Religious Education as a Faith Mystical Experience: Lonergan’s Religious Meaning and Ricoeur’s Narrative Configuration in Teaching Religious Education

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of St. Michael’s College and the Theological Department of the Toronto School of Theology in Partial Fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Theology Awarded by the University of St. Michael’s College

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2016

Abstract

Religious education can too easily be limited to memorization of doctrine and dogma and lessons whose importance is limited to the classroom setting. This method causes stagnancy of faith and intellect, the former of which is put aside in favour of achieving curricular goals. I propose that an understanding of religious education as a faith mystical activity grant both faith and intellect their full dues in the classroom. Through a narrative dialogue between the educator and the students, the transformative value of the mystical experience becomes central to religious education. Curricula maintains its classroom importance and through it, faith development is offered to students in an authentic and respectful manner. Through research into authors such as Bernard Lonergan, Paul Ricoeur and Raimon Panikkar, I offer that faith is not limited to doctrinal content, but must be critically encountered in the narrative space of possibilities. While the scope of this thesis paper is limited to Ontario Catholic Schools due to its limited length, the results and conclusions are of use for any who intend to offer meaningful, faithful and authentic religious education.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................................................... ii

Introduction .................................................................................................................................................................. 1

Chapter 1: Lonergan’s Interiorly Differentiated Model and Religious Understanding ................................................. 6

  Introduction ............................................................................................................................................................. 6
  Knowing .................................................................................................................................................................. 8
  Meaning .............................................................................................................................................................. 10
  Art ...................................................................................................................................................................... 12

Chapter 2: Paul Ricoeur’s Narrative Configuration as a Tool for Religious Education ............................................. 26

  Introduction .......................................................................................................................................................... 26
  The Threefold Mimesis ........................................................................................................................................ 28
  Apprehending the Narrative .................................................................................................................................. 30
    Symbols and Dreams ........................................................................................................................................... 30
    Metaphor .......................................................................................................................................................... 32
    Narrative .......................................................................................................................................................... 35

Chapter 3 The Faith Mystical Experience in Education ............................................................................................ 45

  Introduction ........................................................................................................................................................ 45
  Faith ................................................................................................................................................................. 46
  Mystical Experience ......................................................................................................................................... 52
  In the Classroom ................................................................................................................................................. 56
  Curricula, Evaluation and the Mystical Experience ............................................................................................... 58
  Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................................ 60

Conclusion ............................................................................................................................................................... 62

Bibliography ............................................................................................................................................................ 67
Introduction

In the context of the Ontario Religious Education curriculum, religious education is a catechetical practice complementary to “family and parish-based education.” The effort is to demonstrate the harmony of curricula and Catechesis so that the “content of faith … and methodological principles…” may be incorporated into the schools. The aim of the curricular document is then to develop the “skills necessary for lifelong learning and spiritual development…” and “…to provide… students with authentic, meaningful and relevant courses of instruction…” As such, the goal seems clear: By establishing doctrinal truths in a pedagogical practice, students will be equipped to continue their spiritual and intellectual journey. There are, however, matters of concern, such as the fact that religious knowledge seems to be reduced to learning the contents of faith. If this is so, then religious knowledge is mere adherence to given rules and doctrines. Furthermore, this same preface describes the importance of spiritual development and contents of faith, yet never addresses faith development. Faith, which Raimon Panikkar places at the very constitutive level of the human being, irreducible to either ethics or intellect, is the very drive which urges the human being to continuously transcend itself. To Panikkar, intellectualizing or moralizing faith runs the risk of presenting a mere imitation of the original ontic drive. Faith consists not of an intellectual adherence, but of a continuous vocational transcendence. As such, religious knowledge must be a greater, if more humble endeavor than only learning Catechesis and doctrine, it must be the aim of understanding how God’s love urges us to reach beyond the realms of reason and towards the unknown.

2Ibid.
3Ibid.
5Panikkar, “Faith - A Constitutive Dimension of Man.”
This unknown is the space, or non-space, where all is new, where intellect, affectivity and ethics are transformed or reoriented. Its horizon is marked by a student’s own faith experience and understanding of religion as well as that of every other journeying person the student encounters, including the educator. As such, the interaction of educator and student can be understood as a faith mystical activity, a development of intersubjectivity and religious knowledge in an ongoing process that aims for the goals of authentic education and spiritual development established by the curriculum cited above. The Catechetical and doctrinal contents then become tools and vocabulary aids or, to continue with the imagery of horizons, a lighthouse guiding student and educator alike. In this context, where faith cannot be reduced to intellectual or moral stances, where religious knowledge means something greater knowing the contents of faith, theoretical language cannot suffice in expressing the depth of meaning, often paradoxical, of religious education. As such, I propose that narrative language is the best linguistic form we have to synthesize the necessary theory of religious education and the equally necessary experience of faith in the pedagogical context. For example, we may turn to the Gospel stories themselves which, taken individually, are a narrative of Jesus as he lived and Jesus as he was understood by given communities. Taken as a whole, the four Gospels offer such a synthesis as proposed above for teaching generations of Christians. Yet these stories must always be read with a reaffirmation of who Jesus is for the reader. Narrative language continues then, to be the tool of religious education as a faith mystical experience.

*Gravissimum Educationis* states that “…indeed the Catholic school, while it is open, as it must be, to the situation of the contemporary world, leads its students to promote efficaciously the good of the earthly city and also prepares them for service in the spread of the Kingdom of God, so that by leading an exemplary apostolic life they become, as it were, a saving leaven in
the human community.” (7,25) If indeed religious education must aim for the apostolic development of students, then it must be done in realization of the Spirit’s work in developing religious knowledge. Just as the Gospels are the result of an encounter with the Risen Christ, so too is an educator’s and a student’s own narrative in religious education.

In order to develop this narrative of the faith mystical experience in a pedagogical setting, I will draw from Bernard Lonergan’s interiorly differentiated model in an effort to recognize the full importance of intelligence in a religious education setting, though contrasted by artistic and religious meaning. Knowing God’s love will be the focus of the first chapter, as an authentic course of instruction that considers faith development should be given by one who has attained such knowledge. Otherwise, the religious education classroom puts faith aside and it will appear “hypocritical to the one who does not think that he has faith.”

Following the establishment of a structure for human intelligence and ultimately religious knowledge as elements for an authentic course of religious education, there comes the matter of relevance. André Fossion, author of Dieu toujours recommencé states in an educational video that “Today, when we observe the contemporary world, we find it obvious that God is neither evident to the intellect and he is not necessary to living. This is the experience, anyway, of our contemporaries.” Fossion’s intent is not to discourage the viewer, as he goes on to propose that “We can have a relevant discourse on God that is neither about the necessary nor the evident. It

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6 Gravissimum Educationis is the Second Vatican Council’s “Declaration on Christian Education.” It’s intent is to cement the importance of faith development in all systems of education, either explicitly in Catholic schools, or through personal ministry and example through actions in other schools.
8 André Fossion, Dieu Toujours Recommencé (Bruxelles: Lumen Vitae, 1993).
9 André Fossion, Dieu Désirable. Proposition de La Foi et Initiation, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vAqU-Xw8D40. Aujourd’hui quand on regarde le monde contemporain, bien, on voit bien que Dieu n’est pas à la fois évident pour l’intelligence et il n’est pas nécessaire pour vivre. C’est l’expérience en tous les cas de nos contemporains.
is of the order of the reasonable and the desirable.”

In an effort to make the discourse on religious knowledge and the faith mystical experience relevant, I turn in chapter 2 to Paul Ricoeur’s phenomenology of language. According to this author, there in every person, at the ontic level, the desire to communicate one’s self or identity as a developing story. The person lives many experiences and through these, gains understanding on how to be. One such experience is the faith mystical experience, which to express, to make relevant and desirable, requires much more than theoretic or dogmatic language. Narrative language, with its symbolic and metaphorical components, allows the speaker to fill a story with greater sense than that expressed in the literal definitions of the words. It is akin the artistic meaning in Lonergan’s thought, where structures and theoretical concepts may be found in the story, yet the meaning of the tale cannot be reduced to these elements. Therefore, the second chapter will analyze Ricoeur’s thought on semiotic, metaphorical and narrative language, that which it seeks to express and its relevant components of events, characters and organization. These are the tools that a religious educator may use in making matters of religious knowledge more desirable.

In the third and final chapter, I aim to synthesize the elements of the first and second chapters with the concept of faith from Raimon Panikkar. In doing so, I will address a final point from the Ontario Religious Education Curriculum. Where it states that the curricular document “firmly places all catechesis in the context of evangelization…” I would add that religious education as a faith mystical experience is necessarily an evangelizing action, with the understanding of evangelization as the process of discovering together with others, traces of the

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Resurrected Christ who is always ahead of those seeking him. In this sense, religious education is a continuous discourse, an exchange of stories where all parties must grow and where students must be met at their level of intellectual, affective and spiritual lives. Christ always leads the conversation, which is a dynamic road to the faith mystical experience. Without this evangelical aspect, religious education as catechesis becomes the idea of giving to others what they do not already have. To Panikkar, this would be preposterous, as faith, to him, is a human invariant. Simply put, “Faith is absolutely necessary for salvation. Without faith, man cannot reach God, because it is, by definition, the bridge that links us to him...If faith is a gift from God, nothing prevents it from being a universal gift from God to men just as nature and existence are.” Religious education as a faith mystical experience is a recognition of this ontic value of faith and of evangelization as an intersubjective space in which to move towards the resurrected Christ. In order to better develop this constitutive factor of the faith mystical experience, the third chapter will place Lonergan and Ricoeur’s theories within the context of Panikkar’s definitions of faith and mysticism. To Panikkar, faith is the source of our drive for inquiry, of our desire to express our stories. In the classroom setting, this involves a critical approach where theories and ideas are developed, criticized, accepted or discarded not in a singular effort on the part of each student, but in a shared and dynamic approach. Evangelization occurs in this shared format and narrative expression is the voice of the educator in evangelizing with his or her students. The mystical experience then becomes an increasingly desirable end, either consciously or subconsciously, as it moves away from a simple intellectual effort or adherence and becomes a source for overcoming alienation.

12 Fossion, Dieu Désirable. Proposition de La Foi et Initiation. Le message angélique dit, « Il n’est pas ici, il vous précède en Galilée, c’est là que vous le verrez. » Ça c’est le mouvement de l’évangélisation. C’est allez vers les autres et découvrir avec les autres dans leurs propres vies les traces du Ressuscité qui nous précède.

Chapter 1 : Lonergan’s Interiorly Differentiated Model and Religious Understanding

INTRODUCTION

The primary drive of an educational system is to “make good learners.” Bernard Lonergan dedicated much time to understanding how one learns, and his theory of human interiorly differentiated operations addresses the process of treating thoughts, and serves as a model for students of any age in most pedagogical settings. Lonergan works from the premise that all persons want to know; this is what he calls the unrestricted desire to know. He writes, “Deep within us all… there is a drive to know, to understand, to see why, to discover the reason, to find the cause, to explain… the fact of inquiry is beyond all doubt.”14 This can be most simply exemplified by the toddler asking ‘why’ to new information: “In the human child [the light and drive of intelligent inquiry] is a secret wonder that, once the mystery of language has been unraveled, rushes forth in a cascade of questions.”15 Thankfully, we keep questioning as we grow older: we are subjects seeking to understand the object of our inquiry.

This chapter seeks to draw the link between the unrestricted desire to know and the faith mystical experience by proposing the possibility of religious knowledge as something different than doctrinal knowledge. To Lonergan, both religious inquiry and an artistic drive are tied to human being.16 Religious inquiry is the fact that every question stream will eventually ask

15Ibid., 3:197.
questions related to, or about God – Lonergan thus says that when we seek to know, we seek the transcendental value of the God that surpasses us. Ultimately, our language fails to capture transcendent experience, and we turn to artistic expression where our language (vocabulary, theory, and analogy) fails. In art, we can both express, and appreciate, that which is beyond the medium itself; the transcendent value of art. Lonergan’s development of art is extensive and it is through an appreciation of artistic meaning that we encounter the “plus,” or the “epiphanic”; that which surpasses the image or the representation. Thus, while religious inquiry and the artistic drive of humanity seek to capture what is beyond, they are closely related to the unrestricted desire to know that Lonergan places at the heart of the human creature.

For the religious educator, this also places importance on the freedom of artistic expression in the classroom, both in communicating lessons and allowing students to communicate appreciation and understanding. To Lonergan, the person who is learning, the knower, experiences new data, seeks to understand it, judge the truth of his new premise, and decides or acts according to the knowledge gained - this is basis of his interiorly differentiated model. The depths to which we pursue in inquiring new data or ideas correlates to the realm of meaning in which we are operating, which Lonergan names common sense, theory, and interior differentiation. On analyzing Lonergan’s work on religion and its implications for pedagogy, it becomes apparent that a fourth realm of meaning is required – John Dadosky thus inserts a fourth realm – that of religious meaning. Religious meaning is the recognition of God, the created order, and the abundant love which connects us all, which thus transforms all operations – how we experience, understand, judge and act will now be in relation to God. This has profound implications for religious education, for rather than teaching facts and data about a religion, a

dogmatic approach, the intent should be to provide experiences which convey religious meaning, equipping students to appreciate the religious meaning in all things.

**KNOWING**

As Bernard Lonergan’s theory on artistic and religious meaning are the eventual result of his development of interiorly differentiated consciousness, it is appropriate to introduce a succinct outline of this theory of human interiority presented in *Insight* and more briefly in *Method in Theology*.\(^\text{19}\) Though there is a vast amount of material to consider, this section will be limited to presenting the broad lines of the interiorly differentiated model of the “Knower”. Lonergan divides the process of learning how to learn, or knowing what one does when they are knowing, into three fundamental levels of human activity; experience, understanding and judgment, with the fourth level, decision, sublating the act of knowing.\(^\text{20}\) These levels occur within every person. Lonergan prefers to refer to the person as the subject. Intentionally operating along these levels to their end is what makes one a “knower.”

So what is it to know - what is one doing when one is seeking knowledge and understanding? Lonergan writes that human knowledge is “cyclic and cumulative”, as his model is one of progressive learning, where the completion of the four activities leaders the knower to new perceptions, or new experiences, at which point the knower restarts the four stages of learning. It “is cumulative… in the coalescence of judgments into the context named knowledge…”\(^\text{21}\) This model is universal in that it applies to student and educator alike - it begins with one’s experience of the world.

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\(^{19}\)Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 84.

\(^{20}\)Ibid., 83.

Human Experience is the first level and it begins with the senses; it is empirical data.\textsuperscript{22} Hot is hot when felt by the hand, “tall” or perhaps more fairly, “taller than” is a matter of perception of objects as they are in relation to the subject. We constantly receive data from our surroundings, and can filter input, or select datum, either consciously or unconsciously. For example, I can choose to ignore a minor disruption outside to focus on the lecture my professor is giving. That on which one chooses to focus is that which the knower \textit{intends} to learn.

Lonergan marks the moment when data stands out from habitual patterns of experience, that ‘Eureka’ moment, or the moment of realization of significance, as the moment of ‘\textit{insight}’. Insight generally produces an idea that may or may not be true, which I will herein refer as a potential truth – in this case ‘fire is hot’ or ‘taller is better’.

A responsible subject will then pursue inquiry to establish whether their potential truth is accurate or not. This inquiry is Lonergan’s second level of coming to know, ‘understanding’. For our examples, relevant questions may include: Is all fire hot? Are there different kinds of fire? Do I perceive hot differently than others? Are all tall people better? These questions may give rise to secondary inquiry: What is better? The pursuit of understanding is a balance between the availability of the answers and the constraint of time available to the knower.

The eventual goal of understanding is to be equipped to complete the third stage of coming to know, judging the accuracy of the potential truth.\textsuperscript{23} This is the level of reasonability, and one who is intent on finding actual truth must be changed by their knowledge gained. This may involve a process of revision and correction of existing knowledge beyond the currently analyzed ‘potential truth’. The counterpoint of the responsible learner may be found in the

\textsuperscript{22}R. Jeffrey Grace, “The Transcendental Method of Bernard Lonergan,” lonergan.concordia.ca (n.d.).
\textsuperscript{23}Ibid.
rejection of the new truth, ignoring the knowledge attained for the relative or perceived safety of ignorance. For example, one may accept that fire is indeed hot, but that taller is not necessarily better.

Lonergan’s final level, that of decision, grasps the answer of judgment and applies it to one’s life, both intentionally and habitually. As such, one’s habitual patterns are changed as knowledge gained promotes our being to experience and understand differently, more distinctly, than we did before. Fire being hot leads one to act cautiously around an open flame, to avoid contact with heated surface or even to wear shoes before walking on a paved surface on a hot, sunny day. Rejecting the idea that taller is better, one may not promote concepts of height-based superiority.

MEANING

Lonergan proposes that humans function within three different realms of meaning, which have as their source, the interiorly differentiated operations. These realms are that of common sense whose source is experience, of theory whose source is understanding, and interiorly differentiated consciousness whose source is judgment. These realms are hierarchical, and Lonergan poses that some persons will become stuck, and never advance to higher levels.24 Thus, in the context especially of religious education, it is the role of the educator, aware of the following realms, to invite students to go beyond their current operations and reach new realms of meaning and new horizons.

Common Sense is the move from subjective meaning as gleaned from experience, to inter-subjective meaning, that is, shared meaning and expectations. “The genesis of common meaning is an ongoing process of communication, of people coming to share the same cognitive,

constitutive, and effective meanings.” When inquiring about hot in the realm of common sense, we might learn that the stove is hot and we are not to touch it, without understanding the reason or mechanics of heat or the stove. Just as the first operational level of knowing occurs in every day experiences such as sights, sounds, tastes and even dreams, and not all input is intended inquiry, the first level of meaning in human operations is common sense, that is to say, operations that need not be constantly questioned and reviewed by all operators. Common sense includes social norms, accepted conventions, and regular processes we are expected to follow in order to function socially.

It is not the aim of common sense meaning to define. Thus, in this realm of meaning, we can name hot objects or tall people without defining “heat” or “tall.” In order to define terms such as these, we move from the world of casual insights to the world of theory. Things are no longer understood as they relate to the self, or to the collective, but as they relate to themselves. Dadosky, quoting Lonergan, writes, “The transition from the first to the second stage of meaning is brought about by a systematic exigence …” That systematic exigence is the intellectual requirement that urges a human being to distinguish operations and systems for developing theories in order to best express objects as relating to themselves.

The third realm of meaning is that of interior differentiated consciousness. “One turns from the outer realms of common sense and theory to the appropriation of one’s own interiority, one’s subjectivity, one’s operations, their structure, their norms, their potentialities.” In this realm of meaning ideas, values, ethics and the way we come to them are differentiated so that we may better arrive to our ends. When one knows what one is doing, one does it better.

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25Ibid., 357.
28Lonergan, Method in Theology, 83.
Notably, while one may work at any realm of meaning one has attained, it is not possible to operate on multiple stages at once, which is important to the educator. Marc Smith best summarizes the reasoning:

Quite simply, the reason why one cannot be in more than one realm at any one time is because the conscious acts which are the sources of meaning cannot be reduced to one another, as we have seen. For to experience is not to understand; to judge is not to decide. To operate at one level of consciousness is not the same as operating at other levels. In other words, the realms of meaning are as distinct as the acts which are their sources.29

The educator has the responsibility of communicating with the students accordingly, so that if they are still operating within the realm of common sense, the realm of theory must become relevant and desirable to them so that they may advance accordingly. This desirability of meaning will find later echo in the desire to express being in the second chapter.

The importance of meaning for the religious pedagogue can be further developed in Lonergan’s theory on symbols and art. Just as the interiorly differentiated model presents strict divisions of human intellectual operations, art functions as a liberation from intelligence. That is not to say that it is an unintelligent activity. Art, rather, has the ability to symbolize, to condense meaning and to surpass it, so that one may potentially ever develop their appreciation of any given piece.

**ART**

Lonergan says that “Art… presents the beauty, the splendor, the glory, the majesty, the ‘plus’ that is in things and that drops out when you say that the moon is just earth and the clouds are just water.”30 In making present the compilation of sense, tied to feelings of grandeur of the represented, the subject may feel marvel at the sights and sounds of his surroundings, freed as he

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30Smith, “Religious Language and Lonergan’s Realms of Meaning.”
or she is from their habitual meaning. Returning to a realm of theory, the wonder may evaporate like so much water. Lonergan further recognizes, by his above statement, how the “plus” as described above is that which art finds. It is a realm of meaning where vastness of sense abounds. Thus does one who stands before a rich, green forest feel the awe of Creation, whereas the forester notes the trees that need to be catalogued for the sake of preservation.

Lonergan’s chapter on art in *Topics in Education* is sometimes difficult to reconcile with his brief and underwritten work on the symbol found in *Method in Theology*. Though the two are differentiated, it seems that a mode of expression such as art that makes so much use of symbolic meaning should flow more organically from the symbol. Randall Rosenberg says, “Art communicates the dramatic artistry of human living though the language of the symbol.”31 It does so through the use of patterns and surprise.

In experiencing art, one experiences patterns that give sense to the particulars, like a musical score made up of individual notes, and those patterns may lead the subject to ponder. “Just as our … desire to know ultimately reveals our transcendent orientation within the intellectual pattern of experience, the artistic experience can reveal our orientation to the divine within the aesthetic and dramatic patterns.”32 To Rosenberg, Lonergan’s interpretation of art is then closely linked to a sort of sacramental meaning that goes beyond the object and operates before the intellectual pattern of experience. Symbolic meaning, as a dense core, is highly valued in the artistic expression or experience. There is kinship between art and the faith mystical experience. One need only turn to the poetry of St. John of the Cross and the density of sense therein. Rosenberg also says, “Art explores epiphanic events and opens up fields of

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32 Ibid., 148.
inquiry which might have otherwise been ignored....”  

Braxton’s main issue throughout his own article is that since Lonergan’s approach proposes a progressive and ever more distinct advancement in the realms of consciousness, the place of symbols in hermeneutics is limited to undifferentiated understanding of a thing that can be later expressed methodologically. Therefore, the symbol is relegated to an undifferentiated or synthetic core of meaning that one who has gone beyond the realm of common sense and everyday language will leave behind. Would art then go beyond the symbol? It seems that to Lonergan, the answer is yes. It does so by liberating human consciousness from habitual sense experience and intelligence, according to Glen Hughes.

Hughes’ focus on the liberation aspect of art according to Lonergan stresses the discovery of the novel in the liberation from experience, yet more importantly, it is the liberation from intelligence that contrasts his work from Rosenberg’s who places art pre-intellectually. Hughes accentuates that “We rely in a routinized way on our own interpretation of things... [of] new experiences.”  

Though this routine approach functions well as an “automatic behavior,” Hughes argues for the novel, even bizarre ways in which we can be liberated from this type of intelligence by art that shocks us. This, in turn, “re-enlives intelligence”  

This wondrous effect of art might echo the wonder, the fascination, of the faith mystical experience. As a matter of fact, Hughes adds that art liberates the subject from intelligence as the “constriction and oppression of consciousness that results from a desacralized sense of reality...”  

Clouds can be

33Ibid., 149.
35Ibid.
36Ibid., 996.
37Ibid.
more than water, they can be representations of the shapes people ascribe to them. Stars can be the twinkling in the night that prompts a wish from a child.

Whereas art may simply be experienced, its liberating aspect, as well as its invitation to meditation, clearly play important roles at all level of human operations. The sacramental meaning mentioned above ties art closely to the mystical activity. Produced from an insight into something great, into a certain ‘plus’ and belonging to a level far more obscure than the accepted truths of common sense, the meaning of art is one that may reflect understanding in the fact that art questions, yet it does so in a very different manner than the ordering of relevant questions.

The aesthetic and the artistic are symbolic. Free experience and free creation are prone to justify themselves by an ulterior purpose or significance. Art then becomes symbolic, but what is symbolized is obscure. It is an expression of the human outside the limits of adequate intellectual formulation or appraisal.\(^{38}\)

The manner of art’s questioning is not set in the intellectual pattern of experience. Rather than ponder the nature of a thing, it wonders by shapes and colours and sounds and movement that seem to please or displease the subject. Art is a series of experiential patterns, and as Lonergan states, “the pattern of the perceived is also the pattern of the perceiving, and the pattern of the perceiving is an experiential pattern. But all perceiving is a selecting and organizing. Precisely because the perceived is patterned, it is easily perceived… So verse makes information memorable.”\(^{39}\) For the educator, this promotes the use of artistic expression in relating the faith mystical experience, as will be the focus in the next chapter’s examination of narrative. Quoting Gerard Manley Hopkins in an effort to then express that which art liberates us to, Hughes writes, “Art doesn’t instruct; it says ‘taste and see.’”\(^{40}\) Art reminds us of our own transcendental value as well as the limits of our intellectual horizon. We are free to wonder, to be surprised and to


\(^{40}\) Hughes, “Lonergan and Art,” 997.
experience things differently. Art is not, however, the instructor, it is the call to freedom. It is not the mystical experience, it is a revelation of our orientation to the divine. Art provides the tool to the educator, yet, just as the intellectual meaning and model of understanding is limited by its inability to fully comprehend God, art is limited to surprise and pattern. Artistic expression must encounter religious knowledge if it is to orient itself ever more intently towards the mysterious and the epiphanic. A sacred sense of reality finds even greater meaning in the divine.

**RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE**

In the very first few pages of the fourth chapter of *Method in Theology*, Bernard Lonergan outlines the unrestricted and disinterested desire to know as ultimately leading to questions of religion. This anthropology of religion ultimately links the interior differentiated model to an exterior realm, or in Lonergan’s terminology, ever greater horizons. He presents the following as an example that a human who is not running from understanding or restricted in his or her questioning will ultimately come to the question of God:

Does there or does there not necessarily exist a transcendent, intelligent ground of the universe? Is that ground or are we the primary instance of moral consciousness… Such is the question of God. It is not a matter of image or feeling, of concept or judgment. It is a question… It follows that, however much religious or irreligious answers differ… still at their root there is the same transcendental tendency of the human spirit that questions, that questions without restriction, that questions the significance of its own questioning, and so comes to the question of God.  

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RELIGIOUS MEANING

The matter of religion and religious value emerges from the driving curiosity of the human spirit. It is not a matter to say that because we ask these questions, there is necessarily a belief-basis on the part of a person. It is better to say that religious questioning is a necessary and constitutive part of the human being. Rosenberg provides a concise explanation on the link between our desire to know and our desire to know God as “…the human desire to know is... natural insofar as the desires of the intellect are manifested in questions for understanding and judgment… and… it is transcendent insofar as the adequate object is \textit{ens}.\footnote{Ens is the latin word for “thing”, from the verb \textit{esse} which means to be. As such, the adequate object is being as the dynamic state of a thing.} Although the natural fulfillment is limited by a proportionate object, our desire to know is unlimited…”\footnote{Rosenberg, “Lonergan on the Transcendent Orientation of Art,” 172.}

We find in Lonergan’s work, such as his third chapter in \textit{Method in Theology}, that there are realms of meaning associated to the first three levels of interiorly differentiated consciousness. Those realms are common sense, the world of theory and the turn to the subject. We may also make a case for fourth-level operations as religiously differentiated operations. Dadosky argues that though Lonergan never made explicit a fourth stage of meaning, one can be derived, or rather, ventured, in consequent pattern with the previous three stages.\footnote{Dadosky, “Is There a Fourth Stage of Meaning.”} A fourth realm of meaning would naturally imply a fourth level of operation. Marc Smith states that “acts of deciding give rise to the realm of transcendence, in that through value choices one creates oneself and one's world, and enters that dimension where values may be transvalued by the encounter with absolute value, the divine.”\footnote{Smith, “Religious Language and Lonergan’s Realms of Meaning,” 123.}

Therefore, as Lonergan places religious value at the very heart of meaning and makes God the supreme illustration of loving so that God is love and vice versa, one is responsible to find a way to express that meaning. Furthermore, it is a love so unrestricted
either in depth or actuation that it shapes the horizon of the beloved, granting new depth to previous operations. Because values are transformed, the human will becomes oriented to the will of God, the order of the universe and therefore the order of the soul.\textsuperscript{46} One who respects this good implicitly wills the will of God\textsuperscript{47}. When Dadosky identifies the possibility of a fourth level of meaning in the mention of a “transcendental exigence” from Lonergan, he develops the matter as follows,

\begin{quote}
…the transcendental exigence gives rise to religiously differentiated consciousness—a consciousness that speaks to a person who is habituated into the dynamic state of being-in-love in an unrestricted manner…This unrestricted being-in-love is the basic fulfillment for which all human beings long whether their conscious intending occurs within the world of common sense, theory, interiority or some combination thereof.\textsuperscript{48}
\end{quote}

The affirmation of this stage of meaning implies a new turn in the intention and attention of the subject who is now in a state of being-in-love, an ontological as well as affective statement. This state of being influences all levels of previously understood value and attends to them differently, it influences the intent of being attentive, intelligent and responsible. Love is that which intends God beyond the intellectual patterns and does so cooperatively, that is to say with another.\textsuperscript{49} For the religious educator, this cooperative level is key for it is a recognition that his or her own work should be a combined human and Spirit action. As such, the students must be invited to enter a dialogue, a relationship with educator and each other so that this very cooperation be at the heart of religious education. When the educator discovers that “…the dynamic state of being-in-love in an unrestricted manner is sustained by a commitment on the part of the beloved…” he or she must, “[w]ithin the context of one’s faith tradition, … discern

\textsuperscript{47}Lonergan, \textit{Topics in Education}.
\textsuperscript{48}Dadosky, “Is There a Fourth Stage of Meaning,” 771.
the true spirit within it from the aberrant or outmoded teachings within that tradition…”

Religious education then becomes more than a matter of doctrinal memorization or even a science on the subject of religion, it becomes a long-term responsibility to “…distinguish clearly between the authentic riches of the tradition and the distortions of it through human bias and sin.” Hence may one continue to use doctrine in lesson preparation, but it must be through the scope of being-in-love.

PROGRESSIVE CONVERSION

The above section illustrates the importance of a fourth realm of meaning as extracted from Lonergan’s work on religion for the religious educator’s responsibility, both as a personal attainment and as a long-term goal for the students. The conversion present in fourth-level meaning is not generally one of immediate and complete grasp, as can be exemplified by the constant misunderstanding of the Apostles throughout the Gospels. While there are exceptional cases of religious conversion, such as Paul on the road to Damascus, in most cases, it happens slowly and over time. Our own apostolic calling may follow a similar pattern, as likely will be the case of a student. We follow a path towards understanding and eventually being in love that is drawn through interiorly differentiated operations and realms of meaning. Tad Dunne writes of Lonergan that “It seems more plausible that he recognized a dialectical difference between people who let their heart take the lead and people who do not (affective conversion). And among those whose heart leads, some let their love of God take priority over everything else (religious conversion).” The import of this analysis of Dunne’s in the context of religious education is a sort of progressive conversion of the heart that begins with the affective and may lead to the religious. The cooperative nature of love comes to light. Evidently, Lonergan’s work

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50Dadosky, “Is There a Fourth Stage of Meaning,” 778.
51Ibid., 779.
opens the door to religious education as a faith mystical experience by differentiating love from the four levels of intellectual human operation, meaning and even ethics. There is an innate understanding that religion cannot be taught, say, in the way of mathematics with a clear, linear and progressive development. Instead, the intellectual relies on the affective and eventually the possibility of the religious. That possibility and intersubjectivity is where the faith mystical experience lies. Thus, when Raimon Panikkar says a “possibility that the encounter of religions might be a religious dialogue, on the level of faith even, rather than a merely rational dispute...” we may understand that religious education as a faith mystical activity is the opportunity to let the acts and expressions of one’s faith move through our hearts in dialogue.  

Is there a possibility, then, of expressing being loved in a completely unrestricted manner to others in a relevant and engaging pedagogy? While this is largely a matter for the following chapter, we may find some clues to the answer in Lonergan’s theory. First, what kind of love is being shared in religious conversion? Dunne proposes it is the free, selfless love of agape and that, “to understand the Christian agape, we do better to compare it to the mature versions of human love than to its wondrous beginnings. It is not simply a mutual love; it is an overflowing.” The overflowing of love is not limited the images of the racing heart, it is an active and engaging endeavor of sharing and modeling, of charity, of gratuity. Thus what is felt in the faith mystical experience can be retained, remembered, more deeply felt as the subject grows in maturity and moves to higher realms of meaning. The communication of this love as a

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54 The Latin prefix dia can be translated to the English word ‘through’, while logos can be translated as ‘word’ or ‘verb.’ Thus, a dialogue can be understood as words that move through or between interlocutors.
55 Dunne, “Being in Love.”
relevant object lies in the authenticity of the religious educator and his or her own willingness to erase themselves before God.\textsuperscript{56}

As love is an ontological accomplishment to all interior operations, it is also a dynamic state and its communication lies in a regular reaffirmation of faith, a faith which grows in dialogue less it become stagnant. Dunne quotes from Lonergan’s *Mission and Spirit* article, “‘What, in terms of human consciousness is the transition from the natural to the supernatural?’ He finds the link in a ‘passionateness of being.’”\textsuperscript{57} The subject that is in love needs an interpersonal relationship, something which experience, understand and judging do not, as these only require an object. Love requires an Other as it must be shared and exchanged to abound. On this matter, Dadosky develops a strong argument in his article *Is There a Fourth Stage of Meaning* about both a horizontal and vertical alterity. When meditating the question he notes the following,

\begin{quote}
I suspect that this movement from presence to oneself as knower to presence to the Other through mutual self-mediation is consonant with a work by Paul Ricoeur titled Oneself as Another. In this text… Ricoeur argues that there is a philosophical sense of alterity inherent in the subject’s consciousness, a sense in which the person is present to oneself as another.\textsuperscript{58}
\end{quote}

Recognizing this link and embracing it is the second clue to communicating this love in a pedagogical setting. This realization is what leads to the possibility of religious knowledge as something greater than knowledge of religion.

\textsuperscript{56}A theme in mysticism is the erasing of the ego, the concept of the self as a subject desiring desire. Thus, a religious educator striving for authenticity is one who would let, as the expression says, “God shine through.” The transparency of the self before God is the recognition of God as greater than the subject. 
\textsuperscript{57}Dunne, “Being in Love,” 3. 
\textsuperscript{58}Dadosky, “Is There a Fourth Stage of Meaning,” 772.
RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE AND PEDAGOGY

The term religious knowledge may be confused to mean a space where faith and beliefs are confused for knowledge. This argument, as proposed by Mill\(^59\), is partially refuted by T.J. Mawson in the same referenced article and found to be explicitly refutable with a recognition of the turn to the subject.\(^60\) Knowledge of interior differentiated operations allows for a clear division between believing and knowing. Belief is the expression of one’s faith, while knowledge is the result experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding. David Carr will argue for a sort of wisdom truth found in classic religious texts, he notes that “…while the meaning and truth of religious narratives is not – or at least not primarily – literal meaning and truth, we may nevertheless understand such narratives and claims to exhibit significant moral, spiritual and metaphysical meaning and/or truth…”\(^61\) Though Carr begins to demonstrate an understanding of religious value, his own claims seem limited to the third realm of meaning, while not rising to fourth realm as proposed by Dadosky. As such, his argument on religious education becomes limited by an uncritical universalist alterity, one that equates all religion; “the great religious narratives – including Genesis, the Bhagavad Gita and tales of the Buddha as well as Christian Gospels – may be considered of universal moral and spiritual significance in much the way that Aristotle took great poetry to be.”\(^62\) The issue is not that his claim is untrue, for certainly one may find universal truths in all the above-mentioned texts. Yet he does not write about the mysterious or mystical aspects of those texts, making them more than simple ethical or wisdom stories. It is by bringing his thought into fourth-level operations that one may finally glean the meaning of religious knowledge. Following the progression of meaning from


\(^62\)Ibid., 164.
common sense to theoretical to interiorly differentiated knowledge, one may then speak of religious knowledge. Not as something separate from faith or belief, but as the intentionality change brought about by conversion at every level. A person who knows he or she is loved by God and who knows they are a being-in-love has gained religious knowledge. The educator who recognizes this knowledge and who specializes in theological matters is well-equipped to treat religious education as a faith mystical activity. In this line of thought, Patricia Sullivan writes,

[Lonergan’s] placement of conversion at the center of the theological enterprise, with religious conversion highest, can be seen to make transmitting the faith the work of the Holy Spirit rather than of the theologian, yet work occurring when the theologian, in grace, is, or is open to, living the faith…even in teaching… to students who do not share the faith.  

The acceptance of the work of the Holy Spirit at the core of religious education, paired with the practical aspects of pedagogy and theology as disciplines offers an authenticity to the students that Lonergan calls for. “The message announces what Christians are to believe, what they are to become, what they are to do.” This three-part differentiation in action is paralleled by a three-part differentiation of meaning. “To communicate the Christian message is to lead another to share in one’s cognitive, constitutive, effective meaning.” Lonergan’s point is that the communicator must exemplify all three aspects of meaning constituent of the Christian message, that the cognitive meaning be known, the constitutive meaning be lived and the effective meaning practiced, less the communication become inauthentic, hollow. The importance of this message, which is at the base of religious knowledge, is quite practical to Lonergan. He writes, “[t]he Christian message, incarnate in Christ… tells not only of God’s love but also of man’s sin. Sin is alienation from man’s authentic being, which is self-transcendence,

64Lonergan, Method in Theology, 362.
65Ibid.
and sin justifies itself by ideology."\textsuperscript{66} If sin is alienation from being, then love is the call to be, as previously described above. Authenticity of self is found in self-transcendence and so religious knowledge and the faith-mystical experience must be the beginning and the ends of religious education. The educator is responsible for knowing, living and acting accordingly and respecting the actions of the Holy Spirit in accompanying the students towards similar ends.

\textbf{CONCLUSION}

It has been the aim of this chapter to both justify religious education as a faith mystical activity while developing the possibility for religious knowledge as greater than knowledge about religion. Artistic meaning liberates the person from habitual meaning so that he or she may ask new and unexpected questions. These questions continue to occur as new meaning is found by revisiting the piece of art. Artistic meaning itself seeks to express the epiphanic beyond words. Equipped with this understanding, analogous to the faith mystical experience, the religious educator becomes better suited in using artistic expression in order to help students ultimately aim for fourth level meaning and operations. This ability of artistic expression to touch others intersubjectively, to be a gateway to the transcendence of the beautiful, is of great import for the religious educator who is limited by language in expressing a pre-intellectual experience. Where “a picture is worth a thousand words,” artistic meaning goes well beyond technical language and may lead to what Rudolf Otto calls an experience of the numinous.\textsuperscript{67} That experience is akin to an awareness of being loved, or as Lonergan puts it in the realm of religion, to \textit{being}-in-love. The knowledge of a being-in-love with another or an Other is one that recognizes his or her counterpart as exploring similar depths of being. It orients the intelligence towards greater transcendence, so that the student may indeed become the “saving

\textsuperscript{66}Ibid., 365.
leaven in the human community.” 68 The task of the religious educator is here to encourage further and further inquiry and judgments and further insights, to offer the possibility of God so as to let native curiosity ask more questions along that line. In the faith-mystical experience, the entire person’s intentions and attentions are reoriented, transformed as willing the will of God. Without this experience on the part of the educator, it becomes difficult to authentically teach religious education. The difficulty lies in the inability to acknowledge that the Holy Spirit is tilling the faith while the educator, touched by grace, is simply the one who would remain conscious of this occurrence and attempt to teach in consequence. So as to surpass some of the language difficulties in expressing the faith mystical experience, and thus making the matter of religious education relevant to the students, I now turn to Paul Ricoeur’s phenomenology of language.

Chapter 2 : Paul Ricoeur’s Narrative Configuration as a Tool for Religious Education

INTRODUCTION
The faith mystical experience, as a wholly transcendent event, can never be wholly expressed in words. Its mysterious nature piques our curiosity, while its immanent and transcendent aspects create a distance between occurrence and explanation. Recalling and wondering about the faith mystical experience helps us to expand the intellect’s horizons between the known and the unknown. In order to draw and express meaning from the faith mystical experience, we use the tool of language in its full spectrum, from the literal to metaphorical meaning. The added challenge in religious education then, is not only finding the language to grasp and explain the experience wrought in mystery and ambiguity, but to express it in such a way as to convey relevance and meaning to students who may or may not share a belief basis. Whereas Lonergan’s model provides a process of how we come to know, Paul Ricoeur provides a process of linguistic configuration and interpretation. Therefore, I turn to Ricoeur’s phenomenology of language, specifically of symbolic, metaphorical and narrative configuration, as a means of conveying the faith mystical experience authentically and relevantly. The advantage of narrative configuration in the religious education setting is its ability to surpass literal meaning and to express a greater reality that is shared between an educator, the story and the students. It allows for further depth of interpretation and appropriation on the part of the students, for the variety of experiences and learning ability will give rise to a greater variety of interpretation. This level of
intersubjectivity is of great importance in religious education, as proposed in the previous chapter.

Within the context of Paul Ricoeur’s threefold mimesis, language, especially metaphorical or narrative language, is approached as both intended meaning, inherent meaning and received meaning. Ricoeur’s development on linguistics can equip the pedagogue with the tools to exploit the full richness of language in expressing truth through symbol, metaphor and myth. The narrative nature of this expression offers a freedom in communication to move between the realms of meaning as described in the first chapter. Just as the faith mystical experience transcends words, so too must those words attempt to transcend literal meaning. This chapter will therefore aim to provide a framework for apprehending the form of narrative through symbolic meaning, metaphorical and narrative configuration. According to Ricoeur, these are the tools best suited to expressing what he calls “experiential truths.” First, the symbol itself will be analyzed and compared to Raimon Panikkar’s own definition. The two authors’ appreciation of symbolic language is similar, which is helpful in recognizing means of expressing religious education as a faith mystical experience in a pedagogical way. There will follow an examination of Ricoeur’s treatment of truth of experience where original experience can only be imitated by language. Narrative and metaphorical language serve to partially overcome this hurdle between experience and recounting, so as to acknowledge the fullness of the experience. The third and last section will then examine the structure of narrative configuration as the means for one to express the truths of experience. It will also seek to discern the advantage of such an approach in the pedagogical context in differentiating the “enunciation” from the “enounced.”
THE THREEFOLD MIMESIS

In Ricoeur’s analysis, a narrative is a dynamic interplay of the “threefold mimesis,” that is, between three levels of “representative activity” present in a story or a history. By representative activity is meant that any story, or any work of art from which a narrative may be extracted, attempts to represent either an author’s reality, a story’s own inherent reality, or a reader’s own different reality. These representations find their intelligibility in different reference points depending on whether they are mimesis$_1$, mimesis$_2$ or mimesis$_3$.

The first mimesis is the prefiguring act of any narrative, whether historical or fictional. In order to build a narrative, there must be a plot, and the plot is the imitation of action. There must also be a character, who is an imitation of ethical norms in a given time and place. Finally, as no narrative can truly be read in “real-time”, there is an imitation of time as experienced by the author or the character. Of particular importance to this thesis is that any narrative is a memory or imitation of an event. The truth of that event attempts to be translated into narrative form.

An educator using magisterial methods in dogmatic teaching is merely reaching a student’s intellect. Narrative language provides the means to reach the student at the very affective level of their being.

The second mimesis is the configuring act. At this level, the emplotment is key, as individual events or occurrences, otherwise disorganized, coalesce into a coherent whole. The coherence of these events adds a further dimension to the plot, that of intrigue or stakes. Rather than random actions taking place at random times, events unfurl for plausible and, more

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$^{70}$Ibid., 1:54–55.
importantly, possible reasons. Ricoeur writes that, “to follow a story is to move forward in the midst of contingencies and peripeteia under the guidance of an expectation that finds its “fulfilment” in the conclusion of the story.”\footnote{Ibid., 1:66. The term ‘peripeteia’ is used in narrative configuration as the events of a story that tie the trigger event to its penultimate climax. They serve to move the story forward in time as well as augment the narrative tension so as to better justify the climax.} The second mimesis can be understood as the story’s own ability to anticipate an end to its events. This apocalyptic aspect of the configuring act finds its relevance in many religious myths and books, such as the Bible’s movement from \textit{Genesis} to \textit{Apocalypse}, Norse tales of \textit{Ragnarok} and even tales of rebirth and reincarnation, for to start again, one must come to an end. It is the ability to conclude in a sense of fulfilment of events that give a narrative its poignancy and relevance.

Of the third mimesis, the refiguring action, Ricoeur states that it “marks the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the hearer or reader.”\footnote{Ibid., 1:71.} Such a hearer or reader, who can be understood in the context of this thesis as the student, invests his or her own understanding of surroundings, causal relationships, events, ethics and possibilities into the apprehension of a given narrative. The student will therefore find relevance when a story’s elements are marked by familiarity. Furthermore, they decode a story accordingly, and this is why ever greater sense can be gleaned from reading a story multiple times, or having it read by multiple people or multiple generations. If enough relevance or familiarity is perceived in the tale said or written, then the reader or hearer begins to make the tale his or her own. In the pedagogical setting, this is the real apprehension of value and understanding.
APPREHENDING THE NARRATIVE

In order to construct effective narrative in Ricoeur’s linguistic phenomenology, one begins with an understanding of the parts in order to eventually create a greater whole whose fullness of sense is the result of the interaction and interplay of these constituent parts. First of these parts, is the symbol, a singular object that is the focus of inquiry and analysis. The symbol is described as the semiotic staging ground that urges a person to further discovery of meaning by use of language. Second, one begins to interlace the symbols in order to create metaphorical meaning. Finally there comes the narrative configuration, the shaping and ordering of symbols and metaphor into the whole tale. Particular to the narrative configuration is the developing interplay between events, characters and operations.

SYMBOLS AND DREAMS

All narrative will make use of symbolic language in an effort to convey a greater multitude of meaning. Sébastien Bourgeois, in an effort to synthetically present Ricoeur’s many works on the matter, offers a general definition of the word symbol followed by Ricoeur’s more specific understanding. “The most general delineation of a symbol is that it is a sign… an expression which communicates meaning.” 73 The very lack of differentiation between sign in symbol is this basic definition urges Bourgeois to specify that “…not every sign is a symbol. What characterizes a sign as a symbol… is the… double intentionality, which the symbol conceals in its aim.” 74 This statement is in fact at the heart of much of Ricoeur’s thought. This theory of double intentionality proposes that language comes before philosophical development, that something must be expressed in order for it to be analyzed. The first intentionality is literal and one cannot distinguish the meaning of fruit from the food group. The second intentionality,

74Ibid., 236.
called the patent meaning, “is not given, except in the first.” The second level can only be found by delving into and beyond the literal meaning. Therefore, the fruit of one’s efforts is not necessarily an apple, yet the sense memory of sweetness and flavor of the apple help one understand how the fruit of labour is a positive end. A symbol, then, is that which can be understood literally and interpreted so as to reveal a second meaning. Furthermore, it is that very movement from the literal to the secondary meaning “that makes us share in the latent meaning and thus assimilates us to the symbolized.” Our shared desire to interpret the second intentionality of the symbol grants a further richness to the patent meaning, much in the same understanding of mimesis. In fact, one may draw a parallel with Panikkar’s sixth chapter in The Experience of God, entitled “A Discourse About a Symbol and not About a Concept.” In this chapter, he argues that the concept is that which is grasped as being univocal in meaning. A symbol, however, is a relationship between a subject and object and bears many meanings, neither universal, nor objective, and must be contemplated regularly. In a consideration similar to Ricoeur’s, Panikkar notes that “… language is not merely an instrument used to designate objects or to simply transmit information…” but that it is a desire to participate in the universe that is inseparable from the logos. Thus does he deem a discourse on God possible. To Ricoeur, this intending the logos by use of language is at the heart meaning, and one should regularly return to the symbol so as to always discover new meaning therein.

As language precedes interpretation in Ricoeur’s thought, language precedes interpretation. In his work on Freud, Ricoeur notes that a symbol can emerge pre-linguistically.

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75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Raimon Panikkar, L’expérience de Dieu (Paris: Albin Michel, 2002), 25. « Un discours sur un symbole et non sur un concept. »
78 Ibid., 27.
in a dream and can consequently only be shared in the recounting. Bourgeois explains that to Ricoeur, the operating levels of dreams are in fact symbols of that which we wish to say or, in other words, potential language that must be made into real language in order to be shared. The difficulty of the dream of another is that it is “…a nocturnal spectacle [which] is unknown to us. In fact, it is accessible to us only at the recital of the person once he is awakened.” Bourgeois’ argument on the inaccessibility of dreams is, notably, parallel to Raimon Panikkar’s inaccessibility of the experience of God. In order to make that experience of God, of truth, accessible to another, linguistic configuration is in order.

The matter of the symbolized has, however, been limited to its relationship to the subject. Here, the effort to convey meaning and interpretation meets the symbolized in attempting to transmit a particular experience. This conveyance is configured both metaphorically and narratively.

**METAPHOR**

A metaphor, according to Ricoeur, is that which seeks to express something as something else. The metaphor, like the symbol, can be divided into two categories, that of the dead metaphor and that of the living metaphor. The dead metaphor is one whose expression is nearly literal, whose interpretive value has disappeared over time. As Tengelyi points out, “Dead metaphors are… hardly distinguishable any longer from any literal meaning of an expression… ‘The leg of a table’… or the ‘core of the theory’ are cases in point.” This is what Ricoeur

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80Ibid., 237.
81The accessibility of the dream and its link to the faith mystical experience as defined by Panikkar will be developed in the following chapter. At this time, it is sufficient to note that there is a parallelism of thought between the two authors.
refers to as the sedimentation of sense through history. As the sense of otherness, of asymmetry between terms A and B is lost, as is the surprising meaning that would push the person to interpretation. In the case of a living metaphor, one “…discovers creation of a new meaning or… semantic innovation.” As it does not hold to literal meaning, a metaphor offers a plurality of significances that must be sought and understood within the metaphor itself. It is living as signification continues to be drawn from the statement. That meaning is an attempt to convey what Ricoeur calls the truth of experience as real and as actual. “The attempt to show that truth in experience is to be taken in the sense of an expression of reality as actuality is to be complemented by the observation that the as-structure… conveys to us… the idea of an alteration or transmutation…” The reality being expressed is as something else, something relevant that may transmute the given reality without in turn betraying it. Analogously, the consideration is that metaphor is not simply contained in an image, in a word, as is the symbol, but in a sentence. In moving the understanding of metaphor from a single word to that a fuller sentence, Ricoeur distinguishes it from a “simple copy or picture of reality.” What is sought is the truth gleaned from an experience of reality greater than a snippet. There is a certain dynamism involved in not simply making an observation, but expressing reality as revelation. That which is real, the truth, has been revealed to the subject in a moment of experience, and the subject puts it into words. Here we may note that there is a distance between the experience and language. That truth is surprising and therefore, new. As such, it may not always find theoretical purchase in the sciences or in truths previously expressed. Tengelyi says, “…whereas truth is

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84 Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, p. .
85 Tengelyi, “Redescription and Refiguration of Reality in Ricoeur,” 162.
86 Ibid., 166.
87 Ibid., 163.
At first glance, Laszlo Tengelyi’s claim, which he makes in an effort to remain true to Ricoeur’s own idea of truth and experience, is not so far from Lonergan’s. However, there is contention in the concept of learning truth from scholarly books. Neither Lonergan, nor Ricoeur, favour this statement. For Lonergan, the concept of truth has been laid out in the previous chapter. For Ricoeur, truth is gleaned from discernment, and scholarly books, such as in the case of historical tomes, serve to provide the efforts at truth from a configuring source towards a refiguring source. We may retain, however, that Ricoeur does differentiate factual truth from metaphorical truth when it comes to “baffling experiences.” This is the case of the surprise of revelation when experiences teach us “what it is like to be” rather than “what is” or whether “it is so,” both of which properly belong to the level of understanding and judgment in Lonergan’s thought. Truth then becomes an expression of actuality, of ontic imitation, a concept that is critical in the early steps of relating the faith mystical experience. It is an expression of reality as it is experienced. As mentioned above, the metaphor will then relate to a multitude of senses. Parallel to this thought Panikkar says, “there exist many different concepts of God, but none of them may ‘conceive’ of him.” The living metaphor therefore opens the door in expressing ideas of God while remaining faithful to the irreducibility of God to any idea or concept. It does not, however, provide the means of expressing what Panikkar calls the ontological horizon of human understanding of the divinity. This horizon has great respect for the apophasis tradition, recognizing that God is neither Being nor non-Being, and is to Panikkar the ultimate level of humanity’s horizon in regards to divinity. Ricoeur’s metaphor speaks of truth as reality, but it is

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88Ibid., 165.
89Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, p. .
90Tengelyi, “Redescription and Refiguration of Reality in Ricoeur,” 165.
92Ibid., 27.
in the narrative approach, rather than the metaphorical, that truth can find a greater fullness of expression.

**Narrative**

It is important to note that for Ricoeur, “…metaphorical redescription and narrative refiguration are intertwined with each other.” That is to say, that the metaphor’s attempt as presenting something as something else supports the narrative’s attempt to transform and translate experience. The two are not exclusive and it could be noted that narrative is the movement from the sentence to the story. Metaphor becomes a tool within narrative, the latter of which still seeks to express something similar to the metaphor, but in a larger context of imitation. This transformation of experience is not meant to contort or warp the truth, for “[a] story does not alter things, actions and events; it simply provides them with a particular expression.” Part of the difficulty in relaying the truth of experience is the same as that expressed in the matters of metaphor. The nature of truth in Ricoeurian sense is that it has not yet been expressed, it is not a confirmation of known facts; it is a new and surprising truth that language will express and reason will explore. The distance between experience and language, as previously presented when describing Ricoeur’s metaphor, follows into the narrative, as the story that is told, along the lines of “telling” (as presented above), are a refiguration of reality. Language has the ability to compress and reorganize the link between time and events so that a story is not simply a chronology, it is an imitation of the truth experience, and of the subject who experienced, placed in narrative context. Thus, narrative has ontological ties as Bessière points out: “Whatever the presentations of the identity of the subject narrated in the narrative may be,

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94 Tengelyi, “Redescription and Refiguration of Reality in Ricoeur,” 169.
95 Refiguration is the act of mimesis.
this identity can be read according to the anthropological data given."96 One can but with great
difficulty remove the subject from the experience, and in doing so, mutilates the experience. The
ontological link then presents the difficulty of alienation, and this is the heart of Ricoeur’s thesis
throughout the three volumes of *Time and Narrative* and even into *Oneself as Another*. In
Ricoeur’s theory, time presents a challenge to the matters of the same and the other, in that it
“deprives all episodes of life of their very actuality…” and that “this challenge is met by
stories.”97 To Ricoeur, stories overcome the distance of time, expressing a paradox as a unity, so
that which has happened can be happening in a story being read by a person. It may also, in a
parallel sense, serve to overcome the distance between the immanent and transcendent
descriptions of God, so that the All-Other is experienced by the subject at a point in time.
Retelling this tale may seek to make present the memory of the experience. In the context of
religious education, the importance of this factor is critical. “What we learn from our
experiences may be formulated in statements or propositions; but how we learn from them is told
in stories. From this, it follows that narrative is the adequate expression of lively experience in
language.”98 Where Lonergan’s focus occupies the realm of how we come to know from
experience to action, Ricoeur focus is how we learn from experiences and how to bring that into
action, the first level of which is language. We may then extract a framework of narrative
configuration from his writings, so as to answer the quest how we tell of how we learn from
experience.

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97Tengelyi, “Redescription and Refiguration of Reality in Ricoeur,” 170.
98Ibid., 173.
NARRATIVE CONFIGURATION

The symbol and semiotic meaning play an important role in understanding the structural components of the narrative in the second volume of *Time and Narrative*. Just as semiotic interpretation was limited in appropriating a symbol, so it is surpassed in bringing together the parts of the narrative structure into a narrative whole that respects the dynamism of truth and the telling of a story. In László Tengelyi’s words, “Ricoeur takes inspiration from Aristotle’s approach to Greek tragedy in order to elaborate a hermeneutical concept of truth that applies to literature and art.”

According to Bourgeois, there are two possible and polar opposite approaches to be taken when examining linguistic expressions, such as that of narrative configuration: “…we can descend upon them from the direction of logical contents; and we can ascend from them from the basic level of lived experience…” Pedagogically, this may be akin to moving through Lonergan’s interiorly differentiated model. A student may experience, understand, judge and decide on insights of his own. Conversely, the student may decide to trust a teacher’s knowledge, judge that it is sufficient in aiding questions of understanding and then begin to experience differently based on the lesson. This is what Frederick Crowe names the two vectors of interior differentiated consciousness. The first, the “rising vector” is the progression through interior differentiated model as presented in the earlier chapter. The second, “descending” vector is the one Crowe describes as most common in a student. A student decides to trust that the educator knows the facts best and comes to understanding what the educator is saying by eventually experiencing it him- or herself.

A narrative approach in matters of religious education functions much the same way as the second vector. A tale is woven in which the educator encourages students to ultimately have an experience of God. Yet, due to the

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99Ibid., 160.
dynamic nature of this model, while students are operating in the second vector, they are also operating in the first, gleaning insights from the narrative, participating in the narrative and therefore in the experience.

Similarly to the second vector, Ricoeur begins the study of narrative with identifying those elements make narrative a refiguring of the truth experience. The truth is already there, it has been lived and now must be made relevant. In order to do so, the narrative must be properly constructed. While we have previously examined the semiotic, metaphorical and narrative sense of story, the following section aims to examine the constituent parts of a narrative, those elements that are imitated in mimesis\(_1\) and appropriated in mimesis\(_3\). This is the heart of understanding that which he calls mimesis\(_2\), the culmination of the configuring act. To do so, he initially turns to the work of V.J. Propp in describing the event. He then analyzes Claude Bremond’s work in defining the character as well as the relationship between character and event. Then, through an analysis of verb tenses and narrative time, he brings the last few elements into a dynamic story that one feels urged to tell.

**EVENT**

In Ricoeur’s analysis of Propp’s work on the fable, the concept of désis (that of creating the tension that will later be resolved at the moment of the lusis) leads to the narrative movement of the quest that will from that moment on accompany the story in all of its aspects.\(^{102}\) In this theory, every event, narrative lacuna, or peripeteia intend the end of the story. No event can be considered random or chance. The limits of this theory are clearly its teleological tendencies. All event motivations only serve to meet the end of the story. Whereas mimesis\(_2\) is about a story anticipating its own end, that end may very well be surprising or unexpected, just so long as it is

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possible. The creation of possibility in events is of greater importance than plausibility, so that the reader’s surprise occurs when indications towards a plausible end are reversed, and yet that end still seems appropriate. So while Propp’s model is appropriate for those classical texts built around stringent structures, it does very little to promote characters as influences within the story. What it does offer is the value of action in the narrative, regardless of agents or actors. This differentiating factor does away with the actor as the main source of movement in a narrative, and substitutes the action-type. This frees the actor (or agent) to influence the narrative by his or her choices. In order to do so, we must surpass Propp’s algebraic determinism and focus on the character.

CHARACTER

Ricoeur, working with Claude Bremond’s critique of Propps, offers that actions move through three phases of “dichotomy of choices.” There is an eventuality and the choice of either moving to action or not. Should one choose to act, the action will either complete or not. The need for a character comes from shifting from this first elementary set of phases to that of complex possibilities determined by the role of the said character, here named the actor. The actor is split into two categories, that of the patient, who is any character affected by the actions of the second category of actor, the agent. The agent is one whose initiative affects all other subjects. The shifting of terms from character to actor is an attempt to distance mimesis I from mimesis II, in that a character is an imitation of values and ethics in the first mimesis.

Therefore, there must be something to imitate, which is usually found in historical or contemporary values as discerned by the writer. In mimesis II, it is the function of the character,
as an agent, which Ricoeur attempts to explain. The actor can therefore aim for actions represented in the dichotomy of protection/frustration and improvement/deterioration. The importance of these categories of action for Ricoeur emerge as one recognizes that these are categories of value.\textsuperscript{107} The agent who values becomes a discerning subject. Yet, what does the subject discern? In Bremond’s theory, there is lacking agency between character and event. The reduction of a narrative to simple events discounts the possibility of surprise, while the reduction to characters discounts the possibility of patterns. Furthermore, neither theory accounts for an actual narrative process as being dynamic.

**Relationship and Operations**

Where the object of the story is the end goal of Propp’s approach to narrative, and subject the agent of Bremond’s, relational terms between the two are introduced by Ricoeur in order to aim for the narrative whole. These terms are desire, communication and action.\textsuperscript{108} The subject may want the object, may be told about the object or the subject approaches either of the previous categories in a particular way. Here, tension arises as amongst these relations of the subject to the object, events occur in conjunction or disjunction with these relations, so that every disjunctive moment augments narrative tension, while conjunctural events relieve this same tension, and act as moments of progression. These relations are expressed as operations and are related in terms of potentiality. The subject then, in terms of desire, wants to act or to know or to be or to be able and the object is the source of those wants.\textsuperscript{109} The problem with limiting the event to potentiality is that the story remains static, there is no call for that potential to be actualized. “There would be no event. There would be no surprise.”\textsuperscript{110} Surprise remains a

\textsuperscript{107}Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 2:82.
\textsuperscript{108}Ibid., 2:90.
\textsuperscript{109}Ibid., 2:97.
\textsuperscript{110}Ibid., 2:108.
critical component of narrative in an attempt to imitate the surprise of the truth of experience. In order to resolve this issue, Ricoeur turns to linguistics and the analysis of verb tenses and their distribution and intent within a narrative. Thus is he able to propose that those relationships as mentioned above are governed by verbs and the various relationship between their tenses in expressing the times of a narrative and propelling the story forward. On this matter, Jean Bessière proposes that,

To narrate is basically nothing more than bringing together, by means of refiguration, discordant moments in time and presenting the figure of their agreement. This agreement can be understood according to two perspectives. The first ... [that] time can be represented as one. The second, in Temps et recit [Time and Narrative], cannot be separated from the first perspective: narrative presupposes the representation of an action and, consequently, constant reference to an agent.

The entirety of the relationship between agent and action is regulated by time. The verb tenses propose an insight into the matter, yet what Bessière discerns is that narrative time serves to propel the story forward, so that even the use of flashback is a matter of narrative progression. That is due to the relationship between the agent and the object of his or her desires growing closer or farther as events unfold. What is surprising is when the narrative does not go in the expected or regulated direction as when, for example, it does not follow a chronological presentation of events.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS: ENUNCIATION AND ENOUNCED

There is a matter of differentiation in the telling of a story in Ricoeur’s theory between the enunciation and the enounced. The enunciation is a self-referencing discourse to one who is telling a story, while the enounced is a matter of double meaning. The first meaning of the enounced is that of the object of the story and similar as the story being told; it is “the relation of

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111Ibid., 2:115–184.
112Bessière, “Paul Ricoeur and Narrative Paradoxes,” 49.
113Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 2:155.
events” as presented above.\textsuperscript{114} The second meaning is the act of narrating itself. The narrator makes sense of the events related in the story.\textsuperscript{115} The distinction of these three aspects help distinguish the story-teller from the narrator in the realm of fiction. In the first case, we have the telling of an event. “The "telling" is both the action of recounting and the action of knowing what one is recounting.”\textsuperscript{116} Referring back to the example of the dream, which cannot be homologously experienced by another, the distinction between narrator and story-teller, allows room for the audience to shift their imagination into the realm of the narrator. This is true even when the story-teller and the narrator are the same person, for there is a distance created between the one who tells of a dream they had in the past, and the narrator for whom things are happening presently. In recognizing that distance, the audience-member becomes a player in the narrative, a participant in the retelling of a dream as imagination and experience transform the words of the narrator into appropriable meaning. The end of a story told becomes the beginning of a story appropriated. Progressively, as the story is told, the narrative voice comes closer and closer to the voice of the story-teller\textsuperscript{117} as the time of the story draws closer to real-time. The story comes to an end, in this instance, when the voice of the story-teller and the narrator are barely distinguishable. The story continues when the audience member is able to substitute their own voice in resuming the narration in an organic and distinct manner. It is in this sense that Ricoeur speaks of continuations “…of histories oneself is involved in and defined by.”\textsuperscript{118} The pedagogical implication of appropriation is in the handling of paradoxes, as the story of the initial subject becomes the story of an audience member, making an ending but a beginning, as

\textsuperscript{114}Ibid., 2:152.
\textsuperscript{115}Ibid., 2:153.
\textsuperscript{116}Bessière, “Paul Ricoeur and Narrative Paradoxes,” 57.
\textsuperscript{117}Ricoeur, \textit{Time and Narrative}, 2:159–160.
\textsuperscript{118}Tengelyi, “Redescription and Refiguration of Reality in Ricoeur,” 173.
the time between experiences collapses in the narrative and as the alienation of another’s experience of truth shared becomes the possibility of living and sharing a similar experience.

CONCLUSION

The linguistic appropriation of an idea as preceding the philosophical development of that same idea is central to the application of Ricoeur’s work to this thesis subject. The faith mystical experience can occur but at a particular moment in time. Extending the experience is not possible, nor can another share that experience identically. As the experience occurs pre-linguistically, so must one strive to find the words to represent the meaning that has been revealed. As the example drawn from Genesis demonstrates, the expression of the experience is filled with symbolic, metaphorical and philosophical meaning that weave together into a whole that goes beyond the text. Understanding that whole requires that a subject regularly returns to the symbol, the metaphor and the narrative in order to discover new and greater meaning. For the religious educator, encouraging a similar development within students is a progressive effort of examining semiotic, heuristic and philosophical or theological meaning. Lonergan provides us with the grounds of the unrestricted desire to know and the transcendental model of interiority as a model for knowing. He also aids in establishing a link between the intelligence and the faith mystical experience. Ricoeur provides the linguistic framework in communicating in a manner that respects the paradoxical nature of the faith mystical experience, narratively bringing together time, experience, truth and a development in communicating those items. The attention he places on an experience of truth and the difficulty in communicating a dream may be understood in parallel to communicating the faith mystical experience. The appropriation of a concept, leading to continuation of the narrative that is part of his third level of mimesis allows for the religious educator to make a student participant and active in the narrative. The means for then
conveying this experience is new expressions gained from previous stories. It remains to be determined whether Ricoeur’s work can aid in elaborating religious education as a faith mystical activity that can further become the subject of Lonergan’s model of interiority.
Chapter 3 : The Faith Mystical Experience in Education

INTRODUCTION

The Ontario Religious Education Curriculum’s preface calls for “authentic, meaningful and relevant courses of instruction.”¹¹⁹ In apprehending the use of narrative in teaching religious education as a faith mystical activity, these three points are taken not singularly, but as interwoven. Authentic religious education, as shared by an educator who understands religious meaning, gains its authenticity when all lessons are ultimately aimed at faith development and intersubjectivity. This authenticity infuses the subject matter with meaning, though this meaning has to be shared in order to become relevant. By bringing together the work on art and religious meaning according to Lonergan and metaphorical and narrative composition according to Ricoeur in light of Raimon Panikkar’s definition of faith, I will clarify the meaning of religious education as a faith mystical experience and make it relevant as both a pre-intellectual and intellectual development in the human being. Students must still appropriate data, weigh the data and judge ideas, otherwise, the education becomes a simple “take it or leave it” environment. Narrative composition, by its metaphorical nature, becomes an important tool to the religious educator. Its ability to draw in the student and make him or her participant in the story-telling so that the story becomes his or her own is an excellent tool for understanding. Furthermore, its symbolic appeal, orientation towards a never-ending conclusion and participant activity make it analogous to the faith mystical experience. Such an experience in a pedagogical context requires the critical spirit of inquiry to criticize and understand doctrinal or catechetical precepts. It also

requires the use of narrative language in order to overcome a tendency to reduce faith to theory.

By faith is meant what Raimon Panikkar calls “a condition for love and the guarantee of its creativity… part of a full human existence on earth.”

**FAITH**

For Raimon Panikkar, the term faith must be taken as different from creed or belief. The effort is not to forego the importance of creed, but to recognize the ontic value of faith in human being. As he proposes from the very first lines of his article *Faith, a Constitutive Dimension of Man*, faith occurs in silence and all words used to express one’s faith have the inevitable result of expressing belief instead, “[t]o speak about faith is to translate faith into belief—but the translation is not the original.” In this sense, faith occupies a foundational aspect of our human being, just as the unrestricted desire to know in Lonergan’s theory, and expression of experience in Ricoeur’s work. Due to his tendency towards apophatism, any attempt to put faith into words runs the risk of inauthenticity. While language, as noted in the previous chapter, has the capacity to refer symbolically and metaphorically to a greater reality than the strict definitions of words could express, it is still insufficient in relating the immediacy of faith, what he refers to as, “a pure instant of life.” This is why he would use the term ‘belief’ in expressing faith through words. One’s belief is an ontological process, while one’s faith is an ontic reality. Panikkar therefore makes every effort in his article to speak about faith in general, while not reducing it to doctrinal or dogmatic consent. In the case of doctrinal consent, faith becomes nothing more than an intellectual endeavour. As such, abiding by ideas grasped solely by the intellectual is considered good faith, while disagreeing with such ideas is considered bad.

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121 Ibid., 224.
faith. He would also oppose faith as a moralizing agent. Therefore, good faith is to remain true to one’s ontic drive to transcend one’s self. Bad faith is turning away from this same drive.\textsuperscript{123} Therefore, sharing faith in dialogue is actually recognizing a shared ontic aspect.\textsuperscript{124} Panikkar’s space for faith in human composition is a space similar to Ricoeur’s dream space as potential expression that then yearns to be shared linguistically. It comes before all thought and expression. In this sense, one can but translate faith, and must be wary of the authenticity of his or her words, for, “translating is betraying.”\textsuperscript{125} That same ontic aspect is the condition for love and its creation, just as the fourth realm of meaning is a recognition of God, his creation and the love that binds us together. This realm of religious meaning then, is a further recognition of being – that of being with others and the Other, which Dadosky calls vertical and horizontal alterity.\textsuperscript{126}

Panikkar is further motivated to define faith in such a way as to recognize a plurality of religious expressions and the validity of the faith from various denominations. He explains that “…faith must be something common to men, whatever their religious beliefs. The other possible solution to the dilemma [of whether or not faith is common to all men] amounts to saying that the vast majority of men do not reach salvation and are damned. Human creation would be, at least quantitatively, an almost total failure.”\textsuperscript{127} Thus are we presented with a truly interreligious, or meta-religious definition that is of great use in a struggle for the religious educators who cannot take for granted belief systems on the part of their students in Ontario Catholic schools.

\textsuperscript{123} Panikkar, “Faith - A Constitutive Dimension of Man.”
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 225–226.
\textsuperscript{125} From French: Traduire, c’est trahir.
\textsuperscript{126} Dadosky, “Is There a Fourth Stage of Meaning,” 772–775.
\textsuperscript{127} Panikkar, “Faith - A Constitutive Dimension of Man,” 241.
As a constitutive dimension to being, faith is a gift from God, it is an “‘existential openness,’ the capacity man has of moving toward his fullness.”\textsuperscript{128} At the same time it is a thirst and desire that moves man toward the Absolute. It is the seeking as well as the finding deriving from inquisitive man.”\textsuperscript{129} The inquisitive man is the same as the human subject who has an unrestricted desire to know. The concept of movement towards the absolute implies a dynamic faith, as well it should be, for it urges a person to continuously transcend themselves toward the variety of ends of a plurality of religions. Yet if those ends should be devoid of meaning for a person, then the desirability of faith is extinguished. As such, there is room for intellectual operations in Panikkar’s model of faith. Just as peripeteia serve to create tension between the triggering event of a story and its climax by use of characters, events and their interplay, so does a struggle between a pre-intellectual desire for God and the unrestricted desire to know offer a dynamic interplay throughout one’s life and towards its end. Paul St Amour demonstrates Lonergan’s own struggle with the existence of God not mediated by the intellect. This struggle we can take to illustrate Panikkar’s point, as Lonergan pursued an intellectual endeavor about the notion of God before he could articulate the existence of God.

Lonergan raised the question of the existence of God only subsequent to a painstaking development of a “notion of God.” This notion of God is not grounded upon any direct understanding of the data of sense, nor upon any immediate intuition into the divine nature, nor upon any presupposition of theological belief, but rather upon “an extrapolation” from … self-consistent epistemological and cognitional theoretic positions.\textsuperscript{130}

It seems that the reason that all question streams, allowed to run their course, raise questions of God is due to faith initiating these very questions. Our inquisitive nature is thus a result of our faithful composition. It is not limited to some people, or some religious expression, it is a part of

\textsuperscript{128}Panikkar will refer to God as the Absolute throughout “Faith – A Constitutive Dimension of Man”.
\textsuperscript{129}Panikkar, “Faith - A Constitutive Dimension of Man,” 223.
us all. Panikkar writes that, “all… have faith; in the same way that all… have reason and feelings.”\textsuperscript{131} The expression of this faith, just as the expression of our reason and feelings, may vary from individual to individual, but it remains a shared ontic reality, and reason plays an important role in its development. It was noted earlier that faith cannot be reduced to intellectual operations, but when those operations, stimulated by our curiosity drive us to ask questions of God, to use our previously gained knowledge in expressing ideas and insights about God, then its development becomes a pedagogical matter. “Cognitional subjectivity is motivated, directed, and recontextualized by the ethical and religious dimensions of human existence.”\textsuperscript{132} St Amour further adds that “The question of God is inherent in our self-transcending intentionality and becomes explicit when we allow intentionality to question and reflect upon itself.”\textsuperscript{133} The development of critical thinking does not outweigh faithful endeavours, it supports them. Panikkar’s work even encourages this practice, all the while cautioning the reader: “It is important to see that while faith demands an intellectual content, the intellectual element does not exhaust the meaning of faith.”\textsuperscript{134} That very demand as expressed by the author is that which Lonergan strives to explore and which has been presented as differentiated meaning and value. It is a humbling recognition for the religious educator to acknowledge that while curricula may be presented fully, these matters do not present the fullness of the meaning of faith which must be lived. In fact, the limitation of curricula run parallel to the limitation of theoretical language. This is in part due to the process of evaluation. It is not the place of a school to grade the faith development of a student. It may evaluate comprehension, fact retention, the critical thinking process, but these are matters of the intellect. These items are merely tools in exploring the

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{131} Panikkar, \textit{L’expérience de Dieu}, 45.« Tout homme, du fait d’être homme, a la foi; de la même façon que tout homme, du fait d’être homme, possède une raison et des sentiments. »
\bibitem{132} St Amour, “Bernard Lonergan on Affirmation of the Existence of God,” 16.
\bibitem{133} Ibid., 24.
\bibitem{134} Panikkar, “Faith - A Constitutive Dimension of Man.”
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intersubjectivity of religious education. When Paul St Amour asks about Lonergan’s work, “What, in general, would it mean for an act of understanding not to be restricted?” he does so in recognition that matters of God are truly unconditioned, yet our understanding is always restricted by the horizon between the known and the unknown. But it is important to keep asking these questions, to urge students to wonder and criticize and correct, because it is proof of our imperfection. Panikkar notes that:

Recognizing the openness of man means admitting that he is not God, that is, that he is not finished, absolute, definitive. It means admitting that there is something in him which must evolve, and also affirming the capacity for such evolution. The openness of faith consists in the capacity which man possesses of progressing toward his fullness.

So faith is not limited to doctrinal adherence, nor by wilful good actions. It is far more fundamental and motivates the human being to keep becoming what he or she is called to be in a never-ending process, for ending the process would mean overcoming faith. The role of religious education is the creation of possibility and surprise in the narrative recounting of the faith mystical experience. There are two advantages to the expression of possibility in religious pedagogy. The first is the avoidance of fundamentalism and pre-fabricated answers on matters of faith. If one is to respect faith as an ontic reality then one is responsible for creating a consequent dialogue. Possibility is not the rejection of fact or doctrine, it simply makes these things acceptable on a theoretical basis. This way, accepting the possibility does not have to mean adhering to the ideas expressed. The student is then free to continue building his or her own narrative with a guiding light that he or she may or may not choose to follow. The second advantage of the use of possibility in narrative is avoiding placing one’s own ideas and intellectual processes as the foundation for God. Panikkar notes that, “Wanting to justify God, to

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136 Panikkar, “Faith - A Constitutive Dimension of Man,” 244.
prove him or even defend him, means that we situate ourselves as the very foundation of God and that we…the primacy of the intellect over being.”137 Placing reason above being runs the risk of reducing faith and the mystical experience to that which one understood, rather than that which one must strive to live, share and understand. To the educator, it means inadvertently thinking that the experience of God has granted him or her all answers to all theological questions. If faith cannot be exhausted by reason, then it must be expressed not in absolutes, but, once again, in possibilities. The interplay of possibility in the narrative configuration makes the elements expressed more significant, more desirable as they grow in plausibility. This is the role of peripeteia, to augment narrative tension between the point of initiation and conclusion. So we are urged to avoid intellectualizing faith. We may still know God, but we may not know everything about God. Knowing God is then not so much intellectual matter as it is an experiential event similar to Ricoeur’s mention of experiential truths that teach us not what is, but what it is to be.138 This is the recognition of the ontic primacy over reason and as such is, according to Panikkar, a unifying human factor. “Reason… divides, decides, distinguishes, but does not unite.”139

This understanding of faith expressed through narrative ties the concept of a conclusion to eschatological meaning. The knot, or point of tension of our story140 is the realization of a continued narrative in our lives “this whole life "formed a reserve," an almost vegetative domain in which the germinating organism was to be nourished. "In the same way my life was linked to

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137 Panikkar, L’expérience de Dieu, 59. « Vouloir justifier Dieu, le provuer ou même le défendre, signifie que nous nous posons nous-mêmes comme le fondement même de Dieu… Il s’agit, en ultime instance, du primat de la pensée sur l’être… »
138 Tengelyi, “Redescription and Refiguration of Reality in Ricoeur,” 162.
140 Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 1:41.
The choice to use the word “maturation” over “end” implies a continued growth at the conclusion of life. The faith mystical experience accompanies this maturation. In Christian eschatology, the promise of liberation in faith and of God’s Kingdom as an everlasting life is the conclusion, yet one that never ends. Therefore the proper application of narrative in religious education is one that implicitly recognizes the eschatological promise of eternal life. Conversely, Graham Rossiter argues that, “[t]he aim of religious education in Catholic schools … does not suppose maturation in faith as a definitive goal…” Though one may agree with Rossiter in that maturation is not the “definitive” goal, it should certainly be a concern. Religious education that does not aim for this maturation loses much of its value. Just as beyond the aim of any particular class subject is the intent of making “good learners,” beyond the evaluation of knowledge and understanding should be the aim of developing expressive, insightful students who know they have faith. In this way, students become story-tellers themselves and in this discover a sort of freedom. “God creates the real, and human liberty participates in this power by creating the possible.”

**Mystical Experience**

The mystical experience is in the Christian tradition the immediate encounter with God. Panikkar warns us, however, that “the experience of God is not the monopoly of any given religious system, whatever the denomination…,” and that “…religion gives to culture its ultimate content and culture gives to religion its own language.” Therefore, the language that we use to express a given mystical experience cannot contain God, it can only imitate our experience of

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144 Panikkar, *L’expérience de Dieu*, 41. L’expérience de Dieu n’est le monopole d’aucun système religieux, sous quelque dénomination que ce soit… La religion donne à une culture son contenu ultime et la culture donne à la religion son langage propre.
him, similarly to mimesis1. More generally, this encounter is the *a priori* experience, a dynamic and deeply intimate experience of the intersubjectivity of perfect love. One is dumbfounded by the *fascinans et tremendum*146 and reason serves as an interpretive and mimetic tool in looking back on the experience. Its recollection is mediated by senses, reason, culture, vocabulary and language, but the heart of the experience is truly immediate.

The importance of the mystical activity in religious education is akin to the recognition of faith as an ontic reality. The development of faith in the context of religious education is an ongoing attempt to achieve understanding as to the nature of the mystical experience. It is what Edward Schillebeeckx calls a “‘second innocence’… a style of narration that has been through the … neutralizing process of the sciences and the interiorizing of consciousness… [and that] after all its analyses and interpretations, reason is no longer able theoretically to express in words what in fact there is still to be said, it is obliged to utter its elusive ‘surplus-vested-in-reality’ in stories and parables.”147 This understanding occurs in a dialogue of being, one that this is not only “a discourse of feelings, of reason, of the body, of science… or even of philosophy or of academic theology…” but of “Human experience…of ‘mystery…”148 A reason as proposed by Rudolf Otto as to the heavily mysterious nature of this experience is the realization that God is *more real* than the self.

For one of the chiefest and most general features of mysticism is… self-depreciation…, the estimation of the… personal ‘I’, as something not perfectly or essentially real… which comes to demand its own fulfilment in practice in rejecting the delusion of selfhood… And on the other hand mysticism leads to a valuation of the transcendent

145Ibid., 35–38.
148Panikkar, L’expérience de Dieu, 21. Et ce n’est pas seulement un discours du sentiment, dela raison, du corps, de la science… ni même de la philosophie ou de la théologie académiques… L’expérience humaine… a toujours essayé d’exprimer un « mystère ».
object of its reference as that which through plenitude of being stands supreme and absolute, so that the finite self contrasted with it becomes conscious even in its nullity that ‘I am naught, Thou art all’.  

This sense of greater reality can be understood along similar lines to the transformative value in Ricoeur’s metaphor, thanks to the fourth stage of meaning as explained in the first chapter. One who realizes the ties of love between the created order and the Creator can come to see authentic intersubjectivity as a metaphor for God. The self as created in the image of God becomes a symbol representing a greater reality. The positive interaction of a number of selves working towards progressive ends becomes a metaphor for the Kingdom of God. The place of reason in the realization of our own symbolic value in the mystical experience is the ability to know that which we represent. Analogously, Lonergan writes on the subject of experiencing art that “[t]he world may be regarded as illusion, but it also may be regarded as more true and more real. We are transported from the space in which we move to the space within the picture… As his world, so too the subject is transformed.” An experience of God is immediately transformative, just as metaphor transforms the literal meaning of a story’s portion into greater meaning, and regularly calls one to interpret and rediscover this new meaning. Such an analogy serves the educator well in the realm of education where nullity of the self may otherwise present great challenges to the religious educator and the student alike. Psychologically, the determination of identity and self are critical aspects of the developing student. In this format, the self is now so much self-depreciated as appreciated in representing something else. The student continues to develop personal value and identity, while the educator proposes a theory that encourages such a development with the possible end of discovering greater significance.

150 Lonergan, Method in Theology, 63.
The link between faith as an ontic aspect and the mystical experience is summarized by Panikkar in *L’expérience de Dieu* as follows:

Christian philosophy distinguishes *credere in Deum* ‘believing in God’ (being open to the mystery), from *credere Deo* ‘believing in God’ (trust in that which a supreme Being may have said), and *credere Deum* ‘believing that God is’ (believing in his existence). Faith… has no object. Thought has an object. If faith had an object, it would be an ideology… God is not an object… Divinity surges forth beyond thought. Without a mystical sense, we deform almost automatically… this experience of a ‘plus’ which is to be found in every human being.

The faith mystical experience is not an ultimate intellectual achievement, such as proposed by the Gnostics of early Christian communities. As faith is without an object, so is the mystical experience. This is certainly problematic for language, for to state that the mystical experience is the experience of God, there is already an object of syntax. Thus the analogy of the metaphorical transformation. We may attempt to then speak of God as a greater subject than the human, similar to the St. Thomas Aquinas’s fourth question of the *Summa Theologica* on the perfection of God. This is the ‘plus’ to which Panikkar refers. This is the ‘plus’ of meaning that surpasses the medium of art as proposed by Lonergan. It is the ‘plus’ found in metaphorical or narrative meaning in Ricoeur’s theory. It is the recognition as faith as a gift as well recognition of the gift-giver. As such, it is also a recognition of our transcendental drive not as some aimless desire to surpass one’s self, but to accomplish one’s self. To Christians, this accomplishment is the beatific vision. One may wonder whether or not the mystical experience is then discouraging to human intelligent operations.

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151 Panikkar, *L’expérience de Dieu*.
152 *Ibid.*, 47: “La philosophie chrétienne distingue entre *credere in Deum*, « croire en Dieu » (ouverture au mystère), *credere Deo* « croire à Dieu » (confiance en ce qu’a pu dire un Être suprême), et *credere Deum*, « croire que Dieu est » (croire à son existence). La foi, quant à elle, n’a pas d’objet. La pensée a un objet. Si la foi avait un objet, elle serait une idéologie… Dieu n’est pas un objet… C’est au-delà de la pensée que surgit la divinité. Sans un sens mystique, nous déformons donc presque automatiquement, sans le vouloir… cette expérience d’un « plus » qui se trouve en tout être humain.”
According to Rudolf Otto the mystical experience causes a stupor because God operates outside, or beyond, human schemes of intelligence. Yet there is no denying the need to understand that which causes such wonder in the human being. In fact, it would seem unnatural from the basis of the unrestricted desire to know, for a human being to not seek greater knowledge and understanding of this experienced mystery. While understanding the whole of the experience through human operations is impossible, the accompanying effort is certainly productive. Religious meaning and its accompanying concept of religious knowledge acknowledges that “theological understanding is imperfect… analogical, obscure and gradually developing [it] is also synthetic.” So a student who has come to the realm of religious meaning will not be satisfied with understanding individual concepts under the umbrella of religious knowledge, but will attempt to link various past and future knowledge into a greater whole. The knowledge is also gradually developing, so that while one is transformed by the faith mystical experience, it is not to say that they suddenly gain knowledge of facts that they previously lacked. The education of the pupil continues. Thus, while an understanding of the whole mystical experience is reserved for the beatific vision, it urges the intellect to redefine and synthesize knowledge gained as religiously relevant. For example, biblical interpretation, doctrine and dogma may then be reviewed, critically, so as to differentiate their individual value. Yet they may also be considered along psychology, biology and anthropology to create a greater network of religiously oriented knowledge. The facts of these schools remain, yet their value is now interdisciplinary with an intent directed towards God.

IN THE CLASSROOM

In using Raimon Panikkar’s definition of faith, the plurality of religions practiced, or not practiced, by the students in a classroom becomes less of an alienating factor than it does an opportunity. The religious educator may speak in narrative terms distinguishing the real, the realistic and the probable. Three elements that can be considered real are the interiorly differentiated model, the desire to express one’s self as a being with a history, and faith as occurring before knowledge or expression. The experience of God, as noted above, is then a matter for the being presented as a probable occurrence, which is in fact more important than a realistic occurrences in narrative configuration. As matters of probability grow, so does the narrative configuration make them seem more desirable. And as they grow more desirable, the previously mentioned tension between the desire for God and the unrestricted desire to know grow as well. There, when Graham Rossiter addresses the point of creatively divorcing catechesis from religious education in the classroom, he does so without consideration for the importance of the ontic tension. And as he defines catechesis as a sharing of faith and faith-development among believers, the term faith, is employed very differently from Panikkar. It should instead be taken to mean “belief.” He further criticizes that “Many would use the words "catechesis", "catechetics" and "religious education" as synonyms.” This lack of discernment is ultimately what Rossiter opposes. A proper division of the terms would lead to catechesis not being the full form of religious education, but a tool to which an educator may turn in the context of religious education. He does, ironically, go on to lack differentiation between the terms of catechesis and evangelization when he notes that understanding the initial differentiation in the “…school's educational role (particularly in religious education) is not fundamental catechesis or evangelization. We may oppose this lack of differentiation with a note from Panikkar,

“Religions do not claim primarily to teach man a doctrine, or to provide him with a technique. They claim to save him, i.e., to open for him the way to the fullness of his being, whatever this fullness may be.”¹⁵⁷ Why should religious education be separate from this aim? Having differentiated many of the concepts that Rossiter would divorce, I would oppose his solution. Without a place for catechesis as a form of faith development, the tension between pre-intellectual faith and intellectual belief cannot grow. Whether one is developing new ideas or correcting old ones, one is surpassing themselves intellectually. When one revisits their sense of ethics or their affectivity, they are again surpassing themselves. When one attempts in artistic expression to express that plus that cannot be summed up in their work, one recognizes the drive to surpass themselves. And as per Ricoeur’s understanding, when one constantly returns to that sense dense symbol in discovering truths on their being, they gain ever new and greater insight into surpassing themselves. Therefore, in the context of religious education, one can, and in fact should, presume faith on the part of the student, an ontic faith that differs in belief but that is present in all students. In this way, though the classroom is not the space for a student’s ultimate and final transcendence, it is a place where his or her development of faith, intellect and creativity is encouraged.

CURRICULA, EVALUATION AND THE MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

As noted above, one cannot evaluate faith development. The argument for religious education as a faith mystical experience is one that recognizes the transcendent and ontic value of faith and attempts to build an a basis for critical thinking within those parameters. In Paul Ricoeur’s terms, this creates two overlapping narrative times. In the first, one makes use of

narrative composition within specific lesson contexts. The aim is to directly engage students via curiosity and their own desire to express themselves, making them participant in the telling of the tale. Within the context of this first narrative time, one considers curricular expectations, pedagogical tools and the knowledge that there is data which must be apprehended, analyzed and understood on the part of the student. In this narrative time, one encourages the ever-present curiosity of the subject and a systematic approach in understanding that which is being discussed. The educator may move through the realms of meaning as his or her students’ progress in understanding. The aspect of narrative may come into play as the educator shares religiously differentiated knowledge as a possibility to the students, yet in such a way as to make his tale their own, that they may ponder significance beyond the curricular points. This leads to the second narrative time, which may be described as a meta-narrative. It could be observed in the course of a week, a month, a semester or even many years as students pursue a variety of classes and a variety of narratives in the first time. Here, an educator is responsible for recognizing that his own tale is only important in a sense of continuation from previous stories. In this context, the Spirit is the silent narrator, acting on a student’s faith, intelligence, affectivity and feelings. This is why an educator cannot evaluate a student’s grasp of the meta-narrative. The educator is responsible, however, to be an authentic story-teller: “Every deep human encounter in which faith is left to one side will appear hypocritical to the one who does not think that he has faith. In such an encounter the so-called non-believer does not meet the believer on the same level if the latter puts his faith in parentheses, since what is ultimate and definitive for the first, will only be penultimate and provisory for the second.”\(^{158}\) A student would have hard time trusting and believing a mathematics teachers who could not solve basic arithmetic, or a geography teacher who could not find his or her city on a map. How can one come to trust a

\(^{158}\text{Ibid., 229.}\)
religion teacher who does not have religious knowledge? As such one must not reduce religious education to a simple set of curricular expectations, nor to lack differentiation in evaluating fact and faith, nor constrain faith to intellectual adherence. Rather, religious education must be recognized as a place of faith development where critical thought meets the possibility of transcendence. This way, it can be a truly gratifying experience. Panikkar writes, “…faith is what frees [a human being] from mere cosmic existence, from being simply a thing. It is in this opening to or rupture from his subjection to the realm of objects that freedom arises. By his freedom man is placed at the heart of the trinitarian personal relation.” Should religious conversion occur, it is not due to the educator’s efforts, but to a far more real narrative in which the educator is but a participant, a symbol even.

CONCLUSION

The ability for differentiation and synthesis upon reaching the realm of religious meaning is also of great use to the educator who should keep in mind that faith and belief are to be understood differently, where belief is the translation of faith into language. The educator should further remain mindful of dogma and doctrine as intellectual endeavours and that God cannot be reduced to these. As such, it is recommended that objects of belief such a catechesis be not the end of religious education, but a tool in establishing guiding lights for the students. These can be used in situations of evaluation and grading, while the ultimate end, faith development and creating the possibility of a faith mystical experience, cannot be graded. While it is the role of the school to develop critical thinkers and responsible operators, an institution that teaches religious education must do so with the same level of religious understanding and development as the rest of its courses. Furthermore, the recognition of faith as an ontic reality should

\[159\] Ib id., 227.
naturally make its development a pedagogical aim, for an education system that maims faith studies does so at the expense of a person’s very essence. Developing faith is an orientation to the mystical experience partially achieved by using the narrative configuration in order to respect the very mysterious nature of this experience. Metaphor, time play an important role in creating possibility in the pedagogical context. Religious meaning and knowledge flow from this experience, transforming the entire person and his or her way of interacting with the world. Therefore, while faith development is not an evaluable goal, it is certainly a pedagogical one.
Conclusion

In order to respond to the lack in matters of faith development present in the *Ontario Catholic Curriculum Document*, I made a priority of recognizing the value of faith as never-ending human development and a gift from God, as proposed by Panikkar.\(^{160}\) Working with this definition allows to understand the mystical experience as an encounter with the source of that faith which serves as an experiential core of unconditioned truth that serves to redirect all previous and future knowledge acquired by a person. Quoting Saint Ignatius of Loyola, James Martin writes in *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything*, “While he was seated there, the eyes of his understanding began to be opened; though he did not see any vision, he understood and knew many things, both spiritual things and matters of faith and of learning, and this was with so great an enlightenment that everything seemed new to him.”\(^{161}\) This short excerpt from Saint Ignatius of Loyola’s *Autobiography* demonstrates my definition of the faith mystical experience most clearly. Matters of faith and learning were understood with incredible clarity that would later be difficult to recall in its entirety. Loyola will go on to write on the realization that should he keep studying for the rest of his days, no amount of learning could teach him as much as he had been taught in that moment. In the context of religious education, the example of Loyola’s mystical experience is of great importance for the pedagogue, for he or she is responsible for recognizing that the classroom lessons will never equate to a faith mystical experience. In fact, all the religious educator may offer is what Panikkar calls initiation.

> In the context of a solitary world, initiation is possible because it actualizes the “ontonomie”… the… manifestation of the dynamism of the Being. Initiation establishes

\(^{160}\)Panikkar, “Faith - A Constitutive Dimension of Man.”

itself in traditional societies that are conscious of the solidary and hierachal (sacred order)… character of reality and who consider that the path of man towards his perfection requires a series of measures, a “progress” in the order of beings… It is the responsibilities of fathers, teachers, elders and, especially in this era of familial, pedagogical and social crises, to the true masters, to initiate others to the experience of God.162

This concept of initiation differs from a classical idea of a one-time event. It is a re-occurring event in one’s life and in the lives of the students. Thus, while Baptism remains an initiation in the mysteries of the Church, the educator is responsible for continuing this initiation in the classroom and promoting students’ very being. The Second Vatican Council clearly stated the role of teachers in this context.

Intimately linked in charity to one another and to their students and endowed with an apostolic spirit, may teachers by their life as much as by their instruction bear witness to Christ, the unique Teacher… Let them do all they can to stimulate their students to act for themselves and even after graduation to continue to assist them with advice, friendship and by establishing special associations imbued with the true spirit of the Church. 
(Gravissimum Educationis, 8,27)

The importance of the educator, especially in this context of religious education as a faith mystical experience, is to offer an authentic and meaningful lesson. The sense of authenticity is double. First, it is in the ability of any educator to be well-versed in the subject they must teach. Thus must one know his or her tradition and sacred Scripture and furthermore be capable of approaching both critically in order to make students feel confident in the competency of their teacher. The second sense flows from the first, in that authentic religious education also requires the educator to be eclipsed by Christ the Teacher who calls to Him all the children, or, in this

162 Panikkar, L’expérience de Dieu, 75–77. From French : Dans le cadre d’un monde solidaire, l’initiation est possible parce qu’elle ne fait qu’actualiser l’ontonomie … de chaque être. L’initiation… est une manifestation du dynamisme de l’Être. L’initiation s’établit dans les sociétés traditionnelles qui sont conscientes du caractère solidaire et hiérarchique… (d’ordre sacré)… de la réalité et considèrent que la voie de l’homme vers sa perfection requiert une série de mesures, un « progrès » dans l’échelle des êtres… Il appartient aux pères, aux enseignants, aux aînés et surtout, à notre époque de crise familiale, pédagogique et sociale, aux véritables maîtres, d’initier leurs semblables à l’expérience de Dieu.
case, the students, to a deep, meaningful and personal encounter. On this subject, Panikkar says, “The initiation is personal… the way is unique to every pilgrim… How does one lead to the experience of God?... Not through much cogitation and much austerity, say the Upanishad. ‘Come and see,’ says the master of Nazareth.”¹⁶³ The very personal nature of this encounter as well as matters of authenticity is the reason for turning to Lonergan’s theory of interiority in the first chapter.

The knower is one who is responsible in determining the truth of his insights. He or she does so through the interiorly differentiated model. This model allows for a universal basis of acquiring knowledge and differentiating the realms of meaning. The first chapter’s initial focus on artistic meaning would be echoed in the second chapter’s development of narrative. Artistic meaning serves to explore the concept of the epiphanic through the medium of art. The freedom of expression granted in art, whose aim is not explanation but exploration, is parallel to the freedom of exploring the ‘plus’ of meaning that surpasses all obvious patterns and surprises the subject into thinking differently. That freedom of expression of the artist is shared by one subjected to art who is freed from mundane thoughts and processes into also exploring this transcendent meaning for him- or herself. It is then in the realm of religious meaning that the value discovered in art becomes particularly significant. The subject turns from himself to others, discovering the depths of intersubjectivity. The ‘plus’ of meaning becomes one of being in the encounter with God as love. Religious meaning transforms previously understood knowledge and ethics from an individualistic scope to one of communion. Religious knowledge then becomes the orientation of all that is currently known by the subject, as well as all that will

¹⁶³Panikkar, L’expérience de Dieu; ibid., 78. From French : L’initiation est personnelle… La voie est unique pour tout pèlerin… Comment mener à l’expérience de Dieu?... Pas avec beaucoup de cogitation ni avec beaucoup d’austérité, répondent les Upanishad. « Venez et voyez », dit le maître de Nazareth.
be known, towards God and, implicitly, others. This is the authenticity for which the religious educator must strive, for it recognizes the depth of a personal encounter with God, as well as what Panikkar calls the solidary world. The religious educator then finds new depth in the practice of differentiation in the classroom, respecting not only the taxonomies of intelligence and general learning preferences of the students, but also that each of them must go and see Christ for themselves.

Being loved and the ontic state of accepting such an unconditioned love make for a very particular type of knowledge reliant on the transcendence of the subject who must then attempt to express his or her new state in a relevant sort of dialogue. Interior differentiated consciousness aids the educator in finding methods of expression, in the choice of words and even in the pedagogical approach. Just as is the case with artistic meaning, theoretical language cannot suffice in recounting the epiphanic. Thus does the second chapter focus on the theory of narrative configuration as proposed by Ricoeur, as metaphorical and narrative language seem best suited to teaching religious education while respecting its mysterious nature. Just as the whole of Revelation cannot be expressed and is a matter for the beatific vision, so can the faith mystical experience not be expressed as a cogent whole. Language, particularly symbolic and narrative language, then play an important role in expressing the “plus” of the event, despite its limitations. It also allows, in the pedagogical setting, to prepare lessons with a greater sense of intersubjectivity, as the appropriation of such an event is meant to be shared. The “story” of religion, now spoken from the lips of a being-in-love, can pass on to the listener who may make it his or her own. Narrative configuration can make use of catechetical and doctrinal language in telling a story that is a truth of experience which teaches not “what is this?” but “how to be.” It is an ontological exchange between the story-teller and the listener, paralleled as the teacher and
the student. The ability for narrative configuration to conclude a story while simultaneously passing it on to another is a potent tool for appropriation. It recognizes the importance of the student as a dynamic actor and story-teller, not simply a receiver of knowledge and stories. Panikkar says “The function of the initiate [the student] is double. On the one hand, he must maintain a living conscience of his… teacher, while simultaneously pursuing the tradition in a creative way.”164 In the use of narrative, the story is transformed when it becomes the students so that his or her own experience of the mysteries of faith can also be passed on creatively and relevantly.

Finally, the meeting point of religious knowledge and narrative expression is the dense and ever renewed core of the faith mystical experience. Religious knowledge is not simply religious adherence, else it would be a simple matter of teaching a student to read and memorize key doctrinal texts in order for them to be of “good faith.” The ability to understand and judge ideas and information in the light of a faith mystical experience remains key in the ongoing process of religious education. Panikkar’s insights on the ontic and transformative value of faith serve as an important reminder that being “right” about religion belongs to God and that education must remain open to this transformation that allows us to correct mistakes made by the intellect, a faculty which is always humbled in the presence and experience of the Resurrected Christ.

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