

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

PHILOSOPHY

**PARTICIPANT
HANDOUTS**



**THE RENAISSANCE PROGRAM
Unitarian Universalist Association**

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RENAISSANCE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY MODULE

RATIONALE

Unitarian Universalist religious education needs to be re-invented afresh for every era. This workshop is based on the belief that we need to re-examine the philosophies that served us well in the past and incorporate new research and new philosophies of religious education that expand and deepen our understandings.

A changing world affects the lives of all of us, especially our children and youth. Changing theories of human development suggest that there may be new considerations and ways of meeting spiritual, ethical, and educational needs.

Philosophizing about religious education is something that needs to be done, not just by a few experts, but by everyone who wishes to participate in religious education. Each person operates on some de facto religious education philosophy. By becoming aware of it and examining it in light of others' views the hope is that we will become empowered to do the kind of thinking that leads to an intentional philosophy of religious education.

This workshop will provide some experiences in thinking about basic questions that are posed by theologians and educators. But it is just a beginning and leaders and participants are invited to return often to the basic philosophical questions and to re-examine and re-vision their individual and our collective philosophy of Unitarian Universalist religious education.

LEARNING OUTCOMES DESIRED

- Increased knowledge of foundational questions of religious education: what, when, who, where, how and why.
- Increased ability in articulating one's own religious faith and current religious education philosophy.
- Increased clarity about the purposes of lifespan religious education.
- Increased comfort and competence in taking home a philosophy of religious education and talking with teachers and parents in this area.
- Increased comfort and competence in using some new knowledge, worship processes, and educational awareness in this area with congregations.

SESSION TOPICS

Session I. WHAT?

WHAT is Religious Education? What is its nature and its consequences?

Session II. WHEN?

WHEN does Religious Education take place? What does faith development theory have to tell us? Are there any other complimentary or opposing bodies of theory to which we should also pay attention?

Session III. WHO?

WHO INFLUENCES Religious Education? What are the appropriate roles in this enterprise? Who has been influential in the past?

Session IV. WHERE

WHERE does religious education occur? What is the context of religious education in the community of the congregation? What is the nature of our congregation as teaching community?

Session V. HOW? WHY?

HOW do we go about it? And WHY do we do what we do? What methods, content, and models are consistent with our philosophy? What are the purposes behind what we do in religious education?

The Essex Conversations An Introduction and Overview

Background

It was time! It was twenty-five years ago, at the Stonehouse Club in Little Compton, Rhode Island, that professional religious educators gathered for a group of four three-day meetings to ask the question: "What is our vision for lifespan liberal religious education?"

In the spring of 1998, a coordinating committee comprised of Rev. Makanah Morris, Rev. Patricia Hoertdoerfer, Dr. Rev. Susan Harlow, and Rev. Frances Manly organized to plan a similar process. It was time to bring together the threads of the past in order to provide a vision for the future of Unitarian Universalist religious education. This group represented the UUA Religious Education Department, the Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA), and the Sophia Fahs Center at Meadville Lombard Theological School. In the fall of 1998 I replaced Makanah in the core group. The group formulated the following mission statement for this new gathering of religious educators: "To imagine and articulate the core of Unitarian Universalist Religious Education from various perspectives at the dawn of the twenty-first century."

Funding was solicited and granted from the Panel on Theological Education, Funding for Unitarian Universalism, Unitarian Sunday School Society, LREDA, Meadville Lombard, the UUA departments of Religious Education and Congregational, District, and Extension Services. Representative religious leaders were selected from academia, large, mid-size, and small societies, the UUA Religious Education Department, Religious Education field staff, ministry, Directors of Religious Education, theological students, and youth. There were thirty-three participants in all, including a representative from the Journey Toward Wholeness Committee.

Letters requesting input into the process were sent to twenty-two affiliated UU organizations. Participants were invited to one of the two conversations, one of which was held in April 1999, and the other in April 2000. Participants were asked to submit papers in response to three questions:

1. As we enter the twenty-first century, what is the core of our evolving Unitarian Universalist faith?
2. What is your vision for the goals of our lifespan religious education?
3. What are the vital components of Unitarian Universalist curricula?

Hopes and Expectations for the Essex Conversations

The religious education of children, youth, and adults has been a concern of our liberal religious movement from its beginnings in America. Today we know that a unified view of religious education is essential to our Unitarian Universalist faith. We must energize religious education. We must imagine and articulate a religious education that supports our shared Unitarian Universalist values and reflects the diversity of our community. We sought during the Essex Conversations to articulate a renewed sense of educational purpose, a clear expression of liberal religious faith, and a revitalized commitment to UU Religious Education.

Our hope was that Essex Conversations would provide guidance to the Religious Education Department at the UUA and help renew our sense of mission, revitalize our commitment, and clarify our vision of UU religious education. This came at a good time for the department as we prepared to develop a new lifespan curriculum for the twenty-first century.

Our hope is that the papers presented will help your congregation to clarify and imagine your vision for liberal religious education within your spiritual community.

Paper Summaries

Rev. Dr. Barry M. Andrews

Faith is comprised of both spirituality and religious identity, which are interdependent and reciprocal. Spirituality is largely personal, made up of values, beliefs, and experiences that relate to our individual experience. Religious identity represents values, beliefs, and rituals that a group holds in common. Both are required for full realization of faith. Unfortunately, our current religious education programming ends up teaching religion, not faith.

A core curriculum in Unitarian Universalist faith development would progressively nurture spirituality and character formation. It is not enough to educate about our religious heritage. We must seek to develop faith, helping individuals of all ages to more fully integrate their spiritual lives with their sense of identity as Unitarian Universalists.

Rev. Susan Davison Archer

Our commitment to religious education needs to focus on new paradigms in three areas: the intergenerational community and our ministry to families, living in partnership with the world, and the special needs of adolescents.

We must envision structures for religious education that differ from the old Sunday morning models that separate families and ages. We need to continue to lift up the relationship between inner growth and outer action and to acknowledge the role of basic developmental growth with the ability to participate in a commitment to the common good. We know that the presence of worthy adults in the lives of adolescents is critical to their "becoming." It may be time to advocate for making the position of "youth advisor" a professional one.

Rev. Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley

It is time for critical examination to identify the impediments that keep us from greater alignment between what we say we value and our effectiveness in the process of social transformation. We must face the hidden realities that stand in the way of change. We must gain a clear understanding of the ideologies of liberalism and liberation, which sometimes stand in conflict, inhibiting our progress. These efforts must be coupled with a holistic religious education program, education for critical consciousness and the practice of freedom, rooted in the doctrine of love.

Supporting this work is a multi-dimensional endeavor, requiring educational, ethical, justice, and pastoral works, springing from a new theology of church, of ministry, and of culture.

Rev. Susan Suchocki Brown

Religious Education for the twenty-first Century should promote a commitment to anti-oppression, antiracism, and multiculturalism and prepare learners through education, personal awareness exercises, analysis, and organizational skill development.

Religious education should help us have encounters, experiences, or exchanges that remind and make us aware of the inherent worth and dignity of every person, our first Principle. Yet these goals are not enough. Religious education should encourage and be structured to allow a breaking down of personal and/or social barriers, and it should acknowledge that lack of experience or education may inhibit us from fully grasping the final defining Principle of Unitarian Universalism: respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Pat Ellenwood

Four strategic programs are proposed to secure a more dynamic, central place for religious education and to insure steady, long-term growth.

We must encourage covenantal relationships to help create intentional communities in which preaching, religious education, and pastoral care are all regarded fully as ministry. We need to develop a coherent curriculum plan with a well-articulated scope and sequence, providing us with a common experience of Unitarian Universalism. Our congregations must become intergenerational faith communities in which youth can experience what it means to lead in all aspects of congregational life. LREDA can contribute to this future by building alliances, setting professional standards, and educating congregations around good employment practices.

Judith A. Frediani

We need to claim our unique responsibilities as a liberal religious community. We must offer lifespan religious growth and learning in an intergenerational community, resisting our tendencies to compartmentalize people by age. Education for social action must not only inspire but also equip us to change the world, ensuring that social justice is inseparable from meaning-making in our faith. Our understanding of "curriculum" must expand beyond the books, boxes, and classrooms to fully realize the transformative power available to us as liberal religious communities.

We need to expand our concept of "RE," and we need to change our relationship with our religious educators. Those engaged in religious education need to be at all the tables, be included in educational opportunities, and be welcomed in partnership with parish ministers.

Rev. Dr. Richard S. Gilbert

The curriculum for praxis education, helping people transform their beliefs and values into effective and meaningful action in the world, is the totality of experiences, planned and unplanned, from which we can learn, expanding our Unitarian Universalist horizon beyond the confines of a religious institution.

Education for justice begins with one's own existential situation and goes on to establish linkage to the problems of the world. Education for empathy is based on learning about the personal problems of others, seeking to balance objectivity and subjectivity. Education for engagement provides transforming hands-on experience. Education for empowerment provides space for the creation of programs of peace and justice designed to do no less than change the world.

Rev. Dr. Susan Harlow

Today, the church school is perhaps the sole context in which children can actively pursue religious meaning and experience. We need to pay attention to how people, young and old, are "formed in faith" and can be engaged in a lifelong process of religious growth and learning in community, rooted in Unitarian Universalist Purposes and Principles.

Five challenges are identified: taking religious education out of the Sunday school "box" to explore ways in which the whole religious community is both teacher and learner; restoring "life" as a prime operative value; providing opportunities for the development of deep and authentic relationships; understanding worship as the central educating component of religious community; and engaging us in the struggle to transform injustices in the world.

Daniel Harper

A new typology of learners combines developmental psychology (primarily determined by age) and "depth of faith" (not necessarily determined by age). Eight or more types of learners span across an age range from young children to adults and across the depths of faith from "new" through "long-range" to "deep." There are at least five educational tasks faced by these learning types, including learning our tradition and heritage, practicing religion, discerning religious identity, theological reflection, and refining religious practice.

By referring to this typology and these five educational tasks, religious educators can begin to open up their conversations with parish ministers, theologians, scholars, and others, with the final goal of helping learners to grow religiously and to deepen their faith.

Logan Harris

Many elements come together to create a vital youth group: good advisors, being active within the congregation, working for social action, sharing strong emotional bonds based in a sense of trust, developing spirituality through creative worship, empowerment of youth leadership through strong district and continental connections, and just plain having fun. Youth need somewhere to feel safe, somewhere to laugh and love and learn. We all share the power to change things, and to discover things. We all need our unique, individual power to be recognized and nourished. A youth group can be both a haven of safety and protection, and a place for growth to occur. But youth and adults must work together to create such a possibility. Neither of them can do it alone.

Jen Harrison (Devine)

If our churches are to grow and thrive, retain our youth, develop theologically competent UUs, and work toward a more just world, we need to intentionally develop infrastructures that support relationship, spiritual questing, hope, and healing. Our youth groups at their best model this welcoming atmosphere and safe space for conversation about what is meaningful and valuable.

There is much to be learned from the model of our youth groups and their intentionality in building community. We can also learn from other denominations about how to use small groups to grow large and successful churches. These models can be adapted for a shared, lay-led ministry approach to our religious education programs that will supplement the content driven curriculum-based programs for children and adults.

Rev. Pat Hoerl

The image of a spiral of dynamic, interacting, interconnecting relationships serves as a model of education for religion as relationship. This education needs to address anew the biases embedded in human relations in our congregations and culture, the pluralism of the sources of our Unitarian Universalist faith, and the interdependence of spirituality and ethics in our reverence for life and for the earth. The goal is to help children, youth, and adults develop life-enhancing relationships with others, our faith, the world, our earth, and the universe.

A lifespan curricula series based on the six sources of our UU faith would be an exciting mutual learning adventure promising engagement of professionals and laity, youth and adults, families and congregations

Jacqui James

If Unitarian Universalism is to be the vital faith needed in these changing years, we need to address several issues: ministry to and with families, justice-making, increased support for religious education and religious educators, growing Unitarian Universalists, and functioning effectively in a more diverse culture.

We must find ways to assure that the time that families spend in church is more fulfilling. We must provide lifelong skills, tools, and attitudes to identify and dismantle oppressions and build bridges between people. We must view our religious educators as professionals and religious education as a central task of the congregation.

We must link the generations by encouraging the full participation of children and youth in the living tradition of our Unitarian Universalist faith.

Elizabeth Motander Jones

As our communities and faith evolve, religious education must expand its vision from traditional classroom experiences to viewing all aspects of the community's life as opportunities for education.

We are losing the skills needed to build and maintain strong communities. By looking at the elements that create and maintain strong extended families, we can learn how to apply those to our communities. We grow by sharing our personal and communal stories, reaching out to the wider community, expressing our commitment, showing our appreciation, communicating in positive ways, spending time together, paying attention to our spiritual wellness, and learning to cope with stress and crisis. In this way we can work to build the strong bonds that form our core as a Unitarian Universalist community.

Ginger Luke

The goals of religious education are to create and maintain a human environment and atmosphere where people of all ages can find and create a just community, grow and develop skills and the confidence to live their lives wholly, find and give comfort and solace, and celebrate life. It takes all these components, grounded in our Principles, to make up religious education.

Learning who we are and discovering how to be in the twenty-first century require us to recognize many characteristics influencing the substantive ways we address religious education: people are too busy, more information exists than it is possible to absorb and our people are in need of community. If we really want to facilitate the creation of a new vision of religious education, our institutions need to model how to address these characteristics of the times.

Rev. Frances Manly

Our greatest challenge in religious education is to create a context in which we can experience, as a felt reality, the fullness of our humanity as radically relational individuals. One of the most valuable tools available to us in this work is our Unitarian Universalist Principles, if we read them in such a way as to reveal, emphasize, and explore the "principle behind the Principles."

The deep structure of the Principles reflects the reality that as human beings we are always in dynamic tension between individualism and interdependence, between autonomy and relationship. Each Principle reflects a unique balance point in that tension. The meaning of human existence is to be found somehow in the fact that we are at once separate individuals of worth and dignity and interdependent parts of an indivisible whole.

Rev. John Marsh

We need to teach people how to express themselves in religious language. This requires introducing people to a vocabulary of words, stories, poetry, music, movement, and other forms of expression. We should invite people to imbue their calendars with festival days and to practice daily spiritual disciplines.

While it is important to honor different styles of learning and original styles of thought, it is also important to honor rote learning and the accumulated wisdom of widespread traditions. As ever greater amounts of information are thrust into people's consciousnesses our job will be less and less to provide people with new information and more and more to help people to sort through information and discern wheat from chaff. A grounding in enduring stories will be helpful.

Rev. Makaanah Elizabeth Morriss

A lifespan thematic religious education curriculum based on Unitarian Universalism's six sources can help our people experience a sense of universal connection and their sense of spirit and call them to committed and loving action that will help change the world.

Such a curriculum should encompass early elementary grades through adulthood and be easily adaptable by local teachers and congregations. Support must be provided through a curriculum development resource book and workshops, and development of parent and home resources, including computer resources. Youth programming also needs to include a six sources component. Weaving its energy through all the curricula, program and resources needs to be the commitment to our shared "Journey towards Wholeness."

Rev. Dr. Roberta Nelson

We must change limited cultural attitudes about religious education and teaching in church. We must make a conscious effort to affirm the central importance of religious education within our congregations and the Association. Commitment to intentional selection of teachers, adequate teacher training and a network of support systems is required.

The teacher who listens and hears, who affirms and challenges, who questions and encourages questioning is the heart of our programs. We can overcome resistance to teaching with a vision that engages and supports teachers in their own spiritual search. We must make manifest the miracle that we know happens when teacher-guides engage with young people, with co-leaders and with themselves. They become co-creators of a pilgrimage that goes ever deeper and feeds souls.

Rev. Dr. Tom Owen-Towle

The mission of Unitarian Universalist religious education is to create and sustain an intergenerational community of truthfulness and service, holiness and love. This imperative should undergird and guide our social action, liturgy, and stewardship as well. Unitarian Universalist religious education is neither book- nor guru-centered. It is not adult- or even child-centered. It is congregation-centered, wherein all ages cooperatively engage in what Starr Williams called "a cycle of nurturing." Hence, our educational perspective must be grounded in sound ecclesiology and focus on all members being religious, remembering, recreative, responsible, respectful, renewable, and reverent pilgrims.

Rev Dr Rebecca Parker

The core of our evolving Unitarian Universalist faith is humanistic concern that every being have a chance at life. The goal of liberal religious education is the unfolding and liberation of life, in cooperation with revolutionary grace present in the heart of life. The vital components of such an education are practices of critical reception and creative engagement in the world.

Our educational programs must address our current dehumanization. We can accomplish this by trusting the abiding presence of revolutionary grace. Our task is to cooperate with this grace as it emerges, disrupts our small worlds, and wakes our souls to the larger world in which we meet our neighbors, encounter the divine energies afoot, and find, in our engagement there, our deepest selves and the restoration of our souls.

Rev. Meg Riley

If our religious education programs could create congregations where the religious impulse itself is to savor pluralism and encourage creative tension, our congregations could offer something vital and unique to our communities and to our world.

A concern is that our children experience curricula in a vacuum of intergenerational community or focus. Vital components of Religious Education programs are suggested to address this concern: the embodied practice of religion, affinity groups based on religious identity, attention to civility and positive interaction, spending real time together in community, education for stewardship, respect for those who are sources of passionate energy, and opportunities for close relationships across affinities, self-identities, and ages.

Rev. Dr. Tracey Robinson-Harris

At the core of our evolving Unitarian Universalist faith is our commitment to justice and to transforming structures of oppression and marginalization including those within our own community of faith. Religious education is clearly central to the health, growth and vitality of our faith. And we also know that religious education occupies a place on the institutional margins. Neither the implicit strategy of developing quality programs nor the explicit one of focusing on "professionalizing" or "ministerializing" the role of the religious educator have proven sufficient to address the paradoxical position of religious education in our congregations.

We need to define new strategies for transforming congregations so that educating is at the heart of all aspects of institutional life.

Rev. Jeannellen Ryan

Religious education, in its broadest sense, is a central act of our religious life together. Our times call for it to become "at the core" for Unitarian Universalists of all ages. Our materials should aim toward the small society, toward creative use of the limited time available to families, toward revision of traditional curricula and toward greater involvement of adults in anti-racism and human sexuality educational programming.

Leadership is a critical element. Association-wide, we have never fully embraced the notion of verifiable professional religious education leadership, and the price we pay for marginalization is high. Every UU congregation should have access to a qualified religious education professional, not necessarily every Sunday, but enough to feel its program is in good hands.

Kathy M. Silver

Parents are the primary religious educators for their children, yet we have not given our adults the inspiration and information that they need to fulfill this essential role. Being a liberal religious person does not automatically make you a Unitarian Universalist. This requires basic knowledge of our history and theology, Principles, system of congregational polity, and a desire to learn more. We need to help people convert to Unitarian Universalism. Failing this, people will simply attend their local church as consumers of religious education for their children. Conversion requires education, conviction, and commitment. It is our responsibility to provide avenues for lifespan religious education in which all members, adults and children alike, can easily participate, working together to become Unitarian Universalists.

Rev. Gary Smith

A primary task for Unitarian Universalist religious education is the identification of a corpus of material we would like our children to know, to own in their beings, by the time they have come of age in our programs. We are charged with passing this history on to the next generation.

Unitarian Universalist religious education in the next century must also be about right relationships. In our congregations, we are offering one of the last places of intergenerational contact in our culture. When we create the kind of community in which our children feel loved and welcomed and safe, this is the imprint we leave for that later year, after the inevitable rebellion, when our children's return is possible, with their own children. This is what it means to respect children and take them seriously. This is the future of Unitarian Universalism religious education.

Laura Wilkerson Spencer

Our seven Principles offer guidelines for what our churches and religious education programs need to become, for how to see ourselves and relate to others. We must address issues of diversity, becoming very intentional about creating diverse congregations and using curriculums that take an inclusive approach to diversity. Our religious education programs should focus on creating a cross-generational community that nurtures individual spiritual growth and development. To seriously address these issues will require religious educators to become involved in all areas of church leadership. Churches must hire well-qualified educators and support them in their professional growth and education. Ministers and religious educators must work collaboratively and create genuine collegial relationships.

Rev. Greg Stewart

The educational ministry of the denomination has been the focus of its easiest and most significant innovation. Way Cool Sunday School took Sunday school out of the church's basement and into the city's streets, eliminated age divisions, used curricula as resources rather than recipes, and combined social action with religious education. Underlying the rotational components of worship, classroom, outreach and the arts was the common content of our Unitarian Universalist principles and purposes.

When Sunday school was taken out of the traditional "box," congregations experienced growth in terms of diversity in all its facets, programmatic growth with all its headaches and opportunities, and most importantly, spiritual growth.

Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Strong

A belief in the inherent dignity and worth of every human being is at the core of our evolving Unitarian Universalist faith. This understanding of human nature must remain vital and central to our programs of religious education in the twenty-first Century. Unitarian Universalists have always been at the front of seekers for more insight into the truth as we know it. Encouragement of our children's ability to search must remain within the center of our religious education efforts. From this core of our faith we can ground our visions, goals and content of religious education for all ages. Our curricula for the twenty-first century need to link us to this past and remember us into new life as a powerful legacy to the Principles of freedom, reason, and tolerance from our Unitarian Universalist tradition

Rev. Dr. John W. Tolley

A respect for the ways in which art addresses mystery and the expression of new church members for more emphasis on the spirituality inherent in our faith communities have led our leadership to understand "art" as a powerful tool toward effective religious education and expression.

What is suggested is nothing less than a counter cultural revolution. Our educational goals must first free themselves of the expectations of society and focus on the individual needs, dreams, and constructs of each of

us. When we participate in our chosen art form and gain the skills to release that power in those we teach, we create a faith community whose process is understood as its worth, and whose reflection makes the whole educational endeavor effectual, rewarding and transformative..

Rev .Dr. Tom Yondorf

Unitarian Universalism, like other religions, has failed to solve the problem of how to discipline humanity so that we live without massively destroying other values such as non-human life, the environment, and diverse ecosystems.

One symptom of the weakness of Unitarian Universalism in particular is our inability to retain our children as members of our denomination when they graduate from our religious education programs. Our programs should be outcome-based in design. The test for what it means to be a graduate of our classes and programs should be behavior and knowledge, a portfolio of excellence in human living. Desirable outcomes are listed in six areas, including one that calls on our "graduates" to proselytize persuasively on behalf of Unitarian Universalism.

Adapted from REACH, August, 2000.

Faith Stages According to Fowler

Paraphrased by Rev. Lindsay Bates and Cynthia Wade

Pre-stage: Primal Faith - pre-birth to about age 4

For the youngest ones, there is no "other" or external world. "I'm It." This child is his or her feelings, both physical and emotional, and that's the world; other people are not understood as "other people."

What the youngest children are going to retain from this time in their lives is how they have felt. The youngest ones don't have any understanding of religious symbols, whether it's of God or Jesus or Torah or Santa Claus. Their experiences at this stage, especially of the nurturing/lack thereof provided by primal others, are apt to surface later in the images of God that begin appearing by about age 4 or 5.

Infants form their initial impressions of the world and experience sensations of love, trust and courage (or lack of these) on a body level. The spiritual virtue being instilled is HOPE; the ability is trust through times when that trust is challenged.

1. Stage One: Intuitive/Projective Faith – approximately from ages 4 or 5 to ages 7 or 8

They're learning about how words and symbols work -- which is why this is usually when they're learning to read on their own. Their "cause-and-effect" thinking is still often magical. These children can easily believe, for example, that they are responsible for bad things happening.

Under the best of circumstances, a child at this stage is able to trust in the security and "rightness" of the family, and "Because my mommy says so" is an adequate squasher for all challenges. It's important for parents and other authority figures in the child's life to be willing to say that they believe certain definite things, such as that God does not send people to hell, or NO, the baby did NOT die because you were bad or because she was bad. That parental authority can do a lot to ease the fears that arise when their little friends start sharing their Sunday School stories about going to hell if you aren't right with Jesus. A UU parent or RE teacher who will not express a definite opinion at this point in the child's religious growth is not doing the child a favor.

The authoritative role of the family and the family's chosen circle (which includes the church) explain why at this stage we talk about our children's religion being "CAUGHT." It's what's around them; it's what the people they trust and care about are doing so they do it too.

Spiritually, they're working on the meaning of "Free Will," the inherent worth of each individual, including themselves. They need a lot of encouragement and positive reinforcement for the things they do well and the things they try to do well. They need to know that they are accepted and cared about and loved. This is when our church home needs to be a place of safety and fun and love.

2. Stage Two: Mythic/Literal Faith – approximately from ages 6-8 through ages 10-12

Thought is more complex now, and cause-and-effect thinking passes from the magical to the scientific. Discussion of ideas and of one's own thoughts becomes important. These children are beginning to recognize that they do have their own thoughts, and that other people have other thoughts. How their trusted authority figures handle these differences in thoughts is very important. These children do not want to be thought of as "different." If they know that in their own group different ideas are good, they will be comfortable having ideas that are different. If they are taught that there are absolutely right ideas and absolutely wrong ones, they will feel guilty, inferior, "sinful", if their ideas are not like everybody else's.

Children tend at this age to be very concerned with absolute fairness. Morally ambiguous issues are very hard for them. They're often described at this stage as "legalistic." In this stage, the conviction that if you are good, you will be safe and successful and happy, and if you are bad, you will be punished, is normal. But alongside that is the growing awareness of how unfair the real world can be.

At this stage, stories are very important. These children want to know the stories that everyone else knows, Bible stories, stories about their own church, stories within the family. Those shared stories are part of what creates the group to which these children belong. That's why we often speak of religious at this stage being "TAUGHT." These children want to be told what the trusted adults around them know and value.

3. Stage Three: Synthetic/Conventional Faith - approximately from ages 10-12 through adulthood, but not all adults

This stage is one of transition. Many children decide that they are atheists at this point. If there were a God, then things would be fair, but things are not fair, and therefore there can be not God. Many adults also hold this position.

Adults in many faith communities, including ours, settle quite happily into this stage. We usually enter it (if we enter it at all) when we begin to recognize how complicated and illogical and unfair life can be. We can't count on "ultimate fairness," so we rearrange our framework of understanding value and worth, and we seek meaning within our own group (realizing that there are others but not necessarily being convinced that those other ways might be as valid as ours). Our group's certainties provide our spiritual and psychological foundations.

In this stage, one is "thinking about thinking"; beginning to understand how one develops one's beliefs, how to construct and test hypotheses, now to take another person's perspective while not necessarily agreeing with it.

This is a highly relational way of being, and being part of a group is very important. When God is discussed, it's apt to be in relational terms -- "God is Love," which makes God a little bit like us, or us a little bit like God, or perhaps in a relationship with God.

Important questions become "Who am I?" and "Who are you?" Issues of what we believe and why we believe it become interesting and important. The ideal of relatedness, of belonging, can also create a strong idealism as a member of a group. Ways of being of service become important, in part because of how one is regarded by those who are important to us matters a lot.

Identity becomes of paramount importance in the face of the many possible conflicting roles they are being invited to fill. Sexual and gender identity are important issues.

The spiritual issue is faithfulness -- being true to the values, the commitments, and the ideals of one's community. This is what we refer to as faith that is "BOUGHT." The young person wants to be able to buy into what the trusted group values and believes. And it's the task of the adult community to share our beliefs and values with our young people, to be clear about why we believe certain things are right and others are wrong without being wishy-washy or apologetic about it.

4. Stage Four: Individuative/Reflexive Faith - mid-to-late adolescence through adulthood, but not all adults

This stage is reached as the discovery is made that there really are all sorts of people out there who are not like the folks I grew up with. And they have claims to be taken seriously, which can be perceived as very threatening. This is sometimes a retrenching time. Earlier values are clung to with an almost desperate need for that security. At the same time many presuppositions are being challenged. Early in this stage one tends to see everything in terms of "either/or." Either I'm right or you're right, and if I'm right, you're wrong, and if you're right, I'm wrong.

There tends to be a loss of patience with lack of clarity or ambiguity, and a strong need for an identity that one can indeed defend as valid against those who are different. There is often a tendency to caricature, discount, or not take seriously the experiences and differences of members of other groups while being in relation with individual members. One does not yet see that your insistence upon being who you are does not diminish who I am, no matter how different we may be.

This is a time of intense seeking, which is why this faith is no longer caught, taught, or bought. Now it is actively "SOUGHT." The challenge is to learn to deal with radical differences and ambiguities, to move beyond what's been called a "class-based universalism," in which issues of right and wrong, good and evil are resolved with the conviction that what's right for me and my group is right for everyone.

5. Stage Five: Conjunctive/Paradoxical/Consolidative Faith - may begin as early as late teens or early twenties, but more commonly later in adulthood

Fowler suggests that the transition to this stage is apt to be brought about by experiences in adulthood of deep pain, grief, awareness of the reality of death. It is in this stage that we begin to learn to move away from "either/or" and begin living with "both/and." Concepts and experiences of paradox, of multiple layers of meaning and understanding and experience, are now enriching rather than frightening. Truth is understood to be paradoxical, complex, beyond absolute understanding. Symbols become symbols again, vehicles for experiencing and expressing those things for which exact, scientific explanations can never be adequate.

Authority is found in the dialectic of critically self-chosen beliefs, norms, and values with those maintained in the reflective claims of other persons and groups and in various expressions of cumulative human wisdom. One becomes deeply appreciative of the stories, myths, rituals, etc., of other groups, coming to see them as being equally legitimate vehicles of truth.

In moral judgment, there tends to be an appeal to a principled "Higher Law." Integrating conflicts of law with morality can be a struggle. In this stage, one is apt to be strongly loyal to society and its values while seeing clearly the injustices, pain, etc. within it. One realizes that "seeing what justice requires means doing what justice requires." This is often painful.

6. Stage Six: Universalizing Faith - very few people achieve this level

In reaching this level, one has truly transcended one's own particulars (while still valuing them) and become a full member of the "Commonwealth of ALL Being."

Authority is built upon all previous sources, now located in the individual judgment purified of egoistic striving, attentive to the requirements of pure Being.

Morally, loyalty to Being transcends any and all laws or societal norms.

Spiritually, if you get this far, you have achieved Buddhahood. But I do think, while few of us honestly get here, it is a vision of faith and of being to which we aspire -- so maybe it's not as far beyond our reach as Fowler often seems to insist.

Integration of Developmental Characteristics

LEVEL (Kegan)	THINKING (Piaget)	RELIGIOUS THINKING (Fowler)	MORAL THINKING (Kohlberg)
<u>Infancy</u> Incorporative Balance <u>Mothering</u> Culture	Sensory motor intelligence	<i>Primal Faith</i>	
<u>Preschool</u> Impulsive Balance from <u>Mothering</u> Culture to <u>Parenting</u> Culture	(Ages 2-5) Intuitive Symbolic	(Ages 4-7) <i>Faith Imitated</i> Secure Environment One-on-One Security Great influence of visible faith of primary adults, with imitation of moods and attitudes Magical Thinking	Mothering Authority Egocentric Reasoning Get rewards; avoid punishment
<u>K-1 Grades (ages 5-6)</u> Childhood Transition Period from Impulsive to Imperial Balance <u>Parenting</u> Culture	(Ages 5-7) Concrete Operational Thought Intuitive		Parental Authority Unquestioning Obedience
<u>2-4 Grades (ages 7-8)</u> Imperial Balance <u>Role recognizing</u> <u>Culture</u>	Concrete Operational Observation	(Ages 8-12) <i>Faith Learned</i> "Joining Stage" Process stories, beliefs, practices Reasoning thought about faith Sense of belonging to religious community Age of doer	Peer and Family Authority Social pressure What's-in-it-for-me Fairness
<u>4-8 Grades (ages 9-13)</u> from Imperial Balance to Interpersonal Balance Culture of <u>Mutuality</u>	Early Formal Operational Abstract Thinking		Peer and Parental Authority Rules Interpersonal Conformity Social Approval
<u>9-12 Grades</u> Interpersonal Balance Culture of <u>Mutuality</u> and <u>Identity</u>	Formal Operational	Questioning basic ideas, religions Age of search <i>Faith by Assent</i> : face universal tensions (individual/community, self-fulfillment, service to others, relative/absolute)	Personal Authority Moral Rules Responsibility to the system
<u>Young Adult</u> Institutional Balance Culture of <u>self-</u> <u>authorship</u>	Full Formal	<i>Faith Self-Constructed</i> "Personally Chosen Faith" Self as authority Awareness of paradoxes and polarities of life	Principles Conscience Social or value system authority
<u>Adult</u> Inter-individual Balance Culture in <u>intimacy</u>	Full Formal	<i>Faith Expansive</i> "Reclaimed faith" Creative interchange as authority Comfort with life's paradoxes and polarities <i>Faith Universal</i> Faith in life, Saints	Universal ethical principles Principle of respect for all human beings

Woman's Voice in Developmental Theory: The Work of Carol Gilligan

When the woman's voice is included in the study of human development, women's lives and qualities are revealed and we can observe the unfolding of these qualities in the lives of men as well. The power of the woman's voice in expanding our conceptions of human development is amply illustrated in the work of Carol Gilligan (1982).

By listening to girls and women resolve serious moral dilemmas in their lives, Gilligan has traced the development of a morality organized around notions of responsibility and care. This conception of morality contrasts sharply with the morality of rights described by Piaget (1965) and Kohlberg (1981, 1984), which is based on the study of the evolution of moral reasoning in boys and men. People operating within a rights morality—more commonly men—evoke the metaphor of “blind justice” and rely on abstract laws and universal principles to adjudicate disputes and conflicts between conflicting claims impersonally, impartially, and fairly. Those operating within a morality of responsibility and care—primarily women—reject the strategy of blindness and impartiality. Instead, they argue for an understanding of the context for moral choice, claiming the needs of individuals cannot always be deduced from general rules and principles and that moral choice must also be determined inductively from the particular experiences each participant brings to the situation. They believe that dialogue and exchange of views allow each individual to be understood in his or her own terms. They believe that mutual understanding is most likely to lead to a creative consensus about how everyone's needs may be met in resolving disputes. It is the rejection of blind impartiality in the application of universal abstract rules and principles that has, in the eyes of many, marked women as deficient in moral reasoning.

In recent work Gilligan and her colleague, Nona Lyons (1983), have extended their study of gender-related differences in moral perspectives to the area of identity development. They have shown how the responsibility orientation is more central to those, whose conceptions of self are rooted in a sense of connection and relatedness to others, whereas the rights orientation is more common to those who define themselves in terms of separation and autonomy. Although these differences in self-definition do not necessarily divide along gender lines, it is clear that many more women than men define themselves in terms of their relationships and connections to others, a point which has also been made by Nancy Chodorow (1978) and Jean Baker Miller (1976). When men define themselves in terms of connection, they also frame their moral judgments in terms of responsibility rather than rights (Lyons 1983).

Such insights are transforming our understanding and study of psychology and human development, paralleling transformations that are occurring in all of the intellectual disciplines that have begun to include the woman's voice. When scientific findings, scientific theory, and even the basic assumptions of academic disciplines are reexamined through the lens of women's perspectives and values, new conclusions can be drawn and new directions forged that have implications for the lives of both men and women.

Source: Mary Field Belenky, et. al. *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind*. (New York: Basic Books, 1986), pp.7-9.

TOUGH TERMS

FAITH

1. Paul Tillich in his book *Dynamics of Faith* defines faith as “the state of being ultimately Concerned. The dynamics of faith are the dynamics of a [person’s] ultimate concern.”
2. “Faith is often better understood as a verb than a noun, and as a process than as a possession.” (Frederick Buechner)
3. Faith development theorist James Fowler spoke of faith as a dynamic verb, as an active not static thing. He talked of “faithing”, something we do, a process of wrestling meaning from life and testing it through action and subjecting it again and again to the scrutiny of our minds, to the leap of our hearts, to the reality of action.
4. Sam Keen in *Life Maps: Conversations on the Journey of Faith* looks at the developmental aspect of “faith as trust.”
5. John Westerhoff defines faith as an expression of meaning revealed in a person’s life style, or the foundation upon which persons live their lives – that point of centeredness or ultimacy that underlies and is expressed abstractly in a world view and value system...in a person’s thought, feeling, and action.
6. Thomas Groome suggests that faith is a lifelong developmental process involving the total person which addresses issues of ultimate concern, such as the meaning of life and death, the nature of being, the existence and nature of deity, and the like.
7. Faith can be defined in a three-fold way – as including “belief”—the cognitive (best conclusions of our minds), as “feel—the affective (those allegiances of our hearts), or as “act”—the behavioral (those things we are willing to put our lives on the line for).
8. One’s faith is extremely personal and individual, focusing not so much on creeds and doctrines per se, but more on those perceptions and values of an ultimate nature which are a part of that individual’s very being. Faith Development reflects the changing nature of one’s faith perceptions and understanding through the developmental journey of his or her life. It is through Faith Development that maturing adults function in increasingly complex and adequate responses to life’s ultimate questions and issues.

RELIGION

1. “The religious way is the deep way, the way with a growing perspective and an expanding view. It is the way that dips into the heart of things, into personal feelings, yearnings, and hostilities that often must be buried and despised and left misunderstood...
“The religious way is the way that sees what physical eyes alone fail to see, the intangibles at the heart of every phenomenon...
“The religious way is the way that touches universal relationships that goes high, wide and deep, that expands the feelings of kinship...
“And if God symbolizes or means these larger relationships, the religious way means finding God; but the work in itself is not too important. It is the enlarged and deepening experiences that bring the growing insights and that create the sustaining ambition ‘to find life and find it abundantly...’
“When such a religious quality of exploration is the goal, any subject, any phenomenon, anything, animate or inanimate, human or animal, may be the starting point...
Religion is the gestalt of all experiences.” Sophia Lyon Fahs
2. “Religion is that cluster of memories and myths, hopes and images, rites and customs that pulls together the life of a person or group into a meaningful whole... It lends coherence to life, furnishes a fund of meaning, gives unity to human events and guides people in making decisions. Religion, as its Latin root suggests, is what binds things together.” Harvey Cox
3. “Religion is ultimate commitment.” Henry Nelson Wieman
4. “Religion at its best is the distillation of images.” Sharon Parks
5. “Religion is the result of the tough and tender experiences of life...” Richard Gilbert
6. “Being religious means asking passionately the questions of the meaning of our existence and being willing to receive answers, even if the answers hurt. Such an idea of religion makes religion universally human, but it certainly differs from what is usually religion. It does not describe religion as the belief in the existence of gods or one God, and as a set of activities and institutions for the sake of relating oneself to these beings in thought, devotion, and obedience. No one can deny that the religions which have appeared in history are religious in this sense. Nevertheless, religion in its innermost nature is more than religion in this narrower sense. It is the state of being concerned about one’s one being and about being universally...Religion is the dimension of depth in all of life experiences...My religion is the answer to the question which I am.” Paul Tillich

SPIRITUALITY

1. Spirituality is the experience of a depth dimension to life, a dimension beyond the physical, the obvious, the provable, the universally shared.
2. Spirituality is the inner quickening that comes with a sudden or long sought awareness which touches the core of one's existence.
3. Spirituality is the heightened awareness of oneself in relationship to humankind and the universe.
4. Spirituality is the relationship a person experiences with the universe and the meaning that relationship has for how that person orders and lives life. It includes personal experiences of insight and connection, interpretation and sharing of those experiences, and decisions to act in ways that bring one's life into harmony with the meanings those experiences have evoked.
5. Spirituality is at the core of meaning-making—for those who experience it.
6. Spirituality involves the relationship between one's consciousness and one's soul – and between one's being and the universe as a whole.
7. Spirituality is an evocation of feelings that leads into the spiritual; extrasensory, transcendent experience.
8. By spiritual, I mean the ancient and abiding human quest for connectedness with something larger and much more trust-worthy than our egos, with our own selves, with one another, with the worlds of history and nature, with the invisible winds of the spirit, and with the mystery of being alive. Parker Palmer

ETHICS

It's as basic as how people treat each other and it is the choices we make that can affect the course of our lives and the lives of others.

Ethics refers to standards of conduct, standards that indicate how one should behave based on moral duties and values, which themselves are derived from principles of right and wrong. There are two aspects of ethics: The first involves the ability to discern right from wrong, good from evil, propriety from impropriety. The second involves the commitment to do what is right, good, and proper. Ethics entails action; it is not just a topic to debate.

There is the "Is" Ethics vs. "Ought" Ethics. Is ethics describes operational standards of behavior – that is, how an individual or group usually behaves, without reference to what should be. It is usually associated with cultural relativism. Ought ethics is prescriptive ethics; it is ethics concerned with discernment of and commitment to principles that establish "standards" of behavior to every person. Ought ethics prescribe how people should behave, prescribing standards for what "ought" to be without reference to how things actually are. The ideal behavior is based on specific values and principles, which define what is right, good, and proper.

Ethical development concerns the principles and values about how people interact with other people. Our ethical development depends on our relationships – our relationships with our parents and family, our peer group and their values, and our faith community and living tradition, our world and planet. Our values are learned through experience. Our ethics are practiced in our living every day. Our ethical behavior grows out of our religious identity. From our core values and spirituality, we practice ethical decision-making, and our ethical behavior emerges.

Pat Hoerdoerfer

MORE TOUGH TERMS

PRAYER

Many of the past generation and many today have found three abiding values in prayer:

The quiet meditation on life,

The reaching out toward the universal and infinite, and

The courageous facing of one's profoundest wishes.

Let parents sense and share with their children the glory and mystery of everyday things.

Let them look with sympathy upon humanity's age-long dilemmas.

Let no question be taboo.

The next generation can ill afford to have the deeper values deleted from the book of life.

--Sophia Lyon Fahs

Prayer ... is an effort to reach deep and to reach out and to become what we would like to be, and need to be, and ought to be. Proper prayer is not a petition to escape realities. It is an effort to face up to realities, to understand them, to deal with them. It is an expression of the desire to grow in spiritual stature, in courage, in strength, and in faith. The purpose of prayer is to transform those doing the praying, to lift them out of fear and selfishness into serenity, patience, determination, belonging. If we being to approach prayer in this manner, it assumes an entirely new significance.

--Rev. Jack Mendelsohn

In rational prayer the soul may be said to accomplish three things important to its welfare: it withdraws within itself and defines its good, it accommodates itself to destiny, and it grows like the ideal which it conceives.

--George Santayana

The word prayer has almost as many meanings as there are people who pray. For some it is a conversation, a speaking to God; for others it is speaking to oneself; and for still others it is speaking aloud – to all who are gathered together, or to no one in particular.

--Rev. Patricia Hoertdoerfer

Prayers offer a skilful means for marrying an inner sense of peace with outer demands of the world. They help us to quiet and focus the agitated mind. They use the words to carry us beyond words...By silencing inner noise and distractions, prayer brings us into the presence of the moment. Its gift is an inner experience of prayerfulness in which the silent center of life's meaning is revealed.

--from *Earth Prayers*

The prayer of our souls is a petition for persistence; not for the one good deed, or single thought, but deed on deed, and thought on thought, until day calling unto day shall make a life worth living.

THEOLOGY

Theology comes from two Greek words: *theos*, which is commonly interpreted as “God;” and *logia*, which means “sayings.” Based purely on a linguistic translation then, theology means “the sayings of God”—Who is God? Where is God? What is God? How one might come to know God? In more contemporary terms, we may speak of theology as being in dialogue about that to which we give ultimate value and meaning. Some would add that theology is rational discourse about God, but I would disagree since religion is itself non-rational. It is based strictly in faith.

Daniel Migliore evokes the classical definition of St. Augustine defining theology as “faith seeking understanding: in relation to ourselves—acknowledging, of course, that we can never completely eliminate our own subjectivity. One would begin with faith statement and then continue to test their beliefs against other faith claims. That’s what theology really is—faith seeking understanding, seeking to understand our own beliefs in relation to other beliefs. It is also critical reflection on the meaning of whatever we understand as ultimate reality; which may or may not include a concept of the divine.

Theology begins with a question (or more accurately, a series of questions) which we all come to ask at some point in life, even if we don’t articulate them. Theology tries to make sense of the world. The basic question it asks is: why? why? Unitarian Universalists tend to ask that “why” question a lot. Why am I here? Why are we here? What is the purpose of life? Is there something more—something beyond all the uncertainty that we feel and see? And when we explore it, we can go further. Why is there suffering? Why is there evil? What will happen to me when I die?

-- Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley

We,

THE MEMBER CONGREGATIONS

of the Unitarian Universalist Association,

covenant to affirm and promote

*The inherent worth and dignity
of every person;*

*Justice, equity and compassion in
human relations;*

*Acceptance of one another and
encouragement to spiritual
growth in our congregations;*

*A free and responsible search for
truth and meaning;*

*The right of conscience and the
use of the democratic process
within our congregations and in
society at large;*

*The goal of world community
with peace, liberty, and justice for
all;*

*Respect for the interdependent
web of all existence of which we
are a part.*

*The living tradition which we share draws
from many sources:*

Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;

Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;

Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;

Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;

Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit.

Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support.

*Unitarian Universalist Principles and Purposes,
Initial adoption 1985; amended 1996*

John Dewey

Dewey, a prolific author whose writings spanned many years, does not readily yield to summary. Yet in possibly his best known work, *The School and Society*, three lectures delivered in 1899, one can see a reflection, a criticism, and a synthesis of American educational thought at the turn of the century. Dewey's thinking evidences the democratic faith in common schools as the instrument of reform. According to Dewey what the best and wisest parents want for their children: "Any other ideal for our school is narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy." He envisions schools as the lever of society wherein students are saturated with a spirit of service and provided with the instruments of effective self-direction. Thus he was critical of the standard way of educating, since schools were isolated from the struggle for a better life and dominated by a medieval conception of learning. Instead, he argued, schools should be a genuine form of active community life, not a place set apart of the learning of lessons. To teach merely for the acquisition of information fostered individualism; Dewey passionately believed that schools must be social in orientation so as to teach students the process necessary for the workings of democracy. Schools should not merely reflect society, but improve it. As embryonic forms of community life, they should be permeated with the spirit of art, of history, and of science. If the school were related to life, all of its studies would necessarily be correlated.

Dewey devoted himself to fashioning an alternative form of schooling, one in which passivity, mechanical massing of children, and uniformity of curriculum and method were replaced by activity, group participation, and adaptation to the needs of the student. He acknowledged that his cause was revolutionary—not unlike the case of Copernicus. Only, as Dewey saw it, "the child becomes the sun about which the appliances of education revolve; he [she] is the center about which they are organized." Yet Dewey's methodology also simply recognized what already existed in the child—interest in conversation, inquiry, construction, and artistic expression:

If we seek the kingdom of heaven, educationally, all other things shall be added unto us—which, being interpreted, is that if we identify ourselves with the real instincts and needs of childhood, and ask only after its fullest assertion and growth, the discipline and information and culture of adult life shall all come in their due season.

"My Pedagogic Creed," written in 1897, encapsulates the principles to which Dewey devoted his education vocation; its very title suggests the religious character education held for Dewey. Education, conceived of as a "continuing reconstruction of experience," was religious insofar as it provided the "fundamental method of social progress and reform," the "most perfect and intimate union of science and art conceivable in human experience." Because it shaped human powers and adapted them to social service, education was the "supreme art."

Education was the supreme art because Dewey believed that the potential of societal reconstruction made the teacher the "prophet of the true God and usherer in of the kingdom of God." His view of the exalted vocation of the teacher rested upon a perspective shared with certain other liberals of his time, a naturalistic philosophy that regarded belief in the supernatural as a remnant of a more primitive outlook. His objections to supernaturalism rested on numerous grounds. It ruined religion, since it

made religion an absolute in which people settled for security in fixed doctrines rather than risked discovery of truth by way of experimental methods. It distracted people from the realities of life, since it focused on ideal existence; it led to the false dualism of sacred and secular and was all too often grounded in crass ignorance. Moreover, supernaturalism was incompatible with democracy, because it too often legitimized the authoritarian rule of an elite.

Whether or not Dewey was a theist himself is debated. Certainly his 1934 Terry Lectures at Yale, published as *A Common Faith*, do not reflect traditional theism. Here Dewey used the term God to denote “the unity of all ideal ends arousing us to desire and actions” and ultimately defined God as “this active relation between ideal and actual.” Enamored as he was of scientific method, Dewey could not assent to a transcendent God who could not be empirically verified. Though he continued to use the term and to make frequent reference to the “divine,” his usage evoked images not of a personal Creator, but of the point at which the ideal became present. His profound commitment to education was a religious act, though not in the theistic sense.

Progressivism’s Contribution to Religious Education

Perhaps the contribution of Dewey and other progressives to religious education can be summarized in three points. First, their insistence upon the interrelatedness of doing and knowing engendered a new enthusiasm for “learning by doing,” what a later age has termed “hands-on” education. This recognition of the power of experiential learning was formalized in Dewey’s laboratory school at the University of Chicago and has continued to challenge succeeding generations of educators. Second, their articulation of a child-centered curriculum considerably influenced religious educators who accordingly reworked creed-centered curricula. The assumption that teaching begins with the situation and needs of the learner rather than the content is rooted in the progressive outlook. Third, the progressivist emphasis on the “whole child” and on formation rather than conversion harmonized with Bushnell’s notion of nurture. It provided religious educators with an impetus to use the social sciences and to incorporate psychology into their considerations; it legitimized their awakening sense of the dual character of education as both a political activity and a religious act.

Source: Mary C. Boys. *Educating in Faith: Maps and Visions*. (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1989)

FAHS and MACLEAN

Fulfilling Channing's Challenge

by Jeanne Nieuwejaar

INTRODUCTION

William Ellery Channing, in his 1837 address to the Unitarian Sunday School Society, outlined much of the essential and enduring philosophy of liberal religious education, and presaged the shift from a didactic methodology to a progressive one. His philosophy and methodology, however, were not implemented in our churches until a full century later, when they flowered in the work of Sophia Fahs and of Angus H. MacLean, among others. David Parke has written, "Whereas Channing only announced a revolution, Mrs. Fahs effected one." (Parke, 1965, p. 381)

Both MacLean and Fahs were exposed to many of the same educational theorists while working and studying at Teachers College, Columbia, through the 1920's. The influence of John Dewey, Horace Bushnell, George Coe, Harrison Elliott, and Hugh Hartshorne were important, and led each of these two religious educators to base their work on children's natural capacities for religious and ethical growth and on the pedagogical principle of experiential learning.

FAHS: FOUNDATIONS OF HER PHILOSOPHY

Through her years at Teachers College and the Sunday School there, Fahs underwent a "profound intellectual and religious transformation. . . toward progressive education, and away from a Biblical world view," writes David Parke. "Her world view shifted from Christ to the child, her premise from conversion to growth, her community from the Church to the family of man [sic]. In short, she became a religious liberal." (Parke, 1965, p.267)

She continued to teach at the Sunday School even after receiving her degree, and in her own intense and thorough fashion, she continued her own education to improve continually her skills as a religious educator. This self-education was intensified over the next twenty years as Fahs's energies were directed primarily to the task of mothering. Through this task, to which she dedicated herself most seriously, she learned much about the nature of childhood, the needs and capacities of children, and the impact of traditional religious education upon them.

Over the years another significant influence on Fahs's developing theory had been the work of G. Stanley Hall, an educational philosopher and experimental psychologist who also had an interest in religious education. It was through his work that the principle of natural growth, a central concept in Fahs's enduring philosophy, received experimental

verification and scientific status. It was his theory of recapitulation, however, that found its way into Fahs's thesis work. This theory stated that the development of the individual organism repeats, or recapitulates the evolution of the human race. In religious education this would imply that children should be exposed to -- should re-experience, in a sense -- a little bit of every religious expression in the history of humankind, in order to develop naturally to religious maturity.

Fahs did not accept all the details of Hall's thinking. She did agree that every child must confront the same elemental forces of nature, of birth and death, of love and of conflict; that "modern children must make their peace with the same forces that early man [sic] reacted to in pre-rational and pre-scientific ways." (Hunter, 1966, p. 105) Parke, in his thesis on *"The Historical and Religious Antecedents of the New Beacon Series in Religious Education,"* suggests that Fahs's original contribution to the theory of religious education, was her blending of Dewey's principle, that learning consists in the reconstruction of experience, and Hall's principle, that individual experience recapitulates racial experience. "Her unique contribution to education, thus understood, is a religious dimension, which infuses the life situation approach of Dewey with drama and purpose, and which ingratiate the iron law of recapitulation of Hall with freedom and joy." (Parke, 1965, P. 282) We find this theory very much in effect in her later work on the New Beacon Series.

Fahs's most comprehensive statement of her philosophy of religious education, *Today's Children and Yesterday's Heritage*, was published in 1952~ after her formal retirement from editorship of Beacon materials.

In this work she defines religion as the "vital and healthy result of [the child's] own creative thought and feeling and experience as he responds to life in all its fullness. Influences from without and from the past affect the formation of such religion; but the life-giving element is within the child and in his/her present experiences." (Fahs, 1952, p. 16)

FULFILLING THE PHILOSOPHY

Fahs would make no clear division between secular and religious education, and stressed close cooperation between the Sunday School and the Weekday Schools, hoping that weekday schools, too, would recognize and foster the religious dimensions of the children's experience. Religious experience had a special place in the church school curriculum, she claimed, but not an exclusive place, ". . . since it is the very nature of religious experiences that when they are set off by themselves apart from other experiences of life, they tend to lose their vitality." (Parke, 1965, p.274)

The individual's experiences are meaningless, however, until critically reflected upon, evaluated, and integrated into the whole of life. Teaching, thus, consists in enriching natural experiences, uncovering and interpreting meanings, and crystallizing learnings into guidelines for the future. The atmosphere and structure must always be democratic with children free to reach their own conclusions, and the particular developmental levels of the children must always be honored.

MACLEAN: EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATION

From among a choice of job offers, MacLean chose a professorship at the Theological School of St. Lawrence University, ". . . because of the intimacy, freedom, and natural surroundings promised." (Parke, 1965, p. 203) MacLean spent thirty-two years at this theological school, nine of them as Dean. Although his thinking was entirely compatible with that of the faculty and student body of St. Lawrence, he did not actively embrace Universalism until the 1940's.

MacLean's most comprehensive statement of his philosophy of religious education was published in 1934 as "The New Era in Religious Education." Parke says of it, "The New Era" was the most original work in its field produced by a Universalist or a Unitarian in the twentieth century, perhaps ever." (Parke, 1965, p. 205) In it MacLean affirms, "The good life is the human life." (MacLean, 1934, p. 6) The child's capacity for enjoying the world must be developed, and can be more effectively developed by companions than by books.

The theory of progressive education is pervasive in this work. Children learn what they are ready to learn and what is relevant to their experience; education must begin with present, worthy experiences. "Life is the real school, in the sense that people change and grow where and when they live." (MacLean, 1934, p. 31) MacLean fully realized that learning by doing could easily be simplified into submissive performing of acts suggested by the teacher, and thus merely a gentle form of coercion. "The value of doing depends in part upon the degree of motivation behind it," he wrote. (MacLean, 1934, p. 66) Experiences designed to be educative would be effective only when the children's experiences were rich enough to absorb the learning and when their psychological stage enabled them to welcome and/or seek it.

An important dimension of the immediate experience of the children's education, says MacLean, is the modeling of the whole community. The adults, the teachers, must live out their religious ideals; or, as he would later phrase it, *the method is the message*.

Like Fahs, MacLean insists that one hour in church on Sunday mornings is inadequate for real religious growth. The time spent on religious education must be extended, but there must also be a rich communication and interchange between the religious education program, the church community, and the larger community beyond. In this work, as throughout his whole career, MacLean affirms that the home is the real base of religious growth, and thus must be an integral part of the religious education network. Because of his emphasis on the contextual nature of religious development, he stresses the responsibilities of church adults, especially teacher, to influence the larger communities.

They should do everything possible as citizens to change their communities to make them more religiously nurturing. They should build in their church a community within a community that would provide a place not only for worship and study, but also for "enterprise," the living out of the ideals of their religious convictions.

The children's own experiences are the center of the educational curriculum. Children are confronted with social conflicts, problems, and crises from their very early years, and must have a readiness to respond. Their education, particularly their religious education, should better prepare them for the social realities and ethical responsibilities that are thrust upon them. The personal, experiential approach is the best way to accomplish this preparedness.

The teacher's primary job, in MacLean's thinking, was to shape and supervise positive experiences, and above all else, to give assistance in integrating those experiences into the child's conceptual system and undergirding faith. Positive integration was dependent on the number and consistency of experiences of the good, on habits of mind, and on the opportunity to promote the good life, the opportunity to act upon the new value. "Integration is not merely a gathering together of experiences: It is itself a creative' experience. Where integration is in process, conflicts arise, and conflict is an initial step in moral growth." (MacLean, 1934, p. 253)

Faith, MacLean said, is the substance of things hoped for, and hope, in turn, was derived from the substance of experience. If the things hoped for were good, enriching ones, the faith also would be strong and positive. But, again, this faith is a function of experience. "Children cannot be talked into a beautiful faith," (MacLean, 1934, p. 247) he wrote. "Whatever experience contributes to making one love life, anticipates and determines a faith that embodies that love." (MacLean, 1934, p. 251) The basic emphasis in education, therefore, must be on the process itself, on the environment of social harmony.

Source: *Liberal Religious Education Journal* (Number Four, Spring 1990) *Faith and MacLean A Living Heritage*, Excerpts from "Fulfilling Channing's Challenge" by Jeanne Nieuwejaar (pages 7-32)

EXCERPTS FROM
MEADVILLE WINTER INSTITUTE - February 18-21, 1999
CONGREGATION AS THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL:
ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY

Presenters: Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker, President - Starr King School for the Ministry; Rev. Dr. William R. Murry, President - Meadville/Lombard Theological School .

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING AND PAULO FREIRE IN DIALOGUE

Introductory Remarks - Parker and Murry

1. Channing's essay on "self culture" focused on moral, intellectual, and spiritual growth. He begins his essay with the assumption that we have the power to determine and form ourselves. Channing writes:

"With all the discoveries that people need to make, the most important is that of the self-forming power treasured up in ourselves. There is more divinity in it than in the force which impels the outward universe. And yet, how little we comprehend it. How it slumbers in most people, unsuspected and unused This makes self culture possible and binds it on us as a solemn duty. "

2. Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is a major resource for the presenters. Freire says that the power to name reality is the first step in the process of liberation.
3. Freire's critique of the "banking concept" of education (see *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, chapter 2)
4. Adult religious education in our congregations tends to follow pendulum swings that are reflective of the culture at-large. In the 1950s, Unitarian Universalism was too intellectual. It may be now that we are presently experiencing the opposite extreme-too much emphasis on emotions and feelings. We need to maintain a balance of both head and the heart in remembrance of both our Unitarian and our Universalist heritages-the intellectual life and the emotional dimensions of our lives.
5. The task of liberal religious education is personal and spiritual growth that makes us more fully human. Part of our task is to help people to unlearn those things they have been taught which diminish the human soul and oppress us rather than enhance life. This includes teaching people to become more caring and compassionate people across racial, class, cultural and other social boundaries that divide us one from another. And more-to *move* from compassion to action for justice.

Rebecca Parker's Presentation

1. Thesis: Education's purpose is humanization in the context of dehumanizing forces reeling in the abiding presence of healing, transformation, and sustaining grace.

- a. Dehumanizing forces are those things that kill the soul.
- b. "To be an educator is to cooperate with revolutionary grace in the work of restoring soul."
- c. To teach is to assist with the forces of revolution and of creativity.
- d. "The eye is meant to see things. The soul is meant for its own joy." (Rumi)

2. We live in a system whose core belief is that we are self-interested individuals. Liberal religious education challenges this view.

3. Channing's philosophy of education (Source: Channing's essay *Self Culture*):

- a. Our tradition is intrinsically humanistic, concerned about life in *this* world.
- b. The end of education is to unfold our whole nature; to call forth our own power-power of every kind.
- c. Our whole being reflects God within us--our god-likeness. To be god-like includes being logical, aesthetically-connected to the world.
- d. Education is not primarily to attain knowledge and skills, but to reach our god-given divine nature. "Education is religious practice... in which people attain god-likeness" or as Kenneth Patton states it, to grasp "the full outpouring of our (own) spirit."

4. The Social Implications of Channing's Philosophy of Education:

- a. Channing acknowledges that we benefit from the labor of others.
- b. Implications for slavery: those who enslave other human beings inhibit the power of their own unfolding grace, the fullness of life's potential, and God's will that we be free.
- c. Any system that prevents the full unfolding of human power is evil. In other words, treating human beings as a means to an end. .. or enslavement to the wants and desires of others rather

than directing their energies toward the intrinsic value of their lives.

5. Limitations of Channing's view:

a. The higher one's level of formal education and training, the closer they are to God. *But*, he believed that one could be self-educated.

b. Dewey posited that the purpose of education is to empower our human capacity to be in the world in a responsive way. The problem-posing method of education emerges as the way in which a teacher accompanies a child (or adult) in developing their capacity to be in the world, to interact with their environment. In introducing children to vicarious experiences in which problems were posed, children were engaged in addressing problems. Thus, the problem-posing method is at the heart of what Sophia Fahs, based on Dewey's philosophy, was trying to do.

c. This philosophy is more fully developed in Paulo Freire, who like Channing, viewed the purpose of education in a humanistic way. "The purpose of education," says Freire, "is humanization. "" "To be fully human is to be a subject who acts upon and transforms the world, and in so doing, moves toward ever new possibilities of fuller and richer life individually and collectively." In Freire's analysis, dehumanization is that which comes about through experiencing the world with conscious alertness and interacting in the world in a creative engaged way. For him, the oppressed are submerged in the world, passionately shaped, controlled, and determined by the world-used for the purpose of others, but they are not active in the world. To be oppressed, says Freire, is to not know that your life has value, that there is intrinsic value in your life has---apart from what it does for or gives to others. It is to lose knowledge of who you are; to live without social agency-to not know yourself apart from being at the service of others.

d. Richard Shaull, ¹ interpreting Freire, says education becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. The purpose of education for Freire, then, is to follow a practice in which human beings rediscover the capacity to "consciously and critically experience the world" (to "vividly experience the world with alertness") and to act in the world as historic agents who have the power to create culture and society-to have the capacity to imagine, create, and shape alternatives to oppression, and therefore, to change the world. To do this is to simultaneously recover "knowledge of the self as intrinsically valuable" and useful to others.. So, "recovery from oppression is the liberation of both our relationality and our inherent worth; they are not in opposition." In summary, oppression results in the absence of self knowledge. liberation (or freedom) is the recovery of the knowledge of one's intrinsic value (inherent worth and dignity) as well as of relationality to others.

e. Freire's pedagogy is developed as an educational practice that restores soul. (His language is that education as praxis is a process that humanizes.) We could say that the purpose of education is the salvation of souls; but the salvation of souls is not the release of souls from this world---it is the release of souls *in* this world. ["The purpose of religion is to allow us to unmask all the false faces of the world. The purpose of education is salvation. It is the release of the soul *in this world*."]]

¹ Richard Shaull, *Heralds of a New Reformation The Poor of South and North America* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985)

f. Freire's concept of "education as the practice of freedom" always involves profound trust in human beings, in radical trust (as compared to despair).

- The first thing the educator does is work hard to discover the "thematics of the situation" by which he means is to pay attention to what's going on. Paying attention to situations in which people find themselves begins with the process of dialogue.

- The second step--posing the question--embodies the grasping of hope. The question cannot be arbitrary, but must be motivated by humanistic concerns and grasps a hope. For example, if you lose historical consciousness, you are losing part of your connectedness in the world; and if you lose this connection, you also lose body and human agency, which produces dehumanization. So to lose historical consciousness is a loss of what it means to be human-to receive history in a conscious, critical, and responsive way-a way that connects human beings to their world. This is the humanistic concern. There is also a hope that comes in asking: what do we need to do to regain historical consciousness. The hope that is grasped is that it is possible to be restored to this dimension of the self and the pursuit of how the hope can be fulfilled.

- The third step is student and teacher become co-investigators into the problem posed. This means that Freire understands that the teacher does not have the answer to the question, but that in helping to formulate the question in confidence that the answer can be found. The teacher is the educational leader, but one who works side-by-side with the student-mediated by the world as they confront it together. Teacher, student, and the community all bring resources to the gathering and investigating the problem and its solutions. In taking the actions, the "ongoingness" of this process, more awareness is developed and new questions arrive. The result is that participants in this process become more alive, more engaged with the world. This is what he means by education as the practice of freedom-the transformation of culture in liberating and humanizing direction. In Freire's model then, educational practice is not preparation for, but is itself social engagement and humanization

Freire's method in steps:

- Pay attention. We have lost historical consciousness of Unitarian Universalism.

- Pose a question or problem (What do we need to do in our Unitarian Universalist movement to regain historical consciousness?)

- Investigate the question

- Find the answer

- Act on the answers.

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES: *THE NINE INTELLIGENCES*

Howard Gardner claims that all human beings have multiple intelligences that can be nurtured and strengthened, or ignored or weakened.

He says each individual has nine intelligences:

VERBAL-LINGUISTIC INTELLIGENCE

Well-developed verbal skills and sensitivity to the sounds, meanings and rhythms of words

MATHEMATICAL-LOGICAL INTELLIGENCE

Ability to think conceptually and abstractly, and capacity to discern logical or numerical patterns.

MUSICAL INTELLIGENCE

Ability to produce and appreciate rhythm, pitch and timber.

VISUAL-SPATIAL INTELLIGENCE

Capacity to think in pictures, to visualize accurately and abstractly.

BODILY-KINESTHETIC INTELLIGENCE

Ability to control one's body movements and to handle objects skillfully.

INTERPERSONAL INTELLIGENCE

Capacity to detect and respond appropriately to the moods, motivations, and desires of others.

INTRAPERSONAL INTELLIGENCE

Capacity to be self-aware and in tune with inner feelings, values, beliefs and thinking processes.

NATURALIST INTELLIGENCE

Ability to recognize and categorize plants, animals and other objects in nature

EXISTENTIAL INTELLIGENCE

Sensitivity and capacity to tackle deep questions about human existence, such as the meaning of life, why do we die, and how did we get here.

John Westerhoff
Modes/Dimensions of Consciousness

Mode of Thinking

Active-Intellectual

Responsive-Intuitive

Characterized by

reflection
order
prediction
logical analysis
control

experience
chaos
surrender
mystery
imagination
surprise

Nurtured by

sciences
verbal expression

arts
non-verbal activities

Expressed through

signs
concepts
reflective action

symbols
myths
rituals

Based on John Westerhoff, "Values for Today's Children," from an informal address delivered in 1979, and published in *Religious Education*, the REA journal, vol. 75, #3, May, June, 1980.

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