

TASMANIAN COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

DIVISION OF TEACHER EDUCATION

A critical analysis of Alfred North Whitehead's  
statements that "The essence of education is  
that it be religious"

and

"A religious education is an education which  
inculcates duty and reverence"

Being part requirement for the Degree of Master  
of Education.

E. M. WEBBER - OCTOBER 1976

I acknowledge, by dedicating this  
slight work to them, the help I have  
received from my wife and children.

By mutual reverence, and the acceptance  
of duties, we have discovered that  
learning for life is an educational  
process which may truly be described  
as religious.

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ABSTRACT

An investigation of the various interpretations given by Whitehead to the concepts religious, education, duty, and reverence; and especially of the problems which arise when they are taken in association, as in the title-statements.

The philosophical implications of his views on religion (which cannot be dissociated from his description of that which is religious), and the bearing they have not only on education generally, but also on religious education, is examined. Ancillary to this has been a brief scrutiny of forms of knowledge, methods of learning, truth-claims, and the nature of belief.

This has led to an examination of the nature and role both of certainty and uncertainty; and, on the authority of Whitehead and others, a claim has been made that the latter element has a legitimate place in the activity or process of education.

Whitehead's dissatisfaction with the positivistic standpoint is shown in his advocacy of a type of philosophy which was, for some long time, foreign to most educational theorising; but which appears now to be regaining vitality and support.

The concepts of purpose and teleology are referred to as being necessarily integral to an education which is religious in essence. Similarly, the concepts of subjectivity and objectivity, of the social and the individual, are woven through the whole dissertation. Whitehead's suggestion that conventional religion is losing its authority as it loses its objectivity is examined; and it is suggested that his relativism (which manifests itself as 'process') is seen both as contributing to this, and perhaps as leading to a new understanding of the meaning of religion.

In conclusion, reference is made to special problems which Whitehead's point of view might provide for those who are most directly concerned in the enterprise of education.

PREFACE

Before undertaking the analysis which is the purpose of this Dissertation, I shall comment on an incipient conceptual confusion. In the two title statements Whitehead uses the word 'religious'. 'Religion' is its cognate; but might there not be, in fact, a distinction between the two concepts of such significance that reference to 'religion' should be avoided? In other words, by mentioning religion do we not move into quite a different region? One which is indeed, not strictly germane to our topic?

John Dewey in his A Common Faith (Yale U.P., 1934) wrote "It is widely supposed that a person who does not accept any religion is thereby shown to be a non-religious person.... I believe that many persons are so repelled from what exists as a religion by its intellectual and moral implications, that they are not even aware of attitudes in themselves that if they came to fruition would be genuinely religious. I hope this remark may help to make clear what I mean by the distinction between 'religion' as a noun substantive and 'religious' as adjectival". This last sentence illustrates the difficulty to which I refer.

This can hardly be seen as other than a disparagement of 'religion'. Does it entail, at the same time, a disparagement of the notion of 'religious'? Dewey might have thought not; but in that case he would have put a meaning of his own on the latter word, different from general usage.

Whitehead is similarly critical of some of the manifestations of religion; but he does not go so far, I feel, as Dewey went when he said "Yet it is conceivable that the present depression in religion is closely connected with the fact that religions now prevent, because of their weight of historical encumbrances, the religious quality of experience from coming to consciousness, and finding the expression that is appropriate to present conditions, intellectual and moral". This is too general an assertion to be of much value. Whitehead was more specific because, unlike Dewey, he did not regard all knowledge as being basically scientific in character. For this reason he was

able to make provision for religion as a 'form of knowledge'; and he saw in religion certain recognisable attributes.

Thus, in Religion in the Making (C.U.P., 1927) he tells us that, in the external expression of religion in human history, ritual, emotion, belief, and rationalization are marked features. Furthermore he speaks of concepts peculiar to religion, which come in moments of insight; and he therefore describes religion as 'one among other specialized interests of mankind whose truths are of limited validity'. This conceptualizes a distinctive kind of awareness, the reality of which Dewey would not have accepted. Even less would he have agreed with Whitehead's statement that 'on its other side religion claims that its concepts, though derived primarily from special experiences, are yet of universal validity, to be applied by faith to the ordering of all experience. (my emphasis)

If he is right in this - and I believe he is - he has here closed that gap between religion as a noun substantive and religious as adjectival.

Religion, then, must somehow enter into Whitehead's 'essence of education'; though clearly he was not addressing himself to the consideration of religious education as such. In the popular mind, and in many educational circles, there is much misunderstanding on this score. I have, however, allowed myself to discuss aspects of 'religious education' when the argument seemed to lead to it; because if Whitehead's stated criteria are legitimate, they apply to this subject as much as to any other. Religious education is indeed a brick in the edifice which is religion.

Whitehead himself frequently brought religious and religion into close association, as this extract from Religion in the Making shows.

The importance of rational religion in the history of modern culture is that it stands or falls with its fundamental position, that we know more than can be formulated in one finite systematized scheme of abstractions, however important that scheme may be in the elucidation of some aspects of the order of things.... Religion insists that the world is a mutually adjusted disposition of things, issuing in value for its own sake. This is the very point

that science is always forgetting. Religions commit suicide when they find their inspirations in their dogmas... but dogmatic expression is necessary. For whatever has objective validity is capable of partial expression in terms of abstract concepts, so that a coherent doctrine arises which elucidates the world beyond the locus of the origin of the dogmas in question... The religious spirit is not identical with dialectical acuteness".

When we speak of religion we must certainly include Christianity; and Christianity is peculiar because of its claim to know 'saving truth' by revelation. In addition to revealed religion there is natural religion. Thus a particular kind of epistemology has developed out of Christianity; and so has a special relationship between it, philosophy, and education. Dewey's opinion deserves respect: but I do not see how we can make a clean separation between 'religion' and 'religious' (as he would have favoured) in such a way that we could interpret "The essence of education is that it be religious", quite independently of religion!

If it appears that this is to make a logical mountain out of a <sup>7</sup> semantic molehill, let it be recognised that in any study of religion we must employ certain concepts or hypotheses (e.g. sin, redemption) in unique fashion because they belong to a unique form of discourse. Other concepts (e.g. free-will, creation, after-life), although they have a religious meaning, have other distinct interpretations when they are employed in the discourse proper to, say, psychology or philosophy. Even those religious concepts which can be transferred from one category of discourse to another (by way of analogy or metaphor) must be described as being at least of the substance of religion. So religion seems to have a logical priority from which the knowledge of that which is religious might be derived.

When we add the word 'religious' to 'education' or 'psychology' for example, we produce a conceptual hybrid; and this is bound to lead to ambiguity. Whitehead's statements in the earlier part of this preface suggest a reason why it is hardly possible to apply sufficient rigour to enable us to avoid this ambiguity.

The use of the word 'religious', then, in the two statements which

I shall submit to critical analysis implies,

(a) that all the kinds of things mentioned about religion must be kept in mind.... in substance if not in detail; and

(b) that some equivocation will certainly appear. Consider, for example, the difference (which is not merely semantic) between 'sociology of religion' and 'religious sociology'. 'Education that is religious' (in Whitehead's sense) is not the same as 'religious education'. Yet, at the conceptual level, the two cannot be separated completely any more than 'religious' and 'religion' can be separated completely.

Although it is not possible to give any one comprehensive and satisfying definition of religion, it is, without question, an entity (as Whitehead recognised when he named its attributes) from which the religious is derivative - even though man was being religious long before he knew what religion was!

So the concept 'religious' will have to carry a wide meaning, with overtones which transcend the purely adjectival. With J.P. White we might see it as meaning something like 'the understanding of ends themselves' when we use it in association with 'education', hybrid though it be. And that form of words would not be entirely inappropriate as one aspect towards a definition of 'religion'.



## SECTION ONE

### Introduction

"The aim of education is to dispel error and discover truth" -

Socrates

"The true aim of education is the attainment of happiness through perfect virtue" - Aristotle

For the concepts education and religion, defining characteristics may readily be found, even though their definition is impossible. In this critical analysis of two of Whitehead's statements I have selected from his writings illustrations of a sort to produce an argument which is as consistent, and a pattern which is as intelligible, as might be expected concerning concepts which (like that of virtue, in the quotation from Aristotle, above) are of an ambiguous character. ???

Whitehead's assertions that 'religion is what a man does with his own solitariness', and that 'the essence of education is that it be religious' provide an illustration of the inherent difficulty. For though it might be possible to conceive of a 'solitary religion', it is hardly possible to contemplate an education that was solitary. The dilemma is, however, more apparent than real. It is characteristic of the method of presenting ideas for examination adopted not only by Whitehead, but also by William James and Bergson. Although it was not Whitehead's custom to be paradoxical in his attempts to express what he believed to be 'the truth' (unlike some recent theologians whose writings have had considerable effect on our theological understanding of 'religion') a similar apparent equivocation appears in his use of 'meaning'. In places he intends it to denote value; and, in others, interpretation. The context generally makes clear which usage is intended.

The two statements which I shall submit to critical analysis come at the end of the first chapter of Whitehead's The Aims of Education and other Essays. Although one sentence follows the other immediately, the first ('the essence of education is that it be religious') is an assertion, or a statement of belief.... a manifesto, almost: and the second ('a religious education is an education which inculcates duty and reverence') seems to hint at a methodology. For, as Whitehead says in that Essay, duty requires that we attain knowledge of what is relevant to decision and action, and

reverence is that which is inseparably conjoined with generality of outlook.

There will be cause to refer to this 'overlapping' elsewhere in this work; but I merely remark at this stage that it will be necessary to examine the two statements separately, as well as to analyse the two concepts (of religion and education) along this double course. I intend in this way to elucidate what meaning Whitehead gives to the concepts of education and religion.

Belief is certainly an aspect of religion; and so even is methodology. Methodology is certainly an aspect of education; but so is belief.... if that word is to include theories and philosophies of education. Whitehead's two sentences are definite enough to suggest that they formulate his own philosophy of education. Yet to find out what he meant in what are, in fact, two splendidly inconclusive assertions, it will be necessary, because his comments about the nature, and the scope, and the purpose both of religion and education are scattered so widely throughout his writings, to survey a large area of his recorded thought.

Following the example of discursiveness given by him I have incorporated at sundry points in this work glimpses of Whitehead the man; for it is unlikely that we shall come to a reasonable understanding of his teaching unless we keep in mind who was the teacher. And this in spite of the advice of Thomas Aquinas, who, in a letter to a Brother John on 'How to Study', wrote *Non respicias a quo sed sane dicatur memoriae recommenda!* Although Whitehead did not write formally on education he was an educationist; although he did not write formally on moral philosophy he was a moralist; and although he did not write formally on religion(1), his religious thinking pervades the whole corpus of his literary work. Indeed, to discover his 'complete' thought about any matter (and not least about education) requires a familiarity with that literary corpus.(2)

It will be difficult to keep in the forefront the educational aspect of the subject, and to avoid entering into the depths of Whitehead's religious philosophy. It could be asked, indeed, whether it were possible to comprehend what he meant by 'religious education' without exploring these more profound areas of his thought. I can but plead, in mitigation, the need to be selective within the prescribed compass of this dissertation.

There is a two-fold value in studying Whitehead just now. At the simpler level he was what the man-in-the-street (if he had known him!) would describe as an optimist. He was a man who, in living life to the full, manifestly enjoyed doing so. The sort of upbringing he was able to enjoy, and the period of history in which he spent his youth in Britain, combined to preserve him from the effects of an angst which is so typical of later generations exposed to existential speculations and doomsday realities.

Second, and at a deeper level, what he said about intuition is of prime importance. Much will be said by way of explanation of that statement as I develop my theme.(3.50) But here and now it might be said of the philosophy which is peculiar to Whitehead that it provides a common stratum to those scientific methodologies which allow a place for intuition. He went so far sometimes in his claim for intuition that even his friends had to criticise him. P.A. Schilpp, for example,(4.611) regretted Whitehead's statement that 'our intuitions of righteousness disclose an absoluteness in the nature of things, and so does the taste of a lump of sugar.'(5.165) Whitehead had been describing intuitions as absolute; but in this quotation the emphasis is probably on the absoluteness of righteousness rather than on that of intuition.

It was this sensitivity towards intuition which led him to rebuke the hard-headed positivists(3.164) who heaped scorn upon the mystic, the artist, or the romantic poet. Mary B. Hesse reminds us that Whitehead

contrasts two modes of perception... one part of our experience is handy and definite in our consciousness; also it is easy to reproduce it at will. The other type of experience, however insistent, is vague, haunting, unmanageable... "Sense-data are emphatically the manageable elements in our perceptions of the world. The sense of controlling presences has the contrary character; it is unmanageable, vague, and ill-defined. But for all their vagueness... these... are what we want to know about". I have given this extract at length because it indicates better than any paraphrase could indicate the boldness with which Whitehead comes back to our solid commonsense certainties, and tries to describe them honestly and without any concession to fashionable modes of philosophical expression.(6.115/6)

I give another glimpse of 'Whitehead the man' in the Notes to this Section(7)

but here I must emphasise that Whitehead's optimism was neither fatuous nor unrealistic. He was not of the inevitable, or evolutionary, perfectionist school. Nor was he guilty of a theological liberalism of the grosser sort such as we find, for example, in H.G. Wells' God the Invisible King. (Though both agreed, remarkably enough, in thinking of God as saviour). Whitehead's optimism was a statement of faith about what could be rather than about what is. He found the focus of his optimism in 'the adventure of religion'. Though, as we shall see, he gave his own interpretation to this concept. This would not be inconsistent with Einstein's claim to belong 'to the ranks of devoutly religious men' through finding the meaning of religion in his quest to know the real world. For, as Einstein said, 'To know what is really impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radical beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive form... this knowledge, this feeling, is at the centre of true religiousness'.(8.24)

John Macquarrie tells us that Einstein believed in a cosmic religion.. which was, a faith that the world was ordered rationally, and was comprehensible in that sense. But this cosmic religion was also an important component in that inspiration which is a feature of the creative power of the scientist. 'We invent from our own minds notions of mathematical elegance, we submit them to the test of experience, and they turn out to be true'.(9.244)

This sense of order and consistency is, as Weizsäcker pointed out, an essential development from the Hebrew doctrine of ethical monotheism which has coloured the whole of our Western culture, and especially its sciences.(10.106 and 120) An interesting point is that for Einstein, as for Spinoza, God was non-personal; and Whitehead shows a similar bias in interpretation ('bias' being here entirely non-pejorative). (It is for this reason that I have included this excursion on Einstein).

But there is another significant connection between Whitehead and Einstein which arises from the latter's concept of relativity. If, as he asserted, there are no absolutes in the physical world, is there any very good reason for us to believe in absolutes in any area? Whitehead, for one, would have insisted that there was.

One feels that he could have associated himself also with an opinion

expressed by the biologist, Joseph Needham (and the fact that a biological scientist as well as a physical scientist should comment on the nature of religion is not without significance). Needham maintains that 'religion is no more and no less than the reaction of the human spirit to the facts of human destiny and the forces by which it is influenced; and natural piety, or a divination of sacredness in heroic goodness becomes the primary religious activity'. (8.24) Whitehead comments on this indirectly, as we shall see, in what he has to say about duty and reverence. But it is worth noting here how the scientist has admitted concepts of value into his reckoning.

To anyone who asked "But what is religious education all about, and within what categories does it operate, and by what criteria is it to be judged?" those statements of Einstein and Needham could be offered as contributions towards an answer... an answer which will be fleshed-out by Whitehead. The title-sentences of this dissertation are a summary of the answer Whitehead gave. Though so very brief they are, in fact, a synoptic view of life itself!

I intend, in the course of this work, to explicate that assertion; and, if justification for the line I shall take were required, I would refer to Professor A. Boyce Gibson who, in his Essay on page 40 of Melbourne Studies in Education 1965, wrote

There was never a time when the capacity to see things as a whole was more important, and there never was a time when philosophers were less concerned about it. It is a solace to turn back to Whitehead and to trace the guiding lines of his thought as it swings before the metaphysics of creativity and eternal objects, and an educational programme advancing from creative novelty through precision and discipline to constructive generalisation.

In spite of his devotion to the Platonic form of philosophy Whitehead belonged to the realist rather than to the idealist family of metaphysicians.. a family which lives on in America. In England it has (or had) been ousted by a generally anti-metaphysical way of thinking. The significant thing about the new realism is that it, like the new Thomism, has considerable bearing on the matter of religion. The emphasis on speculation, which is so marked a feature in Whitehead's philosophy, is a reaction against those

forms of philosophy and religion in which idealism is completely rejected. His disinclination towards positivism and linguistic analysis is symptomatic of his desire to produce a constructive philosophy which would revive concepts of wholeness or unity.

It is useful to remind ourselves now and then that there are these different families in philosophy, and that not all have succumbed to the blandishments of empiricism or positivism. In his introduction to Process and Reality Whitehead observes that his philosophy represents to some extent 'a transformation of some main doctrines of absolute idealism on to a realistic basis'. One of the marks of this transformation is the bringing of God into time, and involving Him in the 'world process'.

When Whitehead speaks of religion in his typical fashion he can hardly be referring to the typical transcendental concepts of the divinity which are held in the popular interpretation and understanding. It was because his philosophy was of a non-materialistic kind, even though it was compatible with the natural sciences, that its expression in religious terms was virtually inevitable. It comes as no surprise, then, to find him speaking of 'the religious vision' as 'our one ground for optimism'; thus revealing the source of his own dynamism and his basic idealism, as well as his disenchantment with scientific humanism.

At the same time Whitehead rejected a dualistic explanation of the universe. (11) He strove, as mentioned above, to find a unitary or unifying explanation of things; and this it was which led him to the more theological outlook of his later writings. He found his basic explanation in God.... but he saw God as an 'entity' related to other entities. God was not, that is to say, non-contingent. To this relationship Whitehead gives the name prehension; and he describes all entities as being bipolar, or mental and physical. (12) Just how this differs from dualism of the Cartesian sort is not easy to see; and one can sympathise with Schilpp when he says (albeit in another context) "So far as the present writer has been able to make out, Mr. Whitehead offers no specific answer to this question whatsoever".

We shall have cause to mention, in more than one place, a similar criticism. Whitehead's writing suffers, as Professor Joad used to say,

from two kinds of obscurity.... that of subject matter, and that of expression. In short, Whitehead often failed to be as clear as he should have been!

A quotation from Aristotle might make a fitting conclusion to this section. 'It is the duty of an educated man to aim at accuracy in each separate case only as far as the nature of the subject allows it: to demand logical demonstration from an orator, for example, would be as absurd as to allow a mathematician to use the arts of persuasion'. One can imagine Whitehead's offering that as an answer to the criticisms by Professors Schilpp and Joad.

Notes to Section One

1. Except perhaps his Religion in the Making.
2. Edgar French might have had Whitehead in mind when, in his preface to Melbourne Studies in Education 1965 he wrote

There was a time when educated men wrote on education, as they wrote on moral philosophy, political economy, history or literature; that is, with the ease and naturalness that comes from knowing that a subject falls within the bounds of one's competence and obligation as a learned man... That scholars in the liberal arts and sciences have often been discouraged from expressing their ideas on education is unfortunately true. Fearing that they may not be in command of all the facts, or unsure of the relevance of their particular discipline for educational studies, they have hesitated to write. But in spite of the discouragements, the tradition by which educational studies exist in easy and natural association with arts and letters lives on.

Though as Whitehead was a polymath it would hardly be possible to say what his discipline was - and he did not seem to be afflicted by the diffidence of which French speaks!

3. Ritchie, A.D. Civilization, Science and Religion, Pelican, 1945. This means that we now have three kinds of entities on our hands. (1) There are the strictly non-temporal truths (or universals or concepts if these terms are preferred). (2) Within the temporal realm there are those, if they can be found, which endure through time and constitute a backbone of permanent reality. (3) Lastly, there are changing events with which we are acquainted through sense-experience. The permanencies (2) may or may not be such that we can be directly acquainted with them in sense-experience. The erudite reader will have noticed that what I have just said is derived from contemporary philosophical discussion, mainly from Whitehead, but it is directed towards bringing out certain points made by Plato .... Only rarely is the correct answer found except by going through the wrong ones ... The practice of this method is what Plato meant by Dialectic.
4. Schillp, P.A. (editor), The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, The Library of Living Philosophers, Vol. III, Northwestern University, 1941.



5. Whitehead, A.N., Modes of Thought. Emphasis in the original.
6. Hesse, M.B., Science and the Human Imagination, S.C.M. Press, 1954.
7. Burns, E. McN. and Ralph, P.L., World Civilizations, Vol. 2, 2nd Edition, W.W. Norton and Company Incorporated, 1958.

A liberal in politics and in social theory, Whitehead had a firm belief in the certainty of progress. He had an abiding faith also in a benevolent God. But he refused to think of this God as a divine autocrat handing down tables of law, and punishing men eternally for trespassing against them. Instead, he conceived him as a God of love, as 'the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty, and goodness'. (from *Process and Reality*). The defect of most religions, Christianity included, has been to represent God as a God of power. God is not omnipotent, or else he would be the author of evil. His primary function is to save human beings from the evil which necessarily arises in connection with their struggle for the good. Such was Whitehead's conception of a friendly universe in which God and man are partners in striving towards perfection. p.671.
8. Magee, J.B., Religion and Modern Man, Harper and Row, 1967.
9. Macquarrie, J., Twentieth Century Religious Thought, S.C.M., 1967.
10. Weizsäcker, C.F. von, The Relevance of Science, Collins, 1964.
11. Cartesian dualism led to theological developments which Whitehead was unable to accept. The Cartesian distinction between mind and matter is but one example of what Whitehead called bifurcation. Other examples are those between substance and quality, thing and environment, and science and aesthetics. He tackled the problem of dualism with his doctrine of prehension. Life and matter are like two threads, interwoven in the pattern of process. Distinction between these threads will be drawn by commonsense and by scientific thought; but, in reality, they are not separable.
12. Whitehead's doctrine of prehension is really a developed form of

Hegel's doctrine of internal relations; but differentiated from it by the thought of an active taking-into-relation as against a passive being-in-relation. In this sense it is positive. It may also take a negative form, by exclusion.

SECTION TWO

Religious and Educational Value-systems

"Religion, whatever it is, is a man's total reaction upon life... Total reactions are different from casual reactions, and total attitudes are different from usual or professional attitudes" - William James.

In his Science and the Modern World Whitehead faces the explicit question 'What is religion?'; and, in answering it, he is really making a statement about what he calls 'the essential character of the religious spirit'... and that might not be at all the same thing.

'Religion' he writes 'is the vision of something which stands beyond, behind, and within, the passing flux of immediate things: something which is real and yet waiting to be realised; something which is a remote possibility, and yet the greatest of present facts; something which gives meaning to all that passes, and yet eludes apprehension; something whose possession is the final good, and yet is beyond all reach; something which is the ultimate ideal, and the hopeless quest'.(1.238)

A vision, an unrealised ideal, a hopeless quest? One must confess, somewhat ruefully, that it is not difficult to appreciate why Whitehead and Russell parted company! Yet this passage indicates how Whitehead thought in terms of 'the nexus', the web of relationships which is made up of the actual entities, as in an organism. This is a lively rather than a static concept.

There follows a remarkable transformation; one which makes clear the reason why those who insist on definitions and precise analyses are reluctant to give credit to the intellectual standing of religion (and certainly as Whitehead interpreted it). Having assured us that the religious influence is constantly decaying, he now says that the vision already referred to 'is the one element in human experience which persistently shows an upward trend. Gradually, slowly, steadily, the vision recurs in history under nobler form and with clearer expression'.

We learn from this the secret of Whitehead's optimism. Indeed, he goes so far as to say that the religious vision is the only true source

of optimism; and because of this it justly claims for itself the meed of worship. Needless to say, Whitehead would require that a special meaning be given to that concept also. It does not follow, however, that this special meaning will conflict absolutely with the Judeo-Christian basis or ideal of worship... that is, the utter primacy of devotion and service to God, followed closely by loving service of our neighbour. The religion which is typical of our culture is nothing if not practical in that sense; but service of our fellow-man is meant to be an example of our understanding of our obligation to God. To know this is absolutely essential for any proper understanding of that religion with which we are most familiar; and, with this knowledge, to warn ourselves not to assume that when Whitehead uses the word 'religion' he refers invariably to the love-service phenomenon described in the previous sentence.

Whitehead reveals himself, and gives a good indication of his character when he says 'That religion is strong which in its ritual and modes of thought evokes an apprehension of the commanding vision. That worship of God is not a rule of safety - it is an adventure of the spirit, a flight after the unattainable. The death of religion comes with the repression of the high hope of adventure'.

We hear echoes of those heady words in his other writings; but it is necessary to point out that they do not certainly entail 'brotherly love', nor do they in any sense exclude it.

The religious life, whether it is described in terms appropriate to human personality, or whether in more abstract terms, is meant to be the good life. Not la dolce vita, of course; but the kind of life which rational choice would select from alternatives. W.K. Frankena deals with this very matter, and uses Whitehead's religious model as his example. Referring to Whitehead's plea for the maintenance not only of novelty and adventure in life, but also of continuity and tradition, he regrets the contemporary tendency to substitute the expression of our individuality (at any cost) for standards of excellence. (2.92) Subjectivity takes precedence of objectivity. He does not condemn this out of hand, however; for he holds that it denotes an attitude to life which, though refusing to conform to fixed standards, accepts as a norm the concept of inspiration or imagination, which is commonly called 'life'style'.

This is not inconsistent with Whitehead's teachings. In fact he spoke of 'subjective form' in this connection ... but, and this is important, always in association with reverence. Reverence, on his own showing, is part of his understanding of religion. The question can be raised at this juncture "Does reverence have a meaning which can be ascertained only in relation to some external authority (such as God), or can it be understood fully in a purely sociological context, or even with reference to oneself?"

One thing we may assert. To hold to reverence (and duty) as value is to go a long way towards avoiding the substitution of the abstract for the concrete ... which, as Sartre has told us, is evil. It was the outlook of many thinkers in the Victorian era to recognize the moral imperatives of religion and yet to find 'faith' to be incompatible with the scientific world-view. But just as the older orthodoxy of religion was too narrow to contain knowledge, so now the new orthodoxy of materialistic science is too narrow to make room for the feelings and aspirations of which individuals are conscious. The growing mass of evidence is leading us to make essential relationships between values and persons; and in this lies the force of Sartre's remark.(3)

It follows then that our notions of value will depend very largely on our notions of persons - of, that is to say, the nature of personality. The traditional religious interpretations still stand; but they have given place to interpretations of entirely different sorts. This change is part of the complex process which may be called secularization - a process in which the completeness of meaning is sought in 'this-world-process' (saeculum). We cannot consider secularization as a phenomenon without considering, more particularly, the effects it will have on society in general. This will have important repercussions in education.

It is reasonable to enquire, therefore, how the secular state may be recognised. Perhaps the most obvious way is that its citizens, whilst not denying that certain matters of behaviour are important, will not be in general agreement as to what these are, because they will be lacking in common aims. In consequence they will be without official symbols of unity. This is why societies are disposed to give some measure of attention to religious exercises during times of major crisis. Not

necessarily because they believe in what they are doing (the speed with which the exercises are abandoned as soon as the crisis is over indicates this), but rather because in religion they are provided with symbolic ways of expressing common emotions engendered by the crisis.

What of education in the secular state? In the absence of common aims, and the consequent uncertainty about symbolic expressions of common solidarity, there must be confusion about teaching children 'to behave rightly' or 'to judge correctly'. Educational methods would have to emphasise empirical, scientific, positivistic matters; and to minimise those which were primarily concerned with values.

But, without clear value-concepts, a citizen is going to find it difficult to live in pluralist, secular society because he will lack the maturity necessary to enable him to make instructed decisions. So Bishop Newbigin enquires, in regard to the various ideal pictures of secular society "What will they do in the schools?" 'What seems to be quite impossible is to imagine that one can conduct a school in which there are no accepted convictions about behaviour and about values. To pretend to do so will merely be to be unaware of one's own convictions'.(4.130f) In this connection the Ten Points which are enumerated in the Black Paper 1975 (see Appendix) are of considerable interest. Consideration must also be given to the effect of what has been described as 'the hidden curriculum'. The qualities of neatness, obedience, and conformity, for example, are not without a subtle influence upon the educational authorities. The valuation of a student is not related, in other words, entirely to his mastery of a subject. Indeed, for his career, conformity could well be as important as competence!

There is no doubt that religion (essentially because of its external point of reference) used to provide society with its aims and standards; not to mention giving a reason for life itself. Education was concerned with explicating these matters, and reverence had a supra-human dimension. But it is questionable whether those conditions now obtain to any significant degree.

Whitehead saw the effect and importance of this change, and claimed that the whole of our tradition (which, coming from the age of Plato and

lasting to the end of the 19th century, informed every phase of our culture) is warped 'by the vicious assumption that each generation will substantially live amid the conditions governing the lives of its fathers and transmit those conditions to mould with equal force the lives of its children'. But we are living, so he insists, in the first period of human history for which this assumption is false. This too is an aspect of secularization.

He says that in all areas of our culture there were underlying assumptions of stability, familiarity, and the value of tradition. Sensible or significant changes used to take longer than an average life-span to materialise. But now changes are so rapid and so frequent that it is difficult to find routines in which to settle. He warns that 'the doctrine that routine is dominant in any society that is not collapsing must never be lost sight of'.(5.117) His warning sounds particularly clearly in an age when change is being commended for its own sake, and the disturbing of established values is seen (by enough members of the community to make their influence felt) as a virtuous activity.

It is necessary for us then to try to maintain a balance between routine and novelty. Is this not a genuine function of religion? And does it not have a bearing on duty and reverence? If it is true that a person's religion is what is really taken to heart as most reliably real and most convincingly valuable - the standard by which everything else is judged, no less - then we might expect to find, in contemporary forms or interpretations of religion, what people do indeed value most. Not to say that, in what they value most, they are inclined to find their religion!

Various surveys have recently been made in America, and especially amongst university students; and little evidence has been found to support this ideal. Religion is considered to be a respectable convention, as Whitehead declared it to be. This emasculated notion, so different from that which obtained when religion was still flowering productively (as a rule under persecution or tension), suggests a reason why religion should be studied in depth; and Magee makes the claim that education without religion is incomplete.(6.5) He is not the only one, of course, to have said that. It has become the fashion, especially amongst those education-

ists who are keen to ensure that new-style 'religion studies' have a real and active place in our schools, to assert this.

But this is not what Whitehead meant when he said that the essence of religion is 'that it be religious', even though it might be a pointer in that direction. Magee says that 'education, as distinct from training, aims at the emancipation of a human being'(6.5); and there is no doubt that the major religions of the world, according to their foundation-statements, have this same aim. (7)

That education is a life-long and emancipatory process is being increasingly recognised; but there is only a short time during which the educational process itself is made the centre of our activity. Much is learned; much is forgotten: but principles, concepts and values, and all the dimensions of a true education, endure long after the information has become stale, and skills have been superseded.

President Nathan Pusey of Harvard (Whitehead's own university) is on record as saying that

It is still uncertain what formal education can do to help us towards a religious life. Yet despite many difficulties, there is a growing recognition that an education which ignores this large, central, perennial, and life-giving area of human experience (religion) is a kind of play education, and finally a shallow thing. (See Magee op.cit. for reference to 'an unpublished address').

This quotation is of special interest because it reveals a subtle change which has crept in - education for religion, rather than religion for education!

Magee has some useful suggestions which might help to an understanding of what Whitehead meant by an education which is religious. He says that, because of a false sense of democratic tolerance, the idea has grown up that to believe is more important than what you believe. The witness of history should warn us against this; for nothing can be more horrible than man's inhumanity to man in the name of loyalty to false ideals. It is imperative that we examine our beliefs, and reject those which are base or unworthy, as well as those which are false in fact.



Once again we find ourselves in the realm of values; and Magee says (rightly, I believe)

It is important to discover what is truly worth trusting and worshipping. To relate this to education again, we may say that the central task of education could be interpreted as finding for each person a true centre of reverence that can function as a root and nourisher of every other good, leading to a great commonwealth of human sharing and fellowship. (6.8)

Unless this is done we leave the way wide open for false worship; and false worship is far more prevalent than no worship. According to Magee the religious quality of education shows itself in the investigation of

a dimension of depth in the whole range of the curriculum. Below the technical and factual surface of each discipline lie the fundamental presuppositions of truth and value from which each discipline springs. (6.8)

In saying this he is virtually summarising the essentials of Whitehead's philosophy of education.

According to this interpretation 'the religious' relates to an education which is both broad and deep, and free from dogmatic assumptions. It will place great emphasis on 'disciplined dialogue concerning ultimates'. This ideal reflects the Platonic tradition of dialectic, and is seen as the way by which clear distinctions are maintained between investigation and indoctrination.

This, it seems to me, is in the true spirit of Whitehead; and it agrees with the position he took on religion, education, and also tolerance. To come again to what he said about religion, I refer to his statement that it 'is a vision of something which stands beyond... a bagatelle of transient experience'. He was enunciating the religious belief that life is a deeper and more significant, more mysterious, affair than superficial observation might lead us to suppose.

This, as it stands, looks to be almost a trite observation. Nonetheless it recognises that, even with the most detailed knowledge of physical phenomena, it is still possible for us to overlook a deeper truth - that the universe itself 'is a well of mysterious forces and meanings which it is fatal to ignore'. (8.238)

There are three components in a sound, reliable religion; namely authority, tradition, and experience. These are in addition to that other integral part, which might be called, in a non-committal way, 'beyondness'.(9)

With this in mind we can relate those descriptions of religion which suggest that it is what a person does with his social relations with that well-known one of Whitehead's. This latter must be seen in its context, however. The full quotation includes

Religion is what the individual does with his solitariness - if you are never solitary you are never religious. Collective enthusiasms, revivals, institutions, churches, rituals, bibles, codes of behaviour, are the trappings of religion, its passing forms ... But the end of religion is beyond all this. Accordingly, what should emerge from religion is individual worth of character.(10.5)

In this statement (the negative assertions in which should be observed, as well as the positive) Whitehead is not denying that religion has social dimensions. Character would be a meaningless concept apart from human relationships. What he is insisting on is the inner integrity of the genuine religious experience; an integrity that is quite independent of all outward show or prudent social agreement. It is this inner integrity which should preserve religion against the distortions of magic, superstition, or wishful thinking... all very common features which have provided targets for sceptical antagonists, especially those who have concentrated on the shortcomings of religious institutions.

There can be few religiously-disposed persons who have not, at some time or other, been critical of the outward forms of religion. It is when one comes to ask "What do we put in their place, and how? What do we do to ensure the transmission of tradition, the validity of authority, and the reliability of spiritual experience?" that we run into difficulty. A common way of escape from this impasse is to see the task as hopeless: or, if not hopeless, as pointless, and certainly as one in which religion itself has no part to play.

Or perhaps a more obvious remedy for our social needs or voids is to employ a specialist of one sort or another to suggest or supply what is

required. Whitehead reminds us that 'another great fact confronting the modern world is the discovery of the method of training professionals, who specialise in particular regions of thought and thereby progressively add to the sum of knowledge within their respective limitations of subject'.(8.244) And the academic specialist is sometimes seen (not without reason) as one whose mind is active in the exploration of his own speciality but who, in his attitude to religion or in his aesthetic tastes, retains the undeveloped starting points of experience.

The ordinary human being is going to be called upon to face situations about which there are no precedents, no models. Where will he turn for guidance? In earlier days there were areas of expertise, clearly marked and fairly static. These, let it be admitted, produced dogmatic attitudes. Such attitudes are now dangerous because, of so many things, it can be said that they are in a state of flux and expansion; though that fact does not condemn the attitude outright. An expert in one field is likely to find all his endeavours taken up in maintaining that expertise. In consequence he is likely to be unaware of what is going on in other areas. This may not be too serious in itself; but it is serious if it produces insularity in knowledge.(11.498)

Whitehead spoke severely about the dangers, in democratic societies, which are inherent in professional specialization. The main burden of his argument was that it struck at the roots of wisdom, the hall-mark of which was balanced judgement. His words on this matter seem to be unduly critical; but, as always with his pregnant statements, they must be seen in context. What he is impressing on us is the value of breadth and balance rather than of depth and specialization; for it is in the former that we shall find the vision which a society needs for its motive force. 'My own criticism of our traditional educational methods' he says 'is that they are far too much occupied with intellectual analysis, and with the acquirement of formularised information'.(8.245 f) The quotations from Professor A. Boyce Gibson, in Section One, and J.P. White's analysis of the centrality of the humanities as an educational medium add weight to this statement of Whitehead.(12.62)

The assertion that the essence of education is that it be religious would be easier to comprehend if we could indeed leave it to specialists

to give us expert guidance. But, as we have seen, the religious experience is essentially personal. Comprehension would be easier, what is more, if we each had a special or unique religious sense (of the sort, for example, which Rudolf Otto describes so fully in his book The Idea of the Holy). Whitehead denies the existence of such a thing, and says that we derive our religious truths from knowledge acquired when our ordinary sense and intellectual operations are at their highest pitch of discipline (any declension from which takes us 'toward the dark recesses of abnormal psychology').

This is not so straightforward as it seems; for he is referring explicitly to their use in the formation of value-judgements. Religious truth brings into our consciousness that permanent side of the universe which we can care for. 'It thereby provides a meaning, in terms of value, for our own existence, a meaning which flows from the nature of things'(10.109)

This reads remarkably like the statement of a theosophist; and, in fact, much of what Whitehead says when he is writing specifically of religion, and the part played by emotion and perception, is theosophical in tone, in the sense that he is describing things which underlie all religion(s), and exist in a realm which is not material. In this respect he is fairly dogmatic. That he has chosen the best of both worlds in this way is revealed in such a remark as this

Thus an ill-balanced zeal for the propagation of dogma bears witness to a certain coarseness of aesthetic sensitiveness... it shows a strain of indifference to the fact that others may require a proportion of formulation different from that suitable for ourselves. Perhaps our pet dogmas require correction; they may even be wrong.(10.113)

His argument against dogma seems to be that as it is the product of the thoughts and experiences of other persons or societies it is likely to be stultifying to individuals here and now. (Did he inherit none from Plato?). Every individual must resort to certain vital dogmas which evoke a response from him, and make his own religious life fruitful. They are already there; he enters into that heritage. Whitehead admits to this; and, for that reason, insists upon the central importance of solitariness. But, as an absolute solitariness is impossible, the individual must both

learn from others and also share with others the joy and strength which develop out of his own religious experience. This attitude concurs with Whitehead's emphasis on, for example, tolerance; and certainly has a bearing on what he says about duty and reverence. But more to the point at issue, it illustrates the emphasis Whitehead gave to the purely mental aspects of religion. As he put it himself 'progress in truth... truth of science and truth of religion... is mainly a progress in the framing of concepts, in discarding artificial abstractions of partial metaphors, and in evolving notions which strike more deeply into the root of reality'.(10.117)

This is the dilemma of religious education. And although, as has been stated, this dissertation is not about religious education as such, the dilemma cannot be avoided when we seek the meaning of the statement that 'the essence of education is that it be religious'.

Whitehead finds the essential quality of religion to be a wisdom which is derived from two great universal sources. We learn about our world by empirical observation, and scientific method; and this gives us the more immediate forms of knowledge. If with this is blended an aesthetic awareness which takes us beyond the range of the immediate, we have the wisdom which enables us both to direct our practice, and to analyse what we know. Both these elements flow, according to Whitehead 'from the nature of things'.(cf. 10.128)

In sum then, Whitehead suggests that religion, if it is to stay alive, needs the inspiration of art, and the firm support of dogma - provided always, one supposes, that art does not become corybantic,(13) and the dogma dry bones! He would have found support in the words of William James who, in The Varieties of Religious Experience, wrote 'there must be something solemn, serious, and tender about any attitude which we denominate religious. If glad it must not grin or snicker; if sad, it must not scream or curse'.

In view of the distinctions and differences within religions and between religions (a matter of increasingly precise study) it is not proper to use the word 'religious' as Whitehead uses it in our title-sentence. But then, neither could he properly have used 'classical' or 'humanist' as alternatives. If any such word is to be used, its use must inevitably imply certain presuppositions. In the case we are considering, we can

see that Whitehead meant by religion a phenomenon, or a pattern of thought and ideals, based upon a Platonic model, safeguarded by rational thought, enlivened by imagination, ennobled by tolerance, and leading on to strong ethical activity. And there is no single ideal word for that!

Notes to Section Two

1. Whitehead, A.N., Science and the Modern World, C.U.P., 1926.

2. Frankena, W.K., Ethics, 2nd Edition, Prentice-Hall Inc.

"A.N. Whitehead, closer to romanticism and evolutionism (sc, than Plato was) thought that it should include novelty and adventure, as well as continuity and tradition, and that it should include them in some kind of rhythm of alternation. There is a view abroad today... ever since the romantic era... which disparages both satisfactoriness and excellence in favour of autonomy, authenticity, commitment, creativity, decision, doing your own thing, freedom, self-expression, striving, struggle, and the like. This view is not tenable in any literal or extreme form in my opinion, but it contains an important truth, namely that the best life one is capable of must have form, not just in the sense of pattern, but in the sense of being inspired by a certain attitude, posture, or 'life-style'. Whitehead called this 'subjective form' and thought that reverence should be the dominant style in our lives, though he mentioned others." (my emphasis).

And John Passmore (The Revolt against Science, Current Affairs Bulletin, Vol. 51, No.7, p.26) reminds us that

"It is in this spirit (sc. of Herman Hesse) that the artist now tells us that he is what matters, not his art, and the student that what matters is not the truth of what he says, but only that it is what he thinks. Nothing could be more opposed to the scientific spirit than this attitude of mind. For the scientist what is essential about a person is what he achieves; what he is looking for is not a way to himself but to understanding the world."

3. Here we have an illustration of a perennial problem which comes into everyone's reckoning sooner or later. This perennial problem arose along with the secularization of society; and that secularization is a reality which will be with us evermore, unless there is some global catastrophe which throws mankind right back again to its beginnings: for then, presumably, the whole pattern of religious development, with its crudities, its superstitions, its naivetes - and its splendours - would be worked-over once again.

4. Newbiggin, L., Honest Religion for Secular Man, S.C.M. Press, 1966.

5. Whitehead, A.N., Adventures of Ideas, Macmillan, 1969.
6. Magee, J.B., Religion and Modern Man, Harper and Row, 1967.
7. For example, 'You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free' - John, Chapter 8, Verse 32; though this was a salvific statement rather than a pedagogic.
8. Whitehead, A.N., Science and the Modern World, C.U.P., 1953.
9. Unless we are going to assume that Whitehead's use of the word 'religion' comprehended at all times a universality which included (say) Buddhism or Jainism, we must, it seems to me, assume that he was allowing room for the supranatural in his thinking. Because there is no opportunity to be more specific than that, I have referred to 'beyondness'.
10. Whitehead, A.N., Religion in the Making, C.U.P., 1953.
11. Kandel, I.L., Education for Complete Living, ed., Cunningham and Radford, A.C.E.R., 1938.

'The danger that confronts mankind today comes not from the expansion of education, but from specialization in some narrow corner... the necessity for integration, of a general conspectus, becomes all the more urgent'.

He quotes Ortega y Gasset -

'For science needs from time to time, as a necessary regulator of its own advance, a labour of reconstitution, and, as I have said, this demands an effort towards unification which grows more and more difficult, involving as it does, ever vaster regions of the world of knowledge'.

12. White, J.P., Towards a Compulsory Curriculum R.K.P., 1973.
- 12a. Attention should be drawn to a recent (August, 1975) publication of the British Humanist Association entitled Objective, Fair and Balanced.
13. Max Weber tells of "the marked rejection of all distinctively esthetic devices by those religions which are rational, in our special sense. These are Judaism, ancient Christianity, and - later on - ascetic Protestantism". Orgiastic religion, he says, "leads most readily to song and dance; ritualistic religion inclines towards the pictorial arts; religions enjoining love favour the development of poetry and music". Weber, by giving



details of his idea of the relationship between forms of art and forms of religion, is more specific than Whitehead is, with his more general statements of 'aesthetic'. (Sociology of Religion, Methuen, p.125).

### Section Three

#### Duty and Reverence as the Aim of Education?

"The object of an education is the realisation of a faithful, pure, inviolate, and hence, holy life" - Froebel

" 'Tis education forms the common mind

Just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined" - Pope

The writings of Whitehead are difficult to analyse, partly because of their scope and partly because of their variety. In some places they are almost 'popular', and one tends to hurry through these and assume that they are simple and straightforward. In other places they are profound and tightly argued, and in these places also one could easily overlook an important statement which alters, perhaps, the whole course of a discussion which one had felt to be *au fait* with. This is especially true of his writings about God. He was in the habit, also, of using unfamiliar terms when more usual or traditional ones would have served the purpose quite adequately.

But some of his statements, though of a popular nature, are so definite that they close off certain lines of argument. We have seen, for example, that his statement 'the essence of education is that it be religious' is not on behalf of any sectional, dogmatic, institutional, or ecclesiastical type of instruction. Equally it is clear that it does not recommend a positivistic system of accumulating and assessing facts.(1)

Had Whitehead been alive today he would have been able to call on all the contemporary adjuncts of education - the 'hardware', the electronic and other types of machinery - and no doubt he would have made full use of them. But with reserve, one suspects, because such technical assistance could endanger one of his basic ideas about education, that of the living contact between greater mind and lesser mind. The contact can be had through books, of course; for, as we have it on the authority of Milton, 'A good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life'. The proper and diligent use of books, especially those of a timeless quality, allows us to come to grips with the thoughts of the authors in a way that reference to

arbitrary selections from their works makes impossible. Anything which helps us to be transfused with that life-blood will be of benefit to us; but anything which gives us only selections or illustrations by another person through mechanical means will do us despite if it misleads us into thinking that we have had the wholeness of an author. Free access to books is indicative of a positive attitude towards freedom of choice; and freedom of choice leads to a widening of intellectual horizons. The spoken word has an immediacy which the written word does not have; but it is only the latter which can acquire the quality of transformed speech in which lies the essence of creative expression. McLuhan is a spokesman for those who think that books are destined to become obsolete because the written word is frozen and silent. It is significant that Sartre, now that he is nearly blind, has said "I go on thinking; but writing having become impossible for me, the real activity of the thinking has, in a way, been suppressed".

Now although the traditional approach to the use of books is an integral part of Whitehead's educational policy, in trying to work out a methodology from him we have always to remember that what appear to be methods often turn out to be, in fact, ideals. It is worth pointing out that Whitehead's definition of education, which we are here considering, constitutes a serious challenge to those who maintain that any appearance of order or design in the world is, in truth, fortuitous. If this were indeed true, and if in fact there were no such thing as an abiding law of causation, it is difficult to see how any methodology in education could be worked out at all. There would certainly be no profit in looking to the past and we should have to deny that there are always underlying ideals and assumptions.

Here is another illustration of the impossibility of thorough-going consistency. Consistency (even though Emerson described it as the hobgoblin of little minds) presupposes order; order presupposes that which orders ... and this, I take it, lies behind Whitehead's definition of the essence of education. Whatever else he did or did not believe about religion, he associated it definitely with a concept of order. In this, in his devotion to the written works of master minds, and in his reliance on structured educational forms, we can see evidences of a spirit which, in

a different context, would, without hesitation, be called religious. Whitehead pleads for the deliberate maintenance of an eager humility in education, coupled with a faith that there is an order in life, and that it is accessible to us. Accessible, if not completely comprehensible. This faith is a methodology in itself, and by it we can proceed slowly towards goals which are for ever unattainable.

For the particular outlook or philosophy which Whitehead represents (vide A. Boyce Gibson) this gliding-over from methods to ideals and from ideals to methods, is quite satisfying and satisfactory. For a mechanistic or positivistic philosophy it is a fatal objection! It is too imprecise to be practical. Whitehead's insistence upon the aesthetic and the speculative must prove objectionable to certain kinds of thinker. One can hardly be more definite than that; because of no one person might it be said that he thinks utterly and at all times in one particular 'set', and no other.

Whitehead faces the universe and accepts it; but we would not say of him what Carlyle is alleged to have said of Margaret Fuller 'By Gad, she'd better!'. In him there is all the time the cosmologist, as it were. (2.110) The evidences of nature, of life, of personal relationships even, convinced him of the existence of a greater reality which was independent of these evidences (see Note 3). William James expressed a similar avowal very strongly in Lecture XX of The Varieties of Religious Experience. That non-contingent reality is not 'the God of the churches' however, nor 'the God of the Bible', nor 'the Father of Jesus'. The first is excluded because of the errors and failings of the churches, the sects, and the denominations. The second is excluded because of the moral inconsistencies we meet in that conglomerate of holy writings which we call the Bible. The third is excluded because the idea itself, if not intrinsically absurd, is too restricted. Nowhere did I find Whitehead saying anything like C.S. Lewis said - how that when he met the incarnate god in the mythologies, he accepted the idea with no hesitation, but when he met it in Christianity he at first rejected it (though he accepted it after a struggle). Whitehead grew to reject it, as part of an apologetic; but he did not turn against the moral implications (as revealed in the New Testament) of the Incarnation, as did Nietzsche or Shelley, for example. The point I am making however is that Whitehead was not speaking about

Christian initiation, or instruction in the Christian religion, when he said that the essence of education is that it be religious. We must be quite clear on that score.

On the strength of what I have just written I could maintain that though Whitehead was not a hostile anti-Christian, he was not a conventional Christian either. He did not reject, however, the moral ideals of the Christian religion (perhaps because he saw nothing unique about them), or the challenge to adventure that living the Christian life made. It is as if he were reluctant to make a definite pro-Christian statement or assent for fear he would attract to himself a label or a way of life which would restrict him. We may go so far with safety as to say that he saw God as the Order in Things; and believed that if education were to be religious, it was also to be 'orderly'. To put it another way. Because good education had to be ordered (i.e. with structure, content, progression, reference to ideals and goals, etc.) good education would be religious.

Now there is nothing in this concept of Order which militates against the speculative or the aesthetic. What it does contradict is that attitude to life which depends for its nourishment on the wasting of time, the fancying of idle speculation, the revelling in feeling for feeling's sake. Thus we should have to say that religion, to Whitehead, did not mean what it meant to Ritschl or Schleiermacher either. What is more, the concept of Order is so great a thing that it requires of us constant efforts, not of acceptance so much as of challenge. If it does not necessarily follow that 'to challenge means to think', to think does involve us inevitably in challenge. The challenge is for us to delineate for ourselves ideas which we can accept at first-hand.

There is danger here. It is easy to say "I do not understand; therefore it has no value". Whitehead would have been distressed if anyone had made such deductions from his premises. Yet if we are to consider an educational methodology we have to build-in some safeguards against this danger. Unfortunately, although the "I do not understand: I do not accept" attitude is very prevalent, an alternative - that "because I know or see the best (in morals, in art, in knowledge) I pursue it" - is not really viable. St. Paul was more correct in his diagnosis of the human

situation than Socrates was, in this respect. The personal point of view is not all-important, even though in the ultimate every individual has to say for himself 'I accept' or 'I reject'. Whitehead's way with this difficulty would be to put in front of the pupil models of the best, and, at the same time, to try to develop in him resilience, self-confidence, and comprehensive awareness so that he would make for himself his own rules and standards. As an educational method this would make tremendous assumptions about, and demands of, the teacher! From my own experience I would say that Whitehead was right to hold such ideals. From my own experience also I know that it is impossible to produce a method which would guarantee a full and infallible success-rate. This, to be sure, is part of the price we must pay for being human; for, unless we are thinking in terms of purely mechanistic or reflexive response, there are no educational guarantees to be offered. The teacher can only provide of his best and his highest (which he himself has acquired), point out the models and ideals, and hope that the pupil will find it worth his while to adopt them for himself.(4.498) By adopting this attitude I contradict, no doubt, those who see as a possibility the systematizing of educational methods in quantitative terms.

From which subjects are these models to be offered? Again we shall speak with conviction rather than with certainty. Whitehead has said that where it is in our power to change the course of events (presuming that there is general agreement that change is required), then if we do not arm ourselves with the necessary knowledge to enable us to make the change, ignorance is vice. This is what he means by duty. It follows then that 'religious education' (in the Whitehead sense) comprises the factual, the instrumental, and the technical. Subjects which come under these heads have, in recent years, been given a special place in the educationists' armamentarium. Yet now there are signs of a move to restore some of the 'traditional subjects' to the place from which they had been ejected in recent educational trends, because a necessity for the humane models they alone can supply is being admitted.

Whitehead couples duty with reverence. I take this to mean that though we must learn how to change a situation we must also know (a) why we want to change it, and (b) why it needs to be changed. Whilst at no time minimising the necessity of our knowing how to do things, and achieve results, he emphasises that the necessity must be seen in the context of

our knowing why to do them.

This presupposes a purpose in life, an order, a design. Not necessarily one purpose, nor any 'grand design'; but a conviction (which varies from time to time, and place to place) that there is order in things. This is a religious attitude; and it leads Whitehead to put much weight on 'the present moment'. But note; this is not something ephemeral. It sums up the past, it is the seed out of which the future grows. This itself is a linear process (according to our Western tradition): but the method by which Whitehead would have us understand it is the cyclic. He explains what this means in the Essay, The Rhythm of Education in The Aims of Education. In this cyclic method it is likely that the pupil has a greater opportunity for freedom of development than he would have in the linear. Whitehead sees this freedom as an educational ideal. Freedom is yet another religious motif; and, at the risk of neglecting evidence to the contrary, one might say that freedom of the individual is a basic theme in the major religions - at any rate in their pristine condition.

It is an unhappy fact of experience however that the quest for freedom often leads the individual into religious methodologies and sets of rules which come to assume the qualities of bondage. Freedom is an ideal; it is a value. As such it is easy enough to make grand claims for it. In actual practice it is always regulated, and shaped to a pattern. Otherwise it becomes untidy, lawless, and counter-productive.

Whitehead recognises this as a danger in educational systems which make over-much use of self-expression. What is the self which is to be expressed? Something loose, inchoate, amorphous? Or something which has, from the first, been hardened and sharpened? That he is in favour of the latter idea we deduce from Whitehead's references to work and discipline as values. The self has to be made worthy of expression! Self-expression is good only if it is rightly directed. Without this caveat it leads to selfishness and chaos.

'The self' includes the body. Whitehead, although giving the highest place to spiritual values and mental achievements, does not make the mistake of belittling or neglecting the body. It is, after all, the

vehicle by which and through which we gain our experiential knowledge. It is by the body that we do what is our duty and demonstrate our reverence. There is no valuing of asceticism for its own sake in Whitehead's writing, only an acknowledging of the need for such bodily discipline as shall permit of good productive work being done. In this respect he follows the Jewish idea which is essentially religious. Work is to be held in highest esteem. The Jews, however, based their ideal on the belief that God (the personal, individual entity) worked. Whitehead seems to take the more passive Greek approach in which the Order of Things is more the Contemplator and less the Artisan. And yet, typical of the Jewish outlook also is 'How shall he get wisdom that holdeth the plough?'. There is then, in both outlooks, the suggestion that there is a quality of wisdom which is available only to those who can give the necessary attention to spiritual truths and values in solitude. It is in solitude that one can get fully to grips with certain basic problems which do not yield to the dialectic process. Some problems yield to facts; some problems are clarified by discussion; but some can be solved only at the existential level, "What does this mean for me? What must I do about it? I alone know what is my duty, and I alone can do it".

If this is indeed so, one can see what Whitehead had in mind when he spoke of the religious character of education. One can also see why there has been such a development of public clangour over the past century against the teaching of religion. Religion, in the conventional sense, has its sets of values and standards of truth. It can only assert them, it cannot demonstrate them; they are objectives which cannot have an empirical base. What, then, can 'education' mean in this sense? Whitehead made heroic attempts to square what he saw as objective truths with reality, without availing himself of the benefits of revealed religion. Yet some of his statements are so definite - and that without a demonstrable factual base - that we could be excused for thinking that he felt himself to have some personal sense of revelation. Though this chimes in with his ideas about knowledge, which will be described in Section Four.

With the current emphasis in our schools upon studies of a societal and sociological character it is not to be wondered at that little room can



be found for 'studies in religion' as such. The exploration of personal religious experience is usually left to religious clubs or groups. This means, in effect, that apart from the religious influences of home (and church perhaps) the average pupil will come across precious little to help him understand the meaning of religion, and its contribution to culture, until he is at least sixteen. By which time he has, in all probability, been convinced against it! It is difficult to see how this situation might be overcome - assuming it to be thought desirable that it should be overcome; and the 'teaching' of art, literature, or music suggests that it might be.

The ambition of Whitehead (as set out in the two title-sentences) might be seen as a solution. Starting with an emphasis on duty and reverence, and working this out in the field of personal relationships, and stating moral decisions in terms that are appropriate and comprehensible to different age-groups, one might come eventually to an education which was, in essence, religious. Such a policy would not be without its perils. Patriotism or nationalism, or almost any ideology, could be given a religious interpretation, with perverse and appalling results.(5)

All that can be said for certain about this is that, again and again, a position would be reached of which it would have to be said 'We do not know. We can only select. We must do our best to be fair and objective. Life can be lived at a worthwhile level only if we take account of the needs and rights of other people. What these are we can best discover by personal assessment of the claims made by the teachers and leaders in different human societies at different times in their history'. This is typical of the religious attitude towards life - the leaving of open ends and unsettled arguments; the refusal to confuse symbols with realities; the realisation that poetry rather than prose is proper for the deeper moments of life; and the willingness to admit that even one's enemies have the right to a point of view.

Not all teachers could, would, or would have the opportunity to teach to these ideals. Some subjects would not lend themselves to it. But where it could be done, it could be given a decent measure of objectivity. This is what Whitehead looked for.

On the other hand, if timidity about religious indoctrination, or reluctance to make use of the arts as educational media, leads education-

ists into providing nothing more than 'moral studies', then religion will be seen as no more than a small component of a sociology, or integrated-studies course. And that is not what Whitehead had in mind.

If it be said that in a social climate which is becoming increasingly secular, the concept of 'religion' must be avoided as far as possible, it is reasonable to enquire "But what is this secularization which stands over against the religious way of life?" Whether it will have a meaning or not depends very largely on what meaning we first give to religion. If we are to make any sort of identification between religion and church attendance, then, truly enough, secularization is growing; and the schools of our pluralist society should not teach religion (though they may be permitted to teach about it), nor should we give much heed to Whitehead's dictum. Religion would be seen, at best, as a collection of bits of information; but at no cost, as a way of understanding life.

If, on the other hand, religion be related to some special human quality or apprehension, then secularization must refer to some fundamental change in human psychology. This would be far harder to demonstrate than a decline in church attendance; yet one feels that Whitehead's sympathies lay more in this area of psychology than in the statistics of a sociological phenomenon. And if that is indeed so, he would have agreed with those who say that an education from which religious teachings and values are omitted, or have been eliminated, is not so full an education (qualitatively as well as quantitatively) as should be available for every pupil.

For one thing it is extremely unlikely that without them the pupils would be taught about duty or reverence. Why should they be? Where would one look for criteria? To ask this is not to fall into the trap of making religion the only valid criterion for morality; but, as Lord Devlin told us in his Maccabean Lecture for 1959, on The Enforcement of Morals, no society has yet evolved a satisfactory moral system without some sort of religious roots or value-system either. To put it another way. Whitehead's idea that the essence of education is that it be religious is really saying that education cannot be value-free (wertfrei) or value-neutral.(6)

One cannot avoid the impression that an expressed desire for a value-neutral educational system is really an expression of an anti-religious

ideology rather than a genuine objective educational concept. For is society, in fact, now secularized to such an extent that it is utterly different from what it was in, say, the sixteenth century, or even the earlier part of the twentieth? Do the human beings who comprise society really change radically over short intervals of time? There are enough to say they do; but is the question then settled, categorically?

It deserves fair investigation, for it is not merely rhetorical. If we could limit 'religion' to one small definition, it might be possible to give a clear and simple answer to the religious/secular debate. But what appears to be the case is that although some of the traditional value-systems and thought-patterns (enshrined in structured religious groups) have declined in public interest, support, and power, their place has been taken by what have been called 'religion-surrogates'. These alternatives have developed their own groupings, hierarchies, and symbol-systems. The great difference between now and then is that the individual in contemporary society has a large number of options open to him towards which he may look for guidance in working out his own life; whereas in days gone by he would have had to rely a great deal more on prefabricated answers provided for him. One might say, rather loosely, that more and more answers to religious questions are now being provided from secular sources. Under the general heading or description of dogmatism there is now a huge number of -isms, to any of which people may willingly give their allegiance. What seems certain is that no one person stands completely free from any and every kind of -ism; or, by implication, from some kind of dogma or ideology.

I am inclined to believe that Whitehead did not have this situation in mind; and that he would have wished to ascribe a more limited meaning to religion. For example, religion was for him a form of social idealism. The world is to be made a better place by the development of the individual personality and the improvement of society according to certain patterns (such as those I have described briefly). All this involved, for him, a religious-type ideology, and an educational methodology.

In spite of the criticisms he levels against various aspects of this world, its events and its history, he does not suggest transcending it. To that extent his idea of religion lacks 'religious substance'. It is as

an idealist that Whitehead has no place for the church, or the religious institution. This must be borne in mind when we consider his definitions of education along religious lines. Yet I am sure that he would not have said "The word 'religion' may be applied to almost anything, now that there are so many alternatives about". He would have insisted that it be tightly associated with that which necessarily involves duty and reverence. But then, of course, the critical task becomes that of defining, not religion primarily, but duty and reverence.

Duty can be required of its members by any group, secular or sacred. If membership is voluntary, then duty is a willing and willed obligation. If membership is compulsory or accidental, then the authorities at the head of the structure can impose what conditions they choose, and call them duty - or right, or truth! Provided they have the strength sufficient for their enforcement. (7.180f)

But reverence is different. As a priest once said to me "It is bad enough that the people no longer know the meaning of 'sanctus'. What is far worse is that they do not know the meaning of 'holy'". To translate words into strictly meaningful contemporary equivalents (as is done, for example, in revised liturgical texts) often necessitates the destruction of a numinous atmosphere which had a value of its own. This applies in all literary fields. It applies also to an education from which imagination, romance, or even magic has been expunged.

Whitehead saw in God a reality and a source of values before which human beings needed to adopt a posture of humility. It was part of the purpose of education to inculcate this posture. It involved living in the present moment (my moment, here), but seeing that I had meaning only in relation to you or to them; just as the now had meaning only as part of the sequence of the past and future. Before such greatness the pupil is to be protected against the crudeness or brashness of an educational method or pretension which might lead him to suppose that the acquisition of never so many facts or techniques entitles him to believe that he can know it all.

Education is considered to be so obviously valuable that, for a certain number of years of his life, every person in our land is to be

submitted to a situation, or a process, to which we give the name 'educational'. This has been the pattern in Western civilized countries for a long time. There are many authorities (such as T.L. Jarman, in his Landmarks in the History of Education) to remind us of the basal relationship between religion and education; and of this relationship Whitehead, by virtue at least of his own educational background, could hardly fail to be aware.

Questions are now being asked about education itself. Whether it is equivalent to schooling, and whether it should be applied to everyone. It is not my purpose to make any comments or predictions in this respect. I would only insist that there is a timeless quality about whatever is implied under the words religious, duty, and reverence; and that whatever methods be adopted for the transmission of what any particular society considers to be both valuable and useful, if education is to have any fullness of meaning, it must be related to those three concepts.(8)

I am happy to find that, at least in this respect, I am able to stand in the company of Alfred North Whitehead.

Notes to Section Three

1. It is worth commenting that Kant, in his Doctrine of Virtue also discussed dialogue and catechism. "But the doctrine" (i.e. the theory of virtue) can be delivered either in a lecture, as when all those to whom it is directed are a mere audience, or by the method of questioning, in which the teacher asks his pupil what he wants to teach him. And this method of questioning is, in turn, divided into the method of dialogue and that of catechism, depending on whether the teacher addresses his questions to the pupil's reason or merely to his memory. For if the teacher wants to question his pupil's reason he must do this in a dialogue in which teacher and pupil reciprocally question and answer each other". (From Doctrine of Virtue trans Mary J. Gregor, New York, 1964, p.149f).
2. Hill, M.A., A Sociology of Religion, H.E.B., Paperback, 1973. Another vital consequence implied in this theology (sc. of Calvin) is that, since the natural world is also created by God and reveals his will, the best way to know God is to study his work. These, like man, are submitted to a preordained order. Belief in a natural order, it has been suggested, is an important factor in the growth of modern science; on this we might quote Whitehead's statement that 'The basic assumption in modern science "is a widespread, instinctive conviction in the existence of an Order of Things, and, in particular, of an Order of Nature".
3. Peters, R.S. in The Philosophy of Open Education, ed. Nyberg, D. International Library of the Philosophy of Education, R.K.P., 1975, wrote  
  
By the 'givenness of the world' I mean such things as the phenomena co-ordinated by the law of gravitation or the indescribable stickiness of putty that has not been mixed to the right consistency, the heat of the fire or the expansion of metal when subjected to it. In the face of these palpable features of our life on earth I am constantly amazed at some of the extravagances issuing from modern sorties in the sociology of knowledge.
4. Kandel, I.L., in Education for Complete Living, 1938.

Those who glibly quote Matthew Arnold's definition of culture as a knowledge of the best that has been said and thought in the past fail to continue with the rest of the definition - "that the will of God may prevail" - which has a practical, social implication, however one may interpret the theological reference.

5. Miguel de Unamuno, just before he died of a broken heart (as stated in The Poet's War, an A.B.C. radio programme, February 29th 1976) made a courageously defiant speech from the platform of the University of Salamanca, at which he was the Rector. He described the university as a temple of learning, and himself as the high priest. Was this simply a rhetorical conceit? Hardly, in the revolutionary circumstances of the time. It was an agonised expression of an idea identical to that which Whitehead had... the sanctity of learning, and the nobility of wisdom.

6. It is fashionable to assume that a teleological interpretation of the universe is no longer tenable - as ideal or method - since the time of Darwin. This is one reason for the insecurity which is felt about value-systems. It should be pointed out, however, that Darwin was not an anti-teleologist. He said indeed "I deserve to be called a theist" because, when he wrote his Origin of Species, the conviction of there being an intelligent source of Nature weighed heavily on him. Asa Gray, in an article in Nature, observed that Darwin's great service to natural science was to bring it back to teleology in such a way that it could co-operate with morphology. To this Darwin replied "What you say about teleology pleases me especially" (cf. Life of Charles Darwin, p. 291).

7. Happold, F.C., in Education for Complete Living, says,

Our task is much more difficult than that of educators in the totalitarian states, for our creed compels us to regard each boy and girl not only as a member of the community, but also as an individual, entitled to the fullest measure of self-development, free, within certain limits, to think and act as he or she wishes...To us life cannot be good unless it is based on liberty. It is one of the tragedies of education that religious differences have resulted in its (education) so often being secularized. I can conceive of no sound educa-

tional system which is not fundamentally religious in its basis... Far more than from actual teaching, a child absorbs its scale of values from the life, the tone, the atmosphere, of the school in which it is educated... What this distraught, unhappy world needs is a revival of the religious view of life.

Happold, writing at about the same time as Whitehead was writing most of the works to which I refer, had been headmaster at one of the more famous English public schools, with a specifically religious foundation. Yet he laments the neglecting of 'the physical, the aesthetic, the spiritual' in an educational system which concentrates on academic attainments).

8. Ortega y Gasset in his Mission of the University (P.137f) points out that characteristics, national or individual, are not the product of education. He describes as a pious idealism the idea that nations are great because their schools are good - pious because it attributes to the school a force which it neither has nor can have. This remark in itself is not specially noteworthy. But what follows is, I feel, far more noteworthy. 'Certainly when a nation is great, so will be its schools. There is no great nation without great schools. But the same holds for its religion, its statesmanship, its economy, and a thousand other things. A nation's greatness is the integration of many elements'. (Whatever interpretation we give to 'great' as related to a nation must, presumably, be applied also to education.)



Section Four

Whitehead's Educational Theory and Philosophy

"Education is a development of the whole man.... the ultimate end of man is happiness with God". - Comenius

It has already been mentioned that Whitehead, when writing about general topics, was somewhat discursive. It goes without saying, therefore, that if the direction of his thought about any particular matter is to be discovered, it is necessary that his more famous and popular works (such as Adventures of Ideas, (1) and Science and the Modern World) should be consulted. His thoughts about education were, however, marshalled in The Aims of Education and Other Essays (given as separate papers on different occasions). In a work of larger scope than the present one there would need to be a summary of that book. As it is, brief references only will be made to it.

The essays were first published in book form in 1932, (thus pre-dating the Dewey statement in the preface to this work), eight years after Whitehead had gone to America; and they reflect his British experience and background. Unlike most writing on educational topics, more especially in recent years, they are unencumbered with statistical information and empirical data. Their style is, naturally, that of the lecture; thus the emphasis is on principles rather than details. This is consistent, perhaps, with his famous apophthegm, given at the conclusion of an Ingersoll Lecture on Immortality - 'Exactness is a fake'!

There are ten essays in the book, and the first five are of chief importance for our purpose. Though they provide clear pointers to Whitehead's views on education neither they, nor the complete ten, may be considered as definitive of those views. 'Whitehead on Education' is, in truth, 'Whitehead on Life'. It is too much, therefore, to hope for a comprehensive treatment of the subject in so short a compass.

It is to be expected that the man who said 'I contend that the notion of mere knowledge is a high abstraction and that conscious discrimination itself is a variable factor only present in the more elaborate examples of occasions of experience. The basis of experience is

emotional' (2.28) should make of education a vital subject. He was impatient of abstract notions, and was fully aware of the limitations of both logic and science. His critique of abstraction is a critique of the abstract, impersonal, quantifying rationality; and his objection to abstraction is precisely that, through it, a partial impulse becomes equated with the whole. His philosophy of organism is a protest on behalf of the living body as whole; and he protests also 'on behalf of value' by insisting that the real structure of the human body, of human cognition, and of the events cognized, is erotic, creative 'self-enjoyment'. This is his way of objecting to the Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness. (3)

Whitehead could reduce a complex argument or situation to a neatly-turned phrase, as when he said that the justification for a university was 'that it preserves the connection between knowledge and the zest for life, by uniting the young and the old in the imaginative consideration of learning'. This reference to the university, incidentally, reminds us how Whitehead sometimes gave the impression of knowing about education only from, and at, the higher levels. But again, that is consistent with his method of being more concerned with principles than with details. He gives us what is now called 'an educational overview'; and we must be prepared to find that, in details, this is misleading. In no place, for example, does he make allowance for different 'capability levels' in children; and, at the risk of misinterpreting the motives of so large a mind and so generous a soul, I would say that he seems at times to think more of the programme than of the individual child. Perhaps this was because he wanted every child to have access to the best and the finest, and that he even went so far as to believe that every child could profit therefrom. So we find that although he resembles the great Comenius overall (in favouring experimental science, practical matters and a broad general education for example), in matters of detail he is very different from him.

As an educationist he insisted on logical perfection and coherence, where they could be found; but he insisted no less on the value of imagination and lively experience as necessary complements. As Holmes says, in commenting on Whitehead's views about the entities from which 'the whole of things' (a characteristic Whiteheadian expression) is built.... 'Our sharp decisions about meanings, values, causes, and the

future, as we draw them from the carefully distinguishable facts of science are less definitive than we suppose' (8.622)

Of education itself, and its relation to religion, Whitehead writes

Education is the guidance of the individual towards a comprehension of the art of life; and by the art of life I mean the most complete achievement of varied activity expressing the potentialities(4) of that living creature in the face of its actual environment. This completeness of achievement involves an artistic sense, subordinating the lower to the higher possibilities of the individual personality. Science, art, religion, morality, take their rise from this sense of values within the structure of being. Each individual embodies an adventure of existence. The art of life is the guidance of this adventure. (My emphasis)

It is significant that what is, in many respects, his most important religious book is entitled Adventures of Ideas. Had he been a chemist rather than a mathematician, who also had had a complete grounding in the classics(5), he might have made less of the speculative way of thinking - as a result of his being more accustomed to dealing with actual things. As it is he gives more weight to speculation than he gives to dogma on the one hand, or to scientific considerations or empirical evidences on the other, in his treatment of religious topics. In this context, that particular notion does not need to be enlarged beyond the suggestion that Whitehead, although a scientist and a logician, found no difficulty in contemplating the forms and claims of religion. We might infer from this what direction his educational theories are likely to take.

He did not, of course, fail to appreciate the proper place and value of scientific method and statistical analysis; but, so far as education was concerned, he put above them that attitude of mind which gives pride of place to insight, feeling, and apprehension. We shall have cause to refer again to his criticism of this particular kind of 'objective' methodology; but it is difficult to describe with any precision the attitude of mind which leads to it. That is why Whitehead's views might well be the despair of the educational theorist whose background was essentially different from Whitehead's. Holmes points out, for example, that Whitehead nowhere refers to educational research, English or

American; and that it is useless to look for critical reactions to previous or current studies or experiments in education. He gives us, instead, the benefit of his own experience and learning as applied to 'the general ordering and significance of education'.(8.633)

When we come to consider religion (or, indeed, anything which might be said to be of 'cosmic significance') in education we have to face the difficulty that such matters could have no place in an educational system which was basically scientific or empiricist in its emphasis... for they are felt on the pulses and not read-off from the charts and tables. Such tables and data of precision are related to methods; but methods presuppose aims or goals; aims and goals presuppose the acceptance of ideals; and the acceptance of ideals presupposes agreement as to values. It was this final link in the educational chain with which Whitehead was principally concerned. He had strong religious views (the importance of which is increasingly coming to be realised) which had a powerful influence on his ideas about education. They were, however, in no sense restrictive. So Holmes can say, in his exposition of Whitehead's educational theory,

If objects beyond scientific verification are to be brought within the compass of education, speculative philosophy would not introduce them as idols, or as objects to be accepted as defined, or as fearful symbols to be used for the purposes of institutional authority. Freedom of worship is a fundamental freedom not because it gives religious sects (or schools of philosophic thought) the right to regiment their followers, but because it makes whatever is worshipful also subject to thought.(8.627)

From the sixteenth century we have derived the custom of determining which experiences are relevant for the investigation of natural phenomena. The scientists of that time were wise enough to realise that they were not concerned with the whole range of human experience. They had no need to be, nor could they be. On the other hand, we have inherited, from their insistence that sense-experiences were the sole clues to objectivity, a deep suspicion about the validity of all non-scientific claims to knowledge. This is a point made, and deplored, by Whitehead. He expresses himself strongly to the effect that 'knowledge is not limited to verified perceptions drawn from reflection upon a particular slice of sense-data alone, but upon the whole range of human experience'.(6.389)

The structure of scientific thought is built upon that proper methodology which isolates small areas of experience, or evidence, for investigation. Whitehead concedes this; but he stresses, at the same time, the danger of making 'an arbitrary halt at a particular set of abstractions' lest it lead to the neglect of knowledge in the realm of values and spirit. A dogmatic assurance that nothing worth knowing lies outside the data derived from the senses is unjustified. (see 6.390) Magee continues this line of thought when he says that, as we contemplate our experiences we derive different 'bodies of knowledge' depending on the kind of experience we are thinking about. One is appropriate to social science, another to physics, another to ethics or aesthetics, and still another to the kind of experience we designate religious.

Magee quotes Hume's classic statement 'If we take in hand any volume... let us ask, does it contain any abstract reasoning.... any experimental reasoning..... No? Commit it then to the flames, for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion' as being typical of the kind of thinking which Whitehead criticises because, although Hume was here inveighing against theology (as being restrictive of free enquiry), his words proved to be a foundation-stone for that positivistic philosophy which has, in its turn, provided 'an arbitrary restriction against looking at the possible meaning in wider reaches of experience. It is, in short, too much a priori and too little empirical'. (6.391) It involves, moreover, the jettisoning of beliefs about objective moral standards, or God, or freedom, or immortality. (7)

We have derived our concepts of determinism and order, so far as science is concerned, because of the scientific method which limits investigation to prescribed areas. This does not apply in nature, or in 'real life'.. What laws have been discovered in laboratories apply outside those laboratories, of course; but in addition there is that host of chance events and accidental combinations which make up life as we experience it. It is these chances and accidents which are usually decisive; for by them we are forced into existential situations which lead to acts of choice which, in their turn, may well be the first moves in a rational process. Credo ut intelligam. One notices increasing references to 'tendency' and 'probability' in scientific discourse. It would not be altogether naive to suggest that this was indicative of a

recognition of the validity of this principle.

We have no right to make religious capital out of this situation by, for example, moving out from it to say that therefore there is a transcendent purpose, or a supernatural influence, at work. We need to keep in mind, however, that 'scientific explanation' is coming up against barriers which would have been, half-a-century ago, thought to have been thrown down for ever.

We may say then that there are several types of knowledge which are plausible even if they do not satisfy the strict truth-claims which are appropriate to scientific method, or agree with the out-and-out empiricism of Hume. Yet all of them arise from experiences which have been submitted to the process of reflection or contemplation. Authentic religious knowledge results from reflection upon spiritual experiences; and these can be identified because it is in their nature to elicit response and conviction, and not simply recognition and assent. This is probably what M.C.V. Jeffreys had in mind when he wrote 'Religious experience is normal experience understood at full depth'.

Some things we know, and we know them very well; but we do not know everything. This applies to humanity at large as much as to any individual member of it. An education which has a religious quality about it should preserve us from that intellectual lethargy and pride which is engendered by any sense of dogmatic finality. There are some areas about which it is best to take note of what Kierkegaard wrote in his JOURNALS.... that there comes a point when it is important to understand that one cannot understand further. In similar mood Wittgenstein said that values 'make themselves manifest', they do not arise out of facts.

I believe with Jeffreys that it must be acknowledged that, although religious knowledge comes from religious data, these data are not separate from our 'ordinary' experience. They spring from a particular way of looking at experience. It is hardly possible to be more explicit than that. Authentic religious experience (so many would insist) itself supplies the unequivocal evidence. It is self-authenticating. Otto Strunk, Jr puts it another way when he writes that religion is only religion when the perceiver perceives it as such!' (Religion - a Psychological Inter-

pretation, p.24). A similar point is made by Hirst on p.184 of his Knowledge and the Curriculum.

This is, no doubt, an assertion which could be dismissed as altogether too speculative, drawing whatever justification it might have from an outmoded ontology. Be that as it may, an illustration of what it implies could be taken from Whitehead who 'in opposition to the mechanistic view of classical physics, proposed a view of the world as alive and responsive'. (6.435 and Note 7) I should wish to interpret this as being a 'free' rather than a 'loose' expression of a concept. In other words Whitehead saw in dogmatism and credal statements threats to that freedom which he held to be essential for mental activity and speculative enquiry. This applies to religious thought as well as to every other field of mental experience. If naturalism (which, according to Holmes, 'calls some of the objects of speculation derogatory names' (8.627) on the one hand, would admit for consideration only those objects which were known to science, dogmatic supernaturalism would, on the other hand, rule out further thought about them. In this way they conspire against broad speculative enquiry; and, by thus denying to the human soul access to 'the universal scope of things' do education great disservice. We shall, then, expect Whitehead's interpretation of 'religion' to be unorthodox in terms of conventional formulations, but that it will make generous provision for speculation.

A similar comment could be applied to his interpretation of 'education'.. which, as Holmes says (8.628) 'can take its cue from speculative thought or from some type of thinking of more limited character'. And he quotes Whitehead (in The Function of Reason) in this way

Thus when... a novel speculation is produced, a threefold problem is set. Some special science, the cosmological scheme, and the novel concept will have points of agreement and points of variance. Reason intervenes in the capacity of arbiter, and yet with a further exercise of speculation. The science is modified, the cosmological outlook is modified, and the novel concept is modified. The joint discipline has eliminated elements of folly, or of mere omission, from all three. The purposes of mankind receive the consequential modification, and the shock is transmitted through the whole sociological structure of methods and institutions.

This idea must have educational consequences. To put it directly, Whitehead wanted people who were able to undertake the high discipline of

speculative thinking to engage actively in this constructive work, and to demonstrate in this way the vast resources of the human mind. He believed that, as a result of this, the majority, the multitude, even though neither philosophically inclined nor competent, would live tolerantly and hopefully. In short he invested the word 'speculation' with a richness of meaning indicative of his respect both for that mental process, and for persons.

He was a great advocate of tolerance, and he traced it back 'as a requisite for high civilization' to 'the speech of Pericles as reported by Thucydides. It puts forth the conception of an organised society successfully preserving freedom of behaviour for its individual members'. We have a hint of his special polarization as regards religion when we learn that he would have liked to replace the New Testament book of the Revelation of St. John the Divine with that selfsame speech of Pericles!

But although Whitehead looked for tolerance and the exercise of liberty, he recognised that social life, in school as well as in society at large, was impossible without discipline; and said 'it follows that a doctrine as to the social mingling of liberty and compulsion is required'. The way he hoped to achieve this was through well-defined professional bodies, legal institutions, sovereign states - anywhere in which the propriety of actions had to be judged; and then, on the strength of that judgement, permission had to be given for their performance, or withheld.

By way of illustration of this principle he referred to the notorious Scopes Trial:

The State of Tennessee did not err in upholding the principle that there are limits to the freedom of teaching in schools and colleges. But it exhibited a gross ignorance of its proper functions when it defied a professional opinion which throughout the world is practically unanimous.

One feels that Whitehead would have been perturbed by politically inspired intervention (and that of minority groups) in the field of education - not least in religious education - of which intervention there is so much today.(9) He saw education, its organisation, its practice, and its government, almost as a social and professional enclave; and he was against teachers allying themselves with unions, political parties,



churches or sects. Yet this was not narrowness. He believed that there should be many independent societies within society, each contributing its part towards the welfare of the whole.(10) He saw developing a gradual movement within a world-society in which all men would exercise overall control in a democratic way, but in which also government of this part or that would be in the hands of competent professionals. It was essential for these leaders to be educated for their specific tasks. This Platonic ideal is reinforced by Whitehead's own ideas on education, and goes some distance towards showing why he thought it should have a religious character. Also, although education was to be broadly based, as it were, it was also to have a selective quality with a strong vocational aspect. In spite of his classical background ... or, possibly, because of it?... he had a special interest in technical education. This, no doubt, is one reason why he gave support to the Harvard Business School ('One of the oldest of the arts, the newest of the professions')(11) He might have been expected, as a follower of the aristocratic Greek philosophers, to have had reservations about the place of 'the workers' in society. His overriding attitude of tolerance and equity, however, would have nullified any such outlook.

It is a common experience when reading Whitehead to find one's eyes lifted from the page to the horizon, as it were. This is because his writing is so free and lively that even short paragraphs will often contain a stimulating selection of concepts. The obscurity of his writing may sometimes baffle us; but his remarkable insights quicken our attention. In illustration of this I submit for comment four passages taken from the chapter by Holmes in Volume Three (p.635 ff) of The Library of Living Philosophers; that volume which is given over to the life and thought of Whitehead. He is writing of his subject's educational philosophy, and makes this summary;

1. The Living Process of Education. 'Education ceases, denies its own ends and its essential nature, rots what it should keep alive and sweet the moment it forgets that children are living, growing, active organisms making their own way into a world whose only valid meanings are achieved within the living present'.

2. The Living Utility of Education. 'Education becomes and remains a

living process, and it has personal and national importance, only as it is useful in some way at every point in personal growth and only as it eventuates in specialized power, conscious of its own inherently demanded style, in a form of work which is socially valuable',

3. The Living Rhythm of Education. 'Education must take account of the periodic character of growth, and the rise and fall of energy in interest and power of attention, and of the balance between the need for immediacy of active understanding and the need for grasp of the external and unyielding essentials both of the organized thought to be mastered and the social demands to be met',

4. The Living Quality of Final Educational Ends. 'The ultimate ends of education are living religion, living aesthetic enjoyment, and a living courage which urges men towards new creative adventure'.

In these four points Holmes brings out some of the more important aspects of Whitehead's theories of education; and, although he is speaking about education as such, obviously there must be brought into the discussion a consideration of subjects to be studied, the reason for their inclusion, and the methods by which they are to be taught.

So then from 1, we deduce that Whitehead believed in self-motivated activity as a basis for education. Although 'the present moment' is of great importance to the child, Whitehead is against pottering or tinkering. A school-room project, for example, is to be different in quality and in depth from a home-backyard project! It must also be wider, and better informed, as well as being based upon connected ideas constructively employed. Inert ideas (by which he means ideas which are not incorporated into a structure of usefulness and fertility. Mere 'knowing that' is of little worth unless it is linked with 'knowing how' and 'knowing what for'. How Aristotelean!) and scraps of information have nothing to do with real education. (12.59) As for the present moment as such, this has ethical significance as well as temporal. It has meaning in itself; if otherwise, then neither the future nor the past has meaning. Any value (e.g. happiness, fulfilment) which always lies in the future cannot answer our expectation of what genuine values should be. To live for the future, or in the past, is to rob the present of meaning. If life has meaning, then

it has it here and now; and Whitehead stressed this. The educational significance of this position is that an education which is essentially future-directed must come under criticism. And, of course, the Judeo-Christian religion, with which our educational system has so many intimate links, has fallen under similar criticism often enough.

From 2, we derive a corrective against any idea that utility in learning (that is, learning useful things) is base or mean. Whitehead was very aware that a period of about ten years was so short a time in which educators had the opportunity to mould, influence, or liberate the child. The kind of environment in which children find themselves now demands that they be taught to do things, to prepare to make a living, and to learn how to contribute to their society. That is why Whitehead approved so strongly of technical education (thereby departing from the classical Greek pattern) - provided it was not separated from science or art.

There can be no doubt that Whitehead had a coherent philosophy of education appropriate for the gifted child; but he had little to say about the less-gifted, or the handicapped. He did not regard technical education, however, as a lower-grade education or activity suitable only for those who were not equipped to profit from the higher grades. Those who, like R. Williams in The Long Revolution, see three contributory factors emerging from the nineteenth-century debate on education (viz. education as a natural right; as a means of economic efficiency; or as a liberal or humane policy, but not a vocational training) might see Whitehead as setting-off the first against the second, perhaps; and only partly agreeing with the third. The debate about the difference between 'equality of opportunity' and 'social equality' is more vigorous now than it was thirty or forty years ago.

From 3, we learn something about the constant interplay of freedom and authority. They are not two different things, to be injected, so to speak, into the pupil at different moments as circumstances dictate. The object of this interplay seems to be to achieve what Whitehead himself described in Symbolics, Its Meaning and Effect, and summarised in the final paragraph of that book.

Free men obey the rules they themselves have made.....  
the art of free society consists first in the maintenance  
of the symbolic codes; and secondly in the fearlessness  
of revision, to secure that the code serves those purposes  
which satisfy an enlightened reason.

The implications of this for religious education (as such) hardly need  
be mentioned; and Holmes comments that 'The advocates of the child-  
centred school should read Whitehead. So should the advocates of a fixed  
common culture derived from the past'.(8.639)

Section 4 introduces concepts which, though fine-sounding and generally  
intelligible, are incapable of precise definition. Whitehead's thought on  
the matter might best be shown by one of the two statements which are here  
under analysis (from The Aims of Education, p.23)

A religious education is an education which inculcates duty  
and reverence. Duty arises from our potential control over  
the course of events. Where attainable knowledge could have  
changed the issue, ignorance has the guilt of vice'.(13)  
'And the foundation of reverence is this perception, that  
the present holds within itself the complete sum of existence,  
backwards and forwards, that whole amplitude of time, which  
is eternity'.(See comment on p.50)

If he is correct in this, then two things are of fundamental import-  
ance - the gaining of knowledge, and the understanding of what knowledge  
is. This is for every person to discover for himself; but, unaided, he  
will not progress along this particular road as far as he could, or has  
need to; for he will have to acquire techniques for the first part and a  
set of values for the second. His attitude to life will be guided socially,  
but decided individually.

Which brings Whitehead to the consideration of the responsibility of  
the teacher. The position he adopts in the two final sentences of the  
next quotation is of importance to our understanding of what he meant  
when he linked education with religion. The whole passage provides an  
illustration of my earlier comment on the way Whitehead's writing is so  
conceptually-stimulating.

What I am now insisting is that the principle of progress  
is from within; the discovery is made by ourselves, the  
discipline is self-discipline, and the fruition is the

outcome of our own initiative.

(This might seem to favour a method of self-tuition and self-pacing. No doubt there is merit in that system; and no doubt every student makes use of it to a greater or lesser extent. But observe how Whitehead continues).

The teacher has a double function. It is for him to elicit the enthusiasm by resonance from his own personality, and to create the environment of a larger knowledge and a firmer purpose. He is there to avoid the waste, which in the lower stages of existence is nature's way of evolution. The ultimate motive power, alike in science, in morality, and religion, is the sense of value, the sense of importance.

It takes the various forms of wonder, of curiosity, of reverence, of worship, of tumultuous desire for merging personality in something beyond itself. This sense of value imposes on life incredible labours, and, apart from it, life sinks back into the passivity of its lower types. The most penetrating exhibition of this force is the sense of beauty, the aesthetic sense of realized perfection. This thought leads me to ask, whether in our modern education we emphasise sufficiently the function of art'.(14.62)

By 'art' we are to understand the whole aesthetic impetus; and the teacher, one might almost say, has the awesome responsibility of showing the pupil the sacredness of the present moment, even when it is not beautiful. This suggests that he have some appreciation of ends, purposes, and values to which he feels compelled to introduce his pupils. And this is an aesthetic in itself.

In reading Whitehead one cannot be for long unaware of his pre-occupation with the aesthetic. Even in mathematics he was impressed by the beauty of form as much as by the beauty of meaning. Being fundamentally religious he said that, for him, mathematics was 'the language of divinity'; and for much of his later life he devoted himself to the study of ways in which science, religion, mathematics, and philosophy impinged on each other. His concern for the mathematical type of scientific knowledge rather than the empirical reveals, needless to say, the Platonist. Or even the Pythagorean!

Yet in his admiration for the classical, and his constant return to the modes and styles of the past, he was no reactionary or ultra-conservative. In his book The Modes of Thought he maintained that 'the closed system is

the death of living understanding'. He was writing there of the relationship of mathematics to the Good; but he showed, in the context of that statement, his belief both that the understanding of structure and system was essential for rational thought, and also that process was fundamental to his philosophy. It is not easy to see how the concepts of structure, system, and process apply in aesthetics; but Whitehead the mathematician would surely have looked for elegance of style as a sine qua non of beauty. Style he describes as 'the ultimate morality of mind'.

Now elegance, appropriateness, beauty itself, are functions of specific environments both of time and place. If this is indeed so, this helps us to understand why Whitehead could not agree with any educational method which was essentially static, least of all in religion.

Static doctrine must be offered, of course, as one of the ways in which the phenomenon of religion has presented itself. "The faith, once delivered to the saints" means much to many people. So much, in fact, that marked deviation from that standard is interpreted as heresy or apostasy. However, the growing belief would now seem to be that whatever spirit or dynamic guided the powers of religious (or supra-rational) thought in the past continues to work today. We learn; we grow; we discover. And we can still uphold this belief without falling inevitably into the trap of evolutionary perfectionism. To think along these lines offers more hopeful prospects than those which are associated with static form.

We might surmise, in extension of this idea, that any sort of education which is closed, or static, or given as the last word, cannot be religious. Doctrine must live and breathe. Where it is found to be true (in a pragmatic sense), or meaningful, it must be transmitted. Awareness of this, together with the understanding that all ultimate explanations are given in terms of values, will help us to interpret Whitehead's views on education.

It must be observed, however, that although Whitehead's views themselves underwent a constant process of modification, yet they rested all the time on one solid foundation. He believed that a world without value is a world without meaning. In order for science to be possible, and

scientific method to be valid, there must be more in the world than science is prepared to admit.... an element of meaning, in fact. Whitehead seems to equate this meaning with value. We base our decisions on ultimate explanations and values; and we have there the nexus of religion and education.

In sum, that education should be religious, implies (in the most general of terms) that it is something which leads to the divine principle of the universe - to which we need give no specific name - and to human conduct which is consistent with some ethical norm, and to an attitude towards oneself such as is consistent with the notion that religious education is to do with duty and reverence.

Notes to Section Four

1. Hamley, H.R. in Education for Complete Living, ed. Cunningham and Radford, A.C.E.R., 1938, p.605, writes

As Professor Whitehead has said - "The nation preserves its vigour so long as it harbours a real contrast between what has been and what may be; and so long as it is nerved by the vigour to adventure beyond the safeties of the past. Without adventure civilization is full of decay. - Only the adventurous can understand the greatness of the past". Adventure is a departure from the safe ground of security, not in search of record or novelty, but in search of new securities and perfect-ions. If security is the condition, then adventure is the agency of all growth and development.

2. Anshea, R.N.(ed.), Alfred North Whitehead, His Reflections upon Man and Nature, Harper and Row, 1961

Whitehead insists, as opposed to Descartes, that feeling comes before thought or bare existence that we are aware of. I find myself rather essentially a unit of emotions, of enjoyment, of hope, of fears, of regrets, valuations of alternatives... all of these are my subjective reactions to my environment as I am active in my nature. My unity which is Descartes "I am" is my process of shaping the welter of material into a consistent pattern of feelings.

3. For the significance of 'erotic' etc. in this connection, see, for example, Simone Weil's Intimations of Christianity Among the Ancient Greeks. And see 5. below.
4. See my note on the Summary of the Black Papers 1975; Appendix.
5. "Classics for Whitehead, the humanist, is Latin, which is a pity; more especially as Whitehead, the scientist, appeals entirely to Greek". Gibson, A. Boyce, Melbourne Studies in Education, 1965, p.30.
6. Magree, J.B., Religion and Modern Man, Harper and Row, 1967.
7. That demonstrative proof is not the only kind of rational justification of a belief is a point of view which was exemplified in Kant's postulation of God, freedom, and immortality. In his Preface to the Critique of Pure Reason he says



Accidental observations, made in obedience to no previously thought-out plan, can never be made to yield a necessary law, which alone reason is concerned to discover. Reason, holding in one hand its principles, according to which alone concordant appearances can be admitted as equivalent to laws, and in the other hand the experiment which it has devised in conformity with these principles, must approach nature in order to be taught by it. It must not, however, do so in the character of a pupil, who listens to everything that the teacher chooses to say, but of an appointed judge, who compels witnesses to answer questions he himself has formulated... It is thus that the study of nature has entered on the secure path of science, after having for so many centuries been nothing but a process of merely random groping.

An interesting side-light on Whitehead is to be found as a footnote to p.212 of The Organisation Man, by Wm. H. Whyte, Pelican, 1965.

'Speaking to his friend, Lucien Price, A.N.W. recalled how, in the 1880's in Cambridge, nearly everything was supposed to be known about physics that could be known, and, like others, he thought it was an almost closed subject. "By the middle of the 1890's" he said "there were a few tremors, a slight shiver as of all not being quite secure, but no one sensed what was coming. By 1900 Newtonian physics were demolished. Done for! Still speaking personally, it had a profound effect on me: I have been fooled once, and I'll be damned if I'll be fooled again"'

8. Volume Three, The Library of Living Philosophers (Whitehead) Northwestern University, 1941.
9. Whitehead would have shared that nervousness about the role of the State in education which J.S. Mill expressed in his Essay on Liberty. In a very real sense a Minister for Education can be the most powerful officer in a government. 'That the whole or any large part of the education of the people should be in State hands, I go as far as anyone in deprecating... An education established and controlled by the State should only exist, if it exists at all, as one among many competing experiments...'
10. Perhaps Whitehead's early upbringing, which would certainly have given him an acquaintance with the ideals of mutual service as set out by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 12, as well as with the universalism of the Stoics, had something to do with this point of view?

11. 'The English academic who has been brought up on Newman's Idea of a University feels a certain dreariness of spirit, as Matthew Arnold used to say, when he sees the great University of Harvard launching out into an immense and imposing Business faculty. And he laughs sarcastically when he learns that certain American universities give degrees and diplomas in horticulture - etc. The Englishman, nevertheless, is wrong.. Even (Oxford and Cambridge) are finding that they have to compromise with new ways, and a new country inevitably starts with them'.

J.A. Spender in Through English Eyes quoted in Cunningham and Radford's Education for Complete Living. This was written in 1935!

12. White, J.P., Towards a Compulsory Curriculum, R.K.P., 1973.
13. 'Faith has no merit where human reason provides the proof' - Gregory the Great.
14. Whitehead, A.N., The Aims of Education and other Essays, Ernest Benn, 1962.

## Section Five

### Whitehead and Religion

"No view of education is adequate which does not reckon with spiritual conflict as man's particular heritage. Man's supreme problem is to find reconciliation through and beyond the conflict" - M.C.V. Jeffreys in The Aims of Education.

This section provides a further analysis of Whitehead's conception of religion. In the course of it I shall refer to his philosophy of science, though not with the intention of making any detailed survey of his scientific doctrines. In a discussion of the relationship between education and religion, reference has to be made to scientific method, and the relevant epistemology, because of the major part this had to play in our educational systems and methods. My contention will be that there is also a religious epistemology which, given certain rules or frames of reference, can be validated.

Whereas scientific thinking proceeds along the well-ordered lines of structure, quantity, and causation, and interprets the universe in ways which are amenable to these conditions, religion, and axiological thought in general, interprets the universe in ways for which the questions Why? or Wherefore? are appropriate. This suggests that 'meaning' or 'purpose' must be taken into account; and the universe will then be interpreted according to teleological principles or criteria.

This notion of teleology provides the theme for this section, and it also represents the thread which runs through all those eclectic elements which constitute Whitehead's theory of education insofar as he relates it to religion. It is clear that he would not have given to 'religion' a meaning such as 'that which is dogmatic and church-centred'. It is equally clear that he would not have considered reductionist theories (which would subsume religion under alternative headings such as ethics, literature, human relations, art, or social studies) as adequate, either. Of one thing we might be fairly certain: if he could give conviction to the idea that 'the essence of education is that it be religious', then he must at least have considered religion to be an integrative force, comprehensive rather than sectional.

In an article on religious instruction Brian Hill maintains that in a 'pluralistic democracy' an educational system should reflect both the characteristics and the requirements of pluralism whilst being, at the same time, democratic. He means by this simply that our schools have a responsibility to initiate every student into the forms of thought and experience which are typical of what we understand to be civilized life. Unless this process occurs, the pupil is neither aware of the options available to him, nor is he in a position to make sensible use of his rights of free choice.

To achieve this desirable end, however, Hill says that 'a fair amount of benign compulsion' must be incorporated into the curriculum for the child's formative years. 'There are certain things we believe the child must know in order not only to survive but to develop a life-style which is socially viable and personally satisfying'.(1.38) This sentiment is consistent with Whitehead's educational aims as set out, for example, in the first five chapters of his Aims of Education. Can it throw light on what he meant by education-that-is-religious?

Whitehead does not make the enquiry any the easier when he reminds us that 'there is no agreement as to the definition of religion in its most general sense'. There is, indeed, a broad spectrum of types of religion which extends from humanism at one end to transcendent theism at the other. His statement about the religious quality of education cannot therefore be taken as it stands unless we know what kind of religion he was referring to. One clue might be found in this - that whereas humanism must be ultimately pessimistic (cf. H.G. Wells' The Mind at the End of its Tether, or Hepburn's Objections to Humanism, or Russell's 'firm foundation of unyielding despair'), Whitehead was essentially optimistic.

He was convinced, moreover, that religion must not be treated as if it were but one aspect of the social sciences. He said, for example, 'you use arithmetic, but you are religious... Your character is developed according to your faith. This is the primary religious truth from which no one can escape. In the long run your character and your conduct of life depend upon your ultimate convictions'.(2.5)

The previous paragraph raises the problem which is integral to any discussion about religious education as such. It is commonly said, for

example, (and even by those who would be most reluctant to have religious instruction in state schools) that teaching about religion is in order. The implication is that such teaching could be given if it were taken to be a particular aspect of social science, and suitable therefore for field research, statistical analysis, and so on. Whitehead sees, however, that this would be not only inadequate but also inconsistent with the true character of the subject being studied. Although religious education must be as objective as possible, and those who teach it scrupulous in their intention to guard against indoctrinating, we must always bear in mind that religion is the name for that which is more than a phenomenon. It is an experience; and, as such, it produces in those who study it acts of decision or commitment, for it or against it.

This must be said; for although increasing attention is being given to the academic study of religion, 'religion' has become an end in itself. Thus God tends now to be but one topic in the wider study which is religion; whereas God himself was once the object of worship, and 'religion' was the method and the matter by which it was done. There is noticeable, in contemporary discussion which is to do with the God-concept, a general shift in emphasis from static structure and unchanging categories to process; in ethics, from formal principles to contexts; and in the religious life, from repressive elements to expressive.

Whitehead describes religion as 'the art and theory of the internal life of man, so far as it depends on the man himself and on what is permanent in the nature of things'. If this is so, then it negates the theory that religion is primarily a social fact; because social facts are by no means always of a permanent character. In that respect they contrast with the archetypal constituents in our human nature. Religion could be described, indeed, as the controlled use of archetypal myths... a myth being that which provides a unifying framework for those symbols which are used in the form of a narrative.

This is not to say that social facts are of no importance in religion, or to the study of religion; for 'no man is an island'. As Whitehead puts it 'you cannot abstract society from man, and most psychology is herd-psychology. But all collective emotions leave untouched the awful ultimate fact, which is the human being consciously alone with itself, for its own sake. Religion is what the individual does with his own solitari-

ness'.(2.6) That last sentence is one of the best-known definitions of religion; and it is regrettable that advocates of religion in its more corporate aspects so often quote it out of context and without reference to what is said immediately before and after it.

Whitehead did not mean by it that the ideal form of religion is self-contemplation; even though he must have been aware that 'the unexamined life is not worth living'. Without question, self-scrutiny is one of the higher planes in all the great religions, not excluding those in which the doctrine of 'salvation by saviour' is central.

But Whitehead did not abstract man from his heritage and environment in order to find him in the act of being religious! He always saw religion as existing in the context of civilization, as existing, that is to say, in community of faith or practice. He could never have agreed with those who tried to interpret his definition as meaning that the religious phenomenon could be understood in complete separation from social and environmental factors.

Whitehead looks to standards of reference external to the self with which contrasts and comparisons can be made. The most important of these (because the most comprehensive) he designates as God. God provides a transcendent point of reference for the here-and-now events of daily life. The religious function in man addresses itself to the problem of the meaning of existence in the light of God's will or purpose - however 'God' may be interpreted.

But here is a trap for the unwary! Whitehead does not mean by God the person we learn about at mother's knee. He regards God as a cosmic artist who constantly (or eternally) imposes his ideas on the chaos of space and the disorder of motion. He derived this artistic concept of the creative God almost certainly from Plato, who had developed it in the *Timaeus* and the *Philebus*. The chaos and the disorder are, however, external to God; and so we have a theological dualism. God: and that upon which God works and expresses himself. Whitehead says that the basic assumption in modern science is a widespread instinctive conviction in the existence of an Order of Things; and, in particular, of an Order of Nature.(3)

This is, of course, a primal assumption in nearly all the major religions, and certainly of those which have a semitic origin (the Revealed Trio - Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). Whitehead sees "What do you mean by God?" as a fundamental question, and he describes three sorts of answer to it (2.56/7), with one or other of which a religious outlook would align itself.

- (a) The Eastern Asiatic conception of the impersonal order to which the world conforms,
- (b) The Semitic concept of a definite personal individual entity,
- (c) The Pantheistic concept which, as an extreme monism, identifies the world's reality with that of God.

He assures us, however, that Christianity has not adopted any one of these clear alternatives because 'it has been true to its genius for keeping its metaphysics subordinate to the religious facts to which it appeals'.(2.60) and (4) Nonetheless, the Christian doctrine of creation is that of simple divine fiat, ex nihilo.

Dorothy Emmet, who has done so much to advance the study of Whitehead's philosophy, wrote that 'faith is distinguished from that entertainment of a probable proposition by the fact that the latter can be a completely theoretic affair. Faith is a Yes of self-commitment: it does not turn probabilities into certainties; only a sufficient weight of evidence could do that. But it is a volitional response which takes us out of the theoretic attitude'.(5.140)

This is so; and in all fairness it has to be admitted that it could cause anxiety to educational theorists who are determined to preserve neutrality at all costs, lest the moral integrity of the pupils be tampered with. Practical pedagogic necessity, on the other hand, suggests that this cannot be taken too seriously. A pupil who moved out of his schooldays without 'formed attitudes' (for which his teachers will be, in part, responsible) could hardly be considered educated: and, quite obviously, not every pupil will hold the same set of attitudes as every other pupil. This will be seen most distinctly in the axiological areas... not least in that of religion. Yet Whitehead could say that the essence of education

is that it be religious! This is perhaps an expression of one of his fundamental ideas - that we do not reach every decision as the result of rational exercise, even if we were able to.

Now as it is not of the substance of this dissertation, I propose not to examine the matter too closely, and am prepared to accept what John Hick in his Philosophy of Religion takes as a starting point. He holds Descartes responsible for the view that we can only know truths that are self-evident, or those that can be reached by logical inference from self-evident premises. Even though this allows no place for intuition or revelation, it is a view which forms, I imagine, the opinion of the majority. In other words, the popular view is that 'to know' means 'to be able to prove'... and this is a legacy of the Cartesian tradition. But as Kant told us 'concepts without factual content are empty; sense data without concepts are blind... The understanding cannot see. The sense cannot think. By their union only can knowledge be produced'. And it took G.E. Moore to formulate the opinion that what many people suspect (and all people live by!) is that that Cartesian tradition is irrational rather than rational. Nothing can, in truth, be more certain than the reality of our physical environment. We need only to accept it, not to justify it philosophically. As we have seen already Whitehead also had strong views on this question of 'world acceptance'. (6)

But in the 19th century the ancient struggle between the rationalists and the empiricists (in which the Christian religion, in spite of its existentialist character, was necessarily involved) took on a new form which might be described as Organism versus Atomism. One result of this was that Russell and Whitehead, who had co-operated so fruitfully in Principia Mathematica, later drew apart; the one to become a logical atomist, and the other a philosopher of organism.

That Whitehead brought out two of his most important books (Science and the Modern World and Process and Reality) when he was 63 and 68 respectively has led some critics to suggest that he was then past his best; implying, presumably, that those two books should not be regarded as representative of his finest and most fruitful work. Yet it is reasonable to believe that we are now in the position of being required to choose between the type of philosophy represented by the later Whitehead and that



represented by Russell. (I refer back to the comments of Professor A. Boyce Gibson in the introductory section of this dissertation). Each type has important consequences for the interpretation both of religion and of education.

For Whitehead, speculative philosophy is an endeavour to provide a set of ideas in terms of which everything we experience can be interpreted. It will not do to interpret one experience by one 'set' and another experience by another 'set'; the metaphysical set is meant to provide a consistent and comprehensive interpretation of the world-process as a whole. Whitehead believed that everything of which we were conscious - as enjoyed, perceived, willed, or thought - should have the character of a particular instance in the general scheme; and his views on morals, religion, politics, and history are derived directly from his metaphysical position. Though he developed no metaphysical system which he would have considered to be final, he did look for general ideas by which to interpret 'all the choir of heaven and the furniture of earth'. When Berkeley wrote those quoted words he was referring to 'the mind of some Eternal Spirit' which sustained all things in those moments when they did not happen to be perceived by human minds. Whitehead was equally aware of some Eternal Spirit.

He realised that we start in philosophy from what we find our normal experience to be like; and that we must therefore be suspicious of any theory which would require us to disregard our normal perceptual experience. Berkeley himself was, let it be said, giving symbolic expression to the remarkable way our perceptual experiences fit-in together, both within the experience of any one individual, and that of others. In this way there is induced a sense of wonder and respect which is quite likely to influence even our most mundane reactions to material objects.

In view of the foregoing, it could hardly be otherwise but that Whitehead should speak so frequently of religious qualities and values. The purely scientific scheme of things, he argues, leaves some elements out. Thus, a frankly mechanical outlook on the universe is possible only if we are prepared to treat the abstractions of physical science as if they were concrete elements of experience.(7)

Whitehead is unlike the traditional metaphysician on the one hand (for he nowhere claimed that his own theories were final), and the traditional

subjectivist on the other. He was a realist who would not accept that experience must be conceived subjectively. This is what lies behind his statement about 'qualities' in nature. That they have a reality of their own he expressed in that well-known irony,

Thus the bodies are conceived as with qualities which in reality do not belong to them, qualities which in fact are purely the offspring of the mind. Thus nature gets the credit which should in truth be reserved for ourselves; the rose for its scent, the nightingale for his song; and the sun for its radiance. The poets are entirely mistaken. They should address their lyrics to themselves, and should turn them into odes of self-congratulation on the excellency of the human mind. Nature is a dull affair, soundless, colourless; merely the hurrying of material, endlessly, meaninglessly. (8.68)

However that may be, the fact remains that, out of an infinite variety of possible worlds (the hypothesis is not unthinkable) what has arisen is this actual world-type with which we are familiar. (9) It could be said perhaps that it is the 'excellent human mind' which provides the ordering principle to account for this fact; but, as we have seen, Whitehead attributed it rather to God, whom he described as 'the principle of concretion'.

At first sight this is unexceptionable. God can be given many descriptive titles with some measure of justification. It is when he is deprived of them that offence is more likely to be caused in the minds and hearts of those who worship him. (If Whitehead had denied explicitly that God was the Creator, for example). Yet his ideas of God proved to be as unwelcome to many orthodox theologians as some of his philosophical ideas proved to be unwelcome to philosophers of traditional outlook. He did not think of God as static, passive, or 'deistic'; but, instead, as 'in process'. God is involved, that is to say, in the Creation of which he was and is the author... though managing to avoid the intellectual problems which are inherent in the twin doctrines of Transcendence and Immanence. He is a limited God... though, doubtless, self-limited. This was the stumbling-block for orthodoxy. (10.334/5)

For the 'process thinkers' the basic assumption that man's place must be set in its evolutionary context must be put alongside the conviction

that, in all human experience, the mental and the physical interpenetrate each other. For Whitehead, process rather than timeless being is the ultimate metaphysical truth. He argues that the traditional notion of a God complete in his being and beyond all change, is a self-contradicting idea. That it is an idea, what is more, which is as unnecessary (either in metaphysics or in Christian theology) as it is self-contradictory.(9)

It is likely that Whitehead has made out as good a case as can be offered, at the present time, for a compromise with metaphysics. But to his occasional appeals to intuition and his initial assumption that the universe forms a necessary, coherent system, the empiricist will be inclined to turn a deaf ear. The detailed information supplied by Whitehead about the primordial, and the consequent, natures of God(10) must elicit the pertinent and inevitable questions 'How do you know all this? How can you know it?' He might have found confirmation in some words of Marcus Aurelius concerning his knowledge of God.

To those who ask the question "Where have you seen the gods, or whence have you apprehended that they exist, that you thus worship them?" First, they are visible even to the eyes; secondly, I have not seen my own soul, yet I honour it; and so too with the gods, from my experiences every instant of their power, from these I apprehend that they exist, and do them reverence.(11)

But such an apology, which includes both an appeal to experience and also a cosmological reference, is not without its dangers.(10.335) Some would see it as not making any real sense because it requires an extrapolation from the contingent to the non-contingent - the main objection to the Five Proofs of Aquinas. Perhaps, however, Whitehead's process-philosophy steers around this difficulty; but, if it does, it is only by imputing to God a nature which, in contrast to the definitions of classical theology, is reduced. Whitehead takes the common view that 'the works of nature sufficiently evidence a deity'; and, as H. Hawton says, he deals with that basic query 'How do you know all this?' by saying that he is 'merely trying to frame the general ideas in terms of which we can interpret what we experience'. He admits, nonetheless, that Whitehead, 'in the ardour of the quest, moves a very long way from the data of experience'.(12.152) This is true: he does oscillate between the testimony of the external and that of the internal; and he does not turn to empiricism as a full alternative.(13)

Whitehead says of empiricism that it depends upon the doctrine that there is a principle of concretion which is not discoverable by abstract reason; and he explains it thus, 'God is not concrete, but he is the ground for concrete actuality. No reason can be given for the nature of God, because that nature is the ground of rationality'.(8.222) A religious concern about origins, like a religious concern about the future, talks about God (or 'the gods', or some equivalent), and relates that talk to human problems. Every religion claims that there is something wrong with, or lacking in, human existence; and this claim might well be one of the criteria by which a phenomenon is identified as being 'religious'. They all speak, therefore, in terms of a beyond-ordinary-existence; though they have to resort to symbols in which to express themselves.

What further can be known about God must be sought then in the region of particular experiences. This does presuppose an empirical basis. In respect to the interpretation of these experiences the different races of mankind have differed widely. As a result of the enormous advances in knowledge, made in recent years, about the non-Christian religions, it no longer seems an anomaly to admit that God is known 'by a thousand names'. Jehovah, Allah, Brahma, Father in Heaven, First Cause, Supreme Being - and though they are not strictly identical, every such name corresponds to a system of thought derived from the experience of 'the Orderer' of those who have used the particular name.(cf. 8.223)

When Whitehead uses his famous phrase about the custom of 'paying metaphysical compliments to God'(8.250) he appears to mean that humans esteem God too highly! It is true that some ascriptions of praise give the impression of being without meaning (in any literal sense, that is.. though the special language of worship has received a great deal of critical and scholarly attention of late, and has survived the test). But that this might apply in the logical sense also is the implication behind his statement that 'If this connection be adhered to, there can be no alternative except to discern in God the origin of all evil as well as of all good. He is the supreme author of the play, and to Him therefore must be ascribed its shortcomings as well as its successes'.(14)

The fundamental nature of religious experience, though not universally the same in detail, is as old as mankind. But, from the 15th century

there was... a general movement of European mentality, which carried along with its stream, religion, science, and philosophy. It may shortly be characterised as being the direct recurrence to the original sources of Greek inspiration on the part of the men whose spiritual shape had been derived from inheritance from the Middle Ages. There was therefore no revival of Greek mentality. Epochs do not rise from the dead. The principles of aesthetics and reason, which animated the Greek civilization, were reclothed in a modern mentality. Between the two there lay other religions, other systems of law, other anarchies, and other racial inheritances, dividing the living from the dead.(8.173)

It is true that, in religion, as in philosophy, there was a growth of subjectivism; and that whereas, before the Reformation, religious discussion had been concerned chiefly with matters of a strictly theological nature, after the Reformation the church itself was split as a result of the reshaping of theology in terms of individual experience. It was not enough to know about the doctrines of salvation; it became necessary to experience the effects of salvation and to be able to communicate them. Emphasis now lay upon the experiencing subjects.(cf. 8.173)

Notes to Section Five

1. Hill, B.V., Religious Instruction - an Anachronism? Journal of Christian Education, October 1974.
2. Whitehead, A.N., Religion in the Making, O.U.P., 1927.
3. Doubtless Whitehead, like the writers of the Upanishads, found it impossible to express all the attributes of the Eternal and the Ineffable by a single name, God. Therefore whenever he used that name he used it with a variety of qualifications in mind.
4. I interpret this to be yet another reference to the fact that religion can never be treated in purely objective fashion. 'He that is not for us is against us' has a relevance wider than that of the circumstances in which it was first spoken.
5. Emmet, D.M., The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking, Macmillan, 1945
6. In his Function of Reason, in describing the spirit in which the philosopher seeks to understand the world as 'disinterested curiosity', Whitehead reminds us that metaphysics itself rests on the prior necessity of an initial act of faith in the intelligibility of the world of empirical fact.
7. There is such a thing as a 'philosophy of the as if' - Vaihinger; and a 'religious technique of the as if' - cf. William James, Varieties of Religious Experience, Lecture III. But they produce as many problems as they solve. So we might be prepared to accept Whitehead's stand on this subject.
8. Whitehead, A.N., Science and the Modern World, C.U.P., 1927.
9. It is of interest to note that 'process thinkers', after the style of Whitehead, reject any kind of determinism - scientific and philosophical as well as theological. According to Whitehead, God is the principle of actuality as well as the principle of limitation. "God is the ultimate limitation, and His existence is the ultimate irrationality. For no reason can be given for just that limitation which it stands in His nature to impose. God is not concrete, but He is the ground for concrete actuality. No reason can be given for the nature of God, because that nature is the ground of rationality". Now when Whitehead describes God as the Ultimate Irrationality he implies that it is God's function to make actual one of the infinite number

of worlds that might have been (not to create the world that actually is; for He enters into each creative phase as the principle of limitation rather than as the Creator), He is, in truth, not responsible for the origin of evil! It was not until boundless creativity was limited by the appearance of the first fact (God's primordial nature), that there could be anything subsequent. God, being like Aristotle's *primus motor immobilis*, is not really entitled to the personal pronouns which Whitehead attributes to Him - for He is but an abstraction, a metaphysical necessity!

10. Nicholls, W., The Pelican Guide to Modern Theology, Vol. 1, 1969.

Whitehead, the founder of process theology, made a breach with classical metaphysics analogous to that which Newton made with medieval and ancient science when he conceived of motion instead of rest as the fundamental state of matter... The metaphysics of the ancient world.. assumed that rest was more fundamental than motion, and that motion could only be explained by an unmoved mover. For post-Newtonian physics, motion requires no explanation, rest does... There is a fundamental change here which must affect any post-Newtonian physics. Whitehead makes this change when he takes process instead of substance as the way he conceives the fundamental reality. For Whitehead this includes being, instead of the other way round... The process theologians are regarded by some as semantic atheists, who simply deify a feature of the natural world. They would not of course agree... but would take process philosophy as simply providing a conceptuality in which the God of Christian faith can be understood in a contemporary way.

11. Marcus Aurelius, Meditations XII. 28.

12. Hawton, H., Philosophy for Pleasure, Primer Books, 1959.

13. A reason why has been suggested by the philosopher (of religion) Huston Smith, in an incidental comment which occurs in a statement about Jewish anthropomorphism in The Religions of Man, p.256

It is easy to smile at the anthropomorphism of the early Jew who could imagine ultimate reality as a person... But when we make our way through the poetic concreteness of his perspective to its underlying claim - that, in the final analysis, reality is more like a person than a machine - we must ask ourselves two questions. First, what is the evidence against this hypothesis? It seems to be so completely lacking, that so knowledgeable a philosopher-scientist as Alfred North Whitehead could embrace it without reserve in our own generation.

Second, is the concept intrinsically less exalted than its alternative?

14. He is here facing a dilemma which none other than the prophet Isaiah faced; for in chapter 45, verse 7 of his prophecy we read

'I (the Lord) form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things'.

And in the Tao Te King we also read that

'Tao is the source of all things, the treasure of good men, and the sustainer of bad men'.

This can be rationalized theologically; nevertheless, the dilemma has been voiced. It is inescapable so long as God is thought of as omnipotent. This is but one of the problems which must arise in a God-concept which shows signs of being derived from Asiatic notions of absolute monarchy. It is not surprising that there have always been sensitive thinkers who have revolted against it. In this connection it is worth remarking that a metaphysical concept, when arraigned at the bar of religious experience, may not be able to present a good case. It could be in a position similar to that of a physical doctrine which proves incapable of meeting the facts of the material world as they are known to us. However, Whitehead's theistic doctrine of process may yet prove to be more serviceable and acceptable than the traditional 'world ruler' concept.



Section Six

Religion, Science, and Experience

'It were better to have no opinion of God at all, than such an opinion as is unworthy of him'- Francis Bacon

Whitehead is not saying anything very revolutionary about personal experience as a type of knowing. But he is pointing out that, as a result of centuries of insistence upon the infinite worth of the individual soul, Christianity 'has superadded to the instinctive egotism of physical desires an instinctive feeling of justification for an intellectual outlook. Every human being is the natural guardian of his own importance'.(1.174) In that statement he shows his hand which he is, later on, to play skilfully in the game we call education.(2.18) Religion includes the whole man, in many and varied activities and frames of mind. It certainly includes the intellect, the will, and the feelings.. though no one to the exclusion or detriment of the other two. We may assume that Whitehead knew this ancient three-fold formula; and we might assume further that he applied it to his thinking about education. This throws a little light on what he had in mind when he described the essence of education as religious.

Just how far the personal experience which is religion requires intellectual support, of necessity, is an open question; but the vast scale of explanation and intellectual endeavour occasioned by the concept of 'god' or 'God' suggests that such support is essential at any rate for the more thoughtful members of the human race.(3)

Like Bergson (for whom 'process' meant creative evolution) Whitehead contended not only that metaphysics was a descriptive science but also that direct experience and intuition are basic, while proof is secondary. His authority for that bold statement is that the groundwork of all existence is present in all instances of existence, and hence in all experience. Our task is to see it there. Argument can rest only upon some part of the groundwork that happens to be more clearly discriminated. This suggests that 'clearness and distinctness' concept which is so important for the philosophy of knowledge. The words tend to be associated especially, if

not exclusively, with the scientific outlook; and that is unfortunate. Whitehead often refers to this situation; and I give this one example as typical;

In the same way as Descartes introduced the tradition of thought which kept subsequent philosophy in some measure of contact with the scientific movement, so Leibniz introduced the alternative tradition that the entities, which are the ultimate, actual, things are in some sense procedures of organisation... Kant reflected the two traditions, one upon the other... It should be the task of the philosophic schools of this century to bring together the two streams into an expression of the world-picture derived from science, and thereby end the divorce of science from the affirmations of our aesthetic and ethical experiences. (1.194)

No writer has stressed more forcefully the divorce of science from the affirmations of our aesthetic and ethical experience. The significance of art and religion in the life of man is that they strive to restore the balance (or remarry the divorce). Whitehead insists that the ethical and religious consciousness has as much right to be treated as objectively valid as have the perceptions of the external world on which we base our science. And anyway, no one really believes that the world is entirely without meaning and value!

His emphatic desire to produce, if not unity, then at least harmony, between the different branches of knowledge is laudable. But can the divorce be, in fact, avoided? Are we not confronted with two quite distinct categories of thought and reality which, though both legitimate, are incompatible? Even if the contention of equal legitimacy be granted, that is no guarantee that compatibility will necessarily follow. Religion and science are commonly thought to be in conflict because of their different truth-claims and methodologies. We might ask a second rhetorical question, Is the idea of conflict inevitable? Whitehead maintains that although we have become accustomed to think that this is so, and will remain so unless either science or religion abandons its peculiar position, it is not possible that either should do so, because they are the two strongest powers which move us. We cannot do without the impetus given us either by intuition, or by careful observation along with logical deduction. Or, as Will Durant puts it, we have the necessity to believe in order to live, and the necessity to reason in order to advance.

The conflict between religion and science has been especially acute since the latter part of the nineteenth century, but it is nothing new. Both elements continue to develop, moreover; neither one overcoming the other. Whitehead, trailing his coat in the sight of the scientists, says that, whereas religion used to be obscurantist, science now is! He declares science to be even more changeable than theology (which is not really surprising); though in both regions of thought additions, distinctions, and modifications have been introduced. It follows then that even if theories or doctrines which are propounded today seem to be similar to those which were made in the past, they are really different because they are set in different contexts. Knowledge expands; meanings change. This is why Whitehead is confident that truth is relative. It can only be 'truth up to a point', there being always more to be discovered. All that may be taken for granted are general conceptual standpoints out of which truths may be formulated.

To illustrate this he mentions the two theories about the nature of light; and shows how one theory is necessary to explain one group of phenomena, but that other phenomena can be explained only by the other theory. He was hopeful that, in time to come, there might be found a way to reconcile these two aspects of truth. This far we might agree with him. But I cannot agree with him when he intimates that we can apply the same principles in the hope of similar results when we are dealing with the differences between science and religion. Even though they are working hypotheses only, both theories of light fall within the boundaries of science; and though bridges may be built between science and religion, the very need to build them implies the existence of boundaries.

Whitehead says

We would believe nothing in either sphere of thought which does not appear to us to be certified by solid reasons based upon the critical research either of ourselves or of competent authorities. But granted that we have honestly taken this precaution, a clash between the two on points of detail where they overlap should not lead us hastily to abandon doctrines for which we have solid evidence. (1.229)

It is on the strength of that that he expects science and religion to show the respect to each other which is their due. He sees in the clash

itself an indication that both are waiting to be deepened and refined until at last a reconciliation between them will be possible. Science was guilty, he said, of drawing an arbitrary line between what it would accept as relevant to an interpretation of the universe, and what it would ignore or reject. On the one side, physical and chemical forces prove acceptable; on the other, aesthetic and religious forces are unacceptable. It is worth noting that Professor Leuba concluded his classic Psychology of Religious Mysticism with these words

It is not a replacement of the religious spirit by science which is indicated here, but the inclusion into religion of the relevant scientific knowledge. The hope of humanity lies in a collaboration of religious idealism with science.

Not everyone would agree with Whitehead, however, when he says that the conflict between religion and science is a slight matter of which too much has been made. 'A mere logical contradiction cannot in itself point to more than the necessity of some readjustments possibly of a very minor character, on both sides'. (Whitehead makes frequent use of 'mere'; but in this instance it seems particularly infelicitous.) He draws attention to the different aspects of events which are dealt with in science and religion respectively. It should be obvious that each has its own areas of special, if not unique, authority... physical phenomena for the one, moral and aesthetic qualities for the other. Although this is a summary statement, it will serve, at this stage of the argument; and it gives force to Whitehead's contention (1.228) that 'what one side sees, the other misses, and vice versa'.(4)

He finds a bridge over the boundary (between science and religion) in the sense of wonder - which, said Aristotle, is the mother of wisdom - and the appreciation of what can only be called the aesthetic. These axiological insights or concepts are never far below the surface for Whitehead. Thus, for example, he writes

When you understand all about the sun and all about the atmosphere and all about the rotation of the earth you may still miss the radiance of the sunset.. We want concrete fact with a highlight thrown on what is relevant to its preciousness. (1.248)

It was improper, perhaps, to use that particular quotation in close

succession to what was said about the conflict between religion and science; and yet there is, without question, a sensible connection between them. It is not only Peter Bell of whom it might be said 'A primrose by the river brim, a yellow primrose was to him, and it was nothing more'. Fulness of vision requires the artist's eye; fulness of expression requires the poet's tongue; and the value of the aesthetic lies in its ability to create symbols for a level of reality which cannot be reached in any other way.

J. H. Randall, in his The Role of Knowledge in Western Religion seems to have captured something of the spirit of Whitehead's interpretation of religion when he says that religious symbolism has a fourfold function, namely (a) to stimulate the will to moral activity, (b) to bind a community together by means of common symbols, (c) to communicate a quality of experience which is best described as aesthetic, and (d) to make us aware of a plane of reality in which are to be found life's depths and mysteries (See the preface to this work). These four points surely have educational relevance. But, whatever else might be said about it, this interpretation of religion has no need of a really-existent divine Being. It is simply a life-enriching, intra-mundane experience. It seems magnanimous; but it would mark in fact, the death of traditional theistic religion because it is essentially anthropocentric.

It is Professor A. Boyce Gibson who reminds us (by quoting 'Beauty is a wider and more fundamental notion than truth' from Adventures of Ideas) that, for Whitehead, aesthetic values were indeed fundamental to his understanding of religion. He would not have been content to equate religion with morality, because he saw morality as something derivative, a compound of intellect and imagination. Negative morality, which is a main source of evil, has acquired its special character because it lacks grace. This leads to the interesting conclusion that significant religion is usually the result of reaction against graceless religio-moral forces (cf. Jesus' attacks on the Pharisees, and Paul's strictures against the Law). (5.147) Unfortunately the gracious aspects, both of religion and the morals derived therefrom, usually succumb to formalized structuring in later generations.

No doubt Whitehead had this in mind when he wrote 'No part of education

has more to gain from attention to the rhythmic law of growth than has moral and religious education'.(6.62) Those who are interested in the technique of teaching in those fields need to remember Whitehead's unpalatable quip - that the vitality of the religious spirit is exhibited in its surviving the ordeal of religious education! He had in mind the kind of religious instruction which has insisted too much upon precision in detail at the cost of any sense of grandeur or romance.(7)

But to return to the specific 'conflict' between religion and science. Whitehead shows how the Cartesian dualism had affected our scientific thinking because of its treating bodies and minds as independent individual substances. That they were considered to exist in their own rights, and without any necessary connection between them, was a point of view which harmonised with the individualism which developed after the Middle Ages. This emphasis on the individual and his experiences had a serious effect however, because

the independence ascribed to bodily substances carried them away from the realms of values altogether... They degenerated into a mechanism entirely valueless, except as suggestive of an external ingenuity... This state of mind is illustrated in the recoil of Puritanism from the aesthetic effects dependent upon a material medium..(1.241)

Whitehead's main concern at that point was to illustrate a few of the effects such attitudes have had upon scientific thinking. But of more interest to us is what he had to say about the effects in other areas. He shows, for example, how the doctrine of minds as independent substances leads directly not only to private worlds of experience, but also to private worlds of morals. The significance of this is that 'moral intuitions' can then be held to apply only to the strictly private world of psychological experience. Whitehead suggested that, as a result, self-respect, and the making the most of our own individual opportunities, together constituted the efficient morality of the leaders among the industrialists (of the nineteenth century). The Western world is now suffering from the limited moral outlook of three previous generations. He held also that the assumptions of the bare valuelessness of mere matter led to a lack of reverence in the treatment of natural and artistic beauty.

Whitehead maintained that when Newton produced his explanation of

the physical world in terms of mass and stress, he left them as detached facts, and gave no reason for their joint existence. In doing so he demonstrated what is a profound philosophical truth... a dead Nature can give no reasons! So, said Whitehead, during a lecture on Nature and Life, all ultimate reasons are in terms of aim at value.(8)

There is, to be sure, a bonding between aesthetics, education, and religion which is as important as any nexus we can conceive. Yet there are dangers in this; for there are those who would go so far as to say 'Religion through beauty', or even, 'Religion is beauty' (cf. 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty, that is all/ye know on earth, and all ye need to know' - Keats, Ode on a Grecian Urn.) That there is truth in 'religion is beauty' may be agreed; but to reverse it and say 'then beauty is religion' is to make assumptions of an order which the educational process, by its sharpening of our critical faculties, should guard us against.

Consistent with the aesthetic attitude is that spirit of wonder to which reference has already been made. Teachers in the field of religion are making much of this concept as contributing to an understanding of what is meant by 'the religious dimension'. Critics of the notion say that there is nothing particularly religious about it: and perhaps they are right, if wonder means no more than curiosity. Yet it is likely that the concept of wonder carries with it the thought of 'grateful acceptance' over and above that of the 'mental exploration' which is more appropriate to curiosity. Moreover it is possible that at this very point we should look for any essential difference there might be between science and religion - and also for any likely juxtaposition between them.

Whitehead did not attempt to push aside the conflict between science and religion. On the contrary, he admitted that it had to be taken seriously - with the emphasis being given to the approach to the problem rather than to the conflict itself. Thus he can write

In an intellectual age there can be no active interest which puts aside all hope of a vision of the harmony of truth. To acquiesce in discrepancy is destructive of candour, and of moral cleanliness. It belongs to the self-respect of intellect to pursue every tangle of thought to its final unravelment. If you check that impulse, you will get no religion and no science

from an awakened thoughtfulness. The important question is 'In what spirit are we going to face the issue?' (1.242)

That is a noble statement which, even by itself, entitles Whitehead to serious respect as an educator.

Critics of religious education are forever crying 'Indoctrination' as they suggest that it is not possible to escape from the closed system and tight-knit answers provided by dogma. There would be truth in this if religious education were the same as ecclesiastical instruction. There would also be cause for alarm if every educational contact (those of religion alone excepted) were entirely devoid of indoctrination. But, of course, this is not so. Indoctrination at various places in the educational process is inevitable, even though it might be entirely devoid of evil intent! The influence of the teacher is more significant in the early years of schooling than in the later; in those the influence of the subject-matter taught becomes predominant. As J.P. White indicates in his Towards a Compulsory Curriculum, educators are justified in expecting all pupils to know certain things both for their own good and for that of their society. To equip pupils for the making, in due course, of acts of personal acceptance or rejection (in matters other than 'numerical truths', let us say) is a justifiable educational aim. But in the initial stages of this essential learning process, and no matter how simply they may be expressed, certain axioms or hypotheses must be given to the children as the sine qua non of that learning process. Though as White makes clear (p.104, op.cit.) compulsion must not be confused with coercion.

Also, the theory that we should pursue every tangle of thought to its final unravelment is - though splendid - not so straightforward as would appear. How are we to know when that conclusive state has been reached? Certainly there is, in some areas of life, general agreement that, in such a concept as (for example) 'love is better than hatred', a finality has been reached; and that we know this to be so, even though there cannot be, in the nature of things, any empirical proof for it.

So we notice with interest how Whitehead maintains that it is impossible to think things through impassively. Every age, he says, produces people with clear logical intellects, and with the most praiseworthy grasp of some sphere of human experience, who have elaborated, or



inherited, a scheme of thought which exactly fits those experiences which claim their interest. 'Such people are apt resolutely to ignore, or to explain away, all evidence which confuses their scheme with contradictory instances. What they cannot fit in is for them nonsense'.

It is disturbing to read such words; the more so when we remember that he is not speaking of anything so crude as political propaganda, for example. He was issuing a warning, based on what we must assume to have been his own experience in the world of education and learning, that in any consideration of facts, standards, or values, nothing less than scrupulous honesty and balanced judgement could be accepted. That this is not always the case is not necessarily indicative of bad faith; for, as he confesses, it is an ideal which is not always easy to follow because 'we cannot think first and act afterwards'. This idea was expressed at some length in the first Essay in The Aims of Education - that we cannot wait for a 'correct time' before we begin to think; nor can we refrain from action until after we have thought. The two processes are going on all the time, and always in relation to each other.

This does not mean, of course, that all our actions are rational. What Whitehead wants us to see is that 'it is absolutely necessary to trust to ideas which are generally adequate even though we know that there are subtleties and distinctions beyond our ken'.(1.232) This is in no sense a weak appeal for us to clutch at any intellectual straw, nor is it a suggestion that because we cannot be omniscient we must be as if paralyzed. He is reminding us that, because of human frailty, we cannot hope to do more than adopt those ideas which experience shows to be adequate in certain situations. We all inherit, by way of the traditions of our culture, quanta of evidence which have been shaped into general ideas. Though these are, as a rule, mind-extending, sometimes (as we saw above) they are mind-restricting.

Again, this is neither a counsel of despair, nor a plea that we should be mentally docile, or 'quietist'. Whitehead could never be accused of anti-intellectualism! He says, for example, that those general ideas are never static. 'They are transformed by the urge of critical reason, by the vivid evidence of emotional experience, and by the cold

certainties of scientific perception'. (1.233)

This is well said; and the important thing about it is its round comprehensiveness. This is a feature of Whitehead's teachings. Great matters are always treated in breadth as well as in depth; though he sometimes gives the impression of confusing the ideal with the actual.

He draws a distinction between the somewhat free-ranging intellectual pursuits of Hellenism, and the more rigorous (both as to subject-matter, and methodology) enterprises of Hellenistic Alexandria; and the point he is making there is that although in some areas of life it is only proper to speak of the right and the true, there are other areas in which such precision is hardly possible. This view would, I believe, meet with popular acceptance; but educational theorists sometimes lead us to believe that they have overlooked it.

Whitehead tells us that the difference between the two, namely the Hellenic and the Hellenistic types of mentality, may be roughly described as that between speculation and scholarship. For progress, both are necessary. But, in fact, on the stage of history they are apt to appear as antagonists.

Though here a strange feature arises. Religion seems now so often to be static and rigid in its ideas and concepts. It is unfortunate, indeed, that the conventional 'religious outlook' tends to resist the need to 'think things through'. In scientific matters such an attitude would be absurd; in ethical matters it would be dangerous; in social or community matters it would be obscurantist. This gives us further reason to assume, therefore, that when Whitehead spoke of the religious character of education he had in mind something other than the conventional interpretation. Yet, in origin, religion was speculative. In view of the fact that religion cannot work by means of logical concepts or empirical data (unless it is being described simply as a phenomenon within, say, sociological or psychological limits), speculation is, and must always be, an intrinsic element of religion. We are finite beings who experience 'intimations of reality' beyond what can be measured or investigated empirically. These experiences appear in aesthetic, moral, or mystical dress; and in our attempts to describe them we must resort to metaphor or analogy.

Speculation is not welcomed in the 'religious structures' however, because, by presenting alternative theories, it must be productive of a measure of scepticism. Scepticism is, as Whitehead puts it, 'always disturbing to established modes of prejudice'. And, as Lord Acton said 'Few discoveries are more irritating than those which expose the pedigree of ideas'.

Whitehead's optimism breaks out again when he says that speculation obtains its urge from a deep ultimate faith that, through and through, the nature of things is penetrable by reason. But true religious faith, be it noted, is not demonstrable in relation to its object. For if it were susceptible of proof it would mean that God (or the object of worship) could be known and established apart from faith. That would bring 'God' down to a level with the world of tangible, objective reality - the area in which alone the writ of proof can run.

Now scholarship has to be conservative if it is to give the proper attention to the methods upon which it has been built up. To the scholar then, speculation will not be welcome either, because it will tend to negate the care and caution of the prescribed methodologies. Moreover, speculation has the habit of breaking through defined limits, and of crossing over from region to region of intellectual reserve. Or, as Whitehead put it, 'Your thoroughgoing scholar... finds his fundamental concepts interpreted, twisted, modified. He has ceased to be the king of his own castle, by reason of speculations of uncomfortable generality, violating the very grammar of his thoughts.'(10.137)

That extract draws attention to another feature of Whitehead's teaching - his emphasis upon adventure, exploration, and process. He wants always to be moving on and out, though not always in the way that a careful researcher would wish to go. It is this characteristic which explains his emphasis on the aesthetic and other intuitive modes. We have to distinguish between the epistemological analysis of religious faith, and any argument as to the validity of that faith. 'Religious experience' is a way of interpreting life. That is unarguable. Whether it is illusory or veridical is another matter; and with that Whitehead was not primarily concerned.

In his Adventures of Ideas the burden is that nothing is fixed. Things change; no less do the laws relating to those things change. There is

an evolutionary process at work everywhere; and this makes the concept of fixed, eternal laws invalid. This applies to religion no less than to science. Our knowledge of anything, any phenomenon, moreover, can be at best, limited. That being so, our knowledge of the laws by which they are governed is limited also.

Now just as some religiously-inclined people (used to) leap gratefully towards Heisenburg's Uncertainty Principle (11) to reinforce their arguments in favour of indeterminism - which they confused with free-will - so some of a similar cast of mind will read Whitehead superficially, and find in him an opponent of science and a defender of religion. They should take note of this passage;

As a rebound from dogmatic intolerance, the simplicity of religious truth has been a favourite axiom of liberalising theologians. It is difficult to understand upon what evidence this notion is based. In the physical world as science advances, we discern a complexity of interrelations. There is a certain simplicity of dominant ideas, but modern physics does not disclose a simple world. To reduce religion to a few simple notions seems an arbitrary solution of the problem before us. It may be common sense; but is it true? In view of the horrors produced by bigotry, it is natural for sensitive thinkers to minimize religious dogmas. But such pragmatic reasons are dangerous guides. This procedure ends by basing religion on those few ideas which in the circumstances of the time are most effective in producing pleasing emotions and agreeable conduct. (12.64)

This comment is all the more harsh because it is true. Those who want to call Whitehead to their aid in producing a simple explanation of 'religion' which they can apply to 'education' should realise that the search in which he guides them will be hard and rigorous, and it will almost certainly demand of them the relinquishing of some of their most dearly-held interpretations of religion.

When religion had authority, that authority went hand-in-hand with an objective austerity. Now it is becoming increasingly anthropocentric, and relative in a weak kind of way. One sees, for example, placards bearing such exhortations as 'Come to church; religion is fun'.

Teachers who profess religion, or who agree with Whitehead about the essence of education, must be on guard against this kind of thing if they wish their field of study to be taken seriously; for the implica-

tions are disturbing! The religious quest must probably remain open-ended; and I would contend that a theory or a hypothesis does not have to be close-ended in order to possess elegance. It may develop from step to step in a proper and regulated fashion, and yet come to no conclusion - just because the terminus is unattainable in the human context. This will apply in all axiological categories; and it is they to which we attribute absoluteness. Anthropomorphic concessions cloud the vision!

Notes to Section Six

1. Whitehead, A.N., Science and the Modern World, C.U.P., 1927.
2. Martin, D., in The Religious and the Secular, R.K.P., 1969, says

The spokesmen for optimistic rationalism begin their assumptions on the premise that religion is not true, i.e. it has historically involved beliefs which can be shown to be incorrect .... Once educate people properly, in the neutral scientific atmosphere congenial to rational values, and religion will steadily lose its grip and mankind no longer be troubled by bad dreams... The troubles of religious institutions are an inevitable prelude to the triumphs of truth... As has often been pointed out, this analysis lays far too much stress on religion as a system of explanation and on man as a cognitive animal. Believers are not failed rationalists, but human beings.

3. Some of this intellectual activity seems to be intrinsic to the religious process; but a good deal more is extrinsic. In our particular cultural tradition we rely heavily on both the Hebrew and the Greek contributions. In religion intellectual entities (such as Aristotle's Prime Mover) are apt to become embodied in devotional aspirations; and hymnody is often more effectual than is theology as a medium of popular didactics. Speaking of the nature of the intellectual aspect of religion Whitehead says that it was the completion of a 'dispassionate metaphysic'; after Aristotle's time metaphysics was influenced, as I have indicated above, by ethical and religious interests. Aristotle's idea of God was philosophical rather than religious (and far less mystical than Plato's); and Whitehead was right to point out that metaphysics on its own is unlikely to go much beyond the position of Aristotle. Other factors have to be introduced if progress towards religion is to be made.
4. Whitehead refers to the lives of John Wesley and Francis of Assisi, and uses them to provide an example of the difference which must occur depending on whether we regard them as simple manifestations of physical chemistry, or as events which had the most profound significance in the history of the world. Such an illustration is telling, and is likely to carry conviction to anyone whose mind is not locked in one particular system. How can common principles be applied to such divergent standpoints?

5. Norwood, C., in Education for Complete Living, ed. Cunningham and Radford, A.C.E.R., 1938, says

Now the contention is merely that without a religious basis to its education, democracy cannot last for long. It must seek through its schools a totally different kingdom of values, and teach that, first and before all, must be sought truth, beauty, and goodness; qualities which are the reverse of those sought in the economic sphere, in that they are increased by being shared. The more you have of them, the more there is for everybody else: they can enlighten the schools, they can enlighten the whole life of the citizen community. Indeed, on any right view, religion and education are two sides of one living process of development, in which education fits for life, and religion inspires.

6. Whitehead, A.N., Aims of Education, Benn, 1962.
7. I am inclined to think that the contemporary emphasis (especially in the new curricula on Religion) on that very spirit of wonder already mentioned is a genuine attempt to overcome this shortcoming in educational responsibility, and that it might produce more educational stimulus than the more traditional emphasis on religious morality produced.
8. One can see then why Whitehead was so insistent on there being an aesthetic component in education, and the reason for his describing a religious education as one which inculcates 'duty and reverence'. Reverence is a value which seems now to occupy a lower place than once it did in the scale of values. Not only reverence towards persons, but also reverence towards the things of nature. The Judeo-Christian religion is considered by some to be in part responsible for this decline because of its doctrine that the world was created for our benefit and delight, and because Adam, the representative man, was charged 'to work it and subdue it'. This, it is said, has produced a human arrogance which has led to the wanton misuse of the gifts of nature. It would be fascinating to be able to hear Whitehead on the subject of conservation - as having educational, or even religious, significance!
9. Whitehead, A.N., Adventures of Ideas, Macmillan, 1969.
10. 'Heisenburg had an idea that nuclear theory should be stripped of all non-calculable analogies drawn from human experience.. Einstein was the only one to dismiss a theory which allowed only for statist-

ical but not causal interpretation of atomic processes with his reference to 'the dear God who does not believe in chance'. (From an article in The German Tribune, February 15th, 1976.

11. Whitehead, A.N., Religion in the Making, O.U.P., 1927.



Section Seven

Religion and Rationality

'Scientific truth is characterized by its exactness and the certainty of its predictions. But these admirable qualities are contrived by science at the cost of remaining on a plane of secondary problems, leaving intact the ultimate and decisive questions' - J. Ortega y Gasset.

The situation described at the end of the previous section is undoubtedly one of the reasons why religion has been adversely criticised. Sometimes excessively and unreasonably so; but, as Whitehead insists 'dispassionate criticism of religious belief is beyond all things necessary. The foundation of dogma must be laid in a rational metaphysics which criticizes meanings, and endeavours to express the most general concepts adequate for the all-inclusive universe'.(1.71) As we have seen already, Whitehead does not suggest that a rational explanation can be found for every event and every experience. What he does expect is that resort shall not be had to the irrational or the inconsistent when it comes to the description of religious phenomena. It is only a metaphysic which can provide a safeguard against the disturbing effects of religious emotions; and, according to his own definition, given as a footnote (1.72), Whitehead meant by metaphysic the science which seeks to discover the general ideas which are indispensably relevant to the analysis of everything that happens. This implies an observation, a scrutiny, which is far wider than any specific investigation of a limited area; this latter being properly typical of the scientific method.

In trying to understand Whitehead's attitude here we may be reasonably sure of finding, if not philosophic rigour at all times, then at any rate confident reference to values and standards as absolutes. Paradoxically, however, the absolute which seems to mean the most to him is relativity, or process. His book, Process and Reality, flung down the gauntlet to Bradley's Appearance and Reality, in which it was claimed that what is ultimately real cannot be in process of becoming.

He reminds us, for example, that there are no such things as universal moral laws, or universally identical moral intuitions. This presents

something of a philosophical dilemma; and he himself held a rather negative attitude towards most moral codes because of their conservative nature. He denied the existence of absolutely valid universal moral laws which could be described as being 'quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus'. All societies and communities have ideals; and it is in the actualization of those ideals that real morality is to be found. Yet even they must be considered relative, for they arise at a given place at a given time. He sees morality as a creative, adventurous function rather than a passive acceptance of existing standards, and criticises that frame of mind which regards morality as being simply an innate ability or capacity in which ordinary knowledge and skills have no place.(2)

Dorothy Emmet makes this comment; and it has a bearing on the foregoing;

That philosophy has been able to become a religious faith for some of its greatest masters is a fact which can sustain and encourage its students. But their faith grew out of the whole spirit in which their philosophy was carried on.

She means that a philosopher's thinking may be, for him, of such depth and intensity, that it takes on a religious colouring; serves, indeed, as a religion - for him. But, for those who have not been through similar mental travail, the conclusions reached by the philosopher are not available, except at second-hand. This is not good enough to serve as a religion for them. A philosopher, says Emmet 'can only allow himself to be turned into a prophet at his peril'.(3.150)

The philosopher is in very different case from the theologian, especially in the field of ethics; for whereas the latter works within (or sometimes against) a worshipping community, in which conservative consistency is of prime importance, the former can make his assertions of faith quite independently of any such environment. He can vary his opinions or teachings with some frequency, provided he can produce adequate reasons for doing so. Changes of this sort often have serious moral implications, depending on whether the actions of the philosopher, or the theologian, are consistent with his teachings.

Whitehead might have been uncomfortable with the conventional

liturgical assertions and exercises of a typical Christian group (as Kant was; and as C.S. Lewis was - and said so quite forcefully); and yet, one feels, would not have rejected the idea of worship out of hand, provided a Platonic model was somewhere in the background! (4.238)

He once remarked 'if men cannot live on bread alone, still less can they do so on disinfectants' (4.87); meaning thereby that criticism was a legitimate operation, but that the traditional values which were the subject of criticism had a right to live. Disinfectants destroy bacteria; and, often enough, the tissue which carries them. Criticism is meant to destroy the irrational and inhuman aspects of tradition, but not the tradition as well. But, as Hegel pointed out, when the traditions of a culture come under scrutiny, that culture (or at least that particular epoch of that culture) begins to die. (cf. a reference to Thought versus Culture in The Philosophy of Hegel by Rauch, Monarch Press, p.69).

Criticism does not provide for that affirmation of values which is distinctively the content of faith, and which usually requires some form of liturgical manifestation or religious expression. Whitehead realised that one of the great problems for Twentieth-Century Man was that of value-creation and value-maintenance. Yet he, like many other recent writers on religion, warned against any facile equating of values, goodness, and religion. He said that it was a dangerous delusion to believe in a necessary connection between religion and goodness. The facts of history should serve to disabuse us; for although here and there religion has undoubtedly been a mighty agent for progress, in a wider view of time and place the opposite effect must be considered the more likely. (1.9 and 1.26. But elsewhere, in modo suo, he speaks much more favourably of the role of religion).

This reference to the moral characteristics of religion is only incidental to our purpose at this stage, and it developed out of an example of Whitehead's 'relativism'. Let us return to the epistemology of religion, and its place or significance in the decline of religious authority.

He criticises modern scholarship and modern science when they show defects similar to those of the Hellenistic and the scholastic

eras.(5) He accused professionalized scholarship (a general term, surely!) of limiting the free exercise of reason when it permitted only tautologies and the *sensa* as its valid data; then freeing itself 'from criticism by dogmatically handing over the remainder of experience to an animal faith or a religious mysticism, incapable of rationalization. The world will sink again into the boredom of a drab detail of rational thought, unless we retain in the sky some reflection of light from the sun of Hellenism'.(6.151)

Certainly he is not attacking the rational process as such in that remarkable last sentence. Rather he is criticising the standpoint of those who think that the rational process is all, and that all can be reduced to rationalism. Some of the Greek philosophers might have believed this; others denied it. The School men tried, perhaps, to establish it, but there was a smart reaction. And this process of reaction shows signs of recurring. Increasing numbers of thinking people are prepared to say that reason is not the sole criterion of truth, no matter how legitimate its place in science and everyday affairs, and notwithstanding its proper function in the apprehending and ordering of the information derived from sense-experience. As evidence for this assertion I offer, for example, the six recent lengthy radio programmes in the A.B.C. series Investigations in which this point of view was mentioned by one speaker after another as they discussed the spiritual, scientific, intellectual, and psychological implications of what is commonly called 'the counter-culture'.

It would seem to be fair comment that, in one epoch rationalism is in the ascendent, and in another it is in decline. This alternation may be due to some inexplicable 'spirit of the time', but a more likely explanation is that new plateaux in human thinking are reached from time to time, from which we look back and say 'That is past'. Then, to our surprise, we find that the next plateau is very similar to the one on which we had turned our backs.

Whitehead had something of this sort in mind when he outlined the difference between present and past in terms of the amount of information we now have. Nevertheless, our knowledge is still limited; and we must not, strictly speaking, move a fraction beyond those limits. Therefore

speculation must be ruled out (a proposition to which he could never agree). He sees this as the great danger in positivism and says that although 'it reigns supreme in the domain of science' it is, in truth, the one doctrine which can the least effectively face facts! 'It has never been acted on' he says, 'it can never be acted on, for it gives no foothold for any forecast of the future around which purpose can weave itself', (6.159. My emphasis).

At the time of his writing this, Whitehead was attacking positivism in a way which is no longer necessary; and allowance has to be made for this personal involvement. But he made a good point when he said that if we relied solely on observed fact it would be irrational and improper for any guess to be made as to the future.

In respect of logical positivism Jacques Barzun maintains that 'every student of Western civilization must be indebted to Whitehead's great work', not least for the reason discussed in the previous paragraph. (He was referring to Science and the Modern World particularly). He regretted that a whole school of philosophy should take as its central doctrine that language would provide the answer to even our deepest problems. The relevant extract is given in the Notes (7.4) along with one by G.K. Chesterton, which E. Mascall thought good enough to refer to in his notable Words and Images. Both Barzun and Mascall were reminding us that words are symbols which, in themselves, are fragile and approximate.

That Whitehead also realised this we may assume from his dictum that 'not a sentence or a word is independent of the circumstances under which it is uttered. True scholarly thought never forgets this truth'. Our understanding of word-meaning is not restricted by rules; and as a result of this, words have acquired extra meanings, so to speak, and overtones. It is this element of imprecision which, according to Whitehead, allows us to communicate with one another at levels below that of conventional, literal expression. (8)

Whitehead's critique of rationalism is due, perhaps to the fact that there have been times (and not in the eighteenth century only) when the sublime authority of reason has been asserted in ways which can only be described as extravagant. As an illustration of this I refer to Paul Hazard's comment in his European Thought in the Eighteenth Century. He

maintains that, to reason has been ascribed qualities of infallibility and omnipotence. Not authority - for reason has no need of that; reason is its own authority and will preserve those who make use of it from error and aberration. (9.40)

Hazard is reminding us that if an idea is quite clear, then it is finished - in the same way that a definition (note the etymology), or a rabbit on a dissecting slab, is finished. In the history of ideas imagination is as important as reason. Indeed, it could be maintained that, both in logical and historical priority, imagination preceded reason. (9.46)

Hazard's eloquent passage is in the manner of Whitehead. It could be regarded as mere rhetoric; but not if it is seen as part of a greater whole. Obviously there must be some elements of experience (by far the greatest number indeed) of which it may be said, 'These things we know. We do not have to experiment and to discover, everyone for himself'. In addition there are also those elements about which we intuit, imagine, and dream. They could be called the on-going elements of experience; and religion would certainly be included among them. It is they which enable us to project into the future. It is they which provide the foundations for the concept of purpose.

Doubtless, Whitehead was of this opinion when he was led to suggest that we have in human solitariness the seed-bed of religion. 'The great religious conceptions which haunt the imagination of civilized mankind are scenes of solitariness; Prometheus chained to his rock, Mahomet brooding in the desert, the meditations of the Buddha, the solitary man on the Cross'. (1.19) Although his rhetoric gets the better of his theology here, the emphasis lies, in fact, on the rationality of the religion experienced in these awe-inspiring moments of solitariness in which a sense of detachment from the mundane leads to a deep conception of the universal. (In the case of Jesus also the temptations in the wilderness would have been more apposite).

Whitehead claims that the human spirit does not come to an understanding of life-affecting values until individuality is merged into objectivity of such a kind that we may say 'Religion is world-loyalty'. (cf. Religion in the Making, p.60).

Naturally enough, when considering the intrinsic values which are realized through the desires of finite things, Whitehead turns to the aesthetic order, not to the logical. The astonishing thing is that he holds the aesthetic order to be the highest type of order because it is the most concrete! Indeed, in his Modes of Thought (page 83) he goes so far as to say that both the logical and the moral orders are but aspects of the aesthetic, and that the foundation of the world is in aesthetic experience. If the universe has a purpose, that is, it is the production of Beauty (in the widest sense of that word).

Religious solitariness leads to a kind of 'personal empiricism', the results of which are not to be gainsaid. It plays, moreover, an essential part in religious epistemology. It is on the strength of available evidence in all the major religions that we find justification for saying that 'religious silence' must not be described as atheism or agnosticism - or ignorance. The religious visionary need not be seen as one who is speechless as a result of being baffled or frustrated, so much as 'struck dumb with wonder', as it were. This has positive value rather than negative. It is the silence of caution in face of the dangers inherent in any direct attempt to describe the supreme reality of religious experience.

Whitehead was not alone in being dismayed by the confident manner in which religious realities and attitudes have sometimes been defined; especially in those religions which are based on revelation and divine disclosure. We come again to the question of epistemology; for, if God is indeed transcendent, how can there be any communication between Him and those who lay claim to the revelation? It is significant that Whitehead refers sympathetically to the Asian religions. This is because they have avoided that tension which seems to have become an inbuilt element in our culture between 'western science' and 'western religion' (with all that implies in the realms of education and epistemology). In the particular culture-patterns we have inherited, it is as if the signal 'religion' had been coded to produce the sole response 'Christianity'. Thus the concept is limited; and Whitehead himself was aware of this difficulty. Christianity is so essentially a structured religion, based upon the foundation doctrine that man fell into sin, that too close an identification between religion and Christianity is bound to produce grave

difficulties both in educational practice and epistemological theory. These difficulties are compounded rather than resolved by some of the modern attempts to explain the mystery of religion in terms of paradox. In the outcome, this usually leads to a humanism, the main pre-occupation of which is to be relevant!

H.D. Lewis reminds us that oriental religion, in its avoidance of the sharp distinction between the here and the hereafter, opens the way to a recognition of the proper place of the inner life (in which the religious experience is to be placed); and he says that, in contrast, in many influential quarters of western philosophy, 'their repudiation of any finite access to our own thoughts and experiences is almost axiomatic'. (10.189)

Beyond certain limits it is impossible to consider integrating the Christian religion with other faiths because, as has been known from the earliest days of the Christian era, the concepts of incarnation and revelation are unavoidable stumbling-blocks. There is no way round this difficulty, except by way of attenuation, or travesty, of Christianity. Did Whitehead make allowance for such matters when he said that the essence of education is that it be religious?

We must now enquire, therefore, how religion gives shape to communal and personal living (which, in itself, must be one of the functions of education as well). Its systematic or theological expressions may be, indeed, no more than protective shelters against the rigours of our psychic or spiritual environment. Within protective shelters, however, there is opportunity for the growth of what we call the arts and graces of civilization. Theological tradition has played a major part in assisting the development of manners and morals; and we cannot overlook the role played by religious themes in the arts of mankind. All the arts, without exception. Religion, in providing the dynamic, provides also some metaphysical stability, even though it be a fragile thing.

It is typical of much current popular theological thought that it is concerned overmuch with the immanent. It tends to find its categories of explanation in psychology, sociology - and, even, parapsychology. The effect of this is to minimise the transcendent, and so to deprive us of an external point of reference. It places overmuch emphasis on one



interpretation of truth, and denigrates the role of imagination. Whitehead saw this danger clearly; and that is, without question, one reason why he emphasised the role of the aesthetic, in religion as in anything else.

It is not possible, in the nature of things, for us to experience the Transcendent. Yet any worthwhile interpretation of religion must include an experience which is acknowledged to be transcendent. It is out of these individual experiences that religion, as a phenomenon, has developed: but it is in this latter sense that religion has become a tradition, a social phenomenon; and, in consequence, second-hand. It is likely that Whitehead did not give sufficient weight to this fact; for his use of 'religion' sometimes give the impression that he is referring to a social concept, or an intellectual tradition rather than a living individual experience. As against this, however, are those statements of his about religion and solitariness, and the comparative worthlessness of the second-hand. He was but one of the many who have found utter consistency in this respect impossible of achievement!

It is more than likely that Whitehead, being a master of Greek, and classical culture, would have in mind, whenever he spoke of 'god', the word theos. Theos, in the Greek, has a meaning wider than that of 'god'. It stands for the transcendental reference which humanity, in any age, is accustomed to give to life. We would describe it nowadays rather in terms of 'the numinous', or 'the sense of wonder, or mystery'. In this sense we could say of religion that it is both the awareness of the mystery and the impulse to understand it. This might seem to be equivocal; but it is, I believe, inescapable.

Contemporary religion lacks what traditional religion had; that is, the power to co-ordinate thought and feeling in the wide contextual idea that the universe is purposeful, and beneficent. Such a style of thinking could be expressed only in analogy, of course; and this is so even if we feel obliged to take revelation into account. (It could have come about, incidentally, only in those periods of human history in which it was generally agreed that an over-ruling supra-human providence was in supreme and constant command; it cannot persist once we start thinking that human destiny lies entirely in human hands).

Whitehead would have had little sympathy with a Barthian theology;

not even when Barth himself had begun to relent somewhat in his attitude towards natural theology. Yet Barth had a point when he protested against idealistic metaphysics in which God was reduced to a definition, or to an explanation of the rational system of the universe. Whitehead also protested, as we have seen, against 'paying metaphysical compliments to God'; but he went on to say that God was in himself the supreme exemplification of our metaphysical principles rather than one who should be invoked to save them from collapse. This idea gives a good indication of what Whitehead thought religion to be, and how different anything he said about it was likely to be from those conventional interpretations which are summed up, for instance, in the well-known line 'O God our help in ages past...'. It is necessary then always to keep in mind the varieties of understanding and interpretation which exist in respect of theology. Thus a Thomistic theology (in which philosophy is regarded as a preparatory exercise to theology) is very different from a Barthian. Whitehead could never have accepted any system which required the sacrificium intellectus: and yet he is prepared to go beyond the limits of the intellect, as some of his quoted sayings have shown.

Nevertheless, a fundamental question to be asked of all theological statements is 'Do these reflect God as He Who Is? or God as the Author of Nature?'. (Pascal felt the dilemma, as we know from his heart-cry against the God of the philosophers). The latter question would be more in the nature of a myth than were the older theologies because (since the radical shift of thought in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) of a growing disaffection with the language of analogy, and a growing rejection of the cosmological 'proofs'. I have mentioned elsewhere how religion as a study is replacing theology, because God is increasingly being considered to be an object of investigation instead of as ultimate reality, the fons et origo, no less, of 'god-talk'. (One can see the virtue in the attitudes adopted by Bultmann, Tillich, and Bonhoefer without necessarily going all the way with them.)

Since that time, and as a result of the influence of scientific ways of thought, there has been a growing insistence on making words 'mean what they say'. It has transpired that the language of religious experience has been given a literalness which has militated against it. (It

is as true now as when it was first written that 'philosophy can clip an angel's wings'!) This might help us to understand why Whitehead expressed himself in religious terminology to which he gave unorthodox explanations (it being a custom of his to use familiar words in new senses), whilst C.S. Lewis, for example, found satisfaction in orthodox terminology which he expanded imaginatively (even to writing an appendix on Tao in his pamphlet The Abolition of Man!) Each would have explained the title of this dissertation in very different fashion; yet each could have meant what he said. Thus the same words would have received different interpretations. Whitehead, from his point of view, and Lewis from his.... each was an artist or a poet who would have felt inhibited if he had been required to give to words only the plain meanings associated with them by scientists and positivists. Each had his times of precision, needless to say. Lewis, when he was writing strictly as theologian; and Whitehead when he was writing with the symbols of mathematics and logic.

Even in logical argument a point must eventually be reached when we ask 'How do we know that?' - the point at which and for which there is no proof; no answer, indeed. Here literalness breaks down. It is not by any procedure that we know the point to be sound. We just know; we cannot validate it any other way. If this seems to be dogmatic, to suggest that we have a faculty (cf. the supposed irreducible appreciation of 'the numinous', in which our humanity consists) by which we acquire such, or hold such knowledge might seem somewhat less dogmatic, perhaps. Though no proof can be given of this either; and it is but a concession to the prevailing scientific temper.

The fact remains, however, that the things we know without applying procedures (as Whitehead put it) are foundational to our knowledge. This is true of what for want of a better term we might call the psychic realm, just as much as it is true for the axioms of mathematics and the sciences.

This is conceptual knowledge; and it is quite different from perceptual. Intuition is a kind of metaphoric perception: conceptual knowledge is intuition. All our understanding has a background of knowledge which is not reasoned or argued. We do not acquire meaningful knowledge only when we are consciously, or with effort, cogitating. Many unconscious or effortless experiences may have the power of creating vital changes in

one's way of life. We make new connections among items which are already present in our minds, to make new knowledge. We do not always need new data for the learning of something new, that is to say.

A right understanding of this situation would give a fresh outlook on the matter of drawing limits to methods of acquiring knowledge. To make barriers between emotion, feeling, and rationality is to reduce the dignity of the powers of the human mind. This is a problem which lies at the heart of what might be called 'religious epistemology'.(11)

It should be remembered that religious statements are not propositions (except in so far as they might be steps in a logical process based upon some datum of belief). They cannot, therefore, be held to be true or false in any propositional sense. It should be remembered also that this is not the only sense in which truth is to be conceived, even though the propositional notion of truth and falsehood has tended to dominate our Western style of thinking since the time of the Enlightenment. The revelational style of religion, at any rate, has always asserted that faith is not a belief in theories; and that salvation is not to be had through a doctrinal system. If firm hold had at all times been kept on that notion, there would have been a deeper understanding of the nature of truth itself. Impersonal truth does indeed lend itself to statement form; but personal truth appears in another quality. More will be said about this in the final section, in which the teacher-pupil relationship is discussed.

Notes to Section Seven

1. Whitehead, A.N., Religion in the Making, C.U.P., 1927.
2. This is a theory which has invaded some educational systems in recent years, and which is now producing the inevitable reaction (as expressed, for example, in the Black Papers, 1975, see Appendix, p.115). Dewey was perturbed by this 'naturalist' attitude, seeing that it could lead to an educational dichotomy, namely the acquisition of knowledge of the one hand, and the growth, by natural process, of morals on the other. This could lead, in turn, to the downgrading of moral education so that it became a form of catechetical instruction instead of being the result of rational process. This typifies a popular view that morality is something which is acquired rather than achieved. It does not need to be learned!
3. Emmet, D.M., The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking, Macmillan, 1945. And, it might be added, at the peril of those who accept him as a prophet. In this context a prophet would be one who made proclamations which were necessarily moral in character. My suggestion here is that the ethical management of a society and its citizens is not simply a matter of natural or instinctual endowment. Furthermore, although each one must employ his powers of reason in making moral decisions, this does not exempt him from referring to traditional standards, or make him independent of roots in the past.
4. Whitehead, A.N., Science and the Modern World, C.U.P., 1926.
5. Into those I do not intend to go; for this criticism is much too general for our present study. Suffice it to say that these defects take the form of dogmatic assertions based upon inadequate physical or metaphysical data. The modern alternatives show a similar dogmatism, after excluding teleology as a source of explanation.
6. Whitehead, A.N., Adventures of Ideas, Macmillan, 1969.
7. Barzun, J., Science the Glorious Entertainment, Secker and Warburg, 1964.

That this should be the age in which a school of philosophy has taken language as the sole source of light upon man's

oldest problems, upon his duty and his destiny, is understandable but not re-assuring. When literary critics study a text in the belief that it is made up of units of meaning akin to hard-edged units of science and mathematics, which they can therefore count and classify like geologists working in rocks and fossils, they waste their time and blunt their sensibilities. The philosophers of language make the same mistake when they try to analyse the reality of fact or feeling by scanning the words of propositions in a vacuum.

cf. G.K. Chesterton's spectacular passage:

Whenever a man says to another 'prove your case' defend your faith', he is assuming the infallibility of language: that is to say, he is assuming that a man has a word for every reality in earth, or heaven, or hell. He knows that there are in the world tints more bewildering, more numberless, and more nameless than the colours of an autumn forest.... yet he seriously believes that these things can everyone of them, in all their tones and semitones, be accurately represented by an arbitrary system of grunts and squeals. He believes that an ordinary civilized stockbroker can really produce out of his own inside, noises which can denote all mysteries of memory and all the agonies of desire... for the truth is, that language is not a scientific thing at all, but wholly an artistic thing, a thing invented by hunters, and killers, and such artists, long before science was dreamed of.

8. Whitehead, although hardly to be called an existentialist, described metaphysics in this way.

Philosophy is akin to poetry, and both of them seek to express that ultimate good sense which we term civilization. In each case there is reference to form beyond the direct meanings of words. Poetry allies itself to metre, philosophy to mathematic pattern. (From the final paragraph of Modes of Thought, Macmillan, 1938, p.237 f.)

9. Hazard, P., European Thought in the Eighteenth Century, Pelican, 1954.
10. Lewis, H.D., Philosophy of Religion, E.U.P., London, 1965.
11. Much is heard nowadays of the 'gut reaction' as a means of testing validity. Bronowski, in the last of his Voyage Round a Twentieth Century Skull talks attacked the idea because of its liability to mislead us, who are essentially cerebral creatures. It is interesting to find John Passmore (A Hundred Years of Philosophy, Pelican, 1972, p.341) writing

Philosophers have been misled, Whitehead suggests, because they have supposed that sight is the typical mode of relation-

ship; Whitehead exhorts them to reflect upon their visceral sensations.... from which they will be the more likely to comprehend the relationships which together make up the universe.

Section Eight

Religion, Education, and the Teacher

"Religion to be understood and appreciated properly, needs to be set in a full educational context; and the educational process, in order to be complete, needs to take account of the phenomenon of religion with all its claims about human nature and destiny" - Ninian Smart

To Whitehead, the process thinker, every thing was an occasion of experience which stood in contextual relationship with the whole world! Every entity is related, no matter how remotely, to every other entity. So then experience is a datum. But we need to learn the meaning of experience. If we are able to verbalize it, so much the better for our comprehension and inter-personal communication. There are some experiences however which strike too deeply for us to verbalize them; and many a grieving parent (let us say), with a newly-dead child, has confirmed this. Moreover, even when using words, we have to rely on what we already know in our efforts to communicate with one another. A physicist, for example, when talking to another physicist, creates a different situation of verbal communication and understanding from the one he would create if he were talking to a shop assistant about the same topic. Every conversation is between human beings who already have a vast fund of knowledge amongst themselves which need not expressly be invoked. There are meanings within meanings, and meanings beyond meanings(1). There is 'in group' talk; there are myths; there are symbols such as flags or temples, which may do more than speech does for the communicating of meaning; and there is music, which might be more evocative than them all.

Both in religion, and in other areas of human experience, we are able to communicate by these symbols and evocative expressions. Yet it is fair to say that, of some experiences, simply because they are intrinsically incommunicable, expression cannot possibly be clear; and, of others, because they are incommunicable, the only expression will be silence! From Plato to Spinoza, from Aquinas to Wittgenstein, this has been acknowledged.

"I do not know" can mean, therefore, "I am just not able to give you an account of the matter", as well as "I have no comprehension



of it at all". This would not have satisfied Socrates, of course; for he claimed that to be able to say what was meant by justice was an essential part of our understanding what justice was. But though that may be the argument of philosophers, it is neither entirely true, nor entirely satisfactory. Not everyone, not even the expert, can verbalize precisely all he knows or does. (By 'verbalize precisely' I imply, for example, that A can convey to B a complete understanding and interpretation of an experience which A has had). To know the limits of our own powers of expression does not justify our thinking that we have, in fact, discovered the limits of human potential. There is an ever-growing fund of human understanding; and it is likely that there are ways of understanding and knowledge to which formal expression has not yet been given. Philosophers who speak of limits of understanding speak of a difficulty as if it were an impossibility. It is simply a frontier!

And the frontier of ignorance is also the frontier of knowledge. Yet it is fairly certain that the 'imprecision' (according to many contemporary thinkers) of language which is characteristic of the religious experience, is partly responsible for the alleged decline of religion and its influence. "The language seems not to tell us anything about a phenomenon which seems not to do anything", so to speak! This imprecision is responsible also for the growth of a quasi-religious terminology, the intention behind which is to give religion a new acceptability, if not a new popularity, among the secular fields of experience, the terminology of which has been borrowed.

Whitehead wrote of the 'gradual decay of religious influence in European civilization', but gave no evidence for this statement based on criteria which would have been universally acceptable. Indeed, what criteria could he have given after his insistence on the essentially solitary nature of the religious experience? This could well invalidate any data derived from a social context. Nevertheless his claim that there had been 'a steady fall in religious tone' would meet with wide agreement.

This remark is deeper than a first glance might indicate. He maintained, of religion in general, that a steady decline could be observed;

and this must be put in the context of his other statement that 'religion is tending to degenerate into a decent formula wherewith to embellish a comfortable life'.(2.233) Whitehead had seen the adverse influences to which religion had been subjected as a result of the teachings and discoveries of .. say .. Feuerbach, Comte, Marx, Darwin, and Freud. He was not so aware, perhaps, as we are of the ever-increasing pressures (characteristic of our contemporary Western society) from direct or frontal attack, particularly of an intellectual or pseudo-intellectual kind, which is brought to bear on religion. I refer here to such things as 'popular' sociology or 'mass-media' psychology which, though ephemeral, leave their mark.

He attributed the degeneration, however, to two causes. The first (which contradicts to some extent the previous sentence) is 'the unprecedented intellectual progress over the past two centuries'. Underlying this comment is the suggestion that religion must succumb more and more to a hostile intellectualism. Not an active external hostility, perhaps, so much as an inherent hostility. Whitehead contrasts the way in which scientific knowledge has always been able to expand as new facts have been presented to it, with the way in which religious thinkers have always been caught unprepared. (Here is further evidence of his following the general tendency to identify religion with Christianity; for it is not true of Hinduism or Buddhism, for example. They are not subject to such rigid rules of 'correctness' as those which are applied to Christianity; and they do not, in consequence, make sharp distinctions between permissible and heretical ideas.)

Religion (and I am continuing the identity) must, as a result, always give the impression of being one or more phases out-of-date. What is worse is that religious doctrines tend to be shifted from the area of the essential to that of the desirable, and then from the area of the desirable to that of the optional. In this way the intellectual authority of religious styles of thought is being constantly eroded.

Religious thinkers have trusted overmuch to dogma, and have been too reliant on the authority which they have believed dogma to have. Lord James of Rusholme, in writing about authority in education, describes the breakdown of traditional patterns of discipline in educational establishments; and remarks that, in that environment, the ultimate authority

is that of knowledge itself.(3.67 f) This has important connotations in the field of religion, if for no reason other than that the authority of religion cannot be seen to lie in that area unless its claims to an authentic knowledge-system be admitted. He then says 'education is one of the principal means by which a society seeks to perpetuate its values; it is through education that it produces workers of different kinds on which its prosperity, its happiness, and, most importantly, the tone and quality of its life depend'.(3.78) The perpetuation of values would be seen as one of the main functions of religion also. That is one reason why it, along with conventional types of education, is subject to radical criticism.

One can sense the meaning and importance of a statement such as the foregoing, whilst confessing, at the same time, that it is all very well, and begs many questions about education as well as about society. Though more to our purpose perhaps, is the question 'In what areas, precisely, can 'religious teachers' be expected to have authority?' Not only those who teach religion, but those as well who teach according to Whitehead's dictum that the essence of education is that it be religious? The popular phrase 'Religion is caught, not taught' gives a hint; but it belongs in a context which is not really germane to our argument. Of what sort, then, can their authority be said to be?(4)

When there is a change of ideas in science, this is usually seen to be an advance. A similar claim is made when there are changes in philosophical theories. A change in religious theories, on the other hand, is often taken to signify a retreat. Hence the traditional emphasis on dogma as well as doctrine. In them safety is thought to dwell. Whitehead expects religion to face change as science faces change. He uses the idea that although basic principles may be taken to be eternally valid, they must constantly be re-stated in contemporary terms and categories. But this is easier said than done! Re-statement often becomes, in reality, statement about something quite different. (Hence the scepticism, amongst the supporters of traditional religious doctrine, about Whitehead's God-theory.) It is true that religion should not be allied with scientific statements which are now demonstrably false. Yet so much religious symbolism (which is, unfortunately, often taken literally), and popular expectation, are associated with the 'three-decker

universe' for example, or a messianism of dire apocalyptic.(5)

Whitehead did not see the advance of scientific frontiers as constituting an essential threat to religion. Granted that the assertions of religion must constantly be adapted (to a process theologian this, one imagines, poses no great difficulty)... but 'the progress of science must result in the increasing codification of religious thought, to the great advantage of religion'.(2.234)

One can but envy his optimism, of course; but sees that it is simply a reasonable development of his theory of dialectic. In anything but formal logic, contradiction is a necessary step towards the attainment of real knowledge. This, he says, is one great reason for the utmost toleration of variety of opinion.(6.119) and (7) And he himself gives the reason for his optimism in this way. Having admitted that religion is the expression of one type of fundamental experience, he adds that 'religious thought develops into an increasing accuracy of expression, disengaged from adventitious imagery; the interaction between religion and science is one great factor in promoting this development'.(2.236)

He also gives a second and more subtle explanation for the decline of religion; but the acceptability of this explanation depends on whether we can share the meaning he gives to 'religion'. He certainly does not use the word to refer to church-centred activities. They are not necessarily excluded of course; but he suggests that the religious institution maintains its hold only so long as it reflects the hierarchical structures of the society of which it is a part, and so long as it can provide answers for human fears. He even hints that the role of the religious institution (and he is speaking quite generally) is to inculcate fear. Nevertheless, these are conditions of the old, bad ways.(2.237) Religion, in its modern manifestations, is more concerned with the comfortable organisation of society!

Whitehead is quite scathing about the way in which religious ideas... by nature strong, and constructive, and critical... have been degraded until they are now nothing better than the accompaniments to 'pleasing social relations'. It is interesting to note, however, the reason why he thinks this degradation occurs. It is a direct result of 'the influence

of keener ethical intuitions'; or, in other words, religious ideas (such as are expressed in formal acts of worship, or sacrifice, let us say) are ennobled by ethical interpretation. The Old Testament prophets knew that long ago, and they would have shared Whitehead's opinion that 'religious conduct is not simply a sanctioning of conventional social rules; and, moreover, that the essential content of religion is not expressed by the one word 'conduct''.(2.237)

One imagines that Whitehead would not have wished to be thought of as an antinomian; but he would have been in good company. Jesus and Paul were guilty of voicing similar thoughts which were critical both of society and of its religion; and Socrates 'corrupted the youth' in much the same way.

It is of significance that many teachers and parents are willing to have religion (by which is meant here the religion of the local culture) taught in state schools, provided it means nothing more than morality, or good citizenship. It would be seen, at best, as a means to a useful social end. But if the concept of 'religion' is to have any life or substance at all, it must refer, *inter alia*, to something which transcends anthropomorphic standards of reference. If the concept 'god' is to produce anything of a sense of awe or reverence, or if it is to have any influence on our understanding of duty, there must be an external quality about it. The traditional 'God-out-there' concept cannot be dismissed without a downgrading of the God-concept itself.

This is a terrible dilemma which no one who is concerned about the relationship between religion and education can escape. Dogmatism must be avoided; yet some kind of form and structure must be upheld.(8.74 f) In some subjects this will occasion not the slightest difficulty; but that certainly does not apply to religious education.

It is John Macquarrie who maintains that 'the religious spirit still remains active', even though it has been overtaken by decay. He notes how Whitehead criticises institutional Christianity whilst still allowing religion to have a creative role. This he explains by showing how Whitehead saw a three-phase historical development in the religious phenomenon.

First there was Plato's insight that the divine persuasion is foundational to the order of the world, an insight which anticipates a doctrine of grace. Next, there was the life of Christ which revealed in act what Plato had divined in theory. Thirdly, there was the attempted synthesis in theology of Plato's intellectual insight into practical Christianity. But this attempt at synthesis failed. Theology lapsed into dogmatic finality, and clung to outmoded ideas which turn the notion of divine persuasion into the doctrine of a despotic God who stands over against the world as a coercive Power.

Perhaps too much need not be made of the distinction between a notion and a doctrine in this context; but, says Macquarrie, Whitehead was telling us that if we are to have a theology which points effectually and truly to the Platonic ideals of divine persuasion, then a new reformation is required in which the doctrine of divine compulsion (as taught by formalised Christianity) is rejected. (9.275) Only in that way can religion play its creative enlivening role.

The significance of this for religious education is not hard to see. Macquarrie observes that a neo-realism such as that of Whitehead 'tries to avoid many of the pitfalls which attended traditional metaphysics, and the errors of old-fashioned naturalism... and the danger of anti-intellectualism such as showed itself in the so-called 'life-philosophies'.

The kind of religion which Whitehead found acceptable would seem to have something to commend it for the class-room situation. It steers between the over-confident claims of a revelationism (to coin a word), and the sometimes brash claims of a religious pragmatism which shows itself as an over-enthusiastic morality. Religion is to be regarded as an end in itself, and not as an intellectual discipline, an epistemological method, or a coercive towards pre-determined forms of behaviour.

Whitehead might wish us to be careful about our use of the concept 'supernatural'; but he was faithfully reported, one feels sure by his disciple Dorothy Emmet when she wrote 'religion loses its nerve when it ceases to believe that it expresses in some way truth about our relation to a reality beyond ourselves which ultimately concerns us'. (10) The full force of that statement can be felt only within a community of

belief. It must be pointed out that 'to believe' is the verb which is related appropriately to both belief and faith... in whatever context these may appear, scientific, or metaphysical, or religious. Faith is involved in religion; but religion is not simply a believing something. or believing in something. The kind of faith that is religious is involved faith; and that is the response to a concern which touches the root of our being. No doubt that is why Whitehead went on to describe 'religious education' as being that which inculcates duty and reverence. Education that is religious must be 'involved education'.

Some years ago it was common for philosophers to interpret the validity of religious discourse by models derived from perceptual discourse or scientific discourse. Those models did not succeed well in capturing the most distinctive features of religious discourse. More recently, and under the influence of the later Wittgenstein perhaps, other approaches have become common. But, encouraging though these may be, they tend to have the effect of isolating religion from other modes of experience in a way which can only be seen as unreal. It is worth noting that there is a parallel between scientific 'experience' and scientific explanation, within the community of science, and religious 'experience' and theological explanation, within the believing community. But, as suggested above, belief is appropriate to both communities.

Bearing in mind the statement of Professor Emmet, and the situation just described, I should wish to say that the authority of teachers of religion is to be sought in their honesty and integrity, coupled with a diligence towards both their subject and their pupils. The authority of teachers in general lies, no doubt, in the very same area.... if indeed 'the essence of education is that it be religious'. Teachers are the guardians of that authority which is present whenever truth is revealed or disclosed. They should not lose their nerve when they find themselves in such a position that they cannot express their knowledge precisely, nor describe exactly the limits of what they have felt or experienced positively. Neither need they feel personally responsible for the hesitant answers they might make in such an event, so long as they know and make use of the great stores of traditional wisdom which have been preserved in the classical, humanist, and religious forms and ideals. (See also the essay by D.S. Wringe in Philosophy and the Teacher, ed. Lloyd, R.K.P., 1976.)

This final section is meant to throw some light on the meaning the Whitehead statements have in the classroom situation, or wherever educational values are propagated. For it is here that the conceptual problem outlined in the Preface will confront the teacher most sharply.

He may be clear in his own mind what 'religion' means; and it is most likely that he will have a personal commitment to it, or against it. This implies that no religion is intrinsically and essentially coercive. At best it invites; and the invitation can be rejected as readily as it can be accepted.

But Whitehead asserts that the essence of education is that it be religious. Is Whitehead here describing something which is also non-coercive; or does it assume a convincing, meaningful quality in the teaching situation? If the teacher believes that it does, then he needs to guard against the very real difficulties of (a) tending to give a bias to his teaching such as will favour his own attitude towards religion (and this would have educational implications beyond that of indoctrination); or (b) trying to be so neutral towards the concept that he evacuates the cognate concept 'religious' of any meaning.

The extracts from Smart, and the other writers quoted in this Section, illustrate Whitehead's contention that 'religious' refers to those qualities (e.g. truth, integrity, respect, openness.... with regard to persons as much as to facts) which enable us to recognise a situation as being educational. To that extent we may agree that we have, in a context which seems to be both traditional and conservative, a coercive power by which adventures into new territories of learning can be made.



Notes to Section Eight

1. The intellectual seeks in various ways, the casuistry of which extends into infinity, to endow his life with a pervasive meaning, and thus to find unity with himself, with his fellow men, and with the cosmos. It is the intellectual who transforms the concept of the world into the problem of meaning. As intellectualism suppresses belief in magic, the world's processes become disenchanted, lose their magical significance, and henceforth simply are and happen but no longer signify anything. As a consequence, there is a growing demand that the world and the total pattern of life be subject to an order that is significant and meaningful.  
Weber, The Sociology of Religion, Methuen, p.125
2. Whitehead, A.N., Science and the Modern World, C.U.P., 1953
3. Rusholme, Lord James of, Authority in a Changing World, Constable, 1969.
4. I use the phrase 'religious teachers' deliberately (though it does not necessarily mean 'teachers of religion') as an extension of Whitehead's notion that the essence of religion is that it be religious. I find it hard to visualize education without teachers! The point would seem therefore to follow; though A.N.W. has perhaps confused the issue.
5. cf. the prophecy of an engulfing tidal wave in Adelaide, January, 1976, 'because of its wickedness'. This was a religious comment, or judgement. An intellectual problem arises in such circumstances. It was made, no doubt, both on good religious criteria, and with confidence in a law of causal association. It proved false!
6. Whitehead, A.N., Religion and Science (reprinted as Ch. XII in Science and the Modern World, 1925.
7. Religion, however, does not work this way. (The trumpet must not give an uncertain sound). The equivocation is noted; but the dialectical process is not, as a rule, characteristic of 'religion' - or, more precisely, of religious behaviour.
8. Martin, D., The Religious and the Secular, R.K.P., 1969.  
He quotes Bishop Robinson's suggestion that 'structure must be stripped' because of the wastage that goes on in the maintenance of religious structure; and he shows that this is not possible.

Then 'parallel attitudes arise in relation to images and stereotypes. There is in some a fear of any authoritative image as a centre of religious awareness, because as it commands it restricts, as it focuses it excludes'.

9. Macquarrie, J., Twentieth-Century Religious Thought, S.C.M., 1967.
10. Emmet, D.M., The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking, Macmillan, 1944.

APPENDIX

A summary of the Black Paper Basics; to which I have referred in the text as The Ten Points.

1. Children are not naturally good.
2. If the non-competitive ethos of progressive education is allowed to dominate our schools ----- unable to maintain our standards of living when opposed by fierce rivalry from overseas competitors.
3. It is the quality of teachers that matters -----.
4. Schools are for schooling, not social engineering.
5. The best way to help children in deprived areas is to teach them to be literate and numerate, and to develop all their potential abilities.\*
6. Every normal child should be able to read by the age of seven. This can be achieved by the hard work of teachers who use a structured approach.
7. Without selection the clever working-class child in a deprived area stands little chance of a real academic education.
8. External examinations are essential ----- Without such checks standards decline -----.
9. Freedom of speech must be preserved in universities. Institutions which cannot maintain proper standards of open debate should be closed.
10. You can have equality or equality of opportunity; you cannot have both. Equality will mean the holding back (or the new deprivation) of the brighter children.

\* 'To develop all their potential abilities' forces us to ask  
"For evil, as well as for good?"

For a discussion of this see p.64/5 of Towards a Compulsory Curriculum  
by J.P. White.

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