Article

Engaging with Dewey's Valuation in Religious Education to Enhance Children's Spirituality for Democratic Life

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Abstract: In this paper, we want to address how the educative growth of children's spirituality within religious education can be better understood through Dewey's theory of valuation. We would like to draw attention to the link between an education for authentic spirituality and the pursuit of a genuine democratic life, because education, even religious education, is always political. In doing so, we point to the urgency and importance of fostering spiritual education for children in the face of the current rise of authoritarianism throughout the world and the demise of authentic democratic life. In order for genuine democracies to survive and thrive, their citizens must be educated. Unlike indoctrination and propaganda, which control populations through manufacturing public opinion by which individuals are compelled to comply to an officially approved consensus, education is emancipatory by offering opportunity for dissensus. Emancipatory education enables individual citizens to initiate and participate in activities at the grass-roots level that pursue public and global goods, without waiting to be led by various authorities. Such an educated way of being, which is essential for democratic life, requires young people to be educated spiritually so that they are able to transcend the pressures to conform to public consensus and the will of authoritarianism, and instead to actively live their spirituality by undertaking activities that pursue the good, even when such activities are deemed to dissent from public opinion.

Keywords: religious education; democracy; Dewey; dissensus; existentialism; spirituality; valuation

In this paper, we want to address how the educative growth of children's spirituality within religious education can be better understood through Dewey's theory of valuation (Dewey 1988a). We would like to draw attention to the link between an education for authentic spirituality (in an existential sense) and the pursuit of a genuine democratic life, because education, even religious education, is always political (Apple 2004; Shor 1992). In doing so, we point to the urgency and importance for fostering spiritual education for children in the face of the current rise of authoritarianism throughout the world and the demise of authentic democratic life (e.g., Deetz 1992; Grayling 2018; Legutko 2018; Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018; Schostak and Goodson 2020; Wolin 2017). In order for genuine democracies to survive and thrive, their citizens must be educated. Unlike indoctrination and propaganda, which control populations through manufacturing public opinion by which individuals are compelled to comply to an officially approved consensus, education is emancipatory by offering opportunity for dissensus (Rancière 2015). Emancipatory education enables individual citizens to initiate and participate in activities at the grass-roots level that pursue public and global goods without waiting to be led by various authorities. Such an educated way of being, which is essential for democratic life, requires young people to be educated spiritually so that they are able to transcend the pressures to conform to public consensus and the will of authoritarianism, and instead to actively live their spirituality by undertaking activities that pursue the good, even when such activities are deemed to dissent from public opinion.

1. Education for Democracy

Education is always contextualised by the political ideals of those who are responsible for designing and enacting the curriculum. This has been recognised by Dewey (1985, p. 103), who argued that "[t]he conception of education as a social process and function has no definite meaning until we define the kind of society we have in mind". As the authors of this paper, along with so many others including Dewey, we strongly advocate for a democratic way of life. Consequently, religious education can be understood as having a significant role to play in this respect by enabling individuals who comprise the *demos* to *be* democratic.

We suggest that the subject in the curriculum referred to as 'religious education' ought to have greater emphasis upon the adjective 'religious' than upon the noun 'religion'. These two terms are closely related, of course, but by emphasising the adjective form, we can appreciate that such a subject primarily offers opportunity for *education* first and foremost, and secondarily, it ought to offer a religious dimension for such an education. In Western cultures, education, in its various forms, is an emancipatory project in the sense that it frees people from ignorance, propaganda and apathy. As recognised by Badiou (2002), all emancipatory projects are characterised by bringing an end to cultures of consensus. That is, there is an honouring of the individual, often through notions such as individual freedom and human rights, which provide opportunities for each person to choose how s/he is to participate in life in a personally meaningful manner. Therefore, individual choice is a crucially important characteristic. Education can enhance the freedom and critical awareness to make one's choices as wise as possible.

For a genuine democracy, the notions of individuality and free choice cannot be reduced to the mere casting of a vote at the ballot box every three years or so. Democracy refers to a way of living rather than only some particular characteristics of a government. This has been stated famously by the great champion for the nexus between democracy and education—John Dewey—who explained that "[a] democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living" which is essentially moral in character because "each [individual] has to refer his [sic] own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own" (Dewey 1985, p. 93). Thus, democracy ought to be understood as a way of relating, communicating and overall living, rather than as only particular structural processes within society. Reaching down to the personal level, democracy can be understood as a way of *being*.

Both the mode of *being* and the mode of *having* can be contrasted as two main ways of human existence. Explorations of their differences have been conducted mainly from an existential perspective in various fields such as philosophy (e.g., Marcel 1949), psychology (e.g., Fromm 1976, 1992; May 1983) and theology (e.g., Tillich 1980, 2005), and it continues to be recognised as being important for education (Howard 2020; Webster 2021). Basically, the mode of *having* is based upon the belief that happiness and meaningfulness can be achieved through acquiring or having such things as knowledge, skills, material wealth and prestige. These can be accumulated in such a way that the individual does not necessarily change or grow as a person in a holistic sense. Consequently, one's sense of identity is limited to what one *has*. Operating by the mode of *having*, individuals have the disposition for externalising causes to their problems and are fundamentally fearful that what they have and own could potentially be lost or taken away.

In contrast, the mode of *being* highlights who one *is*. However, this notion of *being* is dynamic and constantly open for re-evaluation and change. Hence, one's *being* ought to be understood as a perpetual state of *becoming*. This mode of *being* specifically highlights the importance of one's holistic self, especially one's interests, desires and will, as these determine one's disposition and all of one's activities. Possibly the most important dimension of one's sense of personal identity is an ultimate sense of purpose, or a 'why' for one's life (Giddens 1991; Webster 2005). It is one's *raison d'être* and can often be articulated through what one values and commits oneself towards. This understanding of one's *being* is also reflected in Dewey (2008a, LW7, p. 287) who asserted that:

> committing oneself to a particular course, a person gives a lasting set to his [sic]
> own *being* ... choosing what kind of person or self one is going to *be* ... [and
> even] what sort of being a person most *wants* to become. [our emphasis]

For Dewey, the education of the *being* of each individual is essential if citizens are
to be part of a democracy. That is, democratic life is thoroughly dependent upon each
individual citizen being able to freely and wisely choose to participate in the public good
from the basis of actually desiring and willing the public good. These notions of *being* and
having are employed by Rockefeller (1991, p. 413), who recognises that Dewey's approach
towards understanding citizens as holistic beings necessitates that we come to appreciate
that choosing and commitment are essentially "existential decision[s]", which we consider
is reflective of living authentically, where the term authentic is associated with authenticity
within existential philosophy because this highlights the importance of the individual freely
deciding. A genuine democracy is not to be found in a population who are dependent
upon following leaders into a particular way of living because the disposition of 'being
led' by authorities, even benevolent ones, does not constitute the ontology of an authentic
democratic being who is responsible for one's own desires and choosing. The disposition
of 'being led' is more suited to living within an authoritarian culture because it relieves
one of exercising personal responsibility.

It is, therefore, important to appreciate that an education for democracy ought to
focus on the interests and desires of students, enabling them to grow so that they are
able to freely choose and commit themselves to what they wisely and critically consider
valuable. In contrast, authoritarian societies seek to reduce opportunities for free choosing
by its citizens, restricting choice and desires within closely guarded parameters. This
too was recognised by Dewey (1988b, p. 185), who was aware that through propaganda,
manipulation and the domination of certain hegemonic ideologies, that an authoritarian
culture:

> eliminates or even obscures the function of choice of values and enlistment of
> desires and emotions in behalf of those chosen which weakens personal responsi-
> bility for judgement and for action. It thus helps create the attitudes that welcome
> and support the totalitarian state.

To summarise, authoritarian elites seek to control their populations by restricting free
choice and judgement-making by their individual citizens and manipulating them so that
they want to conform to a manufactured norm via an appeal to the authority of public
opinion or public consensus. Therefore, those who drift from these norms are often made
to feel persecuted by not conforming to the public or national expectations through loyalty,
duty or patriotism, and can be labelled, for example, as being 'un-British' or 'un-Australian'
depending on the context.

This has been recognised by the financial elites of our societies, who prefer author-
itarian cultures to enable their monopoly capitalism to operate more efficiently. Capital-
istic flows destined to promote corporate interests can be 'interrupted' by social activist
movements which seek to promote the public good over private and corporate goods.
Consequently, societies in the West that nominally regard themselves to be democratic in
nature have been recognised as actually being authoritarian in character, demonstrated
by the domination of the corporate agenda over the concerns that pertain to the public
interest (Deetz 1992; Grayling 2018; Legutko 2018; Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018; Wolin 2017).
Consequently, Wolin (2017, pp. 64–65) describes the United States as embodying "inverted
totalitarianism ... in which the citizens ... are politically lethargic" and even "uncritically
complicit", resulting in "a scarcely noticeable evolution" in which corporate money and
power have come to dominate politics and social life.

This authoritarian domination of corporate power can be understood through the
activities of such organisations as the Trilateral Commission. We think it is significantly
important to note that this Commission has stated that democracy is largely promoted
by 'value-oriented intellectuals' who are characterised as being adversarial, and "who

assert their disgust with the corruption, materialism, and . . . subservience of democratic government to 'monopoly capitalism'" (Crozier et al. 1975, pp. 6–7). As Rancière (2015, p. 55) sums up, the main concern raised by the Trilateral Commission is that "government is threatened by nothing other than democratic life".

It is important, therefore, to appreciate that the people, the *demos*, who comprise the citizenry of democratic societies, are a different group to those who tend to dominate the governments of such societies (Grayling 2018). Rancière, therefore, highlights the importance of an education for equality, where students do not develop the disposition of being led, but rather, through the process of subjectification, become individuals who consider themselves equal with others, especially those who work in authoritative institutions. This aspect of Rancière is utilised by Bingham and Biesta (2010), who identify that "politics is a process of subjectification . . . [where] Rancière's central concepts—equality, democracy and politics—all map onto each other". This notion of subjectification, therefore, is understood by Biesta as the third purpose of education, the other two being qualification and socialisation.

While both qualification and socialisation can be equally valuable for training as they are for education, Biesta draws attention to subjectification as being the most important for education. While socialisation can refer to engaging with the existing social order of the time, Biesta (2013, p. 129) explains that subjectification "is always about how we can exist 'outside' of such orders . . . [it] has to do with the question of human freedom" and is therefore existential in nature. In discussing this existential concept of subjectification further, he adds, "[t]o exist in and with the world thus always raises the question of the *relationship* between my existence and the existence of the world", so that for challenges in this domain in the form of existential events or crises, "my uniqueness is 'at stake' and where *I* am therefore at stake" [original emphases] (Biesta 2017, pp. 8, 12). Being existential in nature, Biesta's reference to subjectivity points to the importance that individuals have in taking a responsible stance regarding how their beliefs, desires and activities affect others and the environment. It is this sense of individual responsibility for critically and wisely choosing what one ought to desire and what activities to initiate that is a key priority for an education for democracy.

In order to promote the growth of existential free choice and responsibility, we believe that educational environments, especially those which focus on religious education, ought to foster a culture of what Rancière describes as dissensus. He warns that cultures which promote consensus tend to force individuals to conform, which consequently works against their capacity for democratic living. He explains that "consensus consists in the reduction of democracy to the way of life or *ethos* of a society . . . Consensus is the process underlying today's continual shrinkage of political space" (Rancière 2015, p. 80). In order to expand upon this monocultural and anti-democratic view of society, he offers his view of dissensus, which he defines as follows:

> A dissensus is not a conflict of interests, opinions or values; it is a division inserted into 'common sense': a dispute over what is given and about the frame within which we see something as given . . . [it is] the putting of two worlds in one and the same world. (Rancière 2015, p. 77)

Here, we can see his view as causing a disruption to a singular narrative which excludes others. It is an active recognition of a plurality of views. Existentially, we could consider that some of these views have not been encountered or created and so comprise a 'nothingness' which is the potential for something else to emerge.

An important democratic role that Rancière (2015, p. 3) sees in dissensus is that it involves "a suspension of the logic that institutes politics as the preserve of those born to rule". This suspension—or possibly disruption—to an authoritarian agenda depends upon a multiplicity of legitimate viewpoints. Such a situation appears to connect well with Mouffe's agonistics. She writes that "[a] well-functioning democracy calls for a confrontation of democratic political positions", but not in the sense of conflict between 'enemies' (as per 'antagonism') but between adversaries—hence 'agonism' (Mouffe 2013,

p. 7). As with Rancière, Mouffe also warns against monocultures of consensus which lead towards avoidance of confrontations and political apathy, thereby undermining democratic life. What both Rancière and Mouffe highlight, as well as others in the field of education, such as Perry (1970), is that an environment which has a plurality of ideas and values does not necessarily cause people to become relativists and disengaged from participating in public life. On the contrary, they argue that such an environment of alternatives encourages individuals to take a responsible and enthusiastically committed stance for the views which they are personally convicted offers the greatest value. Mouffe (2013, p. 6) recognises this level of committed conviction in her claim that "it is impossible to understand democratic politics without acknowledging 'passions' as the driving force in the political field".

Just as thinking requires a dialectical movement between differing ideas, liberal democracies require deliberations and discussions between various people who hold different views. This, therefore, depends upon a culture which not only accepts but actually encourages a diversity of ideas and views. Without such differences, both deliberation and thinking are stifled. Consequently, educators ought to initiate students into cultures of dissensus (Rancière 2015) and agonistics (Mouffe 2013) so that they are able to accept the existential challenges of actually *being* educated as responsible individuals. This will enable them to become more authentic, having a voice of personal conviction to better participate in deliberations and to serve the public good, pushing back against the various forces which are working against democratic life.

Given that the authoritarian domination of corporate power operating in Dewey's day continues to be a feature of democratic societies today, it is timely to examine Dewey (2008b, p. 51) claim that citizens of democracies ought to be pushing back against "vested interests" which work against the public good. To do this, he encouraged developing passionate intelligence as a means for combatting the forces which are working against democratic life. Passionate intelligence, according to John Dewey (2008b, p. 52), can be understood as "devotion, so intense as to be religious, to intelligence as a force in social action". In order to better understand what Dewey meant by this passionate intelligence and its relevance for religious education, we need to investigate Dewey's distinction between the noun 'religion' and the adjective 'religious', which is the focus in the following section.

2. Religion and Being Religious

In order to explore the distinction between 'religion' and 'religious', we begin with Dewey (2008b, p. 8), who argued that 'a religion' as a noun substantive is "a special body of beliefs and practices having some kind of institutional organization, loose or tight". We can recognise this definition of Dewey's as being aligned to the etymology of the Latin term, 'religio', from which both words religion and religious derive. Similarly, these can be understood to derive from *religare* ('to bind') and so we could understand religion to refer to beliefs being bound together as doctrine. However, it may also include the reference of devoted members being bound, willingly or not, to a religion with its associated practices. Dewey (2008c, p. 71) appreciated that historically, religion once functioned in society to give "unity and centre to men's [sic] views of life", as it offered a "social centre of gravity" that organised a community and gave direction and a sense of purpose to the lives of individuals belonging to the community (Dewey 2008b, p. 41).

By contrast, since the postmodern turn and the demise of grand narratives, religion no longer functions to structure a collective way of life in Western societies. Religions now provide ready-made and institutionalised world views that offer messages for a better life (usually through some form of salvation) by which adherents may gain meaning and purpose for their lives and how they should live (Webster 2013). Familiarity with the 'big picture' views which form the foundations of many world religions can therefore offer insight into *why* adherents live the way they do: their conduct and decisions can be understood as personal responses on the part of believers to their particular traditions' metaphysical engagements with ultimate questions.[1] However, the significance of the shift of religion from its function of *defining* society to its current positioning as an aspect *of*

society, for Dewey (1988c, p. 226), is that religion no longer carries out its *social* function of imparting a sense of wholeness, as he observed that "the office of religion as sense of community and one's place in it has been lost". A sense of the whole of which one is a part is necessary to "introduce perspective into the piecemeal and shifting episodes of existence" (Dewey 2008b, p. 17), which gives point to one's actions and a sense of something beyond one's own immediate impulses and appetites.

Responding to this shift in the social centre of gravity of religion, Dewey (2008b, p. 17) challenged common sense understandings which limit the emergence of "genuine perspective" to the preserve of religion. He argued that "whatever introduces genuine perspective is religious" (Dewey 2008b, p. 17). In other words, a person can undergo a profoundly centring experience that evokes a sense of "freedom and peace of the individual as a member of an infinite whole" (Dewey 1988c, p. 226) in the *everyday* relations of human association quite *apart* from religion. It is this sense of a genuine perspective which is holistic and coherent that is now reframing the notion of 'religion' into the more universally accepted term 'world view' in the context of education as per the Commission on Religious Commission on Religious Education (2018). As such, Miedema (2018, pp. 139, 141) defines world views as systems which are "always subjected to changes, of implicitly and explicit views, feelings and attitudes of an individual in relation to human life" which can be "both religious and secular . . . [where] existential questions are a necessary or constitutive part".

Ordinary people whose lives can be described as religious in quality offer value for pushing back against the domination of corporate power as the *being* of this type of individual is characterised not by "adherence to the actual" but commitment to pursuing the possibilities or aspirational ideal ends of natural relations (Dewey 2008b, p. 17) such as described by the Trilateral Commission as 'value-oriented intellectuals'. Ideals which are valued, such as freedom and equality, can be understood as spiritual or religious ideals in the sense that they provide an ultimate sense of value that is worth committing oneself to. 'Religious' as an adjective is therefore defined by Dewey (2008b, p. 19) as applicable to "[a]ny activity pursued in behalf of an ideal end against obstacles and in spite of threats of personal loss because of conviction of its general and enduring value". According to another etymology of the Latin term, 'religio' can be understood to also be derived from *relegere* meaning 'to care', 'heed', 'to go over again', 'consider carefully', 'attend to' (Hoyt 1912, p. 128). Therefore, we can appreciate that the adjective 'religious' can be understood to mean the disposition or attitude of 'paying careful attention to things' (its opposite would be 'neglect', 'inattentiveness' or 'lack of care'). It is this latter meaning which underpins Dewey's concept of the religious attitude (Statham and Webster 2019) and informs his account of 'faith'.

According to Dewey, faith is *not* synonymous with religion. Rather, faith that is religious "is displayed in art, science and good citizenship . . . For all endeavour for the better is moved by faith in what is possible, not by adherence to the actual" (Dewey 2008b, p. 17). Authentic religious faith emerges in everyday modes of human association as a result of ordinary people—the common person—committing wholeheartedly to the realisation of an ideal which they have come to desire and actually pursue, resulting in their attaining a sense of connectedness to a larger whole and a feeling of security and peace within:

> Many a person, inquirer, artist, philanthropist, citizen, men and women in the humblest walks of life, have achieved, without presumption and without display, such unification of themselves and of their relations to the conditions of existence. It remains to extend their spirit and inspiration to ever wider numbers. (Dewey 2008b, p. 19)

The function of the religious can therefore be understood to entail extending more widely to what Alexander (2013) describes as the 'spirituality of possibility', indicating a type of individual whose *being* can help to sustain social and democratic life. Attuned to "the possibilities of existence and [stirred by] devotion to the cause of these possibilities", as Dewey (2008d, p. 242) describes, this type of person is not disposed towards passive "acceptance of what is given at the time" (Dewey 2008d, p. 242). S/he can therefore 'see

through' and resist attempts by single narratives and authoritarian societies to render captive the imagination of democratic populations through restriction of choice and desires to those which primarily serve monopoly capitalism. Clearly, the religious attitude constitutes an ontology that is ill-suited to meeting the needs of an authoritarian culture as it is not dependent on being led and therefore does not seek security in conformity with public norms or opinion but "looks to security amid change instead of to certainty in attachment to the fixed" (Dewey 2008d, p. 245). Dewey argues that the "moving power" of "this faith" does not "depend . . . upon intellectual assurance or belief that the things worked for must surely prevail and come into embodied existence" (Dewey 2008b, p. 17). Rather, this religious faith is fuelled by the "vitally integrative and directive force" (Dewey 2008c, p. 71) of passionate intelligence which carefully attends to possibilities and inspires social action to make ideal possibilities a reality.

Possibilities for grassroots social transformation could be pursued if "social intelligence by means of which direction of social change could be taken out of the region of accident" (Dewey 2008b, p. 52) were given opportunity to grow. Considering this, Dewey then asks:

> What would be the consequences upon the values of human association if intrinsic and immanent satisfactions and opportunities were clearly held to and cultivated with the ardor and devotion that have at times marked historic religions? (Dewey 2008b, pp. 47–48)

The need for "radical intervention of intelligence in the conduct of" (Dewey 2008b, p. 52) everyday associations of community groups, libraries, public schools, neighbourhood organisations, cooperatives, public meetings places, voluntary associations and trade unions is due to the fact that such forums provide ways for citizens to meet, communicate and collaborate on behalf of "larger human purposes", not "narrow ends, personal and class" (Dewey 2008b, p. 54). Genuine democratic life depends on citizens actively participating in nonmarket organisations and associations, which are particularly vulnerable to being negatively impacted by monopoly capitalism. As recognised by McChesney (1999), instead of forming engaged citizens, pecuniary culture fostered by monopoly capitalism "produces consumers. Instead of communities, it produces shopping malls. The net result is an atomized society of disengaged individuals who feel demoralized and socially powerless". This reflects the very same concerns expressed years earlier by Dewey (2008c, p. 49), who observed that:

> The spiritual factor of our tradition, equal opportunity and free association and intercommunication, is obscured and crowded out. Instead of the development of individualities which it prophetically set forth, there is a perversion of the whole ideal of individualism to conform to the practices of pecuniary culture.

Dewey proposed that carefully attending to possibilities of human association through the application of the method of intelligence could bring into focus "the spiritual factor" that is currently eclipsed in democratic life. He argued that:

> Intelligence, as distinct from the older conception of reason, is inherently involved in action. Moreover, there is no opposition between it and emotion. There is such a thing as passionate intelligence, as ardor in behalf of light shining into the murky places of social existence, and as zeal for its refreshing and purifying effect. (Dewey 2008b, p. 52)

Capitalistic flows destined to promote corporate interests can be interrupted by "collective intelligence operating in cooperative action" (Dewey 1988b, p. 188), which opens a way for the common people, the *demos*, to redirect the use of natural knowledge and understanding away from the private profit motive of corporate and industrial elites towards a collective striving for the attainment of wider and deeper public goods. If democratic citizens are to challenge authoritarian cultures from the ground up for the sake of genuine democracy, Dewey (2008b, p. 51) argued that it is "the more necessary to fight for recognition of the method of intelligence in action". Religious faith of the common person—what

Dewey often referred to as a common faith—offers one possible resource that can inspire the courage and resoluteness needed to sustain such a fight.

3. Children's Spirituality

In this section, we want to continue exploring the inescapable nexus between education and the political, by addressing the specific role of children's spirituality. In particular, we want to review some of the understandings for how spirituality for children can be understood in light of our previous discussion on Dewey's religious way of *being* as well as an existential approach for an education for democracy. We will then integrate this with Dewey's theory of valuation and its implications for religious education.

The notion of spirituality in education as being a distinct dimension of holistic understandings of the child (Erricker et al. 1997) and wellbeing (De Souza and Halafoff 2018), has had an interesting development. For example, in England, it first appeared in the *Education Act 1944* and was understood at that time as being synonymous with Christianity. It was included into the Act largely through the work of Canon Hall, who preferred the term spirituality rather than religion " . . . because it was much broader . . . If we used the word 'religious' they would have all started arguing about it" (cited by Priestley 1985, p. 113). It has continued to be endorsed by subsequent Education Acts. Clearly, if it is to be compulsory for all students in the school systems, then spirituality lends itself more readily than does religion as a noun, but we would argue that it has a great deal in common with *being* religious as explored in the previous section. This is recognised by Hyde (2018, p. 202), who highlights that "[s]pirituality is ontological. It belongs to each person's being" and thus is more universal than religion, and is relevant for children as much as it is for adults. As secularisation and cosmopolitanism have become more predominant throughout the West, this has given rise to the appreciation that if spirituality is an important dimension of the whole child, and if this notion of the whole child pervades throughout the diversity of our societies, then it must pertain to something more universal beyond and/or in addition to religion or even Christianity.

A universal understanding of spirituality was advanced by England's National Curriculum Council (1993, p. 2), who described this dimension as:

> something fundamental in the human condition . . . It has to do with relationships with other people and, for believers, with God. It has to do with the universal search for individual identity—with our responses to challenging experiences, such as death, suffering, beauty, and encounters with good and evil. It is to do with the search for meaning and purpose in life and for values by which to live.

Here, we can see an effort being made to appeal to an understanding of spirituality that is inclusive of both people who are affiliated with religion and people with no connections to religion by referring to humankind's universal challenges, such as experiencing death and suffering. It also indicates a search which is active in terms of seeking out and determining which values might be most valuable, rather than dutifully but passively accepting a code of values. Interestingly, the very topics listed in this reference form a great deal of what is often understood to be the domain of religion broadly understood. Similarly, England's Office for Standards in Education, Children's Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (2004) repeats the idea that spirituality pertains to the universalising notions of personal identity, and even attempts to equate the notion of spirit with more inclusive and universalising terms such as character.

Throughout many other government publications in Western societies, spirituality has continued to be recognised as a distinct dimension of children when they are being understood in a holistic sense, and is often included in a list of other dimensions such as the physical, mental, emotional, moral, social and cultural. Such recognition is not limited to the West. For example, literature published by the international organisation UNESCO (Delors 1998) includes spirituality as a distinct dimension which pertains to ideals, values and morals. UNESCO (p. 62) places democracy and education front and centre of their humanistic approach, which espouses that education ought to "build up a critical sense

that makes for free thought and independent action". One of their major understandings of education is that it should enable individuals *to be* and not simply *to have* or to acquire. This has clear connections with the two modes of existing, as examined by Fromm and Marcel as explained earlier in this paper, that is, the modes of *having* and *being*. Interestingly, an earlier UNESCO publication (Faure 1972) focussed specifically on one of their key learning pillars—learning to be, and references some of the works of Fromm. In this it is argued that because democracy is understood as being necessary for pursuing a good life for all, education must assist students in exercising democracy by encouraging "them to retain their own free will [and] to make authentic personal choices" in order to help develop their innate "nonconformist, seeking spirit" (Faure 1972, pp. 102, 149). What appears to be key is that spirituality must encourage individuals exercising their own capacity to make judgements and choices regarding what they find to be of great value.

From such literature, we can appreciate that spirituality ought to pertain to a dimension that is of significance not only for people who are affiliated with religion but also for people with no connections to religion, that is, it must be relevant to humans universally. We can also see that it must focus on the individual's freedom in choosing and making sense, meaning and purpose. This is why sometimes spirituality is referred to as a philosophy of life (Hartman 2018) because it involves engaging with the existential questions that children have. As a consequence of these parameters, we argue that the adoption of an existential understanding of spirituality is most appropriate (Statham and Webster 2019; Webster 2004, 2009). An existential understanding of spirituality places each individual in a responsible stance for giving meaning and purpose to her/his existence. Reflecting upon death, for example, can be understood to particularly emphasise the importance of such an individual stance because only oneself can die one's own death. While an existential perspective highlights the importance of the individual exercising free choice, this does not mean that individuals are to be understood in a de-contextualised situation apart from their social environments. Individuals are social beings, and so even though it is valuable to draw attention to the role of the individual, this is *always* in the context of social relations. These may, however, go unrecognised by the existential individual whose spirituality yet lacks a sense of connectedness with the environment of which s/he is a part (Dewey 2008b).[2] As we have argued elsewhere (Statham and Webster 2019), individuals rarely exist in lonely isolation from each other but they are inescapably socially connected. Therefore, the transition from the spirituality of the existential individual to the next stage of searching for purpose and meaning in life is characterised by the emergence of the spiritually social individual whose newfound appreciation of one's own embeddedness in natural relations is animated by a sense of dependence that Dewey termed 'natural piety':

> Nature and society include within themselves projection of ideal possibilities and contain the operations by which they are actualized ... nature, including humanity, with all its defects and imperfections, may evoke heartfelt piety as the source of ideals, of possibilities, of aspiration in their behalf, and as the eventual abode of all attained goods and excellencies. (Dewey 2008d, p. 244)

A spirituality of piety towards nature, in the sense of heartfelt appreciation of natural relations, motivates a deepened sense of personal responsibility for paying attention to the possibilities of social relations and taking action to care for and develop those connections. A person 'wakes up' from the illusory sense that the quest to seek out and determine which values might be valuable is a solitary one. The process of making life more meaningful is now grasped as necessarily centred on a community-based search for meaning, which provides a source of motive power as "a spirituality of possibility" (Alexander 2013). Therefore, existential dilemmas such as searching for a meaning and purpose of *my* life amongst an array of world views in the company of diverse others embarked on a similar journey, is always related to the more formalised offerings such as those provided by philosophy and religion which seek to offer guidance for *the* meaning and purpose of life where these two quests—seeking meaning for *my* life and seeking *the* meanings of life—are part of the one experience of existence (Britton 1971). Hull (2002) adds that

while spirituality is inherently ambiguous, as individuals find themselves tussling between clarity and self-deception, religion may offer some way through this, but not completely because religion itself consists of some ambiguities.

One of the key characteristics of spirituality as a dimension of the whole child is that it pertains to how the individual lives her life and how she is animated. Being spiritless refers to an apathetic and low-energy manner (Webster 2018) of existence, while in contrast, being 'full of the spirit' can refer, for example, to a horse being full of energy and strong will, or a holy person speaking out courageously. It refers to a passion that can ignite courageous actions based on conviction and commitment. While it is perhaps admirable to witness such an animated way of *being*, it is important that the understandings upon which such passion exists are wise and well-educated, and not superficial or misplaced. Therefore, such passion must be united with intelligence—hence, the importance of education.

4. Dewey's Theory of Valuation

In everyday language, the term 'value' is often reified into its noun form, where we can refer to *the* values of honesty or criticality as examples. However, Dewey draws our attention to the importance of the verb form of the term, where we personally and collectively come *to value* certain things such as ideals. We argue, therefore, that his valuation has a great deal to offer regarding enabling people to become 'value-oriented intellectuals' as identified by the Trilateral Commission, which recognises it is necessary for genuine democratic living.

Valuation is central to Dewey (1988a) holistic understanding of growth, which holds that development at the personal level of the child is not separate from the development of the wellbeing of society. It was his concern that children are particularly vulnerable in nominally democratic societies to being disempowered by the restriction of valuing by having choices, desires and values pre-determined by authorities. This led Dewey to develop his theory of valuation to uncover, disclose and discuss what is valued and what ought to be valued in various programs such as curricula projects. This section will provide an overview of Dewey's valuation, which provides context for discussion of how valuation can contribute to the growth of the whole child and genuine democracy which is specific to spirituality.

Dewey's valuation centres on multiple perspectives deliberating about plans for action or anticipated consequences which have a direct bearing on participants' "personal day-by-day working together" (Dewey 2008e, p. 228). To better understand this account of deliberation as the exploration of consequences, it is helpful to consider Dewey's distinctions between valuing and valuation (or evaluation), prizing and appraising, liking and enjoyment, desire and impulse, foreseen consequences (ends-in-view) and consequences attained.

Regarding the verb 'to value', Dewey notes that in everyday usage, 'valuing' and 'valuation' are often used interchangeably to refer to two different kinds of activities, 'prizing' and 'appraising'. Prizing has the sense of "holding precious, dear" whereas appraising involves the sense of "assigning value to" and the contrast between them is similar to the difference between "esteem" and "estimate" (Dewey 1988a, p. 195). Prizing and esteeming relate to immediate or direct judgements of value whereas appraising and estimating denote mediative or reflective judgement. Having noted this ambiguity, Dewey takes valuing to refer to immediate experience of value (along with prizing and esteeming), while valuation involves reflective judgement or endorsement (along with appraising and estimating). As an example, a person might love chocolate and *value* the chocolate bar before him, but whether or not that person should eat the chocolate bar depends on other considerations, such as his/her diabetes. Therefore, the course of action s/he 'should' pursue requires valuation or appraisal because this aspect includes an anticipation of long-term consequences. Clearly, some forms of prizing are 'better' than others, which is the point of Dewey's distinction between valuing and valuation or evaluation. Hence,

through education, students should not just have their actions and activities improved but they should, as Biesta (2017) has identified, come to desire what they ought to desire.

The contrast between 'liking' or 'caring for' (which Dewey groups together with prizing and valuing) and 'enjoy' introduces a distinction between different modes of behaviour in relation to existential conditions. Specifically, valuing in the sense of liking, prizing and caring for "occur only when it is necessary to bring something into existence which is lacking, or to conserve in existence something which is menaced by outside goods" (Dewey 1988a, p. 204). By contrast, the passive sense of 'enjoy' denotes gratification received *from* something that is already in existence and in relation to which no energy will be expended to perpetuate its continued existence. Liking and disliking are defined as occurring within certain existential conditions where there is potential for effort to be exerted to address a lack or a conflict, which provides context for Dewey's distinction between impulse and desire. Where liking or caring for arises, a "vital impulse" can also emerge, but this does *not* signify the presence of "desires and interest", which Dewey (1988a, p. 207) defines as "modes of behaviour" and not merely "feeling".

Valuation or evaluation is identified with the phenomena of desires and interests which are "seen to arise only within certain existential contexts (namely, those in which some lack prevents the immediate execution of an active tendency) and when they are seen to function in reference to these contexts in such a way as to make good the existing want" (Dewey 1988a, p. 207).[3] What distinguishes situations where desire and interest occur is that they include anticipated consequences. By contrast, the element of foreseen consequences or ends-in-view is absent from situations in which vital impulses arise. The presence of desire and interest with an end-in-view signifies the introduction of the "ideational" (Dewey 1988a, p. 237) element of valuation or appraising in a situation that is found to be objectionable because of some lack or conflict in it. By contrast, impulse, appetite and routine habit are merely effects that can be described as affective-motor in the sense of constituting a mode of behaviour and emotion which lacks the ideational component of foresight, forecast or anticipation. While distinct from desire and interest, impulses provide the starting point from which a desire may be formed. Dewey (1988a, p. 221) refers to the formation of a desire with its end-in-view as the *transformation* of an impulse: "the occurrence of a desire related to an end-in-view *is* a transformation of a prior impulse or routine habit. It is only in such cases that valuation occurs" [original emphasis]. An end-in-view is "the idea of the object of desire and interest" (Dewey 1988a, p. 216) which is formed through foreseeing a consequence. Critically considering and deliberating about an end-in-view requires consideration of and selection from the conditions of the environment that will furnish the means for executing it. The result would be that individuals then come to appreciate, value and desire such an end-in-view.

Ends-in-view and their correlative desires and interests function as a plan for guiding the design of educational curricula and as the means of the educative activities by which actual results are produced. This means that existential and social intellectual factors are present in the formation of an end-in-view, which we consider is crucially important for educators to recognise. The suitability or 'fittingness' of an end-in-view to address a situation will therefore depend on the extent to which formation of the particular end-in-view involved, first, inquiry into the nature of the lack or conflict, and second, inquiry into the likelihood that the chosen desire with its end-in-view will address the needs or requirements of the problematic situation such as enabling a genuine democratic way of living. Consequently, deliberation over a multiplicity of different ends-in-view projected as plans for addressing a problematic situation will include evaluations which contribute to the formation of each desire with its end-in-view. This deliberation will inform appraisal about which ends-in-view *should* be pursued.

Consequences actually arrived at are distinct from ends-in-view, as there can be disparity or agreement to a greater or lesser extent between what is foreseen and what actually emerges. The gap or alignment between ends-in-view and ends as accomplished provides opportunity for further inquiry into the adequacy of the chosen ends-in-view. For

Dewey, the 'maturity' of an individual or a group can be determined by the extent to which impulses or appetites are transformed into desires and interests through critical inquiry, and ends-in-view are matured and tested through valuating what the consequences of acting may be. Maturity or growth on this account can be understood as an ongoing, daily task of inquiry that transforms impulse or blind emotion into intelligent desire. In other words, critical inquiry in educational environments into the formation of desires and interests can bring about "the marriage of emotion and intelligence" (Dewey 2008b, p. 53), that is, passionate intelligence.

Dewey's valuation provides an outline of a curriculum program for transforming children's impulses, appetites and routine habits through initiation into open confrontation of diverse viewpoints exploring ends-in-view. It is not acceptable for individuals to simply *have* a spirituality as if it were an inert commodity to be acquired, but by *being* spiritual in the sense of reflecting upon their relations with others, themselves and their purposes for living, they have opportunity for reflecting on, re-evaluating and growing together with others in their communities. More broadly, valuation functions to address the spiritual void that Dewey perceived to be afflicting democracy by educating citizens' inner dispositions of thought and emotion within "the give and take of participation, of a sharing that increases, that expands and deepens, the capacity and significance of the interacting factors" (Dewey 2008c, p. 82). It provides a means for actualising the "Copernican revolution" (Dewey 2008d, p. 245), which Dewey (2008b) saw a pressing need for, whereby individuals are enabled to transition from the 'unreligious attitude' of the mode of *having* towards the 'religious attitude' of the mode of *being*. Whereas the former looks to "certainty in attachment to the fixed", the latter's orientation of "look[ing] to security amid change" (Dewey 2008c, p. 245) is identified by Dewey as an attitude that supports genuine democracy.

Dewey (2008b, p. 36) wanted to protect children and young people in nominally democratic societies from a sense of "despair or defiance", which can cripple a young person's sense of agency. Despair may arise when youth are made to feel isolated or disconnected from social expectations by, for example, a high-pressure environment in which parents, teachers and public norms exhort reified values such as 'resilience' and 'respect for difference' but neglect to provide students with the guidance (or modelling) they need to actually put into practice and existentially exhibit those attitudes and dispositions in their lives and daily interactions. When older children lack access to environments in which they feel comfortable to express their thoughts and views on issues of meaning and values with others (Hyde 2006), it can lead to them living "in silence with a sense of isolation or oddness" (Scott 2004, p. 77). Lack of a supportive environment "in which children are listened to" (Hyde 2020, p. 12) can also stifle younger children's natural curiosity and desire to explore and ask questions about their surroundings, which can create an expectation—before a child has developed the capacity to verbalise his/her needs or insights—that his/her voice will not be heard or is not worth listening to. When children and adolescents do not feel able to express what really matters to them to each other or to adults, they can become vulnerable to falling into a "cycle of silence" (Adams et al. 2008, p. 35). Silence about their inner life makes adults unaware of this dimension of children's experience, which leads to parents and teachers remaining unaware so that they rarely initiate opportunities for children to express themselves with the result that young people think that adults are not interested and so remain silent about their own experiences and ideas because they do not know how to break out of the 'cycle of silence' and passively acquiesce to it.

Dewey (2008c, p. 83) understood that the process that transforms citizens of all ages into spectators and consumers is a force that cuts off commitment to public goods at the roots by intervening at the personal level to silence citizens' inner life and to shape "an artificially induced uniformity of thought and sentiment":

> Conformity is a name for the absence of vital interplay; the arrest and benumbing
> of communication. As I have been trying to say, it is the artificial substitute

used to hold men together in lack of associations that are incorporated into inner dispositions of thought and desire. (Dewey 2008c, p. 82)

Such conditions which leave young people with little defence against developing the *having* mode of being disposed towards conformity with ready-made manufactured consensual norms are more likely to emerge in school environments where the discourse of education is at risk of being eclipsed or silenced by monopoly capitalism's discourses of performativity and individualism (Keddie 2016; Webster 2013). Whereas the former invites students to reflect together with their teachers on what counts in terms of being a good student, a good teacher and a good person through promoting discussions about notions of living good and meaningful lives in cooperation with others, the latter compel teachers and "students to constantly measure themselves against a narrow vision of ideal studenthood and citizenship and to engage in competition, individualism, utility and pragmatism rather than collaboration, social responsibility, creativity and experimentation" (Keddie 2016, p. 120).

At the level of student and teacher experience, the shared process of forming values or ends-in-view that organise one's everyday collaborations with others can "free" passionate intelligence—which Dewey (1987, p. 220) defined as the spiritual factor in genuine democracy—from monopoly capitalist discourses that produce the compliant way of being of the mode of *having* where impulse, appetite and habit are not transformed. That is why authoritarian societies prefer to obscure Dewey's distinction between raw impulses and desires with ends-in-view: the latter opens up the possibility for transformation of blind emotion into intelligent desire as a way of *being* capable of 'disrupting' the former's modus operandi of controlling populations through manufacturing emotion and public opinion. Dewey explained that:

> Democracy is much broader than a special political form, a method of conducting government . . . it is something broader and deeper than that . . . It is, as we often say, though perhaps without appreciating all that is involved in the saying, a way of life, social and individual. The key-note of democracy as a way of life may be expressed, it seems to me, as the necessity for the *participation of every mature human being in formation of the values that regulate the living of men [sic] together*:— which is necessary from the standpoint of both the general social welfare and the full development of human beings as individuals. (Dewey 1987, pp. 217–18) (our emphases)

Thus, while passionate commitment to enacting one's convictions which is characteristic of the religious attitude "as a sense of the possibilities of existence and as devotion to the cause of these possibilities" (Dewey 2008d, p. 242) may appear to have value, there is the possibility of succumbing to extremism and fundamentalism. Therefore, it could be objected that this sort of devotion to the cause of possibilities may be found in fanatics and ideologues whose morality we might question (Noddings 2009). What assurance is there that passionate intelligence released by values formation will not lead to outbreaks of violent collective emotion that endanger rather than expand values of human association?

Dewey (2008b, p. 53) acknowledged the potential for "intense emotion" to arise in conditions where desire for justice and security combines with people's lived experience of inequity, oppression and insecurity to produce the kind of social changes that "go by the name of revolution". However, he contrasted emotions which are "blind" to those which are enabled to become "fused with intelligence" (p. 74), and this is, of course, where the education in religious education has such an important role to play. While spirituality that informs 'blind' emotion may lead to social action that is destructive, Dewey argued that the only assurance of improving society for the better is the motive force born from the marriage between emotion and social intelligence.

The increasingly visible phenomenon in nominally democratic societies "of nonparticipation in public affairs or the retreat from participation to spectatorship" observed by Fairfield (2008, p. 131) and others can be understood to be a symptom of a *lack* of authentic

emotion. This "inner void" (Dewey 2008c, p. 83) arising from the absence of forums in which citizens deliberate and test ideas about public goods stifles the capacity for authentic action which depends on "freed intelligence . . . to direct and to warrant freedom of action" (Dewey 1987, p. 220). Responding to the spiritual void in social conditions that embody authoritarian cultures of conformity necessitates a transformation of the fundamental orientation of citizens towards public affairs. Dewey offered his theory of valuation as an outline of programs for enabling individuals to become more intelligently passionate and committed to enacting what they hold together to be valuable, and this is what we consider as having great value for the spiritual education of children within religious education programs.

5. Some Implications of Dewey's Valuation for Religious Education

In this final section, we would like to explore some of the implications that all of this has for the development of children's spirituality through religious education. We do not, thereby, mean to suggest that the implications of the foregoing discussion are confined to the curriculum subject of religious education alone, as that would significantly limit the scope of application due to the fact that religious education is not included as a subject or program in the curriculum of all educational systems.[4] Moreover, in those countries where religious education is taught, the subject may only be allotted 60 min of curriculum time a week and the number of teachers who actually teach religious education may be limited. Moreover, beyond these logistical considerations, we contend that other areas of curriculum aside from religious education and also the curriculum work of teachers more broadly in their schools and communities can provide opportunities for enabling the progression through stages of growth towards connectedness with others and maturity, which characterises the spiritually social individual (Statham and Webster 2019) that Dewey held out as the type of individuality that can be developed through valuation. However, our focus on religious education is not only on account of space constraints as we will argue in this section that the subject of religious education is in some ways uniquely positioned to make a specific contribution to enabling spiritual development.

We began this paper by highlighting the ontological importance of *being* educated and not just simply *having* an education such as in the case of acquiring information and knowledge. All education, including religious education, ought to promote a democratic way of living. This is because education is always inescapably political. This point has been made recently by Biesta in relation to educative growth and subjectification. Subjectification does not just affect each person as an individual, but rather, it affects all our relations with others because we are social beings and hence must simultaneously be political. He draws upon Kant's 'motto' of the Enlightenment project "as having the courage to make use of one's own understanding" and then argues that this:

> suggested a democratic educational orientation towards encouraging everyone to make use of their understanding, that is, to think for themselves, draw their own conclusions and act upon them, rather than following other people's orders. It is precisely here that subjectification becomes an educational 'theme' or 'concern' and hence the distinction between education as socialisation and education as subjectification becomes 'possible'. (Biesta 2021, p. 14)

In contrast to authoritarian cultures, which typically employ conforming influences such as manufacturing public opinion to coalesce around consensus, genuine democratic societies are characterised by individuals thinking and making judgments for themselves. Democracy can therefore be characterised as involving dissensus and agonistics due to individuals acknowledging the legitimacy of a multiplicity of views and ideas. This requires people who are educated to participate in democratic life to develop the disposition of being able to passionately participate wisely with others who have different world views, out of a critical and intellectual awareness of what is most valuable for a community to share together. This requires the formation of what Dewey refers to as a religious attitude

that can grow through an engagement with valuation, which we understand to necessarily involve existential questions and concerns in terms of ultimate values as ends-in-view.

One of the unique features of religious education is that it offers an array of world views which transcend the predominant economic emphasis currently dominating societies and schooling curricula, where students are encouraged to primarily learn to earn. This has become so hegemonic that there are few opportunities for young people to engage with matters which lie outside the hyper-competitive environments of schooling in which they are divided into winners and losers. Religious education has a wonderfully unique position in the school curriculum, to be able to offer perspectives which can be valued by individual students who are seeking to live meaningful lives beyond simply learning how to earn a living. It is our view that religious education actually has a most significant potential to offer in order to promote democratic living, which in turn can offer a far more meaningful, free and fair life for everyone.

We have already identified that children's spirituality can be understood to have a profound existential character simply because it includes serious engagements with existential questions shared by individuals and by their communities. As such, religious *education* does not lend itself to the study of abstract knowledge. Instead, as Hannam (2021, p. 128) recommends, religious education should engage with "ways in which it is possible to respond to questions of what it means to exist, that is to live a life, with a religious orientation in the world". This approach encourages personal responses which value the freedom to critically consider what might be most worthwhile. There is no justification to require a consensus amongst students regarding what is personally meaningful, but there is the expectation that individuals might be able to both articulate and justify their personal stances to others within a social environment.

In examining the importance of such an approach for religious education, Hannam, similarly to the position we have adopted in this paper, is also firmly against any overt or implicit curricula experiences which may foster compliance and/or an authoritarian culture. To make her case, she makes reference to Hannah Arendt, who argued for the importance of encouraging a plurality of thinking and actions in order to prevent the rise of totalitarian tendencies which only promote a singular perspective. Explaining this further, Hannam (2021, p. 130) argues that:

> evil is something that is enabled to arrive into the world when people do not think and therefore when people neither speak nor act for themselves . . . [Arendt's] key point is that when people are not permitted, or in some other way not able, to speak and think for themselves the public sphere ceases to exist. And it is under these circumstances that totalitarianism can emerge.

Arendt was very familiar with Fascism and especially Bolshevism in her time, and so she was acutely aware of the importance of fostering free societies through a plurality and multiplicity of world views in order to prevent the domination of singular narratives to which individuals are expected (or forced) to conform. Such conformity can occur more subtly, of course, through what is regarded to be a consensus such as represented through public opinion, the view of experts/authorities or even science (Feyerabend 2011; Russell 2010). Hence, for an education worthy of democracy, knowledge must always be considered as fallible and individuals must develop the habit of critical thinking and judging for themselves. As has been discussed earlier in this paper, we consider that being democratic involves being value-oriented, where what is often valued are often spiritual ideals and aspirations. The spiritual ideals which are provided via religious education, such as freedom, life, grace, forgiveness, harmony care, commitment, courage and especially love, readily lend themselves for being valued by students. As we have argued above, students should not be expected to devote themselves to such ideals or creeds out of obedience, duty or loyalty to authority but, because we are promoting an existential perspective, students should be free to choose to value such ideals. Dewey recognised that such valuing, if indeed people are genuinely religious, ought to be passionate and

energise people from a young age to take actions in their everyday relations based upon their convictions and commitments.

This is the passionate intelligence that Alexander (2013) describes as eros. Drawing on Dewey, he argues that "our experience is fundamentally aesthetic rather than cognitive" (Alexander 2013, p. 136) and argues that it is therefore important to have our imaginations informed and educated. This is because it is not a matter of just loving anything that might evoke an impulse within, but rather loving wisely involves giving careful consideration to what is beloved and then to come to care for and desire what is valued. Again, we see this marrying of the emotional with the intellectual through a passionate spiritual commitment to ideals and aspirations that individuals have come to freely value themselves. This engages with the whole child approach in children's spirituality, where intuitive and tacit understandings play great importance in how young people understand themselves and their place in the world. While this sort of approach to spirituality is clearly relevant for various aspects of the curriculum, including the school culture and ethos, we also firmly believe that it is through experiences within religious education, in particular, that such dispositions evoked by the religious attitude can grow.

Religious education informed by valuation could offer adolescents and older children opportunities to express their thoughts on issues of meaning, including what it means to be a good student and a good person and to engage in discussion about their own and others' views, including the views of students affiliated with religion and those who are not affiliated with any of the world religions. Discussion might emphasise the importance of voicing out and listening to diverse opinions and developing a disposition to inquire into the grounds or reasons for holding a belief. Such deliberation could cultivate a sense of responsibility for giving careful consideration to the consequences of holding an opinion and for actively seeking out and consulting with those whose views differ from or are contrary to one's own because of the belief that engaging with difference enables an individual to test out, make rigorous and become more intelligently passionate and committed to enacting one's ultimate sense of purpose or 'why' for one's life. Including teachers' own purposes for teaching and their curriculum work in the conversation might help to initiate collaboration of multiple perspectives in such discussion and to keep it going, inside and beyond the religious education classroom (Statham and Webster 2019). For younger children who are not yet able to articulate their views, religious education informed by valuation could encourage freedom of self-expression and creativity through painting, drawing, dancing, music, singing, dressing up and play. A key focus of the teacher might also be on developing a disposition of trust on the part of the young learner that his/her needs and concerns will be carefully attended to and listened to as this can lay the foundation for the child to expect, when s/he is older, that his/her views will be heard by adults and peers and can contribute to enrich the life of the community of which s/he is a part.

6. Conclusions

Valuation which engages the spirituality of young people contributes to the wellbeing of democracy as a mode of associated living. As a community-based search for meaning, valuation can open a way for breaking the 'cycle of silence' where children and adolescents do not feel able to express what really matters to them through offering opportunities for students to engage with each other and their teachers in collaboration, social responsibility, creativity and experimental inquiry into ends-in-view. A religious education program informed by valuation aims to re-connect the holistic development of individuals of all ages to the effort they put into improving the general welfare of the local groups they belong to and the wellbeing of the wider society. It sees a connection between the suppression of children's sense of agency—especially children categorised as diverging from the norm or even as 'struggling learners' or as having a disability—and the forces which reduce citizens to spectators and stifle commitment to public goods by shaping a conformist way of being that desires certainty and relates to values and world views as fixed. It seeks to

provide opportunities for the religious attitude and attendant dispositions to be evoked and deepened in children as participants in valuation, and sees this as necessary for releasing the spiritual force of passionate intelligence which animates a democratic way of being that is constantly open for re-evaluation and change. It aims to combat forces that transform children into future consumers and to position children to understand themselves and each other as active participants in working towards making their daily interactions in school and the associations that they belong to more genuinely democratic and equitable—not at some far-off distant time in the future, but right *now*, in the present. Finally, it makes the connection between educating children's desires and the wider reorientation of citizens to public affairs that is urgently needed to reverse the dominance of corporate interests which position the pursuit of the good of the individual as 'private' and unrelated to the public interest, and it names this as a spiritual task.

Notes

1   For example, why is there something rather than nothing? Why do we exist? Why do *I* exist? What might I become? What is the meaning of life? Is there a God?

2   Drawing on Perry (1970) 3-stage scheme for intellectual and ethical development, we (Statham and Webster 2019, p. 110) identified growth associated with three stages of spirituality: the lost individual, the spiritually existential individual and the spiritually social individual.

3   Desire is an "active relation of the organism to the environment" (p. 205) and an "interest" arises where a person has "a stake in the course of events and in their final issue—a stake which leads him [sic] to take action to bring into existence a particular result rather than some other one" (p. 206).

4   For example, in Australia where the authors are based, religion is not part of the school curriculum.

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