At a Crossroad: The Human Imagination and Educating to Reality in Religious Education

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There are many indications that prove that religious education, and the religious discourse to a large extent, have reached a critical crossroad. Demands for a non-religious common ground in society is having a strong impact on how conventional religious education is perceived. Further, the harsh criticism on the legitimacy of religious from humanistic and atheistic circles also points to the fact that religious education needs to be re-evaluated. The paper takes critical look at religion both as a historical and cultural phenomenon and as a construct of the human imagination. Based on this it aims at addressing the question: Can religious education be justified if the aim of education is to educate to reality? The question will be answered by stating an argument that views religious education as an exercise in a healthy use of the human imagination as an intellectual reference, emotional nest, and the mind’s eye. This argument will be analysed and debated and conclusion will be drawn.

**Keywords:** human Imagination, educating to reality, religious education

**Introduction**

Once upon a time there existed somewhere in the world, nobody knows where, a school which was called the Black School. There the pupils learned witchcraft and all sorts of ancient arts. Wherever this school was, it was somewhere below ground and was held in a strong room, which, as it had no windows, was eternally dark and changeless. There was no teacher either, but everything was learnt from books with fiery letters, which could be read quite easily in the dark. The pupils were never allowed to go out into the open air or see the daylight during the whole time they stayed there, which was from five to seven years.

By then they had gained a thorough and perfect knowledge of the sciences to be learned. A shaggy gray hand came through the wall every day with the pupils’ meals and when they had finished eating and drinking, it took back the horns and platters. But one rule of the school was that the owner should hold on to, for himself, the student who would be that last to leave the school every year. Considering that it was pretty well known among the pupils that the devil himself was the master, you may fancy what a scramble there was at each year’s end, everybody did his best to avoid being last to leave the school.

It happened once that three Icelanders went to this school, by the name of Saemundur the Learned, Kalfur Arnason and Halfdan Eldjarnsson; as they all arrived at the same time, and they were all supposed to leave at the same time. Saemundur declared that he was willing to be the last of them, at which the others were much...
lightened in mind. So he threw over himself a large mantle, leaving his sleeves loose and his fastenings free.

A staircase led from the school to the upper world and when Saemundur was about to mount this, the devil grasped at him and said, “You are mine!” But Saemundur slipped out of this mantle and made off with all speed, leaving the devil the empty cloak. However, just as he left the school the heavy iron door was slammed suddenly and wounded Saemundur on the heels. Then he said, “That was pretty close upon my heels”, which words have since passed into a proverb.

Then Saemundur contrived with his companions to escape scot-free from the Black School. Some people say that when Saemundur came into the doorway, the sun shone upon him and threw his shadow onto the opposite wall. As the devil stretched out his hand to grapple with him, Saemundur said, “I am not the last. Do you not see who follows me?” So the devil seized the shadow, mistaking it for a man and Saemundur escaped with a blow on his heels from the iron door. But from that hour he was always shadowless, for whatever the devil took, he never gave back again.

Many indications point in the direction that religious education, and the religious discourse as such, have reached a critical crossroad. First, the demand for a non-religious common ground in society is having a strong impact on how conventional religious education is perceived; second, harsh criticism on the legitimacy of religion in general from humanistic and atheistic circles also points to the fact religious education needs to be re-evaluated; third, identity crisis among religious educators also points in this direction.

This paper takes critical look at religion as a historical and cultural phenomenon and a construct of the human imagination. It aims at addressing the question: Can religious education be justified if the aim of education is to educate to reality? The question will be answered by stating an argument that views religious education as an exercise in a healthy use of the human imagination. The argument will be explained, debated and conclusions will be drawn. The article argues that the creative imagination is the defining element in, to use “god-talk”, God’s freedom not only within them, but within society at large. The article explores how this translates both into religious education and secular world-view.

**Two Worlds**

They humans, when looked at historically, seem to be somewhat predisposed to imagine worlds with either better characteristics than their own or worse. This is “part and parcel of our endeavor to know”, to find themselves and to achieve a feeling of safety and security, a “home in an otherwise complicated and dangerous universe”.

Present in every human being are two desires: a desire to know the truth about the primary world, the given world outside themselves in which they are born, live, love, hate and die and the desire to make new secondary worlds of their own or, if we cannot make them themselves, to share in the secondary worlds of those who can.

This protective function is not at least, based on our need to distance ourselves from reality because such a distancing serves some psychic purpose. As Freud(1929) wrote:

But one can do more than just withdraw from the world like a hermit; one can try to re-create the world, to build up in its stead another world in which its most unbearable features are eliminated and replaced by others that are in conformity with one’s own wishes. But whoever, in desperate defiance, sets out upon this path to happiness will, as a rule, attain nothing. Reality is too strong for him. He becomes a madman, who for the most part finds no one to help him in carrying through his delusions (p. 81).
It is asserted, however, that each one of them behaves in one respect like a paranoic, and he corrects some aspect of the world which is unbearable to him by the construction of a wish and introduces this delusion into reality. A special importance attaches to the case in which this attempt to produce certainty of happiness and a protection against suffering through the delusional remolding of reality is made by considerable number of people in common. The religions of mankind must be classed among the mass delusions of this kind. No one, needless to say, who shares a delusion ever recognizes it as such.

Pedagogically, this is an important insight, as it not only hints at the validity of religious education when reality becomes too harsh, but also alerts them to the potential psychopathology of religious beliefs. Nonetheless, despite Freud’s powerful criticism of religion as being delusional, it is probably impossible, even for the most rational and conscious of them, to totally transcend all delusions. Further, as the human “self” is itself an imaginative construct, it is always encircled in the world of the imagination. To learn to appreciate this is to humbly admit to the limitations of their beliefs and to submit to extend the lucidity of transparent living.

In the most primitive and autistic parts of their psyche there are untutored fantasies, omnipotent and magical thinking, utter whimsicality, free associations, ineffable images, hallucinatory entities and events, very private needs, symptoms, dreams, sterility and internal objects. Even the most sagacious of them can dwell in this whimsical world, acting out needs and motives associated in the public sphere, in the marketplace and in how they relate to animal and nature. Under normal conditions, the part of their psyche that is closest to perception is the “realistic” world, where there are sense perceptions, reality testing, hard and undeniable facts, logical connections, look-and-see references, actual entities and events, factual needs, signs, indices, workings, resourcefulness and external objects. This can only be apprehended to a certain degree, however, due to their normal psychological constraints. However, in between these two worlds, there is inevitably, even for the most scientific, rational and dogmatically correct among them, the intermediate world of sacred wonders. A fertile space where there are tutored fantasies, adventurous thinking, orderly imagination, inspired connections, imaginative entities and events, cultural needs, symbols, playing, creativity and transcendent objects prefigured by the transitional objects of their childhood.

If there is a well-intentioned God who has sacred aims for humans to know what is best for them, then they should naturally educate them to cooperate in facilitating these aims. From this perspective, the challenge of religious education would be to find ways to work constructively with the provocative “reality” of a living God in their lives. With theologically charged terminology, this involves pedagogically finding ways to guide them towards a healthy self-actualization of what tradition has referred to as *Imago Dei* or God’s image in their created nature, in their personal lives, within organizations, society and within humanity at large. Theologically this can be interpreted in terms of the “visible Church” or the invisible church, which is from a more secular point of view, in terms of social institutions, democracy, human rights and culture. The basic question revolves around the dynamics between their constituted nature and the actualization of their lives towards constructive, peaceful aims. Their physiological and psychological make-up play within society have to do with the dynamics of our imagination. Theologically, Christ claimed the presence of a living God among them and challenged them to live a life faithfully and abundantly in the potentiality of an imagined kingdom. This he saw as a sacred community where God’s presence is felt as a healing, comforting and peace-building power. He imagined this community ultimately to grow, not necessarily uniformly and mono-culturally, but rather as an opening up of an imaginary space for all of humankind.
From a modern standpoint and in light of the imaginative nature of these things, it seems that their imagination is essential for their living as it gives them the potential to create their future in cooperation with a divine plan that is physiologically registered in their innermost being. It seems that their imagination is somewhat controlled, dependent and inseparable from the physiological reality of the body and therefore largely determined by it. However, if they dare to, they can also envision our imagination as being somewhat free from it and as an active agent able to transcend their bodily make-up and transform its physiological nature through its dialectical relationship between the inner world and the outer.

The Secular and the Sacred

The sacred is the aspect of life that reflects their dedication to deities, religious aims and meanings that are not to be challenged or transgressed. Externally, the sacred is portrayed in sacred symbols, places, nature, persons, animals, theologies, philosophies, theories and political ideologies. The sacred is, in Paul Tillich’s words, ultimate reality that they easily fuse with our human motives, needs, desires, creeds and dogmas. In religious education relating to the sacred is commonly expressed as the goal of a journey that, through the imaginative use of vocational devices such as rituals, texts, prayers, community, etc., enables them to reach deep into their souls to sense the totality of our psyche and, through that, deep into the collective human psychic reality that is common to all human beings. On this journey, they realize that God — as far as they know him or her — is the projection of the whole of their psyche upon a sacred heavenly image, with the positive result of causing the self to lose its pretentious status as the center of the world. By mirroring themselves in the image of God, the self yields to a new center where the needs of both the self and the unconscious are recognized.

In this dimension, however, psychopathology manifests in oppressive conscience, where a neurotic voice is mistaken for the voice of God, in “legalistic repression of parts of our being”, or in the immoral “exploitation of all possibilities”. The sagacity of the sacred is found in the imaginary feeling of wonder that vigorously challenges the self and compels it to evaluate itself in response to proclaimed messages, or what the New Testament called Good News that resonate within their innermost being. What religious education has to offer is to enable people to experience, the God-given life force that reveals itself in their sense of the sacred and can be approached though the imagination as a “central resource” of their inner life. Through the imagination, the self is able to maximize its potentialities within the constraints imposed on it, both as an active agent and as a passive receiver. Ulanov writes:

The world of religious mystery and the world of the deep unconscious are both largely unknown worlds... They overlap and ... anyone ... who tries to put into words what a primordial experience will immediately feel the necessity of using symbolic language. It is as if they have to describe a happening that is both profoundly subjective and starkly “there” and “other”, an unmistakably objective event that penetrates to the center of their most private subjective selves without quickly rebounding into the surfaces of consciousness.

In the intermediate space between the experiencing self-consciousness and the sacred, the imagination enables the self as a whole to feel its freedom in the play of fancies. The constructive and responsible enjoyment of this reality nourishes as the self in faith and consolidates this life of freedom in responsible self-actualization of vocational living. It takes their most subjective personal experiences out into the world at large. The aim of religious education should be to foster this in a healthy fashion.

The function of religion for the human psyche is to offer true or false containment for primordial
experience. In true containment, religion gives primordial experience a place and state of being in which it finds itself at ease with them and they find ourselves at ease with it. In false containment, religion’s primordial experience is such a threatening appearance that there is nothing they can do but flee from it.

**Psyche and Soul**

The self-consciousness can through religious education imaginativity relate with the psyche, but they still need to explore the reality of the soul as a foundation of their psychological well-being. The Ulanovs argue that “the psyche’s functions are its life” and it “consists of the conscious and the unconscious” reflecting their relationship to the human, the non-human and the sacred.

The psyche is a central fact of human life, perhaps even though it has no clear biology and its bodily habitation cannot be clearly fixed, in spite of all the advances of neurology and medical psychiatry and biochemistry.

In healthy religion they project the whole of the psyche positively upon God, creating the sense of living in the presence of something infinitely bigger than oneself—something that is simultaneously human and something that transcends the human. In unhealthy religion project their shadow side, i.e. aspects within themselves that they do not want to be aware of and hide behind their personal masks upon either God, the devil, demons, or others. The latter turns God into a harsh and violent deity and them into fanatics, preoccupied with sin, hell and the devil and hence makes them victimize themselves and making them incapable of moral self-evaluation.

Now, once again admitting the difficulty of giving any complete designation of the self and the psyche, or describing their precise location in their physiological body, they will dive still further into the unknown by addressing the subject of the soul. In doing so, their definition impasse gets even more complex. The Ulanovs say:

The soul is harder still to locate and in an age of scientism, particularly difficult to define. That does not for a moment persuade those who have met the soul in their work in depth psychology, or religion, or any other discipline that deals with human interiority, to believe that the soul is only a remnant of a looser time in human intellectual enterprise or a continuing mark of superstition or easy credulity, sooner or later to be replaced by the discoveries and determinations of more thought minded scientists.

In fact, the notion soul, just like the concept of God, has been handed down to them through the centuries as a valuable tool for describing some of the most profound and meaningful moments of our experience. The Ulanovs write:

Soul describes very well, with a rich tradition of experience as well as speculations behind it, the organizing principle of life, which the body gives up when it turns from living organism into cadaver. The soul inhabits the body and is not, at least not in this life, encountered except in the body. But it does not depend on the body in the way the psyche does. It is by definition spiritual, without matter, without any parts that can be measured by the senses. In scholastic philosophy, its simple being is the mark of its perfection, making it indissoluble, everlasting, their link to life that transcends the body.

Religious education should, based on all this, evolve around the human experience of having a soul. The soul is here defined as the faculty that meditates the divine in our life and the talent that allows for the actualization of the sacred aims in their lives. Theologically, it is the seed of God’s image within their psyche, a well-kept constitutional secret incarnated in our physiological nature and ready to be cultivated in reality and society. The Ulanovs write:
The soul is the meeting place of the human and the divine; the source of their notion of general purposiveness, wholeness, clarity of being; the canopy under which the conscious and unconscious constituents of the psyche can come together in a union which, at least by analogy, points to that union of the individual with its ultimate source to which the religions believe all people are called.

By attuning to the soul, they have to open themselves imaginatively to the real of the sacred. In religious education this process can be cultivated in a variety of fashion, such as in solitude, within society, or within the non-human environment and is often stimulated by sacred texts, signs, symbols and places. This experience is often felt as momentary surrender or dissolution of the self into aims representing aspirations more sublime than its habitual intentions and the concentration of all their imaginative powers on this aim and putting it into long-term practice is what the Christian tradition calls, contemplation and contemplative living. This self-perpetuating act is felt as an intimate closeness to something infinitely transpersonal. In this transitional encounter with the sacred, they experience what has been depicted in the world’s religions as numinous, divine, holy, thou, spirit, God, etc. in the fusion of the subjective experiences of the soul and the objective indications that reflect the sacred in our environment. In this meeting, the self attends to the motions of God’s grace, imaginatively experiencing sacred things brought to it as the soul reacts to the hidden but everpresent God.

**Known and Unknown**

Their experience of the sacred, however, takes place in the junction of the *sacred as known* and the *sacred as unknown*. They experience the sacred as conventional, familiar and delightful echoes of what they are accustomed to from their past, what has been handed down to them by their native religious heritage and resonates with their best experiences of their lives as infants, in the arms of another. On the other hand, they also encounter the sacred as the awful, unfamiliar and surprising, that which frightens and challenges them, provoking within them fearful remnants of our most vulnerable state when, as infants, they were out of the hands of their primary caregivers for too long. As they will see, this is a self-alternating process and encountering it is like any other transitional experience, not without risk or difficulties. This reflects the struggles that they potentially face as the self makes an effort to transcend itself for purposes of self-alteration in the dimension of the sacred and purification on the path to an authentic life. This indicates the strenuous process they must undergo if they take on the challenge that sensing the sacred imposes on them, a process which, if successful, is aptly described by the term transparency.

This educational process, facilitated by their imagination, enables the personal and the collective, the non-rational and the rational, the primary and secondary, the conscious and the unconscious to meet, enabling distinct realms of their life to breathe in concerted and beneficial relation to each other. Nonetheless, just as they need, in the name of maturity, to perseveringly individuate the self in regard to the inner psyche and the outer environment, they also need to differentiate the self in regard to the powerful influence of gods and divinities. Even in the wildest of manic psychic states, where they are consumed by the flaming reality of the gods, the self needs to hold firm and not stray from its own responsibilities in regard to the sacred. Most personal gods are created in our own image, and often out of their most infantile wishful thinking. These gods are all too easily fused with their ideas of a supreme God and sometimes with horrendous consequences.
Religious Education

Psychologically religious education should aim at enabling the self to operate within the space of creative freedom that allows its intuition to find new possibilities and interpretations. This can be done through a variety of methods, ranging on the extremes from pietistic self-sacrificings and sensory deprivation to a total opening up to then inspirations of spontaneous mental associations that are first freed from cognitive judgments, memories, desires, or the need for comprehension and then critically examined. Healthy imagination can often be seen in the imagination of the healthy childhood, that then often seems to diminish in adulthood when it has been restricted by convention, propriety and power games. Religious education should offer a change to retrieve this by contemplating the wonders of the psyche, human society, nature and the soul. This retrieval is the path to spiritual maturity and can be described metaphorically as a return to our childhood. It will not happen without disruptions since they will inevitably fall into the hands of something inevitably bigger than the self. Nevertheless, if they do not persevere and become imaginatively mature, they will not be able to enter the land of the living God.

The transformative work of religious education occurs within the ambit of self-alteration, in the dual movement of self-preservation and self-actualization, the continuous restoration and evolution of the self. In this movement, which is provided for by the intermediate function of the imagination that facilitates the flow of images from the inner world to the outer world and back, an inner private room is created within the immense imaginary universe. In this room, their future potentialities allow the self to have, even if only momentarily, an enriching and transformative emotional experience through its encounter with something that transcends it. This “something” originates from within their soul but can, due to projective mechanisms, be experienced as an outer revelation.

The Icelandic writer Thorbergur Thordarson (1888-1974) realized that much of their suffering is caused by a lack of imagination and, as they become preoccupied with their own suffering, they lose the imagination needed to face up to the suffering of others and become apathetic towards them. He said that if they only “had imagination instead of the fear of God, there would be less suffering in the world”. Thordarson believed that conventional education aimed only at teaching logic and knowledge and that educating people about the creative imagination, empathy and real solutions to the world’s problems was missing. He defined the imagination, not as a private act, but as a collective conscience with the surrounding world; without imagination of this kind, collective life turns into an immoral and unconscious culture of machines, whereas to have a “rich imagination is to live a life in God”.

Traditions

Pedagogically every age has a different idea and understanding of how to relate to the sacred and of what constitutes the experiencing and actualization of it. It seems that the task of the first Christians educators was to postulate and claim certain truths in regards to take an integrated individual stand over and against collective crowd mentality. Ever since the first century, the task of the Church has been to carry this message forward and interpret it afresh with respect to ever-changing cultures and world-views.

Religious educators found and formulated various means for dealing with the unexpected and dangerous tendencies of the sacred. Sometimes the imagination was allowed to play a role by its ability to bend, redirect and interpret students experiences of the sacred, but sometimes there was a tendency to limit these kinds of
unruly and arbitrary experiences, and experiences based on personal wishes, feelings, or perceptions, in the name of objective facts, reasons, or universal principles. There was also the tendency to direct transpersonal influences by means of definite forms, laws, rites, institutions, belief systems and medications.

Both secular and religious education rely on the imagination as well as on formal, rationalistic methods, creeds and codes. This should enable them to both realize the religious origin of Christian pedagogy and find a way to reform the identity-bewildered Christian tradition. They have seen that Christianity has the possible psychological effects that are capable of both strengthening and destroying the self. If it were to envision itself as a provider of a secure space for our imagination to flourish, it might well regain its stature as a theater of healing. This would make it an interesting modern organization that channels the nourishing effects of their soul into an arid and drug-saturated society. Mystical Christianity portrays the state of contemplation as the full blossoming of the interior life.

When they work as educators with the imagination, they are, inevitably, working within the transitional space that originates in their experience of living in closeness with a trustworthy other—the primary care giver. This expands and becomes the basis of our experience of being touched by the sacred, in closeness with God. In this, they are safe to sense the movement from the innermost realms of their being, out towards God and then back again—and in this movement to sense the darkness of their being and to realize that this darkness belongs to God. If they can hold on to this experience, they might even imaginative have a face-to-face encounter with God in a “contemplatio”: a total directing of their mind towards God, where they come to understand that they and God are both two distinct beings, but also one. In this process, the ego surrenders to the self in the safety of a sacred space. But “contemplation” derives from “con” which means “in” or “with” and “templatio” derives from “templum” or “temple”.

The Tango of Soul and Psyche

Religious education should enable them to enjoy a free-flowing imagination that untangles their perceptions from conventions and enables them to both concentrate deeply and see the world as playfully as a child. It should enable them to see clearly, a prelude to rational thinking and to regain the capacity to be puzzled and fascinated by our experiences. It unravels their imagination from fantasy and makes them perceive everyday things in playful ways or as Ann Belford Ulanov expresses it, when soul and psyche work—and play—together, anxiety is quietened and an ineffable peace descends. The peace is not prescribable and that is true. But they have the most unmistakable foreshadowings of it in both soul and psyche and that is why they must come to terms with both.

An unhealthy relation to the sacred involves having an imagination that is fixated, one is enslaved socially or personally by excessive religious fantasies, lack of imagination, stagnated literalism, or a concrete religious system, producing bigotry, fanaticism, inordinate self-destructive ecstasy, dogmatism, and ritualism. But neither is it healthy if, in a breakthrough out of all this, one loses the identity of a personal and communal religious center.

Religious education should feed the imagination with myths, dreams, fantasies and a number of other fundamental elements often neglected by other fields of knowledge. It should emphasize the individual who also is connected with the social aspect of living in a community with others, by initiating developmental processes that develop within the context of society and history. Religious education can help them to strengthen their individuality and autonomy and render them better equipped to make responsible choices and
reflective democratic decisions. Even though its effects are not easily measurable, humankind can gain from a
sound religious education as an imaginative enterprise that reveals the twofold aspects of their personal and
collective nature, and the way to modernity and sustainable future. Wolfart Pannenberg says the philosophers
never grasped with full clarity the unique intersection of creative freedom and receptivity that characterizes the
life of the imagination.

The two great mistakes within theological discourse in regard to the imagination manifest themselves,
however, in what Paul Tillich (1886-1965) described as the two dialectical poles of self-preservation and
self-alteration. One is displayed in extreme literalism and the other in extreme transcendentalism. In theology,
the imagination can be interpreted as the space where divine inspiration and human creativity are not in
competition but, rather, work together in such a way that inspiration is the condition for human creativity.

Conclusion

Understanding the workings of the imagination challenges their understanding of religious education. It is
their hope that the insights provided in this article can encourage religious educators to regain their confidence
to controvert all ill-founded worldviews that disregard or dismiss the human imagination and their need for
cultural and symbolic living. He hopes it encourages them to concentrate on the future in light of renewed
promises of increased self-reflective abilities of their students, since our in-depth understanding of the
dynamics of their imagination could help better equip them for contemplating our needs and aims. Even further,
they could make them better able to imagine the needs of others and make mature choices as consumers and
citizens in regards to the four dimensions of life. Finally, they could also make them better equipped to make
sound democratic decisions as they not only enhance increased autonomy, but also encourage working through
all confrontations between finitude and infinity within themselves and lessen the effects of inhibitions,
preventing personal growth.

Politics is an imaginary discourse that should foster both individual and collective growth. The politics
that prevail, however, are mind-numbing pastoral politics where herds of citizens and professionals are led by
political shepherds who manipulate the fantasies that create the group dynamics of the crowd. As the Church
becomes more permeated by the sacred, it should be able to provoke a more critical and enlightened approach
in regard to such fantasies. Further, due to its extensive historical experimentation with institutional life and
organization, it should be well equipped to lay out the advantages and disadvantages of pastorally motivated
 communal life and management.

Regrettably, many religious educators are not making use of this knowledge of the relationship between
the individual and the collective; additionally, they face an identity crisis. Religious education too often fosters
flock herd mentality, individual vulnerability, self-righteousness and ignorance. They find traces of the sacred
within all four psychological dimensions of reality—within the intra-psychic, the inter-personal and the
supra-personal dimensions, as well as in the trans-personal relations with God. In this last dimension, the
imagination represents the life of the spirit that has power to both control and distort the self.

To experience the sacred is to experience the life of the imagination. It is a fearful thing to surrender to the
sacred—a reality that they naturally fuse with our image of God almighty, the creator of everything visible and
everything invisible, the inner and the outer worlds. The sacred is what the religious traditions invite them to
imaginatively explore through myths, texts, sagas, tales, rituals, prayers, meditation, contemplation and
symbols. It might be fearful to fall into it, but it might be even more fearful to fall out of it, into a world empty
of symbols and poetic meanings, a world of reductionism and bare chemicism.

If they look critically at the collective journey that is human history, they see how their education easily stagnates in religious beliefs, scientific myths and political fantasies that dismiss the nourishing ability of the creative imagination and the poetic space of the sacred. As they are poetically created in the likeness of God, they can—through a devotional self-preservation and self-alteration dialogue with the sacred—be led by a natural tendency to float gently towards the mystical shore of authentic selfhood.

Religious education deals with the meeting place intersection convergence of the real and the imaginary and imagination plays a role in both. Just as science is more than just evidence, numbers, mathematics, laboratory work and logic, religion is more than worship, devotion, poetry and beauty. Both can submit to the purpose of creatively directing humankind in a constructive direction towards sustainability and growth on its collective journey. The scientist may imagine the heavens to be in the brain and the religious imagine a mind in the heavens—and both are needed.

They become persons through consciousness and through educating themselves towards reality. In modern theology, this means being open to the variety of transitional experiences that the imagination allows for. They do this by determinedly imagining that they are being loved by a God who mirrors the deepest realms of their soul and transcends their temporal existence and by understanding themselves as living securely within the greater narrative of the sacred story of Life. This challenges them to actualize the sacred by making it more transparent in themselves, requiring them to become progressively more conscious, less contaminated by primitive impulses and accepting of the gifts that the archaic soul provides.

Through the use of religious symbols that reflect archetypal psychic contents and processes, religious education, can allow the self to transcend itself as the imagination moves from the soul deep within, through the self and out into the world, all the way to God in the heavens and then back in again in the same experience. A healthy ego constantly transcends itself through self-preservation and self-alteration processes in its consideration of the sacred on its journey toward a more mature self-identity. This is a movement from faith to secularism, back to faith, that they all can make safely, as they imagine they live securely in the hands of either a living God—even though it is expressed being no god at all.

References