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CHILDREN, RELIGION AND THE ETHICS OF INFLUENCE

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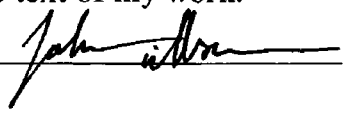
A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the award of PhD

July 2015

CHILDREN, RELIGION AND THE ETHICS OF INFLUENCE

John Tillson

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates how (if at all) children ought to be influenced with respect to religion(s). To answer this question, I develop a theory of cognitive curriculum content and apply it to the teaching of religious beliefs and beliefs about religions. By ‘a theory of cognitive curriculum content,’ I mean a theory that determines which truth-claims belong on the curriculum, and whether or not teachers ought to promote students’ belief of those claims. I extend this theory to help educators to decide which attitudes address on the curriculum and whether or not to promote them. I then apply this to the case of religious attitudes and attitudes about religions. I argue that where having or failing to have a certain attitude makes a significant difference to students’ lives, it ought to be addressed by curricula. Where failing to have the attitude is irrational, this failure ought to be remedied; where having the attitude is irrational, that attitude ought to be discouraged; and where neither having nor failing to have the attitude is irrational, that attitude ought to be introduced and discussed without encouragement or discouragement. In so far as is practicable, educators should aim to acquaint students with arguments for and against having these attitudes and initiate them into the practice of assessing their soundness. The implications of this theory for extra-curricular influence, such as upbringing in the home, are also explored.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My first debt of gratitude is to the Irish Centre for Religious Education for the award of a doctoral scholarship which enabled me to conduct this research. I am also indebted to my supervisors, Gareth Byrne and Ian Leask, whose fine balance of patience with timeliness, criticism with encouragement, and forensic attention with panoramic awareness, helped me to develop a thesis from the mere shadow of an idea. There are a number of other individuals whose wisdom and conversation about various related matters I have benefitted from: Richard Bailey, Julian Bennett, David Boylan, Kevin Currie-Knight, Scott A. Davison, Mark E. Jonas, Kevin McDonough, Joseph Rivera, Claudia Schumann, Patricia Smith, and Kevin Williams. I should like to single out Michael Hand for both his keen criticism and kind encouragement since he agreed to supervise my MA thesis in 2009. I would also like to thank the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain (PESGB) for the inestimable support and encouragement that it has provided over the years both monetarily and in spirit.

Additionally, I would like to thank audiences and participants at several conferences and seminars to whom I presented related material. These include audiences for papers that I delivered for the PESGB Birmingham Branch, the Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia's 2013 annual meeting, the 2013 Postgraduate Conference in Humanities and Education, hosted by the Mater Dei Institute of Education & St Patrick's College, the Mater Dei Institute of Education's research seminar series, the PESGB's 2014 meeting for New Research in Philosophy of Education, and for Trinity College Dublin's Metaphysical Society.

Without the help of these many people and institutions, this thesis would not have those qualities such as it has. It is customary to say that its remaining faults are my own doing, and so they are.

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Chapter One

THE RESEARCH QUESTION, ASSUMPTIONS AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

My question is how (if at all) we may ethically influence children with respect to religions. In particular, by what means, and towards what ends (if any) may we do this? I will limit myself to discussing the ethics of *deliberate attempts at formative influence* for the purpose of delineating, for myself, a manageable but ambitious task; that is to say, a doctoral level task. A more perspicuous formulation of my question is this: What ethical claims (if any) do children have over us when it comes to our influencing of them with respect to religion, and what ethical claims (if any) have we over them in that regard?¹ Indeed, they may have ethical claims over how we educate other children, since the way each child is educated will have a significant effect on the way that they treat others, and each likely has claim rights over how they are treated by others. By an ethical claim that A has over B, I mean a demand that can be made on A's behalf which B is ethically obliged to satisfy. It is common to think that people have such claims to life and liberty (at least claims to omissions, if not acts, and at least until they violate other significantly ethical claims).

The different, sometimes conflicting, ethical-claims that children are said to have in this domain include being initiated into their own cultural background, or that of their parents (Steven C. Vryhof);² knowing what beliefs about momentous religious matters are best justified (Michael Hand);³ to come to an autonomous, critical position about

¹ This 'we' and 'us' captures those who are both capable of influencing children, with respect to religions, and capable of controlling how they do so. Subsequent investigation may reveal that different people have different ethical burdens in this domain, but that is part of what is to be established.

² Vryhof contends that "if a community is to survive, if individuals are to survive, both memory and vision must be persevered and passed on," these being "a cultural memory – their story, their identity, their cultural anchor points – and cultural vision – their imagined future and world and life view." Steven C. Vryhof, 'Between Memory and Vision: Schools as Communities of Meaning', in *Commitment, Character, and Citizenship: Religious Education in Liberal Democracy*, ed. by Hanan A. Alexander, and Ayman K. Agbaria (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 47. Cultures are intrinsically valuable according to Callan, perhaps then, people should be initiated into them in order to ensure their survival (or at least we have reason to initiate people into them, because we have reason to ensure their survival). Eamonn Callan, 'The Ethics of Assimilation,' *Ethics* 115(3) (2005), pp. 471-500.

³ Michael Hand, 'Religious Education,' in *Rethinking the School Curriculum: Values, Aims and Purpose*, ed. by John White (London: Routledge Falmer, 2004).

which religious claims are best justified (Andrew Wright);⁴ to be aware of what different religious affiliations people have and have had, as part of a more general understanding of diversity; to gain a comprehensive narrative, since it is a precondition of having evaluative knowledge (Trevor Cooling);⁵ to be acquainted with the transcendent; to come to know what being part of a religion is like so as to make a more autonomous choice about whether to be religiously affiliated (Terence McLaughlin);⁶ to make good on the ills experienced in society.⁷ Being educated ‘about’, ‘within’, ‘into’, and ‘from’ religion are also all aims that have been variously understood and defended.⁸ Generally, we may ask whether children ought to be advanced in a religion, encouraged and prepared to evangelize, forewarned and forearmed against faith, encouraged and prepared to denounce religion, insulated from religion, or not deliberately influenced with respect to religions, at all. One possible answer to our question is that we can do no wrong when it comes to influencing children with respect to religion, that whatever we do will be alright. In this case, children would have no ethical claims over us when it comes to our influencing them with respect to religion. Another answer is that children have a claim to be left to develop according to their un-perverted nature, and even a duty to insist on being so left. I do not think that either the maximally permissive or impermissive views are correct, as I shall argue in Chapter 6.

Ultimately my arguments are addressed to whomever the decision-making buck stops with; however, one’s ethics of influence will have something to say about whom it is

⁴ Andrew Wright (2000) ‘The Spiritual Education Project: Cultivating Spiritual and Religious Literacy through a Critical Pedagogy of Religious Education,’ *Pedagogies of Religious Education*, ed. by Michael Grimmitt (Essex: McCrimmon, 2000), pp. 170-187.

⁵ Trevor Cooling, ‘Contestable Beliefs in Education: Fairness and/or Neutrality?’ *Oxford Review of Education* 38(5) (2012), pp. 551-566.

⁶ This last point is argued by Terrence H. McLaughlin, ‘Parental Rights and the Religious Upbringing of Children’, *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 18(1) (1984), pp. 75-83. This would seem a more plausible claim if a circumscribed anti-realism were true of religion (as opposed to global anti-realism, or realism about religion), since whether religious beliefs are true or false is not best rationally evaluated from a position in which one already believes them. On the other hand, if religions do not contain propositional content, and understanding them consists in knowing what it is like to indwell, then a ‘don’t knock it ‘til you try it’ attitude seems more appropriate.

⁷ It is often thought that education ought to derive its *raison d’être* from redressing existent or foreseeable societal problems, as when the press claims that schooling is responsible for addressing moral crises, as seen during high profile crimes such as James Bulger’s murder. On this view, one need only identify those ills related to religion in society and target them, because children will have a claim right over each other not to perpetuate those ills. Some, such as the new atheists, Dawkins, Dennett, Hitchens and Harris, would argue that religion itself constitutes a societal ill, and might hope that education would redress it. Others would argue that irreligiousness is an ill to be redressed by religious initiation.

⁸ Gareth Byrne, ‘Encountering and Engaging with Religion and Belief: The Contemporary Contribution of Religious Education in Schools,’ in *Toward Mutual Ground: Pluralism, Religious Education and Diversity in Schools*, ed. by Gareth Byrne and Patricia Kieran (Dublin: Columba Press, 2013).

that the buck ought to stop with. It may, for instance, tell us both who it is that is responsible for satisfying children's ethical claims, as well as what those claims are.

Methodology

Purpose and Scope of Study

As explained above, the purpose of this study is to investigate how (if at all) children ought, ethically, to be influenced with respect to religion. This is a question about ethics rather than politics or law, and I hope to answer it by specifying what, morally, we ought to aspire to. I do not draw any difference between the use of the word 'ethics' and the use of the word 'moral' in the following, although I recognize that other authors do. After answering what children are entitled to morally, I will not go further and discuss how this ought to relate to legal expectations and sanctions. The relation between proper moral and legal expectations is complex and beyond the reasonable scope of an already large topic. Briefly though, saying that people have an ethical entitlement not to be harmed, or to be benefitted, does not obviously translate into a legal entitlement (e.g. making romantic scoundrelism illegal).

I ask about the ethics of *influence*, instead of the ethics of upbringing, or of education, or of schooling, since I am interested in formative influence *per se*, and believe that similar considerations are relevant, both to what kinds of upbringing and education children are entitled to, and also to questions of whether schooling embodies an appropriate expedient in their service. That is to say, the ethics of education and upbringing are best discussed in tandem, as parts of the ethics of influence. For this reason, my topic is broader than both of these topics, but it is not thereby unwieldy. There exists research on more specific topics than I address: the aims of upbringing; the aims of religious education; the justification of religious schools; the justification of evangelism. My project draws on and is relevant to all of these areas. They all fall within the remit of the ethics of influence, with respect to religion and indeed, contributions to each of those areas must already have implications for the others by virtue of this fact.

Contribution to Knowledge

The research question that I address has both empirical and normative aspects. The contribution of this thesis is not empirical. It draws on existing empirical studies by others, and on more common knowledge that most human beings can reasonably be expected to have (for instance, the knowledge that human beings have parents, are mortal and can believe falsehoods as well as truths). Rather, the contribution of this thesis is to clearly frame an original research question, to clearly identify the sub-questions whose answers will help us to answer our overall question, and then to assemble the most plausible answers available to those sub-questions so as to answer the overall question. One contribution made by this research, which is of particular interest, is its elaboration and application of the theory of propositional curriculum content which I previously developed from a systematic arrangement of some arguments made by Michael Hand.⁹ The present work extends that theory so that it captures the affective side of the curriculum, as well as the propositional side. It then applies this theory to religious beliefs and attitudes, and beliefs and attitudes about religion.

The Approach of the Study

After clarifying the key concepts employed in the research question, the first task of the work is to identify sub-questions, the answers to which should, when taken together, answer the overall question. These seven questions are:

1. What are the sources of responsibility?
2. What is the content of responsibility?
3. In what respects are we apt to be formatively influenced?
4. What means of formative influence are available?
5. What ethical obligations and restrictions are there on the means by, and the ends towards, which we formatively influence children?
6. What is a religion?
7. How rational is religious belief?

⁹ John Tillson, 'Towards a Theory of Propositional Curriculum Content,' *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 48(1) (2014), pp. 137-148.

Each question will receive consideration in a chapter of its own, and in the order listed above, before, in Chapter 9, my conclusion, I come to summarise my answers to each, and explain what import, taken together, they have for answering our overarching question.

A minimally comprehensive answer to our central research question must consider how we can determine the difference between what is and what is not ethical, and how one comes to have ethical responsibilities at all. It must consider what sort of thing influence is, and where it fits on the ethical/ unethical distinction, and indeed, what ethical difference it makes when we are talking about influencing children, as opposed to adults. It must have a notion of what counts as a religion, and in what respects we may possibly be influenced with respect to it. It will also need to consider what the value of religion is. Having satisfied these desiderata, we should be in a position to answer our overarching question. It should be said that what is presented over the following chapters is an argument emerging from the employment of my method, rather than a documentation of the method itself.

Amongst the things required is some sort of ethical framework for prospectively selecting kinds of acts and for retrospectively evaluating particular influential (and potentially influential) acts.¹⁰ This has two parts. First, any plausible answer to our overall question must identify specific parties that have responsibilities to children, together with the content of those responsibilities. If either were lacking, it would be as though an unsigned, blank check were made out to children. For this reason, we require an account of the sources of ethical responsibilities which identifies the bearers of responsibilities (benefactors), the beneficiaries of responsibilities, and the things that benefactors are responsible for doing or achieving. Second, an account of benefits and harms (or of wellbeing) is required to give content to the responsibilities. (In Chapter 3, we defend being godlike as a goal for being well, which accounts for why we should want to know, and should want to promote knowledge of momentous truths, as well as why we should want to be rational).

An account of influence and of potential influence should distinguish between formative and behavioural influence, and specify those respects in which we are apt to

¹⁰ On the notion of selecting 'kinds of acts' rather than particular acts, see Jonathon Dancy, 'Ethics Without Principle,' interviewed for 3:AM Magazine by Richard Marshall <<http://www.3ammagazine.com/3am/ethics-without-principles/>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

be formatively influenced, as well as those *means* by which we are apt to be so influenced. A theory of ethical influence will draw on these materials. An account of religion is required which demarcates its extension. An account of the value (or status) of religion is required. Finally, an account of the application of the foregoing to religion, given its status, is given.

This work is essentially an exercise in organizing information and categories, and seeing where the implications of plausible (but not empirically discoverable) principles lead. As Wittgenstein remarks, “the problems [of philosophy] are solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have always known.”¹¹ An account of whether these considerations apply to things other than religions would be interesting, although not essential to the research question: it could be suggestive of further research to be done in the same vein.

Resources Consulted

The resources consulted here were selected because they seemed to be germane to answering my research question. The relevance of work is established, by whether it provides or criticises part of an answer to, or problematizes or offers some alternative way to couch the terms of my research question itself. As a whole, the thesis contributes to discussions of Eamonn Callan, Peter Gardner, Michael Hand, Terence McLaughlin, and John White about whether religiously partisan upbringing and education are ethically permissible. Many of these discussions were printed in the *Journal of Philosophy of Education*. To make this contribution, the thesis engages with a range of literature in addition to that one, relatively discrete, body. For instance, it engages with bodies of literature concerning what counts as a religion, the value of religion, the validity of arguments for the existence of God,¹² and concerning in which respects human beings are apt to be formatively influenced. The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy’s critical surveys of existing philosophical literature on discrete, relevant bodies of philosophical literature were read in order to determine which particular works to read.

¹¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell’s, 2010), §109.

¹² Where the word is used as a proper name, I will capitalize it: e.g. “Lamb of God, you who take away the sins of the world: have mercy on us”. Where it is not a proper name, I will not capitalize it: e.g. “the god of revelation”; “one or more gods”.

Methods

While it seemed that each of the sub-questions called for a slightly different method, in general, the research method employed primarily consisted of reading and critically reflecting on literature which offered considerations relevant to the answer of my research question. The critical reflection consists, firstly, of attempting to clarify the concepts employed and propositions asserted in order to establish whether or not apparent conflicts and harmonies between ideas are sustained at a deeper level. Where there are conflicts, we are forced to choose between them (on pain of contradiction). Much of the method can be described as conceptual analysis, which is largely theoretical, as distinct from empirical: one famous example has it that knowledge consists of 'justified, true belief' (albeit an example that no longer looks plausible in light of Edmund Gettier's counterexamples).¹³ Another example is the arrangement of concepts in terms of generality and exemplification. Which categories are subsets of which other categories is the question and this is a philosophical question *par excellence*: for instance, if the above analysis holds, then knowledge is a subset of true beliefs, which are a subset of beliefs *tout court*. Such conceptual geography forms a precondition of sound experimental methods, for one cannot empirically confirm an incoherent hypothesis.

On the matter of what religion is, I assess a range of available methods for demarcating the extension of religion, and settle on an essentialist approach. I attempted to identify an essence of religion in the familiar philosophical manner of hazarding potential essences, and testing them with hypothetical, or actual scenarios that might constitute counterexamples, revising those suggested essences to avoid legitimate counter examples, and otherwise providing reasons why the supposed counter examples were not legitimate after all. This is a method we find exemplified in Plato's dialogues, although I do not report on the application of the methods in the same way. Whereas Plato would imagine a two or more sided conversation, I might do the same but will not report it in that way; rather, I will collapse it into a single account, presenting arguments impersonally, except in so far as I attribute them to a source, or endorse them. Writerly

¹³ Gettier counter-examples are cases where we appear to have justified, true beliefs, but not knowledge: such as when I look at a twenty four hour clock twelve hours after it stops and truly believe, with justification, that it is, say, twelve o'clock. Edmund L. Gettier, 'Is justified true belief knowledge?' *Analysis* 23(6) (1963), pp. 121-123.

devices such as irony and literary subtlety completely drop out of this way of writing; thus, I try to be as literal, explicit and unambiguous as possible.

This thesis is largely a work of applied ethics, and I am persuaded by the writing of Bernard Williams that ethical questions cannot be answered by philosophy in itself.¹⁴ What philosophy can provide ethical thought, though, is the procedure of reflective equilibrium by which we can hope to apply our ethical notions more consistently, revising them to create a more coherent whole (a procedure employed brilliantly by John Rawls and, in relation to non-ethical beliefs, David Lewis).¹⁵ One important part of this procedure is that of drawing analogies between cases. One anticipates that where there are no relevant differences between the cases, like judgements are required of each. Where one's judgements are not alike in analogous cases, one then seeks to revise or suspend judgement. This method is admirably expounded by Ben Spiecker and Jan Steutel.¹⁶ The procedure works in the following way. One already has a range of ethical intuitions about particular cases, for instance: Oswald should not have shot JFK; the Police Sniper should have shot the armed man on a shooting spree; murderers should be executed; drawn out, torturous executions are wrong. With these in hand, one then attempts to do one of two things: 1) see whether these all fit together, and, if not, which of them can be jettisoned, or 2) attempt to see which principles can be formulated to explain the most, and revise fewest, of these intuitions. Preference would be given to the simplest, least extensive and most explanatorily powerful set of principles. Where one has intuitions which are left by the wayside, one would ideally have a theory of error; of how one came to have the mistaken view, and some respect in which it differs from the others in virtue of which it is not to be trusted, while they are (after all, it was not so long ago that they seemed to be on the same footing). In this way, a theory is generated from intuitions.

Spiecker and Steutel make the additional suggestion that the initial intuitions can be rendered more plausible by already being in accordance with principles, or theoretical generalisations (the example they give is that of Immanuel Kant's principle of dignity). This suggestion seems doubtful: either the theory is just admitted as one (admittedly

¹⁴ Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Abingdon: Fontana Press, 1985).

¹⁵ David Lewis, *Counterfactuals*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973); John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).

¹⁶ Ben Spiecker and Jan Steutel, 'Reflective Equilibrium as a Method of Philosophy of Education,' in *Methods in Philosophy of Education*, ed. by Frieda Heyting, Dieter Lenzen, and John White (London: Routledge, 2002).

rather general) intuition among others or it is not admitted at all. No strength is added by generality; it is the process of reflective equilibrium which is meant to a) generate theory and b) lend it what plausibility it has. If theory is admitted as intuition (perhaps because one has successfully internalized bits of Kant's philosophy), it is still the process of reflective equilibrium that is supposed to give that theory-intuition whatever extra-intuitive plausibility it can gain. It may be that people start off with different intuitions, and that the process will just bring people to different systems in light of that; this is a legitimate worry that I cannot completely diffuse, but will return to shortly. By way of neutralizing this point, Harry Brighouse has suggested using a wide reflective equilibrium, and engaging in a joint discussion with a wide variety of others about which intuitions to plug in, so as to compensate for irrelevant biases (such as race, age, and culture).¹⁷ There seem to be limitations on this; I should not like to co-create a system with, say, racist, sexist, and homophobic people. While such a methodology has its appeal, it does not suit a PhD project, unless the researcher were to use subjects, and not work, as co-partners in the production of a theory with their conversation partners.

Empirical moral psychology is closely related to, but distinct from, this approach, and is, I think, irrelevant in an important way. True, empirical psychology can reveal limitations about people that one's ethical theory needs to accommodate in being psychologically realistic. However, conducting surveys indicating the variety of intuitions seems unhelpful; in particular, it will not tell us which of the intuitions are right. Indeed, they would be made no more right by some particular intuition being more common. One would need a theory about when intuitions are more likely to be right, and to determine whether the respondents were in such a state. Furthermore, if one doesn't share their initial intuitions, it is only the process of reflective equilibrium that can help us to adjudicate between them. As David Lewis has emphasized, one starts off with one's *own* judgements (and indeed, where else could one start off?), and revises from there. However, there is no guarantee that we will all be able to converge in our opinions through rational discourse.¹⁸

a theory cannot earn its credence just by its unity and economy. What credence it cannot earn, it must inherit. It is far beyond our powers to

¹⁷ Harry Brighouse, 'Afterword,' in Diana E. Hess and Paula McAvoy, *The Political Classroom: Evidence and Ethics in Democratic Education* (London: Routledge, 2014), p 214.

¹⁸ For a reconstruction and illuminating discussion of David Lewis' general philosophical method, see Daniel Nolan, *David Lewis* (Cheshire: Acumen Publishing, 2005), Ch. 9.

weave a brand new fabric of adequate theory ex nihilo, so we must perforce conserve the one we've got.¹⁹

It may be that neither of us is making any mistake of method. We may each be bringing our opinions into reflective equilibrium in the most careful possible way, taking account of all the arguments, distinctions, and counterexamples. But one of us, at least, is making a mistake of fact.²⁰

Anybody who talks for long enough will eventually contradict themselves. (This is perhaps a contingent, rather than necessary truth - presumably God would not contradict himself, or a true messenger of God would not). If they notice the contradiction, they will have a choice forced on them between which (if either) of the contradictory elements they wish to affirm if they hope to be consistent, and – what is the same – intellectually honest. While it is possible to avoid contradicting oneself by talking about different subjects, so that one makes very many propositions, none of which have anything to do with one another and so none of which can possibly contradict one another, that is not what people tend to do when they speak. Anybody that writes 90,000 words on a single topic will notice this rather keenly because they will have produced written evidence of what they have said, evidence that they know will be inspected for contradictions. Concordantly, Gary Gutting has suggested that someone's ability to sustain a point of view at length is evidence in its favour:

The mere fact of developing a claim in some detail may serve to persuade us of its plausibility. Since more detail is likely to lead to problems, particularly when ideas are extended beyond their original domain, the more thoroughly and extensively a claim is developed without encountering problems, the more likely it is to be correct.²¹

In contrast, Richard Rorty makes the following remarks:

Eventually I got over the worry about circular argumentation by deciding that the test of philosophical truth was overall coherence, rather than deducibility from unquestioned first principles. But this didn't help much. For coherence is a matter of avoiding contradictions, and St Thomas's advice, 'When you meet a contradiction, make a distinction,' makes that pretty easy. As far as I could see, philosophical talent was largely a matter of proliferating as many distinctions as were needed to wriggle out of a dialectical corner.²²

¹⁹ David Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1986), p. 134.

²⁰ David Lewis, *Philosophical Papers*, Volume One (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. xi.

²¹ Gary Gutting, *What Philosophers Know: Case Studies in Recent Analytic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 77.

²² Richard Rorty 'Trosky and the Wild Orchids,' *Common Knowledge* 1(3) (1992), pp. 140-53, 145.

For instance, if I were to remark that I would not mind traveling on a spaceship, but would dread exploring oceanic depths in a submarine, one might wonder what the relevant difference is. Supposing, for instance, that the levels of danger are identical, and so too are the claustrophobia and unpleasantness of dying should things go wrong, why then should I prefer one to the other? There may be a distinction such as the view being sublime from a spaceship and disappointingly murky under the sea. However, it is absurd to think that there will always be a distinction to alleviate every contradiction, sometimes there are no relevant distinctions to be made: for instance, no nifty distinction can salvage the self-contradictory notion of a 'square circle'.

Clearly, consistency on a topic is not enough to render an account of things as true or good, it is rather a precondition (even if, as Gutting suggests, it gains credence with detailed development). What more is required? This is something plausibly provided by the process of reflective equilibrium. One takes initially plausible, but not sacrosanct beliefs, and attempts to systematize them, revising or rejecting them if they resist such integration.²³ But that just aims for consistency. There must be something good or true on the whole about our initial intuitions, for the process not to be an exercise in systematic fiction writing. There is a large scope for empirical confirmation and refutation in all but ethics, and other evaluative claims, it seems, but even in the empirical domain we rely on perceptions, memory, introspection and what not, so ethics is no worse off in principle than is empirical confirmation.

Normative questions have an ineliminable, non-empirical aspect, it seems. Take the everyday question of what, if anything, one should have for lunch. Some empirical evidence may be relevant to deciding the matter, it may help to determine (among other things) what food is poison, cheap, or convenient to obtain. But the matter of which of these is good, best, or best, all things considered, is a non-empirical matter. Some may say that the evidence of being ill when poisoned counts against eating the poisonous stuff for lunch. But, there are, at some point, values which are not recommended by evidence; such as that illness is undesirable. One might say that they did not enjoy it when they were ill last time, but then one assumes that what is enjoyable is a relevant factor in what one should do in this case, and this is not determined by the evidence.

²³ For an interesting discussion of how far this enterprise can and should be undertaken, see Thomas Nagel's *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) in which he suggests that false reductions, and denials of the most evident features of the world can result from pursuing it over-zealously.

Furthermore, the questions of how to weigh up the values one has, and choose between conflicting values, are not empirical matters. The ineliminable, non-empirical aspect seems to be made good on by our intuitions, and the spectre of disagreement may be mitigated (if not negated) by the process of reflective equilibrium. If someone does not agree with my account of wellbeing, they may be able to challenge me by pointing out that it fails to account for something which is also good, but I will at some point need to share an intuition about what good is excluded. Incidentally, there is a very real possibility that my conception leaves out social goods and purpose, but again, it seems that we must work from shared intuitions (or perhaps learning) about what is good.

A research method might be expected to provide a correct answer to a specific question. That is to say, to both generate and justify an answer. Karl Popper dissented, arguing that what makes a view reliable is the fact that it is subject to no apt criticism, and that there is no possibility of justifying beliefs beyond this.²⁴ One might ask how Popper's dissent is justified, but that would be a funny question to ask a person who denies that views can be justified. He embraces the notion that all of our beliefs are based on nothing but prejudice; it is whether they are subjected to unending critique and retained only where they survive such a process that they might be considered (tentatively) to count as knowledge (or as close a thing to knowledge as we can come to having). For Popper, how we come about our conjectures is rationally immaterial; whether they came to us in a dream, by misunderstanding some other conjecture, or in a flash of inspiration, no method of production can be thought to produce reliable beliefs. Instead, it is by surviving the process of making novel predictions with the potential to be falsified by future evidence that lends our conjectures what credibility they have. Research methods seem like nonsense then, unless they are methods of critiquing what must, at root, be a prejudicial view. Generative cum justificatory research methods are untenable if Popper is right.

Indeed, what basis could one have for establishing the truth of a proposition? It seems that there are just three possibilities: Insisting on the proposition dogmatically; regressing to a further justificatory point, which itself will need to be dogmatically asserted, or further justified by yet another point to which the same problem applies; or, by a circular justification. In the end justification must stop somewhere, and one hopes

²⁴ Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1963)

that others will judge things similarly at some sufficiently basic level. Needless to say, none of these methods can ultimately establish the truth of our view.²⁵ Some say that the foundations on which our views may be based are indubitable; that they cannot be simultaneously understood and doubted. Descartes presumed to find such a fact in the *cogito*; his famous dictum, ‘I think, therefore I am’.²⁶ Some believe that he did, but, it is far from clear that we can derive anything else from this. It is doubtful that the entire edifice of human knowledge can be derived from self-evident foundations such as the *cogito*. However, one also worries that we have no reason to trust the methods of discrediting views. If we have no grounds for asserting a claim, it is hard to understand how we have grounds for criticising a claim, for, surely, that involves presupposing some other claim to be warranted (e.g. claiming that Newtonian physics is false, because light bends presupposes that we’re right in thinking, due to observation, that light bends). Apart from this, the process of reflective equilibrium, many philosophical arguments need be inspected for their soundness, whether their inferences are valid, and their premises plausible. The robustness of one’s judgements in all these matters is checked by engaging the scholarly community through publications, and seminar and conference presentations.

Methodologically, I want to emphasize exact thinking, by means of the defining of terms, and the marking of relevant distinctions where there is a danger of ambiguity, or conflation. I want to argue for conclusions, and make my (more contentious) assumptions known so that people might know where they disagree with me, if they, in fact, do. The point of precision is to make clear when there is a disagreement, and what it is. This avoids arguing at cross purposes, and also guards against oscillating between, or otherwise, conflating distinct ideas. To give a trivial example: the bark of a dog and tree are utterly different, and remarking that ‘a tree’s bark is worse than its bite’ is obviously absurd. Unfortunately, however, some oscillations are more subtle. Everyone might agree that ‘what we need is good religious education!’ and, all nodding, completely overlook the disagreements about what constitutes good religious education (a surprisingly common occurrence). Moreover, not only are there disagreements about what is good, but also about what sorts of enterprises might be aptly described by the

²⁵ Scepticism of our suggested premises is always possible. If sceptics are sincere, there will be no discontent between actions and thoughts: as when sceptics act on knowledge they deny having: preferring to leave by the door, rather than upstairs windows.

²⁶ “I am, I exist, is necessarily true, every time I express it or conceive of it in my mind.” René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and the Meditations* (London: Penguin, 1968), p. 103.

phrase ‘religious education’. It is not uncommon to hear a religious education pre-service teacher say: what we need is good religious education, as if they have just had the last word in an argument, when it is only to say that religious education is not bad *per se* – and to invite the follow up question: what constitutes good religious education? Indeed, it presupposes some interpretation of the phrase which could already be at cross purposes with what other people have in mind. Yet, more perniciously than exacerbating the difficulties of communication, one might use an expression to refer to several quite distinct things, and oscillate unknowingly between them.

What I hope to do is to systematically integrate claims that I take to be true, discarding beliefs which cannot be so integrated in the process. As I say, the research process is not recorded in this thesis, but an argument built out of the research is. I will warn the reader now that, in the course of this thesis, I refer to fictional films and literature. The point of my drawing on such resources is usually illustrative, or to elaborate a thought experiment.

Key Concepts

My research question makes use of four core concepts, which will need some preliminary individuation and introduction before we proceed. Fuller discussion of each will follow in later sections.

Ethics

As I will argue in Chapter 2, what we *can be* morally responsible for is those of our actions and omissions which bear on the wellbeing of intrinsically valuable objects, such as human beings. Following Peter Singer, I accept the principle that “if it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it.”²⁷ As to whose responsibility it is, I argue that the best person for the (ethical) job is responsible for making sure that it is done (an onus they cannot abdicate, but which falls simultaneously on the next best person if they drop the moral baton). While plausible,

²⁷ Peter Singer, ‘Famine, Affluence, and Morality,’ in *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1(1) (1972), pp. 229-24, p. 229.

this answer does not easily accommodate the view that biological parents have a prima facie responsibility for their children's wellbeing. I argue that it can, in fact, accommodate, and even ground, this view. The conception of wellbeing that I develop (in Chapter 3) is one which holds that the nearer an act brings human beings towards becoming like God, the better it is for them; the more it keeps them from becoming like God, the worse it is for them.

Influence

We ought to distinguish between two kinds of influence; that which makes a difference either to what others do, and (as a first approximation) that which makes a difference to *who* others are. Call these 'behavioural influence' and 'formative influence' respectively. It is the latter that we will be most interested in. The distinction will receive further attention later in this chapter.

Children

Childhood might be understood in two different ways 1) as a period of time subsequent to birth, 2) or as a state (which just so happens to last a period of time, and come subsequent to birth). Children can be recognized as looking different from adults, and having different capacities from adults (some of which diminish or disappear with age, and some of which increase or appear with age). One might wonder whether childhood can be skipped, or whether childhood could ever come after adulthood. We might think that we can imagine cases of each: consider the hypothetical cases of a cloned adult, where a clone is created with all of the knowledge and skills of an original individual, and consider also the (curious) case of Benjamin Button, whose physical aging process runs in reverse.²⁸ In this latter case though, the mental maturation of the Benjamin Button does not run contrariwise, and in the former case, the clone's own mental states still piggybacks the normal mental maturation of the original person's childhood. One could perhaps imagine a child being born into the body of an adult, but needing to learn to occupy that body just as an infant learns to occupy that body. Childhood seems to me to be a period of physical and mental maturation, and these can be taken apart from one

²⁸ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button: And Other Tales of the Jazz Age* (Auckland: The Floating Press, 2009).

another; in the (fictional) case of a ‘child’ vampire, we might be inclined to say that despite having the physical form of a child, the vampire, when they reach the age of, say, twenty, is no longer a child, but an adult ‘in the body of a child’. We might describe the adult as being physically childlike. Similarly, in the case of, say, Lenny from *Of Mice and Men*, we might say that while mentally childlike, he is physically not childlike, and indeed, is not a child.²⁹ Here, the notion of child-like suggests that there is some childish state, or states common to childhood. Could it be that were Lenny to have been made a vampire as a child, that he would never have ‘grown up’ either physically or mentally, and so would have been a child eternally (perhaps, ala the Lost Boys of *Peter Pan*)?³⁰ That is a tough case that challenges the natural inclination that childhood is a lapse of time that is leant its importance by the states that tend to characterize it; for instance, a high degree of dependence and vulnerability. In fact, the term may not be well defined, and even if it is, it may be that having or not having certain capacities is what really matters for moral differences in how we treat individuals. For instance, we might instead talk about people who are not yet able to reason fully, rather than people who are ‘below the age of reason’, and thereby leave out people who have lost the ability to reason fully, or those who will likely never gain it without speaking of inhabitants of a certain age range, which is what children might appear to be.

Religion

Something is a religion, I will argue (in Chapter 7), if and only if it requires a) belief in (one or more) super-powerful beings and b) submission to them as having rightful dominion. There exist social structures which may be called ‘religions’ in a derivative sense, in that they are built around this primary sense of the word. A person is religious if they believe in one or more super powerful beings that they submit to, regarding them as having rightful dominion. A social group is religious if it shares a belief in one or more super powerful beings that it submits to, regarding them as having rightful dominion.

²⁹ John Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men and the Moon Is Down* (London: Penguin, 2010).

³⁰ James Matthew Barrie, *Peter Pan* (London: Broadview Press, 2011).

What is an Ethics of Influence?

I want now to map out the general terrain of the domain within which I offer this contribution, before getting underway. An ethics of influence would deal with the ethical rights and wrongs of influence.³¹ When we influence something, we make a difference to that thing; for instance, we might perpetuate a state of that thing that would otherwise cease, as when watering a house plant. Of special interest are the ethics of making differences to what people do (call this behavioural influence), and to those of their characteristics in virtue of which they are disposed to do what they do (call this formative influence). Let us say a little more to distinguish these concepts.

Formative Influence and Behavioural Influence

We think of children as being impressionable, and of our childhood comprising our ‘formative years’ in which we acquire dispositions which are hard to countermand. A formative influence is one which affects our formation, and, usually, we have in mind an influence undergone in childhood. I will use the term to capture an effect on our formation, without locating this purely in our childhood. Indeed, one might hope to reform a person later in their life and this should be considered as a hope to wield a formative influence, since reformation is a subset of formation.

While they are neither contrary nor contradictory notions, formative influence and behavioural influence are distinguishable. Consider the case of the conditioned reflex of salivating at the ringing of a bell that Ivan Pavlov induced in dogs. Compare this with the unconditioned reflex of their salivating on being presented with food. While one makes a difference to the dogs by presenting them with food, in that one stimulates their salivation, one does not thereby make any difference to those conditions in virtue of which they salivate. On the other hand, one does make a difference to those conditions

³¹ The difference between good and bad influences on people is not identical to the difference between ethical and unethical influences on people (unless you are an implausibly strong sort of consequentialist whereby people are not judged by the likely outcomes of their actions, but only the actual outcomes). I think of a scene in the HBO miniseries, *Boardwalk Empire*, Created by Terence Winter (HBO, 2010–2014) in which brothers Eli and Nucky Thompson, a corrupt politician and sheriff respectively, discuss their abusive father at his wake: he was not such a bad man, suggests Eli, since (he claims in all sincerity) they had both turned out alright. Quite apart from the joke that neither man seems to have turned out alright, one wants to say that their father still did wrong by beating and neglecting them, no matter how they had turned out; plausibly for a combination of the following reasons: 1) they were more likely to be worse off for their treatment in the long run, 2) the treatment was distressing at the time, 3) there was an absence of mitigating factors excusing the neglect. It seems that Thomas Nagel and Bernard Williams argue against this view somewhat in their defences of the concept of ‘moral luck’.

in virtue of which they salivate if one regularly attends this with the ringing of a bell, since the bell alone will eventually suffice to stimulate the dogs' salivation. While presenting a dog with food would count as a behavioural influence, it would not count as a formative influence. Conditioning a reflex, however, would count as both.

This example deals with influence at an unreflective level, having to do with involuntary responses. However, the same contrast exists at the reflective level too. For instance, a salesperson's convincing of someone to buy their product seems to be largely a case of behavioural influence, rather than formative influence. Here, the salesperson influences action, not so much by making a difference to those internal conditions in virtue of which people do what they do (their dispositions), but instead by exploiting existing conditions. By contrast, a journalist's attempt to persuade people into taking up an attitude that will affect the decisions that they will make in the future would be a case of formative influence, in virtue of changing their dispositions.

Or again, one may think of the threats of fines and prison (and of hell) as being deterrents and of the promise of financial rewards (and of heaven) as being inducements which might affect our decisions, but not our decision making apparatus. To put it another way, these things will affect our decisions, but not us. One might think that creating deterrents involves creating a belief, but it doesn't, even though informing people about a deterrent is wise since otherwise the deterrent cannot deter.³² Instead, the relevant thing to the ethics of influence qua mental characteristics that determine action is not the creation of a deterrent, but informing people about the deterrent. It should be said however, that sustained conditioning through incentives and disincentives may affect a formative influence; if we take away the incentives and disincentives after a while, like scaffolding from a building, they may have helped to form habits and attitudes which make their continued presence unnecessary.

Potential and Actual Influence

Strictly speaking, the ethics of influence would seem to preside over that domain of acts which succeed in making a difference. However, we ought to broaden the scope of our

³² As was the case with Russia's failure to warn the world about its doomsday device (a complex of buried nuclear bombs triggered to automatically explode if Russia were ever attacked) in *Dr Strangelove or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, dir. by Stanley Kubrick (Warner Bros, 1969).

enquiry to capture the ethics of *potential* influence in order to capture those acts which fail to make a difference and yet might have done (such as giving unheeded advice). Consider here an analogy with the ethics of killing. The ethics of killing ought to capture such acts as attempted murder, even though the act does not count as an instance of killing. Proper to that domain, is the ethics of those acts which were intended as killings, whether successful or unsuccessful, and the ethics of acts which might have killed, though they were not intended to do so (as in some cases of gross negligence). Arguably, the ethics of killing ought to capture the ethics of acts which were unintentionally *and* unpredictably, actual acts of killing. Indeed, influence may be intended or unintended on the part of the influencer, and may or may not be recognized on the part of the influenced, but neither of these excludes the possibility of ethical evaluation. Nevertheless, it is *deliberate* attempts at formative influence that we will be concerned with in this inquiry.

The Ethics of Influence, Qua Influence

The Ethics of Influence ought to be regarded as a distinct area within ethics. Concordantly, we should think of coercion, indoctrination, manipulation, misinforming, and lying as being among the stock ethical expressions of this area, while other ethical terms like murder, theft and greed are extraneous to it. True enough, it might be that many unethical acts make a difference to their dispositions, but it is not purely for this reason that they are unethical. Consider the case of an armed robber threatening a till clerk to open the register at a small local grocery store, in order to pay for a holiday. The tiller will almost certainly be traumatised by the experience, and this is an additional wrong to stealing. Furthermore, it would seem that in taking someone's life instantaneously, one does something wrong without tampering with their dispositions.

Why Should We Care About the Ethics of Formative Influence?

Having a considered understanding of and approach to the ethics of formative influence is fundamental to having a considered and consistent approach to ethical schooling and upbringing, amongst other things including (but not limited to) therapy, immigrant assimilation, journalism, offender reform, and advertising standards. Qua activities of formative influence, it is important that we approach these areas with a consistent

understanding of what kinds of influence are and are not ethically acceptable. I want to suggest that the very same obligation to inform can morally compel both the teacher and journalist in those roles, even creating a moral necessity for those roles. Indeed, it is ultimately from ethical obligations and restrictions regarding the communication of information and regarding influence more generally that activities like schooling and their curricula content and aims must be derived. That is to say, such considerations come prior to questions about what the aims of education ought to be or what content ought to feature on curricula. Qua ethically motivated, formatively influential activity, schooling ought to look to an ethics of influence to provide its very *raison d'être*. One derives one's idea of educational activities, indeed, one's concept of education, from one's ethics of influence, for the reason that our institutions ought to fit our rights. Concordantly, in the next two chapters, I explain the *sources* and *content* of responsibilities of influence.

Summary

In this chapter we have introduced and explained our primary question and established what methods I shall use to answer it. Our question was how (if at all) children may ethically be formatively influenced with respect to religions. As we have seen, answering this question will involve separating out a series of sub-questions which will need to be addressed in order to answer the primary question. The relevant questions are:

1. What are the sources of responsibility?
2. What is the content of responsibility?
3. In what respects are we apt to be formatively influenced?
4. What means of formative influence are available?
5. What ethical obligations and restrictions are there on the means by which and the ends towards which we formatively influence children?
6. What is a religion?
7. How rational is religious belief?

Each question will receive consideration in a chapter of its own, and in the order listed above, before, in Chapter 9, my conclusion, I come to summarise my answers to each, and explain what import, taken together, they have for answering our overarching

question. The answers to these may be seen as somewhat modular, and readers may agree or disagree with my answer to each, while still agreeing that answers to each are needed, perhaps substituting this or that answer of mine for a preferred answer of their own, thereby reaching a different conclusion. Four concepts which are crucial to the investigation, namely, ethics, influence, children, and religion, were introduced. Having done this, we went on to say more about what an Ethics of Formative Influence might look like in general terms, asking what the ethics of influence qua influence was, distinguishing between formative and behavioural influence, and explaining why we should consider the topic to be an important one. With this in hand, we can now turn to answering our first sub-question, of how it is that anybody should be responsible to anybody else, or, equivalently, the project of identifying the sources of ethical responsibility.

Chapter Two

THE SOURCES OF PARENTAL AND EXTRA-PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Introduction

I want to know how (if at all) children may be ethically influenced with respect to religions. Any plausible answer to this initial question must enable the identification of specific parties that have responsibilities to children, together with the content of those responsibilities. The alternative is to address an ethical cheque to children with either or both the amount and the patron missing. What is needed is answers to the questions: who (if anyone) has duties to act so as to influence children with respect to religion(s), and who (if anyone) has duties of omission on influencing children with respect to religion(s), and in virtue of what do they have them?¹ In this chapter, after defending both moral objectivity and a proper contextual sensitivity of moral principles, I discuss two foundational questions regarding ethical responsibility:

1. What sorts of things *can we properly* be held morally responsible for at all? (Part of which involves establishing who or what can possibly have ethical claims over us, and part of which involves what sorts of claims can be had.)
2. In virtue of what is it that people have the specific responsibilities that they in fact do?

In answer to the first question, I argue that what we *can be* morally responsible for is our actions and omissions which bear on the wellbeing of intrinsically valuable objects and subjects, such as human beings. Concerning the second, after criticizing the view that the specific moral responsibilities that people have is parasitic on the nature of relationships that they have, I discuss the view that they emerge from, of whether or not they are best person for the (ethical) job. While this answer is plausible, it does not easily accommodate the view that biological parents have a *prima facie* responsibility for their children's wellbeing (for trying to avert harms to them and to ensure their benefit). I then discuss various attempts to say in virtue of what it is that biological

¹ An act is the performance of some particular deed, and its omission is the failure to perform that particular deed. While some particular deeds amount to the omission of other particular deeds (for instance, spending all of July in Australia means not spending any of July in America), this does nothing to harm the distinction between acts and omissions.

parents usually ought to accept responsibility for their children's wellbeing. These include principles of fairness, ownership, naturalness, being best equipped, and, finally, whether responsibility for the wellbeing of children being occasioned by biological parentage makes for a plausible moral axiom. I conclude that the principle of being the best person for the (ethical) job, can, in fact, accommodate the view that biological parents are usually morally responsible for their children's wellbeing. I argue that the principle of 'the best person for the ethical job' is able to ground both parental, and what I shall call extra-parental, responsibility to children. Before summarising, I consider some problematic cases for the thesis of the primacy of biological parental responsibility for children's wellbeing. I shall address the content of parental and extra-parental responsibilities in the next chapter.

Moral Objectivity and Context Sensitivity

I want to defend the claim that value judgements may be right or wrong irrespective of what anyone happens to judge valuable. We act as if things were valuable; we refrain from acting in ways that damage those things which we take to be valuable, and we act in ways which advance and preserve those things which we think are most valuable. We act as if beholden to perceived obligations, and refrain from acting in ways that seem to us impermissible; we act in spite of what we might prefer to do, for instance. It seems, furthermore, that we cannot jettison our evaluations entirely, or take ourselves to always merely 'project' value rather than recognize it. While it might be *psychologically* hard or even impossible to switch all of our values at random, I want to suggest that it is not a *logical* possibility to think that it would be *all right* to simply change our judgements randomly (in a hypothetical, random attitudinal-amendment machine, say), or to undo all of our judgements and have none. This is because, to think that, would already mean that they were not really our judgements *at all*. To make sense of a sincere civil rights advocate being willing to undergo the risk of becoming a racist, say, there would need to be some other sincerely held value that would be well served by entering the machine. Similarly, to think that all of our judgements merely reflect arbitrary preferences would be to have already abandoned them. It seems that we cannot step outside of our values. In having values, we are committed to our value judgements being right or wrong irrespective of what we happen to think, otherwise we would already be judging the objects that we value to be worthless. That said, we will likely

find that our values can be made to form a more coherent whole than they do, by amending them in light of one another. Indeed, this process of mutual amendment (or reflective equilibrium) seems to be the best method for developing one's ethical view (see the Methods section in Chapter 1).

While I readily acknowledge that value judgements have varied across time and place, and between cultures and individuals (amongst other things), I deny that whether or not these judgements were correct has been determined by any of these facts.² At the same time, I also acknowledge that judgements can be properly sensitive to contextual features. In understanding how both things can be so, we do well to contrast primary and secondary moral entitlements, with the latter emerging from the former. We may say that all morally significant beings have primary moral entitlements to life and liberty no matter who they are, or where or when or to whom they were born, but that there are some secondary moral entitlements that emerge from these primary moral entitlements which do vary between contexts. While nobody could plausibly have had a right to brain surgery in prehistoric times, since there was no such thing, they might more plausibly have had a claim to be looked after as well as possible (without thereby sacrificing anything else of equal moral importance). The secondary entitlement of a right to brain surgery emerges from the primary only in contexts in which brain surgery is (amongst other things) a reliable option.³ I offer these remarks only by way of showing the compatibility of moral objectivity and contextual sensitivity. Here, then, I allow that context sensitivity is compatible with moral objectivism. Misunderstood, the contextual sensitivity of objective and universal moral principles can sometimes generate bad questions about what is appropriate to certain contexts.

² Indeed, one may resist the argument that differences of value go as deep as it is sometimes claimed: superficial differences of value are explained as emerging from applying shared values across time to different contexts. It is doubtful that this line of argument completely exhausts all differences of value, but it certainly mitigates it somewhat.

³ Some may say that there were no rights in pre-historic times, and certainly there were no legal rights, no United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, or European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights. Indeed, laws are a social construct, but one may argue that there is a moral reality of rights, that laws can reflect, or fail to reflect. Some argue that morality itself is a social contract (notably, Hobbes, and Rousseau), but it seems that immoral contracts can be created. What I mean to contend is that in drawing up a contract which defines the good, the right and the just, some evaluative judgements have to be presupposed to justify those procedures, and indeed the fact that immoral contracts can be drawn; this shows that morality cannot just be defined into existence by contracts themselves. Indeed, a breach of contract (where one can get away with it, without damage to their reputation) cannot be written into the contract as bad thing without circularity, since it is presupposed by the very existence of contracts.

It is common to ask what kind of education is appropriate in liberal democracies.⁴ However, it seems bizarre to ask what kind of education is appropriate in an illiberal theocracy, or in a totalitarian state. One might more reasonably ask how an ethical education might be possible in the context of such an unjust state. However, one does not ask what kind of education was appropriate to children in Nazi-Germany, as if the official views of the country somehow made it all right to teach children the things that it did, and in the way that it did.⁵ One might argue that a liberal democracy is the only morally acceptable form of government, and then ask what forms of education are morally demanded within it. It might be that a moral kind of education prepares children to live in and be supportive of what is the best kind of government, morally speaking. Indeed, the factual circumstances about the kind of society we do happen to live in, do, to some extent, determine the sort of education that children should have; a moral education in Nazi-Germany and present day Ireland will both involve forcefully criticizing anti-Semitism, but it will likely only permit secrecy in Nazi-Germany.⁶ The context of Nazi-Germany created a moral compulsion for a secretive, politically subversive education; a context of liberal democracy might more likely create the moral compulsion for a more politically allegiant education. Deep political questions exist about how society ought, ideally, to be organized, about whether states ought to exist, for instance (Anarchists do not believe this). I do not want to presuppose or defend any answers here, and the forgoing remarks are merely intended to be illustrative. While I will defend the notion of extra-parental responsibilities to children from the wider community, this need not be thought of as presupposing or requiring the existence of a state. That said, in the present Irish context, for instance, it will not be alien to regard existing state infrastructure such as taxation, and government funding as the natural means to satisfy extra-parental responsibilities (i.e. satisfying those ethical entitlements that reach beyond parents' responsibilities).

⁴ *Commitment, Character and Citizenship* is one book already encountered, in Chapter 1, footnote 2, which sets that as its central question.

⁵ It is worth bearing in mind various education-for-justice initiatives take themselves to exist in unjust conditions, and deliberate on how they might hope to raise consciousness, and change the conditions within which they operate.

⁶ It would be singularly inappropriate to reproach the White Rose group for the anonymity of their anti-Nazi graffiti and pamphleteering, since six were (as they could reasonably expect) beheaded for treason when they were apprehended.

By Whom, to Whom, and in Virtue of What are Ethical Duties Owed?

Children plausibly have different ethical claims to particular acts and omissions over people corresponding to the different relationships they have to them. For instance, they seem to be owed special kinds of care (unique profiles of act obligations) by their parents, teachers, and doctors; we commonly think of parents as having special duties to their own children, rather than to other people's children, for instance. While we might regard all people as having duties not to harm children (duties of omission), it seems that parents have a lion's share of duties to promote their own children's wellbeing (duties to act). One's ethics of influence might demand of everyone that we do no harm where we attempt to influence other people's children without demanding any attempt to influence other people's children, or to forbear from doing so. On these views, what obligations of acts and omissions we have to children (and indeed to adults) turns on the character of our relationships to them. However, to assert that some relationships are special requires an account of how and why they are ethically special, how it is that they entail different ethical obligations (if they are not to be merely prejudicial). While we may be quite happy with the notion that one has special obligations to family and friends, this notion becomes darker when we speak about special obligations to countrymen, or to members of our sex, gender, class, race, or species, just in virtue of our belonging to the same categories.

Independent of the notion of special relationships is the plausible principle articulated by Peter Singer that "if it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it."⁷ Notice that this principle does not turn on the nature of relationships. Whoever we are, we ought to prevent what harm we can from coming to others, whoever they are to us ("without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance," that is).⁸ It is to argue that we have *act obligations* to ensure basic benefits for others; friends, family, countrymen, and distant strangers alike.⁹ Brighthouse and

⁷ Singer, 'Famine, Affluence, and Morality,' p. 229.

⁸ In 'Persons, Character, and Morality,' in *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 1981), Bernard Williams argues powerfully that bracketing motivations caused by our special relationships can seem pathological, and require 'one thought too many of us': as when I save my wife instead of a stranger, where there is nothing else to choose between them for both reasons, when it seems that I should just save my wife because she is my wife, without thinking any further.

⁹ In fact, the idea is not as circumscribed as this. To say we ought to act to prevent bad things from happening is not yet to specify what counts as a bad thing. So it might be that we have moral reason to prevent bad things from befalling non-human animals, plant life, human artefacts, and so on, not because

McAvoy suggest that while “it is good for a child to have music lessons,” “providing them might take away money being spent on a parent’s education towards a more fulfilling career.”¹⁰ Here, an appeal is made to comparable moral worth. However, an appeal might have been made to basic goods; music lessons are not a basic good, the absence of which constitutes a form of harm.¹¹

I take it that coming to harm is a bad thing, although more substance must, and, in the next chapter, will, be given to this rather bare conception. On Singer’s principle, we owe the prevention of harm to others whoever they are, and so owe them action, rather than just omissions of action such as not harming them. But why should we accept Singer’s principle?

An Argument for Singer’s Principle

When we have a principle which is conceived of as a source of explanation, it need not be amenable to explanation itself; it may be ethically basic. What can give it some rational credulity for the sceptical is its use in explaining other things which they are already ethically committed to. What then, can Singer’s principle explain to lend it credibility if it is to be conceived of as ethically basic? I think that Singer’s principle can explain both the intuitive appeal of the Problem of Evil, and the appeal of apologists’ best responses to it. The problem challenges theists, by asking why it is that such suffering persists, if God is able to prevent it, knows about it, and is morally good. Here, the suppressed premise seems to be that knowledge of suffering, in addition to the power to end it, gives one the moral responsibility to do so, one which a morally good being would act on. This requires no special relation of God to those who suffer, but only to his power and knowledge, that, if he is good, he will use to end suffering. This looks like an application of Singer’s aforementioned principle. And indeed, the apologist’s usual responses that 1) suffering is a consequence of allowing free will, and 2) suffering allows for moral growth, both draw on Singer’s qualification of not

of their import for human animals, but for their own sake. Cf Scott A. Davison, *On the Intrinsic Value of Everything* (London: Continuum, 2012).

¹⁰ Harry Brighouse and Paula McAvoy, ‘Do Children Have Any Rights?’ in *The Philosophy of Education: An Introduction* ed. by Richard Bailey (London: Continuum, 2010).

¹¹ Some might suggest that harm consists, to some extent, in the loss of goods, so that if one already enjoys music lessons, to lose them would constitute harm, while not being given music lessons in the first place would not count as a harm. On the other hand, this same analysis could not plausibly to starvation and nourishment.

“thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance.”¹² One might say that, being our creator, God would have a special reason to relieve our suffering, but that relationship is not mentioned as part of the traditional problem, and there is no suggestion that, were God not our creator, he would be relieved of any onus to relieve innocent suffering. We have said something about the source of responsibility, about who can be responsible and in virtue of what, but what can they be responsible for?

Objects of Responsibility

What *can* we be responsible for? Talk of our responsibility for our actions and their consequences, together with responsibility for our omissions and the absence of desired consequences, are familiar; for instance, for my walking over the flower bed, and for so walking having damaged the flowers, or for my failure to water the flowers, and for the flowers not being kept alive. Also familiar is talk of responsibility for the completion of tasks, and for the condition of things and people; for instance, for (the task of) watering the flowers, and for the flowers’ (condition of) being alive. These are all connected, but are not identical. I could have done all that I could to keep something in a good state and yet have failed to have kept it in that state, and have to answer for how it is. On the other hand, I could be responsible, not for the state of plant, but for doing certain things to the plant: for feeding, and watering it, but not for what state it is in per se. While it is what outcomes *actually obtain* that is good or bad for us, it is for the outcomes we intend, and risk, that we are culpable in acting. In saying this, I have committed myself to denying that we can be responsible for the state of things independently of our actions, and omissions. But it is through the relations of our actions and omissions to the wellbeing of intrinsically valuable objects that they become morally significant (I use the word ‘objects’ broadly enough to include human beings, as in, ‘the object of one’s affections’).

What things and people are we responsible for the wellbeing of (in as much as our actions and omissions can ensure it)? Put differently, what things are we morally

¹² These have been advocated by Alvin Plantinga, in *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989) and by Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume One, ed. by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. by Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co. 1885).

required to keep bad things from befalling? It must be a bearer of intrinsic value,¹³ and have scope for harm and benefit. Nobody can be responsible for something that does not matter. Nor can anyone be morally responsible for something immutable. Since no harm or benefit can come to immutable objects, there is nothing that one can ensure and therefore nothing that one can be responsible for ensuring. Arguably, nobody can be responsible for self-sufficient things (for instance, people able to care for themselves but unwilling). However, one may reasonably doubt that anyone can be self-sufficient and yet still come to harm; perhaps a necessary condition for self-sufficiency is that it ensures its own wellbeing. We say that in order to merit responsibility from outside, a thing needs to be at least both vulnerable (not immutable), and unable to secure its wellbeing (not self-sufficient). Some may say further that those able but unwilling to secure their own wellbeing merit responsibility (thinking of those on suicide watch, or with self-destructive tendencies).

What Is It to Do a Moral Wrong?

There seem to be two different kinds of wrong for which we can be blamed, namely acts (such as harming) on the one hand and omissions (such as allowing harms and failing to ensure basic goods) on the other.¹⁴ While an act can *cause* harm, an omission is not a cause of anything.¹⁵ However, a failure to cause something can thereby allow some harm or fail to procure some basic benefit, without playing a causal role; for instance, failing to feed one's child allows them to starve (a clear case of coming to harm). Locking one's child in a broom cupboard without human contact is wrong because it allows the child not to develop in ordinary and desirable ways (such as by

¹³ I do not have an account of what it is that distinguishes something as being an intrinsic value bearer. I need only to be allowed that children count as bearers of intrinsic value. Jeremy Bentham has insisted that being of moral value requires sentience (or a capacity to endure pain), Scott A. Davison has argued that every concrete object is of intrinsic value. It seems to me that having benefit/ harm profile is a necessary condition of being of moral worth, but not a sufficient condition, further more something immutable might be of intrinsic value, but not moral significance - since it cannot be harmed or benefitted.

¹⁴ I speak of failure to ensure basic goods, rather than failure to ensure goods *tout court*, since ensuring some goods, such as exotic holidays are surely supererogatory. A basic good might be that of proper nourishment, the negation of which would constitute a form of harm; that of being malnourished.

¹⁵ There is lively debate in metaphysics as to whether we bring about states of affairs through omissions. However, Helen Beebe has argued convincingly that there is "no need to think of [for instance] Godzilla's lack of impingement [in our world] as a kind of causation." My not feeding a plant doesn't cause it to die, even though my feeding it causes it not to die. But this in no wise means I was not morally culpable for allowing the plant to die. Helen Beebe 'Causing and Nothingness,' in *Causation and Counterfactuals* ed. by L. A. Paul, E. J. Hall & J. Collins (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), pp. 291-308.

becoming verbal, active and sociable, which are basic goods), that is, it constitutes certain omissions. Furthermore, it also causes them to have a torturous existence quite apart from what is being missed out on (not only does their lacking basic goods constitute a bad thing, but what is present to them is bad also).

Things are a little more complex than this, though: intentions, risks and outcomes are also important. For the moment, I shall talk of causing harm, and leave the matter of allowing harms, and failing to procure basic goods, to one side. We can distinguish the following: someone's intending to do harm (whether or not their act makes harm likely, and whether or not it causes harm), someone's acting in such a way that doing harm is likely (whether or not they intend to do harm, or realize that harm is being risked), and someone's actually causing harm (even if they hadn't intended to, or even done something that significantly risked causing harm). It seems that too much of an emphasis on actual outcomes obliterates the importance of the nature of our actions, and their underlying intentions, since whether or not we acted well comes down to how things may (even freakishly) turn out. I want to emphasize risk and intention, rather than outcome.¹⁶ So, more accurately, we do wrong when:

1. we *intend* to frustrate goods or bring harm
2. we *fail to intend* to bring basic goods
3. when we *risk* frustrating goods or bringing harm,
 - 3.1. unknowingly, but negligently
 - 3.2. knowingly and irregardless.

We do wrong even if (through luck) no harm comes. Stipulation 3.2 captures the following scenario: I might greedily eat all of the food that my family has, and not feed my children because I enjoy gorging myself. In doing so, I did not intend for my family to come to harm even though I knew that they would; rather, their coming to harm was a bi-product of my intended outcome. Even still, my action seems no less wrong for that. Here, my action of eating all of the food was in part a knowing forbearance to feed my children, and that omission to feed my children and grant them a basic good is a

¹⁶ See Thomas Nagel, 'Moral Luck', in *Mortal Questions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), and Bernard Williams, 'Moral Luck', in *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) for a critique of this view.

wrongful aspect of both my intentions and actions. While it is what outcomes *actually obtain* for us that are good or bad for us, it is for what outcomes we intend, and for what outcomes we risk, that we are culpable for. The next stage of our enquiry is to establish in virtue of what it is that people are responsible for averting harms and ensuring benefits for anything in particular.

Who is Responsible for What Actions Pertaining to Whose Wellbeing, and in Virtue of What are they so Responsible?

We know what sorts of things we *could possibly be* responsible for (at least for our actions and omissions which bear on the wellbeing of vulnerable, value-bearers that are not self-sufficient), but how do we know what things (if any) we *are in fact* responsible for? It is certainly an interesting question as to how one acquires responsibility for a child's development (and for other forms of influential practices, such as providing public information, immigrant assimilation, and offender reform). Indeed, it is an interesting question as to how one comes to have *any* moral responsibilities at all, whether, for instance, they are always or ever a matter of choice. In the next section, I shall argue that the responsibilities arise from being the best person for the moral job. However, first, I want to argue that moral responsibilities do not arise from roles, as is often thought.

We might say that a little league coach should attend all of their team's training sessions, and that if they were unable to, then they ought not to be in that role. Indeed, we expect doctors to be good qua doctors and everyone else to be good in their role, but why have these roles and the duties that come with them in the first place? It seems that one takes on a responsibility distinctive of a role through a choice, and that one can opt out of that role (the first half may often be true in becoming a biological parent, though not always). Plausibly, however, the primary functions of roles address the vulnerabilities of value-bearers that create an ethical demand for those roles in the first place, vulnerabilities which place ethical demands on members of societies to fill the roles. Indeed, in the case of one's role being a bad one, we should hope that its occupier sabotages their purpose as best they can; concordantly, Oskar Schindler is (rightly) admired for being a terrible munitions manufacturer for the German army during the Second World War. Bernard Williams points out that some people's successes in their roles are precisely moral failings, even by their own lights:

It is said of certain German Generals who during the war were appalled by Hitler's policies that they were for a long time inhibited from setting to work against him by considerations of the oath they had taken, as officers of the Wehrmacht, to obey him. Let's suppose obedience to the oath could be established as certainly part of one's duties as a German Officer; then what the Generals needed was to form the conception of things they had to do which were contrary to what they were supposed to do as German Officers; that is to say, it was no longer under the title, and in the role, of German Officer that they had to act. And this was a conception, which it seems, some of them found very difficult to form.¹⁷

Some have suggested that the relationship that teachers have to students makes certain demands of them.¹⁸ However, I do not think that it will do to start by explaining the nature of a relationship, and then proceeding to explain what responsibilities flow from that relationship. This is because what are understood to be the responsibilities are constitutive of the relationship. For instance, it would be absurd to suppose that just because someone was in a role they ought then to satisfy it. Rather, it is because they ought to assume a role that they ought to satisfy its duties. Indeed, we can think of cases where those playing a certain role in a relationship have no responsibility to stay in it, because there was no need for the role in the first place; think of a subordinate younger sister waiting hand and foot on her lazy slob of an older brother; the fact that they have such a relationship implies no duty to sustain the role.

There are many diverse kinds of relationships: husband-wife, parent-children, grandparent-grandchildren, godparents-godchildren, neighbours (in the sense of people living nearby), doctors-patients, and so on. Some of these relationships feature saliently in responsibilities that we expect people to fulfil with respect to one another, other relationships do not feature so prominently ('lives two doors down from', for instance or 'wears the same colour hat as'). Some of these roles are more obviously social constructs than others, and the question is whether the roles have any moral basis for

¹⁷ Bernard Williams, *Morality* (Cambridge: Canto, 1993), pp. 51-2.

¹⁸ D.E. Cooper, 'Teaching and Truthfulness,' *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 27 (2-3) (2008), pp. 79-87.

the creation of the institutions in which they exist in the first place.¹⁹ I want to ask about a stage, logically prior to actual existing arrangements, which has to do with what arrangements should be brought into existence, that is to say, asking about whether the ethics of influence ought to have implications for upbringing and schooling, and not vice versa. In the next section, I consider the answer that the best person for the ethical job is responsible for making sure that it is done, a view which, I shall argue, has considerable plausibility.

The Best Person for the Job

It seems reasonable to leave tasks to those best placed and equipped to perform them, where they need to be performed (the best person for the job, as I will call them). So the individual nearest to the elderly person that fell over ought to help them up, and where they cannot provide sufficient care to them, to call out for someone that can (again, the nearest person whose powers will suffice). This is an onus that they cannot abdicate, but which falls simultaneously on the next best person if they drop the 'moral baton', so that in not bothering to help up the elderly person, the most able person thereby puts the next most able person under an obligation to take up the slack, without excusing themselves. Here, we have two rival goods to weigh up in the service of expedience, namely, proximity and competence. We often hear of people in need of complex surgery being flown to distant hospitals which specialise in such treatment (a case from 2012 is that of Nobel Laureate, Malala Yousafzai, who, as a young girl, was shot in the head by a Taliban gunman, being flown to Birmingham, England for specialist treatment). There is a balance of immediacy and competency to be weighed up, since someone may be nearest by but least competent, or furthest away but most competent. There will be gradations in between, and, indeed, those most competent to a task may be equipped well above the level of expertise required for a task for it to be done sufficiently well. We may distinguish between ability and opportunity (more on this distinction in Chapter 3), and we may say that modern day doctors would be best able to look after the needs of ancient peoples in ill health, but have no opportunity to do so, being separated by the ages. Needs here (and throughout) are to be understood as basic

¹⁹ It is reasonable to say that they are created because people are a) not able to meet their own needs and responsibilities unassisted and b) unable or unwilling to respect other people's needs unpressured, or at all.

goods of vulnerable, value-bearers. The thought here is that being best able to do something together with having the opportunity to do it (through some combination of proximity, liberty, expertise, equipment and availability) is what obliges someone to meet needs.²⁰ We might also add another clause: that of knowing about the need to be satisfied. It seems unreasonable to blame anyone for failing to help out in a disaster that they had no way of knowing to have been occurring.

It is possible to cultivate expertise, and obtain equipment (and, indeed, we can advance expertise and develop equipment). It is interesting as to whose job it should be to step up and fill the required expert roles (those roles dictated by needs). On the one hand, it is not as though it is alright for everyone to do just whatever they want (thus societies do well to reward those jobs most needed so that people are more inclined to take on those roles). On the other hand, it is not as though it is alright for society to allocate the needed places and then draft people into those roles. This undermines the plausible principle that people ought to have an open future.²¹ Perhaps drafting teachers and doctors should be done if the need for them desperately outweighed their supply, in spite of inducements. Indeed, it is often (falsely) attributed to Aristotle that one's vocation is the overlap between one's talents and society's needs (some versions have it that it is the overlap between one's talents and the world's needs). A vocation here is thought of as being how one could most valuably employ one's abilities in a career (which would hopefully be highly rewarding), whereas we want to know whether some people might have a duty to become certain types of professionals, or for certain professions to be created. This difference aside, it is a plausible enough starting point to consider that one may have an obligation to satisfy those roles at which our talents and society's need intersect. Before going on to look at parent-child relationships, I want to defend my conception of ethics against a certain Kantian objection.

The Very Idea of Imperfect Obligations

I have argued that any ethics of influence must identify specific parties that have responsibilities to other specific parties, together with the content of those

²⁰ The reference to 'availability', harks back to Singer's principle: "if it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it," since it seems that one cannot neglect to help simply because one would prefer not to; one needs to have been doing something at least as morally important which was incompatible.

²¹ One thinks also of coercion, and inducement, and of brainwashing as morally dubious means of getting people to assume certain roles cf. Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (London: Macmillan, 1974), p. 23.

responsibilities. I claimed that the alternative was to address an ethical cheque to children with either the amount or the patron missing. But this claim of mine is something that Kantians, such as Onora O'Neill, are concerned to deny. Following Immanuel Kant, Onora O'Neill distinguishes between perfect and imperfect obligations, perfect obligations having set benefactors, and imperfect obligations having unset benefactors. A set beneficiary is a specific person who is due a benefit from a specific benefactor. Where the beneficiary is unset, there is no specific person who is due a benefit. But "so long as recipients of the obligation are neither all others or specified others, there are no rights holders and nobody can either claim or waive performance of any right."²² However, I cannot even make sense of owing something to nobody in particular. If I ever owe anything to anybody, it must be in virtue of their qualifying for the benefit somehow. But this seems to make it a perfect obligation. I may not owe you something in all circumstances, but I may owe it you in some particular circumstances: I don't owe the time the train leaves at (if I know it) to everybody or anyone in particular, but I owe it to people who ask. If you ask, and I refuse to tell, you can object that I breached your right to know. We will now explore how these considerations might help us with deciding how (if at all) parents are responsible for their children's wellbeing. Having defended my conception of ethics against a Kantian objection, we can go on to look at the import of my account for parent-child relationships.

The Nature of Parent-Child Relationships

"Really," my dad said. "I wouldn't bullshit you about this. If you were more trouble than you're worth, we'd just toss you out on the streets."

"We're not sentimental people," Mom added, deadpan. "We'd leave you at an orphanage with a note pinned to your pajamas."²³

These comments are made in jest, and are funny. The suggestion that attachment to one's child is mere sentiment that ought to be trumped by a negative return on a cost/benefit analysis is laughably absurd.²⁴ Indeed, it is almost universally held that a

²² Onora O'Neill, 'Children's Rights and Children's Lives,' *Ethics* 98(3) (1988), pp. 445-463, 448.

²³ John Green, *The Fault in Our Stars* (London: Penguin, 2012), p. 166.

²⁴ But to laugh, it seems is to evince one's position, without making an argument. Certainly the joke has some persuasive force, but it is not rational. It may be regarded as an intuition pump which shows up one's feelings.

child's biological parents should, where possible,²⁵ assume primary responsibility for their child's upbringing. The emotionally charged word 'abandonment' is used where parents give their children up for adoption, for instance (though it should be noted that many young mothers have been coerced into giving their children up for adoption, or do so for their child to have a better life), and the word 'neglect' is used where parents fail to invest time, energy and consideration into their child's upbringing. There is a powerful scene in the film *There Will Be Blood*, which illustrates this.²⁶ There, the protagonist, Daniel Plainview, is brought to confess in an outburst of emotion in front of a Baptist congregation that "I've abandoned my child! I've abandoned my child! I've abandoned my boy!"

Biological parent-child relationships are not defined by proximity and expertise (although it is often thought that parent-child relationships ethically demand proximity and the cultivation of some expertise, among other things).²⁷ Indeed, there are many things which we call needs that we do not think that all parents would even be capable of meeting; medical needs being the most obvious example. We might further suggest that children can have educational needs which outstrip what most parents can provide (especially parents working in non-educational contexts), and thus have to outsource the satisfaction of some of their child's educational needs to others.

Proximity and ability would be relevant considerations for relieving parents of their parenting commitments, but it seems that parenting's own commitments come from a source other than ability and proximity.

²⁵ Few other responsibilities could trump their responsibility for bringing their child up. One recalls Jean Paul Sartre's example of a young man who had the choice "of going to England to join the Free French Forces – which would mean abandoning his mother – or remaining by her side to help her go on with her [difficult] life," Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism* (London: Methuen, 1973), p. 35. This decision can be paralleled with that of many fathers (and fewer mothers) that have gone to war, or pursued other projects which took them away from their children.

²⁶ *There Will Be Blood*, dir. by Paul Thomas Anderson (Paramount/ Miramax/ Ghouardi, 2007).

²⁷ In fact, saying 'biological parenthood' is ambiguous between two or perhaps three senses, as shall explain now. These sense in which I meant it is: genetic parentage. There are disputes over the proper definition of motherhood, where that means who should be presumed in the first instance (sans defeaters, such as severe mental illness) to be female guardian, (or female primary carer, or parent) to bring up the child. The possible definitions are genetic, contractual (or 'intent' based), and gestational. The complexity emerges where a 'traditional surrogate' agrees to be both genetic and gestational mother to a child, but to give them up to another woman to raise the child (the contractual mother). On the contractual (or intent) definition, the surrogate cannot renege on the contract. On the gestational definition, the child would be supposed to be that of whoever carries and births the child. On the genetic definition, the child would be supposed to be that of whoever's DNA it is that they share. It seems that where the concept of a biological mother comes apart, we should simply say that children can have two biological mothers: namely a gestational and a genetic mother. See Andrea Mulligan, 'Surrogacy in the Courts: The definition of Motherhood', <<http://humanrights.ie/children-and-the-law/surrogacy-in-the-courts-the-definition-of-motherhood/>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

One might use the writing of Bernard Williams to resist the idea that the responsibilities of parenthood are derivative of any universal ethical principle. One might draw especially on Bernard Williams' paper 'Persons, Character and Morality' in which he characterizes the person who saves the life of his wife over that of a stranger for the reason that "it was his wife and in situations of this kind it is permissible to save one's wife," as having had "one thought too many." It might have been hoped "for instance, by his wife" that he had saved her *just because* she was his wife.²⁸ Williams argues that most people have reasons to live in the form of projects which they aspire to undertake, and that these can be intimately related to close, preferential relationships with other people. Where we must give up on these in favour of impersonal requirements of what he calls the morality system, we thereby lose what are our interests in living and "generally one shouldn't take advice if, were one to take it, one would have no reason to go on living."²⁹ However, this is no explanation of a responsibility, but an argument for a 'free pass' on some moral responsibilities. The natural worry about such an approach is that it ultimately amounts to nihilism, with our only having those responsibilities we like, and our not *really* having those anyway.

The Source of Parental Responsibility

In virtue of what is it that a biological parent has a specific set of act obligations to their child? There are various principles in virtue of which people potentially ought to accept responsibility for their biological children's wellbeing, which we shall now assess. These include principles of fairness, ownership, naturalness, and being best equipped. I will ultimately defend an argument from them being best equipped to them having a specific set of act obligations. First though, perhaps responsibility for the wellbeing of children being occasioned by biological parentage makes for a plausible moral axiom, just as Singer's principle seems morally axiomatic.

Moral Axiomaticity

A responsibility to act as guardian might be thought to arise from biological parentage axiomatically, just as being best able to satisfy some need might be taken to be an

²⁸ Bernard Williams, 'Persons, Character and Morality' in *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 1- 19, 18.

²⁹ Elijah Millgram 'D'où Venons-Vous, Que Sommes Nous, Où Allons-Nous?' *Reading Bernard Williams*, ed. by Daniel Callcut (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 141-165, p. 144.

axiom of moral responsibility. If it is, then there may come times when rival parties have the same moral responsibilities, and one will need to trump the other, or else they will need to share the responsibility somehow. In the case of parenting, we want to say that the initial responsibility goes to the parent over the best equipped; indeed, if it did not, then there would hardly be room for special responsibility of biological parenthood at all. If we cannot find another principle in which it is rooted, then we may have to admit this.

It would seem wrong for anyone to take a child away from a biological parent, other things being equal. Indeed, it would often seem wrong for someone to take the child away from a biological parent, other things being unequal; wealth or social status, for instance.³⁰ There is a strong presumption that the person or people that a new born child would 'go home with', so to speak, from a maternity ward, is the mother, or mother and father, in the first instance. One consideration is the wellbeing of the biological parent; whether or not they want to be a parent, and if they do, it would seem cruel to the parent to take them away. This suggests that parents have some rights of parenthood that can be distinguished from responsibilities of parenthood. Suppose it made no odds to the child's wellbeing whether they stayed with the parent or not, it would seem odd, other things being equal, to say that there was no valance in the parent's favour that their child should stay with them.

Fairness

It might be thought unfair for anyone to take on responsibility for a child that they did not create. It is least unfair that parents raise their own children. Here, then, one would expect that where a parent were keen, but moderately less able to parent their child than another person who was also keen to raise them, that they ought to leave the parenting to that person. However, this consequence also seems too counterintuitive. Furthermore, it seems that this case overlooks the wellbeing of the child in the first instance, instead looking to keep people free of unbidden responsibilities. However, it seems in the very nature of responsibility that it comes unbidden. This is nicely expressed by an exchange

³⁰ In *Gone Baby Gone*, dir.by Ben Affleck (LivePlanet, Miramax, Ladd Company, 2007), protagonist, Patrick Kenzie, is forced to choose between allowing a child to live with her wealthy, middle class kidnappers, and her poor, 'white trash,' former drug using, uncouth, single mother. One thought that motivates him is that not only 'other things being equal,' is it better to be with one's biological parents, but other things being unequal, it usually is too.

from Peter Jackson's adaptation of JRR Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring*, when Frodo confides in Gandalf, his mentor that he wishes he had never come to have the responsibility of destroying an evil, magical ring:

Frodo: I wish the ring had never come to me. I wish none of this had happened.

Gandalf: So do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us.³¹

Ownership

The parent-child relationship has sometimes been characterised as one of ownership, where parents are entitled to sell their children, or use them as any other piece of property. It is perhaps in virtue of one's having in some sense *made* one's children that one might be thought to own them. It has been thought the case that one cannot properly be held accountable for how one treats one's own property. While it might be foolish to destroy or harm one's own property, one cannot be morally blamed for it.³² But this result is hugely counterintuitive. Indeed, on this model parents would not be responsible for their child's welfare at all. This is to construe childhood as a form of slavery. One might urge that this is a false consequence of ownership. Modern UK and Irish law regards pet owners as being responsible for their pets' welfare, while still being their owners. So too might one urge that this is true of slavery. However, there would seem to be something terribly wrong not only with whipping, raping and murdering slaves, but with owning people in the first place. One wonders why adulthood should release one from slavery, or whether one would remain the property of their parents until they both passed away, and whether they could transfer ownership before passing away. One might resist the notion of property altogether, and urge along Marxist lines that all property is theft. Alternatively, we might allow for the possibility of ownership and try to draw a distinction to separate those things which may be owned

³¹ *The Lord of The Rings: Fellowship of the Ring*, dir. by Peter Jackson (New Line Cinema, 2001), the remarks look different to those in the original text: "I wish it need not have happened in my time." "So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us, Tolkien, John Ronald Reuel, *The Fellowship of the Ring: Being the First Part of The Lord of the Rings* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012), p. 50.

³² This too is still somewhat contentious, and indeed someone might resist the notion that we do not have any responsibilities to our property. Perhaps ownership might be limited by some moral norms: for instance, it would not be alright to burn a beautiful painting for the sake of it, just because we owned it.

from those that may not. This is not easy to do. It is very tempting to suggest that the capacity for self-determination makes one's ownership unethical, but sleeping people do not have it, nor do people in comas, nor perhaps some severely disabled people. We might say then that the capacity for self-determination is a sufficient but not a necessary condition for why one should not be owned. Notice that many non-human animals ought not to come under our ownership either, under this definition, since they too are self-determining.

Naturalness

Another *raison d'être* for parents being responsible for their children is that it is in some sense, *natural*. The Irish constitution is written with this in mind.³³ Presumably, not to allow this would be a perversion of nature, of how things would go in a state of nature, or without interference. But it does happen in nature, to the extent that we can understand the expression 'in nature'. Moreover, it seems that we can distinguish between what is natural, and what is morally acceptable. It seems that vindictiveness, jealousy and blood feuds are perfectly natural, but certainly not morally acceptable.

Having discussed the prospects of parental responsibility being understood as morally axiomatic, and as a consequence of more basic principles of fairness, ownership, naturalness, I will now defend an argument from them being best equipped to them having a specific set of act obligations.

Best Placed

It might be urged that it really is their ability to be best able to care for their children that makes biological parents responsible for their child. Parents usually love their children and want to do what is best for them; their desires overlap with what they think is in their children's best interests (including satisfying their perceived needs, and keeping them from coming to perceived harm). It may be argued that this motivational drive makes parents the best equipped to nurture their children, or at least counts in favour of their being so considered. Kleinig and Hobson both argue for this conclusion:

³³ The State acknowledges that the primary and natural educator of the child is the Family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children. (Article 42, 1).

There is some reason to think that the developmental needs of children are likely to be met most successfully in an environment in which primary responsibility, and the authority that is derivative of that, lies with the parents. There are grounds *for* believing that parents, more than anyone else, will have the kind of commitment to their offspring that will safeguard and promote their welfare interests.³⁴

Parents should be the prime agents in their children's upbringing, other things being equal, because they are the ones most likely to best promote the welfare of their children. It is the parents who have the most direct interest in their children's welfare and the parent-child bonds of affection are more likely to ensure the continuous care and attention needed, even under the most difficult of circumstances. It is generally agreed by psychologists that the developing child benefits greatly from the intimate relationship with its parents and the sense of belonging and being loved that is normally present.³⁵

It may be objected that what parents think is in their children's best interests may not be. Jehovah's Witnesses having refused to let their children to have blood transfusions in life-threatening situations, arguably, demonstrates this. So too does the practice of female genital mutilation. It seems that there are reasonable expectations of a good upbringing, connected with proper development that parents should be held accountable for, and not just any earnest upbringing will do. Indeed, both Kleinig and Hobson acknowledge this. It seems to be their contention then, that those who are in the best position to raise children have the responsibility to do so, and that (usually) that is their biological parents because (usually) their parents love them. If this works, then they will have placed the allocation of upbringing responsibilities within the context of the 'best person for the job' principle.

This argument really only establishes that it is biological parents who *love* their children, who have a responsibility to them bring them up. This can seem strange in that a parent who chose to have a child, and then frivolously decided that they did not want to bring them up, had not broken some duty. Here, what would be wrong is the frivolity of the decision to have a child, rather than their giving up their child. Indeed, there is something worrisome about a biological parent who are parents out of a sense of responsibility alone, and not out of a sense of affection, and concern. Consider an emotionally indifferent parent, or indeed a parent who did not like children, or their child in particular, one who perhaps resented being responsible for them. It is hard to

³⁴ John Kleinig, *Paternalism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), p. 145.

³⁵ Peter Hobson, 'Some Reflections on Parents' Rights in the Upbringing of Their Children,' *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 18(1) (1984), pp. 63-74, 64.

imagine such a person actually raising a healthy and happy child. It might be a rare case, perhaps the case of a psychopath, since it would be hard for most people to resist forming strong bonds with anyone that we spend a large amount of time with, and aim to care for. Even still, it seems false to say that children who are unloved and unwanted have no ethical claims over a world that is able to care for it, it seems that their parents in the first instance and anyone else who is most able after that, has the responsibility to help. However, willingness is important. Willingness seems to be part of the ability profile. A begrudging carer is hardly a real carer at all. It is contingent whether affections will grow or not, and perhaps one can take steps to make them do so; by spending time together, for instance, by enjoying activities together. It would only be when a person both willing and able to facilitate their wellbeing cannot be found, that a begrudging carer is to be drawn on.

Some might deny the idea that primary-caregiving-responsibilities going first to biological parents is anything but a social construct, devoid of moral character; biological parents just happen to be expected to be a primary caregiver in our society. But this is extremely implausible: this intuition can be encouraged by asking people what they think of a case of a child being taken away from biological parents and given to some other people for no special reason. This simply looks like a case of kidnapping, with wrong done both to parent and child. There may be social arrangements in which child care is diffuse, with no clear primary carer; these might include polygamous societies in which men have multiple wives all of whom take on responsibilities for raising one another's children. Indeed these do seem to erode the somewhat atomistic sorts of responsibility which appear to be recommended on Singer's principle.

Non-Biological Parents as Primary Carers

There are cases where we should not look to biological parents to take on the role of primary carer. By 'primary carer' I mean, the parental role in the normative rather than biological sense of the word. There are instances where plausibly, it is no shirking of moral responsibility that they do not take up this role. Some might even be concerned that I am outlining a sort of hierarchy whereby the best sort of upbringing is that facilitated by one's two biological parents, and any other permutations of this are inferior in quality. This is not at all what I am defending. Furthermore, I am not arguing

that initial responsibilities of primary caregiving always originate with parents, but only that, on Singer's principle we can understand why they often do. There are many cases where it is not at all obvious that primary caregiving responsibilities go first to biological parents. While one can imagine speculative cases, such as where a child spontaneously came into existence without biological parents, there are actual cases. Let us consider some of those cases now.

Where a parent feels that they are not capable of being a primary carer; such cases might include rape victims who carry their child to full term pregnancy, perhaps out of a moral belief that their unborn child is entitled to live. Other cases could include mentally ill people who do not believe that they could adequately raise their children. In this case, there will be some fact of the matter about whether or not they could, and perhaps they could be persuaded that they could be good parents where that is true. However, if someone does not believe they could be a good parent, that is ground to take their worry seriously, and could very possibly become a self-fulfilling prophecy due to stress that child-raising in such a belief would likely cause.

There are cases where couples have more children than they were prepared for – say a poor couple who saved up to be able to afford to raise one child, but unexpectedly had octuplets. It might be that the wider community should facilitate their raising these children where they want to serve as primary caregivers; by giving resources, time and energy for instance. Where the task outstrips their abilities, that task could not possibly fall on them as a duty.

Consider cases where the parent does not want to raise their child. One may wonder why they had the child. An explanation could be that the child had been unplanned, and had in a country where abortion is illegal. Alternatively, they might have been naïve about what having children involved, have felt pressured into having a child, or have found that circumstances since trying and succeeding in conceiving had changed dramatically. One might ask: if they gave their child up for adoption, would they be doing the wrong thing? On the account that is sketched above, it not clear that they are, indeed, they would more likely be doing the wrong thing in raising a child with a sense of duty and resentment, since this is unlikely to be conducive to the child's wellbeing.

There are cases where biological parents enable others, such as gay or infertile couples, to become primary carers, through the donation of sperm and egg, and through 'traditional surrogacy' (as distinct from 'gestational surrogacy'). Think of a surrogate mother, who agrees to have a child that she will not mother, although she will be that child's biological mother in both a gestational and genetic sense. Suppose that the surrogate mother decides that she would rather raise the child that she has borne. It is not obvious whether she is doing the right, or wrong thing; she is backing out on an agreement and she may disappoint those with whom she has made the agreement. She may be damaging her own wellbeing by going through with her agreement, and handing over her biological child.³⁶ On Singer's principle we say that we ought to stop bad things from happening; breaking a contract would seem to be a bad thing, giving up a child that one loves would be a bad thing, refusing a child to someone who dearly wants, and has prepared to be a parent would seem to be a bad thing. Weighing up which of these is the least bad thing to do is no easy task. However, it does not seem at all obvious that there should be a presumption of primary caring responsibilities falling on the traditional surrogate: especially not when one considers the person who requested the child refusing to accept responsibility for their upbringing, perhaps because the child is disabled, or other than anticipated. There is a good question unaddressed by this chapter, and indeed, thesis as to whether there should be a presumption in favour of a mother's assuming the role of primary carer where a dispute exists as to who it should be. Where does the moral onus for childcare fall? Some might criticize the 'naturalization' of motherhood, and regarded it as a form of oppression. Against this, I urge that, if in essence 'first refusal' to bring up a child goes to a mother over a father, this is a form of freedom which is clearly not extended to the father, and hardly looks like a form of oppression at all. It might only be defended by a thesis of manufactured consent on which mothers are persuaded against their interests to want to bring up children. Also importantly we can imagine a case where a DNA donor and gestational surrogate agree in a contract that a third woman should be the mother, and that all three claimants disagreed as to whom should raise the child at the birth. It is this case that is of interest later.

³⁶ We might say: no traditional surrogate mother can sign a binding contract in which she says she will unreservedly have a child on behalf of another person. That any such contract will have no ethical commitment on her to do so, any more than signing oneself into slavery ought to.

Summary

We want to know how (if at all) children may be ethically influenced with respect to religions. Any plausible answer to our initial question must identify specific parties that have responsibilities to children, together with the content of those responsibilities. In this chapter, after defending both moral objectivity and context sensitivity, I argued that what we *can be* morally responsible for is those of our actions and omissions which bear on the wellbeing of intrinsically valuable objects, such as human beings. After criticizing the view that the specific moral responsibilities that people have is parasitic on the nature of relationships that they have, I discussed the view that they emerge from whether or not they are best person for the (ethical) job. While this answer is plausible, I acknowledged that it does not easily accommodate the view that people have a *prima facie* responsibility for their biological children's wellbeing (for trying to avert harms to them and to ensure their benefit). I then discussed various attempts to say in virtue of what it is that biological parents ought to accept responsibility for their children's wellbeing. These included principles of fairness, ownership, naturalness, being best equipped, and, finally, whether responsibility for the wellbeing of children being occasioned by biological parentage makes for a plausible moral axiom. I concluded that the best person for the (ethical) job is the one responsible for making sure that it is done and that it *can*, in fact, accommodate the view that biological parents have a *prima facie* responsibility for their children's wellbeing. I argued that the principle of 'the best person for the ethical job' is able to ground both parental and extra-parental responsibility to children. Before summarising, I considered some problematic cases for the thesis of the primacy of biological parental responsibility for children's wellbeing. In the next chapter, we shall address the content of these responsibilities.

Chapter Three

THE CONTENT OF PARENTAL AND EXTRA-PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we discussed the *sources* of responsibility. In this chapter, we shall discuss the *content* of responsibility. I have agreed with Peter Singer that “if it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it.”¹ I also argued that it is the person best placed to prevent something bad from happening that should morally do it. Singer’s principle requires some idea of what constitutes a bad thing. In this chapter, I contend that, other things being equal, an intrinsically valuable object’s coming to harm is a bad thing, while its being benefitted is a good thing. It will be argued that the nearer an act brings us towards becoming like God, the better it is for us, and the more it keeps us from becoming like God, the more it harms us. We shall also discuss the parental role, and extra-parental roles, which we can be responsible for playing in virtue of our being the best person for the ethical job. The justifications of paternalism are discussed, as is the value of autonomy, and the values of truth and truthfulness, before we summarise our findings.

The Good and the Bad, Harms and Benefits

Singer’s principle requires some idea of what constitutes a bad thing (his own example is famine). It seems that coming to harm is a bad thing, and being benefitted is a good thing, but what is of harm and what is of benefit to human beings (and to children in particular)? The answer that I want to elaborate and defend is that the nearer an act brings us towards becoming like God, the better it is for us, while the more it keeps us from becoming like God, the more harm it is to us. God is “that than which a greater cannot be conceived,”² and that which helps us towards being in the greatest conceivable state, by giving us more powers, opportunities, knowledge, and goodness,

¹ Singer, ‘Famine, Affluence, and Morality,’ pp. 229-243, 229.

² Anselm, *Proslogion*, trans. by Clement C.J. Webb, <<https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Proslogion>, Chapter IV> [accessed 18 June 2015].

for instance , is *in fact* in our interests, rather than just what we might happen to *think* is in our interests. Atheists need not think that any such being exists to understand that being in such a state is properly desirable.

Adams on God and Excellence

The view advanced here is to be distinguished from that of the prominent theist, R.M. Adams. For Adams, “God is ... that which best plays the role of the referent of *the Good*.” “God is a particular, not a Platonic form or universal; but God is the Good, and so Adams suggests that the excellence of created things might consist in some kind of resemblance of God.”³ The view I defend is different from this. According to my view, God would be excellent and in the best possible state. There is a God role; that being, or those beings, which have all perfections, and anything which satisfies that role is maximally excellent. Things are more excellent by the degree to which they approximate the role. On this view, God’s condition (if the God role were satisfied) is not excellent because it happens to be satisfied by that particular individual (while whatever other conditions that individual might have been in would be equally good), but because there is some standard of excellence which that individual exemplifies. Atheists may accept the standard while denying that anything satisfies it.

Omnipotence, Abilities and Opportunities

In order to better understand this conception of wellbeing, we should distinguish between powers, and opportunities, understanding that God would have maximal powers and maximal opportunities to exercise them. The distinction is brought out in the following example. While I might be *able* to learn a foreign language in the sense that, were I to go to abroad and immerse myself in the language, I would indeed learn that language. I still might not have the *opportunity* to go abroad, and so my ability to learn a foreign language (given the opportunity), would seem pointless. It should be admitted that some abilities and inabilities are two sides of the same coin and a choice must to be made as to which ability/ inability pairing to have. For instance, one cannot be optimally good at long distance running and optimally good at sprinting (contingently, if not necessarily); indeed, God cannot logically do everything, since

³ Scott A. Davison, *On the Intrinsic Value of Everything* (London: Continuum, 2012), p. 118.

claims that God is omnipotent can present us with a paradox as to whether God could thereby make a stone that he could not lift.⁴ Consider an example about a trade-off in mental powers offered by Kevin Currie-Knight in a personal correspondence:

One trait (speed of processing) may be desirable but require a trade-off with another desirable trait (faster processing often means a less nuanced or less accurate processing). Consider ADHD-like processing (that sees bigger pictures over details and oscillates focus rapidly) and non-ADHD focusing (quicker to see details and pay attention to one thing at a time, for longer). It is fantastically difficult to say which of these is better, because the answer is almost surely contextual.

We can easily reply to this valuable insight that, while there are almost certainly trade-offs to be made, one would be more nearly omnipotent, and thereby better off, in being able to process well, both quickly and slowly, as one thought appropriate. While one may have a constitutional penchant towards doing one more effectively, it is no reason not to train oneself in the other. As finite beings, it is true that we have to make choices about which of our talents to develop, and must develop one or some to the exclusion of others. However, that is no objection to the conception of excellence, but only to our being able to ultimately satisfy it.

Four Objections to Wellbeing Construed as Godliness

There are some other difficulties with this conception of wellbeing that I ought to address. First, in emphasizing Godliness, we seem to be emphasizing independence, but it may be both impossible and undesirable to emphasize these over socialization and functioning well within teams (to emphasize independent labour to the division of labour into (fulfilling) specializations). Second, being human involves inhabiting a point of view on the universe, whereas being godlike may seem to involve transcending any parochial point of view, and seeing the universe under the aspect of eternity.⁵ However, it would seem strange to recommend this as an ideal. In particular, it would seem strange to emphasize radical transformation out of human biological limitations: such as being uploaded onto computers to become maximally disembodied, for

⁴ Some respond to this sort of challenge by claiming that God cannot make a square circle because that is not a coherent proposition. However the two sides of the stone-making/lifting dilemma seem coherent: either God can make a stone he cannot lift, or God cannot make a stone that he cannot lift. And so God must (on pain of contradiction) be limited in one way or the other.

⁵ This description is in terms taken from Bernard Williams' *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Abingdon: Fontana Press, 1985); see especially Chapter 8, 'Knowledge, Science and Convergence'.

instance. Third, emphasizing truth, power, and beneficence (in the sense of maximising truth and power in others) seems a little paltry, as it lacks much of a reason to live. Fourth, the conception of wellbeing that I have in mind may register a note of insensitivity, and political incorrectness. Firstly, one may think of blind people having heightened senses of smell and hearing, as a result of lacking sight. Furthermore, human beings with disabilities may prefer to think of themselves as simply *having* disabilities, rather than *suffering with* them, regarding their situation as an alternative way of being in the world, even regarding the word ‘disability’ as stigmatizing and condescending. A good example of such an attitude is demonstrated by some members of the deaf community, who take pride in their way of being in the world. Alternatively, lacking certain powers can give people a sense of purpose in overcoming their inabilities: either in respect of gaining powers (the power to walk again, perhaps, or the ability to read), with the journey having been more worthwhile than the destination. Indeed, one may think of the virtues which one cultivates by way of adjusting to life as being more important than how one is in the world. There is much truth in these objections, but I still want to maintain that (other things being equal) the more abilities one has, the better off one is, and the greater one’s abilities, the better off one is (and where things are not equal, it is because these *access goods* give one access to yet more goods). John Rawls expresses this point well:

Regardless of what an individual’s rational plans are in detail, it is assumed that there are various things which he would prefer more of rather than less. With more of these goods men can generally be assured of greater success in carrying out their intentions and advancing their ends, whatever these ends may be. The primary social goods, to give them in broad categories, are rights and liberties, opportunities and powers, income and wealth.⁶

Rawls’ list of “rights and liberties, opportunities and powers” and “income and wealth” seems to be collapsible into the categories of abilities and opportunities described above (with wealth, rights and liberties providing opportunities to exercise powers, or abilities). I want to add knowledge, and understanding to this list of access goods, as well as the ability to expand one’s knowledge and understanding. This is not just because opportunities to pursue projects require knowledge; indeed conceiving of

⁶ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 92.

projects, inventing or choosing between them requires knowledge too; but instead because knowing is partly constitutive of wellbeing.

Wellbeing and a Sense of Purpose

We might say that it is all well and good being better natured, more powerful and having more opportunities, but wonder what should we do with our increased power and opportunities. This is to ask the question that has been variously formulated as: what is best in life, how ought one to live, what is the meaning of life, and what is the good life? Should we simply make other people more powerful, and freer to use their powers, or are there some goods which powers and opportunities give us access to (they are after all *access goods*). While being given powers and opportunities is of benefit to us, and being disempowered and having opportunities restricted harms us, I have as much as acknowledged in my last paragraph that these cannot possibly be all that there is to value, even morally. Powers and opportunities are valuable because they enable us to avail of goods, to pursue worthwhile projects. I have said nothing about this so far. Further, good character is surely to be valued for itself and not for the effects it has, as the following consideration demonstrates. Imagine a moral monster plugged into a virtual reality machine living out all of their fantasies of wanton cruelty and destruction, convinced that it is real, without any possibility of actually harming anybody, even still, the content of their character and desires seems bad in itself. However, good character certainly does not promote harm or undermine benefits, and so is not a rival good.

Satisfying Preferences Is Not the Only Good

So far we have given answers to the questions ‘What sorts of things *can* we be morally responsible for?’ and ‘What counts as a harm or benefit for a human being?’ In answer to the first question, I argued that what we *can be* morally responsible for is those of our actions and omissions which bear on the wellbeing of intrinsically valuable objects, such as human beings. My answer to the second question was that the nearer an act brings us towards becoming like God, the better it is for us, the more it keeps us from becoming like God, the more it harms us. In contrast to the account of wellbeing offered here, Peter Singer has defended the goal of maximising the attainment of

people's ultimate, informed, and rational preferences.⁷ The problem with this notion is that people may cut their preferences to fit what is available to them, that is, they may start to want what they get, where they do not get what they want.⁸ Indeed, one already has to admit at least one objective good on Singer's view, namely the satisfaction of rational desires. But this seems implausible, because it makes what people's preferences are completely arbitrary, with none better than any other; people don't want good things because they are good, they just have wants, and these ought to be respected (it is nihilistic about all but one value, and then that value seems dubious in its solitude). Indeed, the specification of 'rational' preferences only seems contentful if there are objective values to rationally track. That said, it does seem that a person's ability to get their own way is (other things being equal) a good, together with their having a range of ways that they might possibly get available to them, but that is so because there is a range of things which are in fact valuable or that might reasonably be thought 'valuable'.⁹

An Additional Claim Right

As per the arguments of the last chapter, we have rights to omissions of harms, and actions which keep us from coming to harm over each other. It may be that education and upbringing could help to cultivate characters of the sort that would respect these rights (it would be a bad thing if people didn't stop bad things from happening and if we can stop that from happening through education, then we ought to (from Peter Singer's principle)). If that is so, however, then it must be someone's responsibility to raise children to respect these rights. Whose responsibility would it be though? Plausibly, it is something of a collective duty to enable this (to fund it, for instance),

⁷ Rawls also thought that wellbeing consisted in satisfying preferences, but insofar as one allows that that certain preferences are always rational, it allows for something of a minimal 'objective list' understanding of wellbeing, in addition to which a variety of preferences may be respected.

⁸ Amartya Sen has convincingly argued this point in an interview for *Conversations with History* by Harry Kreisler, <<http://www.uctv.tv/shows/On-Theory-with-Amartya-Sen-Conversations-with-History-9510>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

⁹ Here we may recall Bernard Williams' argument that most people have reasons to live in the form of projects, without which they have no reason to live; see especially Bernard Williams, 'Persons, Character and Morality,' in *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 1- 19. Indeed, living for power, opportunities alone may constitute an empty existence. Perhaps then, any particular interests people develop – whichever particular abilities and opportunities are developed – are equally desirable, so long as they save off the diminishment of the powers and opportunities of others and of oneself. Perhaps they can be cultivated, or, more directly, instilled. But even this seems pointless; if the only value in life is life itself, life seems without value. Life seems best understood as an access good, so that if there are no goods to access, it becomes worthless.

and (again, as per the arguments of the last chapter), the duty of those best placed to execute the role to do so.

The Content of Parental Responsibility

It is the content of the parental (or guardian) role that generates the need for it in the first place. It seems that children's welfare needs require the generation of at least one person to play what we might call the parent role. The parental role is not to provide every type of care, but to have an overview of the care which children need, and ensure that they receive it; that they see a doctor when they are ill, get to school, that they eat and drink, and rest, that they are growing in powers, knowledge and beneficence (indeed, knowledge seems to be a precondition of power, if not equivalent to it (as shown by the case of Casandra)). The idea is that it is good to have an overseer of the beneficiary's wellbeing. This role described thus far is administrative, but it further requires a depth of and pervasiveness of concern. It seems that children need stability, and strong loving relationships, both as a good in itself, and as a model of how to develop relationships in the future, and as a basis for enabling growth of powers, knowledge and beneficence. These are the wellbeing needs, and scope for their best satisfaction that generate the parent role, a role, which, as I argued in the previous chapter, is often (but by no means always) best satisfied by biological parents. There are also extra-parental responsibilities generated by the potential harms to which children are susceptible: responsibilities that out-strip the abilities of people who play the parent role, qua occupants of that role, to minister to.

The Content of Extra-Parental Responsibility

It seems that people who are not parents can either have duties to take over, or supplement parental responsibilities.

Taking Over Parental-Responsibility

While it is overwhelmingly agreed that, other things being equal, biological parents ought to raise their children (and indeed, other things being unequal they often ought to do so, too), it is also widely held to be incumbent upon wider society to relieve parents of their charge if they are abusive or negligent, or to assume some responsibility if they

are overburdened. Biological parenthood is (we argued in the previous chapter) usually the point from which responsibilities of childcare originate, and from which they transfer over to others. What counts as sufficient reason to take a child into care is a point which is contested, but one which every society has a *de facto* answer to evident in its policy, or lack of policy. Boris Johnson, London's incumbent Mayor, controversially argued in a London paper that extremist parents and guardians ought to have their children taken away on the grounds that they ought not to be able to teach children doctrines of hate and violence; "radicalism is a form of child abuse" he argued.¹⁰ In his article, he focused on radical Islam and was accused of Islamophobia. His *exclusive* identification of Islam seems unfortunate given that Islam is not the only broad category within which there exist factions promoting doctrines of hate and violence, but it is surely one reasonable example among others (including the Christian group The Ku Klux Klan). Let us accept that often (usually, in fact) biological parents have a primary and original ethical responsibility to and for their own children. Original, in that the responsibility is theirs in the first instance, and taken from them where they are unable or unwilling to fulfil it, and primary in that, while others may owe some kinds and degrees of responsibility, theirs exceeds the kinds and degrees of responsibilities that anyone else owes to them.¹¹ Responsibility of parents can temporarily be transferred over to others who act in loco-parentis, such as carers, coaches, tutors, teachers, baby sitters and so on (but it is still thought that providing for the child financially, for buying food for instance, is a responsibility that falls on the parents shoulders, except where they are not able to or where others are happy to).

¹⁰ Boris Johnson, 'The Children Taught at Home About Murder and Bombings,' in *The Telegraph*, <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/10671841/The-children-taught-at-home-about-murder-and-bombings.html>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

¹¹ Allowing that biological parents do have a primary and original ethical responsibility to and for their own children, some wonder whether just anyone with the biological capacity to parent, ought thereby to have freedom to have and raise children, or whether it ought to be controlled through parenting licences. The thought being that some people are not adequate parents (which anyone who accepts that in some circumstances children ought to be taken from their care must accept), and that rather than being allowed to have children only to have them become somebody else's responsibility, they ought not to be able to have children in the first place. A system intent on doing this would need to control birth – perhaps through sterilization. In China, those who have become pregnant after having already had a child have been forced to have abortions. Indeed, whether prospective parents ought to be merely allowed or enabled to have children is also interesting. Furthermore, it is interesting whether there might be moral limitations, which need not, and perhaps ought not to be translated into legal limitations.

We might say that this responsibility cannot be abdicated, that it is inalienable (as the Irish constitution does).¹² But that does not mean it cannot be shared and to some extent mitigated (as when a parent leaves their child in the care of a reliable childminder or teacher). Furthermore, it seems that, since parents can neglect their responsibilities (can be abusive and do harm beyond allowing harm to happen, and failing to bring basic benefits), a duty can fall upon others to relieve parents of their charge.

Indeed, parents may be mistaken about what is in their children's interests even where they are diligent in serving those perceived interests. It may be reasonable to give parents a large margin for error in determining what is in their children's interests. This is partly because what counts as an error may not be always obvious, partly because some errors matter less than it matters that parents maintain a close relationship with their children. However, we cannot reasonably think that parents are infallible in this regard; even sincere, well-intentioned parents can be mistaken. While an important question is indeed when parents ought to be relieved of custody, it is not our question.

Supplementing Parental Nurture

It seems that often there are many aspects of children's wellbeing that parents cannot adequately minister to or provide for. Health and education are obvious examples of both. Where keeping children from harm in these domains outstrips the means and abilities of parents, it seems that responsibility falls beyond parents to the wider community (where that community is able to meet those basic elements of wellbeing). This would be the arguable basis for free healthcare, and, more importantly in this enquiry, free education (at least for those unable to secure it for themselves). I shall argue in Chapter 6 in some detail that children have extra-parental claim rights to be educated, and in Chapter 9 will explain how this relates to religion.

¹² "42: The State acknowledges that the primary and natural educator of the child is the Family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children." The Irish Constitution, <<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/en/constitution/>> [accessed 28 June 2015]. "What exactly is it that cannot be alienated when one has an inalienable right to X — X itself or the right to X ?" asks Joel Feinberg in his 1978 article, 'Voluntary euthanasia and the inalienable right to life,' *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 7(2), pp. 93-123. There, he argues persuasively that it is the right to X , rather than X . Concordantly, one could give up one's children, but it would seem then that one could have them returned later. Perhaps it is defeasible; one has that right, but it can be trumped by conflicting claim rights, but in that case it is hardly inalienable.

Paternalism, Autonomy and Entitlement

I will now argue that children's having claims over their guardians does not entitle guardians to compel their children to benefit from those claims; instead, additional paternalistic arguments are needed to make that case. Guardians might well have such an entitlement and it may be closely connected to their responsibilities, however, the two are not identical, and must be separately justified. The thought is this: children have certain ethical claims over their parents in the first instance that they do not have over anyone else (until their parents seriously and obviously fail in satisfying these): to be physically nourished, for instance. However, supposing that they did not want to be nourished, it would not *follow* that children ought to be force fed by their parents. Again, it might be that children should be force fed, but not just from parents' responsibility to satisfy claims that their children have, for it seems that claims are things that their holders can waive.

More naturally, we would think of justified compulsion as requiring some good for others; we think of ourselves as having obligations to others rather than to ourselves, or at least of having the right to veto our own obligations to ourselves and others' obligations to us, but no right to veto our own obligations to others. To take an example given by Jonathon Wolff during a conference keynote address: a more compelling reason to wear seatbelts in cars than to avoid doing damage to oneself, is to avoid doing damage to someone sitting in the seat in front; this example was used in a UK public advertising campaign in which a young boy without a seatbelt crushes his mother's chest when he is flung forward into her seat during a collision, while he himself comes off comparatively unscathed. Concordantly, it raises few eyebrows when it is suggested that criminal offenders ought to be compelled to undergo a process of rehabilitation in order to reintegrate into civil society. To motivate compulsion to receive entitlements, plausibly we should begin by contrasting wards and wardens. If one ever properly has wardenship over somebody else, one's ward, rather than being entitled to have their own decisions regarding their own wellbeing respected completely, one has a responsibility to commit their ward to what one thinks best for them. This might well take the form of compelling one's ward to benefit from an entitlement.

To leave it to children to exercise and waive claims is to respect their autonomy, and at this point in our investigation, it is an open question as to whether, and if so, adults ought to respect children's autonomy. Arguably, while children have rights to

wellbeing, they do not have rights to self-determination, where they are not yet competent choosers:

Children often do not grasp the ramifications, for them or for others, of the choice they make. This is true even of very simple decisions (what to eat for lunch; how long and with whom to play after lunch; how early to go to bed), let alone decisions about whether to waive or claim their rights.¹³

For adults, because they generally have a better sense of what will serve their well-being than any other agent does, we think that they should have a great deal of control over how and whether these interests are met. Young children are in a different condition, and do not have an interest in controlling as much of their lives as adults do.¹⁴

Even still, according to Brighouse and McAvoy, children do “have a powerful interest in the conditions and resources needed for them to develop into the kinds of beings that have agency interests.”¹⁵ Where they are not competent choosers, those best placed to oversee the satisfaction of children’s wellbeing needs (to keep them from harm, and ensure that they receive basic benefits) have a duty to do so.

Champions of promoting autonomy and reason sound a little unrealistic in the case of small children whom in practice they would prefer to be obedient, to follow instructions and complete set tasks. Lest anyone should think that children are naturally good, and are poisoned by a corrupt world, one is tempted to point to a brilliant website which chronicles the poor reasons for which children tantrum (e.g. the reason one young boy is bawling is that “he is not allowed to put his hand in the toilet”).¹⁶

Indeed, young children’s consent counts for less than adults’ consent, since children give their consent much more readily than adults do. Adults, just by virtue of the accretion of knowledge through experience, are in a stronger position to make judgements about what will secure their own wellbeing (although, they may not make good decisions, and may act contrary to what they know is in their interests, perhaps through giving in to the pull of addictions, or the attraction of a nearer good at the expense of a more significant, longer term good).

¹³ Harry Brighouse and Paula McAvoy, ‘Do Children Have Any Rights?’ in *The Philosophy of Education: An Introduction*, ed. by Richard Bailey (London: Continuum, 2010), pp. 78-85, 76.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 81-82.

¹⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁶ ‘Reasons My Kid is Crying,’ <<http://www.sunnyskyz.com/blog/119/36-Reasons-My-Kid-Is-Crying-Temper-Tantrums-You-Can-t-Help-But-Laugh-At>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

Harms and Benefits to Children

We might say that children have rights to actions which prevent their coming to harm, but no right to self-determination, because they are not competent choosers. But since this is not true of all and only of children, the morally relevant category would seem to be ‘incompetent choosers’, rather than ‘children’. Another point about children is that they are going through a formative phase. Childhood is a phase in the sense that one passes through it before adulthood, and it has an effect on one’s adulthood:

There has been a tendency among moral and political philosophers to regard children as proto-adults and to see their interests primarily in those, future oriented, terms.¹⁷

Thus they consider the fundamental responsibility they bear toward their children to be the obligation to provide the kind of supportive environment those children need to develop into normal adults, where normal adults are supposed to have the biological and psychological structures in place needed to perform the functions we assume that normal, standard adults can perform.¹⁸

We can overemphasize these points, since adulthood is not a formative terminus (as Kevin Williams has emphasized).¹⁹ Indeed, we can think of all of life as constituting a process of growth and becoming, or as constituting a phase (before death). Furthermore, as Brighthouse and McAvoy point out, even supposing that we know a child to have a terminal condition which will prevent them reaching adulthood, they will still have “interests in the present day,” “there are goods available to her in childhood [...] the value of which is not reducible to the role they play in human development.”²⁰ Matthews argues that children are better able at some things than adults (such as learning a second language), and are not to be understood as adults minus certain abilities.²¹ But we cannot allow the pendulum to swing too far in this direction: children are vulnerable and impressionable. Childhood is a period which comes before

¹⁷ Brighthouse and McAvoy, p. 81.

¹⁸ Gareth B. Matthews, ‘The Philosophy of Childhood,’ *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/childhood/>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

¹⁹ “An irony about the ascription of authority to adults is that it introduces a sharper distinction between the worlds of children and adults than can be justified. Adulthood should not be envisaged as an emotional, intellectual or career terminus” Kevin Williams, ‘Conscripts or Volunteers? The Status of Learners in Faith-Schools,’ in *Philosophical Perspectives on Compulsory Education*, ed. by Marianna Papastephanou (London: Springer, 2014), pp. 131-141, 133.

²⁰ Brighthouse and McAvoy, p. 81.

²¹ Gareth B. Matthews, ‘Getting Beyond the Deficit Conception of Childhood: Thinking Philosophically with Children,’ in *Philosophy in Schools*, ed. by Michael Hand and Carrie Winstanley (London: Continuum 2008), pp. 27–40.

adulthood (barring the tragedy of childhood fatality), in which people do well to develop their powers (especially those that are more easily acquired then). It is a period in which one does well to promote those learning objectives that constitute a well formed adult for this reason. The thought is not that when people reach adulthood that they no longer have something to learn, or have no obligation to learn, but simply that learning happens best in childhood, and those who do not receive such tutorage suffer for it in later life. However, children finish schooling at a certain age (which varies from country to country in which schooling is enjoyed or endured), not when they achieve certain required capacities. Indeed, those who have reached this age and not even been through those formal educative procedures are not thereby denied autonomy-rights, are not compelled to attend school, or kept from voting or drinking. It is disingenuous for any such system to stress capacity based autonomy-rights, or attempt to justify its practices on their basis. It is perhaps reasonable to think that it would be cruel to keep people in schools until they have attained certain standards, especially if they show no sign of likely doing so: at some point, the benefits of schooling (such as powers) do not warrant the costs of restriction (namely, opportunities). For instance, it would be absurd to compel schooling until old age if a student had failed to attain the minimal standards generally desired of students in order to graduate. Indeed, it would seem that students who had not graduated by adulthood would not have a claim right to such an education, since it would extend beyond what anybody would reasonably be expected to offer.

Young children are more impressionable than adults. They are more deeply, and more comprehensively receptive to influence than adults. Early influences are thereby too easily irrational, and too hard to shake, and so more is at stake than with the formative influence of adults. Early influences enter deep, permeate subsequent learning, and are harder to separate out and reject rationally. Indeed, “Socrates was tried by the Athenian courts in 399 BC and executed, on charges, among other things, of “corrupting the youth.”²² The charge was corrupting *the youth*, and not corrupting people of just any age. The motivating consideration here is likely that the youth are more impressionable, and need to be protected by laws whereas adults do not.²³

²² Bernard Williams, ‘Plato: The Invention of Philosophy,’ in *The Sense of the Past: Essays in the History of Philosophy*, ed. by Myles Burnyeat (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), pp. 148-186.

²³ Could parents be accused of corrupting their children, or is the parent’s conception of corruption and honesty that count? Suppose the parent did not live up to their own standard or honesty?

In summary, Children are best able to learn while young and may reasonably have a paternalistic attitude taken to them to further their own benefit, and while adults might benefit from compelled learning, it is especially cruel to restrict opportunities into adulthood, with childhood being understood as a period of time rather than a physical or mental state. But since children are more impressionable than adults, special concern needs to be paid when exercising influence over them.

Knowledge, Rationality, Autonomy and Wellbeing

What do knowledge, rationality and autonomy add to one's wellbeing? When exercising one's autonomy in voting for leaders, or government policies, or choosing what products to buy, or which school to send our child to it is, (all other things being equal) better to be informed than to be uninformed or, which is a special case of being uninformed, misinformed. There seems to be something special about informed decisions, and its specialness consists in having valuable real options, theoretical rationality (which tracks the truth), and practical rationality.

First, informed decisions rely on real alternatives in order to be meaningful. We need only mention Henry Ford's edict that his customers could have his cars in any colour they wanted, so long as they wanted his cars in black, to illustrate this idea. Second, there are general prohibitions on lying, on not checking one's sources, on not verifying results, on failing to gather information, on not telling the truth, the whole (relevant) truth and nothing but the truth. It might be thought that the premium on informed consent creates the need for truthfulness: for gaining someone's consent through misinforming them looks like a case of manipulation. However, theoretical rationality is required for us to track the truth, and is required for the possibility of informed consent. Third, informed choice means nothing if we do not know what to do with the information we have, e.g. how to derive a good choice from the information available.²⁴

²⁴ One's ability to understand information so as to be informed already requires some degree of rationality. Two generals advising a senior commander may have all of the same information, and one may be more talented than the other and so make the better decision, but that is not to say that one is more rational than the other. While the more talented general might plot a better strategy through some imaginative leap, which they then find to be better than other available options, we could say that were both to fully understand both the options and advantages, they would opt for the same course. This is to be understood as practical rationality.

A few tempering considerations should be raised at this point. First, we can be spoiled for choice, and this can worsen our choice; we will likely choose better between three options than between three hundred. Second, all other things are not equal when it comes to informing our decisions: informing ourselves requires time, energy and all the more so the less are our talents at doing so (by research and critical reflection). Indeed, it can be well to defer to expert opinion on the questions of what to think, and on the question of what to do. Third, there is a powerful value that can conflict with these values, namely happiness. We might say that an informed choice can still undermine our wellbeing, and we would have been better off having had the choice made for us. It is cited as an example in Thaler and Sunstein's book *Nudge* that parents are happier when they are not given the decision of whether or not to artificially preserve the life of their child who will never have any reasonable quality of life. Another example might be *Sophie's Choice*, from William Styron's book of that name, in which a Jewish woman is forced to choose between saving the life of one or the other of her children.²⁵

These important considerations notwithstanding, there still seems to be something special about informed decisions. Having the power to make a decision and the political freedom to do it is to be called autonomy of action. And it requires rationality, truth tracking and real options. Enabling informed consent ought to be one aim of upbringing. Ensuring real options is more a matter for political and economic theory. Cultivating practical and theoretical rationality is the other matter. All of this is so because (as argued earlier) of the existence of many valuable options and the difficulty in appraising them decisively.²⁶

Why Seek and Share Truth?

It may be that knowing the truth is often beneficial, but not always so. Is benefit what justifies truth telling, or is benefit something extraneous which perhaps sometimes trumps whatever it is which justifies truth telling? Sometimes, it seems better to believe

²⁵ William Styron, *Sophie's Choice* (Open Road Media, 2010).

²⁶ A quandary about whether to exercise paternalism or respect for autonomous choice (requiring further reflection): Singer's principle seems to force us (if we are to be moral) to prevent harm coming to someone, but it might be that violating someone's wishes is morally worse than letting them come to harm. What happens if they would prefer to come to harm? Suppose that is there considered preference. Do we respect their preference, or force the good on them? Acknowledge our own fallibility might encourage epistemic humility enough to defer to their judgement of what is best. Suppose they do not think it was for the best and that they want to be perverse, do we then defer to both our judgement and theirs and prevent them?

a falsehood, which has some pragmatic approximation to the truth, when we are not able to understand the complexity of the truth. This comes out in Michael Hand's example of telling young children that "all berries are poisonous."²⁷ Here a falsehood goes proxy for the truth; it is not as useful as the truth, if that was attainable, but it will do where it is not attainable.

The value of truth was powerfully challenged by Nietzsche in *Beyond Good and Evil*, where he asked, "granted that we [happen to] want the truth: why not rather untruth? And uncertainty? Even ignorance?"²⁸ "The falseness of an opinion is not for us any objection to it," he continued, more pertinent is the matter of "how far an opinion is life-furthering, life preserving, species-preserving, [or] perhaps species rearing."²⁹

We are fundamentally inclined to believe [that] the falsest of opinions [...] are the most indispensable to us; that without a recognition of logical fictions, without a comparison of reality with the purely imagined world of the absolute and immutable, without a constant counterfeiting of the world by means of numbers, man could not live — that the renunciation of false opinions would be a renunciation of life.³⁰

The most obvious response to Nietzsche is this: objecting to truth in this fashion, presupposes access to the truth. Thus, when he comments that "we are fundamentally inclined to believe the falsest of opinions are the most indispensable to us," we are fundamentally inclined to believe this (if indeed we are) because it is true. Indeed, if Nietzsche truly recognizes "untruth as a precondition of life," he is put in the awkward position of vouching for the untruth of certain propositions, while at the same time depending on thinking they are true to in order to live at all.³¹ This objection can be mitigated somewhat however, in that Nietzsche might respond that he is only able to embrace the truth at a great cost, and one which not worth the price to anyone else; and perhaps then, only briefly, before he must shun the truth. Further, one might bear the truth in order to better protect others from it. This latter option is paternalistic to be sure, but so too is education altogether.

²⁷ Michael Hand, 'Religious Upbringing Reconsidered,' in *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 36(4) (2002), pp. 545-557.

²⁸ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good And Evil*, trans. By Helen Zimmern, <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/4363/4363-h/4363-h.htm>> [Last accessed 30 June 2015], §1.

²⁹ Ibid, §4.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

More generally, the thought is that practical and theoretical reason can recommend contrary beliefs. Indeed, whether to employ theoretical reason appears to be a question for practical reason, as does how long to spend thinking about something is also a practical question. While theoretical reason might suggest assent, dissent, or agnosticism, whether or not to believe truly appears to be a matter for practical reason. Consider the case of Pascal's Wager. Pascal argues that it is less costly to believe wrongly that God does not exist than it is to believe wrongly that God does exist. I do not think that the argument works in this instance but it could work in some other instances.³² He concludes that where theoretical reason is indecisive, practical reason is not. Some might doubt that one can, as a matter of fact, convince oneself of a proposition which one self-consciously does not think is true. It is perhaps easier to imagine at the level of the subconscious. It is matter of some puzzlement, but an empirical matter, and one we have reason to believe is both possible and not uncommon.

Sympathetic examples of paternalistic lies (and not mere over-simplifications) include the following. A soldier who is moments from dying on a battle field may be better lied to about the severity of his condition. But here the misinformation will not likely affect the autonomy of his decisions (such as changing his will). Similarly in the film *Titanic* (Dir. James Cameron, 1997), a mother in a third class compartment puts her children to bed, reading them a story as the ship goes down, with no hope of their escaping, judging it better that they should pass away without the anxiety of knowing their fates. "A mere omission," some might object. True, but a lack of truthfulness and the illusion of safety may easily require the support of lies. Somewhat differently, in *Interstellar* (Dir. Chris Nolan, 2014) the protagonist decides to leave his daughter on earth in attempt to save all humanity without telling her that humanity is in peril, since "when you become a parent, one thing becomes really clear, and that is you want to make sure your children feel safe." Here he has withheld information, but, were he pressed, he might have had to lie in order to preserve his daughter's sense of safety. Here, it is his child who he is protecting from the truth; perhaps were she an adult, he might have been less inclined to conceal the truth from her, since it would figure significantly in

³² Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, in *Œuvres*, ed. by L. Brunschvigg (Paris: Hachette, 1925), part III, §233.

what decisions she would go on to make. For these examples, T.S. Eliot's words come to mind:

Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind
Cannot bear very much reality³³

Indeed, Timothy D. Wilson (whose work on narrative we shall consider in a Chapter 4) emphasizes happiness over truth, after an initial emotional upheaval when a lover leaves us "we can take a step back and put as good a spin as we can on what happened," he says.³⁴ "Our wellbeing is intimately tied up with the way in which we think about ourselves and our place in the world."³⁵ "What kinds of perspectives [narratives] make us happy? Research reveals three key ingredients: meaning, hope and purpose;" "meaning answers to the most basic questions about human existence and our place in the world," "optimistic people cope better with adversity," "it helps to see ourselves as strong protagonists who set our own goals and make progress towards them."³⁶

Perhaps what matters is that people are happy, not that they are informed. Some information will disrupt people's lives and make them unhappy. It might be the case that, in practice, nobody ever knows well enough what will happen when people are informed and so one cannot use the balance of probable happiness to dictate whether or not to inform. It is sometimes said that what one does not know, cannot hurt them. This is clearly false in the case of smoking: not knowing that smoking causes cancer does not mitigate the effects of smoking.³⁷ In many cases, it may be that the information would help them make decisions which will more likely benefit them (as with the smoking example). On the other hand, if someone's wife had cheated on them, but feels ashamed and would never do so again, it may only be that telling the husband could do nothing but ruin the relationship that it is in everyone's interest to preserve. Indeed, it may be in the interest of the wife to delete her memory of having done so, should that

³³ T.S. Eliot, 'Burnt Norton', from *The Four Quartets*, <<http://www.davidgorman.com/4Quartets/1-norton.htm>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

³⁴ Timothy D. Wilson, *Redirect: The Surprising New Science of Psychological Change* (London: Allen Lane, 2011), p. 13.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

³⁷ On the other hand, it is clear that sometimes beliefs are self-fulfilling, and would not have been true, had they not been believed: a soldier's conviction that he would make it out of the war alive, for instance increases their likelihood of survival).

be possible.³⁸ Some are wont to respond that the relationship was already ruined, and that this would merely make it apparent. But this is not from either one of their points of view, but only from some third-personal perspective which may remain un-manifest for the duration of the relationship. The point is put (rather gratuitously for this context) by John Stewart Mill's remark that "it is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied."³⁹ If one really pushes the disruption line of thought by suggesting that one's suicide was an inevitable result of one's being informed, Mill's 'better to be Socrates satisfied' line might begin to look a little pale, but this is rarely the case. There would seem to be a duty to inform, paired with informing sensitively.

So how can one respond to Nietzsche? One approach is that which R.S. Peters took, with his transcendental arguments. These were designed to show that truth is hiding in the background of everything we value, that an interest in truth presupposed in valuing anything at all. Another is offered by Robert Nozick who asks whether we should rather live our lives in an experience machine, than encounter reality. We will look at each of these in turn starting with a consideration due to E. Jonathan Lowe.

Truth is Unitary

If truth is, as E. Jonathan Lowe argues convincingly, unitary, then it is no good hiving off one area of inquiry to be insulated from requirements of truth, or systematically attempting to so insulate it, since all facts must be consistent with all other facts. "Truth is single and indivisible or, to put it another way, the world or reality as a whole is unitary and necessarily self-consistent."⁴⁰ Indeed, lies multiply to maintain the illusion, the more so, the more our worldview is compromised with untruths.

Transcendental Arguments

R.S. Peters' Transcendental Arguments attempted "to establish the worthwhileness of theoretical activities by demonstrating the value of truth" by arguing that "the person

³⁸ The premise of *The Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, dir. Michel Gondry (Focus Features, 2004) is that people with traumatic pasts, or obsessions with the past that diminish their happiness do well to have their memories erased, and to start afresh.

³⁹ John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1906) p. 260.

⁴⁰ E. Jonathan Lowe, *A Survey of Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

who seriously asks ‘Why do this rather than that?’ must, in order to answer her question,” a) “find out what this and that involve” and b) “have made some preliminary assessment of her situation, distinguished this and that as options for herself, and judged the choice between them to warrant careful consideration.”⁴¹

However, Hand holds that the justificatory problem is merely deferred: “The problem, then, is that having shown commitment to truth to be presupposed by serious engagement in practical discourse, Peters now needs to justify serious engagement in practical discourse.”⁴² However, denying that we should be committed to tracking the truth seems unstable: it seems to require a justification of the sort that it says is not required, and would not allow that such justifications are required unless one is provided. If it could, that might give us pause for thought, but otherwise it seems merely prejudicial. While Peters attempts to say that serious engagement in practical discourse is unavoidable, because in failing to engage with it seriously, one would find themselves living by “procedures which are inappropriate to demands that are admitted, and must be admitted by anyone who takes part in human life.”⁴³ Hand speculates that such demands might possibly be ignored; however, anyone who did this would be a nihilist, which is surely a rare, if not altogether inconceivable case.⁴⁴

The Experience Machine

If truth is only instrumentally worthwhile, one ought to plump for a life of good that the truth is ultimately instrumental to (perhaps pleasure). Consider the following thought experiment presented by Robert Nozick:

Suppose there was an experience machine that would give you any experience you desired. Super-duper neuropsychologists could stimulate your brain so that you would think and feel you were writing a great novel, or making a friend, or reading an interesting book. All the time you would be floating in a tank, with electrodes attached to your brain. Should you plug into this machine for life, preprogramming your life experiences? [...] Of course, while in the tank you won't know that

⁴¹ Michael Hand, ‘On the Worthwhileness of Theoretical Activities,’ in *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 43(2) (2010), pp. 113 -114.

⁴² Ibid, p. 115.

⁴³ R.S. Peters, ‘The Justification of Education,’ in his *Education and the Education of Teachers* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 86-118, 253.

⁴⁴ Hand, ‘On the Worthwhileness of Theoretical Activities,’ p. 115.

you're there; you'll think that it's all actually happening [...] Would you plug in?⁴⁵

Intuitively, it seems to me that the answer should be 'no'. In seeking reasons to value truth, one is necessarily subordinating truth to some other value. The question is: as a matter of fact, do you appreciate the truth as good in itself? In responding Nozick's thought experiment as I do, it seems that I do appreciate truth as a good in itself, as an anchor which I may or may not be inclined to stray from. Where I respect others equally, I will endow them with that truth. Indeed, given my procedure of reflective equilibrium, what are important are my own intuitions. In the absence of an error theory explaining why my intuition is misleading, and in the absence of any more fundamental value with which it conflicts, I must accept its dictates as being rationally compelling.

Duties of Truthfulness

Rational beings, as rational beings, have a duty, it seems, to believe the truth, and to disbelieve falsehoods, or, more accurately, to believe and disbelieve only on rationally adequate grounds.⁴⁶ They have a duty to pursue the truth, and correct their false beliefs. They have a practical reason to tell others the truth and to correct their false beliefs, namely the mutual epistemic benefit gained from this activity. Since pursuit of the truth requires sensitivity to the sorts of considerations which render a proposition more likely true or more likely false, the further duties to sensitize ourselves to such considerations is entailed by the duty to pursue the truth, and a practical reason to sensitize others to such considerations. Call these the duties of truthfulness. Children come to recognise and observe these duties chiefly through the guidance of their parents or carers and those who act in *loco parentis*. Adults have a duty to promote the duties of truthfulness in the children for whose development they are responsible.

It seems that the duties of truthfulness have the following implications for determining and teaching propositional content: in the absence of defeating conditions, teachers ought to attempt to *impart* a given belief to children where it is known to be true, and ought to *make it known* to them as *possibly* true, where it is thought to be a reasonable

⁴⁵ Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 44-45.

⁴⁶ This claim is denied by David Papineau, who argues that there are no doxastic norms, but he allows that we still have moral reasons not to misinform others which seems to create a drip-down moral obligation to avoid believing falsely so as to avoid misinforming unknowingly David Papineau, 'There Are No Norms of Belief,' in *The Aim of Belief*, ed. by T. Chan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

possibility. On the question of when beliefs should be taught to be false or unfounded, it seems that the educator is only *entitled* to do this where they know the belief to be false or unfounded, but should only *bother* to do it when it is something that they know the child believes.⁴⁷ Thus, on the assumption that Young Earth Creationism (which takes the book of Genesis to be literally true) has been decisively falsified, it may still have a place in the science classroom just insofar as its inclusion enables any student adherents to come closer to a more scientific understanding, and to leaving behind their false beliefs.⁴⁸ The question ought to be raised as to whether it is particular people's beliefs sets, or something more impersonal and encyclopaedic that we ought to have in mind when we speak of imparting beliefs which are known to be true. The question is crucial since it will have implications as to the universality or teacher-relativity of the content of education. If it is personal belief-sets that we have in mind, then one might wonder whose estimation of the truth is to be drawn on, and, very arguably, it is the educator who has the responsibility of making the judgement call as to what is known. For an educator to teach anybody else's estimation of the truth would seem to be a dereliction of the duties of truthfulness, and inauthentic. Of course, this encumbers them with a heightened onus to adopt and revise their beliefs rationally. On the other hand, that onus may be too high, and expertise as pedagogue in no way guarantees that subject matter expertise is sufficient enough to make robust judgements oneself. Indeed, experts will have to be identified by non-experts, and there is no shortage of claimants.

Underlying the above account of the duties of truthfulness, there is one obvious and important question for the curriculum which we should address, namely, whether we should seek and promote the truth about everything. What is worth correcting people on, informing other people about, and testing our own beliefs about? Some things are true, but are trivial and not worth knowing. Indeed, there may be some mistakes which are not worth correcting. Whether or not I have 73 hairs on my left eyebrow should be the least of anybody's concerns.⁴⁹ Thus, we need a criterion of importance. In chapter 9, I will develop and defend the following criterion: In order to decide *how important* it is

⁴⁷ John Tillson, 'Religious Education and the Floodgates of Impartiality,' *Philosophy of Education Society Yearbook* (Urbana, IL, Philosophy of Education Society, 2011).

⁴⁸ cf. Michael Reiss, 'Imagining the World: The Significance of Religious Worldviews for Science Education,' *Science and Education*, 18(6-7) (2007), pp. 783-796, and 'Teaching Evolution in a Creationist Environment: An Approach Based on Worldviews, not Misconceptions,' *School Science in Review* 90(331) (2008), pp. 49-56.

⁴⁹ This is not to deny that my belief about how many hairs constitute the average eyebrow could be so wildly off, that the processes, or lack of processes by which this belief was formed, affect the formation of beliefs on more serious matters.

that a particular belief appears on curricula, educators ought to ask: How much of a practical difference would it make to the student's life if they were *not correctly informed* about that belief's truth (if they were wrong, or had no opinion, for instance)? Supposing that Christianity were true, it would obviously make a practical, if eschatological, difference to their lives if children are not *correctly informed* about whether Christianity is true, just as much as it makes a practical difference if children are not right about how to ensure their physical health. The more 'foundational' a piece of information is, the more of a practical difference it is likely to make in the following ways: to undermine or re-cast much of what is already believed, or to provide a platform for the future assimilation and interpretation of further information. In the sciences, for instance, evolutionary theory is foundational in just this sense for much of biology, zoology and anthropology.

Summary

In this chapter, I contended that, other things being equal, an intrinsically valuable object's coming to harm is a bad thing, while its being benefitted is a good thing. I also contended that, the nearer an act brings us towards becoming like God, the better it is for us, and the more it keeps us from becoming like God, the more it harms us. The content of parental responsibility was contrasted with the content of extra-parental responsibility. The parental role is to provide an overview of the care which children need, and ensure that they receive it, not to provide it themselves. This role further requires a depth of and pervasiveness of concern. It seems that children need stability, and strong loving relationships. These are the wellbeing needs, and scope for their best satisfaction that generate the parent role, a role which, as I argued in the previous chapter, is often (but by no means always) best satisfied by biological parents. There are also extra-parental responsibilities generated by the potential harms to which children are susceptible: responsibilities that out-strip the abilities of people who play the parent role, *qua* occupants of that role, to minister to. Children are best able to learn while young and may reasonably have a paternalistic attitude taken to them to further their own benefit, and while adults might benefit from compelled learning, it is especially cruel to restrict opportunities into adulthood, with childhood being understood as a period of time rather than a physical or mental state. However, since children are more impressionable than adults, special concern needs to be paid when exercising influence

over them. We asked why seek and share truth, looking at a challenge from Nietzsche, and responded with arguments from E. Jonathan Lowe, R.S. Peters, and Robert Nozick, before outlining the duties of truthfulness. One key import of this conclusion has been that, the more rational people are, the better off they are, i.e. the more competent and inclined they are to apportion belief to the evidence, and to seek evidence and suspend judgement where they lack evidence.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Evidence is not always necessary or relevant to establishing the truth of claims. There are of some things which are (quite properly) immune from evidential refutation: seemingly truths of maths and logic, as these are prior to evidence. Furthermore, it seems that some (defeasible) warrants for belief require no further justification, on pain of infinite regress, warrants such as memory and perception.

Chapter Four

THOSE RESPECTS IN WHICH PEOPLE ARE APT TO BE FORMATIVELY INFLUENCED

Introduction

My question is how (if at all) we may ethically influence children, with respect to religions. More particularly, we have in mind the ethics of deliberate, formative influence. I have distinguished formative influences from behavioural influences in Chapter 1, claiming that they are not mutually exclusive, but merely distinct. Behavioural influences make a difference to what people do, and formative influences make a difference to those of their mental characteristics in virtue of which they are what they are: their beliefs and desires for instance, or, more generally, their dispositions. Others may like to say that these dispositions constitute our character, our identity, or *who* we are.

We should be clear that the sense of personhood (or of identity) that is of interest here is not that which has to do with people's persistence conditions. We may assume that individuals have synchronic and diachronic identities which distinguish them from other individuals at any given time, and in virtue of which they are identical with some spatiotemporally distinct individual from an earlier time (e.g. those conditions in virtue of which Eminem is numerically identical with Slim Shady, but distinct from Dr Dre, and again why a contemporary Eminem is numerically identical with a young Marshall Mathers). When we speak of identity such as that which is cultivated by formative influence, we do not have this in mind at all. Indeed, the same individual might undergo a deep and comprehensive transformation, while retaining their diachronic and synchronic identity. That is why it is possible to say of an individual that he is a changed man or a different person without paradox. Furthermore, an individual could have exact clones made who would share all of their attitudes and beliefs and so on, but who are yet numerically distinct individuals who must therefore have distinct persistence conditions.

It is obvious that there are limits to what influence we can have over one another. For instance, some attempts to influence people to be a certain way are superfluous, as people would be thus and so *anyway* (e.g. encouraging people *not* to grow wings), others attempts are idle because no influence *could* make them thus and so (e.g. encouraging people *to* grow wings). There may then be some *rigid* internal conditions in virtue of which people do what they do, and in virtue of which they cannot be brought to do other things.¹ Our interest will be in the *malleable* internal conditions in virtue of which people do what they do, as these are respects in which people *can* be formatively influenced by one another. The point about *internal conditions* is to distinguish them from *external conditions* in virtue of which people do what they do: say, being asked, ordered or coerced into acting, all of which constitute behavioural influences.

The *malleable* internal conditions in virtue of which people do what they do may come with default settings which can be altered (e.g. we may naturally feel disgust at some things, and come no longer to feel disgust at them), or they may come with no default settings, but empty value fields, which may be given some input (e.g. we may have no beliefs about whether God exists, and yet come to hold some). Malleability may vary by degree in different people, and one may think of one's plasticity as registering on some kind of scale with an inability to change at one end, and an inability to avoid change at the other (between maximal and minimal impressionability). However, before one thinks of an inability to resist the force of an influence as always being a sign of weakness, gullibility, or undiscerning, one ought to reflect that a rationally decisive argument will compel an agent to accept its conclusion insofar as that agent is rational. Any ability to resist such compulsion appears obtuse.

While our particular volitions to act may be affected by what I have termed 'behavioural influences', more intimately with our personhood (and hence 'formatively'), those of our dispositions which incline us towards actions and volitions may also be influenced; dispositions being "those properties picked out by predicates like 'is fragile' or 'is soluble', or perhaps more accurately by sentences of the form 'x is

¹ This may be because either some kind of non-environmental determinism is somewhat true (genetic determinism, for example) or libertarianism maybe somewhat true (one may say: I will not try to persuade you: you'll either accept the deal or you will not).

disposed to break when struck' or 'x is disposed to dissolve when placed in water'."² Ultimately, we are interested in the ethics of influencing those of our malleable yet stable internal conditions which incline us towards our actual volitions and actions. What are those conditions (i.e. in which respects can we be formatively influenced)?

Learning versus Formative Influence

The question 'in what respects can we be formatively influenced?' is distinct from the question, 'what can be learned?'. It seems that the latter is a subset of the former, for, in principle, there could be forms of formative influence in which nothing is learned. Perhaps knowledge could imaginably be uploaded or implanted, for instance.³ Short of such speculative possibilities, learning and being formatively influenced might seem to be coextensive. And even still, the respects of formative influence and the range of the learnable might be coextensive still. However, we should reflect that people have often been formatively influenced in ways that cannot naturally be classed as teaching, or learning. Michael Hand has suggested the examples of foot binding and female genital mutilation to me in a private correspondence, remarking that "they are certainly things that are done to children that change them, or affect their development, in significant ways." A more positive example might be confidence-building exercises.

Focusing on just the case of what can be learned, Hand has convincingly argued that it is broader than "skills and factual knowledge" (contra D.W. Hamlyn), since we can learn falsehoods, and truths, but without *knowing* them to be true. It is also broader than propositions (be they true or false, justified or unjustified), skills and "control by paying relevant attention" (contra John Wilson), since "learning to be compassionate or just does not seem to be a case of coming to know something, nor does it appear to be a matter of acquiring self-control."⁴ Ultimately, Hand judges that he knows of no

² John Maier, 'Abilities,' *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2011 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/abilities/>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

³ For instance, in *The Matrix*, a character named Neo is plugged into a machine for "combat training" and "learns" Jujitsu (or *uploads* a Jujitsu programme) in just a few seconds. He turns out to be something of an upload savant, taking on board several other martial arts shortly thereafter. "I know Kung Fu" he announces, "show me" replies his mentor. Sure enough, Neo is able to demonstrate impressive new Kung Fu skills that rival his mentor's. At the same time, it is highly doubtful whether Neo could be said to have *learned* these skills, as opposed to another form of acquisition, *The Matrix*, dir. by The Wachowski Brothers (Warner Bros, 1999).

⁴ Michael Hand, 'What *could* go on the School Curriculum?' in *The Philosophy of Education: An Introduction*, ed. by Richard Bailey (London: Continuum, 2010), p. 51.

satisfactory answer to the question of what can be learned, and recommends the question for further attention. This question is part of our concern insofar as we want to identify those things that can be learned, and in virtue of which people do what they do. We want to know how we can best characterise and classify the various different kinds of malleable internal conditions in virtue of which we do what we do. We are attempting to identify discrete *respects* in which we may be formatively influenced. These seem to be somewhat wider than those things which we can ‘learn’, and which can be ‘taught’, but they are susceptible to influence.

In this chapter, we shall critically survey and attempt to synthesize the best parts of some notable answers to our question. We will consider potential answers from the work of Timothy D. Wilson, E.J. Thiessen, Daniel C. Dennett, Harold Bloom (et al), E. Jonathan Lowe, and Herbert Kelman. I will defend a critical synthesis of these proposals. Before we begin by discussing the work of Dennett, by way of a brief, advance summary, I argue that we regard the following as constituting those respects in which we are apt to be formatively influenced:

1. The degrees and kinds of one’s physical and mental abilities
2. One’s stock of concepts
3. Those propositions which one understands
4. One’s cognitive, propositional attitudes, such as belief and disbelief
5. One’s affective attitudes to propositions and objects.

Memes

In his book, *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea*, Daniel C. Dennett defends the idea that human beings are (in Suzanne Blackmore’s memorable phrase) ‘meme machines.’⁵ Although definitions vary, a meme is, roughly, “an idea, behaviour, style, or usage that spreads from person to person within a culture.”⁶ The term was coined by Richard Dawkins in his book, *The Selfish Gene*:

We need a name for the new replicator, a noun that conveys the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of *imitation*. ‘Mimeme’ comes from a suitable Greek root, but I want a monosyllable that sounds a bit

⁵ Suzanne Blackmore, *The Meme Machine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), Daniel C. Dennett, *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995).

⁶ <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/meme>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

like 'gene'. I hope my classicist friends will forgive me if I abbreviate mimeme to *meme*. If it is any consolation, it could alternatively be thought of as being related to 'memory', or to the French word *même*. It should be pronounced to rhyme with 'cream'.⁷

One way to think of this is to conceive of the brain as a piece of biological hardware, capable of supporting software, that might be called ideas, beliefs, and so on (although the extension of the phrase 'so on,' is precisely the issue at stake), but that may be captured under the general heading, 'memes'. Memes go beyond this, expanding to any respects in which humans are imitable by one another (or indeed any respects in which one entity is imitable by another entity). Question: What can go on the curriculum? Answer: Memes! Dennett gives a fascinating example of this way of thinking during a talk entitled 'How Did the Humanities Evolve?'⁸ "Whenever you hear a philosopher use the word 'surely' a little bell should ring 'ding', because you've probably just located the most weak point in the person's argument ... he doesn't want to argue for it, he's trying to nudge you along with a 'surely'." Dennett then announces "I have just downloaded an app on to your neck top". Dennett's 'application' is a habit, one that is apt to pass through cultural transmission such as conversation.

Dennett observes that "our normal view of ideas is a normative view [...] In brief, we ought to accept the true and [admire] the beautiful." And, says Dennett, it is because a claim is thought to be true, and a painting beautiful that they are believed and admired respectively. In contrast, for Dennett, the proper explanation of why a claim is believed, or why an artwork is approved of, recasts claims and artworks as memes, and says that "meme X spread among the people because X is a good replicator."⁹ However, we may worry that this claim is either rationally self-defeating (if it is thought to explain everything), or that it is true but trivial. Memetics (the study of memes) seems to claim the following:

1. That the entirety of the intellectual economy is formed of replicable units
2. That the entirety of human behaviour is made up of replicable aspects
3. That the entirety of the explanation as to why they are replicated has to do with whether they are suited for replication, and is no different in character to the explanation of why some genes are successful in particular environments.

⁷ Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, Second Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 192.

⁸ Daniel C. Dennett, 'How Did the Humanities Evolve?' <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2er4N5hzKA>> @ 44:56 [accessed 23 June 2015].

⁹ Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, pp. 363-364.

The question arises as to how anything like rational thought enters into evaluating these three claims. If it doesn't, then it seems that this whole way of talking is itself a meme which has no rational foundation and it would be a staggering coincidence if it turned out that the flow of memes produced a correct explanation of itself. Indeed, it may seem that the very notion of truth drops out of the picture as memes, like genes, become mere coping mechanisms to navigate the environment, rather than representations of a mind-independent world. However, the question arises as to whether that picture is true, and if it is, then it cannot be true after all (its truth is not even possible). As Anthony O'Hear explains: "As with every other belief or theory we should be minded to accept it only if we have genuine reasons to think it true – which is just what the meme analysis leaves no room for. So we should reject it."¹⁰

If a weaker hypothesis is suggested, that while some ideas are rationally spread, others are spread in a more gene-like fashion, we could be more sympathetic. These evolutionary stories could be mobilised to explain non-rational trends in a rational fashion. That much seems trivially true, however. While some philosophers of education, such as Smeyers, Smith and Standish might be expected to scorn the very notion of memes, declaring "the reconstruction of the pupil or student as a collection of programmable skills" to be part of the lamentable condition in which education finds itself in valuing "performativity," an argument is required to say how it is wrong.¹¹ It might well be suited to the performativity agenda, but that does not show it to be wrong, indeed, it need not be adopted for the performativity agenda. For our purposes however, we may say that it leaves the most interesting question open, namely 'what kinds of memes are there?' Thus, for us, Memetics has little to offer for the moment (indeed, we might even hope that we have something to offer it). One other limitation is that memes are not co-extensive with those respects in which we can be formatively influenced, since while we might become more or less confident, these are not acquired through imitation or transmission but through such practices as encouragement, praise and deference.

¹⁰ Anthony O'Hear, *Beyond Evolution: Human Nature and the Limits of Evolutionary Explanation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 157-158.

¹¹ Paul Smeyers, Richard Smith, and Paul Standish, *The Therapy of Education* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 4.

Timothy D. Wilson and Narratives

Timothy D. Wilson argues that “in order to understand why people do what they do, we have to view the world through their eyes and understand how they make sense of things.”¹² Wilson cashes out the ideas of how people ‘view the world’ and ‘make sense of things’ with the concept of a ‘narrative’.¹³ For instance, Wilson contends that “people have core narratives about relationships that are rooted in their early interactions with their primary care givers,” furthermore “our interpretations are rooted in the narratives we construct.”¹⁴ In sum, our interpretations of events are rooted in narratives that are constructed from experiences, such as early interactions with caregivers. The notion of a narrative emphasizes a certain holism, and structuredness of one’s belief set, especially in its suggestion that there might be core, and, by implication, peripheral beliefs. There may be two kinds of core beliefs, and these may overlap: emotional core beliefs and epistemic core beliefs. Compare my belief that I am a good person with my commitment to the law of non-contradiction. One might be central to my particular conception of myself, and perhaps to my emotional security, the other is a precondition of my ability to make any sense of the world at all. Our narratives are essentially first-personal, not third-personal (although, one can attempt to be more objective or impersonal in one’s account of the events in which one features).¹⁵ They attempt to show the connectedness, or coherence of the episodes of one’s life. One’s narrative is a representation to oneself, of oneself, of one’s past and projections into one’s future.

Wilson’s account of narratives raises two questions for us. The first is whether there are any explanations of why it is that we do what we do, that go beyond our narratives, which still deal in internal malleable dispositions. The second is whether a narrative is a

¹² Timothy D. Wilson, *Redirect: The Surprising New Science of Psychological Change* (London: Allen Lane, 2011).

¹³ The term is found in other places also. MacIntyre emphasizes the importance narratives. It is connected with the idea of ‘meaning making’, too. Galen Strawson has criticized the idea that all of us are narrative beings with a need to represent our lives to ourselves as stories, saying it is simply empirically false “Some of us don’t naturally cast or construe our lives as a narrative or story of some sort, and we don’t experience parts of our lives in this way either. Nor do we think of ourselves as opposed to our lives in a narrative way.” Galen Strawson, ‘We Live Beyond Any Tale That We Happen to Enact,’ *The Harvard Review of Philosophy* 18(1) (2012), pp. 73-90.

¹⁴ Wilson, *Redirect*, p. 9.

¹⁵ According to Wilson, attempting to construct more impersonal narratives of disturbing experiences can help to relieve distress. I am here reminded of Thomas Nagel’s contrast of the internal, subjective point of view and accommodating it in a more external, objective account of the world and one’s place within it (cf *The View from Nowhere*), and Bernard Williams’ contrast of more ‘parochial’ and more ‘absolute conceptions’ of reality (*Descartes and the Project of Pure Enquiry*).

simple thing, or whether it admits of analysis into parts in some principled way which themselves make up the range of those malleable, yet stable internal conditions which incline us towards our actual volitions and actions. By way of caution, we should worry that people's narratives could prove delusional (a monster may conceive of themselves as being fundamentally decent, for instance) and that they may be rationalizing rather than rational (someone may have done something quite kind for a selfish reason, and convinced themselves that it was because it was kind that they did it).¹⁶ If narratives are to be causally efficacious in general, then they will need to be more than post-hoc, epiphenomena. Consider the following example of the possibly causally redundant role of the narratives, with which people understand themselves. 'Implicit Bias' is the name given to those biases which we do not know ourselves to have, and which we may even believe ourselves to not have. According to the Stanford School of Medicine's website, Social Science has shown that, unbeknownst to themselves, people can hold "a positive or negative mental attitude towards a person, thing or group." Furthermore, "our implicit and explicit biases often diverge."¹⁷

Learning Objectives in Schools

Many schools already distinguish learning-objectives from learning-outcomes, with outcomes cited as evidence of the satisfaction of objectives. It is learning objectives that we are primarily interested in here. To focus on learning outcomes is too behaviouristic for our purposes; for we are interested in what it is in virtue of which people do what they do, not in what they do. The divisions between 'knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes' form the usual taxonomy of learning objectives. For instance, a lesson might hope to encourage students' knowing the key people, actions and consequences during the holocaust, understanding why the actors did what they did, being able locate and interrogate relevant sources, and their being appalled by the concept of mechanised genocide. These ways of dividing up the respects in which human beings can be formatively influenced are not obviously flawed. They presuppose (and perhaps not wrongly) that knowledge is the only kind of belief which it is worthwhile and

¹⁶ Delusion can sometimes explain why people do what they do; somebody who is convinced that they are made of glass may be very cautious about being struck by anything, and so one's core narrative explains one's behaviour. Alternatively, it could be a post hoc justification, and so a rationalization rather than causal explanation.

¹⁷ Stanford School of Medicine, <http://med.stanford.edu/diversity/FAQ_REDE.html> [accessed 23 June 2015].

acceptable to promote. If Timothy D. Wilson is right, perhaps one might only add the integration of knowledge into stories containing one's own self as an important aspect of formative influence. One might also add the tendency to exercise control by paying relevant attention, if John Wilson is right. However, one is not yet inclined to eliminate or transmute knowledge, understanding, skills or attitudes. A fuller discussion of these prospective respects of formative influence will wait until later.

Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomy

Benjamin Bloom et al.'s prominent taxonomy of educational objectives divides the range of the learnable into three 'domains', namely the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. Each domain is made up of hierarchically arranged categories, the more sophisticated of which presuppose competence of the less sophisticated parts. The first volume of the taxonomy, on the cognitive domain, was published in 1956,¹⁸ and a second volume, on the affective domain, followed in 1965.¹⁹ Bloom projected, but never produced, a third volume, on the psychomotor domain. Others attempted to fill the gap, but we shall look at the original Bloom handbooks here, and also their more recent development and defence by Anderson and Krathwohl.²⁰ The original categories to be found in the Bloom handbooks were these:

- The categories of the cognitive domain, from least to most sophisticated, are: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.²¹
- The categories of the affective domain, from least to most sophisticated, are: receiving phenomena, responding to phenomena, valuing, organization (or prioritization), internalizing values.²²

¹⁸ B.S. Bloom, M.D. Engelhart, E. Jonathan Furst, W.H. Hill, D.R. Krathwohl, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals. Handbook I: Cognitive Domain* (New York: David McKay Company, 1956).

¹⁹ D.R. Krathwohl, B.S. Bloom, B.B. Masia, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals. Handbook II: Affective Domain* (New York: David McKay Company, 1964).

²⁰ R.H. Dave, 'Psychomotor levels in Developing and Writing Behavioral Objectives,' pp.20-21 in *Name of Book* ed. by R.J. Armstrong (Tucson: Educational Innovators Press, 1970); A. Harrow, *A Taxonomy of Psychomotor Domain: A Guide for Developing Behavioral Objectives* (New York: David McKay 1972); E. Jonathan Simpson, *The Classification of Educational Objectives in the Psychomotor Domain* (Washington, DC: Gryphon House 1972).

²¹ Bloom et al., *Handbook I*, p. 18.

²² Krathwohl et al., *Handbook II*, p. 35.

The categories of the affective domain are far less plausible than those of the cognitive domain. Their proposed progression seems deeply confused. Surely valuing, which is apparently a higher order skill, is presupposed in receiving and responding to phenomena (which just translate as listening to and engaging with other points of view). Furthermore, the idea that organization (or resolving inconsistencies, and tensions, and such like) occurs before internalizing values is absurd: the idea here is that one maps out the values that one ought to have and then upload the results is manifestly false. It is more often the case that one is challenged about one's behaviour and attitudes, and reflects on them after the fact, perhaps modifying them for the future. Ethical reflection is more often a matter of bringing one's existing commitments into reflective equilibrium rather than deciding which values to internalize in the first place.

The Bloom Taxonomy of cognitive learning defined knowledge as the ability to remember previously learned information. ("Knowledge, as defined here, involves the recall of specifics and universals, the recall of methods and processes, or the recall of a pattern, structure, or setting").²³ Bloom took knowledge to be more basic than understanding, but, as Bernard Williams puts it, "if you do not know what it is you are believing, how can you be sure that you are believing anything at all?"; that is, belief, and thereby knowledge, presupposes understanding.²⁴ Consider the absurdity of the following reviewer's comment (from an otherwise insightful review): "comprehension requires students to understand what they know."²⁵ Clearly one has to comprehend what one knows, or one would not know what it is that one apparently knows.

These problems might simply be redressed if we simply recast 'knowledge' as 'memory', for surely someone can remember some string of information without understanding it. Indeed, this change was made by Anderson and Krathwohl et al.²⁶ Anderson and Krathwohl also argue that "the real nature of a synthesis necessitates creating a new product;" consequently rebranding 'synthesis' as 'create', modifying its definition, and placing it at the top of the cognitive hierarchy.²⁷ The list of cognitive

²³ Bloom et al., *Handbook I*, p. 201.

²⁴ Bernard Williams, 'Tertullian's Paradox,' in *Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 3-21, 17.

²⁵ Jack Conklin, 'A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives,' *Educational Horizons* 83(3) (2005), p. 155.

²⁶ Anderson, L.W., Krathwohl, D.R., (eds) Contributors: Airasian, P.W., Cruikshank, K.A., Mayer, R.E., Pintrich, P.R., Raths, J., Wittrock, M.C.. *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (New York: Pearson, Allyn & Bacon, 2001).

²⁷ Conklin, p. 157.

feats, in order of ascending difficulty, suggested by these authors, is as follows: remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating, and creating. There does seem to be something right about the idea that synthesis involves evaluation, and that evaluation does not involve synthesis, even though it sets one out on the path to synthesis. However, the idea that creation is the most demanding feat seems doubtful. One can create a new work of art by splashing a bit of paint about, but it is much harder to accurately recreate an old work of art (it may not be worth doing so, but it is a harder task). Indeed, creativity is often a matter of noticing the benefit of some mistake, which is to say, creativity is often serendipitous, rather than deliberate. The sense of 'creativity' that is more deserving of a top spot would be a critical synthesis of existing materials into a coherent whole.

One might say that one need not recollect anything in order to, for instance, be critical of it, or be said to understand it. I have understood many more sentences than I can recollect. And indeed, I could see a sentence for the first time, which I understand, and which I cannot (of course) understand in virtue of recalling it. Indeed, it seems that understanding the sentence 'put the cat on the mat' requires some analysis. Perhaps one might associate it with an action all in one go, without understanding the parts of the sentence, but understanding in general requires some level of analysis due to the compositionality of meaningful sentences from meaningful part (in this case: 'put', 'the cat', 'on', and 'the mat').

In general, the Taxonomists want to distinguish between 'higher order' and 'lower order' thinking, the idea being that the higher order processes presupposes competency in lower order processes. We might think of this as being a scale of human cognitive flourishing. However, we should just qualify this by saying that mastery of lower levels may produce material of greater worth than mere competence of higher levels of thought. Or one might reasonably suggest that great mastery of the lower levels is redundant (e.g. recalling great sequences of signs, without comprehension, such as recalling the whole of the Yellow Pages, without being able to call a single number in it). It might outline broad categories of phenomena, but it does not help us assess their worthwhileness. Furthermore, it does not help us distinguish between deep and shallow degrees of understanding - we will have to go further and work out what a deep and worthwhile understanding is. I recall Hubert Dreyfus remarking in a lecture that he had taught a course about an aspect of Heidegger's philosophy, and that one of his students

had understood it better than he did himself, and, indeed, had understood it better than Heidegger did, as he had proposed more defensible revisions. Here, we see understanding phasing into evaluation and synthesis. This might be termed 'deep understanding', and distinguished from some baser level of comprehension. However, it seems that even base level comprehension presupposes something. We also ought to hesitate over the notion that evaluation is a high level activity whereby one, who has not evaluated, has, in some way, failed relative to someone who has; it might be that withholding judgement is sometimes more rational than passing judgement. I was taken aback when I asked E. Jonathan Lowe whether he was a theist, agnostic, or atheist, as he replied quite pointedly that rather than fitting any of these categories, he simply had no opinion. It raised the possibility for me that I had rushed to conclusions, when confronted with a much more critically reflective, and informed person who had suspended judgment. Obviously enough though, a deep and worthwhile understanding of a topic will usually require more than an ability to recall strings of symbols.

The idea that evaluating phenomena is a higher order activity is also highly doubtful; people evaluate phenomena instantaneously, and unreflectively. There are more conscious processes where one makes oneself aware of their evaluations, perhaps suspends and informs their judgement and deliberates further on what judgement is best. However, simply feeling one way or another about things is part of the most basic processes whereby people are able to survive in hostile environments: infants have pro-attitudes about being nursed that they surely cannot have deliberated on.

Indeed, one might also reasonably seek to blend affective and cognitive domains; Eamonn Callan draws on a distinction between *relational* and *appreciative* understanding. Relational understanding seems to consist in having a mental representation of a thing, and some sense of how it connects with and relates to other things (by similarity, causal chains and what not). Appreciative understanding, however, involves some sense of whether it is good or bad, desirable or undesirable.²⁸ Michael Hand observes that:

cognition and affect are not at all easy to separate: an integral part of coming to understand the facts, theories, texts and narratives that make up the cognitive content of the curriculum is coming to feel their

²⁸ Eamonn Callan, 'Why bring the kids into this?' *Faith in Education: A Tribute to Terence McLaughlin*, ed. by Graham Haydon (London: IoE Press, 2009), pp. 14-15.

interest and excitement, their inspiration or disenchantment, their nobility, injustice, comedy or tragedy.²⁹

The sort of understanding that Hand has in mind here is appreciative, which can be distinguished from more formal and disinterested forms of understanding. For instance, someone may be able to answer questions about the holocaust correctly, to reason well about it from the evidence, and yet take a disinterested, merely professional view of it. Here, it would seem that there was a major failing in their appreciative understanding, even if their more formal understanding was outstanding.

Anderson and Krathwohl et al. depart from the original, where “it was assumed that the original Taxonomy represented a cumulative hierarchy; that is, mastery of each simpler category was prerequisite to mastery of the next more complex one.”³⁰ In their version, some of the skills which exemplify having understood content are considered more complex than some of those that exemplify the ability to apply content (e.g. explaining content versus executing a task).³¹ They also want to distinguish between the categories’ applications to what they call factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive knowledge. These do not appear to me to be exhaustive and exclusive categories. They are not clearly related to one another, and they appear somewhat arbitrary. Indeed, Jason Stanley and Timothy Williamson have powerfully challenged the idea that examples of ‘knowledge how’ cannot be reduced to examples of propositional knowledge.³² Indeed, picking out conceptual knowledge and self-knowledge (metacognitive knowledge) from among the contents of things that one can know about might be justified for some practical purposes, but they do not seem to be ontologically special, for instance, self-knowledge is a species of factual knowledge.

In general, the Bloom taxonomy and its revisions provide us with interesting, systematic and recognizable, realist taxonomies of formative influence. The details of the taxonomies at which I have looked seem doubtful, but it is always possible that a much more defensible version will yet be brought to my attention.

²⁹ Michael Hand, ‘Should We Promote Patriotism in Schools?’ *Political Studies* 59(2) (2011), pp. 328–347.

³⁰ D.R. Krathwohl, ‘A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy: An Overview,’ *Theory into Practice* 41(4) (2002), pp. 212–218, pp. 212–13.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

³² Jason Stanley and Timothy Williamson, ‘Knowing How,’ *The Journal of Philosophy* 98(8) (2001), pp. 411–444.

E. Jonathan Lowe, Belief + Desire Psychology versus Volitionism

According to E. Jonathan Lowe, our actions are sometimes rational, and sometimes non-rational (if still reasonable). Those actions are rational which are performed *for a reason*, and those are non-rational which are caused by psychological forces such as combinations of beliefs and desires.³³ (At the same time, in Lowe's own example, unreflectively dodging a piece of falling masonry is reasonable, if not, in this sense, rational). This view amends the picture of human beings as belief-desire machines, mechanistically determined to act by inner psychological forces over which they have no control (or which comprise them), to allow them the faculty for genuinely free choices, or volitions, which are often (although by no means always) part of the explanation of our actions. Indeed, such a psychologically determinist outlook can be seen to be implicit in some of the above accounts if they are taken to be exhaustive accounts of why it is that we do what we do. It would be fair to add here though, that picturing human beings as bystanders to their beliefs and desires, determining their actions in concert, has a false ring to it since human beings may be thought to be largely constituted by their beliefs and desires.

Herbert Kelman on Personal Identity

Herbert Kelman has written on the extent to which our personal identity can be influenced by others. What he has in mind by 'personal identity' is made up of:

the enduring aspects of a person's definition of her-himself, the conception of who one is and what one is over time and across situations. [Their personal identity] is what individuals bring to the many situations and social interactions in which they become involved as they go through the life cycle and, at any given period of time.³⁴

However, as we have seen in our discussion of narrativity, people's self-conceptions are apt to be mistaken: how people think they are, and how they are is different; the latter is more important, and encompasses the first, anyway. We could amend this to regards people's actual identity as being constituted by those of their behaviours that *are*

³³ E. Jonathan Lowe, *Personal Agency: The Metaphysics of Mind and Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 181.

³⁴ Herbert C. Kelman, 'The Place of Ethnic Identity in the Development of Personal Identity: A Challenge for the Jewish Family,' in *Coping with Life and Death: Jewish Families in the Twentieth Century, Studies in Contemporary Jewry: An Annual*, Volume XIV, ed. by P.Y. Medding (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 3–26, 3.

“enduring aspects of a person ... over time and across situations,” that they “bring to the many situations and social interactions” in which they become involved.³⁵ On Kelman’s account, those respects in which we are apt to be formatively influenced are just our behaviours. However, he makes highly idiosyncratic use of that word (one which seems to include almost every explanatory aspect of behaviour to the exclusion of behaviour itself): “I use the term behaviour very broadly to include attitudes, opinions, beliefs, values, and action preferences. My model is not concerned with the motor aspects of behavior, but with its evaluative components.”³⁶ Kelman’s list of internal malleable dispositions then, consists of “attitudes, opinions, beliefs, values, and action preferences,” which he terms the “evaluative components” of behaviour. It seems that the last four of these are all examples of attitudes.

Elmer Thiessen and Social Grouping

Elmer Thiessen has contributed interestingly (although not explicitly) to this topic in his discussion of the ethics of evangelism. Thiessen glossed ‘evangelism’ as any “deliberate attempt [...] to bring about [...] a change of a person’s belief, behaviour, identity and belonging.”³⁷ This, it seems, is Thiessen’s analysis of the respects in which we might be formatively influenced with respect to religion. Unfortunately, Thiessen’s analysis leaves us wanting a fuller account of ‘identity’, and although we can form our own plausible conceptions to fit the bill, this does not tell us what Thiessen had in mind. Furthermore, his conception of ‘belonging’ seems to oscillate between two different senses, namely a “sense of belonging”³⁸ and, more substantively, “re-socialization into an alternative community,”³⁹ elsewhere, Thiessen even implies identity and belonging to be the same thing: “a change of identity (belonging).”⁴⁰ Thiessen glosses ‘a change of identity’ as “a change of who you are,”⁴¹ which is itself ambiguous. A plausible sense could be ‘a significant change of one’s character’. More importantly however,

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 7.

³⁷ Elmer John Thiessen, *The Ethics of Evangelism: A Philosophical Defense of Proselytizing and Persuasion* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2011), p. 11. Evangelism in this sense may be either religious or non-religious, depending on whether it is religious beliefs, behaviours and identities that one is attempting to inculcate, and religious groups that one is attempting to make people feel part of.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 16.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 10.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 16.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 10.

and somewhat problematically for me, Thiessen draws attention to influence over social grouping; a respect in which we can be influenced, which does not seem to be anything like a disposition. Grouping people is to put them into groups: to make them spend time together. It could additionally involve giving them roles within that group, and can be more or less coercive. It appears to be a form of behavioural influence then, which will presumably come to have a formative influence. That said, we might take Thiessen to offer the following answers: beliefs, behaviour, character, and sense of belonging.

Proposed Respects of Formative Influence

Informed by the accounts that we have considered, I shall now present my account of those respects in which we are apt to be formatively influenced. First though, I want to explain why we should not include behaviour among those respects in which we are apt to be formatively influenced. It is because if one were interested in behaviour, it seems that interest in beliefs, for instance, would be rendered redundant, because it seems that behaviour is to be explained partly in terms of beliefs. Indeed, our behaviour does not count among those things in virtue of which we do what we do; it just is what we do. By way of which sorts of malleable, internal conditions do people do what they do? It is the ethics of our effects on these that we are interested in. I shall now sketch what I take to be the likeliest candidates.

1. One's abilities (or powers) in degree, if not always in kind:⁴²

1.1. One's Mental Abilities:

This include our abilities to believe certain propositions (via concepts), to perceive things (also via concepts), to refrain from action, and to execute an array of mental feats (to be impartial, imagine, remember, direct attention and so on). Anderson and Krathwohl suggested: recollection, comprehension, application, analysis, evaluation and creation, and these are also plausible examples.

⁴² Arguably, we never truly acquire a new power altogether, but only develop those out of which we construct more kinds of powers: the power to twist and the power to push down, and the power to rearrange the order in which we execute actions allows us to remove the lids from medicine bottles.

1.2 One's Physical Abilities:

For instance, abilities to perform certain actions such as running, jumping, climbing, chewing, swallowing, reading and so on. Bloom refers to these as “psychomotor” skills. Such actions as making beds, tying threads and running baths would be too generous a psychomotor ontology, rather what is important is the fine and gross motor skills which are common across all kinds of social activities.

2. One's Concepts:⁴³

One would be unable to decide to perform an action that one does not have the concept of, for instance, somebody from the distant past could not choose to build a nuclear reactor.

3. Those propositions which one understands, and towards which one may have a cognitive or affective attitude:

Believing or disbelieving that it is true, and fearing or hoping that it might come true. Propositions will presumably be composed of concepts.⁴⁴ Those propositions which we understand make up the set of those propositions which we may believe, for as we have heard Williams say once already, “if you do not know what it is that you are believing how can you be sure that you are believing anything?”⁴⁵ That said, it does seem that we can defer to authorities of both understanding and epistemic warrant, saying: I neither understand nor (for that very reason) believe this proposition, but believe that you both understand it and know it to be true. In this way, we might be committed to a proposition without even understanding it.

4. One's Cognitive Attitudes:

These attitudes include belief, disbelief and doubt. It seems that the beliefs we have form the framework within which we decide to do what we do: if we decide that we want a stamp and go to get one, where we go will depend on where we believe we

⁴³ Although, it might be that some concepts are innate, and not open to revision.

⁴⁴ “The content of a thought can include only what the content of its constituent concepts (and ‘logical’ syntax) contribute” Jerry A. Fodor, ‘Language, Thought and Compositionality,’ *Mind & Language* 16(1) (2001), pp. 1–15, 6.

⁴⁵ Bernard Williams, ‘Tertullian's Paradox,’ in *Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline*, ed. by A.W. Moore (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 2006), p. 19.

can get one, and our decision to go and get one will depend on what sort of thing we think that a stamp is and how it connects with other things that we want to do, such as getting a parcel to a distant friend. Furthermore, in so far as we are rational, our beliefs about what reasons we have to act or believe will also affect what we go on to do.⁴⁶

Following Wilson, we might allow the interrelations of these to be a prominent feature. However, beliefs have to be interrelated to count as beliefs in the first place it seems. Daniel C. Dennett seems to demonstrate this in a discussion of implanted beliefs. An interesting question is posed by Dennett: “Suppose we have entered the age of neurocryptography,” he says, “and it has become possible for ‘cognitive micro-neurosurgeon’ to do a bit of relevant tinkering and *insert* a belief into a person’s brain.”⁴⁷ Suppose that Tom has the belief: “I have an older brother living in Cleveland” inserted, and that it is false. This might play out in two ways, says Dennett, one in which Tom’s rationality is intact, and one where it is damaged. Were Tom asked whether he has a brother, he would answer that he does, and that he lives in Cleveland. Were he asked anything more about his brother, he might realise that the belief was false and eliminate it (after all, he also believes that he is an only child, and has no recollection of his brother). On the other hand, he might maintain that he has an older brother living in Cleveland (“in the nature of a tick”), and that he is also an only child, in which case “his frank irrationality would disqualify him as a believer.”⁴⁸ Worse, perhaps, “pathologically, the brain will surround the handiwork with layers of pearly confabulation,” such as a made up name and what not. Where Tom is to remain rational, in order for the belief to be sustained, it cannot be inserted in isolation, or without simultaneously eradicating other beliefs.

5. One’s affective attitudes to propositions and objects:

Fearing that a particular proposition should be true and loving a particular person are examples of affective attitudes to a proposition and object respectively. They

⁴⁶ For any proposition, a person may take one of the following (mutually exclusive) attitudes: belief, disbelief, or agnosticism. They may also take no attitude at all - at least in that case that they are unaware of the proposition.

⁴⁷ Daniel C. Dennett, *Intuition Pumps and Other Tools for Thinking* (London: Penguin, 2013), p. 65.

⁴⁸ Dennett (2013), p. 66.

would include Thiessen's example of a 'sense of belonging' to groups. These may be cashed out further, in terms of:

5.1 One's 'first order' wants,⁴⁹ and their prioritization and

5.2 Which stimuli trigger which attitudes (for instance, Nazi propaganda aimed to provoke disgust at the thought of Jews, by associating them with vermin).

Discussion

These might all be described as dispositions, and all perishable dispositions. Indeed, some want to account for beliefs⁵⁰ and powers as dispositions. A dispositional analysis of powers might go like this: just in case one wants to do something and wills to do it, they are disposed to do it, whereas, those that aren't able, are not disposed to do it or willing to do it (e.g. raising one's arm when under the influence a powerful sedative). We might think of character and other dispositions more generally being formed by repeated action, sometimes reflective action, so that actions become less reflective and perhaps more sophisticated. We may be reminded of the following warning about character formation in this regard:

Mr. Wiseman then cautioned his young friends as to the habits they contracted in early life: "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." You sow an act, you reap a habit (acts repeated constitute habits); you sow a habit, you reap a character; you sow a character, you reap a destiny. Let them, he said, cultivate habits of industry, application, and order, and they might rely upon it, with God's blessing, they would succeed in life.⁵¹

Here, actions form dispositions, and so it seems that by encouraging one-off actions, we set off on the journey to forming dispositions.

⁴⁹ Harry G. Frankfurt, 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,' in *The Importance of What We Care About* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 11-25.

⁵⁰ Frank Ramsey provides a functionalist account of belief along the following lines. A belief is to be individuated by its causal properties: my belief that the wine is not poisonous will have different causal consequences, all other things being equal then if I did not have this belief; Frank P. Ramsey and George E. Moore, 'Symposium: Facts and Propositions,' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (Supplementary Volumes) 7(1) (1927), pp. 153-206.

⁵¹ 1856 August 27, The Essex Standard, and General Advertiser for the Eastern Counties, Kelvedon School, (Mr Wiseman speaking), Quote Page 2, Column 6, Colchester, England. (19th Century British Library Newspapers: Part II).

Where Have the Other Candidates Gone?

We established that Memetics had little to offer us in failing to divide up the sorts of memes. Wilson's narratives, considered as first personal, holistic structures with cores and peripheries that inform our interpretations and actions were in serious danger of becoming epiphenomenal, and so causally uninteresting. On the other hand, they also had the drawback of failing to discriminate their constituent parts. Their benefit was in offering some degree of structure to constituent parts.

We observed that many schools and curricula distinguish between knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes as learning objectives. We allowed that beliefs form a broader category than knowledge, without presupposing the value of truth. We allowed also that understanding was ambiguous between being able to entertain the content of a thought, and having some appreciation for the value of a thing. We held that attitudes were a broad enough category to capture belief states. It seemed that integration of knowledge and attitudes into coherent stories containing one's own self might be an extension of this list too, and also 'control by paying relevant attention', in John Wilson's expression (such as when we learn not to look down while rock climbing), that would seem to be an example of developing a habit, or eliminating a habit. E. Jonathan Lowe's volitions may well be parts of our mental landscape, but they do not seem to be internally malleable dispositions, or indeed dispositions at all.

Kelman's categories of attitudes, opinions, beliefs, values, and action preferences, were subsumed, it seems. Thiessen's categories of belief and sense of belonging have been accommodated. Behaviour was rejected, as was re-socialization, as not belonging to the category of respects of formative influence. The category of 'identity' is perhaps captured by the taxonomy as a whole. One worry in this line of thinking is that it sets up a false opposition, between individuals in isolation on the one hand, and individuals in situ on the other. However perhaps there never are thoroughly internal properties that people have; perhaps people's properties are necessarily constituted in part by their surroundings.⁵²

Not all of the ethics of influence is captured with this focus. Indeed, we can influence people to act via coercion, and even if we did not change them much in the above

⁵² This is a conclusion which Hilary Putnam's belief externalism, Twin Earth considerations motivate, cf his seminal paper, 'Meaning and Reference,' *The Journal of Philosophy* 70(19) (1973), pp. 699-711.

respects, it would seem to be an unethical example of influence (simply playing on what dispositions were already in place).

Summary

As we have frequently reminded ourselves, it is the ethics of deliberate, formative influence that I am interested in here, and I have distinguished formative influences from behavioural influences in Chapter 1, claiming that whereas behavioural influences make a difference to what people do, and formative influences make a difference to those of their internal malleable characteristics in virtue of which they are apt to do what they do. In this Chapter, I argued that we are apt to be formatively influenced in the following five respects:

1. The degrees and kinds of one's physical and mental abilities
2. One's stock of concepts
3. Those propositions which one understands
4. One's cognitive attitudes, such as belief and disbelief, to those propositions
5. One's affective attitudes to those propositions and also to objects.

We've these respects in mind, we can proceed to ask by what *means* children *can* and *may ethically* be formatively influenced, which is the subject of our next chapter.

Chapter Five

WHAT FORMS CAN AND SHOULD INFLUENCE TAKE?

Introduction

This chapter discusses *means* by which children *can* and *may* be formatively influenced. We begin by trying to make sense of the notion of a ‘means’ or ‘form’ of influence by distinguishing between three rival ways of categorizing actions, namely by, intentions, processes and outcomes. Three kinds of platforms which influencers can use to amplify or enable their communication acts are then discussed, namely, media used to communicate, the social status of the communicator relative to those communicated with, and the social status of the spaces and occasions in which they occur. An explanation of the differences between directed and undirected, systematic and *ad hoc*, and rational and non-rational, potentially influential, acts follow. I then develop the notions of rational and non-rational means of influence at length, offering examples of each, before arguing that rational means of influence are morally preferable to non-rational means of influence.

Forms of Influence

What forms *can* influence take? We might list all sorts of (potentially or actually) influential activities: propagandising, journalism, educating, indoctrinating, manipulating, informing, persuading, arguing, recommending, demonstrating, explaining, inspiring, dissuading, impressing, convincing, lying, enculturating, conditioning, training, and on and on. However, this seems to be a mixed list (i.e. some actions may be counted twice by satisfying more than one member, since the categories cut across each other). For instance, propagandising, journalism, educating, and indoctrinating might all involve persuasion, arguing, inspiring, and impressing. Some of its members are to be identified by the effect that they have, since they are (to borrow Gilbert Ryle’s expression) *achievement verbs* while other members, namely, *task verbs*, are not to be identified by the effect that they have, but by the effect that they aim to

have.¹ So, while one cannot succeed in impressing without impressing anybody in particular, on the other hand, one can succeed in reporting an event without an audience; for instance, I might report on an event in a private diary, perhaps in a secret cypher. The contents of such a report would remain inert as a potential influence until its code is cracked. Importantly, for each success verb, we may be lacking in a convenient task verb, but there was no less task conducted to which the success term may be applied retrospectively (with certainty), or prospectively (perhaps with some confidence), e.g. we may say retrospectively: she has persuaded the audience, or prospectively, that she's persuading the audience as we speak. Alternatively, we might want to say that she is *trying* to persuade the audience, but she might not be trying at all and yet still be engaged in a process which might well have that result. Our task is to specify those discrete kinds of potentially influential acts which may be used to influence people, be they direct or indirect, and which may be employed across various media, professions and spaces. We ask: in what principled ways can we distinguish between forms of influence, and what taxonomy of influence is available to us?

There are potentially influential activities which may be performed, and it seems that these can be performed on different platforms, changing the probable audiences. For instance, consider the difference between reporting an incident in a private conversation in a private place, and reporting it in private conversation in a public place, or reporting it on a popular television show, and reporting in a private diary which someone reads. Here, reporting an incident seems to be one sort of communication act, one which may be performed on different platforms, changing the probable audiences. But how exactly are we to specify potentially influential acts, so to avoid mixed lists? It seems that there are three rival ways of categorizing actions, namely, intentions, processes, and outcomes.

Intentions, Processes, and Outcomes

We might want to specify potentially influential acts in terms of their intentions, their processes or their outcomes. Impressing, and inspiring seem to specify influential acts by outcome. 'What did the actor do?' one might ask, and an answer might come that 'They inspired me', or 'They impressed me'. On the other hand, we might want to

¹ Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Penguin Book, 2000), pp. 49-53.

specify potentially influential acts (or activities) in terms of processes; what they involve doing on the actor's part. This allows that outcomes may vary. Talking, for instance, seems to be very process specific, and nothing to do with outcomes: one can talk without talking to anybody, and without thereby having any particular effect on them. Of course, process and outcomes do have some connection: reporting an episode to somebody (if they believe you to be accurate and sincere) will have the result that they take your word about the episode. Finally, one may intend to affect a certain outcome, act in a way that one thinks will affect it, and yet the chosen acts does not affect the intended outcome. While some act terms are tightly connected with the outcomes, such as making an impression or being inspirational, here it seems that we retrospectively characterize the act in terms of the outcome, even though it does not seem essential to its nature. Outcomes are what are desired it seems, and processes are what may be employed to achieve them. Either or both outcomes and processes may form the content of our intentions. We have already argued in Chapter 2 that it is what harm we intend or allow, and what harm we risk (either through indifference or negligence) for which we are morally culpable.

Platforms of Influence

There seem to be three sorts of platforms that we might identify for potentially influential acts: media used to communicate (e.g. television), social status of the communicator relative to those communicated with (e.g. a college student's professor), and the social status of the spaces and occasions in which they occur (e.g. during the Royal Society's Christmas lecture).

Media seem to comprise means of recording and/or broadcasting information. Media are means of communicating a message, or cultivating a specified outcome (attempting to affect an influence that one can specify in advance). It seems that the printed word, telephones, television, the internet, radio broadcast, all fit on this list. They are all capable of supporting any of the members in the (mixed) opening list of influential activities. Media may make use of different forms of information: images, text, audio recording, and motion pictures (it is less clear how texture, scent, heat and taste, among the forms of data available to other senses may be recorded or broadcast). The internet is a medium that can support any of these forms of information; the printing press can

only support the first two; radio can only support audio. One might suggest that a flick book can record motion pictures, and one might admit this (it is not *too far* an artefact from a film reel, which *could* be understood as a motion picture file), but insist on its limitations. One might ask: what about Twitter, and Facebook, and blogs? These are social networks, and, to that extent, they are social spaces comprised of media. They are means of inter-personal communication facilitated by the internet. They are means of exchanging information of the sort listed above. The information that they share could equally not be recorded or broadcast, and they could perhaps find alternative vehicles of dissemination. It seems that media are *means* of influence in one distinct sense.

I have said that media are means of recording or broadcasting information. One might wonder whether those things recorded and broadcast can be media as well; whether dance, speech, and song might count as media, for instance, or whether a story or play might be a medium. Arguably, all communication is dependent on some medium or other, if only vibrations in the air and language. Here, then, the modifier 'mass' is helpful in distinguishing mass media from more circumscribed media. Media might be thought of as platforms, but not all platforms are media; one might think of public spaces such as soap boxes at Speaker's Corner in London, theatres, cinemas, schools, or universities. Any shared space is a platform for communication. It is any space in which one has access to another; one could list shopping malls in general or particular shopping malls, or crowded streets, or places of work. One might also think of social positions as being platforms for influence: being a police officer, a teacher, a doctor, a prime minister, a journalist, a celebrity, are likely examples of individuals whose social status makes a difference to their communicative power. Here, the status of the space and the actor are important because they determine the degree of trust that they will likely be leant by the audience. When an esteemed professor delivers the Royal Society's Christmas lecture, or when a doctor, or teacher informs their audience of a proposition, their audience are often rationally obliged to believe them. (Although discovered abuse of trust can undermine the rationality of investing trust in the future.)

Directed versus Undirected Communication

One interesting distinction is between knowing and not knowing whom it is that one is addressing. For instance, contrast talking with a dear friend in person with putting a

message into a bottle, and putting it out to sea. These may be thought of as pure examples of directed and undirected communication, each of which occupy opposite poles of a continuum. Plato voiced a general concern about undirected communication in the *Phaedrus*:²

Once it has been written down, every discourse rolls about everywhere, reaching just as much those with understanding as those who have no business with it, and it does not know to whom it should speak and to whom not.³

Film certification, by such bodies as the British and Irish Boards of Film Classification (the BBFC, and IBFC), the establishment of television watersheds, and creation of document passwords somewhat ameliorate this problem. However, no content is like Arthur's sword in the stone, presenting itself only to those for whom it is properly suited. I remember admiring the gangsters in *Goodfellas* as a teenager, and for that reason it might have been better if the film had known that I was not ready to see it.⁴

Systematic versus *ad hoc* Communication

In conversation, we often tell stories and jokes, to amuse or entertain, or simply to relay something of an interesting experience from our day. These are *ad hoc*, being told to friends or strangers as we fancy. By contrast, we may assume a slightly more systematic approach: suppose someone says something racist in conversation, we may have developed a strategy for responding to such comments: either to ignore them, challenge them directly, or drop hints and problems along the way, for instance commenting 'is it not true that Martin Luther King a hero?' Or 'would you not say that Morgan Freeman a great actor?' On other hand, as with curricula, we have thoroughly systematic approaches to communicating information. Curricula are systematic programmes for learning.⁵

As we have said, our task is to specify those discrete kinds of potentially influential acts which may be used to influence people (whatever kind of media they assume, directed or undirected, ad-hoc or systematic, in various professions and various spaces). We

² Cf. Bernard Williams, 'Plato: The Invention of Philosophy,' in *The Sense of the Past: Essays in the History of Philosophy*, ed. by Myles Burnyeat (Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2009), pp. 148-186.

³ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 275d-e, trans. by Williams, 'The Invention of Philosophy,' p. 150.

⁴ *Goodfellas*, dir. by Martin Scorsese (Warner Bros, 1990)

⁵ Curricula can be instantiated across our three kinds of platforms: media, social space and social role.

want to know in what principled ways we can divide forms of influence up, what taxonomy of influence is available to us. The contrast between rational versus non-rational means of influence is a promising start. What is this rational/non-rational distinction? Borrowing from Michael Hand's usage, "held non-rationally" (when said of, for instance, a belief), means held "without regard for the evidence", thus, "held rationally" would mean "held *with* regard for the evidence".⁶

Rational versus Non-Rational Influence

Rational Influence

One might hope to convince people using *rational methods* that a proposition is true, that an action, attitude, or emotion is good or appropriate, or that a habit would be good to cultivate. According to Hand, beliefs can be transmitted in two rational ways. First, "where beliefs are known to be true, they can be imparted by means of rational demonstration" in which a proposition is proven to enjoy sufficient probative force to make non-belief irrational, or at least to make belief rational.⁷ Second, "other things being equal, when a person perceived by others to be an intellectual authority [on a relevant matter] asserts that a proposition is true, she places them under a rational obligation to accept her assertion. [Insofar as they are rational] she *imparts a belief* to her listeners, and she does so by *appealing to their reason*".⁸ This is fairly intuitive: belief acquisition can be warranted either by testimony, or by acquaintance with the stuff being testified to. Non-rational methods would involve any other means of influencing someone. Perhaps Hand would admit one more form of rational influence, namely, that of providing the conditions within which students might discover the truth of some proposition themselves. This also captures the method of 'steering', which Hand, in turn, glosses as "guiding participants, by means of strategic prompts, questions, and interjections, toward a predetermined conclusion."⁹ One might think of

⁶ Hand, 'Religious Upbringing Reconsidered,' pp.545-557, 545.

⁷ Ibid. Propositions can enjoy sufficient probative force to make belief rational, and they can also enjoy sufficient probative force to make denial irrational. Hand thinks that directive education requires the latter. In fact, Hand thinks that where the latter is not in evidence, then it must have taken a non-rational means of persuasion to convince someone of the proposition. This is clearly not the case, however; indeed, Hand even allows that people can come to religious beliefs rationally, without any lack of available information, or relevant expertise. We will return to this line of criticism later.

⁸ Ibid, p. 551.

⁹ Michael Hand, 'Framing Classroom Discussion of Same-Sex Marriage,' *Educational Theory* 63(5) (2013), pp. 497-510.

such closed-ended exercises as allowing students to conduct experiments to discover facts about the world, as not too dissimilar to steering: after all, when the experiments do not show what they are supposed to, the teacher says: we did the experiments wrongly, not: we have made an important discovery. Are there any other forms of rational influence?

Rational Deliberation

In his book, *Redirect*, psychologist, Timothy D. Wilson, recommends what he calls the ‘Pennebaker Technique’, in which a writing exercise is set on a topic about which the subject is confused and anxious. The task is to write an account, of a traumatic event, say, requiring the subject to contemplate the event until they settle on a telling of the event with which they are content. To this end, Wilson tells us to “commit to writing about your problem for at least 15 minutes a day for three or four consecutive days – ideally at the end of each day – and [to] write without interruption each time”.¹⁰ The technique is, as attested to by robust empirical warrant, apt to markedly reduce confusion and anxiety. The exercise seems somewhat similar to essay writing *per se*. Indeed, we might observe that writing is a sort of technology, a way of making one’s thoughts external. In articulating and externalizing one’s thoughts, one is put in a better position to sort through them and, for instance, make them self-consistent (to establish reflective equilibrium among them). While it is perfectly possible, given the unreliability of memory, that one will, in writing about the incident, reimagine and falsify it. As such, I suggest that this is a rational exercise. Although no particular conclusion is recommended in setting the exercise, it is recommended that people come to some self-consistent set of opinions on a given topic (a coherent account of it), and a manner of achieving this is recommended also, namely, the writing technique. It is to a large extent a non-directive exercise, allowing for a diversity of acceptable accounts, they are better to the extent that they are self-consistent, comprehensive, simple, and detailed.

¹⁰ Wilson, *Redirect*, p. 72.

Two Concerns About Rational Persuasion

There are two concerns that we ought to address before moving on to discuss non-rational influence. First, the limitations of rational persuasion in affecting change, and, second, the problems that are inherent in deferring to intellectual authority.¹¹ Thaler and Sunstein note that “the evidence does not suggest that education is, in and of itself, an adequate solution” for affecting change; by ‘education’, they have in mind ‘rational influence’ in the above sense.¹² There seem to be some limits to what rational methods can achieve, the most obvious examples being that phobias, addictions and delusions do not seem to be shaken by the recognition of good reasons, or prevent them from being recognized as such. Timothy D. Wilson gives an example of Kurt Lewin’s finding that: “Simply lecturing people about the importance of” eating organ meats during the food shortages of Second World War “didn’t work”. However, women who attended meetings in which “skilled leaders steered the conversation to the ways in which obstacles to serving organ meats could be overcome,” were “much more likely to serve organ meats.”¹³ This manner of steering can look somewhat underhanded, and, indeed, perhaps we ought to distinguish between rational steering, and non-rational steering, which splits in respect of whether or not participants are steered towards influences for which they recognize decisive rational grounds. Albeit, David Bridges and David E. Cooper might both very well think that any kind of steering represents an abdication of truthfulness unless it is admitted upfront that this is what one’s agenda is.¹⁴

Michael Hand recommends that we put rationality ahead of autonomy as an educational aim on the grounds that merely being the one whose judgement counts is not always rational; we often do better in deferring to intellectual and moral authorities (i.e. those who are in a proper position to know about something, or tell us what to do).¹⁵ We should usually believe experts, and should usually obey police; at least in societies with laws that are (for the most part) just, and police who (for the most part) enforce them justly. Indeed, James Ladyman gives good examples of rational deference to intellectual

¹¹ An intellectual authority is one who is in a position to opine on topics in a reliable way. A ‘moral authority’ is one to whom we ought to defer on the question of what to do. Sometimes it is proper to defer to tour guides, teachers, and police officers about what to do.

¹² Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein, *Nudge* (Penguin Books: London, 2009), p. 121.

¹³ Wilson, *Redirect*, p. 11.

¹⁴ David Bridges, *Education, Democracy, and Discussion* (Slough, UK: National Foundation for Educational Research, 1979), p. 114; David E. Cooper, ‘Teaching and Truthfulness,’ *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 27(2-3) (2008), pp. 79-87.

¹⁵ Michael Hand, ‘Against Autonomy as an Educational Aim,’ *Oxford Review of Education* 32(4) (2006), pp. 535-550.

authority, emphasizing the sheer diversity of deep and narrow epistemic specializations (even within physics) required for undertaking and interpreting data from experiments conducted with the Large Hadron Collider.¹⁶ The complexities of each specialization are such that nobody can be conversant in all forms of expertise, and so not only is the epistemic labour split, but so too is any comprehensive and detailed understanding of the enterprise. Each contributor is heavily dependent on deference to the judgement of other colleagues, whose discipline they can understand only dimly by comparison with their own. However, this can sound extremely worrisome in light of reports of German soldiers replying “I was just following orders” when asked about their role in the Nazi atrocities at concentration camps. In *Obedience to Authority*, Stanley Milgram, reports a now infamous experiment in which people defer worryingly to a perceived intellectual cum moral authority. When told by a person in a white lab coat to punish another participant with an electric current which was turned up gradually to what they believed were fatal levels, most subjects obeyed, though they were distressed by doing so.

There are other examples of similar experiments. For instance, C.K. Hofling found that twenty one out of a sample of twenty two nurses would have administered a patient with an overdose of medicine when ordered to by unknown doctors in a hospital setting, in spite of official guidelines forbidding giving such a dose.¹⁷ One point made by Ladyman is that where doctors abuse their intellectual authority, this undermines the trust people can and should have in their professions. One might suggest that perhaps there is often no good ground to determine who we should defer to and who we should not: and it is a case of moral luck as to whether we defer for the best. In these cases, it seems that the participants had good grounds to resist obedience, and, yet, obeyed. Similarly, parents are culpable for any harm that befalls their children when they entrust them to ‘quacks’, but not when they entrust them to medical doctors who then abuse their power and mistreat their patients (a doctor Harold Shipman type, for instance).

Onora O’Neill has argued convincingly that trust ought to be retracted in cases of breach of trust:

¹⁶ James Ladyman, ‘Pseudoscience and Bullshit,’ <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32ZaTKa2IRg>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

¹⁷ C.K. Hofling et al., ‘An Experimental Study of Nurse-Physician Relationships,’ *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 143(2) (1966), pp. 171-180. It seems that the nurses were in such a position that they had to defer to authority one way or another: either indirect communication through official guidelines, or direct communication from a doctor. Either way, they were deferring to an authority.

Trust requires an intelligent judgement of trustworthiness. So those who want others' trust have to do two things. First, they have to be trustworthy, which requires competence, honesty and reliability. Second, they have to provide intelligible evidence that they are trustworthy, enabling others to judge intelligently where they should place or refuse their trust.¹⁸

If O'Neill's criteria have been satisfied, deference seems to be warranted. There also seems to be a presumption of trustworthiness for qualified doctors so that we would trust them until they prove untrustworthy. However, it would be wrong to trust someone who does not have medical training on complex medical matters. In these cases, an institution is being entrusted with selecting competent, honest, reliable professionals, and their trustworthiness is inherited from the institution, and its proven track record, one that can be undermined by malpractice by its members. Deference, it seems, is not inherently bad. In some matters, we should not defer to others, with the Milgram experiments chief among them. In the case of Nazi obedience, the consideration of punishment for disobedience was also an important mitigating factor so that one might have known that it is morally best to disobey, and that it might be heroic to do so, but heroism might reasonably be thought to be morally supererogatory. However, what is worrisome is not rationality here, but deference. Deference is sometimes rational, and sometimes not. Contrasting with rational methods of persuasion are non-rational methods of persuasion, which we shall discuss now. Rational methods are to be preferred to non-rational, since they are truth-sensitive, and being able to track the truth seems important to flourishing, as argued in Chapter 2.

Non-Rational Methods

We have said (following Hand) that using anything but the presentation, or testifying to their existence of, rationally decisive grounds in order to impart a belief of attitude, belief, or policy etc., makes use of non-rational methods of influence. However, we have allowed that steering, and framing discussion and experiments, can be utilized as forms of rational influence. It seems fair enough to define non-rational methods by reference to rational methods, since, after all, the term non-rational is simply the negation of 'rational'. The range of things that belong to this category may be

¹⁸ Onora O'Neill, 'How to Trust Intelligently,' <<http://blog.ted.com/how-to-trust-intelligently/>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

importantly open ended. Some prominent examples can be found in contributions to social psychology. Much social psychology seems to be more focused on behavioural influence rather than formative influence. For instance, many of the ‘nudges’ described by Thaler and Sunstein in *Nudge*, and many of Robert Cialdini’s mechanisms of persuasion in *Influence*, are concerned with what it takes to encourage desired responses, and actions, on a fairly immediate basis. Nevertheless, there is much which is both interesting and relevant.

Pseudo-Rational Methods

Leading off from our discussion of rational methods of influence, let us start our discussion of non-rational methods of influence by considering methods of influence that play off of the desirability of rational persuasion, and pretend to count, as examples of it. These pseudo-rational methods include knowingly presenting fallacious arguments, the motivated provision and concealment of relevant information and arguments, and lying. Feigning intellectual authority, and stating something as true without either argument or any intellectual authority seem to count as examples, and so too does reverse psychology. Consider the following illustration of reverse psychology. One man who is unable to walk around easily, has a front door that will not close properly unless slammed. He falls out with a visitor, who storms out of the apartment. The immobile man yells after his visitor “and don’t slam the door.” Sure enough, in a bad temper, his visitor slams the door, as per his wishes, but contrary to his request. Hand describes as semi-rational, “Galston’s ‘noble, moralizing history’, in which the fine deeds of a mythologised ‘pantheon of heroes’ are rehearsed and celebrated,” describing it as “at once an exercise in emotional manipulation and an attempt to supply pupils with reasons to be patriotic, albeit spurious ones.”¹⁹ ‘Pseudo-rational’, might be a more apt description than ‘semi-rational’, but it is not clear – perhaps aspects of Galston’s style of education are genuinely rational, rather than quasi-rational, in that they are scattered among non-rational elements. The difference between quasi-rational and actually rational education might turn on one of two things: whether the teacher offers reasons they believe to be spurious, or which happen to be spurious despite their own acceptance. After all, it is important to recognize that even experts can be misled by bad arguments, despite paying due diligence.

¹⁹ Hand, ‘Should We Promote Patriotism in Schools?’ pp. 328–347, 329.

Motivated Acceptance

We can be motivated to believe propositions, and it is easier to believe what we want to believe (what we want to be true), and harder to believe what we don't want to believe (what we don't want to be true). Given this, one may appeal to what people want, in attempting to persuade them.²⁰ This phenomenon is more commonly termed 'wishful thinking'.

Re-Socialization and Conformity

It seems that we become more like those around us the longer that we spend with them. Eamonn Callan terms this, "the magnetic power of conformity,"²¹ and Robert Cialdini, 'social proof.' One means we use to determine what is correct is to find out what other people think is correct; we view a behaviour as more correct in a given situation to the degree that we see others performing it.²²

By way of example, using canned laughter causes audiences "to laugh longer and more often when humorous material is presented and to rate the material as funnier."²³ In another example, the 'smoke-filled room study' showed that people were more inclined to stay in a room as it filled with smoke, if stooges remained in the room unperturbed (although that experiment was designed to test whether there was a 'by-stander effect', which lessened people's willingness to raise an alarm than when alone).²⁴ Here, one's judgements are likely conflicted, the judgement 'I should raise the alarm' conflicts with the judgement 'nobody else thinks that it is appropriate to raise the alarm, so perhaps I am over reacting'. Indeed, the rarity of whistle-blowers may further exemplify this phenomenon. In fact, these social processes may, in fact, be different, but closely related, kinds of phenomena.

Some influences just 'rub off' on us, like a local accent on an extended holiday. We copy one another, and thereby 'fit in' with one another, whether in respect of what we

²⁰ On this matter. see Simon Blackburn on 'Motivated Belief' in *What Do We Really Know? The Big Questions in Philosophy* (Quercus, 2012), p. 72.

²¹ Eamonn Callan, 'Integration as Stealth Assimilation,' in *Education and Philosophy: New Perspectives on the Work of John White*, ed. by Judith Suissa, Carrie Winstanley and Roger Marples (London: Routledge, 2014), p.160.

²² Robert B. Cialdini, *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion* (New York: Morrow, 1993), p. 116.

²³ *Ibid*, p. 115.

²⁴ Bibb Latané and John M. Darley, 'Group Inhibition of Bystander Intervention in Emergencies,' *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 10(3) (1968), pp 215-21; a video of the experiment is available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KE5YwN4NW5o>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

wear, how we speak or even what we believe and value (sometimes more consciously, sometimes less consciously). Becoming self-aware, we might raise our behaviour to the conscious level, and then make a habit of some alternative behaviour in order to have it become a second nature. Lou Reed's lyrics, "anything that you might do, I'm gonna do too. You held up a stagecoach in the rain, now I'm doing the same" provide a lively expression of conscious mimicry.²⁵ One thinks also of a Japanese candid camera show in which hundreds of actors lay face down in the street; when passers-by saw this they lay down on the street also.²⁶ It seems that intention and consciousness can vary when it comes to conforming with, or mimicking others, just on the grounds of numeracy; one might intentionally emulate another, or one might attempt to keep from emulating another, and yet still do so through unreflective slippage. Finally, one might have no intentions one way or the other, and yet still do so. These are connected with whether or not the emulation is conscious, it seems that intentional acts are necessarily conscious ones.

It is because of this feature of human nature that it is possible to influence people by re-socializing them, and by setting examples. This might not be considered as a kind of influential act, but rather as an example of determining what we might call 'influence architecture' (borrowing from Thaler and Sunstein's expression 'choice architecture').²⁷ It is not entirely clear if this should be classed as an example of behavioural or formative influence. That is because if we are ever-malleable (or plastic), and able to adapt to conform to new social environments, then we might be tempted to say that we are not formatively influenced but only behaviourally influenced. Even still, we can be influenced in those respects in virtue of which we do what we do, even if that is to be explained in terms of a circumstantial fact.

Consider some other examples of re-socialization. The architecture of Kilmainham Gaol, Dublin City's historic prison based on Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon design, separated inmates into individual cells so as to keep them from spreading anti-social behaviours and attitudes.²⁸ Character reform was sought through separation from bad

²⁵ 'I'm Sticking With You', performed by the Velvet Underground, lyrics by Lou Reed.

²⁶ <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQMfiOnVeVo>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

²⁷ Thaler and Sunstein, *Nudge*, p. 3

²⁸ Michel Foucault discusses this design at some length, arguing that the same process of separation and observation is used by modern States in managing and 'improving' their subjects, be they "a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy." *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin, 1991); see, Chapter 3, 'Panopticism' for his discussion, and p. 200 for the quotation.

role models, and being without the privacy to persist in antisocial attitudes and behaviours. Indeed, prison may have the function of a criminal university for convicts. This is well illustrated by a remark of George, the central character of the film *Blow*: “Danbury wasn’t a prison, it was a crime school. I went in with a Bachelor of marijuana, came out with a Doctorate of cocaine.”²⁹ The same worry is put this way in *A Clockwork Orange*, “cram criminals together and what do you get? Concentrated criminality; crime in the midst of punishment.”³⁰ Indeed, separating friends judged to be a bad influence on one another into separate school classes is also an example of this practice. It is a kind of intervention in people’s location and socialising, and can sometimes count as an infringement of their rights to freedom of association, and self-determination.

One’s objects of emulation can vary in scope. One can emulate some admired individual (as Alexander the Great self-consciously emulated Achilles), some admired class of individuals (as a young boy might emulate his footballing heroes), or the people by whom one is surrounded just in virtue of their being the majority. We may recall Williams’ finding obscure the idea of blaming people who do not accept the values by which one judges them wanting, and his interpretation of blame as a pragmatic tool for encouraging people to internalize those values, and come to judge themselves by it. For Williams, blame is a “proleptic mechanism” which depends on the common “disposition that consists in a desire to be respected by people whom in turn one respects.”³¹

Herbert Kelman’s Account of ‘Identification’

Herbert Kelman’s analysis of what he calls ‘identification’ offers an account of emulation of three sorts distinguished above. For Kelman, ‘identification’ is a means by which:

an individual accepts influence because he wants to establish or maintain a satisfying self-defining relationship to another person or group.

²⁹ *Blow*, dir. by Ted Demme (Apostle, Avery Pix, New Line Cinema, 2001).

³⁰ *A Clockwork Orange*, dir. by Stanley Kubrick (Warner Bros, 1971).

³¹ Bernard Williams, ‘Internal Reasons and the Obscurity of Blame,’ *Logos* 10 (1989), pp. 1-11, 7.

The individual actually believes in the responses which he adopts through identification, but their specific content is more or less irrelevant.

He adopts the induced behaviour because it is associated with the desired relationship. Thus the satisfaction derived from identification is due to the act of conforming as such.³²

Kelman wants to argue that this kind of process or incitement to an influence is vulnerable to the cessation of the identification. One reservation we might have about Kelman's analysis is that identification might well work the other way around, where one is attracted to a relationship in virtue of the content of a person's memes, and not *vice versa*. Thus they may lose that attraction if the memes change. Somewhat differently again, some people have converted to a faith in order to forge a relationship, and some have maintained their faith after the relationship has ended. Perhaps this is somewhat similar to those who have moved abroad for the sake of a lover, who at the end of the affair decide to stay on. "I'm not here for them, I'm here for me", they say to themselves. Kelman identifies 'believing for extrinsic rewards' with 'identification', but presumably belief for extrinsic rewards (we could term this 'motivated belief') can find other motivations than 'identification'. In connection with this, we might be reminded of 'cults of personality', which Wittgenstein's disciples exemplify quite well, as detailed in Ray Monk's biography of Wittgenstein, *The Duty of Genius*.³³ There, students are recounted as having modelled themselves on not just Wittgenstein's philosophical views and methods, but also his aesthetic tastes, his style of dress, and mannerisms. It seems that we are impressed by the force of personality that some people have, and may, more or less consciously and more or less comprehensively, model ourselves on them.

Timothy D. Wilson's Story Editing Techniques

Wilson's 'Story Editing' tools are "a set of techniques designed to redirect people's narratives."³⁴ Wilson counts the 'Pennebaker Technique' that we encountered earlier among these; although, earlier, I argued that setting writing tasks of that sort ought to be classed as an example of rational influence (albeit, non-directive). The other techniques

³² Herbert C. Kelman, 'Compliance, Identification, and Internalization: Three Processes of Attitude Change,' *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 2(1) (1958), pp. 51-60, 53.

³³ Ray Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: the Duty of Genius* (London: Vintage, 1991).

³⁴ Wilson, *Redirect*, p. 11.

that Wilson prescribes are ‘Story Prompting’, ‘Steering’ and ‘Do Good, Be Good’. Story Prompting “involves redirecting people down a particular narrative path with subtle prompts.”³⁵ For example, one might narrate people’s actions so that they come to internalize that narrative; in Wilson’s example, labelling children as “helpful people” encourages them to internalize this view of themselves. According to Wilson, “we have to be more subtle with adults; rather than simply giving them a label for their behaviour, we need to get them to reach that conclusion themselves”.³⁶ Steering, in Wilson’s sense, encourages people to engage in reasoning which presupposes the content that one hopes to transmit (a nefarious example of this technique, is the question “how does one kill the Jews?”).³⁷ One might reasonably describe this as often being pseudo-rational (although perhaps learning to do maths, or use proper grammar perfectly innocently requires this sort of instruction). “Do Good, Be Good” is the name that Wilson uses to describe how “our narratives will change to match our behaviour” (which will presumably make our behaviour less effortful, or less prompt-dependent, otherwise, narratives would appear superfluous).³⁸

Positive and Negative Reinforcement, and Neither

Positive and negative reinforcement are often employed to exercise formative influence. Examples include the following pairings of contrasting concepts: punishment/reward, incentive/disincentive, approval/ disapproval, praise/ blame, encouragement/ discouragement. For each of these pairs, presumably, it is possible to do neither, and take a neutral stance of neither encouraging nor discouraging whatever respect of influence is in question (a particular attitude, for instance). Likely, there is nothing wrong, per se, with positive and negative reinforcement, but particular examples of it are wrong: humiliation, and physical harm (hitting, and starving, for instance). However, these look like tools for behavioural influence in the first instance, which may thereby wield a formative influence. They may, for instance, habituate one to certain behaviours through repeated action. One might say that the internal disposition to act in that way is simply the habit (rather than any particular attitudes and beliefs, say).

³⁵ Ibid, p. 14.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 11.

³⁸ Ibid, pp. 17, and 74.

What Forms Should Influence Take?

We have discussed what forms influence can take. Now, we will discuss what forms influence should take. Hand wants to encourage evidence-sensitive belief. This aim seems to be concordant with our conception of wellbeing detailed in Chapter 3. Hand worries that to influence children by “appeal to anything other than their reason is to gain their assent by the exercise of psychological power, to charm or intimidate them into belief. It is to implant beliefs in such a way that they are held non-rationally or non-evidentially.”³⁹ This is morally wrong, however, because “Insofar as one’s beliefs are held non-evidentially [...] they are highly resistant to rational reassessment. Because they are not founded on evidence, the discovery of counter-evidence has little or no effect on them.”⁴⁰ To the extent that one’s beliefs and judgements have been non-rationally imparted in a specific domain, one is prevented from thinking rationally about the content of that domain. One’s ability to track the truth is thereby undermined, and so the extrinsic goods of rationality are undercut, and so too is the intrinsic good of being rational.⁴¹

In his book, *The War for Children’s Minds*, Stephen Law observes that “appealing to someone’s power of reason strongly favours beliefs that are true.” He challenges the reader “to construct a strong, well-reasoned case capable of withstanding critical scrutiny for believing that the Antarctic is populated by crab-people or that the earth’s core is made of cheese”, and comments dryly, that “you’re not going to find it easy.”⁴² For Law:

reason is a double-edged sword. It cuts both ways. It doesn’t automatically favour the teacher’s belief over the pupil’s. It favours the truth, and so places the teacher and pupil on a level playing field. If

³⁹ Michael Hand, ‘A Philosophical Objection to Faith Schools,’ *Theory and Research in Education* 1(1) (2003), pp. 89-99, 95.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ On Hand’s use of the word ‘indoctrination’, “to indoctrinate a child ... is precisely to impart beliefs to her in such a way that she holds them non-rationally”, Hand, ‘Religious Upbringing Reconsidered,’ pp.545-557, 545. However, accusing a teacher of having “Having imparted beliefs to her *in such a way that they are held non-rationally*” may well seem odd. If one did everything one could to ensure that a belief came to be held rationally, and yet failed in their task, it would seem unfair to suggest that one had done anything wrong. But this is what seems to follow from Hand’s analysis if indoctrination is to be a moral wrong. One might just tweak the definition of indoctrination from “imparting beliefs to her in such a way that she holds them non-rationally”, to “imparting beliefs in such a way that she will likely hold them non-rationally”. Alternatively, one might deny that culpability is part of the concept of indoctrination, and that it is necessarily wrong.

⁴² Stephen Law, *The War for Children’s Minds* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 32.

as a teacher, you try to use reason to persuade, you may discover that it is actually you, not them, that's mistaken.⁴³

If one thinks that it is important that children become adults whose beliefs track the truth, one should agree with Hand that we ought to equip children to rationally form and revise their judgements, and so worry about anything which damages their ability to do so.⁴⁴ According to Hand, using perceived intellectual authority to convey a false belief "is a lesser crime than indoctrination" (or 'successful, non-rational influence') on the grounds that rationally imparting and importing beliefs does no damage "to the child's capacity to make rational judgments [...] [since their] beliefs are held on the basis of evidence and are open to revision and correction."⁴⁵ Jim Mackenzie has pointed out that it is an empirical question as to whether teaching a given belief in a particular way will result in the child's being able or unable to revise beliefs on the basis of further reasons and argument. He claims also, that it is empirically false. As he sees it, Hand is committed to "two conditionals: (a) that if a belief is held nonevidentially, then it cannot be modified in the light of evidence or reasons, and (b) that if a belief is held on the basis of evidence, then it can be modified in the light of evidence or reasons."⁴⁶ As a counter example to (a), Mackenzie claims that:

we come to beliefs about how to use language (give-gave-given and policeman-policewoman) non-evidentially in childhood, but we can modify these beliefs using reason as adults, and learn to say she where once we said he and police officer unless the officer's gender is relevant. So there are beliefs we came to hold non-evidentially which we can modify by new evidence or arguments.⁴⁷

As a counter example to (b), Mackenzie points out that "Kelvin did not retract his calculations of the maximum age of the earth even after the discovery of radioactivity invalidated his central assumptions."⁴⁸

On the first count however, as we have seen, Hand takes beliefs imparted on the strength of perceived intellectual authority to be "held on the basis of evidence" and "open to revision and correction,"⁴⁹ and since children learn the difference between

⁴³ Ibid, p. 33.

⁴⁴ Michael Hand, 'What Should We Teach as Controversial? A Defence of the Epistemic Criterion,' in *Educational Theory* 58(2) (2008), pp. 213-228.

⁴⁵ Hand, 'Religious Upbringing Reconsidered,' pp.545-557, 553.

⁴⁶ J. Mackenzie, 'Still Irrelevant to Us,' *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 38(4), pp.639-648, 651.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Hand, 'Religious Upbringing Reconsidered,' pp.545-557, p. 553.

‘give’, ‘gave’ and ‘given’ from perceived intellectual authorities, this does not seem to be a counter example. Furthermore, these are examples of socially constructed truths that are (basically) made true by how people use them, and therefore how people use them *just is* evidence. On the second count, the Kelvin example cannot undermine the belief that ‘if a belief is held on the basis of evidence, then it *can* be modified in the light of evidence or reasons’, for possibility does not entail actuality; that fact that something *can* happen doesn’t entail that it *will*, so it does not matter that Kelvin actually *did* not revise his view in accordance with the evidence, but merely that he *could* have. Indeed, Kelvin might have been well able to revise his views, but unwilling to (and this willingness is something that also ought to be cultivated). Moreover, it seems that what ought to be important is that we do our best to ensure that beliefs be “open to revision and correction,” so the fact that some people who come to their views through the persuasive force of evidence, do not revise their views in the light of emergent, contrary evidence at a later time, ought not to persuade against the use of evidence to motivate belief. Indeed, it seems that we ought to maximise the probability of students’ being able and willing to revise their beliefs on the basis of further reasons and argument. While it is an empirical question as to what we must do to maximise the chances of this, it does seem likely that presenting reasons or vouching for having seen reasons will facilitate this aim. Indeed, it seems simply to be a matter of initiating them into that practice, and it is hard to see how else they might come to internalize that practice.

Education and Indoctrination

Are education and indoctrination to be identified with specific, potentially influential processes? Indoctrination is not to be so identified if it is to be understood as a success term for acts which happen to bring about intransigent, or non-evidential commitment to beliefs, as Hand would prefer. However, there are surely practices which will increase the likelihood of such outcomes which are morally blameworthy (be they employed misguidedly, maliciously, negligently, or knowingly but indifferently). These practices may reasonably be called indoctrinatory.

Some would prefer to restrict ‘indoctrination’ to cover only the inculcation, intended inculcation, or practices likely to inculcate beliefs such that they will be held non-

rationally. They do not want to extend the term to capture the inculcation, intended inculcation, or practices likely to inculcate outcomes in other respects of which we are apt to be formatively influenced. For instance, R.S. Peters remarks that “whatever else ‘indoctrination’ means, it obviously has something to do with doctrines.”⁵⁰ However, it seems that whatever is objectionable about the inculcation, intended inculcation, or practices likely to inculcate beliefs such that they will be held non-rationally, is equally objectionable about the inculcation, intended inculcation, or practices likely to inculcate outcomes in other respects of which we are apt to be formatively influenced.

Stephen Law has offered an interesting list of potentially influential acts and influence architecture which conduce to non-rational formative influence. A communication architect is one who designs the context in which the potentially influential acts take place. He might like to call these indoctrinatory practices and do so because it increases likelihood of coming to believe X, without having any reason in the normative sense, perhaps even being immunized to reason in respect of that belief. Law’s list of ‘authoritarian’ practices includes the use of punishment, rewards, emotive imagery, social pressure, repetition, control and censorship, isolation, uncertainty, and tribalism.⁵¹ He describes these as “essentially manipulative”⁵² and observes that “whether or not the beliefs in question are actually true is completely irrelevant so far as the effectiveness of these methods is concerned.”⁵³

In addition to punishing dissent and rewarding assent, one might stigmatize dissent, making it “seem embarrassing or even shameful,” so as to discourage at least overt dissent, if not private belief.⁵⁴ It might be well to say, with John Locke, that punishment and such like are hardly likely to encourage internalization of the intended content, but rather, public compliance, and indeed, that is a reason not to use such methods if formative influence, as distinct from behavioural influence, is truly one’s interest:

Although the magistrate’s opinion in religion be sound [...] if I be not thoroughly persuaded thereof in my own mind, there will be no safety for me in following it. No way whatsoever that I shall walk in against

⁵⁰ R.S. Peters, *Ethics and Education* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966), p. 41.

⁵¹ Law, p. 26-30.

⁵² *Ibid*, p. 31.

⁵³ *Ibid*.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 27.

the dictates of my conscience will ever bring me to the mansions of the blessed.⁵⁵

Effective architecture for non-rational, formative influence includes the use of ‘control and censorship’, such as that exhibited by Totalitarian states which “eliminate ‘unhealthy’ books from libraries,” which can prevent dissent by starving people of the intellectual resources to identify contrary evidence, reasons and arguments.⁵⁶ Concordant with destroying cultural resources for dissent, such as books, isolation from dissenting voices can cultivate belief; “Authoritarians often consider it unwise to allow their own children to mix with unbelievers, from who they pick up unacceptable beliefs.”⁵⁷ Three additional devices include the use of emotive imagery, such as “iconic images of their Authority,” to cultivate devotion,⁵⁸ “making people feel vulnerable without the party, church, person or whatever,”⁵⁹ and taking advantage of people’s inclinations towards Tribalism: “Human beings are peculiarly attracted to them-and-us thinking,” which he calls “the twisted looking-glass of tribalism.”⁶⁰ Our tribalistic tendencies can be used to secure commitment to content, and not just to one another.

The Limits of Rational Education

Michael Hand tempers his account of the ethics of rational and non-rational influence by allowing that there are “important and legitimate forms of non-rational influence – the modelling, cajoling and exhorting – by which teachers begin to shape the emotional responses of young children before they are ready to assume responsibility for their own emotional lives.”⁶¹ Here, though, he adds certain important caveats:

What I think we can say is that, in so far as we have a fundamental obligation to respect and to develop the rationality of pupils, we must strongly prefer the rational approach to emotional education; and, moreover, that we may consider cultivating non-rationally in younger pupils only such emotional responses and attachments as we are able and entitled to cultivate rationally in older ones. In other words, unless it is appropriate for us to promote an emotion by rational means, there is

⁵⁵ John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, in *The Second Treatise of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, Third Edition, ed. by J.W. Gough (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966), p. 143.

⁵⁶ Law, p. 29.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 27.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 30.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Michael Hand, ‘Should We Promote Patriotism in Schools?’ *Political Studies* 59(2) (2011), pp. 328–347, 331.

certainly no question of it being appropriate to do so by non-rational means.⁶²

Indeed, champions of autonomy and reason sound a little unrealistic in the case of (at least) small children whom they would prefer to be more obedient at following instructions, and complying with set tasks. Before anyone thinks that children are naturally good, and are poisoned by a corrupt world, one is again inclined to point to website mentioned earlier that chronicles children's sometimes poor reasons for complaint.⁶³

Reliability of Influence

Communication acts work on two levels, namely, advocacy and demonstration. For instance, one may demonstrate or model some policy, and one may advocate a policy. Indeed, one's demonstration and advocacy may contradict one another. The statement 'nobody should speak', when spoken, would appear to be self-undermining. In this case, the prospective subject of influence might wonder whether to do as told (and be quiet), or to do as shown (and talk). Even with consistency across the two, there are no guarantees of successful formative influence, whether rational or non-rational methods are used.⁶⁴ Methods of influence are, it should be acknowledged, unreliable. The processes that one employs may not affect the desired outcome:

Every historian knows that actions often have unintended and unwanted consequences. It would be perfectly ordinary for a move ... to backfire disastrously.⁶⁵

Events can be the causes of outcomes that they were intended to prevent, and even trigger outcomes that they would normally prevent.⁶⁶

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ <<http://www.sunnyskyz.com/blog/119/36-Reasons-My-Kid-Is-Crying-Temper-Tantrums-You-Can-t-Help-But-Laugh-At>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

⁶⁴ A notable example of this is the following. In 1959, W.D. & H.O. Wills launched a tobacco brand with a video advertising campaign that featured a man resembling Frank Sinatra walking the streets of London alone at night. He wears a long coat, a Trilby hat, and evokes a film noir theme. The man stops and lights up a cigarette before turning his back and walking away from the camera. As he does, a voice announces that "You're never alone with a Strand." Despite the popularity of the adverts, the marketing did not work and the brand was withdrawn the next year. According to one commentator, "the unfortunate outcome was that consumers, subconsciously associating Strand with loneliness and unsociability, stayed away from the brand in their droves." See 'Off the back of a Fag Packet: TV Cream's Guide to Tobacco Advertising,' <<http://tv.cream.org/extras/tobacco/index.htm>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

⁶⁵ David Lewis, 'Causation as Influence,' *Journal of Philosophy* 97(4) (2000), pp. 182-97, 195.

⁶⁶ Daniel Nolan, *David Lewis* (Acumen: Chesham, 2005), p. 92.

Summary

In this chapter, we discussed the *means* by which children *can* and *may* be formatively influenced. We began by trying to make sense of the notion of a ‘means’ or ‘form’ of influence by distinguishing between three rival ways of categorizing actions, namely, by, intentions, processes, and outcomes. Three kinds of platforms which influencers can use to amplify or enable their communication acts were then discussed, namely, media used to communicate, the social status of the communicator relative to those communicated with, and the social status of the spaces and occasions in which they occur. An explanation of the differences between directed and undirected, systematic and ad hoc, and rational and non-rational potentially influential acts then followed. I then developed the notions of rational and non-rational means of influence at length, offering examples of each, before arguing that rational means of influence are morally preferable to non-rational means of influence. With the material from Chapters 1 to 5 in hand, we may turn to the task of constructing a theory of ethical influence in this next chapter.

Chapter Six

A THEORY OF ETHICAL INFLUENCE

Introduction

In this chapter, I outline an account of ethical influence quite generally, with little specific reference to religion. Applying the theory to religion will wait until Chapter 9, and will require both a definition of religion and a judgement about its status (to be provided in Chapters 7 and 8, respectively). Following Michael Hand, call the encouragement or discouragement of children's belief of a given proposition 'directive teaching', and call the facilitation of children's understanding of that proposition 'non-directive teaching.' The first part of our present chapter addresses two questions. The first question is: when ought influencers teach propositions directly and when non-directly? ¹ The second question is this: 'which propositional content should influencers address?' When asked of educators in particular, an answer to these questions would amount to what I will call a 'theory of propositional curricula content', by providing both a means for choosing that content, and a directive for teaching it. While the answer that I give to the second question is unlikely to prove exhaustive, I still consider that it would form an important part of the answer, bringing us towards a theory of propositional curricula content. The next part of this chapter extends this approach to encompass the determination of non-propositional content. We finish by assessing various objections, including claims that all influence is immoral. But these ethical imperatives can generate a *raison d'être* for schools as vehicles for delivering curricula.

We begin with an outline and discussion of Michael Hand's 'Possibility of Truth' argument for compulsory Religious Education (RE), from which the theory of propositional curricula content developed here, takes its impetus.² We then go on to explain how the theory here developed is a natural extension of Hand's argument. Next, a theory of propositional curricula content is outlined via two steps: a) outlining a conception of *moment* that motivates a proposition's inclusion on the curriculum, b)

¹ I borrow the terms 'directive and non-directive from Michael Hand, see especially his 'What Should We Teach as Controversial? A Defence of the Epistemic Criterion,' *Educational Theory* 58(2) (2008), pp. 213–228. Strictly speaking, non-directive teaching would include acquainting students with, and inducing them into assessing the soundness of, arguments for and against propositions, as well as merely understanding them.

² Hand, 'Religious Education.'

refining the notion of what degrees of rational support are required to decide between the directive or non-directive teaching of a momentous proposition. We draw on conclusions supported in earlier chapters: a) the duties of truthfulness that motivate occasions for directive and non-directive teaching, and b) discussing acceptable means of influencing students' beliefs.

Michael Hand's 'Possibility of Truth' Argument

The theory of propositional curricula content that I want to develop is a natural extension of Michael Hand's 'possibility of truth' argument for compulsory RE. Hand argues that a discrete, compulsory, non-directive subject focused on the critical examination and evaluation of religious beliefs should form part of pupils' education. The argument is this: some religious propositions (about God, salvation, life after death, and so on): a) "are sufficiently well supported by evidence and argument, as to merit serious consideration by reasonable people," b) "matter, in the sense of making some practical difference to people's lives," and c) require "a facility with distinctive kinds of evidence and argument" in order to evaluate their plausibility appropriately. Hand concludes that children are entitled to an education, enabling them to make rational judgments about the truth or falsity of these propositions.³ That is to say, the premises motivate a curriculum element whose aim is to enable children to make rational judgments about the truth or falsity of religious propositions, a curriculum being "a planned programme of learning."⁴ It is reasonable to think that a planned programme of learning delivered by subject experts is precisely what would be required to enable one to make rational judgments about the truth or falsity of religious propositions. Parents or, more generally, primary carers could not reasonably be expected to satisfy this entitlement qua parents and primary carers. The responsibility would be what I have termed extra-parental in an earlier chapter. Hand calls this the 'possibility of truth

³ Hand, 'Religious Education.'

⁴ Michael Hand, 'What Should Go on the Curriculum?' *The Philosophy of Education: An Introduction*, ed. by Richard Bailey (London: Continuum, 2010), pp. 48–59, 49. This formulation has the benefit of acknowledging the similarity of all courses of learning, and the similarities between the sorts of ethical considerations that could motivate their existence, whether they be news programmes, programmes of learning for citizenship tests for immigrants, rehabilitation programmes for criminal offenders, or educational television series like *Planet Earth* (BBC, 2006) and *The World at War*, written by Anthony Hughes (1973). It also acknowledges the variety of vehicles of provision which programmes of learning can be facilitated by.

argument'. While one might take issue with its premise, I think that the form of the argument is valid, and it is this which I want to build on.⁵

Hand regards this argument as motivating a compulsory, discrete subject for children.⁶ I want to observe that the same entitlement would exist for adults as much as for children, but admit further that one might reasonably hope to satisfy each person's entitlement during childhood and early adulthood. It is also worth observing that one's entitlement cannot justify one's compulsion to receive that entitlement all by itself (we saw this point argued in Chapter 3). We allowed that whereas it can be reasonable to compel children to undergo formative influence for their own wellbeing on paternalist grounds, it is not so easy to argue the same for adults. Even still, it might be reasonable to urge that, insofar as adults can be said to have an entitlement, then they may thereby have a claim on subsidies in order to avail of it.

Extending Hand's Argument

It seems to me that the validity of Hand's possibility of truth argument would imply the validity of what I shall call the 'certainty of truth argument'. Were some religious beliefs certain, as opposed to merely plausible, then this, together with their epistemic distinctiveness and moment, would motivate a discrete, directive (or confessional), and compulsory subject. Let us call propositions that 'matter, in the sense of making some practical difference to people's lives,' 'momentous propositions'. Suppose now that some momentous religious propositions were neither plausible nor certain, but supported by little to no evidence and argument, or even conflict with such evidence and argument that they could not reasonably be believed at all. It seems that educators should include the matter of the truth of such propositions on curricula only on an *ad hoc*, as opposed to systematic, basis, when they have reason to think that their students believe such propositions, so as to dissuade them -otherwise the curriculum is in danger

⁵ There are at least two anti-epistemic approaches to challenging Hand's argument. One is to argue with Pascal that we can have non-epistemic motivations to believe that something is true; another is to argue that, for instance, religious language is non-propositional. We can leave the second of these to the next chapter, although I would refer readers to a persuasive critical discussion of both approaches in J.L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism: Arguments for and Against the Existence of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

⁶ It should be said that Hand is non-committal as to which curriculum organizations would best satisfy the educational entitlement, regarding that as a largely contextual matter, but thinks there is as good a case for discrete RE as for any other discrete subject.

of becoming a museum of curiosities, to the exclusion of plausible and certain, momentous propositions.⁷

We should notice that these arguments apply quite generally to any momentous propositions that are susceptible of plausibility or certainty, and not just religious propositions. We may look on this as the beginnings of a theory of propositional curriculum content. It is important to notice that these argumentative mechanisms can be accepted without accepting Hand's judgements on the plausibility of religious propositions, or indeed any other judgements about the state of knowledge. This should be regarded as one of the strengths of the position. I do not think that if the premises of the arguments from certainty and possibility are met, that their conclusions are guaranteed. Instead, I think of each as defeasible arguments, since "there is always an (open) list of defeating conditions any of which might rule out" their conclusions.⁸ Instead the premises are sufficient "unless some feature is present which overrides or voids them."⁹ For instance, one should not equip students with criminal *modi operandi* if the large difference that this information would likely make is the student's committing crimes or bringing harm to others.

The Need for Intervention

As mentioned, Hand thinks of his argument as justifying a compulsory, discrete subject, and it seems to be his 'distinctive kinds of support' premise which motivates RE being a discrete subject. This is not all the work that the 'distinctiveness' premise does, however. Additionally, it suggests that the intended learning outcome of students being able to understand and evaluate the truth of religious propositions would not be achieved without this intervention, that is to say, the endeavour is not superfluous to, and indeed, is the best method of, satisfying its own aim. To a first approximation, what matters for a proposition's inclusion within curricula is that it satisfies one of the following three sets of predicates:

⁷ Tillson, 'Religious Education and the Floodgates of Impartiality'.

⁸ Frank Sibley, 'Aesthetic Concepts,' in *Approach to Aesthetics: Collected Papers on Philosophical Aesthetics*, ed. by J. Benson, B. Redfern and J. Roxbee Cox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 7-8.

⁹ Ibid

1. a) That it is momentous; b) that it might well not be believed without intervention; c) that it is certain.
2. a) That it is momentous; b) that it might well not be understood and rationally evaluated without intervention; c) that it is plausible.
3. a) That it is momentous; b) that it might well be believed without intervention; c) that it is false or unfounded.

Where the first set of premises applies to a given proposition, teachers ought to promote students' belief of that proposition. Where the second set of premises applies to a proposition, the teacher ought only to facilitate students' understanding of that proposition, and the arguments available for evaluating its truth. Where the third set of premises applies to a proposition, the teacher ought to discourage students' belief of that proposition. It should be noted that a certain value of truthfulness has been presupposed in all of the discussion, and it is this that was defended in Chapter 3. We are now in a position to critically elaborate the notion of momentousness from Hand's suggestive phrase 'making some practical difference to people's lives'.

Moment

For any proposition, a person may take one of the following (mutually exclusive) cognitive attitudes: belief, disbelief, or agnosticism. They may also take no cognitive attitude at all (at least where they are unaware of the proposition). In what follows, the key distinction to bear in mind is that distinction between belief and non-belief, which captures all the other attitudes and non-attitudes. To determine a proposition's moment, we ask what difference it would likely make if a person failed to believe the truth.

A paradigm example of a highly momentous proposition is that smoking tobacco dramatically increases one's risk of cancer. Knowing this may not stop everyone from starting to smoke, or make all existing smokers give up, but everyone for whom smoking is an available option ought to know it all the same, as it is a consideration that ought to figure into their decision of whether or not to smoke. Indeed, suppose that it were only known by doctors that smoking causes cancer and that a heavy smoker with ailing health goes to see one who, after conducting the relevant tests, informs him that he has lung cancer. Devastated, but also surprised, the man asks how this could be so. In response, the doctor informs him that the cancer is very probably a result of his

smoking. Again, the man is surprised: ‘but nobody told me smoking causes cancer’; ‘you never asked’, replies the doctor. The appropriate response is to feel that those in the know were guilty of a moral failing in not spreading the word. Moment, in this case, has to do with the avoidance of one’s own serious harm, but this is not the only grounds on which a proposition, if believed, would likely (or should) make a huge difference to the way one will act or live. This example should motivate us to accept that there exists an ethical duty to not only share, but to volunteer, and disseminate information or ‘spread the word’, in the case of momentous propositions, as well as provide a very striking illustration of a momentous proposition.

What criteria have we for determining a proposition’s moment? We ought not to say that ‘a proposition is momentous if people would change their lives as a result of knowing it’, since clearly the fact that smoking causes cancer is something that the medical profession, at least, has a duty to raise awareness of, and yet many who are made aware, do not even try to give up smoking. Alternatively, I could say ‘a proposition is momentous if people should change their lives as a result of knowing it’. Alternatively still, I could say that ‘a proposition is momentous if it constitutes a reason for people to change their lives’.¹⁰ The point is to equip people with information that is relevant to making decisions that will affect their lives, information that they would likely have wanted to know prior to making decisions. This is likely to include information pertaining to their own wellbeing, as well as that of others.

Some would point out that information alone is not enough to motivate people to change their lives: meeting people on a cancer ward is more likely to motivate change in addition to information, than information alone. Indeed, simply recognising that one’s phobia is irrational does not make it go away, hence the existence of various kinds of therapies to help do this. This observation should not be seen as an objection to the theory advanced here, rather this consideration should at most be seen as leaving the door open for supplementary, motivational aspects to curricula.

Moment admits of degrees. Of maximal moment, there are eschatological motivations to live in certain ways in the ‘here and now’ (for fear of damnation, for instance); of

¹⁰For a critical discussion of whether reasons for action ought to be characterised by reference to one’s motivational set, or by something outside of that, see S. Finlay and M. Schroeder, ‘Reasons for Action: Internal vs. External’, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2012 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/reasons-internal-external/>> [accessed 23 June 2015]. Clearly I am committed to the latter position, given the argument of Chapters 2 and 3.

minimal moment, there are propositions such that it would make little difference to anyone whether they believed it, disbelieved it, had no opinion on the matter, or never even realised there was a matter to have an opinion about. The relevant question here is what difference it would make if someone were not right about a matter, and whether it is worth taking some pains to be right about it.¹¹ Additionally, the moment of some propositions is local, and the moment of others is more ubiquitous: it is quite local that the password to some particular computer network is, say, 'qwerty'. The moment of other propositions is not so local: 'germs cause human illnesses'; 'God exists as described by the Qur'an'; 'human beings are invulnerable'. Finally, there is a contrast between propositions such that it is momentous for everyone that just someone or just a few people should believe them (call this 'specialist moment'), and propositions such that it is momentous for each individual that they should believe them themselves (call this 'general moment'). Consider the proposition that nothing can exceed the speed of light. While it might make some difference to me that physicists know it, it doesn't seem to make much difference to me that I know it. This distinction is an arguable basis for a contrast between general education and specialised education; whereas general curricula would be interested in propositions of momentous importance for each individual to know, more specialised curricula would concern themselves with propositions which it is of momentous importance to society that at least some people know.

In this chapter, I will have in mind propositions of ubiquitous, general moment as a factor in determining propositional curriculum content in general, universal education (as opposed to specialist education and locally-peculiar education).¹² Some such propositions are supported by such evidence and argument that they cannot be reasonably denied, and others by such evidence and argument that they can reasonably be doubted. Yet others are supported by little to no evidence and argument, or even conflict with such evidence and argument that they cannot reasonably be believed at all. It is here that the duties of truthfulness, discussed in Chapter 3, play their part in determining whether teachers ought to promote students' belief of that content on the

¹¹ This matter is often not something that we can determine without knowing the answer. For instance, it would be worth knowing whether things are carcinogenic if they in fact are carcinogenic, and not nearly as worth knowing if they were not. The fact that time and energy invested into some ventures yields information of less value than the resources themselves is a worry faced by researchers and explorers alike.

¹² I will later have in mind propositions of moment which are locally peculiar to religions.

one hand, or just facilitate their understanding of that content, on the other, or discourage students' belief of that content.

It is not the place of this chapter to argue that any particular propositions satisfy the criteria for inclusion within the propositional content addressed by curricula; it is the skeletal theory and not any particular application of that theory that this chapter hopes to recommend. Certainly, the theory could be combined with judgements about the state of knowledge so as to determine propositional content addressed by curricula; indeed, that is what I will attempt to do in the course of the last two chapters. That said, it may be helpful to give a few suggestive lines of thought along which the theory could be applied to contemporary curriculum theory debate, independent to that line of enquiry. As I have said, propositions of ubiquitous, general moment are the stuff of propositional curriculum content in general, universal education (as opposed to specialist education and locally-peculiar education). They would comprise, it would seem, a basic curriculum in that they would be propositions which it is everyone's right to be aware of, together, in so far as they are capable of understanding this, with the considerations which grant them their degree of plausibility. In liberal democracies, it is of ubiquitous, general moment as to what effects politicians' proposed policies are likely to have if adopted. Other likely examples of momentous propositions to constitute a basic curriculum involve information that bears on social conscience (about fair trade and work conditions), and information that bears on personal health and safety (about sexual health, recreational drug and road safety). Clearly, the theory would cash out differently when applied to different contexts; for instance in a land without tobacco, it would not be a momentous proposition that smoking causes cancer. In the next section, I shall attempt to refine the notion of what degrees of rational support are required to decide between the directive and non-directive teaching of a momentous proposition.

Certainty and Possibility of Truth

Heeding the work of David Hume, Jim Mackenzie has pointed out that law-like statements, such as 'all men are mortal', cannot be verified by any number of observations, since a counter example could always yet come to light, thus, no amount

of evidence could possibly decisively determine their truth.¹³ In the philosophy of science, this is known as the problem of induction since it seems to undermine the evidential authority of law-like scientific theories. On Karl Popper's understanding, such theories are seen as more or less reliable depending on how often they open themselves up to falsification without being falsified.

On Popper's account scientific theories, since they are not known to be true, cannot be imparted by the presentation of proof or decisive evidence, but to use a form of leverage other than the force of evidence seems to be necessarily indoctrinatory. Perhaps Hand hopes that teaching currently accepted scientific theories can also be justified by using our perceived intellectual authority.¹⁴

It seems that Hand will have to argue that evidence can prove law-like statements (and overcome the age old problem of induction), or say that we should not teach law-like statements to be true, or argue that they be imparted by perceived intellectual authority. It seems to me that admitting that law-like statements cannot be proved true might be the best option, but to add the challenge 'who wants to bet that the sun will not rise tomorrow?' The idea behind explanatory and predictive science (and probability in general) is to make the best bet, and some bets are clearly much better than others. Thus, we ought to absorb 'best bets' into our taxonomy of education. One could directly teach that 'this theory is our best bet'. If one were very worried about misleading children about the relative certainty of a proposition, they could build some epistemology into the curriculum to discuss the confidence with which different statements can reasonably be invested, given their supporting evidence and argument. Of course, in many cases, a best bet may still not be a strong enough bet to warrant directive teaching, and, in this case, it would instead warrant non-directive teaching. While it would be more correct to switch from describing 'possibility of truth' and 'certainty of truth' arguments to describing 'supported by sufficient probative force to warrant serious consideration' and 'supported by sufficient probative force to make denial irrational' arguments, to avoid clogging my prose with such unwieldy formulations, I have elected to use the former terminology as a *façon de parler*, while asking that the reader bear in mind that it is only that.

¹³ J. Mackenzie, 'Still Irrelevant to Us,' *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 38(4) (2004), pp. 639–648, 649.

¹⁴ Ibid.

The Theory

The notions of truthfulness and moment combined in the ways which we have seen above, supply a systematic approach to determining which propositional content curricula should contain, and whether teachers ought to promote or demote students' belief of that content on the one hand, or just facilitate students' understanding of that content, on the other. As we have seen, what matters for a proposition's inclusion on curricula is the applicability of one of the following sets of premises:

1. a) That it is momentous; b) that it might well not be believed without intervention; c) that it is certain.
2. a) That it is momentous; b) that it might well not be understood and rationally evaluated without intervention; c) that it is plausible.
3. a) That it is momentous; b) that it might well be believed without intervention; c) that it is false or unfounded.

Where the first set of premises applies to a given proposition, teachers ought to promote students' belief of that proposition. Where the second set of premises applies to a proposition, the teacher ought only to facilitate students' understanding of that proposition. Where the third set of premises applies to a proposition, the teacher ought to discourage students' belief of that proposition. While it might turn out that this theory is incomplete—since my argument fails to motivate the appearance of a particular proposition on curricula, while a further argument does motivate it—the existence of such arguments will not serve to undermine the theory that I elaborate here, but to supplement it.

The Promotional versus Non-Promotional Distinction

One may contrast the educator's aiming to impart something to, or promote or encourage something in, the student on the one hand (perhaps a belief, a disposition, or an understanding, for instance), with their not aiming to impart something on the other. This distinction turns on the educator's intention (rather than their methods, or the results of their teaching). As we have seen, Michael Hand tends to talk about directive and non-directive teaching. However, the question 'should one be directive, yes or no?' gives the impression of an exhaustive and exclusive distinction, since it posits and negates a predicate (namely, directive). As Hand uses the terms, 'directive' means to

encourage belief or disbelief and ‘non-directive’ means to encourage understanding. Of course, as Hand recognizes, they are not exclusive; indeed, he argued in his doctoral thesis and first book that belief could not take place without understanding.¹⁵

It is better, I submit, to separate out these issues and ask whether we ought to promote or ought not to promote particular formative outcomes in students: first, whether they understand a proposition, for instance, and, second, whether they believe or disbelieve a proposition in addition to understanding it. A given subject matter may be taught with promotional aims in some respects, while being taught with non-promotional aims in others. Thus, an understanding of political ideologies, and an interest in discussing politics might be promoted, while allegiance to a particular ideology is not promoted. At least for my purposes, it will make things more perspicuous. Non-directive education of the proposition that some political theory (PT) is true can be represented in the following table.

Attitude	Promotional	Non-Promotional
Interest in truth of PT	x	
Understanding of PT	x	
Belief that PT		x
Disbelief that PT		x

Extending the Theory of Ethical Influence

I said at the outset that an answer to two questions would amount to what I called a ‘theory of propositional curricula content’, by providing, both a means for choosing content, and a directive for teaching that content. The first question was: ‘when ought influencers to encourage or discourage children’s belief of a given proposition on the one hand (call this ‘directive teaching’), and when ought influencers to simply facilitate children’s understanding of that proposition, on the other (call this ‘non-directive teaching’)? The second question was: ‘which propositional content should curricula address?’ It seems that we can be more comprehensive by asking: ‘When ought

¹⁵ Michael Hand, *Is Religious Education Possible?* (London: Continuum, 2006).

teachers to encourage a given formative outcome?’ and ‘Which potential formative outcomes should curricula address?’ These are derivative from the question ‘What formative influence (if any) ought we ethically to have?’ In Chapter 4, we attempted to give substance to the question by providing an account of those respects in which we are apt to be formatively influenced. The general respects that I suggested were the following:

1. The degrees and kinds of one’s physical and mental abilities
2. One’s stock of concepts
3. Those propositions which one understands
4. One’s cognitive, propositional attitudes, such as belief and disbelief
5. One’s affective attitudes to propositions and objects.

We may ask what considerations preside over whether and how to impart or promote each of these kinds of formative outcome. Thus far, our discussion has addressed the third and fourth of these formative outcomes, and the first and second in a way that is derivative of them. We shall now expand our discussion to take account of the fifth formative outcome. I have argued that where being wrong about the rationality of a proposition would make a large difference to one’s life, and where one is likely to be wrong about its rationality without intervention, that proposition ought to feature on the curriculum. I also argued that where denying that proposition is irrational, it ought to be encouraged; where affirming it is irrational, it ought to be discouraged; and where affirmation and denial are both rational options, it ought to be taught non-directively. More than merely helping pupils to understand, and believe or disbelieve momentous propositions, I argued that teachers should, in so far as is practicable, aim to acquaint students with arguments for and against them and induct pupils into the practice of assessing the soundness of those arguments. While this version of the framework applies principally to cognitive attitudes, our affective attitudes can be captured by an analogous framework.

I agree with Thomas Nagel that “there is such a thing, or category of thought, as *reason*, and that it *applies in both theory and practice*, in the *formation not only of beliefs but of desires, intentions, and decisions as well*,”¹⁶ and ask: is it rational that students should have certain affective attitudes? Where having or failing to have a certain attitude

¹⁶ Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 6.

makes a significant difference to students' lives, it ought to be addressed by curricula. Where failing to have the attitude is irrational, this failure ought to be remedied; where having the attitude is irrational, that attitude ought to be discouraged; and where neither having nor failing to have the attitude is irrational, that attitude ought to be introduced and discussed without encouragement or discouragement. Again, teachers should, in so far as is practicable, aim to acquaint students with arguments for and against having these attitudes and induct them into the practice of assessing the soundness of those arguments.

Now it might seem that the question of justification is asymmetrical in the case of cognitive propositional attitudes and affective attitudes, and so it is. But perhaps not in the way one might expect. In the case of cognitive propositional attitudes, one might ask whether there are good epistemic reasons to believe a proposition. In the case of affective attitudes, one might ask whether there are good reasons to have a certain attitude or behaviour. However, the question of whether it is good to have a belief is not entirely epistemic. There are theoretical and practical reasons, and since believing is an activity, it is practical reasons that, properly speaking, warrant belief. In so far as one assumes the policy of believing the truth, then theoretical reasons which track the truth become important. It is true that having a truth-tracking belief set enables a world-navigation by allowing one to know where one is going, and how one is getting there (both literally and more figuratively, in the case of career ambitions and plans). Thus, one may wonder how the plausibility and mattering clause might be weighed against each other if two contradictory propositions each had a greater value in one respect than the other had.

Something but the Truth

Strikingly, Hand allows that there are some occasions where parental discretion on which being known-to-be-true is not a requirement for promoting beliefs. Young children naturally perceive their parents to be intellectual authorities on everything, observes Hand. He continues:

insofar as a parent is perceived by her children to be an intellectual authority on religious matters, she is in a position to impart religious beliefs to them by appealing to their reason [without having to demonstrate their truth]. She has no need to resort to indoctrination

because her children will be rationally obliged to believe whatever she tells them about religion.¹⁷

One might object that (when done wantonly) this is an abuse of perceived intellectual authority, even if the belief is rationally imparted: using that perception to convey a false confidence in a proposition. When done inadvertently, a charge of negligence might be appropriate, depending on the likelihood and severity of the false impression.¹⁸ Hand pre-empts this, responding that “most of us, while we recognise that it is *normally* wrong for parents to use their perceived intellectual authority to impart not-known-to-be-true beliefs, are prepared to grant exceptions to this rule when the belief confers a significant benefit on the child”.¹⁹ Notice that Hand specifies parents in the forgoing remarks, and not teachers, or other extra-parental influencers.²⁰ He gives three examples:

1. protecting them from physical harm: all wild berries are poisonous,
2. contributing to their emotional security: bad people always go to prison, and
3. giving them and their parents pleasure: the tooth fairy will come for your tooth tonight.

On the first example, we see a simplified version of the truth, or perhaps a stepping stone towards the truth. Indeed, one hears it remarked by science university students just how crude secondary and primary science education is. Here one might urge that a lie is not being told, but the nearest proximity to the truth manageable for one’s cognitive ability. One might suggest that “some berries are poisonous, and you don’t know which” would have the desired effect, namely, forbearance from eating berries that might, for all they know, be poisonous. Here, an elision is being made between theoretical reason and practical reason; because their practical reason is limited, a noble

¹⁷ Hand, ‘Religious Upbringing Reconsidered,’ pp. 545-557, 552.

¹⁸ Of course, many parents will not be presenting a ‘false confidence’, but what Hand must consider a misguided confidence, what some might argue to be an immorally unjustified confidence.

¹⁹ Hand, ‘Religious Upbringing Reconsidered,’ p. 555.

²⁰ Hand has in mind familial benefits, but the thought can generalize to anyone with perceived intellectual authority. Thus one might think of Plato’s noble lie in this connection, a myth which if believed, “would have a good effect, [in] making [citizens] more inclined to care for the state and one another,” *The Republic*, trans. by Benjamin Jowett, <<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.html>> [accessed 28 June 2015], Book 3, 415c–d.

lie is required to help guide their practical decision making. It seems then that these are exceptions to the general rule. The second and third are more clearly lies.

Hand then claims that “there is clearly something in the idea that close social ties, such as those that bind the family, are strengthened by agreement and threatened by disagreement on matters of religion.”²¹ He says this justifies parents’ giving their child a false confidence in the truth of their religion, by using their perceived intellectual authority as leverage. It does not justify indoctrination (and thereby damaging students’ facility for making rational judgements).²² Schools (unlike parents), thinks Hand, are not in a position to impart belief without using non-rational methods, and endangering students’ recognition of and responsiveness to good reasons). He argues that “teaching for belief in not-known-to-be-true propositions is, when successful, indoctrinatory, except where teachers are perceived to be intellectual authorities on those propositions.”²³ He further states that 1) where unsuccessful, that is no vindication, “teaching which would constitute indoctrination if it were successful is objectionable whether it is successful or not,”²⁴ and 2) that “except perhaps in the earliest years of schooling, pupils [...] know that their teachers are in no position to testify to the existence of decisive evidence for the truth of religious propositions.”²⁵ Granting that in absence of perceived intellectual authority, successfully convincing anybody of the truth of a belief that is not known-to-be-true, the “teacher must do more than merely present them with the evidence, for the evidence is not decisive,” and “implant beliefs in such a way that they are held non-rationally or non-evidentially.”²⁶ However, this view seems incompatible with Hand’s further contention that people may reasonably

²¹ Hand, ‘Religious Upbringing Reconsidered,’ p. 555.

²² For many parents, the perceived intellectual authority and significant benefit clauses are immaterial: they believe that their religion is certainly true, and that its value depends on its truth; Hand’s argument can only persuade those who believe that the question of religious truth is genuinely open. Indeed, they may argue that salvation over damnation is a strong enough reason to warrant indoctrination, assuming of course that indoctrination is not incompatible with salvation. In his television movie, *The Root of all Evil*, dir. by Russell Barnes (Chanel 4, 2006), Richard Dawkins shows rehearsals of a Christian theatre project – ‘Hell House’ – which is intended to scare children Christian. Its motivation is to save young people from eternal damnation. Dawkins is compelled by the director’s argument that given the reality of Hell, it is morally essential to use what he might otherwise term ‘child abuse’, to persuade them of the reality of hells and perils or ways of living which court going there. Here we must urge epistemic humility in religious belief, so that at the same time as having these beliefs, believers allow that they are not so certain as to warrant passing them on.

²³ Michael Hand, ‘A Philosophical Objection to Faith Schools,’ *Theory and Research in Education* 1(1) (2003), pp. 89-99, 96.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 98.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 95.

believe religious propositions: that they have come to believe them without having been indoctrinated, but on the strength of some reasonable interpretation of the evidence. In the same paper, Hand says:

the truth or falsity of religious propositions is a matter of disagreement among reasonable people. The evidence available is ambiguous. Some people judge that it points in one direction, others that it points in another.²⁷

All the same, one may argue that it is wrong to teach something that is not known to be true, as true, without its wrongness depending on having relied on non-rational means to impart the belief. It is wrong because tracking the truth is both intrinsically and extrinsically valuable and frustrated by false impressions.

Liberalism versus Education

Hand has rejected what he calls ‘a behavioural criterion’ for teaching controversial issues, in favour of an epistemic one.²⁸ There are two senses in which a matter may, in ordinary parlance, be called controversial, one corresponding to each criterion respectively; a matter may be called controversial in the sense that people disagree about it (especially when they disagree about it passionately), or in the sense that the matter is left unsettled by rational procedures. It may be that a matter has been settled by rational procedures and yet continues to be contested passionately in the public square; take, for instance, the issue of whether the earth is flat or whether the holocaust happened. Michael Hand argues that we should use the epistemic criterion to determine what should be taught as a controversial issue, by which he means ‘what should be taught non-directively’.

His answer, as we have seen above, would be that we should only teach those matters on which the truth has not been determined by rational procedures in a non-directive manner. This leads us directly into the question of whose determination of the truth ought to count. Some might worry about whose judgement counts when it comes to saying what is known to be true, and what is not. The simple answer would be ‘the educator,’ but this gives rise to complications. For instance, the employer of the

²⁷ Ibid, p. 93.

²⁸ Michael Hand, ‘What Should We Teach as Controversial? A Defence of the Epistemic Criterion,’ *Educational Theory* 58(2) (2008), pp. 213-228; ‘Should We Teach Homosexuality as a Controversial Issue?’ *Theory and Research in Education* 5(1) (2007), pp. 69-86.

educator (either the parent or the school, or the state) may have a contrary opinion about the truth. In such a case it would seem as though the educator were being used merely as a tool if their judgement were to be side-lined in favour of their employer's judgement, their teaching would become inauthentic, and usually thereby lack integrity. Arguably, it is the consensus among intellectual authorities, those familiar with the evidence and arguments relevant to determining a given matter, whose determination of the truth ought to count. But this answer leads us directly into a tension between liberalism and education within Hand's work.

Let us consider Hand's possibility of truth argument, with respect to religious belief. Let us suppose that Hand is wrong about the plausibility of religious belief. Let us suppose that religious beliefs have been shown decisively to be mistaken, and yet (for non-rational reasons) they continue to be maintained. On Hand's argument, the educational responsibility of schools is to promote true belief and demote false belief. It would then seem that schools ought to build pupils' resilience to religious belief. However, given the increasingly religiously plural context in which, for example, Irish schooling takes place, caution may be urged to the atheist head teacher who, in the name of education, decides that the role of the school is to build her pupils' resilience to forming religious belief, in case such an enterprise provoked violent reactions from faith communities or had other undesirable consequences in practice. One would likely be the retreat of parents of strong faith from public schooling into home schooling and private schooling in order to protect their faith (a counterproductive outcome for our head teacher). Furthermore, in liberal political theory, seriously respecting the right of citizens to form, revise and pursue their own conceptions of the good, including religious conceptions, is thought by many liberals to properly imply the right of parents to raise their children in their faith. Thus, liberal state education cannot easily defend deliberately eradicating the religious beliefs of children. Considerations such as these will likely temper the implications of any purely epistemic, educational considerations. In this temperance, a tension can be seen to emerge between the proper role of the school, in its educational commitment to promoting truthful belief on the one hand, and the proper role of a liberal democracy, in its commitment to upholding the peace in spite of what anyone happens to believe, on the other.

One might exclude the dimension of the possible truth of religious claims from schooling altogether by way of compromise (as in France and the United States),

instead of building pupils' resilience to religious beliefs, or disabusing them of such religious beliefs as they already have. However, this would not seem to be much of a compromise, since the epistemic responsibility of school would seem to have been resigned in such a case. Hand could object that this is not a problem for him at all by pointing out that on his analysis, many religious propositions are plausible. However, he also considers that many religious beliefs *are* implausible: not least, Seventh Day Adventism, and others which take a literal attitude to creation myths, denying evolution. Moreover though, the fact that the system which Hand seems committed to do, can yield this problem, just by plugging in different judgements about the state of knowledge, shows that it is a problem with the system, even if the conclusions he derives from it just so happen not to bring this problem to the surface. Indeed, it may be that the state of knowledge would shift, while the state of belief does not and these problems would emerge.

Religious persecution is indeed a terrible thing. It forced the pilgrims to flee to England, where people were killed on account of the beliefs. America set up a strict(ish) religion/public affairs divide so that each was able to pursue their conception of the good, and not be subject to anybody else's conception of the good. They would not be persecuted for the content of their belief. The idea is that the state ought not to ally itself with, or work under the banner of any particular religious conception of the good. Perhaps there are some which it can reject, such as those with anti-liberal principles. However, the promotion of truth in a non-dogmatic way does not involve persecution, or punishment for false or unfounded beliefs. My contention is that, morally, parents ought not to raise their children in their faith, not that it should be illegal for them to do so, which would be thoroughly illiberal.

Similarly, one might accept that there is a universal educational entitlement to momentous truths, and worry that homogeny seems to be a consequence of promoting beliefs of universal, ubiquitous moment. Would such a right correspond to our having a duty to go and colonize distant countries with our superior knowledge? Doesn't that sound impossibly arrogant and colonial; would it not erode cultures to the extent that it was successful? On the other hand, is there something wrong about allowing cultures to live in isolation, as museum pieces, and meticulously avoid intervention? Perhaps there is a happy medium between two extreme policies about how to interact with the other:

one that neither aims at intellectual colonization nor forsakes contact altogether, perhaps it consists in opening lines of dialogue and cultural exchange.

Comprehensive and Restricted Formative Influence

At this point, we may introduce the distinction between *comprehensive* and *restricted* formative influence. Granted that we are able to exercise formative influences over one another, the influence that we have may be more or less comprehensive or specific depending on just how many respects in which we influence one another. One might attempt more or less comprehensive programs of influence, in attempting to change more or less about a person. One might on the one hand, simply want to discourage one particular habit, but, on the other hand, they might want to re-write someone's belief set and simultaneously rearrange their priorities in life. Attending a one to one language lesson, or piano lesson, might constitute an example of a relatively restricted, formative influence. What Thiessen had in mind by evangelism was surely comprehensive formative influence (+ socialization; a form of behavioural influence, with formative upshots). Another term one might think of is 'personal transformation'.

An influence is more or less deep depending on what else it *ought* to effect, if accepted. Changing one's religious beliefs usually ought to go deep, as it will have implications for very many aspects of one's life. Providing someone with some fundamental concepts that affect how they perceive the world sounds about as deep as it gets. In connection with this thought, one might bring to mind the notion that two people from two entirely different historic-socio-economic places would be endowed with such different conceptual frameworks, that they would see the world very differently. It is interesting to wonder just how fundamentally people are open to influence, and how far their outlooks are intractably hardwired and how universally so, but it is not a question to be explored here. The comprehensiveness of set of influences being imparted raises the moral stakes, and with it, the level of warrant required to assent to be rational.

Is All Influence Immoral?

How defensible is the idea that all influence is unethical, and that we ought to avoid influencing children (and indeed anyone at all)? There are perhaps more or less

defensible versions of this doctrine, and we shall attempt to follow some of the strands of argument that lead to this conclusion that all influence is immoral.²⁹ First though, we will consider whether a policy of non-intervention is coherent.

Is a Policy of Non-Influence Conceivable?

I do not think that it is at all facetious (as some might) to complain that it is not clear what a policy of non-influence would look like. It is fair to say that I, in particular, have had no influence on Alexander the Great (although notionally, the concept of how subsequent generations might perceive him likely did influence him). The people we can claim most safely that we have had, and risked no influence upon, are those we have had no possibility of contact with at all (even indirectly). However, we do not want to say, in general, that we ought to sacrifice contact with one another in order to avoid influencing one another. We may want to say this about some specific cases. For instance, some parents might rightly think it best to keep their children from having contact with certain people precisely so that they cannot wield any influence over their children. Indeed, children would not grow up at all were it not for their being raised by adults; at best they would be feral, and at worst they would be dead. Whatever points those who oppose influence want to make, they must certainly bear in mind these truisms. However, insofar as it is not possible to avoid influence altogether, it need not entail that there could or should be no ethical prohibitions on influential activities: it might be that we ought to follow the path of minimal influence, for instance. Alternatively, it might be that we ought never act so as to influence others, but only allow that this is an unfortunate by-product to be tolerated where we act for other reasons.

Innate Teleologies

It seems that in maintaining that influence is immoral, one is committed to the notion that children have an innate teleology, and that these may be frustrated. To frustrate the

²⁹ The title of this section is taken from a celebrated monologue in Oscar Wilde's, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (London: Penguin, 2012). Lord Henry Wotton, reflects that there must be "something terribly enthralling in the exercise of influence" (p. 51) and undertakes to exercise such an influence over Gray, all the while himself denouncing influence as an intrinsic evil. Arguably however, it is not influence *per se* that is on trial as corruptive, but instead hedonism as a form of influence. Consider for instance how Gray's adoption of Wotton's hedonism lead to his ultimate undoing.

child's innate teleology would be to wrong them. By way of comparison, consider how a seed will grow into a tree if allowed to follow its natural path, but how that innate teleology can be frustrated, for instance, by falling on a road in the baking sun. Indeed, that innate teleology might equally be helped on its path: a seed that falls on a road in the baking sun might be moved to more hospitable surroundings and so be helped to achieve its natural ends.

Let us call the idea that we have within us a perfect way that we could be, Innate Perfectionism. There are two versions of innate perfection, one which allows for influence and one that does not. On the first let us say that a designer made each of us with a perfect form in mind, and left to unfold without interference, thus allowing us to fulfil our purpose. Any interference can only pervert the course of reaching our innate perfection. On the second, let us say that a designer made each of us with a form in mind, but that we can be helped to reach that perfection, we can facilitate and cultivate one another's perfect form, and indeed, we can frustrate our own fulfilment. Many people would dissent from the above stories since they do not believe that human beings were designed at all. However, it might be that one can understand the idea of an innate teleology without positing a designer. Indeed, one may wonder what the best way that they themselves could be is: the strongest, smartest, fastest, most caring, and so on. Still others might dissent from the first view since they want to emphasize free will, so that while we might have an innate perfection to fulfil, we will not simply fulfil it if left to get on with it; we may make bad decisions which prevent the fulfilling of our perfect nature. It seems that the second of these ideas is the more plausible, but it already makes room for positive influence. Let us now consider whether the idea of an innate teleology is coherent at all. We begin our next discussion with a poem of the sculptor, Michelangelo which speaks to innate teleologies.

Can We Make Sense of the Idea of an Innate Teleology?

The best of artists has that thought alone
Which is contained within the marble shell;
The sculptor's hand can only break the spell

To free the figures slumbering in the stone³⁰

Michelangelo's poem expresses the idea that he did not create his sculptures. Instead, they resided within the block of marble all along, leaving to him the workman's task of chipping away the marble which obscured them. The thought might bespeak false modesty, since there were likely very many other statues equally contained in the blocks that he worked; many other ways that they could have been chipped away at to produce a quite different statues. Of a less creative activity, one might say, 'I did not complete the Sudoku; the Sudoku was complete all along. I just filled in the missing numbers'. Here, the determination of the correct result does nothing to undermine the fact that a process is required to realise it. Even if there were veins running through a block of marble such that no other statue could be produced from that block, but only the David, say, or a broken David, then it would still take serious skill, insight and effort to bring out the complete and undamaged David. The question here would be: are children somewhat like the David, or the Sudoku, with an innate perfection, that is to be revealed? (Here we will take it as read that the undamaged David is better than any of the (purportedly) damaged Davids; that the innate teleology does indeed trump its perversions).

We should be wary of vacuity in the innate/ acquired distinction, for if we set the definition too loose, then, granted felicitous circumstance, every feat or trait a person might accomplish or develop would count as innate. For his use of the term, Dylan Evans adds the condition of requiring few special circumstances for a person to develop some skill or trait. Under this use, first-language acquisition counts as innate:

When I say a trait is 'innate', I mean that it needs very few special conditions for it to develop. In other words, so long as you give a child the basic things it needs to survive such as food, shelter and company, that child will develop all the traits that are innate to humans. Language is innate in this sense; you do not need to provide lots of special instruction materials for a child to acquire a language. All you need to do is bring the child up in a group of other humans who can speak.³¹

Evans suggests that on this model, innateness should be conceived on a continuum:

³⁰ Michelangelo, quoted in René Dubos, *A God Within: A Positive Philosophy for a More Complete Fulfillment of Human Potentials* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), pp. 10-11.

³¹ Dylan Evans, *Emotion: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 13.

Innateness is not an all-or-nothing thing, but a question of degree. When investigating emotions or any other biological or psychological trait, we should not really ask whether it is innate or not, but rather *how* innate it is. The more 'special conditions' over and above the basic necessities of survival that are required for the development of a trait, the less innate it is. Learning language is less innate than growing legs, since growing legs requires only a normal genome, basic nutrition, and the luck to escape nasty accidents, whereas learning a language requires all these things *plus* interaction with other speaking humans.³²

We should contrast suppressing or not suppressing aspects of children on the one hand, and encouraging or not encouraging aspects of children on the other. Some characteristics might develop with encouragement, and atrophy without it, others might develop without encouragement or discouragement, but atrophy with discouragement. Some people might think that how a child grows without either encouragement or discouragement is a way to understand the natural growth path of the child. However, it is not clear that such a path of growth is desirable. Ken Robinson has done well to point out that children have a natural ability to become good pickpockets, but that rather than being something that we ought to encourage, or ignore, it ought to be discouraged. Indeed, natural things are not thereby good things. All sorts of things are natural, but not good and ought to be discouraged: it may be more natural to feel jealous of another person's success rather than to take pleasure in it.³³

While Plato's views shifted throughout his life and are not entirely clear given his tendency to write in dialogue form, in one of his moods, Plato held that acquiring knowledge was a matter of recalling a world which one had previously inhabited, but that recollection (or anamnesis) could be brought out through guidance and facilitation (such as Socrates' provocations), as well as through private contemplation. While it is surely wrong to speak of *the* Platonic conception of knowledge, we may construct something we could reasonably call a Platonic conception of the person, and their

³² Ibid, p. 15.

³³ On the other hand, and to some extent undercutting even this argument, it is hard to see what the word 'natural' covers (even once the words 'unnatural', and 'supernatural' are on the table since they are parasitic on the word 'natural'), since everything seems to occur within nature. Some may want to say that cities, and pollution are unnatural, but the modern world developed by human kind's activity on top of the pre-human world, and alongside the contemporary non-human world, and so are as much a part of nature as are the dams of beavers. We may want to say that the human world is changing the world for the worse, but that does not mean it is unnatural, it just means that nature contains conflict, and that some expressions of nature are ultimately self-destructive, as human-kind may well prove to be. I conclude that 'the natural learning process' is a curiously vacuous expression. 'Unnatural learning processes' might at best signify processes through which one doesn't learn at all: human beings do not learn maths by eating chalk, *qua* eating chalk. That would be an unnatural learning process, which is just to say: not a learning process.

accumulation of knowledge. We could draw on *The Republic*, particularly the analogy of the Cave, the *Phaedo*, and on the *Meno*. We would see that soul once inhabits a world of forms, which it is taken from to be embodied on earth. Knowledge on earth consists in the recollection of forms. Here, knowledge is transcendently empirical, since we learnt about the forms through direct acquaintance as souls, but it is present in us from birth in human form and so also innate. In the *Meno*, Socrates leads a slave boy to demonstrate Pythagoras' theorem by asking a series of questions to tease it out of him, and indeed, Socrates thought of himself as a midwife, teasing knowledge out of other people, and this would be a paradigmatic example of him doing so.³⁴

Certain sorts of true beliefs do not fit this form so well; the fact that I am an embodied person does not seem as good an example of a form as say, the shape of a triangle. However, it is undeniably a fact, and no more illusory than the shape of the perfect triangle, and arguably less so. It could have been a form perhaps, but then human history would appear to exist predetermined in the realm of the forms. Perhaps we could say that the realm of the forms consists of all truths from all time, simultaneously, and perhaps that is a coherent idea, but it is a huge departure from common sense and under-motivated as a departure from simplicity. Indeed, it seems simpler to suggest that human beings perceive their existence, rather than recall it. To the extent that Plato insisted knowledge to be only about that which was changeless, such as mathematical truths, we may caution that this was also unmotivated. Facts may *be* states of affairs, or true statements *about* states of affairs. States of affairs themselves can come into existence, and make certain statements about them true. Those states of affairs that come into existence may be contingent, and so too may be the truth of propositions about them, and they may only be true once they have, materialized (if irreversibly so). For instance, it may not be true today that Arsenal football club will win tomorrow, even if come tomorrow Arsenal really do win. Mathematical ideas are among those about which Platonism is most plausible.

Let us accept this for the sake of argument that mathematical advances take place by recollection, rather than by discovery. This would be an example of innate perfectionism. It does not follow that mathematics is best pursued in isolation. Without

³⁴ That said, often (as in the *Euthyphro*) Socrates shows people to be ignorant of what they had taken themselves to know about, and does more by way of demolition than discovery. Plato, *Euthyphro*, trans. by Benjamin Jowett, <<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/euthyphro.html>> [accessed 18 June 2015]

interventions, people may miss-remember and instead they may be able to help each other remember. While one might worry that they will recall a false story between them, falsely believing themselves to have remembered something when reminded by someone else, it is not quite like this in the case of mathematics, since the beliefs, such as $2 + 2 = 4$, are supposed to be self-evident. It cannot but be true, and one cannot understand that at the same time as not believing it, to entertain it is to be convinced of its truth. Indeed, Plato favoured education, as a process which leads people to recollect the forms, and live in their light. Let us now consider the case that valuing ‘independent mindedness’ conflicts with the exercise of influence.

Independent Mindedness as a Virtue

There is a virtue of independent mindedness which is contrasted with being sheep-like, following the crowd, and with deference to an authority. Similarly, people are chastised for being gullible. At the same time, we should remind ourselves that we do not praise people for recalcitrance or excessive scepticism (to believe as little as possible is not the best policy); indeed we praise open-mindedness and chastise closed-mindedness. The comic, Tim Minchin qualifies this with the warning, “if you open your mind too much, your brain will fall out.”³⁵ The closed minded person will not admit (even to themselves) that they are wrong; they are dyed in the wool and intransigent. The open-minded person can entertain doubts, they can assume things for the sake of argument, they can be taught new ideas, and let go of old ideas.

Michael Hand has observed that rationality and heteronomy are not proper contrasts. Whereas autonomy contrasts with heteronomy, rationality contrasts with irrationality.³⁶ Autonomy means doing what one thinks is best or believing what one would estimate to be true, heteronomy means deferring to some other in this respect. Hand points out that, in some circumstances, we might judge something to be best, or true, but be in such a weak position to judge, and rationally ought to defer to those better placed to judge; for instance, the claims of qualified doctors are often better than those of those without

³⁵ Tim Minchin, ‘If You Open Your Mind Too Much, Your Brain Will Fall Out (Take My Wife),’ <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkLGMyybz4I>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

³⁶ Michael Hand, ‘Against Autonomy as an Educational Aim,’ *Oxford Review of Education* 32(4) (2006), pp. 535-550.

medical training. By way of hesitation, we may consider the following entreatment from Michael Mann's film of the eponymous novel, *The Last of the Mohicans*:

Well, then, Cora. In my heart I know, once we're joined [...] we'll be the most marvellous couple in London. I'm certain of that. So why not let those whom you trust, your father, help settle what's best for you? In view of your indecision, you should rely on their judgment. And mine. Will you consider that? Please consider that.³⁷

The theme of his film and the novel is that Cora ought to have followed her heart rather than the reasonable-sounding supplications of someone of whom she was fond, but about whom she was not impassioned. It is perhaps not always obvious as to when deference or insistence is most rational.

Impartial Surveys of Possibilities

One (fairly weak) version of the idea that all influence is immoral might be the following; that we ought to broaden the possibilities available to those that we influence, and not to narrow them. On this understanding, it is acceptable to tell people about a range of competing conceptions of the true and good, but never to promote anything in particular as true or good. Such an endeavour might be an example of what Michael Hand calls non-directive education. An advocate of such a conception of education might deny that directive education is ever acceptable, although they must accept that some influence is being sought: at least one's understanding is being adjusted (and some beliefs) in broadening the range of possibilities that one has available. Thus, one is brought to understand a proposition, if not to believe or disbelieve or suspend judgement over its truth value. Or, one is brought to understand, and be capable of an action, practice, or way of life, if not fully initiated into it or encouraged to identify with it. The objective would be to inform decisions without commending any.

It seems that some values will be in evidence (modelled, and thereby potentially transmitted) in what one frames as being a domain of options, and what one offers as being a consideration in its favour. Indeed, one might argue that employing the policy of global non-direction, amounts to directly recommending it. Where the question of how education ought to proceed is discussed (perhaps in teacher training colleges), the

³⁷ *The Last of the Mohicans*, dir. by Michael Mann (Morgan Creek Productions, 1992).

lecturer might take a non-directive approach again, allowing general directivity to be a reasonable option, but in so far as they do not take directivity, one might suggest, again, that in employing non-directivity, they are taking a directive attitude about it. This seems false. There seems to be scope for commitment without advocacy, even if one's commitment is manifest.

The problem with taking a permissive attitude is not incoherence, but undue reticence. Some might accept the theory of formative influence advocated earlier, but claim that nothing is so well justified as to be deserving of directive teaching. However, this seems much too sceptical. Students ought to be taught directly, because the history of free enquiry has accumulated a wealth of wisdom. It seems unduly sceptical that school students should start from scratch; that they should have to reinvent wheels, re-falsify dead theories, or worse, remain captured by them (one recalls the words of Newton 'If I have seen further than others, it is because I was standing on the shoulders of giants'). It seems unduly sceptical that the four humours theory should be considered as equally credible as modern medicine in a science classroom.

Thiessen on Foss and Griffin

By way of defending the possibility of religious evangelism being an ethical endeavour, Elmer Thiessen critiques Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin's paper, 'Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for Invitational Rhetoric,'³⁸ in which it is lamented that "most traditional rhetorical theories reflect a patriarchal bias in the positive value they accord to changing and thus dominating others."³⁹ Foss and Griffin worry that "embedded in efforts to change others is a desire for control and domination, for the act of changing another establishes the power of the change agent over that other" which simultaneously "devalues the lives and perspectives of these others."⁴⁰ Thiessen neglects to allow that Foss and Griffin do not rule out the use of persuasion entirely. In their own words, "we believe that persuasion is often necessary."⁴¹ Instead, they argue that "an alternative exists that may be used in instances when changing and controlling others is not the

³⁸ Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin, 'Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric,' *Communications Monographs* 62(1) (1995), pp. 2-18.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 1.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 2.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 5.

rheter's goal," calling this an "invitational rhetoric."⁴² They conclude that "invitational rhetoric is one of many useful and legitimate rhetorics, including persuasion, in which rhetors will want to be skilled."⁴³ Here, rhetors will "recognize situations in which they seek not to persuade others but simply to create an environment that facilitates understanding, accords value and respects to others' perspectives, and contributes to the development of relationship of equality."⁴⁴

It seems that Foss and Griffin provide us with reasons to reject persuasion wholesale, and no reason to entertain it as a reasonable endeavour for rhetors. One wonders what it is that might 'necessitate' persuasion, if it is merely an expression of a will to dominate. It is not clear how the will to dominate can legitimate a form of rhetoric; it might be desirable by some, but it does not seem to be justified. However, it does not seem at all fair to say that the will to persuade is thereby a will to dominate. Indeed, it is not just changing others for its own sake that is usually desired, but changing others in desirable ways. Indeed, by the same token, those that wield influence ought to accept that they too might be improved or benefitted and thereby be open to the prospect without shame. Thiessen offers examples of morally unexceptionable persuasion "a mother persuades her child to tie her shoe laces. A father his teenage daughter to consider attending college."⁴⁵ How about a negotiator persuading a suicidal person not to jump, or a terrorist to release the hostages? Thiessen's cases seem unobjectionable, and in the cases that I suggest it seems incumbent on the negotiator to exercise persuasion.

Thiessen objects further that "none of us are quite as independent as we would like to think we are," in particular, many of our beliefs and values are acquired from those around us, "most (maybe even 95%) of the beliefs that we hold are a result of persuasion."⁴⁶ Thiessen emphasizes "an inescapable degree of human interdependence."⁴⁷ This might be so, but as we have observed earlier, it might be that we ought to follow the path of minimal influence. It might be that we ought never act so as to influence others, but only allow that this is an unfortunate by-product to be tolerated. Foss and Griffin can reasonably complain that we live in a poor moral

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 16,

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Elmer John Thiessen, *The Ethics of Evangelism: A Philosophical Defense of Proselytizing and Persuasion* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2011), p. 56.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 57.

climate. Similar responses can be made to Thiessen's complaint that "the purpose of argumentation, scholarship, and indeed the educational enterprise generally, is precisely to persuade and alter beliefs," since it is not as though this is essential to scholarship: one can assert one's beliefs, and the reasons for them without trying to persuade.⁴⁸ Thiessen might then observe believing testimony is desirable, for without it, our knowledge base would be much smaller. Foss and Griffin can agree with this, however, and advise that we ought not to persuade, but merely share what we take to be the case, and often we will do well to learn from one another in doing so.

Thiessen might suggest that Foss and Griffin's writing amounts to a performative contradiction: 'but look,' he might say, 'you yourself are writing to persuade.' And if indeed they are, they are doing wrong on their own account, but that does not mean that what they are doing is not wrong.⁴⁹ A more compelling objection seems to be that Foss and Griffin do not seem to be providing an alternative to persuasion in the form of invitational rhetoric. It seems as if they are trying to soften persuasion by calling it "invitational rhetoric," but "a rose by any other name is still a rose", as Thiessen says. Does Foss and Griffin's thesis amount to, in David Lewis' memorable dismissal of rebranding materialism and 'physicalism,' "a *tacky marketing ploy*, akin to *British Rail's* decree that *second class* passengers shall now be called 'standard class passengers'?"⁵⁰ Understanding ought not to be the preserve of those who communicate for purpose other than persuasion. It seems that persuasion is justified only where one understands the position that they are recommending, and the position they are criticizing. Indeed, it seems that one ought always to be open to the possibility of being proven wrong, if believing the truth, and doing the good really are what one is concerned with. One might suggest that the difference turns on the difference between invitation and insistence. But Thiessen does not advocate for insistence in evangelism; "the requirement that there needs to be an invitation to persuade is too strong [...] It is when permission to persuade is denied [...] that it is immoral to continue to try to

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 58.

⁴⁹ One wants to say that that anti-persuasion positions stand to pro-persuasion principles as democracy stands to autocracy. Just as Democracy is vulnerable to becoming an autocracy through democratic process in a way that autocracy is not vulnerable to becoming a democracy through autocratic process (not in practice- dictators don't decide to relinquish power in favour of democracy unforced), so anti-persuaders are vulnerable to persuaders, as persuaders are not vulnerable to anti-persuaders (at least not to ones who are live up to their ideals).

⁵⁰ David Lewis, 'Reduction of Mind,' In *A Companion to the Philosophy of Mind*, ed. by Samuel D. Guttenplan (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 41.

persuade.”⁵¹ However, they might perhaps claim that they are not writing to persuade, but merely to record their thoughts. In doing so they would be saying: I think the following, because x, y and z – I might be wrong. In doing so, one wonders where the meaningful difference lies between this and persuasion. Perhaps it just amounts to fallibilistic, open minded, rational persuasion. It might also simply amount to a difference of intention, of whether one speaks in order to persuade, or speaks in order to report one’s thought, or perhaps to invite criticism.

Notwithstanding Thiessen’s hesitancy, there are perhaps occasions where insistence might be warranted, with the only misgiving being its practicability; intransigence is not likely to be swayed with insistence (One may worry that insistence is a symptom of intransigence, but it need not be). We might find persuasive consequentialist arguments to favour bypassing rationality on some occasions. Consider whether there are any conditions under which one ought to slip another human being a conversion pill, a pill which will instantaneously change their beliefs, attitudes and projects to what one desires. A plausible example might be that the British Special Operations Executive would have been justified in slipping such pills to leading Nazis, so as to avert the Holocaust or Second World War.⁵²

Not All Influence is Immoral

In sum, Foss and Griffin’s alternative to persuasion seems doubtfully genuine, and their arguments against persuasion rather weak, too. Bryan R. Warnick recounts Isocrates’ letter to King Phillip of Macedonia, “all who are blessed with understanding ought to set before themselves the greatest men as their model, and strive to become like him.”⁵³ As Warnick observes, “for Isocrates, the imitation of exemplars is not opposed to living with intelligence; instead, imitating noble exemplars *is* intelligent living.”⁵⁴ Locke qualifies this thought somewhat, remarking that where some students “*affectation* of all kinds, whencesoever it proceeds, is always offensive; because we naturally hate whatever is counterfeit, and condemn those who have nothing better to recommend

⁵¹ Thiessen, *The Ethics of Evangelism*, p. 59.

⁵² Tillson, ‘Elmer Thiessen and the Ethics of Evangelism,’ pp. 243-258, 248.

⁵³ Isocrates “To Phillip”, 106-13, quoted at Bryan R. Warnick, *Imitation and Education: A Philosophical Inquiry into Learning by Example* (New York: SUNY Press, 2009), p. 16.

⁵⁴ Bryan R. Warnick, *Imitation and Education: A Philosophical Inquiry into Learning by Example* (New York: SUNY Press, 2009), p. 16.

themselves by.”⁵⁵ That is to say, one may properly model oneself on models that befit one. This point seems more aesthetic, or rooted in etiquette, than anything else, in Locke’s formulation. On the other hand, it can be given a more statused and a more ability-based interpretation. Imagine for instance, an underling carrying oneself with the pomp and self-importance over a strong and courageous leader. Or imagine someone carrying themselves in imitation of Einstein when they are not capable of simple arithmetic. These points carry some individual-sensitive constraints on the selection of proper role models.

However, children’s ideal futures are under-determined by their genetic endowment: one cannot read off from their genome, how things ought to go for them ideally. While I am happy enough to defend a conception of wellbeing as approximation of Godliness (as I have in Chapter 2), I do not think that there is one goal towards which we should bring children which is their fullest and most ideal development, or that we could easily imagine what that would be. Thus, different upbringings and different goals can be of equal worth within this conception. Furthermore, even if there were some latent perfection, it is far from obvious that scrupulously avoiding both encouragement and discouragement of those things which we admire and disapprove respectively is apt to lead them there. It seems that we often have good reason to encourage certain formative outcomes and discourage others.

Summary

In this chapter, we have seen that for each prospective formative influence, which a child could adopt, influencers may ignore it, promote it, demote it, or draw attention to it as something worthy of consideration to adopt. The theory of ethical influence that I developed was the following; that for each prospective formative influence, it ought to be promoted, floated or demoted respectively according to the following three sets of criteria, and where none of these apply, it might be fairly ignored:

1. a) That it is momentous; b) that it might well not be adopted without intervention; c) failing to have it is irrational.

⁵⁵ John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, §66, §99, <<http://www.bartleby.com/37/1/>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

2. a) That it is momentous; b) that it might well not be understood and rationally evaluated without intervention; c) neither having it nor not having it is irrational
3. a) That it is momentous; b) that it might well be adopted without intervention; c) having it is irrational.

We have also seen that the influences which may be had may be more or less comprehensive or specific depending on just how many, and how fundamental, the respects in which we manage to influence one another are. We argued that the comprehensiveness of a set of influences being imparted raises the moral stakes. Furthermore, while it might be alright morally on some occasions to favour the practical rationality of the beliefs that one imparts over their theoretical rationality, in so far as those beliefs are highly comprehensive, it becomes significantly immoral to sacrifice theoretical rationality in formative influence. Later in this chapter, we shall consider how comprehensive religious belief is.

These same considerations were seen to preside over both formal educators and informal educators such as caregivers. Furthermore, it was shown how the above theory of ethical influence could be used to select curricula content, where a planned programme of learning delivered by subject experts is the sort of intervention that would be required to rationally encourage and discourage them in children, or to enable children to better judge their rationality. Since parents or, more generally, primary carers, could not reasonably be expected to satisfy this entitlement qua parents and primary carers, the responsibility would be what I termed ‘extra-parental’ in Chapter 3. However, we admitted that even to the extent that we are equipped with such evidence to warrant being directive, we ought still to emphasize fallibility and deference to reasons rather than commitment to conclusions, and to the extent that we are not so equipped, we ought to encourage interest, and rational deliberation, but stop short of promoting or undermining particular views.

Chapter Seven

THE NATURE OF RELIGION

Introduction

We want to know how (if at all) children may be ethically influenced with respect to religions. To reach that point, we will have to try to answer the prior question ‘what is it that we mean by ‘religions’?’ Some objects of study routinely appear in religious studies courses and books: the Abrahamic faiths, Judaism, Christianity and Islam (from oldest to youngest); and the non-Abrahamic faiths, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Sikhism. Other objects of study, such as Scientology, Marxism and Secular Humanism, have appeared less routinely, alternatively referred to as cults, ideologies, and worldviews. But how are we to discern between religion and non-religion? A good illustration of the problem is given by Timothy Fitzgerald, who points out that in:

denying the legitimacy of an overall theoretical structure [of religion], on the grounds that the ‘conceptual geography’ of the concept is too rich and complex, the editor [of a book on religion] seems to have deprived himself of any principles for controlling what does and what does not get included in the book.¹

After sketching a number of ways of approaching this question, including, by stipulation, identifying family resemblance, and proceeding with examples in mind, I defend taking an essentialist approach. Ultimately, I defend an essentialist definition of religion, namely, that a religion, is anything which essentially requires a) belief in super-beings and b) and submission to them as having rightful dominion.

Essentialism

Jonathan Lowe distinguishes between two kinds of essences: those conditions in virtue of which something qualifies as a particular *kind* of thing, and those (identity) conditions in virtue of which something at T1 and, again at T2 qualifies, as one and the same thing.² The kind of essence that we are interested in here is the essence of kinds,

¹ Timothy Fitzgerald, ‘Philosophy and Family Resemblances,’ *Religion* 26(3) (1996), p. 215–236, 226.

² E. Jonathan Lowe, ‘Essentialism, Metaphysical Realism, and the Errors of Conceptualism,’ *Philosophia Scientiae* 12(1) (2008), pp. 9–33.

rather than the essence of individuals. Essentialists venture to identify criteria which are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for something to count as an instance of a kind. They interpret the question 'what is it that we mean by 'religion'?' in the following way: what are the constitutive features of religions, those features of a phenomenon in virtue of which it is a religion? Some concepts are seemingly exceptions in that they seem to be incapable of such analysis: we might call these atomic, or basic concepts, in that they are too basic to be so analysed, but may be drawn on in other such analyses: arguably the notions of substance, cause, person, truth, time, belief and action, are such concepts. Indeed, analysis works by way of cashing out some concept in terms of others, and analysis has to stop somewhere if it is not to be circular.

Consider the matter of what is to count as breaking the 100 metre world record, a feat accomplished by Usain Bolt. To achieve this, it is necessary to run 100 metres, but not sufficient. Conversely, it is sufficient to run that distance a whole second faster than anyone previously, but not necessary. It is both necessary and sufficient for breaking the 100 metre world record that one run that distance faster than anyone has done previously.³ This is an essentialist definition of that phenomenon.

We ought to distinguish now between words and their objects, between signifiers and things signified. So we can ask both whether some things in themselves have essences, and whether words that used to refer to them have essences of application. It is at the level of objects that I am looking for an essence of religion. But this is to be found by starting at the linguistic level, with common usage: by picking paradigmatic examples of religion, and seeking an essence which they share. That said, we should be wary of undue deference to common usage, since it may create false or otherwise bad nominal unities: "We cannot ignore everyday usage in trying to analyse such a concept [as seeing], but we must be ready to criticise and refine that usage where it is confused or vague."⁴ We must not be afraid of revision at the linguistic and conceptual level if we care about tracking truths about phenomena.

We also ought to acknowledge that words can have distinct senses. Consider the homonyms in the sentences 'hear the dog's bark', and 'feel the tree's bark'. We would

³ This is probably not quite precise; it will likely also be necessary to run that distance in gravitationally similar conditions to those that we currently enjoy on Earth, on a straight course with a 0° gradient.

⁴ E. Jonathan Lowe, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 3.

be foolish to seek a single set of necessary and sufficient conditions in the application of the word 'bark'; given the differences of sense, it is more reasonable to seek them for each case. It is less obvious that words such as 'meaning', 'health', 'art' and 'religion' might be such cases, but we should be prepared to allow that they are.

Another possibility is that there are separate senses of 'religion', which have common core. Christopher Shields refers to this as 'core-dependent homonymy'; it is used by Aristotle to explain the relationship between the senses of the word 'healthy' in the expressions 'Socrates is healthy', 'Socrates' exercise regimen is healthy', and 'Socrates' complexion is healthy'.

First, they are non-univocal, since the second is paraphraseable roughly as *promotes health* and the third as *is indicative of health*, whereas the first means, rather, something more fundamental, like *is sound of body* or *is functioning well*. Hence, *healthy* is non-univocal. Second, even so, the last two predications rely upon the first for their elucidations: each appeals to health in its core sense in an asymmetrical way. That is, any account of each of the latter two predications *must* allude to the first, whereas an account of the first makes no reference to the second or third in its account. So, suggests Aristotle, *health* is not only a homonym, but a *core-dependent homonym*: while not univocal neither is it a case of rank multivocity.⁵

The natural kinds of the mind-independent world are perhaps more likely to be defined by necessary and sufficient features, that is, by essences, than as cultural concepts. To put it differently, the mind-independent world of such things as the periodic table elements, species and natural laws, rather than the social or mind-dependent and culturally constructed world, consisting of artefacts and institutions, seems more likely to consist in essences. We could think of 'water is H₂O' as being a paradigm example of a natural kind having an (identifiable) essence. But while we might seek necessary sufficient conditions, they may not be available for mind-dependent concepts. On the other hand, some sort of public consistency, and correctability seems to be required for words to have a shared meaning. Words cannot mean whatever we want them to mean, as Humpty Dumpty wanted in Lewis Carol's *Alice in Wonderland*, otherwise they would mean nothing at all, since they would fail to communicate anything. On the other hand, perhaps this consistency need not consist in necessary and sufficient conditions.

⁵ Christopher Shields, 'Aristotle,' in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/aristotle/>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

Functional Analyses

Brian and Beverly Clack suggest that *substantive* and *functionalist* approaches have been the two main ways of defining religion.⁶ While E.B. Taylor's "belief in spiritual beings,"⁷ and "super-empirical beings" are offered as examples of substantive analyses, the functionalist, we are told, "lays stress on the functions rather than the content of religion."⁸ However, I want to suggest that these are less fundamental than the distinction between essential and non-essential analyses, since one might say that the sort of essence we should be looking for, with respect to religion, is a functional one. There is a large body of literature in the sociology of religion from Durkheim to present, both defending and criticizing functionalist definitions of religion (Durkheim: reinforces social norms; Marx: the opiate of the masses; Freud: a crutch for the weak in the face of death). The functional analyses above will likely be disputed by religious people, but we should not class any of these functions as the essence of religions, even if they were true. Even if they were all true – and all religions fitted them – they would still hardly be sufficient. Other things might satisfy those functions also. Consider the following example of a non-religious opiate provided by comedian, Bill Hicks:

Go back to bed America, your government is in control. Here, here's American Gladiators. Watch this, shut up, go back to bed America, here is American Gladiators, here is 56 channels of it! Watch these pituitary retards bang their fucking skulls together and congratulate you on living in the land of freedom. Here you go America - you are free to do what we tell you! You are free to do what we tell you!

What alternatives are there to essentialist analyses of religion (whether substantive or non-substantive, or some combination)?

Five Alternatives to Essentialism

One might abandon looking for an essentialist definition of religion, either because it is too difficult to do, or because it is not, in principle, possible, or because it is both unnecessary and undesirable. A range of alternatives may be available: one might

⁶ Beverley Clack and Brian R. Clack, *The Philosophy of Religion: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1998), p. 2; Eshleman emphasizes the same distinction and offers a composite, essentialist definition of religion in Andrew Eshleman, *Reading in Philosophy of Religion: East Meets West* (Singapore: Blackwell, 2008), p. 4. His definition admits of many counterexamples, and the one that I shall offer is to be preferred both in respect of simplicity and explanatory power.

⁷ E.B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*, Volume One (London: John Murray, 1871), p. 424.

⁸ Clack and Clack, p. 4.

stipulate a definition; one might appeal to sufficient, but not necessary conditions; following Wittgenstein, one might appeal to a loose unity of family resemblances; one might simply proceed with ‘excellent examples’. In the next five sections, I shall explain and evaluate each of these strategies in turn.

Stipulation

“A stipulative definition imparts a meaning to the defined term, and involves no commitment that the assigned meaning agrees with prior uses (if any) of the term,” says Anil Gupta.⁹ Stipulation usually dictates a definition for a word in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. While one might quite innocuously baptise a previously unnamed concept, used as an alternative to analysing some prior use of a word, stipulation looks suspect. It becomes a blatant misappropriation of word and multiplies senses beyond necessity. One concept becomes proxy for another under the name of the original, risking intellectual oscillation between them, total conflation or substitution to the neglect of the concept originally of interest. One does better to invent a term, rather than arrogate it from common usage, but then it is plain that one has neglected the concept that had originally been of interest. While we might provide an essentialist analysis of some concept which does act well as proxy for religion in one or other of its senses, it is more appropriate not to call it religion. Besides, we cannot be sure just how far it does become proxy for religion without an essential characterization of that concept.¹⁰ It seems to me, then, that stipulation is not a promising alternative to seeking out an essence of an interesting concept.

Merely Sufficient Conditions

Despairing of finding “a single principle or essence,”¹¹ one might produce a definition of how they shall use the term that is rightly, but not exclusively deserving of it; something that is religious *if anything is*. That is, they might offer some conditions

⁹ Anil Gupta, ‘Definitions,’ in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/definitions/>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

¹⁰ I want to clarify now that by the ‘concept of religion’, I have in mind more a term, which may act as an umbrella for manifold concepts; one corresponding to each sense of the term religion should there be more than one sense of the term.

¹¹ In William James’ expression, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p. 23.

sufficient for religion, but not essential to it. This seems to be essentialist in its commitments, but to take the essentialist's task to be practically overambitious and unnecessary for its purposes. Should they be available while necessary and sufficient conditions are not, that may be the best that we can do, and represent an acceptable fall-back position.

One Sense Among Many

In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James seems to suggest that an essentialist definition cannot, in principle, be provided to capture the range of phenomena that are claimed to be religious:

the very fact that there are so many [definitions] and [that they are] so different from one another is enough to prove that the word 'religion' cannot stand for any single principle or essence, but is rather a collective name [...] Let us not fall immediately into a one-sided view of our subject, but let us rather admit freely at the outset that we may very likely find no one essence, but many characters which may alternately be equally important in religion.¹²

It is not clear what he can mean by 'collective name'. 'Triangle' might constitute a collective name, in that it names a kind to which many instances belong. Here however, an essentialist analysis is obviously forthcoming for its members. Alternatively, James might be taken to anticipate the existence of a plethora of homonyms, but in that case his collapsing them together in the expression 'equally important in religion' is clearly illicit. Indeed, as we have seen above, it is no skin off of the essentialist's nose to say that religion is one word with many meanings: the essentialist can readily admit that homonyms exist. If that is the case with 'religion', one should begin to differentiate them and specify the sense at issue.¹³ Indeed, the various senses of 'religion' could prove to be *core-dependent homonyms*.

¹² James, p. 23.

¹³ Are Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism religious in the same sense? That might depend on whether there is an analysis which can capture these words. Michael Hand points out that there are metaphorical uses of the term religion, whereby if something is a religion or religious, then it is in a different sense than those things which are literally religions. But metaphors may be made of each literal sense of the word religion.

James gives “a narrow view” “for the purpose of these lectures”, “out of the many meanings of the word [...] choosing one meaning in which I wish to interest you particularly.”¹⁴ The single sense that James delineates is this:

Religion, therefore, as I now ask you arbitrarily to take it, shall mean for us *the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men [sic] in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they consider to be the divine.*¹⁵

The expression “arbitrarily to take it,” suggests that James’ use is stipulative, with no reference to common usage. On the other hand, “choosing one meaning” from “the many meanings of the word” suggests the contrary. I suggest that James is best read as delineating a single sense, which has no natural priority (for instance, it is not the core on which its homonyms are dependent). It will be well now to evaluate this definition.

The word ‘divine’ is cashed out as “denoting any object that is godlike, whether it be a concrete deity or not.”¹⁶ ‘Godlike’ is glossed in turn as what is “most primal and enveloping and deeply true,” and, in particular, only “such a primal reality as the individual feels impelled to respond to solemnly and gravely, and neither by curse or jest.”¹⁷ Ironically, this understanding of ‘godlike’ does not seem to capture gods. Gods are (as we shall argue later) super-powerful rational agents; they are not propositions and so cannot be true. He also says (which sounds different again) that “a man’s religion might thus be identified with his attitude, whatever it might be, towards what he felt to be primal truth.”¹⁸ This would seem to suggest that to believe that there is a ‘primal truth’ is to have a religion, namely whatever one takes to be primal truth, and would abandon James’ stipulation that one’s response to it need be solemn.¹⁹ I would suggest that people would have an easier time saying whether they were religious (perhaps confusedly) than whether they took anything to be primally true. I would also suggest that, to the extent that I can make sense of it, nihilists would then count as being religious in saying that the universe is basically meaningless, as would materialists in

¹⁴ James, p. 25.

¹⁵ James, p. 26.

¹⁶ James, p. 28.

¹⁷ James, p. 31.

¹⁸ James, pp. 28-9.

¹⁹ If a God were taken to be primal reality, then surely one’s religion would not be identified with what one took to be primal reality – since nobody says that gods are religions. Rather gods are the subject of religions, while religions themselves are taken to offer, to borrow Eshleman’s phrase, “an appropriate way of being related” to gods.

saying that nothing exists but matter and its relations. These both seem to be putative examples of primal truths about the universe if anything does.

It is interesting as to why James mentions “individual men *in their solitude*.” Arguably it is to isolate belief from social reinforcement to the furthest extent possible so that it is what one thinks *really*, rather than what one merely ‘goes along with’. Contra James, Durkheim has argued that religion is essentially social. But while religion can be learned from others,²⁰ one could subsequently become a Robinson Crusoe, who retains his or her religion. Moreover, it seems that a Robinson Crusoe might invent a religion, or a religious ceremony. It might be thought unlikely, but Durkheim’s intuition is not one that I want to preserve or dismiss in advance of presenting a definition. I want to say that since human beings are social creatures, it is not surprising that their beliefs spread and are reinforced and developed and acted upon in a social way. Indeed, one cannot understand religion *as it actually exists* without employing social concepts. However, it does not follow from religion’s being social *in practice*, that religion must be social *in essence*.

In sum, James offers a single sense which is not so promising and an essentialist analysis of religion *tout court*, which is. Identifying a single sense of the word ‘religion’ is, indeed, a possible strategy, but one of limited interest, especially if an essential analysis is forthcoming.

Excellent Examples

Alvin Plantinga suggests that while it is “extremely difficult to give (informative) necessary and sufficient conditions for either science or religion”, “we do have many excellent examples of each” and suggests tentatively that “perhaps that will suffice for our inquiry.”²¹ (His inquiry is not ours, but is to determine whether the relation between religion and science is “characterized by *conflict* or by *concord*”. Even still, our projects share a concern with the demarcation of religion). Scott Davison seems to concur with Plantinga’s approach; “in general,” says Davison, “it seems doubtful whether we need

²⁰ Indeed, it is oft remarked how religious beliefs conglomerate around geographical locations, or did until mass migration.

²¹ Alvin Plantinga, ‘Religion and Science,’ in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta, forthcoming <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/religion-science/>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

criteria to decide whether or not something falls under a given concept. We may be aware of paradigm cases, for instance, without being aware of criteria.”²²

Sven Hansson dissents from this view:

It is in a sense paradoxical that so much agreement has been reached in particular issues in spite of almost complete disagreement on the general criteria that these judgments should presumably be based upon. This puzzle is a sure indication that there is still much important philosophical work to be done on the demarcation between science and pseudoscience.²³

Indeed, one may know the paradigm examples, but one cannot read off from these what else falls under the concepts; to see whether some other thing is a religion, you have to ask how similar is it to our excellent examples (paradigm cases), which would require specifying which aspects of the examples they ought to be similar to, which is the same thing as to determine criteria. Bearing in mind these misgivings, we shall now evaluate Wittgenstein’s contention that excellent examples are not only enough to get by with, but that they are sometimes (perhaps often) all that are available.

Family Resemblance Analyses

In his later work, Wittgenstein was to deny that there must be an essential feature common to all the correct uses of a given word. In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein maintains that there need be no essence to any common noun, not even core-dependent homonymy.²⁴ To elucidate how we apply words without their objects sharing an essence, Wittgenstein discusses the concept of games. An imaginary interlocutor suggests that “a game consists in moving objects about on a board according to certain rules,” but is corrected “you seem to be thinking of board games, but there are others.”²⁵ Wittgenstein suggests that we should not assume that there are necessary and sufficient criteria available at the outset of our task.²⁶ He then reminds us of the variety of things that we call games, and suggests that while many may share all sorts of similarities, no combination of these are common and exclusive to all. He

²² Scott A. Davison, *On the Intrinsic Value of Everything* (London: Continuum, 2012).

²³ Sven Ove Hansson, ‘Science and Pseudo-Science,’ in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/pseudo-science/>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

²⁴ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2010).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, §3.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, §66.

suggests that in the case of ‘games’, the best that our actual investigations can afford are what he calls “family resemblances”;²⁷ “a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail.”²⁸ This is so much as to say that concepts do not need necessary and sufficient concepts to be applied. Religion may prove to be a family resemblance kind, what Christopher Shields, amusingly, calls a ‘motley kind’.

Given Wittgenstein’s account of ‘games’, how, then, we might challenge him on the question of whether games are distinguishable from things which are not games? What is it that makes the concept of a game usable? Wittgenstein’s response comes in two parts. He first characterizes the various similarities as ‘family resemblances’: “[...] for the resemblances between members of a family [...] overlap and criss-cross in exactly the same way,” and games, he says, “form a family.”²⁹ It is these resemblances that distinguish the word’s correct application. Wittgenstein then further justifies his idea by saying a concept does not need to have distinct frontiers in order to function. “What still counts as a game and what no longer does? Can you give the boundary? No. You can draw one for none has been drawn. (But that never bothered you before when you used the word ‘game’).”³⁰ That is, common nouns like ‘game’ do not suddenly become unusable simply because we do not like what constrains their proper use. Perhaps more likely we could say that the word ‘game’ is applicable in virtue of sharing some (but not complete) similarity with one species or sense of ‘game’, and then we have a sort of initially loose or metaphorical application, which comes to forge a new literal application, and thereby a new sense.

Indeed, the *Philosophical Investigations* convinced many people that ‘game’ failed to have necessary and sufficient conditions. Applying this Wittgensteinian understanding, Peter Byrne, Benson Saler and Ninian Smart have all attempted to give family resemblance analyses of ‘religion’.³¹ Timothy Fitzgerald acknowledges that while any

²⁷ Ibid, §67.

²⁸ Ibid, §66.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid, §68.

³¹ The following examples are found in Timothy Fitzgerald, ‘Religion, Philosophy and Family Resemblances,’ *Religion* 26(3) (1996), pp. 215–236, 234, endnote 2; Ninian Smart, *The Science of Religion and the Sociology of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton, 1973); Benson Saler, *Conceptualizing Religion: Immanent Anthropologists, Transcendent Natives, and Unbounded Categories* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993); Peter Byrne, ‘Religion and the Religions’, in *The World’s Religions*, ed. by Stewart Sutherland et al. (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 3–28; Peter Byrne, *Natural Religion and the Nature of Religion: The Legacy of Deism* (London: Routledge, 1989).

“essentialist definition of religion such as “belief in God or gods” must be “too parochially tied to Judaeo-Christian theistic origins of the word;” a Wittgensteinian family resemblance analysis promises “a distinctive role for religion as a universally applicable analytical concept.”³² However, he objects that on such an analysis, “the ‘religion’ family and other neighbouring families such as ideologies, worldviews, values or symbolic systems [...] becomes so indefinite that the word ceases to pick out any distinctive aspect of human culture.”³³ He recommends that we do away with the term religion, and look to other, more universal anthropological categories. The term while perhaps alright for everyday purposes, is no good for academic uses, and according to him, it is too imprecise, and confused. It seems to me however, that a decent essentialist definition may still be forthcoming. Which ‘essentialist definition shall we accept, or which back up shall we revert to? It is ultimately Michael Hand’s that I shall employ, amend and defend.

Before discussing Hand’s essentialism, I want quickly to make a comment about the importance (or unimportance) of self-identification in identifying religious people. There is a difference between self-identification, and identification. That an insane person might not self-identify as insane does nothing to imply that they are sane. Sometimes, self-identification is a necessary condition, of belonging to a category, but not always. It is never sufficient however; indeed, it makes little sense to think of the set which that would imply: the set of all people who claim to be part of that set.

Hand’s Essentialism

I want to defend a slightly modified version of Michael Hand’s essentialist definition. Hand does not investigate the word ‘religion’, but the word ‘religious’, and claims that to be religious one must believe that there exists at least one god who makes a positive difference to one’s life. Granting this, perhaps a religion would be, in essence, a body of beliefs central among which is a belief in the existence of at least one god who makes a positive difference to the lives of at least some believers. Additional aspects of particular religions, such as institutional form, rituals and what not, would be incidental at least qua religion, if not qua the particular religion that they are.

³² Fitzgerald, p. 215.

³³ Ibid.

For Hand, to be religious, one must hold “beliefs about a god or gods”; in particular, presumably, one must most fundamentally believe that they exist.³⁴ Immediately, we think of the common objection raised, for instance, by Clack and Clack: “to deny that Buddhism counts as a religion [...] would surely be a bizarre consequence.”³⁵ However, if Buddhism is presented as a counter example, Hand is prepared to respond, convincingly, that firstly, “it is not unusual to hear people deny that Buddhism is a religion and describe it instead as a philosophy or a way of life, precisely because they take the crucial element of belief in a divine being to be missing” and secondly:

a great many Buddhists manifestly *do* believe in gods or something very like them. For schools of Buddhism in the Mahayana tradition, the heavens are richly populated with Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, ready to help human beings along the Eightfold Path to Enlightenment.³⁶

He concludes that “Buddhism is a philosophy in some of its forms, and a religion in others.”³⁷ While I should not like to drive a wedge between ‘religions’ and ‘philosophy’, for it seems reasonable that something could be a religious philosophy, I would accept that Buddhism is a religion in some of its form and not a religion in other of its forms, while perhaps being a philosophy in all of its forms.

Clacks, Hand and Plantinga all agree that belief in god(s) alone is insufficient. Clack and Clack state: “Religion is certainly more than cool adherence to a rather bizarre belief or system of beliefs.”³⁸ Hand observes: “A person may hold beliefs about gods and yet be utterly indifferent to them. She may regard the existence as one more fact about the world which has no relevance to her life.”³⁹ Plantinga conjectures:

The truth here, perhaps, is that a belief isn't religious *just in itself*. The property of being religious isn't intrinsic to a belief; it is rather one a belief acquires when it functions in a certain way in the life of a given person or community. To be a religious belief, the belief in question would have to be appropriately connected with characteristically religious attitudes on the part of the believer, such attitudes as worship, love, commitment, awe, and the like.⁴⁰

³⁴ Hand, *Is Religious Education Possible?* p. 95.

³⁵ Clack and Clack, p. 3.

³⁶ Hand, *Is Religious Education Possible?* p. 96.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Clack and Clack, p. 3.

³⁹ Hand, *Is Religious Education Possible?* pp. 96-7.

⁴⁰ Plantinga.

Indeed, “For Kierkegaard Christian faith is not a matter of regurgitating church dogma. It is a matter of individual subjective passion.”⁴¹

While John Wilson suggested that, additionally, a person “must adopt a moral code for reasons connected with her beliefs about gods,” Hand suggests, instead, that though sufficient, this would not be necessary: “since people who worship and revere the gods they believe in, or supplicate their gods for assistance in times of need, certainly have a religion, even if their religious beliefs have no influence on their moral principles and judgements.”⁴² Instead, Hand suggests that “a person must hold the gods she believes in to have *some positive relevance to her life*” (e.g. “Worthy of worship”, “receptive to supplication” or “moral authorities”), “any of them is sufficient.”⁴³

This has the benefit of leaving out those whose attitudes to gods that seem unreligious. Hand’s example is of Ivan, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, who is contemptuous of God, who he regards as morally repugnant on account of the suffering he allows.⁴⁴ Plantinga has added that devils believe in God, and yet, in their antipathy to God, are not religious: “According to the New Testament book of James, ‘the devils believe [that God exists] and tremble’; the devils’ beliefs, presumably, aren’t religious.”⁴⁵ Perhaps devils *should* regard God as having some positive relevance to their lives – perhaps their souls can be redeemed – but the crucial point is whether or not they *do* regard God as having some positive relevance. Furthermore, perhaps this positive relevance should not just be seen as some sort of silver lining to an otherwise grey cloud, where one makes the best of a generally bad thing (e.g. finding solidarity in opposition to the bad thing; perhaps as opponents of animal cruelty, or torture do).⁴⁶

Instead of Hand’s criterion of ‘holding gods to have *some positive relevance to her life*,’ I would suggest that Plantinga’s understanding of religion requiring certain attitudes would be better; having some positive and invitational attitudes to the god, or gods,

⁴¹ William McDonald, ‘Søren Kierkegaard,’ in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2012 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2012/entries/kierkegaard/>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

⁴² Hand, *Is Religious Education Possible?* p. 97.

⁴³ Ibid, pp. 98-99.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 98.

⁴⁵ Plantinga.

⁴⁶ While the devils and Ivan Karamazov might admit that gods exist, they do not admit that gods have rightful dominion, which they submit to in a way they consider proper and are thereby not religious. However, both must be able to recognize that other people are religious by doing so, and also need to recognize that religions exist. What are religions? They are perhaps a combination of other people’s attitudes to entities posited in doctrines, which they regard as existing.

rather than merely a belief that they have some positive relevance (that one benefits from their existence). Christians might petition God through prayer for intervention in worldly matters, but they additionally defer to God as being the authority on moral matters; both in respect of knowledge and motivation, they defer to Him willingly. On the other hand, one might petition some god without thinking that they are a rightful ruler, and yet believe the god to have some positive bearing on their lives. One might like to construct the counterexample of an individual being specially favoured by a god who they regard as a fool, and so take to be a positive relevance without having the slightest respect for them, but on the definition of 'god' that I shall defend, this will not be possible; a god is one who excels us in every respect, and with whom we have no chance of competing successfully. A demi-god is one who we may have some (however small) chance of beating (more on gods later). Despite having this counterexample unavailable, I hope that I have said enough to convince that 'positive relevance' is insufficient as a necessary condition. One could anyway, imagine a case of someone who (wrongly) believed that they could 'get one over' on a god, perhaps planning to deceive their way into paradise. They might then regard the god as having some positive relevance to their life, but would not thereby be religious.

I would suggest that the characteristic attitude is one of willing deference. Possible attitudes to gods include contented, and discontented subordination, and (futile) overt dissent.⁴⁷ Discontented subordination includes resentfully placating powerful gods. Overt dissent is exemplified by Ivan, in Dostoyevsky's *The Brother Karamazov*. One thinks of the remark that "They may torture my body; break my bones; even kill me. Then they will have my dead body, but not my obedience" as political equivalent of Ivan's attitude.⁴⁸ It is interesting to think of dissent and discontented subordination in relation to gods' powers and desires, since the dynamic is like that of an omnipotent Orwellian Thought Police. Of course, George Orwell's Thought Police (from his novel, *1984*) attempted to engineer willing subordination, not being satisfied with discontented subordination, and hoping to undermine the possibility of dissent in the style of Ivan. I will suggest that willing, as opposed to engineered, subordination is the religious attitude. The criterion of regarding gods to have rightful dominion may exclude those

⁴⁷ Perhaps, to be precise, we would want to distinguish between two forms of contentedness: not minding, and being positive about the status quo, and actively supporting it. It is the latter which I take to be the religious attitude.

⁴⁸ This line is said by Ghandi in the eponymous film, dir. by Richard Attenborough (Columbia Pictures, 1982).

that worshipped the gods of the Parthenon as people who deferred to the gods more through expedience than through what they considered rightful (where what is considered right is not constituted by the arbitrary or self-interested preferences of the mighty, which is anyway just to erode the concept of right), but I do not take this to be problematic.

Gods

For Hand, a “god is a transcendent or superhuman person, a person who transcends or exceeds the ordinary limits of human personhood.”⁴⁹ I take it that Hand offers two ways of characterizing an identical property, that a transcendent person and a superhuman person are the same thing. D.C. Comics’ Superman is a superhuman or transcendent person, in the sense that he is much like ordinary people except that his powers far exceed those of humans in degree, and also in kind.

It is interesting to wonder whether the degree of super-ability necessary to qualify a being for godhood is absolute or indexical. Is there some absolute standard which constitutes godly levels of superhuman power, or is it that having greater powers than some group make one a god relative to them? One may think of a group of aliens having regular powers relative to one another, but much greater powers than human beings (the species of which Superman was a member, for instance), and, so, be gods relative to us. Alternatively, Anselm’s monotheistic definition of a god as “that than which nothing greater can be conceived” might help us anchor an absolute notion of a god as having maximal powers.⁵⁰

However, I think that an indexical concept of gods is all that we require: a god is one who excels us in every respect, and with whom we have no chance of competing successfully. A demigod on the other hand, is one who we may have some (small) a chance of beating. For instance, Hector was a powerful man, but not sufficiently powerful to be a demigod and Achilles was also a powerful man, but not powerful

⁴⁹ Hand, *Is Religious Education Possible?* p. 107.

⁵⁰ This definition is arguably monotheistic in essence, in that there could only exist one being corresponding to Anselm’s definition: those than which none greater can be conceived might all be identical on the grounds that having no equals is parts of the conception of maximal perfection. Against this, it may be urged that excellence is not relative but absolute as there being a thousand runners could be just as fast as each other (and none possibly faster than any of them). There being a thousand of them in no way undermines their excellence as runners, however.

enough to be considered a god; Achilles' half human and half god parentage explains his limitations rather than defines them.

It is interesting to consider how Jesus maps onto our definition of a god. Jesus' Incarnation, it is said "does not mean that Jesus Christ is part God and part man, nor does it imply that he is the result of a confused mixture of the divine and the human. He became truly man while remaining truly God. Jesus Christ is true God and true man."⁵¹ It is regarded as something of a mystery or paradox as to how this is conceivable, and, so, if Jesus fails to fit our definition of a god it may do little damage to our definition. It was thought to be a paradox that Jesus could both have died on the cross, and been a god. It was thought by some to be an outright incoherence.⁵² It was also thought to be a paradox or outright incoherence that a god could have been born to a human being. However, our definition has not committed itself to whether gods must be immortal, uncreated or world-creators. This openness allows that a god could perhaps come into, and go out of, existence, could have been created, and could fail to have created anything. I have said that one is only a god relative to another being, where their powers exceed the possibility of being beaten at any task. It seems that Jesus could be beaten, since he was crucified, and so was not a god, but it seems that he allowed himself to be beaten. It was not against his will, and perhaps he could not be willingly beaten. Indeed, it also seems logically if not empirically possible that a human being could be a god relative to other humans in that they belong to the species, but are endowed with such incredible powers that they cannot be beaten by other human beings. It will be well now to see whether the definitions can withstand objections that I myself have not suggested.

S.J. McKinney's Critique

Hand's definition has been critiqued in a review by S.J. McKinney.⁵³ In this section, I shall quote five challenges made by McKinney, and defend Hand's thesis against them.

1. [I]t is questionable whether his [Hand's] sketchy account of the concept of god ... adequately reflects the centuries of scholarly debate on this concept.⁵⁴

⁵¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, <http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM> §464, [accessed 28 June 2015]

⁵² Tertullian, *De Carne Christi*, "*Et mortuus est dei filius; credibile prorsus est, quia ineptum est.*," "The Son of God died: it is *immediately* credible--because it is silly," silly in the sense of the ridiculous which is properly contrasted with the sublime. Tertullian, *Treatise on the Incarnation*, ed. and trans. by Ernest Evans (London: S.P.C.K., 1956), ch5. v4.

⁵³ S. J. McKinney, 'Is Religious Education Possible? By Michael Hand,' *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 45(1) (2011), pp. 163–165.

⁵⁴ McKinney, p. 164.

The term ‘sketchy account’, seems more name-calling than critique. In providing analyses, simplicity is desirable (although, not to the point of oversimplification: while there is sometimes a trade-off between explanatory power and simplicity, other things being equal, simplicity is in itself a theoretical virtue). Furthermore, “an adequate reflection of the centuries of scholarly debate on this concept” is not required for a satisfactory definition; that would rather be a historical project (and history before it was philosophy, to play on Bernard Williams’ distinction between the History of Ideas and the History of Philosophy).⁵⁵ Indeed, it is only those considerations which threaten to undercut Hand’s definition which are relevant to his project. Should we know of any, we ought then to challenge Hand with them rather than chide him for failing to scour centuries’ worth of texts to find them; it is quite enough to pick up on the key discussions in contemporary texts.

2. It is further questionable if he really acknowledges, never mind addresses, the tension that arises for contemporary philosophy from the obfuscation of the delineation of the relationship between the god of philosophy and the god of revealed religion as exemplified in the sourcing of texts (e.g. scripture) from revealed religion as evidence of the nature of this god.⁵⁶

It is hard to know what the accusation is here. If it is that there is a difference between the god of philosophers and the god of revealed religion, and that Hand neglects the latter, I want to say that that is a poor objection. There is no such thing as ‘the god of philosophers’; either philosophers want to characterize something more general than the god of revelation (if indeed there is just one god of revelation at all), or they do not. If they do, then it is not a problem that they do not refer to *just* the god of revelation. If they want to characterize the god of revelation in particular, they can. Richard Swinburne wants to do so when he talks of “a person without a body (i.e. a spirit) who is eternal, free, able to do anything, knows everything, is perfectly good, is the proper object of human worship and obedience, the creator and sustainer of the universe.”⁵⁷ Hand’s definition does capture the god of revelation, if that means “the god, gods who appear in the Abrahamic scriptures,” but aims to capture, and quite rightly, *more* than

⁵⁵ Bernard Williams describes his book, *Descartes: the Project of Pure Enquiry*, as “a study in the history of philosophy rather than in the history of ideas. I use these labels to mark the distinction that the history of ideas is history before it is philosophy, while with the history of philosophy it is the other way round” (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), p. 9.

⁵⁶ McKinney, p. 164.

⁵⁷ Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 1.

just the god of revelation. On the other hand, if the accusation is that the bible cannot be used to provide evidence for a definition of the god of philosophers, then again this seems to be mistaken. Again, while there is no god of the philosophers, one may define a more general concept of god which contains the god of revelation, but other gods also. In this case, it is perfectly proper to use the god of revelation as a constraint on one's definition of gods; if a paradigmatic example of a god (namely, 'the god of revealed religion') does not fit within one's definition, then so much the worse for one's definition.

3. Is it not problematic for the philosopher to be building logical structures connected to *inexact* concepts?⁵⁸

McKinney makes a good point here. Indeed, Aristotle makes a similar point apparently about ethics along these lines: we want exactness and clarity in our thought, but not more exactness and clarity than the phenomenon allows. Aristotle claims that "it is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits."⁵⁹ "Now fine and just actions, which political science investigates, admit of much variety and fluctuation of opinion, so that they may be thought to exist only by convention, and not by nature" says Aristotle.⁶⁰ Admitting 'ambiguous cases' is even among the desiderata that Eshleman places on an adequate definition of religion.⁶¹

Timothy Fitzgerald complains that "Analysis of 'religion' texts shows that the word is used in such a large range of contexts that it is devoid of analytical value."⁶² The pendulum might seem to have swung too far in the opposite direction with too precise a definition. If the term is inherently vague, though, it may be so vague as to be useless in this context. Neither of the problems appear to me to be material however. It seems to me that Hand makes the concept no more definite than it already is; he just makes it

⁵⁸ McKinney, p. 164.

⁵⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W.D. Ross, <<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.html>> [accessed 18 June 2015]
Book I Section III.

⁶⁰ Here Aristotle appears to point to the distinction raised earlier: that mind independent substances may admit of essence and social constructs not (we may safely here ignore the fascinating topics of the matter of whether the Just is a mere matter on convention is immaterial, as is the relation between convergence/divergence and stability/instability of opinion, and mind dependence/ mind-independence of phenomena.

⁶¹ Eshleman, p. 4.

⁶² Fitzgerald, p. 215.

clear to us where its exactnesses and vaguenesses lie, or, rather, our modification of Hand does that. One question will be whether the concept is too narrow, whether it presides over the range of phenomena that we might want it to in order to keep it from being too parochial (the second prong of the dilemma which Fitzgerald uses to challenge the efficacy of the academic usefulness of the term 'religion'). This concern will be addressed in the next chapter.

4. Is religion necessarily some form of collective enterprise? If the person is part of a collective enterprise, she would believe that her gods have some relevance for the lives of others within her group. Further, it could be argued that the collective enterprise believes that it contributes positively to society. This may, of course, take the form of the religion being critical of society and the values of society. If it is the case that religion is a form of collective enterprise and believes it contributes positively to society, perhaps a third point can be added: (3) she believes this religion will have a positive influence on others in her group and on society. Clearly this argument rests on the idea that religion is a collective enterprise and others may quibble with, or refute, this phraseology and statement, but this example is used to illustrate the complexity of this *inexact* concept of religion and suggest that perhaps philosophers such as Hand need to explore this concept more deeply and draw on a greater range of sources to inform their thinking.⁶³

McKinney asks whether religion is essentially social in nature, and suggests that if it were, a further constraint on the definition of religion ought to be that any putative religion should regard itself as being a good for society.⁶⁴ I do not think that that conclusion follows: one could conceivably have a corporate religion which was ego-centric, so that a society considered that it ought to sacrifice its own good for someone they considered to be divine, or divinely favoured (one may think of the Egyptian pharaohs as being in this vein). Even still, I do not think that religion is essentially social in nature; instead, it seems that a person could have a private religion (or to the extent that they could not, it is no different from any other aspect of human belief, understanding and activity, and so a trivial thesis).

I want to suggest that it is not at all surprising that 'religions', in a derivative sense of the word, have social structures; religions in one sense of the word *are* social structures, but they are social structures constructed around religion in a primary sense. A religion

⁶³ McKinney, pp. 163-4.

⁶⁴ Supposing that a putative religion promised *only* to be a good for one's own society, as Judaism had done would it then be a religion on McKinney's suggestion? Or, if it were to be a social good, need it be a good for all people (and perhaps animals as well)? The nature of McKinney's suggestion is a little ambiguous, but I think that it is not worth exploring.

is: anything which essentially requires a) belief in super-beings and b) and submission to them as having rightful dominion. There exist social structures which may be called 'religions', in a derivative sense, in that they are built around this primary sense of the word. A person is religious if and only if they believe in super powerful beings that they submit to, regarding them to have rightful dominion. A social group is religious if and only if they share a belief in super powerful beings that they submit to, regarding them to have rightful dominion.

There is an interesting relationship between societies, or clubs and doctrines. A cycling club usually will not consist of people who believe a certain set of propositions; they will consist of people that want to ride bicycles together. Here, there is an emphasis on belonging, rather than believing (although obviously some, rather common beliefs will need to be shared for that to be possible). A political society will on the other hand be a group of people who gather, perhaps to advance certain causes in light of certain shared beliefs, and perhaps to debate the finer points and applications of their basic, shared beliefs. Here, there is a case of belonging *and* believing – indeed, it is belief that motivates belonging. Grace Davie has argued that in the later part of the twentieth Century, Britain became a more privately religious society (which is not to say that beliefs could not be expressed, or acted on in the public space, but to say that people did not form congregations on the basis of their beliefs, but maintained them individualistically).⁶⁵

5. How are philosophers, for example, to respond to the contemporary reshaping of the landscape of religion? The nomenclature can be a little confusing but 'new age religions' and 'new age spiritualities', so easily dismissed and ridiculed, have, in fact, been the subject of serious academic study and debate and, crucially, have proved to be the catalyst for a revision of the (always porous) boundaries of the sociological concept of religion. What are the implications of this for the philosophical concept of religion? What are the implications for the distinction between religious and non-religious people? This is a new challenge for the philosophers who engage in discussion of religion (possibly the result of the insufficient philosophical focus on this *inexact* concept) and philosophers have an important role in the contemporary clarification of the concept of religion.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain Since 1945: Believing Without Belonging* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

⁶⁶ McKinney, p. 164.

Philosophers ought to respond to the new, putative cases of religion by seeing whether they fit with a definition; this would seem to be Hand's ready response. Being a subject of serious academic study is no criterion of religion, and indeed something need not be the least bit plausible to reward study in a sociological sense. Indeed, mental illness is worthy of study without being desirable, in part to help cure it.

McKinney claims that the so called new-religions "have proved to be the catalyst for a revision of the (always porous) boundaries of the sociological concept of religion." One may worry with Fitzgerald that the boundaries are so vague that the concept does not reveal enough determinations as to whether something is or is not a religion; it is quiet on too many cases, and is thence useless or useless for some practical purposes (such as an academic field of study with a specific remit).

Religions and Propositional Content (or Truth-Claims)

One of the biggest questions that we face in trying to understand what a religion is, that we face in the light of the discussions of Wittgensteinians (such as D.Z. Philips), is: how important are doctrines for religions (sufficient, necessary, necessary and sufficient, irrelevant, or incompatible)? It seems that religious people express propositional attitudes or make truth-claims; the propositions asserted are commonly called 'doctrines'. Indeed, the first of the five pillars of Islam (found in the Hadith of Gabriel) focuses on belief content: *Shahadah*, the declaration that there is no god except Allah, and that Muhammad is his Messenger. The Nicene Creed, professed in mass by Christians of several churches, appears to consist of a set of propositions, which are asserted to be true in the profession. Indeed, St. Paul writes to the Corinthians that "if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."⁶⁷ However, Paul does not say that Christ's having risen is to be taken literally, and if he did, he may still have been speaking non-literally (e.g. metaphorically, ironically, or exaggeratingly).

On my own definition of religion (namely 'a doctrine which claims the existence and rightful dominion of one or more gods, and requires submission to them'), doctrines (namely 'there exist one or more gods, who have rightful dominion') are essential. However, the aforementioned Wittgensteinians deny that religious claims are meant

⁶⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:14, King James Version.

literally (or at least claim that many are not). They have one of two options open to them: global and local non-literalism. The global non-literalist says that not only are religious propositions not meant literally, but there is no such thing as literal language for them to be contrasted with.⁶⁸ The local non-literalist says that religious propositions are not meant literally, that they might be meant as exaggerations, or metaphors, or some other non-literal thing. J.L. Mackie suggests that Philips was hoping to carve out an understanding of religious claims such that they would fall somewhere between literal statements and non-literal statements (a clearly impossible task).⁶⁹ Certainly, Jesus is reported in the Gospels as making frequent use of non-literal language, like allegorical tales. But it seems that he literally made frequent use of them.

There is a large literature on what can be meant by religious language. Proponents of the *via negativa* seem to deny that it has any meaning to humans. It is possible for sentences to have meaning that is not appreciated by the speaker, as when I phonetically pass on a message sent by someone else in a language that I do not understand. On the other hand, it must mean something to someone to be meaningful, and, if it means nothing to me, it is hard to see how I could believe it since, as Bernard Williams puts it, “if you do not know what it is you are believing on faith, how can you be sure that you are believing anything?”⁷⁰

We may ask, are propositions involved, and what would these matter? What are their truth conditions? Are they the same as the truth conditions of their statements literally construed, and what literal sentences would share their truth conditions? Is there anything that secularists could reject?

Tim Crane suggests that “a lot of humanists treat religion as if it were simply a kind of rival cosmological hypothesis, and that this is all it is. My view is that to the extent that

⁶⁸ A colourful expression of global non-literalism (which may not be one which its author was consistently committed to), is seen in this passage from Nietzsche’s essay, ‘Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense’: “What then is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms -- in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins,” in *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche’s Notebooks of the early 1870s*, ed. and trans. by Daniel Breazeale (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1979), p. 84.

⁶⁹ J.L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism: Arguments for and Against the Existence of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), Chapter 12.

⁷⁰ Bernard Williams, ‘Tertullian’s Paradox’ in *Philosophy as A Humanistic Discipline*, ed. by A.W. Moore (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 19.

religions are cosmological hypotheses, this is not the only important thing about them.”⁷¹ What if they all turned out to be false, would this matter? Wittgenstein wants to say ‘no’:

Queer as it sounds: The historical accounts in the Gospels might, historically speaking, be demonstrably false and yet belief would lose nothing by this: *not*, however because it concerns ‘universal truths of reason’! Rather because historical proof (the historical proof-game) is irrelevant to belief. This message (the Gospels) is seized on by men believingly (i.e. lovingly). *That* is the certainty characterizing this particular acceptance-as-true, not something *else*.

A believer's relation to these narratives is *neither* the relation to historical truth (probability), *nor yet* that to a theory consisting of ‘truths of reason’.⁷²

It would be not only conceivable, but amusing to think that the utterance of people who regarded them as in some way less than literal, turned out to be literally true, as many regard them to be (many philosophers of religion at least; Alvin Plantinga, Richard Swinburne, William Lane Craig and others give impressive defences of literal belief). Non-literalists should not be regarded as being religious in my view, but as quasi-religious at most.

As we have seen, Jonathan Lowe distinguishes between two kinds of essences; those conditions in virtue of which something qualifies as a particular *kind* of thing, and identity conditions in virtue of which something at T1 and again at T2 qualifies as one and the same thing. In connection with this, Lowe considers that “it is *metaphysically* possible — even if not *biologically* or *physically* possible — for any individual cat to survive ‘radical’ metamorphosis, by becoming a member of *another* natural kind of living organism.”⁷³ In connection with Lowe’s suggestion, it might be possible for an individual tradition to pass between being a religion, and no longer being a religion. Suppose that a tradition needs to affirm belief in a god to be a religion, and that a tradition used to do so in its past but does not any longer, it may be that an individual tradition has passed from the kind of religion into another kind, a non-religious ideology, or society, perhaps.

⁷¹ Tim Crane ‘Mindful,’ interview for *3:AM Magazine* by Richard Marshall, <<http://www.3ammagazine.com/3am/mindful/2/>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

⁷² Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, ed. by G. H. Von Wright in collaboration with Heikki Nymam, Trans. by Peter Winch (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing), pp. 37e-38e.

⁷³ Lowe, ‘Essentialism, Metaphysical Realism, and the Errors of Conceptualism,’ pp. 9–33.

I do not want to say that religions consist of truth claims that have no evaluative dimensions, and that have no social dimension of membership. The Nicene Creed opens (in English) with the words ‘we believe in one God’. That utterance may be distinguished from ‘we believe that there exists only one God’, meaning instead that they obey, or trust one particular god. It seems to mean a combination of these interpretations: that 1) there is only one god, and 2) they obey and trust in Him. Professing ‘belief in’ a subject or ideal is additionally relational, and may contribute to one’s being so related to that subject or ideal. As J.L. Austin famously noted in his William James lectures, words can be deeds, as when one says ‘I do’ at a wedding service, or signs a name on a contract. While one I do not wish to deny that there are important, performative dimensions to professing the Nicene Creed, they should not be seen as ruling out the presence of propositional content; content which is required for their identification *as* religions.⁷⁴

Is Faith Accidental or Essential to Religion?

Suppose that a group of scientists working on the Large Hadron Collider discovered (however that might be) that God existed, and that historians converged on the consensus of the historical veracity of the Bible, or something near enough to it, and that they did so because it was supported by, among other things, archaeological discoveries. Would these scholars have faith and would, what they have, be a religion? It is fair to say though, that one’s attitudes to the impersonal discoveries of history and science are not dictated by those disciplines, so that one could perhaps find the truth of some doctrines about God to be true, and yet not be inclined to willing subordination, and so not be religious. Suppose also that they regarded God to be worthy of worship, due to sound arguments and submitted themselves to his will accordingly. Again, would these scholars have faith and would what they have be a religion? They would have reasonable belief and not faith in the sense “belief without evidential or argumentative grounds.”⁷⁵ Admittedly, it has been that the best justified theories have turned out false (Newtonian physics being the paradigm example), and so it might turn out that

⁷⁴ J.L. Austen, *How To Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, ed. by J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

⁷⁵ This distinction is a bit quick: there are very arguably ‘properly basic beliefs’, to use Alvin Plantinga’s expression; beliefs which are not based on evidence and argument, but that are still reasonable, and indeed, that are presupposed in other arguments.

orthodox learned opinion could yet be false, and reason could yet emerge for people to reject it. So too, it seems that these scientists, unless they had discovered some logically incontrovertible evidence, might too have to abandon their beliefs, even still, it seems to me that faith is accidental rather than essential to religion and that while these scientists and historians do believe in the existence and rightful dominion of God, and accordingly submit to Him, they are thereby religious.

In opposition, one might urge that the nature of true faith is that one never gives up one's beliefs (and holds their beliefs independently of the shifting sands of evidence).⁷⁶ Certainly, Kierkegaard emphasized leaps of faith: "*without risk there is no faith. Faith is precisely* the contradiction between the infinite passion of the individual's inwardness and the objective uncertainty."⁷⁷ It might seem to the extent that a religion's doctrines constitute a compellingly supported hypothesis (so that nobody could reasonably deny it), what we have is no longer a religion.

Certainly, *never gives up one's faith* seems too strong a criterion for religion: people have converted from one religion to another, part of which involved a change of beliefs. While it might seem strange to think that a phenomenon depends for its nature on how it was arrived at, the notion of a scientific view certainly has that built into it. Newton's ideas would not have been scientific if a) they were not reasoned towards and b) they were not applied at the risk of falsification. A definition of science is at least as difficult as a definition of religion (I would suggest even more difficult), but we can have a sense that how an idea is reached (via a scientific method, perhaps), and how it is treated subsequently (through experimentation) makes it scientific rather than some intrinsic property of the idea.⁷⁸

Arguments for the existence of God, for the coherence of theism, and more generally for the reasonableness of religious doctrines have existed for a very long time. Certainly, Thomas Aquinas offered a very sophisticated defence of Christian Theism, and more recently, so too has Richard Swinburne. It would seem bizarre to deny that

⁷⁶ Alternatively, it could be that private revelation cuts decisively through the public evidential record.

⁷⁷ Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, trans. by David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 182.

⁷⁸ I do not want to contrast science and religion in the abstract, just in their nature (irrespective of how particular well supported scientific hypothesis may differ from particular religious doctrines in fact), but certainly if the difference were that one was rational, and the other was immune to rationality that would be deep cleavage between the two, and where they were to overlap in content it would not matter at all to the religious person any more than if there were to be no overlap at all.

these were religious thinkers. Indeed, the tradition known as fideism, which this thought dovetails with, has consistently been rejected by the Catholic Church, which is surely a paradigm example of a religious institution.⁷⁹

Summary

We want to know how (if at all) children may be ethically influenced with respect to religions. To reach that point, we sought to answer the prior question ‘what is it that we mean by ‘religions’?’ As we have seen, there are a number of ways of approaching the question. We have explored the available options, starting with essentialism, and moving on to a few alternatives to the essentialist’s project. Having criticised these or attempted to go one better, I ultimately came to employ and defend a slightly amended version of Michael Hand’s essentialist definition of religion.

A religion, I said, is anything which essentially requires a) belief in super-beings and b) submission to them as having rightful dominion. There exist social structures which may be called ‘religions’ in a derivative sense, in that they are built around this primary sense of the word. A person is religious if they believe in super powerful beings that they submit to, regarding them to have rightful dominion. A social group is religious if they share a belief in super powerful beings that they submit to, regarding them to have rightful dominion.

⁷⁹ <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06068b.htm>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

Chapter Eight

THE STATUS OF RELIGION

Introduction

We want to know how children ought to be formatively influenced with respect to religions (to religious beliefs and attitudes, and to beliefs about and attitudes to religion). With a definition of religion in hand, we now ask what the value (or normative status) of religion is. Religion has at least two kinds of status: a social status and a normative status. Its social status consists in whether people think it is true or good, and its normative status consists in whether it is in fact true or good. It is the latter, and whether this can be established well enough to justify either discouraging religion, or encouraging religion, that is important for answering our overall question.

As we saw in Chapter 6, ethically speaking, whether a given formative property should be encouraged turns (in part) on its theoretical and practical rationality, on whether it is rational to have that formative property. Where the having or not having of a certain attitude makes a significant difference to students' lives, and requires some systematic, professionally-led education for its effective encouragement or discouragement, it ought to be addressed by curricula. Where that attitude requires only informal, minimally systematic encouragement or discouragement, the educative role falls to parents. Where not having that attitude is irrational, it ought to be encouraged; where having it is irrational, it ought to be discouraged; where having or not having it are both rational options, it ought to be taught non-directively. Again, teachers, and parents should, in so far as it is practicable, aim to acquaint children with arguments for and against having these attitudes and initiate them into the practice of assessing the soundness of those arguments.

Notice that we have been discussing religion in essence, and not any one in particular. It could well be that religion in essence is true, because some particular manifestation is correct; perhaps Roman Catholicism, for instance, is broadly correct about what is true, and good. Just because religion, in essence is true, it would not follow that every religion is true in essence, since the essence of each particular religion may be more expansive than the essence of religion *per se*. For instance, the figures of Jesus and Muhammed play no role in the essence of religion, but are plausibly essential to the

essence of Christianity and Islam respectively. That said, establishing just that religion is true in essence can lend support to every particular religion. Indeed, for religious pluralists establishing such a conclusion would do rather more. Religious pluralists (notably John Hick) argue that there are no fundamentally important differences between religions, and so to establish religion in essence is to establish all that is most important about all the particular religions. However, I take it that pluralism is one more form of exclusivism alongside all the others. Indeed, the truth of religious pluralism entails the falsehood of any other claim to exclusive truth.¹

This thesis cannot attempt detailed treatment of the rich and multifarious defences of particular religions (e.g. via evaluating the historical credibility of particular religious texts). Such texts are too numerous, are open to diverse interpretations, and leave ample room for what is sometimes, unfairly, called ‘cherry-picking’, in so far as adherents do not accept texts to be inerrant, but instead to be variously flawed relayed messages from a divine source. Given these complexities, what can we reasonably hope to achieve in this chapter? One thing we might do is look at arguments that could be used in support of any of the various particular super-beings that people think it proper to submit themselves to.² We could look at the kinds of arguments as to whether or not a super-being worthy of deference exists, or ones that establish at least part of that claim. Additionally, we could consider some arguments to the effect that religion is inherently good, or inherently bad, and then consider that the problem of evil gives a significant problem to theists, and that in the absence of a critical, open institutional network such as to warrant scientific theories, which then subject beliefs to systematic scrutiny in the pursuit of rational consensus, religious belief is not rationally compelling.

¹ There are more and less strong forms of exclusivism. A weak form is sometimes called ‘inclusivism’ which allows that one religion best captures ultimate reality, but allows that other religions contain much that is true and of value. Inclusivism even allows that other religions have much to teach it, but it must maintain that it itself captures much which is indispensable if it is not to collapse into pluralism.

² The various arguments for the existence of a god are just such arguments, employed equally by Muslims, Christians and Jews. Some might like to urge the identity of these three gods, but this seems a dubious move. That is because we need to fix a referent of which the various accounts are supposed to be accounts. Thus, various biographers might write radically different accounts of Tony Blair, but we can fix the referent of the biographies independently of the accounts (it is not just whatever the account is an account of). In the case of God, three people who accept each of the rival accounts would need to have another way of fixing the referent than their accounts, perhaps a shared revelation, or mystical experience.

Religion is not Inherently Good or Bad

We ought to distinguish between religions as practised, and religions as prescribed by their own canonical texts. Arguments can be made that various religions are more objectionable if taken at a textual level than they are as practised, and vice versa, that religion would be better if the texts were more closely observed than those who profess to follow in its footsteps. So, for instance, if Christians stoned people, for the various reasons they are told to in *Leviticus*, morally, they would be the worse for doing so. On the other hand, if Christians really all did love others as they love themselves, morally, they would be the better for doing so. Concordantly, there are two modes of defence (tending in different directions) available to the religious apologist:

1. It is not the religion in essence that is at fault when people enact perversions of the text, since the real religion is that prescribed by its canonical texts.
2. It is not the religion that is at fault when the texts make immoral and unjust pronouncements, since the real religion is the lived religion.

It seems that religion has scope to be horrendous if, for instance, people believe a super-being exists, whose word ought to be deferred to, and take that being to require things which are in fact deeply unjust and immoral. Examples abound through history, with human sacrifice being common. The recent examples of 9/11, the Charlie Hebdo massacre and the atrocities of the Islamic State in some countries help illustrate the point.³

In a public debate on the question of whether the world would be better or worse without religion, Tony Blair has attempted to answer the criticism of textual religious evil, admitting that it is a hard criticism to answer. His response comes in two parts. First, that the spirit of the text is different from the *prima-facie* literal readings, and that spirit is not one which recommends evil acts.⁴ Second, believers must interpret scripture in a way that makes sense to people in the modern world. Seemingly suggesting that, seen in their contexts, the (by modern lights) horrendous prescriptions of ancient texts

³ One point I want to make is that it is logically possible that there should exist a wicked super-being: indeed, perhaps there does exist a super being that wants us to do wicked things, and it may be in our interest to defer to that being, and follow her wicked commands. One may in this case think it morally better to refuse deference, and rebel (however fruitlessly) – that is the attitude of Ivan in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. As I have said however, a belief of this nature is not a religious belief, although it might reasonably be described as quasi-religious.

⁴ Tony Blair and Christopher Hitchens, 'Is Religion a Force for Good in the World?' <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddsz9XBhrYA>> @ 1:17:53 [accessed 23 June 2015].

are less horrendous, and even thoroughly admirable.⁵ It might be that it is our modern liberal standards that are at fault if these views do come into conflict (and that we are misled by our bias of presentism – that the most recent developments are just fashions and not improvements), or it might be that moral truth changes over time. Neither seems plausible. Instead, it is better to suggest that religious texts are fallible.

Indeed, the idea that revelation is inerrant, un-updatable, and entirely perspicuous is unsustainable given developments in scientific understanding. Furthermore, there is something odd about the notion that there exists a text in which nothing is certain except that it is correct so that, if what we took it to mean, turns out to be false, we must simply have misread it. There is more integrity in the approach of geologist, Kurt Wise, who found that the bible would be revised beyond recognition if updated by modern science, and so rejected modern science; “if all the evidence in the universe turns against creationism, I would be the first to admit it, but I would still be a creationist because that is what the Word of God seems to indicate.”⁶

To the extent that religious people object by denying that religion really is represented in these examples, one must reply that such denial amounts to whitewashing religion, by sweeping any inconvenient examples under the carpet. Attempts to do so merely exemplify what Anthony Flew has termed the ‘no true Scotsman fallacy,’ an (underhanded or misguided) argumentative manoeuvre in which one denies that bad examples of a phenomenon are really examples at all, so as to insulate it from criticism. Consider the following example from Flew:

Imagine Hamish McDonald, a Scotsman, sitting down with his *Glasgow Morning Herald* and seeing an article about how the “Brighton (England) Sex Maniac Strikes Again”. Hamish is shocked and declares that “No Scotsman would do such a thing”. The next day he sits down to read his *Glasgow Morning Herald* again; and, this time, finds an article about an Aberdeen (Scotland) man whose brutal actions make the Brighton sex maniac seem almost gentlemanly. This fact shows that Hamish was wrong in his opinion, but is he going to admit this? Not likely. This time he says: “No *true* Scotsman would do such a thing”.⁷

⁵ Ibid, @ 1:20:35 [accessed 23 June 2015].

⁶ Kurt Wise, In ‘Six Days: Why 50 Scientists Choose to Believe in Creation,’ ed. by John Ashton, <<http://creation.com/kurt-p-wise-geology-in-six-days>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

⁷ Antony Flew, *Thinking About Thinking: or, Do I Sincerely Want to be Right?* (London: Collins Fontana, 1975), p. 47.

Lest we make a similar mistake, bearing in mind our definition of religion, it seems amply possible that religions may be both false and harmful. Whether one is religious in a good way seems somewhat hostage to the fortune of what they take the content of their god's edicts to be. It can be that what one takes to be the possible range of god's edicts can be limited by what they take to be the content of morality. As an illustration of this case, take Kant's assessment of the situation in which Abraham found himself when God purportedly asked him to sacrifice Isaac:

For if God should really speak to a human being, the latter could still never know that it was God speaking. It is quite impossible for a human being to apprehend the infinite by his senses, distinguish it from sensible beings, and be acquainted with it as such.—But in some cases the human being can be sure that the voice he hears is not God's; for if the voice commands him to do something contrary to moral law, then no matter how majestic the apparition may be, and no matter how it may seem to surpass the whole of nature, he must consider it an illusion.⁸

However, our discussion ought to focus on religion at its best, as much as on religion at its worst. If we are to encourage belief of the true, and emulation of the good, it might be that acceptance of some particular religion ought to be encouraged, while some others ought to be discouraged. All the same, it may be that the essence of religion is true; that there really is a super-being to whom we ought to defer, and that we ought to orientate ourselves accordingly, irrespective of how much wrong is falsely done in their name.

The Normative Status of Religion

Is religion, at its best, true or good? It might be that one religion or another is actually true and, perhaps unsurprisingly, cultivates goodness and gives purpose (perhaps it is more surprising that other religions might do so as well) and it might be that religion is in some way good without being true. Consider two ways in which this could be so:

1. Religion (at its best) is a scaffold that cultivates goodness better than its absence; for instance, religion is a noble lie, a necessary tool for paternalist elites to manipulate ignorant masses for their own good.

⁸ Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties in Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. by Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 7:63.

2. There are no atheists in fox holes, as they say, because a life without religion is impossibly bleak and death terrifying.

We shall consider whether these two considerations bear critical scrutiny before considering whether there is good reason to think that religion is in essence true (that there exists a super being to whom we ought to defer).

Practical Reason and the Utility of Religion

In this section, we shall consider the utility of religion, apart from the question of whether it is true, whether practical reason decides in its favour, irrespective of theoretical reason. We will discuss whether Religion (at its best) is a scaffold that cultivates goodness or whether life without religion is impossibly bleak and death terrifying. I argue that the existence of God is tangential to both the content and existence of morality and also the objective meaning of our lives.

Religion and Moral Goodness

Some say that religion is of negative value, some that it is worthless, others say that it is highly valuable, and yet others say that it is a mixed bag. Sam Harris thinks that religion is very bad indeed:

If I could wave a magic wand and get rid of either rape or religion, I would not hesitate to get rid of religion. I think more people are dying as a result of our religious myths than as a result of any other ideology. I would not say that all human conflict is born of religion or religious differences, but for the human community to be fractured on the basis of religious doctrines that are fundamentally incompatible, in an age when nuclear weapons are proliferating, is a terrifying scenario.⁹

There is a case to be made (and it frequently is) that religion is a terrible affliction on human beings; much evil has been, and still is done in the name of religion. However, one might just as well run a parallel case with an assessment of the value of science, which more obviously shows the inadequacy of the argument:

At a 2011 conference, another colleague summed up what she thought was the mixed legacy of science: the eradication of smallpox on the one

⁹ Bethany Saltman, 'The Temple Of Reason: Sam Harris on How Religion Puts the World at Risk,' *The Sun* <http://thesunmagazine.org/issues/369/the_temple_of_reason?page=1> [accessed 23 June 2015].

hand; the Tuskegee syphilis study on the other. (In that study, another bloody shirt in the standard narrative about the evils of science, public-health researchers beginning in 1932 tracked the progression of untreated, latent syphilis in a sample of impoverished African Americans.) The comparison is obtuse. It assumes that the study was the unavoidable dark side of scientific progress as opposed to a universally deplored breach, and it compares a one-time failure to prevent harm to a few dozen people with the prevention of hundreds of millions of deaths per century, in perpetuity.¹⁰

Atrocity seems to be an accidental property of religion. It is not religion *per se* that is at fault when people commit atrocities on religious grounds. If Harris were to have his wand and wave it, we might reasonably worry that a baby would be thrown out with the bath water here. Daniel C. Dennett's more sympathetic account of religion is that it has good aspects and bad aspects, but that what is essential to religion is false, and we can salvage the good parts in other ways, that religion is not essential to them.¹¹ Indeed, Dennett has presented an interesting case in which he hopes to 'salvage' the good of religions from the bad. What he takes to be the bad is basically that all religions are false: that no super beings exist, and therefore no super beings exist that deserve our deference. All the same, religions do have much positive value when considered in terms of their utility, but that a noble lie is not necessary for accessing those incidental goods. Christopher Hitchens asks what good can a religious person do that a non-religious person cannot, or would not. This challenge, if it cannot be met, suggests that religion is incidental to doing the good.¹²

One may think that our question is whether the world would be the worse, the better or much the same for lacking religion to be relevant, that whether getting rid of religion would mean getting rid of evil or whether getting rid of religion would mean getting rid of good are the questions on which our decision must turn. Perhaps they are, but neither answer seems plausible. Weakened versions of those contentions would also seem relevant, namely, that to promote religion is in effect to promote evil, or to decrease religion, is in effect to undermine the good. It seems that religions, qua religion (identified on our rationale from Chapter 6) may just as likely promote evil as it does

¹⁰ Steven Pinker 'Science is Not Your Enemy,' *The New Republic* (2013), <<http://www.newrepublic.com/article/114127/science-not-enemy-humanities>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

¹¹ Daniel C. Dennett, 'On What Should Replace Religion,' <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5tGpMcFF7U>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

¹² Hitchens can be seen posing this challenge at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4TnA3b8MhD0>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

good. 'Religion' is not an unqualified force for good, or an unqualified force for evil. People may want to distinguish between good and bad religion.

It seems that there is no necessary connection between being religious and valuing the good and the just. The eponymous character of Plato's dialogue, *Euthyphro*, suggested that piety is what is pleasing to the gods.¹³ But, as Socrates presses, there exists a question as to whether it is pious just because it pleases the gods, or whether it pleases the gods because it is pious. In the first case, the pious is arbitrary, in the second the pious is quite independent of the gods. It is a (partly empirical question) as to whether what particular religions encourage are good works. One needs a conception of the good, and to compare this to what it is that particular religions promote. The concept of the good that I am working with has been elaborated and defended earlier in the thesis (Chapter 3). On that conception of the good, it is evident that much that is unethical and much that is ethical have at different times and places been encouraged by religions. There is no scope for this thesis to attempt to weigh up the good and the bad encouraged by each, or indeed, any particular religion (indeed, ring fencing a particular religion for such an assessment might prove enough of a challenge).¹⁴ And indeed, such analyses may be relevant to judging the ethical utility of particular religions.

It does not seem, then, that religion is a necessary tool for paternalist elites to manipulate ignorant masses for their own good. Is it (at its best) a scaffold that cultivates goodness better than its absence? In the absence of evidence either way, it is best to suspend judgement on this point. However, one practical reason can be given for not connecting the teaching of morality with religion, and that is that (even putting the *Euthyphro* considerations aside) there is a danger that where children lose their religious faith, they may also lose their moral commitments if they consider the latter to be dependent on the former.

Having discussed whether Religion (at its best) is a scaffold that cultivates goodness, we now move on to consider whether life without religion is impossibly bleak. I argue

¹³ Plato, *Euthyphro* trans. by Benjamin Jowett, <<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/euthyphro.html>> [accessed 18 June 2015], 6e-7a.

¹⁴ Perhaps Catholicism would be the most obvious example of a discrete religion. One might say in connection with Catholicism: retarding scientific development by the punishment of heresy, the Crusades, and the Spanish inquisitions are among the more obvious ethical abominations in its name. On the other hand, one might point to a great deal positive charity work done in its name, and much scientific progress made in the name of uncovering and understanding the majesty of God's creation.

that just as the existence of God is tangential to the content and existence of morality, so it is also to the objective meaning of our lives.

Religion and Lives Worth Living

Timothy D. Wilson has argued that people benefit from having a strong sense of purpose, and that this purpose is often religious.¹⁵ Some may take false comfort from such passages as Psalm 23, false that is, if Christianity were not true. It is not obvious however, that false comfort is undesirable, or less desirable than, say, a properly appreciative terror at death or a sense of emptiness in a world without meaning. In so far as life does not seem impossibly bleak to unbelievers, this might be because they are not honestly confronting the prospect, but deluding themselves. This is the worry that in the absence of religion, nihilism must be true.

Psalm 23 A psalm of David

Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

One metric of meaningfulness, might be whether one's beliefs are capable of inspiring great art. It might be worried that there is little of inspiration in a godless world and that atheism is incapable of inspiring art worth seeing or music worth hearing. Disenchantment is all that is left. There is nothing to marvel at, or glory to reflect without god. There indeed a preponderance of religious art works, but there are non-religious ones too. It might reasonably be expected that there would be, since religion has been around for a very long time, and atheism seems to have been a rather more marginal position throughout history. Furthermore, the explanation for why there are such wonderful religious works of art is not that religion is necessary for the production of great art, but that religious institutions had the money to commission it. We do not need to be religious to benefit from religious works of art, but we will not benefit from

¹⁵ Timothy D. Wilson, *Redirect: The Surprising New Science of Psychological Change* (London: Allen Lane, 2011), p. 40.

them in the same way that a religious person will take themselves to benefit from it, by, for instance, coming to better appreciate the person of god, or the sacrifice of Jesus.

With or without God, the level of objective meaning in our lives seems the same. The question is sometimes put to atheists, as to what the meaning of life would be without a God. The question is usually put on the assumption that either God gives us our meaning, or else we have no meaning at all. Atheists might hope to correct this assumption, arguing instead that either God gives us our purpose, or else we have only whatever meaning we make for ourselves. William Lane Craig argues that “whatever meaning we make for ourselves” boils down to “no meaning at all”, and while one might construct some sort of meaning as an atheist, it will be merely an illusory, subjective meaning. Meaning in theism, by contrast, is objective, in deriving from God. One may live one’s life with meaning “as an illusion” in the absence of absolute value, but it is still ultimately meaningless.¹⁶ Interestingly, contra Craig, Bernard Williams points out that if there is no perspective from which one can identify absolute importance or meaning (as Craig claims of the atheist world view), then there is no perspective which can deny our importance or meaning: “If there is no such thing as the cosmic point of view, if the idea of absolute importance in the scheme of things is an illusion [...] then there is no other point of view except ours in which our activities can have or lack significance.”¹⁷

I side with neither Williams, nor with Craig; contra Williams, there are facts of value (both of goodness and meaning), and, contra Craig, whether or not God exists makes no difference to whether or not there are facts of value. The import of Euthyphro’s dilemma (“is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods?”) can be made relevant just by swapping ‘pious’ for ‘meaningful’. God doesn’t add anything ‘objective’ to the picture: either God’s judgements about how we are to live, what counts as valuable and what the best investment of our time is are just one more opinion or they defer to a standard that we would have anyway. Now, if God exists, it might be true that he created us with a specific purpose in mind. This purpose does not limit our meaningful possibilities however. Even if this were

¹⁶ William Lane Craig in discussion with Christopher Hitchens, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x9NIRKJBKt4>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

¹⁷ Bernard Williams (2006) ‘The Human Prejudice,’ in *Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline*, ed. by A.W. Moore (Princeton, Princeton University Press), pp. 135-152, 137.

determinate as the purpose of a knife is fairly determinate, we could still find other remarkable employments; the given one is not the only one (consider using the knife as a screw driver or lever). Some people suppose that life without an eternal afterlife is meaningless, and that life with such an afterlife is, for that very reason, meaningful. Wittgenstein points out that the problem is not resolved; it just applies for longer.

It is true however, that we may have to count God into our practical deliberations if he does exist. But that does not affect the point that God makes no difference to the objectivity of meaning. For instance, in our practical deliberations, we may have to factor in that God can totally satisfy all of the people all of the time, and we might want to commit ourselves to this satisfaction. Craig says that the point of life is to “give glory to God and enjoy him,” and this might prove satisfying. On the other hand, while a world with God might be preferable to one without, in being more godlike, we ought to acknowledge and make the best of the world we have, rather than live with the illusion of greater meaning. Alex Miller tells us that for Brian Leiter:

The central features of religious practice and belief [...] are that religious obligations are experienced as trumping all other considerations, that religious beliefs don't aspire to answer to empirical evidence and that religious beliefs provide 'existential consolation' in that they 'render intelligible and tolerable the basic existential facts about human life, such as suffering and death'.¹⁸

Miller demurs, “In one respect Leiter is perhaps over-generous to religion” he says, for “while he agrees that many fundamental religious beliefs are false, his talk of religion as ‘rendering intelligible’ important facets of existence should perhaps be replaced by talk of its apparently rendering such facets intelligible.” Miller observes that “given the falsity of fundamental religious beliefs, the ‘existential consolation’ it provides is akin to consolation provided by a drug, which is why Marx described it as the ‘opium of the people’.”¹⁹ Richard Dawkins refers to this sort of view as patronizing and condescending, that while intellectuals might do alright without religion, “you hoi polloi, you ordinary people down there, you need religion.”²⁰ Dawkins is more

¹⁸ Alex Miller, ‘Beyond Belief’ Review of Brian Leiter *Why Tolerate Religion?* (Princeton University Press 2013), *Morning Star*, 11 March 2013, p. 11.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Richard Dawkins, ‘Q&A with Richard Dawkins: ‘I guess I’m a cultural Christian,’ interviewed by Paul Bowers for *Charleston City Paper* (2013), <<http://www.charlestoncitypaper.com/charleston/qanda-with-richard-dawkins-i-guess-im-a-cultural-christian/Content?oid=4581071>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

optimistic about the prospects of people to reconciling themselves to living in a universe without God.

How Rational is Religious Belief (at best)?

We now turn to assessing the theoretical rationality of religions. We have two questions to answer here. First, should we assess religious belief by the standards of theoretical reason? Second, if we should assess religious belief by the standards of theoretical rationality, how do they fare by those standards (i.e. what is the state of religious apology, and natural theology)? There are at least three strands of argument suggesting that we need not to assess religious beliefs by the standards of theoretical rationality: Pascal's Wager, Alvin Plantinga's instance on 'properly basic belief', and various versions of Wittgensteinian Fideism.

Pascal's Wager

Pascal argues that where theoretical reason cannot decide the matter of whether or not God exists, practical considerations give us reason to cultivate belief in God.²¹ He reasons that rationally, we ought to minimize our potential losses, and in deciding whether or not to believe in god. If we believe in God where he does not exist, we lose relatively little, whereas if we fail to believe in God where he does exist, we lose out on eternal bliss, to eternal damnation. This argument only gets off the ground if theoretical reason is, in fact, unable to determine whether or not to believe in God, which is what is in question. Moreover though, Pascal only addresses his considerations to deciding between the existence and non-existence of one particular god (one who punishes disbelief with torment, and rewards belief with paradise). But the range of options is not so narrow, "Another possibility is that there might be a god who looked with more favour on honest doubters or atheists [...] than on mercenary manipulators of their own understandings."²² But deciding between which of these two gods, with their contradictory attitudes to your potential decision, cuts away any practical reason to believe in one rather than the other, since the odds of benefitting or suffering from either decision are equal.

²¹ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, in *Œuvres*, ed. by L. Brunschvigg (Paris: Hachette, 1925), Section III, §233.

²² John L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism: Arguments For and Against the Existence of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 203.

Properly Basic Belief

According to Alvin Plantinga, it is “entirely right, rational, reasonable, and proper to believe in God without any evidence or argument at all.”²³ All arguments require premises, and some premises are “properly basic”, requiring no further validation. Among those beliefs which require no further validation is belief in God. The warrant for our beliefs may properly be provided by perception or memory for instance, and neither perception nor memory need further support, otherwise justification would set out on an infinite regress. Belief in god is properly basic, Plantinga says, requiring no further argument. Some human beings, he contends, have been graced with a *sensus divinitatis* which equips them with knowledge of God just as perception equips us with knowledge of our environment.²⁴ Thomas Nagel responds to this contention by remarking that:

if I ever found myself flooded with the conviction that what the Nicene Creed says is true, the most likely explanation would be that I was losing my mind, not that I was being granted the gift of faith. From Plantinga’s point of view, by contrast, I suffer from a kind of spiritual blindness from which I am unwilling to be cured.²⁵

Plantinga and Nagel need not reach an impasse, however. Each properly basic kind of warrant is defeasible and can be proven unreliable by further investigation; perceptual delusions are possible after all. Perhaps Nagel has scope to persuade Plantinga by pointing out the inconsistencies of the import of Plantinga’s *sensus divinitatis* with the deliverances of his other senses. One method by which this could be done is by appeal to the problem of evil.

Kinds of Fideism Which May Call Themselves Wittgensteinian

Ludwig Wittgenstein never advocated a position which he called ‘fideism’, but the following are four positions drawing inspiration from his writing which may be so called (although the second pair may have a low fidelity):

²³ Alvin Plantinga, ‘Reason and Belief in God,’ in *Faith and Rationality*, Third Edition (Paris: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), pp. 16-93, 17.

²⁴ Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 214.

²⁵ Thomas Nagel, ‘A Philosopher Defends Religion,’ in *The New York Review of Books* (2012), <<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2012/sep/27/philosopher-defends-religion/#fnr-2>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

1. In *Lectures and Conversations*, Wittgenstein seemed to regard religious claims as different in kind from historical and scientific claims:

Suppose, for instance,[he says], that we knew people who foresaw the future; make forecasts for years and years ahead; and they described some sort of Judgement Day. Queerly enough, even if there were such a thing, and even if it were more convincing than I have described, belief in this happening wouldn't be at all religious belief.²⁶

Wittgenstein suggests that such a forecast would not make us change the way we live, but this is doubtful, as people adjust their lives to all sorts of new information in so far as they are rational. Wittgenstein then offers an example of something that he does take to be a religious forecast: whereas some particular individual would not be foolish enough to say 'I had a dream that it will rain tomorrow, therefore it will', they would say 'I had a dream of the last judgement coming, therefore we can expect that'. These sorts of things can change the way you live, he suggests. So the sort of fideism which may be encouraged here is a sort of antirealism, to be contrasted to the realism of science and history; religious statements don't say things which have much to do with science or history.

2. Wittgenstein observes in the *Philosophical Investigations* that explanations, reasons and justifications must come to an end somewhere: "explanations come to an end somewhere,"²⁷ "the chain of reasons has an end,"²⁸ and "justification comes to an end."²⁹ One stops somewhere and cannot go on defending their views *ad infinitum*. One might be inclined to suggest that it is the language community that cooperatively (and perhaps unconsciously) decide where justifications are to come to an end. This could allow for some religious beliefs being incorporated at that level.

3. Also, in the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein comments that "the meaning of a word is its use in the language" (though he goes on to say that this is only of "a large class of cases").³⁰ Richard Rorty takes this to mean that "no linguistic items

²⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, ed. by Cyril Barret (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2010), p. 56.

²⁷ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2010), §1.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, §326.

²⁹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, ed. by G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright Trans. by Denis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1969), §192.

³⁰ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §4.

represent any non-linguistic items.”³¹ This creates a sort of parity between science, religion, mathematics, psychoanalysis and so on: none can be said to be ‘picturing’, ‘mirroring’ or ‘capturing’, the world, so none can be said to be the way the world is really. Language is kept ‘in touch’ with reality by being a useful tool: like saying ‘ouch’ when our feet hurt, or expressing disapproval with rude gestures (although, even the ideas ‘reality’ and ‘language’ are meant to be linguistic constructions). One then need only say that people speak in religious ways as one form of world-coping, which is no more accurate or inaccurate than any other. One might attempt to insulate it from external criticism by saying that it shares nothing with other ways of speaking, such as scientific ways. This sort of story requires that I do not say: all religious remarks are ethical and aesthetic ones, because that would mean they are not logically unique. Instead one would have to insist that they are without non-religious synonyms.

4. John McDowell uses a kind of parity argument to defend ethical realism: the idea that ethics is just as much part of the world as scientific laws.³² This argument can be used for apologetics. McDowell say that there is no objective way of seeing the world from which point of view we can say what is and is not a part of the world *really*. This seems to be the sort of argument one can use to defend religious beliefs: there’s no way of seeing what the world contains really, we have only the things we say about the world to go on and so long as religion is not just bad science, the things it describes are as much a part of the world as ethics and the laws of physics.

These forms are not satisfying however. In the first position, it sounds like Wittgenstein is employing a principle of charity as if to say: this is so absurd, it cannot be of the same kind as sober science and history, or no sane person could possibly believe it; but this is exactly what is in question and cannot count as a reason. Indeed, if Jesus were to return, this would have nothing to do with Christianity as Wittgenstein understands it and this is too counter intuitive a result; that it would both surprise Christians if this were to happen and that it would have nothing to do with the Christian faith. One might deny that this objection could not sensibly be raised since there is no difference between ‘Jesus will return to judge us’ and ‘Jesus will really return to judge us,’ since they are

³¹ Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophical Papers*, Volume One (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 2.

³² John McDowell, ‘*Aesthetic Value, Objectivity, and the Fabric of the World*,’ in *Pleasure, Preference and Value*, ed. by Eva Schaper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 1–16.

both a part of the religious language game. However we clearly can make sense of them as having cognitive and non-cognitive senses (e.g. one being a prediction and one being a false story that one acts 'as if' true in order to regulate their behaviour).

Against the second and third strand, there are two arguments I'd raise. The first is due to Bernard Williams: if we take religion to be true in a non-universal way and not true in the way that science is true, then the claims of religions are weakened to mean something other than intended.³³ This applies also to the first form. The second is that conceptualism (the idea that reality is in some-way dependent on the concepts that we use) is self-defeating, since it fails to:

accommodate *thinkers*, their *thoughts*, and the *concepts* that they deploy [...] because concepts themselves are either *something* or else *nothing* - they either exist or they do not. If they don't, then conceptualism is out of business. But if they do, then they themselves have an essence [which cannot itself be constituted by concepts].³⁴

Against the fourth variant, I would defend the possibility of an absolute conception, and have done elsewhere.³⁵ Indeed, denying the existence of such a conception undermines itself by denying that we can describe mind-independent reality at all:

[Since] if nothing about the structure of mind independent reality is accessible to us then, by the same token, nothing about the structure of our own thought is accessible to us either - for in the relevant sense of 'mind-independent', our thought itself is nothing if not part of mind-independent reality.³⁶

The State of Religious Apology and Natural Theology

Michael Hand comments on the state of religious apology, that:

The most even-handed view of the arguments [in support of religious propositions] is that they have some, but not decisive, rational force. They do not place one under a rational obligation to accept their

³³ Bernard Williams and Bryan Magee, 'The Spell of Linguistic Philosophy,' in Bryan Magee, *Talking Philosophy: Dialogues with Fifteen Leading Philosophers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

³⁴ E. J. Lowe, 'How are Identity Conditions Grounded?' in *Persistence*, ed. by C. Kanzian (Frankfurt: Ontos, 2008), p. 84.

³⁵ John Tillson, 'Is Knowledge What It Claims to Be? Bernard Williams and the Absolute Conception,' *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 45(8) (2013), pp. 860-873.

³⁶ E. Jonathan Lowe, *A Survey of Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 8-9.

conclusions, but they carry enough weight to make those conclusions rationally credible.³⁷

Michael Hand then answers 'no' to both of our questions: failing to believe in and submit to a super-being is not irrational, and belief in and submission to a super-being is not irrational. To assess this view, we must have a notion of what constitutes a rational belief, and what constitutes an irrational belief. We will then want to ask whether belief in super-beings to whom one submits on account of their rightful dominion is rational. Rational belief, at a minimum, requires that the content of one's belief is coherent i.e. that it has content, and is not self-defeating. More than that, though, it requires that one have reasons for one's belief that show it to be more probable than not, and more probable than alternative explanations. With Karl Popper, we may also require that they be capable of falsification. For, if they are consistent with all the possible data, they seem not to be genuinely contentful at all. To be a genuinely reasonable hypothesis they will need to generate predictions that might turn out to conflict with contingent data, but happen to be confirmed by it, and will need to be the simplest explanation of the data that we have. It ought to be acknowledged that these standards cannot apply to all beliefs, and some, as Plantinga has convincingly argued, must be properly basic, requiring no further justification. However, even beliefs such as these are not thereby infallible.

Roughly though, there are two main kinds of arguments which can be appealed to: *a priori* arguments, and *a posteriori* arguments; the former hope to be true without the need to consult evidence, and the latter hope to be true given the available evidence. It is only the ontological arguments which claim to be the former, the others all claim to be the latter.³⁸ The ontological argument claims that God's existence is necessary, since existence is built into the very concept of God. In the simplest version of the argument, you are asked to imagine something than which nothing greater can be conceived. What you are imagining must have *every* kind of perfection, otherwise something yet greater could be conceived in having one extra kind of perfection, and that would mean that you were not thinking of that than which nothing greater can be conceived. Existence, it

³⁷ Hand, 'Religious Education.'

³⁸ Three notable version of the argument were developed by St Anselm, Descartes and Plantinga. St. Anselm, *Proslogion*, in *St. Anselm's Proslogion*, trans. by Clement C.J. Webb, <<https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Proslogion>> [accessed 18 June 2015]; René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and The Meditations*, trans. with an introduction by F. Sutcliffe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968); Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974).

is said, is more perfect than non-existence, and thus the greatest conceivable thing must also exist. However, it was convincingly objected by Immanuel Kant, that existence is not a property that something can have or lack.³⁹ As Peter Hacker has pointed out, “the verb ‘to exist’ looks no different from such verbs as ‘to eat’ or ‘to drink’,” but while “it makes sense to ask how many people in College don’t eat meat or drink wine, it makes no sense to ask how many people in College don’t exist.”⁴⁰

The arguments *a posteriori* are arguments to the best explanation of some contingent facts about the world. Wherefore life on earth, wherefore rationality, wherefore the character of human consciousness, what best explains these? Richard Swinburne suggests that we would expect these features of the universe if God existed, and would not expect them if God did not exist. Since they exist, it is more likely that God exists than does not.⁴¹ They also include arguments from some basic principles of rationality plus general features of experience, such as the arguments from contingency to necessity, arguments from motion, and causation, for instance: explanation has to terminate somewhere and cannot go on *ad infinitum*, there exist contingent beings, objects in motion and events which are caused, these must terminate in a necessary being, an unmoved mover, and an uncaused causer, respectively. All of the arguments from contingency to necessity, from motion, and causation could go through and converge on a single, necessary unmoved and uncaused causer, but they would not establish the existence of an agent, let alone a super-agent, or one to whom we should defer.

Moreover, though, the argument to necessity from contingency does not go through. The principle of sufficient reason suggests that for each contingent being, there must be a sufficient explanation for its existence, and then again it must be asked what the explanation for the existence of that contingent being is. Such a regress can only terminate in a necessary being, it is thought. But it seems that the principle of sufficient reason is not a principle that we may fairly apply in this way. It is a prejudice to expect that there is a sufficient reason for everything; it seems just as likely that some contingent aspects of reality are inexplicable.

³⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Second Edition, trans. by N. Kemp-Smith (London: Macmillan, 1933).

⁴⁰ P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein* (London: Hachette, 2011), p. 8.

⁴¹ Richard G. Swinburne, *The Existence of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Some insist that the principle of sufficient reason demands that there be some sufficient cause for the world's existence. Some (notably William Lane Craig) suggest that God is the most parsimonious explanation that we have. A God being a simple entity made of no parts, but capable of acting and creating is the simplest explanation for the existence of something rather than nothing, and god being necessary (and ontologically simple, made of no parts) requires no explanation himself. Apart from this use of the principle of sufficient reason, we should respond with Dennett by asking "How could postulating something supernatural and incomprehensible be parsimonious? It strikes me as the height of extravagance."⁴²

According to Alvin Plantinga, evolution and naturalism are an unstable combination of beliefs, and rationally one has to reject one or the other.⁴³ However, since it seems that we have good reason to believe that evolution is true, then rationally, for this to be possible, we must reject naturalism. Indeed, atheist, Thomas Nagel has even expressed some sympathy for this view in his book, *The Last Word*: "Without something more, the idea that our rational capacity was the product of natural selection [...] there would be no reason to trust its results in mathematics and science, for example."⁴⁴ (And in so far as the evolutionary hypothesis itself depends on reason, it would be self-undermining.) The evolutionary hypothesis is acceptable only if reason does not need its support. At most, it may show that reason need not be biologically mysterious.⁴⁵ I too do not think that evolutionary development shows that we have reason to trust our faculties of reason; it does not obviously vindicate rationality. However, it again seems precipitous to terminate explanation in God.

The Problem of Evil

As we have already noted in Chapter 2, the problem of evil challenges theists by asking why it is, if God is able to prevent suffering, knows about the existence of suffering, and is morally good, that suffering persists then. Anselm's definition casts God as that than which no greater can be conceived, others as an omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent, agent composed of no parts. Obviously such beings would qualify as

⁴² Daniel C. Dennett, *Intuition Pumps and Other Tools for Thinking* (London: Penguin, 2014), p. 39.

⁴³ Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), Chapter 12.

⁴⁴ Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 135.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

gods, and ones to whom it is right to defer, but suppose a being existed except that it did not know exactly one thing, and that no other similar being existed. It would seem odd to deny their being God, especially if that being played the role that is traditionally thought to have been played by Yahweh or Allah. In Chapter 6, I defended the view that a god is one who excels us in every respect, and with whom we have no chance of competing successfully. This allows that for us, mortal, fallible and flawed, human beings, God need not be that than which no greater can be conceived, and so the problem of evil poses less of a threat to religion. The sort of god required for religion is one to whom we ought to defer. We ought to defer to such beings that know the good, and recommend the good to us. Even still all that is required for the problem is that god is supposed to know about human suffering, care about it, and be able to stop it, while, as a matter of fact, suffering persists.

Again, as noted in Chapter 2, the apologist's usual responses that 1) suffering is a consequence of allowing free will, and 2) suffering allows for moral growth. These arguments are vulnerable to very reasonable counterarguments: namely that free will does not account for natural evil, and natural evil can do as much to diminish moral growth, and makes unfair use of some people for the moral growth of others. We might add another theodicy: God is knowledgeable, powerful and good enough to be beyond human rivalry, but not knowledgeable, powerful and good enough to prevent human suffering. Indeed, they may know and recommend the good to us, but be weak willed themselves (if less so than we human beings), and sometimes fail to live up to it. Even still, the problem poses enough of a threat to suggest that denying religious belief is not irrational. It seems to be a discussion on which reasonable arguments and interpretations can be made by both sides.

Socially Embodied Rationality

We can, each of us, evaluate arguments for ourselves, but it may be well to defer in part to the judgement of others, for unless we can convince others that we are right, we may have reason for hesitancy. It is possible to be the lone bastion of truth in a population of ignorance, but if one seems unable to persuade others who patiently listen to our arguments, we may suspect that we may not have certain knowledge. Let us say, with James Ladyman, that science progresses with the benefit of argument and evidence

(they are what it is hoped will persuade people), but also relies on certain features of social organization.⁴⁶ Certain social organizations allow open minded people to come together and present possibly true claims. They then attempt to offer evidence and argument in support of these claims. Others are then able to look for evidence that would be consistent or inconsistent with it. Those which are best supported will, by and large, be accepted by the group. The group's aggregate belief set is more likely to track the truth than is the belief set of any particular member. It would have to be those that are familiar with the relevant arguments, and have some talent at assessing them, whose opinions would be of interest, and not just anybody's.

Have we any such social organization in academic philosophy? The survey of philosophers' opinions conducted by Bourget and Chalmers show 72.8% of respondents embrace atheism, 14.6% embrace theism and 12.6% embrace neither.⁴⁷ The clear majority of respondents then, consider themselves to be atheists. However, it might not be in their professional capacity that they hold this view; it might not be that those asked were expert enough to have a properly informed view; not being philosophers of religion, but, for instance, ethicists. There might be a selection bias in asking philosophers of religion or theologians for their opinions; they might have gotten into philosophy of religion in order to justify their views, and so not be good, impartial judges of the success or failure of their arguments. On the other hand, those outside of these fields might be insufficiently familiar with the arguments to have given them a fair hearing.

It is highly doubtful that the survey should be taken as an indicative that denying atheism is irrational, and indeed it was not intended to show any such thing, but merely to give philosophers some basis for making statements of the form; such that a form is so common as to warrant being called 'the orthodox view', or 'the official doctrine'. There may be ways to systematize academic philosophy such that the majority opinion among experts cannot rationally be rejected by non-experts. However, unlike science, it seems that it is in no such state at present. Still, perhaps in the absence of a critical, open institutional network such as to warrant scientific theories, which subject beliefs to

⁴⁶ James Ladyman, 'Pseudoscience and Bullshit,' <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32ZaTKa2IRg>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

⁴⁷ David Bourget and David J. Chalmers, 'What do Philosophers Believe?' *Philosophical Studies* 170(3) (2013), pp. 1-36.

systematic scrutiny in the pursuit of rational consensus, religious belief is not rationally compelling.

Summary

Is failure to believe in and submit to a super-being irrational? Is belief in and submission to a super-being irrational? Or are neither irrational? From this necessarily brief overview of the relevant arguments, it seems that I must agree with Hand that failing to believe in and submit to a super-being is not irrational, and belief in and submission to a super-being is not irrational. We discussed whether religion, in essence, was inherently good or bad, and it seemed to be neither. We then discussed whether two utilitarian arguments to encourage religious belief, namely that Religion (at its best) is a scaffold that cultivates goodness or whether life without religion is impossibly bleak and deathly terrifying. I argued that the existence of God is tangential to both the content and existence of morality and also the objective meaning of our lives. We addressed three arguments to the effect that theoretical reason was irrelevant to determination of whether it is rational or irrational to believe in God. Finally, we discussed whether there were good theoretical reasons, and found, from the arguments looked at, that there may be scope for not believing irrationally in so far as one already takes God to exist as a simple fact, for which one's intuition is not susceptible to an error theory which one is committed to by other basic beliefs, and finally in so far as other basic beliefs do not conflict with it. The problem of evil poses enough of a threat to the existence of God that one cannot think it unreasonable to deny religious belief.

Chapter Nine

HOW CHILDREN OUGHT TO BE FORMATIVELY INFLUENCED WITH RESPECT TO RELIGION(S)

Introduction

As explained in Chapter 1, my research has been concerned with how (if at all) we may ethically influence children, with respect to religion(s), or, equivalently, what ethical claims (if any) children have over us when it comes to our influencing them, with respect to religion(s), and what ethical claims (if any) we have over them. I said there that it is formative influence that I would be interested in particular. In our first chapter, we identified seven sub-questions, the answers to which put us in a position to answer the overall question. These seven questions were:

1. What are the sources of responsibility? (Chapter 2)
2. What is the content of responsibility? (Chapter 3)
3. In what respects are we apt to be formatively influenced? (Chapter 4)
4. What means of formative influence are available? (Chapter 5)
5. What ethical obligations and restrictions are there on the means by which and the ends towards which we formatively influence children? (Chapter 6)
6. What is a religion? (Chapter 7)
7. How rational is religious belief? (Chapter 8)

In this concluding chapter we summarise the findings of our research so far, and explain what import, taken together, they have for answering our overarching question that we set out in our first chapter.

Ethical Foundations

Over Chapters 2 and 3, I unfolded what I took to be the ethical foundations pre-requisite for any answer to our primary question. That involved answering the following questions:

1. What sorts of beneficiaries *can* we be morally responsible for?

2. In virtue of what is it that people are responsible for averting harms to and ensuring benefits for anything?
3. What counts as a harm or benefit for human beings?

In answer to the first, I argued that what we *can be* morally responsible for is those of our actions and omissions which bear on the wellbeing of intrinsically valuable objects, such as human beings. In answer to the second, I concluded that the best person for the (ethical) job is responsible for making sure that it is done, and argued that this principle is able to ground both parental and extra-parental responsibility to children. From this, I concluded that, ethically speaking, some primary care giver (usually a biological parent or biological parents, in virtue of their usually being best able to satisfy the role) is responsible for ensuring basic benefits for children, and averting harms to them. Additionally, we saw that some extra-parental responsibilities are generated by children's welfare needs (by their harm benefit profiles) which out-strips what parents are able to provide (at least qua parents). In answer to the third question, I defended the view that the nearer an act brings us towards becoming like God, the better it is for us, and the more it keeps us from becoming like God, the more it harms us.

Respects in Which We are Apt To Be Formatively Influence

As we have frequently reminded ourselves, it is the ethics of deliberate, formative influence that I am interested in here, and I have distinguished formative influences from behavioural influences in Chapter 1, claiming that whereas behavioural influences make a difference to what people do, and formative influences make a difference to those of their internal malleable characteristics in virtue of which they are apt to do what they do. But in virtue of which characteristics is it that people are apt to do what they do? In Chapter 4, I argued that we are apt to be formatively influenced in the following five respects:

1. The degrees and kinds of one's physical and mental abilities
2. One's stock of concepts
3. Those propositions which one understands
4. One's cognitive attitudes, such as belief and disbelief, to those propositions
5. One's affective attitudes to those propositions and also to objects

Ethical Means and Ends of Formative Influence

In Chapter 5, I argued that, morally, influence should take a basically rational form so far as that is practicable, but that non-rational means could be used where people, such as small children, are insufficiently rational to benefit from rational influence. The import of Chapter 3 was that the more rational people are, the better off they are (i.e. the more competent and inclined they are to apportion belief to the evidence, to seek evidence, and to suspend judgement where they lack evidence).¹ In particular, I agreed with Michael Hand that we should equip children to be in a position to rationally form and revise opinions about those matters which are momentous to their lives. In Chapter 6, we saw that for each prospective formative influence which a child could adopt, influencers may ignore it, promote it, demote it, or draw attention to it as something worthy of consideration to adopt. The theory of ethical influence that I developed was the following, that for each prospective formative influence, it ought to be promoted, floated or demoted respectively, according to the following three sets of criteria, and where none of these apply, it might be fairly ignored:

1. a) That it is momentous; b) that it might well not be adopted without intervention; c) failing to have it is irrational.
2. a) That it is momentous; b) that it might well not be understood and rationally evaluated without intervention; c) neither having it nor not having it is irrational
3. a) That it is momentous; b) that it might well be adopted without intervention; c) having it is irrational.

In Chapter 6, we also saw how the influences which may be had may be more or less comprehensive or specific depending on just how many respects it is in which we influence one another. We argued that the greater comprehensiveness of a set of influences being imparted, the more the moral stakes are raised. Furthermore, while it might be alright morally, on some occasions, to favour the practical rationality of the beliefs that one imparts over their theoretical rationality, in so far as those beliefs are highly comprehensive, it becomes significantly immoral to sacrifice theoretical rationality in formative influence.

¹ Evidence is not always necessary or relevant to establishing the truth of claims. There are some claims which are (quite properly) immune from evidential refutation: seemingly truths of maths and logic, as these are prior to evidence. Furthermore, it seems that some (defeasible) warrants for belief require no further justification, on pain of infinite regress, warrants such as memory and perception.

These same considerations were seen to preside over both formal educators, and informal educator, such as caregivers. Also, in Chapter 6, it was shown how the above theory of ethical influence could be used to select curricula content where a planned programme of learning delivered by subject experts is the sort of intervention that would be required to rationally encourage and discourage *them* in children, or to enable children to better judge their rationality. Since parents or, more generally, primary carers could not reasonably be expected to satisfy this entitlement *qua* parents and primary carers, the responsibility would be what I termed ‘extra-parental’ in Chapter 3. However, we admitted that even to the extent that we are equipped with such evidence to warrant being directive, we ought still to emphasize fallibility and deference to reasons rather than commitment to conclusions, and to the extent that we are not so equipped, we ought to encourage interest, and rational deliberation but stop short of promoting or undermining particular views. This then, amounted to our theory of ethical influence. Chapters 7 and 8 began to lay the foundations to apply this theory of ethical influence to religion.

Application to Religion

To give content to the question of how children ought to be influenced with respect to religions, we have had to explain what sorts of things religions are. Our answer was that religions are those things that essentially require a) belief in super-beings and b) and submission to them as having rightful dominion. As became apparent in Chapter 6, the key questions for whether religious initiation is ethically acceptable were these:

1. Are the content of one’s beliefs about and attitudes to religion momentous?
2. How rational is religious belief?
 - 2.1. Is failing to believe in and submit to a super-being irrational?
 - 2.2. Is belief in and submission to a super-being irrational?
3. Does correct belief require intervention, or is it likely to occur without intervention?
4. Is religious belief more comprehensive or more restricted in its effects on those respects in which we are apt to be formative of influenced?

Both by providing some fresh considerations, and by drawing on the import of Chapter 8, we shall turn now to answering these questions.

Does it Matter Whether One is Religious?

Some might like to suggest that religion is essentially idle, an epiphenomenon that is causally impotent. Arguing along those lines, they may suggest that the world would be much the same with or without religion. However, it seems that religious beliefs and beliefs about religions do motivate actions, and so this is not true.

It is instructive to consider Pascal's Wager here.² Either there is a super-being to which one should be orientated in a certain way or there is no such being, and no such orientation is possible. As we have seen, Pascal observes that there is less of a cost in living as though there is such a being when there is not than in living as though there is not such a being when there is. Whether one is religious matters more if religion is true than if it is false then, but it does still matter. Non-religious people would be less inclined to evangelize against religion if being religious was only significant for religious people. To the extent that being religious is of public significance in what they consider to be bad ways (to take an extreme example, bombing abortion clinics), they will be inclined to evangelize against it. While I accept that Socrates' response to Euthyphro's dilemma rules out the possibility of super-beings' judgements about goodness being moral truth-makers, others do not. Furthermore, one may allow that super-beings are better placed to track moral truths, even if they do not invent them. And so the believer will defer to that being about what they ought to do, what is good, what is important and what is best, all of which makes a convincing case that it matters whether one is religious or not. Without knowing in advance whether or not it is true that a god exists and we should defer to them, it is at least pragmatically significant whether or not there is such a being.

How Rational is Religious Belief?

Is failing to believe in and submit to a super-being irrational? Is belief in and submission to a super-being irrational? Or are neither irrational? In Chapter 8, we discussed whether religion, in essence, was inherently good or bad, and it seemed to be neither. We then evaluated two utilitarian arguments to encourage religious belief, namely that Religion (at its best) is a scaffold that cultivates goodness or whether life without religion is impossibly bleak and deathly terrifying. I argued that the existence

² Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, in *Œuvres*, ed. by L. Brunschvigg (Paris: Hachette, 1925) Section III, §233.

of God is tangential to both the content and existence of morality and also to the objective meaning of our lives. Finally, we discussed whether there were good theoretical reasons for religious belief. We found that there may be scope for some people to believe rationally, in so far as a) they already take god to exist as basic datum and b) other basic beliefs do not conflict with it. However, the problem of evil poses enough of a threat to the existence of god, that one cannot think it unreasonable to deny religious belief. From this necessarily brief overview of the relevant arguments, it seems that I must agree with Hand that failing to believe in and submit to a super-being is not (always) irrational, and neither is a belief in and submission to a super-being (always) irrational.

Does Rational Evaluation of Religion Require Intervention?

An intervention is an action which aims to make a difference to a state of affairs, so that a different outcome obtains than would in its absence. It seems that interventions are required to cultivate rationality, with respect to religious beliefs and attitudes, and beliefs and attitudes about religions. Whereas many things come naturally to most children, such as swallowing, speaking, walking and playing, it seems that critical reflection on prospective respects of formative influence does not. Furthermore, a planned programme of learning delivered by subject experts is precisely what would be required to enable one to make rational judgments about the truth or falsity of religious propositions. Parents or, more generally, primary carers could not reasonably be expected to satisfy this entitlement qua parents and primary carers.

Does Religious Initiation Amount to A Comprehensive Set of Formative Influences?

Michael Hand observes that “most of us, while we recognise that it is *normally* wrong for parents to use their perceived intellectual authority to impart not-known-to-be-true beliefs, are prepared to grant exceptions to this rule when the belief confers a significant benefit on the child.”³ He gives as an example, telling one’s children that “the tooth fairy will come for your tooth tonight.” However, there seems to be a significant difference between this belief and religious belief, namely that the latter is very much

³ Hand, ‘Religious Upbringing Reconsidered,’ pp.545-557, 555.

more comprehensive. The enabling reasons as to why it might be alright to tell children to believe in Tooth Fairies and Santa Claus are that the falsehoods propagated are a) fairly narrow and b) come with a somewhat limited life span. All the same, it still carries underappreciated moral costs.

Some might like to say that children do not really believe in Santa, or that it would merely count as make-believe to pretend that he exists, and not as lying. However, I think that these claims are both false: children do believe in Santa, and to the extent that we sustain their belief in Santa, we often lie, conceal information, and otherwise mislead them. Belief is to be distinguished from make-believe (certainly on their part). Make-believe involves at once being aware of the falsehood of propositions, and yet playing along 'as if' they were true; when children act in plays, they do not confuse their part for real life. Allow me to cite two personal experiences by way of illustration. As I saw it, my toy was delivered down the wrong chimney by Santa, and the neighbouring family unjustly kept it from me, which was as good as stealing, for I had requested that very toy of Santa, while my neighbour had not. Indeed, when I mentioned the problem to my neighbour's parents, they laughed about it.

How far does one go in sustaining the belief if it is questioned? One might have to make fake reports. Sometime later, I tried to disabuse another child of her belief in Santa, and she was, in the moment, at least, devastated. Streaming with tears, she listed her evidence for her belief in Santa: she had written letters to him, and had received replies, had heard sleigh bells, and her parents had testified to his existence. I told her that the evidence was easily faked, and that her parents could well be lying. She insisted that she would have recognized her parents' and neighbour's handwriting, and that her parents would not lie to her. Loss of trust is one reason why you would want to avoid being caught out as a liar. However, most parent-child relationships are not too damaged by children realizing that their parents lied to them about Santa. Indeed, coming to see through the lie can be seen as a positive experience of coming of age, of leaving one's childish state. To the extent that this girl had been initiated into a comprehensive set of false beliefs there was more chance of residual damage, once she had been disabused of the central beliefs. As I have emphasized, truth is unitary, and to the extent that one successfully and comprehensively integrates false belief into one's

belief set, residual damage can be left when the central beliefs are eliminated.⁴ The worry is that a narrow set of beliefs (about Santa) may sprawl to affect other beliefs, in light of the unity of truth. Consider the following questions that might be posed, and to which answers would further elaborate and damage the accuracy of one's belief set, and perhaps even one's ability to form and rationally revise beliefs. What has Jesus to do with Santa? How can Santa do the things he does? How old is Santa and can he die? Where does he live? Can we visit him? The more inquisitive the child is, the more elaborate the stories have to become and the more danger there is that they will cultivate a systematically false belief set, leaving residual damage when the principle beliefs are gone. John Broome gives an example of this working at a simple level: "I look out of the window and see that it is raining, and immediately believe it is raining. Sometime later I look up and see that it has stopped raining, and no longer believe that it is raining. The initial belief is immediately erased".⁵

However, it is not at all likely that all beliefs will be amended to fit together and less likely the more comprehensive and fundamental the beliefs are. In contrast to a belief in Santa and the tooth fairy, it seems that religions are comprehensive, and it is their very comprehensiveness that makes them morally special: "Religious traditions are so comprehensive and all-encompassing in their claims that almost every domain of philosophy may be drawn upon in the philosophical investigation of their coherence, justification, and value."⁶

Religions are doctrinally totalizing, that is to say that they are often close to a theory of everything. The same might be said of some scientific theories; however, religions are usually more comprehensive in this way than is any single theory in, say, physics, and with far less warrant than, say, Einstein's theories of general and special relativity. Religions often have cosmological hypotheses, but they also make prescriptions, and evaluations (they, in Hand's phrase, "recommend patterns of life"). They have readymade answers to lots of questions that are to be accepted wholesale. That would be fine if they were so well justified to make denial irrational, but as we saw in Chapter

⁴ At best, one might compartmentalize their belief sets, giving truth a duality, as in George Orwell's novel, *1984*, in which it is allowed that two and two always makes a four in weapons development, but makes a five in politics.

⁵ John Broome, 'Rationality,' <<http://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/john-broome-rationality>> @38:00, [accessed 23 June 2015].

⁶ Charles Taliaferro, 'Philosophy of Religion,' in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2013 Edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2013/entries/philosophy-religion/>> [accessed 23 June 2015].

8, it seems that they are not. It is not just religions that have this feature, indeed, Daniel C. Dennett's physicalism, is similarly comprehensive, as is Humanism, and Dialectical Materialism. In Chapter 8, I argued that no religion has sufficient support to warrant its directive teaching to young people, that is, to warrant religious initiation. At the same time, it seems entirely possible that some children do already believe rationally, and while, promoting rational belief is a desirable aim, and thereby promoting critical scrutiny, going further and making it an aim to disabuse children of their religious beliefs *carte blanche* is also not acceptable, for they are not all obviously irrational in their beliefs.

Should Religious Initiation be Optional for Children?

What is the range of choices possible regarding one's potential initiation? One may, by default, have been either 'opted in', or 'opted out' of some initiatory process. One may have been opted in, with the option to leave, or opted in with no option to leave. Alternatively, one may have been opted out with the option to enter, or without the option to enter. These four options can be represented in the following figure:

Originally Opted In

Subsequently Able to Opt out	1
Not Subsequently Able to Opt Out	2

Originally Opted Out

Subsequently Able to Opt In	3
Not Subsequently Able to Opt In	4

From our discussion of basic goods and paternalist duties to ensure that they be satisfied in Chapter 3, it seems that if a child would like to start riding horses at no particular cost (e.g. financial), that would be alright, and if a child wanted to stop riding horses at no particular cost (e.g. being a worse huntsman in a hunting community), that too would be alright. Neither a system in which children were initiated into horse riding, with the option to stop doing so, or one in which they were initiated into riding horses, only if they opted in, is objectionable. In the absence of any significant drawbacks to

those that cannot ride horses (or to others dependent on their being so able), a system which insisted on children's learning to ride horses (opting them in without the choice to opt out) would seem unduly coercive. It would then seem appropriate to say that horse riding was being unfairly forced on children. On the other hand, there are some activities that we do not think we ought to initiate children into at all. Gambling, drinking alcohol, sexual intercourse, and blood sport are perhaps strong examples.⁷ Here, neither do we opt children in, nor do we allow children to opt in. Conversely, there are some forms of initiation which we do not think that children ought to be able to opt out of, and which they ought to be opted into by default. Moral development, numeracy, literacy, language development, and leading a healthy life style, are perhaps strong examples here.

Where should the various ways in which one can be formatively influenced with respect to religion, fit on this fourfold array of choices? It seems that being initiated into a religion should be a matter of total option for adults; where one must opt in, and where one has the ability to opt out at any point, but what about children? At what age should people be allowed to 'opt in' to religion? Should, for example, the Catholic Church address children as potential converts? I argue not. Instead, the Catholic Church ought to recognize that even though it takes faith to be true and of maximal significance, there is a plurality of other options which are at least as reasonable, and that it is not so well supported by evidence and argument to make its denial irrational, which, as we saw in Chapter 6, is what is required for the encouragement of a formative influence in children to be warranted, this is all the more important when the set of formative influences in question is so comprehensive as religious belief. Equally however, we saw in Chapter 8 that religious belief can be rational and so it is not thereby irrational to deny that atheism is true, and so morally wrong to encourage atheism, even if children ought to be encouraged to reflect critically on religious doctrines and practices.

None of this is to urge that students ought to be insulated from religious belief and beliefs about religion, or that they should not be able to discuss any that they themselves may have acquired or developed. Instead, in due course, I will argue, in line with Chapter 6, that we should inform children about religions, and facilitate their

⁷ Actually a more nuanced position might think that forms of initiation into safe forms of alcohol consumption, and harmless gambling, or even sexuality (cf. John Wilson on sexual initiation among children, who emphasizes role play and fiction) might be reasonable. John Wilson, 'Can Sex Education be Practical?' *Sex Education: Sexuality, Society and Learning* 3(1) (2003), pp. 23-32.

ability to evaluate religious claims and attitudes, and attitudes and claims about religion. Indeed, it seems that learning about religions (among other forms of diversity, and theories of meaning, and ethical systems) is neither a matter for opting in or out where children are concerned. First, though, I shall consider an objection to what has been argued so far.

Some are wont to respond that there are no neutral forms of initiation (e.g. Trevor Cooling, Anne Hession, and Elmer J. Thiessen).⁸ Instead, they regard the failure to initiate children into a religious perspective as initiating them into a substantive, non-religious perspective. I want now to discuss some terms that are often used as if they were interchangeable, but which ought to be distinguished. I have in mind the concepts of neutrality, impartiality, objectivity, unbiasedness, and balance. What have these concepts to do with one another? First, we should distinguish between their being used to characterize a) methods of inquiry, b) the presentation of issues, and c) the state of one's opinions or allegiances. Methods of inquiry are procedures which one uses to come to one's decisions. The presentation of issues is to be understood as, for instance, how journalists report on, or how teachers teach, topics, events, and disputes (in particular, whether they are taught directly or non-directly). The state of one's opinions or allegiances is made up of one's propositional and relational attitudes. Let us start by discussing the term 'neutrality', and which terms are in fact interchangeable with it.

The Nature of Neutrality

The word 'neutrality' (as distinct from siding with a disputant or deciding on an issue) may be used to characterize one's opinions and allegiances, but also how issues are presented – that is as to whether issues are taught 'directly' or 'non-directly'.⁹ It is better, I think, to use the terms 'directive' and 'non-directive', to refer to how topics are taught than the term 'neutral', since those terms can only apply to how topics are taught. It is better, too, to reserve the term 'neutral' for characterizing the state of one's

⁸ Trevor Cooling, 'Contestable Beliefs in Education: Fairness and/or Neutrality?' *Oxford Review of Education* 38(5) (2012), pp. 551-566; Anne Hession, *Catholic Primary Religious Education in a Pluralist Environment* (Dublin: Veritas, 2015); Elmer John Thiessen, *Teaching for Commitment: Liberal Education, Indoctrination, and Christian Nurture* (MQUP: McGill-Queen's Press, 1993).

⁹ Cf. Michael Hand, 'Should We Teach Homosexuality as a Controversial Issue?' *Theory and Research in Education* 5(1) (2007), pp. 69-86; 'What Should We Teach as Controversial? A Defence of the Epistemic Criterion,' *Educational Theory* 58(2) (2008), pp. 213-228.

opinions, and that is the sense in which I shall discuss it beneath. The sense of term is interchangeable with ‘non-partisan’, which is to be contrasted with ‘partisan’. It is also interchangeable with ‘uncommitted’, which is to be contrasted with ‘committed’.

Some people claim that neutrality is impossible. However, I take neutrality to be a state of indecision between options, and it would be absurd to say that indecision were a decisive state. Hess and McAvoy claim that “[educational] aims are never neutral.”¹⁰ While it is true that aims, and people, cannot be neutral *tout court*, or neutral about everything, they can be neutral on particular matters, or neutral between other states. And, once this is admitted, it must be acknowledged that questions, aims and people can be neutral on some matters (even while they cannot be neutral on all matters).¹¹

Why might neutrality be unattainable? One might say ‘whoever is not for us is against us’, and conclude that someone neutral between, say, the allied and the axis forces, such as Switzerland, was thereby an enemy. This result is also absurd, though: an enemy opposes one’s ends, rather than simply fails to support them. One might suggest that neutrality is a commitment in itself, that it is a position (that neutrality is itself not neutral, and so is a self-defeating concept). In the case of Switzerland’s role in the Second World War (or lack of it), we can reasonably say that Swiss State took a policy: that of refusing to take sides. In this case, there were committed to non-commitment to both the allied and axis forces. That is to say, their commitment was a of second order kind. While this preserves the notion of neutrality, second order of commitment is not required to understand the notion of neutrality. As an illustration of this, we may regard Burden’s ass as being neutral on which bale of hay to eat from first, on account of simple indecision between those options, not because it prefers not to commit to either option. Whether due to a decisive refusal, or a state of indecision, neutrality is clearly possible, meaning either a failure or refusal to take sides. We might thus say that there are two kinds of neutrality: decisive and indecisive neutrality. A refusal to take sides seems more specific to practical courses of action, or siding with disputants, than to resolving theoretical questions about whether or not a proposition is true. Indecisive

¹⁰ Hess and McAvoy, p. 76.

¹¹ Consider the question ‘in what sense, if any, does music have meaning?’ That question itself is decided (or committed, or partisan) on the following matters, that there is a fact of the matter, that it is worthwhile to know, that music exists, and that meaning can be had in more than one sense.

neutrality seems equally applicable to siding with one or another disputant, and coming to an intellectual decision.

Bearing these distinctions in mind, let us consider the question of the existence of God. The attitudinal options are often presented as being just three: God exists; God does not exist; I am unsure whether or not God exists.¹² One might allow that degrees of confidence can be had, but basically one must be a little inclined to bet for or against the existence of God, and where they are unable to decide which of the ontological options (namely of God's existence of non-existence) to bet on, they can be said to be *neutral*, non-committal, or non-partisan, between those options.

The Nature of Impartiality

I take it that the following contrasts are identical in meaning: Impartial/partial, unbiased/biased, unprejudiced/prejudiced, and disinterested/interested. These concepts (and their various markers) apply in the first instance to methods of inquiry and decision-making procedures. Only in the second instance do they characterize states of opinions which were formed in these ways. How are we to understand 'impartiality' in this sense? In Kant's aesthetics, the distinction between interestedness and disinterestedness plays the following role: One is a better judge of an object's aesthetic value insofar as one has no irrelevant interest in the object being appraised. For instance, an art auctioneer interested in selling a painting of two young sweethearts for the highest amount possible may judge it mainly in terms of its monetary value, the father of the painter may be unduly proud of the work, and perhaps a bitter, aged bachelor may be unable to appreciate its value: e.g. some facts about our experience, character and desires may be irrelevant to making aesthetic judgements, and ought to be bracketed in making them. But what are we describing here if not biases, or prejudices that warp one's judgement? So too may we describe one's partiality as a factor which warps one's judgement beyond the domain of aesthetics; for instance, one may be less

¹² Actually there are other possibilities: one doesn't know that it is even an issue, or one fails to understand what the issue is that one might have an opinion about. Indeed, one might hold that question does not make sense. For instance, in any dispute about whether square circles might exist, I am tempted to say: the proposition is incoherent, and could not be the sort of thing which could have evidence in favour of or against. These possibilities come one stage before neutrality.

capable of adjudicating well between two disputants if one of the disputants is one's own child, and the other is a stranger, perhaps with an annoying voice.¹³

What Has Neutrality to Do With Impartiality?

As we have said, one use of the term 'impartiality' characterizes a method of inquiry; other than that, the term may be used to characterize the state of one's opinions or attitudes, and here it can have two distinct senses: one in which it means those attitudes or opinions were arrived at through an impartial process, and one in which it means that one's attitudes or opinions are neutral. To save confusion, I think that it is best to use the terms impartial and partial to characterize methods of enquiry and decision-making procedures, and to talk about the opinions arrived at as being neutral, or non-neutral in some regard.

Thus, the question of whether one is neutral about some matter is quite distinct from the question of whether one got there impartially.¹⁴ For instance, one could come to take a neutral stance *because* of a bias (that is, due to their partiality). Imagine someone who regards both the potential existence of God, and the potential non-existence of God as being decisively unattractive because of, say, the prospect of no afterlife, and the prospect of being judged respectively. Because of these biases, they may irrationally be neutral between these options as to which of them is true. Indeed, impartial inquiry often leads to substantive conclusions and not neutrality: perhaps impartial inquiry might lead to neutrality about the cause of the extinction of the dinosaurs, but it does not lead to neutrality on the question of whether the earth is only thousands of years old.

¹³ I want to sound a note of caution: It might be thought that in bracketing out irrelevant factors about our experience in forming judgements, that there is danger of bracketing out too much. Perhaps we ought not to bracket out certain features of our character, or our valuations will not matter to us in the end. Bernard Williams has pressed this point in respect of ethics, and it is perhaps even easier to press a similar line of thought in the case of aesthetics. Indeed, one might go so far as to say that there is a world of subjective truth: this seems to be the contention of Thomas Nagel in *The View from Nowhere*. Pursuing that intriguing idea is not one that can be done in this thesis.

¹⁴ It is perhaps true that Switzerland in its neutral stance might have been well placed to adjudicate between the Allies and Axis forces; at least, both would have reason to prefer them to adjudicate instead of an adjudicator who sympathised with the other side.

Two Conceptions of Balance

The concept of balance applies to the presentation of issues (e.g. by journalists and teachers in reports and lessons). While the BBC makes it policy to frame the arguments of disputants without taking sides, and calls this impartiality, actually it is neutral presentation, and may not be the result of impartial methods of investigation.¹⁵ The BBC might have a fair claim to offer ‘balanced’ reporting, but ‘balanced’ is too vague to be a worthy value. It is important to ask: how do they balance their reporting? If they balance it in such a way that each disputant or opinion is given equal coverage, then that is balance in a certain sense, but it is unbalanced in another; sometimes such coverage gives credence to the incredible, whereas it ought to correspond to credibility. On the question of whether or not the earth is flat, it would seem absurd to favour a neutral report. Indeed, it is sometimes held that in forming a more defensible opinion, one does well to take a thesis, consider its antithesis, and somehow merge the two to form a third view which is more defensible than either of the others. But we should not assume that such a procedure is rational; one position may have an outright victory over the other, with no room for rational synthesis.

According to Michael Hand, one can be directive, or be non-directive. I have already said that I think this terminology can be improved on; we should distinguish each of those things that one hopes to promote, demote, or neither to promote or demote but merely introduce, rather than collapse them together. However, let us use it for the moment for the sake of convenience. One might think of directive teaching as being unbalanced, and non-directive teaching as being balanced. However, that is only so in the sense of balance which considers that equal time for each disputant is required, no matter what the deliverances of impartial inquiry. If one thinks that the presentation of topics ought to be balanced according to the deliverances of impartial inquiry, it might be that directive teaching is balanced and that non-directive teaching unbalanced; teaching creationism versus evolution as an open ended debate (non-directively), say, is unbalanced, in failing to reflect the actual weight of evidence. I think that we do well to stop talking about ‘balance’ and talk instead about justification of steering, and relatedly of disclosing one’s own views. Even still, some might doubt the coherence or

¹⁵ They are not neutral on the value of the royal family, at least in so far as they honour them at national celebrations such as Queen Elizabeth II’s Diamond Jubilee.

practicality of non-directive teaching, especially if the teacher is not neutral between options themselves.

The Possibility Non-Promotional Commitment

I contend that teachers (and parents) can have an opinion about something without either wanting or trying to steer their pupils (or children) towards sharing that opinion. Indeed, one might even think that they ought not to steer children towards that opinion. Some people contend that this is either impossible in practice because one cannot bracket all of one's opinions away (especially in framing issues for discussion), or they believe that it is undesirable to do so. These are the sorts of considerations cited in its favour. For instance, it might be thought that an educator cannot guard against steering pupils towards such an opinion.

As argued above, we ought to concede that global neutrality is indeed impossible for rational agents. It is almost inconceivable that there should be a conscious person with no attitudes, or beliefs. Nor do I think it is desirable that there should be. There are many beliefs and other kinds of attitudes which it is rational, and entirely proper, to have. However, it does not follow from having an attitude or belief that one should systematically promote it in others. It does not follow from having a belief that one must either withhold or disclose it. Indeed, it is often hard for pupils to tell where teachers sit on certain issues, partly because teachers are capable of playing roles, such as devil's advocate; they can simulate having certain views for pedagogical purposes.

A quite different worry is whether disclosure of this kind is even compatible with non-directive teaching, for, arguably, announcing one's views *just is* a form of steering. Sometimes, the teacher's disclosure seems equivalent to directive education; consider the teacher's endorsing views, or consider their asserting those views. In particular, consider their using universal and prescriptive language, such as '*we* believe that' and '*it is true that*' or '*certainly,*' or failing to qualify assertions, e.g. by not adding '*Catholics, like me, believe that*' to the claims like, '*Jesus died for our sins*'. Alternatively, however, they could stress their own subjectivity in confessing/disclosing their personal views, namely by stating: I believe that, or it seems to me that. One can also use less emphatic language: it seems that, or arguably, or one reason to think x is

that. On topics that one aims to teach non-directively, when, if ever, should teachers withhold or disclose their views? At first blush, there is a tension between saying on the one hand: I don't want to steer belief, and on the other: I believe this. However, while disclosing one's beliefs is a form of promotion (namely endorsement), there is a difference between disclosing one's beliefs and promoting them.¹⁶ Consider the difference between these expressions: 'I believe Jesus Christ is the son of God', and 'we believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God' (where the 'we' captures the children in the class). One looks to be more of an assertion about the teacher's own belief set, another to be an assertion about the world (thereby putting an onus on the listener to accept their testimony), the latter makes a statement about the students' belief set, and presumably more of a normative one, that this is what you should believe (perhaps in virtue of your parentage, or where you go to school).

I agree that one's actions will sometimes reveal one's attitudes; training children to swim shows at least that I think it worth my while teaching swimming to children, and doing so unenthusiastically may reveal the opposite. It may also indicate that I value swimming itself, and think that it is worth the children's time. However, it is often possible and desirable to withhold one's views, and often possible and desirable to reveal one's views. Disclosing one's views need not entail any more than that; by simply disclosing them, for instance, one need not state one's reasons for belief and one need not defend one's view against objections, and certainly one need not allow one's view to become the focus of the class. To the extent that children neither opted in, nor can opt out of such a class, this could be reasonably described as forcing one's private views on pupils, especially to the extent that one denies children scope for dissent. Indeed, the privileged position of the teacher can in itself make dissent less easily voiced anyway. In the case of spending time doing something, it must be admitted that one cannot live and yet not spend time doing anything. And in the case of doing worthwhile things, religiously committed educators must promote activities which are considered worthwhile within one's religious outlook, but not for religious reasons per se, nor as a form of initiation into their religion. In the case of belief about whether or not a proposition is true, one can be neutral; one can genuinely not have an opinion on the matter. That may amount to living as though there were a negative answer to the

¹⁶ I borrow the terms 'withholding' and 'disclosing' from Diana E. Hess and Paula McAvoy, *The Political Classroom: Evidence and Ethics in Democratic Education* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

question, but *c'est la vie*, that's the way the cookie crumbles, rather than a reason to initiate children into a faith. There is still room for commitment without advocacy. I now propose to critically discuss the aim of 'learning *from* religion', much emphasized in religious education literature, policy documents and teaching materials.

Against Learning *from*, in Favour of Learning *about* Religion

How can we make sense of the expressions 'learning about' and 'learning from'? We can learn from (among other things) our mistakes, the past, and other people. It seems that to learn 'from X' is to identify X as the *source* of our learning. We can learn about (among other things) books, other people, and the past. It seems that to 'learn about X' is to identify X as the *object* of our learning. It seems clear however, that in religious education, it would be important to learn about religion; in fact, it would seem to be the very *raison d'être* of such a subject. It can comprehensibly be urged that to deserve the name of 'religious education', religion might not be the *object* of understanding at all, but perhaps the student, or the world in general should be. Instead, religion would be the source of knowledge, shedding light on the student, and upon the world in general. However, that presupposes religions to be a source of knowledge on these things, but that seems too epistemically contentious to presuppose in a learning objective (as the combination of our findings in Chapters 6 and 8 has shown above). As to which sources we should learn about religion from, that seems to be a further (albeit very important matter), that in no way conflicts with what the subject matter of religious education is. One might reasonably suggest that children should learn about religion(s), from religion(s), on the grounds that each religion is *an* authority on itself. There is no guarantee that religions are the *best* authorities on themselves, but it seems reasonable to suggest that particular religions should be able to speak for themselves where they are the object of learning (even if they are not presumed to have the final word on themselves).¹⁷

¹⁷ Caution might sometimes be in order here: careful consideration would be required to decide whether it would be appropriate to allow violent, extremist religious outlooks to speak for themselves, since one may legitimately worry about the possibility of their having a corrupting influence. On the other hand, if it is important to understand those outlooks it seems that hearing what they have to say for themselves is an important part of that. Furthermore, if one were reasonably confident that these views would be heard anyway, it might be well to subject them to critical scrutiny in the controlled environment of the classroom.

When we speak of learning from religion in the sense of learning from a religious source, we still need to specify what lessons should be taught. It is not enough to say that children should learn from religion. It is important to specify *what it is* that children should learn from religion. Should the various religions teach children about the world as they see it, or should they merely teach children about how they see the world (together, perhaps, with what are their aspirations and practices)? For instance, should children learn from Christians that Christ died for their sins, or should they learn that Christians think that someone special was born (whom they call the Christ) who died for mankind's sins? This latter option seems less contentious where it is admitted that the epistemic credentials of religion are less than intellectually compelling (as Chapter 8 argued). During a public panel discussion entitled 'What is the Place of Faith in Schools?',¹⁸ Richard Dawkins contended that people have nothing to learn from religion(s). That is to say, according to Dawkins, any uniquely religious content is false. While you can learn kindness from religious sources, you can learn kindness from non-religious sources. While you can learn what Christians believe from Christians, you can learn this from non-Christian sources. While it is admitted that good and true things can be learned from religions, Dawkins contends that all of the teachings *specific* to each religion are false. If Jesus *did in fact* rise from the dead on the third day subsequent to his execution, *you could learn this* from Christianity, but (again, according to Dawkins) he did not, and so you cannot. On this view, it is a mistake to suppose that religions are to be learned from in the respects that they are unique. One need not hold that every religion's teachings are demonstrably false to share Dawkins' reservations. Instead, it is enough to hold that none of that content which is specific to religions is so well demonstrated that we may presume to promote its belief among children. It ought not to be an educational aim that children should come to assent to any specifically religious content (even if it may not be an educational failure if they did come to do so).

How to Understand Religion

If the import of Chapters 6 and eight is correct, then it seems that Michael Hand is right in arguing that children have the right to an education enabling to make rational

¹⁸ 22 February 2012, 'What's the Place of Faith in Schools?' Westminster Faith Debates, featuring James Conway, John Pritchard, Richard Dawkins and Robert Jackson. AHRC/ESRC Religion & Society Programme

judgments about the truth or falsity of religious propositions.¹⁹ Furthermore, if the arguments in favour of paternalism in Chapter 3 are correct, it ought to be compulsory for children. Simply being able to recall information about religions is of course hopelessly superficial for this purpose (not least since one may not have even understood it at all). Furthermore, learning about religions in a deep way involves not just being presented with information and being able to recall it, but understanding that information through having it explained. Moreover, in addition to explanation, existential engagement and imaginative identification might well be required, but again this is not best termed ‘learning from’ religion. Instead, it is better marked out with the terms ‘personal’ and ‘impersonal’ understanding. John Lippitt explains the role that Kierkegaard gives to the terms ‘objective’, and ‘subjective’ understanding well: “To relate oneself appropriately to certain ideas means to relate to them *in the first person*. Ethical and religious concerns, Kierkegaard insists, fall into this category.”²⁰ Again:

To certain ideas – a mathematical proof for instance – I can relate myself, entirely appropriately, in a disengaged, impersonal manner. But to certain other ideas – such as what kind of person I ought to become, or the fact that I will shortly die – such a disengaged reaction would be entirely inappropriate [...] [perhaps] a way of evading the significance my death has for me.²¹

I would recommend the use of the terms ‘impersonal’ and ‘personal’ over ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’, since that latter pair is already quite equivocal enough.

A Political Rather Than Moral Right to Religious Upbringing

Many defend religious initiation according to parental preferences (through denominational schooling). It is important to make clear that a political liberty right is not a moral claim right; just because, politically speaking, nobody should stop you from doing something, that is not enough to say that it is morally incumbent upon you to do it, or even morally alright for you to do it, and certainly not that anybody ought to facilitate you in doing it.²² However, as I have emphasized throughout, my question is how children ought morally to be influenced with respect to religions. In this particular

¹⁹ Hand, ‘Religious Education’.

²⁰ John Lippitt, *Kierkegaard and Fear and Trembling* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 8.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² It is not clear that denominational schooling as a legal option is incompatible with my thesis (even while I think that religious initiation of children happens to be morally wrong). It might more likely be the case that state-funded religious initiation is incompatible with it, or at least that a legitimate demand for state funded religious initiation is incompatible with it.

case, it takes the form of whether it matters morally if we initiate children into religious beliefs, or refrain from doing so. It is true that children benefit from feeling a sense of belonging, indeed, think of the converse: exclusion, isolation and its high risk of loneliness and alienation. However, being a member of a community (belonging) does not presuppose being initiated into a set of beliefs (believing). We must be careful to say that we can agree that belonging is important, without thinking that believing is necessary. Indeed, if rejecting those beliefs is not irrational, it is important to forebear inculcating them. Of course, it would be wrong to insist that parents refrain from worship themselves, but they should not make a concerted attempt to initiate children into the doctrinal fold, and indeed into the practices which presuppose those doctrines, (e.g. worship).

Some authors, such as, Gareth Byrne, have wanted to advocate children's religious initiation within "their own faith community." Providing an aspirational description of denominational schools, he says: "as well as learning about and from religion, these schools encourage their Christian young people to draw close to God in Jesus Christ" and acknowledges that "other faith schools will form pupils of their religion within their faith tradition."²³ He has in mind that children have a natural or default religion (namely, that of their parents or community), and that this is what it is right to initiate them into. However, it follows from this that a mere accident of birth dictates how it is proper to influence someone, with respect to religion(s), even where the state of knowledge is universal. However, the idea that children ought to be opted into religious initiation by default because they have a religion in the sense of doctrinal commitments just by birth is to be resisted, even though it is to be admitted that they may well belong to some community or crisscrossing communities by birth. Clearly, children are not religious until you initiate them into religion, any more than they are mathematicians, carpenters or competitive swimmers until initiated into those practices. Nobody is of a religion, unless they accept at least its key doctrinal elements (or something close enough to them). Children do not, from birth, accept those doctrinal elements (they do not come innately packaged), and so are not of any religion. If children are only to be initiated into a faith which is already theirs, and yet do not have a faith (by virtue of

²³ Gareth Byrne, 'Encountering and Engaging with Religion and Belief: The Contemporary Contribution of Religious Education in Schools,' in *Toward Mutual Ground: Pluralism, Religious Education and Diversity in Irish Schools*, ed. by Gareth Byrne, and Patricia Kieran (Dublin: Columba Press, 2013), p. 213.

lacking even the most basic belief), it follows that children ought not to be initiated into a faith.

Supposing that all religious initiation in schools were voluntary in the sense that any and all students could if they wish (and are aware that they could) decline to accept such instruction at any time, and indeed, had to opt in to it in the first place, that would make it less morally objectionable it seems. However, even if less than literally captive, it still seems that initiating children into beliefs which it is not irrational to deny, especially ones so comprehensive in scope, is not a moral educational aim. Where religious education does not attempt religious initiation (but instead hopes to promote deep understanding through explanation, existential engagement, and critical reflection), there seems to be scant reason why children should have scope to exempt themselves from religious education any more than they should have scope to be exempt from history, maths or science. Indeed, it seems that they ought initially to be opted in to such an education on the grounds of the momentousness of religious beliefs, their degree of rationality and the requirement of intervention to promote rational deliberation on their truth or falsity. It seems to betray insecurities about the ability of one's faith to survive a critical scrutiny, or investigation of alternative to it in so far as parents do.

Summary of Conclusions and Scope for Further Research

My research question has been how (if at all) we may ethically influence children, with respect to religion(s). One possible answer to my question is that we can do no wrong when it comes to influencing children, with respect to religion, that whatever we do will be alright. In this case, children would have no ethical claims over us when it comes to our influencing them, with respect to religion. Another answer is that children have a claim to be left to develop according to their un-perverted nature, and even a duty to insist on being so left. As argued in Chapter 6, neither these, the maximally permissive or impermissive views, are correct. The primary focus of this research has been whether, morally, children should be initiated into faith at all, and our finding has been that, children should not be, irrespective of whether it might be attempted in the context of the home or the school. It is debatable as to whether a school could be distinctively

religious without attempting to initiate children.²⁴ To the extent that it could not, then there should not be any religiously distinctive schooling while the epistemic picture is such as it is. I have also argued that children should not be dissuaded from religious belief *tout court*, even if they ought to be encouraged to assess religious propositions rationally, since it seems that it need not be irrational to deny atheism.

However, there are many other respects in which children might be influenced with respect to religions. There is much that is beyond the scope of this thesis to comment on. It seems that the program of research developed through this PhD can be extended to address other questions. I have discussed how children ought to be influenced with respect to religions (albeit with a fairly narrow focus on the rights and wrongs of religious initiation in the home and in schools). However, it is an interesting question as to whether there exists any non-religions which are apt for similar moral consideration in how children ought to be influenced with respect to them (similar perhaps because of their comprehensive, formative role, and epistemic credentials). If this were the case, it would seem that we would not be interested in religion *qua* religion, but in religion *qua* some other phenomenon (e.g. worldviews, or comprehensive doctrines).²⁵ Additionally, it would be interesting to apply the theory of ethical influence, here applied to religion, to other domains, including, for instance, how children ought to be influenced with respect to sex and sexuality; gender identity, status and relations; science; the natural world; the economy; morality; governance and many other domains of momentous import for their lives.

Our concern has been with deliberate formative influence, however, we could discuss the ethics of non-deliberate formative influence, of morally culpable non-intentional actions (i.e. negligence), just to better understand the scope of moral innocence and blameworthiness in this domain. We might also discuss the ethics of behavioural influence as well; that is no small part of formative influence, it seems; furthermore, it

²⁴ Michael Hand, 'A New Dawn for Faith-based Education? Opportunities for Religious Organisations in the UK's New School System,' *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 46(4) (2012), pp. 546-559; Peter Gardner, 'Hand's Academy Challenge: Some Starter Questions,' *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 48(4) (2014), pp. 637-645.

²⁵ There is a strain of thought which claims that non-religious objects might be appropriate in religious education classes (The British Humanist Association for instance argues that Humanism ought to be studied in RE, and for RE to have its name changed; I take it that this is essentially to push for a whole new subject). Ninian Smart, 'Secular Ideologies: How do they Figure in Religious Studies Courses?' in *Teaching The Introductory Course in Religious Studies: A Sourcebook*, ed. by M. Juergensmeyer (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1991).

is also very interesting in its own right. Also of interest, is developing a deeper understanding of the different sorts of ethical claims adults and children may be said to have, with respect to how they are influenced. For instance, our research has suggested that entitlement, plus being a child, justifies both the compulsion and facilitation of that entitlement. But the same entitlement would seem to exist as much for adults, and while paternalism is usually not appropriate for adults (as argued in Chapter 3), it would seem that this entitlement ought to be facilitated also.

So too am I interested in how these considerations might map onto considerations relevant to formatively influential practices. As we observed previously, having a considered understanding of and approach to the ethics of formative influence is fundamental to having a considered and consistent approach to ethical schooling and upbringing, amongst other things including (but not limited to) therapy, immigrant assimilation, journalism, offender reform, and advertising standards. Qua activities of formative influence, it is important that we approach these areas with a consistent understanding of what kinds of influence are and are not acceptable.

Also of interest is how the findings of this research ought to relate to legal and political rights. The relation between proper moral and legal expectations is complex and was beyond the reasonable scope of our already large topic. Briefly though, saying that people have an ethical entitlement not to be harmed, or to be benefitted, does not obviously translate into a legal entitlement (e.g. making romantic scoundrelism illegal).

One final and significant issue left unaddressed by our research is this. It might reasonably be thought that teachers ought to be authentic to their views, and indeed that they ought to promote those statements that they believe to be the truth in the interests of integrity and truthfulness. While I have read and written about this issue, it was beyond the scope of this project to discuss fully, and so I plan to conduct further research in that area in the future. Indeed, it might reasonably be hoped that others will take up some of these directions of thought, drawing on the arguments and distinctions presented in this work.

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A Qualitative Study of Youth Evangelisation using the Internet

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October 2011

Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of PhD, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed: 
Sony Sebastian

ID No.: 54177227 Date: 2 DEC 2011

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ABSTRACT

A Qualitative Study of Youth Evangelisation using the Internet

Sony Sebastian

This research examines the effectiveness of the Internet as a means of youth evangelisation. The project is divided into two main parts: (i) The establishment of a theoretical base relating to the concept of evangelisation, the Internet as a means of social communication and youth culture. (ii) The design, implementation and analysis of a cohort of case studies to test a research question based on the theoretical perspectives.

Following a general introduction (Ch. 1), the chapter on evangelisation (Ch. 2) defines the concept and examines its development. The Internet as a means of social communication is considered in chapter 3, preceded by an overview of broader models of communication of relevance to web 2.0. In chapter 4 various aspects of contemporary global youth culture are considered in the context of web 2.0. The second part of the study – the fieldwork, covered in Chapters 5-7, is based on the design and activation of an online portal (*Cybersouls*). The main research question was to test the efficacy of the online mentoring of young people by Faith Friends (FFs) intended to deepen their understanding, appreciation and appropriation of their faith tradition. This was facilitated through mutual online interaction in the context of religious education material presented in digital *Scrolls*.

Mixed methods were adopted in the analytical process. In-depth qualitative analysis of data (using NVivo) was undertaken relating to a sample of cases selected by survey sampling and usage sampling techniques.

The key research findings are: (i). Effective mentoring by a Faithfriend enhances the potential of the web 2.0 environment for youth evangelisation. Such effective mentoring depends on careful selection and training of Faithfriends, particularly their proficiency in: ICT skills; youth culture and knowledge of the faith tradition. (ii). A collaborative and constructivist model of using the Internet underpins an effective approach to evangelisation with young people. (iii). Making use of the full potential of web 2.0, the proficiency of multimedia and social networking enhances the effectiveness of evangelisation. (iv). The efficacy of an online environment of evangelisation is dependent on the calibre of the offline resources and organisational capacities that are utilised.

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my gratitude to everybody who offered me assistance in various ways in the course of my research.

First of all, I wish to thank my supervisor, Dr. Andrew G McGrady, who trusted, challenged and inspired me on my research journey. Also, I acknowledge the support and encouragement given by Dr. Kevin Williams, as a co-supervisor. Dr. Paddy Devit and Dr. Gabriel Flynn were most helpful during various stages of the project.

I am indebted to the staff in the registry and the library and the IT department of Mater Dei Institute of Education for their assistance during my time on the campus.

Special thanks are due to John Chacko for his input in the design and development of the website.

To those members of Jesus Youth who shared the task of authenticating Faithfriends, together with members of other youth movements, I offer my sincere appreciation. The Faithfriends themselves and all Cybersouls who acted as the 'salt of the earth' merit special mention as, without them, this research could not have been undertaken.

I gratefully remember the congregation of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) to which I belong, for their continued trust in me over these years.

Finally, my warmest thanks are due to my beloved parents and all my friends in Ireland and India for their ongoing support throughout the project.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ARPANET	: Advanced Research Projects Agency Network
BEC	: Basic Ecclesial Community
CA	: Conversation Analysis
CAQDAS	: Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis System
CCC	: Catechism of the Catholic Church
CCUN	: Church Computer User Network
CMC	: Computer Mediated Communication
CMS	: Content Management System
CS	: Cybersoul
DA	: Discourse Analysis
EN	: <i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i>
FF	: Faithfriend
FNC	: Federal Networking Council
FTP	: File Transfer Protocol
GDC	: General Directory for Catechesis
GNU	: GNU's Not Unix
ICT	: Information and Communication Technology
ISP	: Internet Service Provider
IRC	: Internet Relay Chat
IWG	: Interagency Working Groups
JY	: Jesus Youth
KWIC	: Key Word in Context
LSN	: Large Scale Networking
MUD	: Multi User Dungeons
RCLA	: Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults
TCP/IP	: Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol
WAN	: Wide Area Network
WCD	: World Communications Day
WYD	: World Youth Day
YCW	: Young Christian Workers

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The research presented in this dissertation is centered on an exploratory study which investigates how the Internet could be used by the Catholic Church as a means of progressing the evangelisation of young people.

The aim of this opening chapter is to introduce the project and present an overview of the complete study. It commences by providing a brief backdrop in sequence to the Church, the Internet and young people in the context of evangelisation. Next, the primary objective of the study is set out. Finally, the structure of the entire thesis is delineated.

1.1 The Church, the Internet and Young People: An Overview

The accumulated wisdom of the Catholic Church has evolved over a period of 2000 years. During this time, its continuity has depended on the handing down of faith from one generation to the next. Therefore, the faith development of young people has always been a priority in the mission of the Church as they constitute the link to the following generation. The message of Jesus Christ is at its core. His experience, emanating from His life on the Earth, His death on the cross followed by His resurrection, underpins the messages to be conveyed. The Church's ideas and doctrines grew and expanded as it encountered numerous cultures which enriched its teachings and existence over the years.

Taking into account the constantly changing environment in which it exists, the Church has to renew its own ministries. Regarding evangelisation, which is a core mission of the Church,

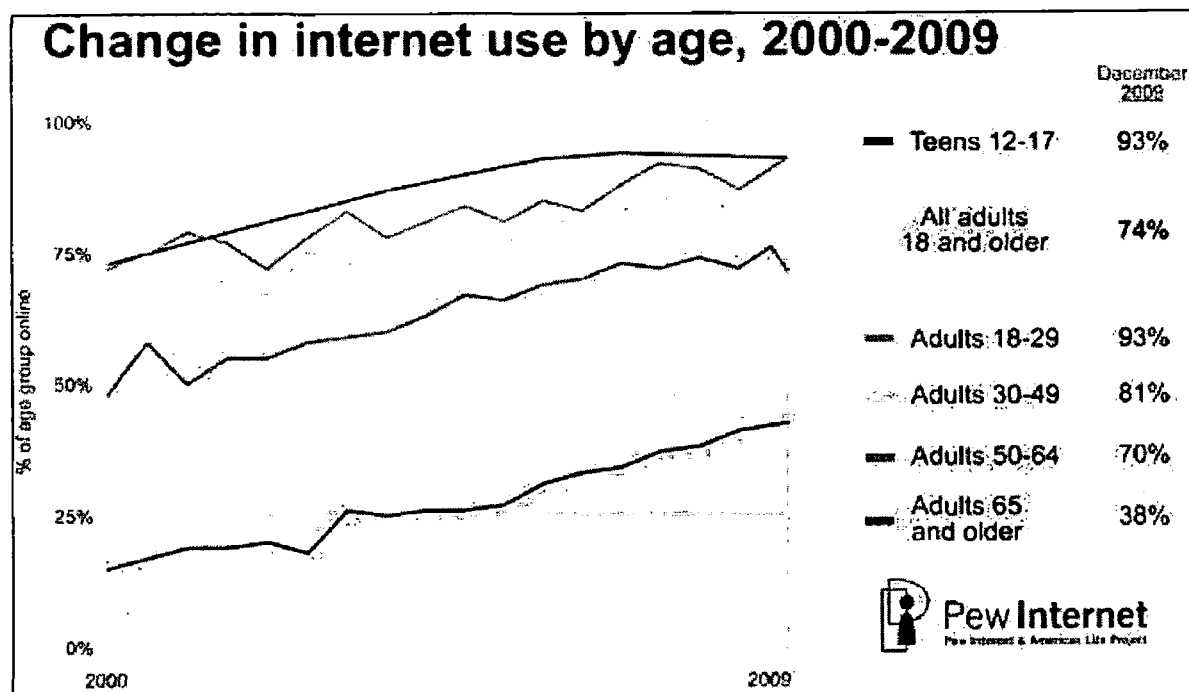
it has to read the signs of the time, as Vatican II (1965) invited it to do. In the current climate, part of the Church's response involves taking an active and positive interest in Information Technology which has such a dominant role in the contemporary world.

The introduction of the Internet has transformed society faster than any other modern invention and this revolution is sweeping across the globe at a tremendous pace. Primarily, the Internet and its surrounding communication technology appear to have accelerated the speed of the distribution of knowledge and revolutionised methods of learning worldwide. Young people adapt to this mode of learning with such a natural ease that they often leave older generations in awe. The acquisition and formatting of ideas that took perhaps generations to put in place now seems instantly accessible to them, being available at the tips of their fingers.

As Sherry Turkle (1996) explains, for young people, this form of learning is not new because they are surrounded by technology from their birth. For their parents, the change is so rapid that they find it difficult to catch up. In contrast, young people are born into a fast pace of life and therefore it becomes the norm for them. While older people may find some of the material on the Internet disturbing, young people perceive it as being attractive and exciting. This electronic wave has had a significant impact in society over the last three decades, inducing swift changes in many spheres of human existence. These changes have spawned a raft of new technology. 'E-mail' was one of the initial terms the Internet introduced into the technological lexicon. This was followed by e-learning, e-business, e-books, e-cash, e-commerce, e-journal, e-ticket, emoticons, e-dating etc. Facilities such as Facebook, Bebo, YouTube, and Twitter are now common currency. The rise in Internet use by age (Lenhart et al., 2010) is captured in Fig 1.1 below. It shows that usage is highest in the 12-29 year age

group, reaching 93% in the US by 2009. This endorses the popularity of the medium for the young generation in the US.

Fig 1.1 The Rise in Internet Use by Age



Source: Lenhart et al. (2010)

Elliot (2010) reports that the users of Facebook, a favourite of the younger generation, grew from 1 million in 2004 to 500 million by 2010. This phenomenal growth is just one endorsement of the popularity of the Internet among young people.

1.2 Net Driven Church?

Regarding the impact of the Internet on the spiritual realm, a general observation suggests that the Catholic Church considers the paradigm as an innovative prospect. It is appropriate therefore that the Church should consider the possibility of the Internet in the spiritual sphere (Foley, 2002a). However it does not seem to have emulated the pace of the 'dotcom' companies in adapting to this new medium. The Church does not appear to have taken

advantage of the openings which other institutions and individuals have grasped and used to great affect. It seems unable to identify the opportunities which other institutions and individuals have recognised in this technology. This suggests that the Church may be somewhat removed from this technologically dominated world and hesitant to interact with it.

Although Jesus ordered the disciples to take nothing except a staff for their journey, when He sent out the twelve in pairs 2000 years ago (Mk 6: 7-9), it is now considered necessary to equip ministers with the appropriate modern tools in their core mission of evangelisation (Foley, 2002a). It is argued that the Internet is a powerful medium which can be utilised effectively by the Catholic Church, especially for the faith development of young people. The following sections support the rationale of this stance.

1.3 Youth: Excitement of Today and Promise of Tomorrow

Taking a long-term view, it is evident that the destiny of mankind lies in its young people. Therefore if the Church does not seek them out, it is putting its own future at risk. While many traditional forms of worship do not seem to be attractive to young people today, they still yearn for a spiritual fulfilment, having an inner yearning for God. Beaudoin (1998) argues that signs of their unfulfilled spiritual hunger can always be identified in their behaviour. According to Careaga (2001), from an early age they have an innate curiosity which compels them to pick and choose and be in control, rather than being told what to do. As the Internet, with its vast and varied forms of information, caters well for this curiosity in young people, it is widely used by them on a regular basis. It is considered that the Church, by providing its presence effectively on the Internet, can respond to the yearning of young people for God.

1.4 The Internet: Powered by Youth

The Internet, with its global reach, is the medium of the future. It receives life from the human presence at each node; *vice versa*, going online gives life to the head, heart and hands. In particular, it is consonant with the thinking of young minds. The philosophy of the medium, its values, culture, etiquette, language (smilies, avatars, lingos etc.) etc are easily absorbed by young minds. Thus the Internet seems to be close to their cognitive patterns. Therefore it is submitted that an in-depth understanding of the organisation and *modus operandi* of the Internet can provide the Church with promising opportunities for evangelisation.

This involves the Church taking a retrospective look at its own ministries. Evangelisation being the term encompassing the ministries of the Church, a question arises, regarding which form of evangelisation is to be initiated by the Church online? Any apprehension to enter into this medium, if it exists, needs to be set aside. It is submitted that reading the signs of the time, as Vatican II invited the Church to do, involves taking an active and positive interest in Information and Communication Technology.

In conclusion it can be said that adapting to the modalities of the Internet calls for considerable research and reflection. Creative and imaginative design will be required from the Church leadership in order to implement new ways of being the Church. This study provides hands-on experience in relation to the use of the Internet by the Church to further youth evangelisation. It is hoped that the insights gleaned from it will make a modest contribution to the development of the Church's youth ministries in the technological era of the 21st century and beyond.

1.5 Primary Objective of the Study

The primary objective of the research is to establish the potential role of the Internet as an instrument in the evangelisation of young people. More specific objectives are given in chapter 5.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

This opening chapter provides an introduction to the research. Then the thesis is divided into two main parts: Part I - Theoretical Concerns and Part II - the fieldwork. A review of the relevant literature is presented in Part I (chapters 2, 3 and 4). Chapter 2 explores evangelisation, clarifying various aspects of the concept and identifying its relevance in the contemporary world. In addition, the contributions of Popes Paul VI and John Paul II to the process of evangelisation, particularly in relation to young people, are described. Communication is considered in chapter 3 which also includes a review of the Internet. Having identified web 2.0 as a space with potential for the evangelisation of young people, the discussion in chapter 4 provides an in-depth review of youth.

Part II deals with the fieldwork in the following three chapters (5, 6 and 7), which was centred on designing and activating an online site – *www.cybersouls.ie* – for the faith development of young people. In chapter 5 the research questions are reviewed and objectives are clarified. Also, the piloting and implementation of this project are described. The opinion of the participants regarding this online initiative are presented in the questionnaire findings in chapter 6 together with details of the selection of 13 cases for more in-depth analysis. Then the qualitative analysis of the interactions of these selected cases, using NVivo, follows in chapter 7.

The concluding chapter (chapter. 8) draws together the main strands of the study. A brief review of the project is provided, followed by a synthesis of the main findings addressing the research questions in relation to the three main areas of the research. In addition, suggestions for expanding this exploratory study are identified together with areas for future research.

“The Church is born of the evangelising activity of Jesus and the Twelve. She is the normal, desired, most immediate and most visible fruit of this activity: “Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations” (Mt 28:19)” (Paul VI, 1975b, para. 15). As evangelisation is at the core of this study, it is analysed in detail in the next chapter.

PART - I
THEORETICAL CONCERNS

CHAPTER 2

EVANGELISATION:

A FUNDAMENTAL MISSION OF THE CHURCH TODAY

This chapter explores various aspects of the theme of evangelisation. The opening section presents the background and context of the study. This is followed by an account of various aspects of evangelisation. Finally, the contributions of Paul VI and John Paul II, both pioneers of modern evangelisation, are considered.

2.1 Context and Main Topics

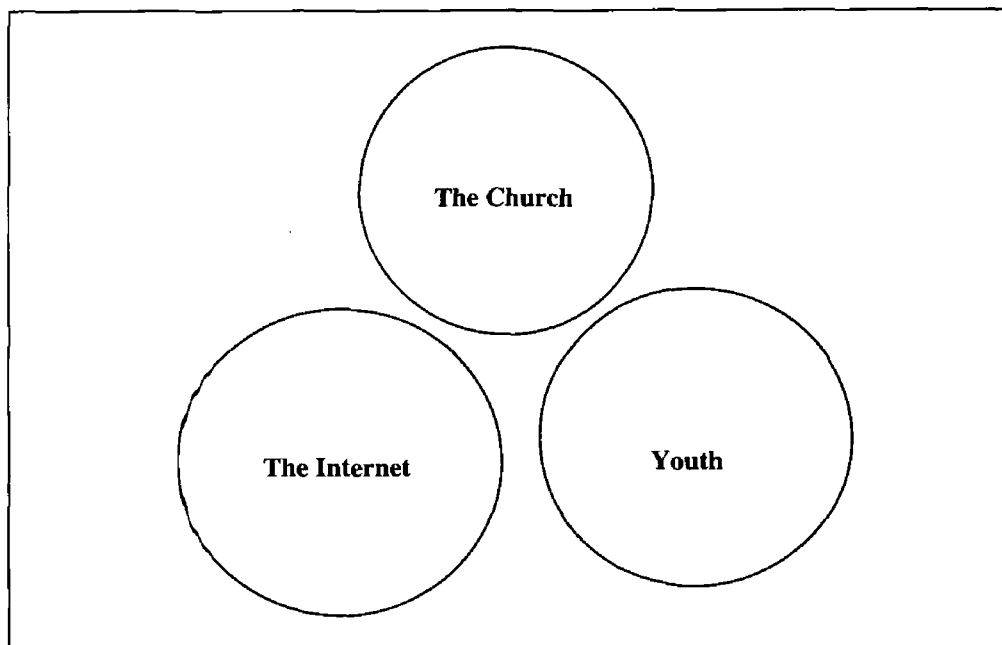
Context: And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new' (Rev 21:5). The Greek philosopher Heraclitus observed that "no man ever steps in the same river twice, for it is not the same river and he is not the same man" (cited in Graham, 2002, Section 3). He held that an explanation of change was fundamental to any theory of nature. More recently, Vatican II testified that "Today, the human race is involved in a new stage of history. Profound and rapid changes are spreading by degrees around the whole world which has repercussions on man's religious life as well" (Vatican II, (1965f, para. 4). In the contemporary world, the fast pace of change is affecting both the Church, as well as the wider world. Pope Paul VI (1964) captured this reality in the document *Ecclesiam Suam* observing that this all pervading change also impacts on the Church.

Not so long ago, churches used to be packed with worshippers. All the different age cohorts in the human spectrum thronged into the temples of eternal wisdom. This was true in the case

of the Catholic Church as well. However, things have changed considerably in recent years. Regarding the different age groups, there seems to be a black hole in the Church through which young people disappear, particularly those between the ages of 15-35 (Briggs, 2008). This study sets out to address this challenge by exploring the opportunities afforded particularly by the Internet for the development of youth evangelisation.

Three spheres are involved in this study: the sphere of the Church, youth culture and the space of the Internet. This is depicted graphically in Fig 2.1 below. The possibility of the convergence of these three spheres is a fundamental issue in this thesis. In this chapter, they are looked at from the point of view of the Church.

Fig 2.1 The Three Spheres of the Study



Referring to the Internet, Gibson (1984) observes:

Cyberspace, A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts. . . . A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every

computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. (p. 104)

The spreading of the word of God reached new dimensions in the last four decades due to the fast growth of media technology, whereas evangelisation achieved a new spirit, with unprecedented youth participation. A detailed study of evangelisation, which is a fundamental activity of the Church, is provided in the literature review below. The Church's stance regarding the internet and young people are explored later in the chapter imbibing from the life and teachings of Popes Paul VI and John Paul II.

2.2 Evangelisation: The Universal Mission of the Church

Evangelisation is the fundamental driving force in this research. At this theory development stage of the study, the essence of evangelisation is explored first of all, considering its ontological aspects.

Evangelisation: Ontological Aspects

The etymology, definition and other related concepts regarding evangelisation are discussed below.

Evangelisation

Literally the word 'evangelisation' means 'bringing good news' (Dorr, 2000, p. 76). Bosch (1991) analyses the Greek words '*evangelion* (gospel), *evangelizesthai/ evangelizein* (preach the gospel) which contributed two words to the English language with similar meanings - 'evangelism' and 'evangelisation'. Dorr (2000) says that, of the two words, 'evangelism' has a much longer history in English. It is favoured by the evangelical wing of Protestantism,

putting a great deal of emphasis on getting people to listen to and read the Bible. Thus 'evangelism' was more associated with the great preaching crusades of evangelists such as Billy Graham.

Bosch (1991) states that 'evangelisation' came to be widely used by 1975 in the Catholic Church, with the publication of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN), when it supplanted the word 'mission'. He says that this document shuns the word 'mission' and uses 'evangelisation' and its cognates more than 214 times. "Evangelisation is understood here as an umbrella concept embracing the whole activity of the Church sent into the world: "One single term - evangelisation - defines Christ's office and mandate" (Bosch, 1991, p. 411). He continues by saying that the activities of the Church such as proclamation, translation, dialogue, service and presence and goals such as human development, liberation, justice and peace are integral parts of the ministry of evangelisation. In his apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, John Paul II (1988) stated that "The entire mission of the Church, then, is concentrated and manifested in evangelisation" (para. 33). His predecessor, Pope Paul VI, in EN, observed that "Evangelising is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity" (Paul VI, 1975b, para. 14). He defined the mission and identity of the Church more comprehensively and methodically than in the past: "She exists in order to evangelise, that is to say in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace" (para. 14). Next the term 'mission', which was used instead of 'evangelisation' until almost thirty years ago (Dorr, 2000), is analysed.

Mission

'Mission' is derived from the Latin word *missio* as an expression employed in the doctrine of the Trinity to denote the sending of the Son by the Father (Vatican II, 1964a) and of the Holy

Spirit by the Father and the Son (Bosch, 1991). (The theological discourse of the east and west regarding the *filioque* is not discussed here as it is not considered appropriate.) The term 'mission' was first used by Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) (*365 Saints*, 1995), the founder of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) in the sense of 'sending' ecclesiastical agents to distant colonies (Bosch, 1991). Thus the word 'mission' is also historically linked with the colonial era and with the idea of magisterial commissioning. The term presupposed an established church in Europe which dispatched delegates to convert overseas peoples and was, as such, an attendant phenomenon of European expansion. Mission encompassed activities by which the Western ecclesiastical system was extended to the rest of the world (Bosch, 1991).

This initial meaning of 'mission' as working in foreign non Christian areas and its association with colonialism were considered by theologians and consequently Vatican II broadened the meaning of 'mission' to cover the whole work of the Church (Dorr, 2000). It is similar to the term 'evangelisation'. As Bosch (1991) explains it:

By the sixth decade of this century, however, it was generally accepted in all confessional families that mission belongs to the essence of the church. Mission was no longer merely an activity of the Church, but an expression of the very being of the church. (p. 493)

Soon the scriptural word 'evangelisation', which was more fresh without any associated image of working in foreign non-Christian areas, began to be used to describe the fundamental work of the Church in any situation. Furthermore, in the words of Dorr (2000), the text from Luke's Gospel 4:18-21, which links the 'good news' with the liberation of captives, meant that the word 'evangelisation' could be used to convey a sense of the comprehensiveness and integral quality of Christianity, i.e., it is not just a message about

'spiritual' affairs or about the next life, but also involves a commitment to transform this present world (Dorr, 2000).

The origin and purpose of mission are clearly expressed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC, 1994):

The Lord's missionary mandate is ultimately grounded in the eternal love of the Most Holy Trinity: 'The Church on Earth is by her nature missionary, since according to the plan of the Father, she has as her origin the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit.' The ultimate purpose of mission is none other than to make men share in the communion between the Father and the Son in the Spirit of love.

(para. 850)

The discussion of the terms 'evangelisation' and 'mission' endorses Bosch's (1991) observation that "Mission, evangelisation and witness are nowadays often used by Catholics as synonymous" (p. 411). The same writer notes that, for the previous fifteen centuries of the missionary history of the Church, other terms were used in place of mission such as: propagation of the faith, preaching of the gospel, apostolic proclamation, promulgation of the gospel, augmenting the faith, expanding the Church, planting the church, illuminating the nations etc. (Bosch, 1991).

Evangelisation is the fundamental duty of the Church. Inherited from Jesus Christ, the first evangeliser, it stands as its primary aim. Here the evolution of the term *evangelisation* and similar terms were analysed, capturing a historical perspective on evangelisation. Some important aspects of evangelisation are next for discussion.

Evangelisation as fundamental mission of the Church

"I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God ...; for I was sent for this purpose." (Lk 4: 43). A mission is a duty entrusted to a person to achieve a particular task. According to Dorr (2000), the mission of the Catholic Church is evangelisation itself. He says that 'bringing good news' is the meaning of evangelisation, which is repeated 24 times in the synoptic gospels (Dorr, 2000, p. 76). This expression of 'good news' is summed up in the classical text from Luke's Gospel:

The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed to go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.' . . . Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing'. (Lk 4: 18-21)

Dorr (2000) highlights three aspects of this text. First there is the 'Good News' of liberation for people who are poor, oppressed or disadvantaged. Jesus began his mission preaching liberation for *people*. Therefore his mission was anthropological. Secondly, this liberation being brought by Jesus is something new. It is Christo-centric. Thirdly, it takes place through the power of the Holy Spirit, i.e., it is pneumatic - spirit centred. All these aspects reflect the personal love of God for his people, through the person of Jesus Christ. It continues through the Holy Spirit, even after the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is understood that evangelisation, or 'bringing of good news', is achieved through the friendship of God for human beings by the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Therefore, evangelisation, as lived by Jesus Christ, is anthropological, Christo-centric and pneumatic.

Jesus the First Evangeliser

The apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN) (Paul VI, 1975b) on Evangelisation in the Modern World is considered to be the 'Roman Catholic Magna Carta of the mission of the Church' (Luzbetak, 1988, p.111). It says that "Jesus himself, the Good News of God, was the very first and great evangeliser; he was so through and through: to perfection and to the point of sacrifice of his earthly life" (Paul VI, 1975b, para. 7). *Evangelii Nuntiandi* comprehends the meaning, the content and the modes of evangelisation conceived and put into practice by Jesus in the following themes: Proclamation of the Kingdom of God; Proclamation of liberating salvation; Total interior conversion which the Gospel calls *metanoia*; Tireless preaching of the Word of God with authority; Proclamation through evangelical signs and Proclamation for an evangelised and evangelising community (para. 7-13). In order to continue his ministry of Proclamation of the Kingdom of God, liberating salvation and *metanoia*, in the Acts of the Apostles we see Jesus commissioning his disciples: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit will come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). In Acts 2 we read about the preaching of the Apostles with evangelical signs.

The incarnation of Jesus Christ and his preaching of liberation to the people provided the initial foundation for evangelisation in this world. This human centred mission of God was fulfilled in Christ and it became spirit centred or pneumatic in the first Christian communities.

In the debate which follows about evangelisation in the Catholic Church, teachings and traditions about 'mission' and other terms used previously with a similar meaning to

'evangelisation', are used as appropriate. A coherent concept of 'evangelisation', as understood by the Catholic Church, now follows.

Evangelisation has a Trinitarian origin

The constitution *Dei Verbum* of the Vatican II (1965d) describes Revelation as that act by which God manifests himself personally to man (para. 3). This personal love and the resulting communication of God with humanity are beautifully presented in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC, 1994):

God who 'dwells in unapproachable light' wants to communicate his own divine life to the men he freely created, in order to adopt them as his sons in his only begotten Son. By revealing himself God wishes to make them capable of responding to him and of knowing him and of loving him far beyond their own natural capacity. (para. 52)

This intimate communication between God and human beings, culminating in the person of Jesus Christ, is reiterated in the CCC by quoting St. Irenaeus of Lyons, "The Word of God dwelt in man and became the Son of man in order to accustom man to perceive God and to accustom God to dwell in man, according to the Father's pleasure" (CCC, para. 53). Thus by divine ordination this communication is intended to be mutual and interactive because it is a process of God and man becoming accustomed to one another. *The General Directory for Catechesis*, (GDC, 1998) says that 'God, in his greatness, uses a pedagogy to reveal himself to the human person; he uses human events and words to communicate his plan' (para. 38). This approach to communicate God's Good News is the pedagogy which God employed to communicate with humans.

Evangelisation is the process of transmitting Revelation to the world. It is accomplished through words and deeds. The GDC (1998) says that it is at once both testimony and proclamation, word and sacrament, teaching and task. Evangelisation transmits the words and deeds of Revelation; it is obliged to proclaim and narrate them and at the same time to make clear the profound mysteries they contain (para. 39). "The Church, the universal sacrament of salvation" (Vatican II, 1964a, para. 48; Vatican II, 1965a, para. 1), born of the Holy Spirit, transmits Revelation through evangelisation; she announces the Good News of the salvific plan of the father and, in the sacraments, communicates his Divine Gifts (GDC, 1998, para. 45). According to *Gaudium et Spes* (Vatican II, 1965f), this is achieved by the witnessing of the Church serving as a leaven and as a kind of soul for human society as it is to be renewed in Christ and transformed into God's family (para. 40). As stated in *Lumen Gentium* (Vatican II, 1964a): "By an utterly free and mysterious decree of His own wisdom and goodness, the eternal Father created the whole world. His plan was to dignify persons with a participation in His own divine life" (para. 2). By participating in the communication of the Internet, the Church also has to act as a leaven, transforming cultures and, consequently, people belonging to these cultures, as children of God. The pedagogy that the Church adopts in this participation has to make use of the language of the cultures it encounters. These include the culture of youth and the seemingly ephemeral but boundless culture of the Internet.

Purpose of Evangelisation

Evangelii Nuntiandi (EN, Paul VI, 1975b) says that evangelisation is bringing the Good News to all strata of humanity and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new, according to the promise of the Father in the Revelations: "Now I am making the whole of creation new" (Rev 21:5). Evangelising the cyberspace, which is a new stratum of human existence, is considered here. The Church makes use of the Internet in

various ways. However, the Internet seems to be a new stratum of human existence where the Good News has not yet been incarnated in a profound way. "The purpose of evangelisation is the interior conversion of the personal and collective conscience of people, the activities in which they engage and the lives and *milieux* which are theirs" (Paul VI, 1975b, para. 18). It is a vital and in-depth transformation, reaching to the very roots of culture, taking the person as the starting point and coming back to the relationships of people among themselves and with God (para. 20). This requires knowing the particular culture which is being evangelised. Evangelisation, by its divine origin as well as its divine purpose, is closely related to culture:

With the help of the Holy Spirit, it is the task of the entire People of God . . . to hear, distinguish and interpret the many voices of our age, and to judge them in the light of the divine word. (Vatican II, 1965f, para. 44)

Therefore it is vital for the Church to understand the Internet and the culture of youth which are explored in Chapters 3 and 4. Various elements of the process of evangelisation are next for consideration.

Essential Elements of Evangelisation

In his apostolic exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*, Pope John Paul II (1979) explained that evangelisation is a rich, complex and dynamic process, made up of elements or moments that are essential and different from each other. This reiterates what Pope Paul VI (1975b) wrote in EN, following Vatican II. The corresponding evangelical foundations of these aspects are listed in the General Catechetical Directory (GDC, 1998): "proclaim" (Mk 16:15), "make disciples and teach" (Mt 28: 19-20), "be my witness" (Acts 1:8), "baptize" (Mt 28:19), "Do this in memory of me" (Lk 22:19), "love one another" (Jn 15:12).

More concretely, Initial Proclamation, Christian Initiation, Catechesis, Religious Education, New Evangelisation and Theological Reflection are identified as the essential moments of evangelisation in the of the National Directory for Catechesis of Ireland (Irish Episcopal Conference, 2010, p. 51-62). All of these elements can be categorised in two modes: (a) sacramental (b) non-sacramental. For example, initial proclamation can happen anywhere during a Church homily to a congregation or in a one-to-one conversation. Reading the Holy Bible and any written article can also provide moments of initial proclamation. Even if Christian initiation into the Church community is accomplished through the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist, this process is not completely sacramental in the case of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). The preparation for the sacraments need not necessarily be in a community. Thus some dimensions of the moments of evangelisation can be performed in spaces other than actual corporeal human communities. In other words, the word of God can be encountered by the human soul in circumstances other than sacramental presence. Weigel (2005) cites an instance from the life of John Paul II who testified that “the overcrowded Paris Metro was a “superb” place for contemplation” (p. 83). Therefore, cyberspace, where people congregate electronically, may be a place of encounter of the Word of God. Consequently, it can create a new space of actualising these moments of evangelisation. (The characteristics of cyberspace which can substantially help the evangelisation of young people are discussed later in chapter 3 on Internet Communication.)

These elements of evangelisation are intended for those who choose the Gospel for the first time and those who need to complete or modify their initiation. The Christian faithful of mature faith in the bosom of the Christian community are also the beneficiaries of this process (Paul VI, 1975b, para. 49-57). The GDC stresses the importance of repeating these moments, if necessary, as they give evangelical nourishment in proportion to the spiritual

growth of each person or of the entire community (GDC, 1998, para. 49). These moments are complementary and mutually enriching, according to EN (Paul VI, 1975b, para. 24). If the Church is targeting young people on the Internet, the ways of initiating dialogue with those young people to deepen their journey of faith need to be identified. This shows that there are sub-categories within the broad umbrella of young people which need to be identified and dealt with according to their religiosity and religious adherence. These sub-categories are examined in the next section.

Evangelisation in the Church

This section explores aspects of evangelisation in the Church community. Then existing modes of evangelisation are considered. Proclamation of the Gospel always begins with the Christian community and invites the people to conversion and the following of Christ. This community welcomes those who wish to know the Lord better and permeate themselves with a new life. Those who are initiated into faith and those deepening their faith are accompanied by the community with maternal solicitude, helping them participate in her own experience of faith and the Church incorporates them to herself (GDC, 1998, para. 254).

The communion and communities within family, the baptismal catechumenate of adults, the parish, Catholic schools, associations, movements and groups of faithful and basic ecclesial communities are some of the fundamental loci of evangelisation which the GDC (1998) addresses directly (Renewing the Vision, 1997) . Investigating whether there can be an online counterpart of these real life communities is a major research question.

Also, traditionally, communities were the loci of evangelisation of young people. The GDC (1998) recognises the family as such a community and as the primary locus of evangelisation

of its young members, and parents as the primary educators. The family is defined as a domestic Church where various aspects of evangelisation or functions of the life of the Church may be reflected. Christian education takes place here more by witnessing than teaching. It is more ongoing and daily, than structured formally. The question arises, can the faith formation of young people be initiated and enhanced within online communities? Of the communities listed earlier, attention is given here to evangelisation in the last two, i.e., associations, movements and groups of the faithful, as well as basic ecclesial communities. Finally, new movements in the Church which act as agents of evangelisation today are discussed briefly. The essential elements of evangelisation in these non-traditional communities are reviewed below.

Basic Ecclesial Communities

It would be beneficial for the Church to consider new movements such as basic ecclesial communities which are included as part of its network for evangelisation. Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) are small groups of Catholics who meet regularly for services of prayer, worship and communal reflection on both their religious and secular lives (Sweetland, 2004, p. 68). They spring from the need to live the Church's life more intensely. EN states that the big cities lend themselves to life in the mass and to anonymity, consequently making people unable to fulfil the desire and quest for a more human dimension (Paul VI, 1975b, para. 58). New movements and basic ecclesial communities are a response to this feeling of alienation. These are the new forms of being the Church. According to the General Directory for Catechesis (1998), BECs are a sign of the Church's vitality. The GDC explains that "the disciples of Christ gather together in them so as to hear the word of God, to develop fraternal bonds, to celebrate the Christian mysteries in their lives and to assume responsibility for transforming society" (GDC, 1998, para. 263). In this way BECs are new attempts at

evangelisation 'under the movement of the Holy Spirit' within the communion of the Church (John Paul II, 1988, para. 31).

The human values which emerge in the BECs are friendship, personal recognition, a spirit of co-responsibility, creativity, vocational response together with concern for the problems of the world and the Church. The GDC asserts that an enriched community experience can result from BECs which are true expressions of communion and a means of forming a more profound communion. It is considered that the characteristics of these communities may be adapted to the online communities proposed in this research. The following characteristics of BECs are identified in the GDC as being conducive to the process of evangelisation:

- the fraternal climate, in which it lives, is an environment suitable for integral catechetical activity, providing that the proper nature and character of catechesis is respected;
- catechesis must strive to deepen community life so as to ensure a basis for the Christian life of the faithful, without which basic Christian communities lack stability;
- the small community is always a suitable place to receive those who have concluded a catechetical journey (GDC, 1998, para. 264).

Catechesi Tradendae considered the content of catechesis to be the same as the content of evangelisation (John Paul II, 1979, para. 26). Fuellenbach (2002) argues that BECs address two needs of the Church in the context of the globalisation process. These are the need for inculturation of faith and the need to create a community in which justice and compassion are the basic principles of action. In this new ecclesial climate of BECs, he argues that there are two ecclesiologies or images of the Church involved. One is the hierarchical model and the other is the communion model. The hierarchical model promises continuity while the

communion model, with the origin of BECs, appeals particularly to new experiences. The old model is viewed by Fuellenbach as being organised around the axis of clergy-sacraments with the new model being organised around the axis of gospel-laity. With a blend of these two models, the participative hierarchical organisation of the Church can effectively take up the task of evangelisation with unity and singleness of heart, like one body. BECs are examples of contrast societies, stemming from the need for the Church to be sustained in adverse situations. Souls coming together in cyberspace to share the Good News can constitute another new way of evangelisation.

The GDC (1998) maintains that participation and partnership can increase the responsibility of an individual in living the very existence of the Church: “The Church exists in order to evangelize” (Paul VI, 1975b, para. 14). Three major modes through which every member of the Church can carry out evangelisation are identified and set out below.

Modes of Evangelisation

According to Westerhoff (1981), evangelisation refers to encounters through deeds and words which aid conversions or human transformations in the realms of thought, feeling and behaviour (p. 303). The whole process of evangelisation is accomplished, through three modes of encounter - personal, communitarian and technical. There are various specific instances of encounters where evangelisation takes place and these can be categorised under these three modes.

Personal Mode: EN argues that personal contact is indispensable for evangelisation. Jesus’ personal encounter with Nicodemus, Zacchaeus, the Samaritan woman and Simon the Pharisee, together with the personal encounters of the apostles, are given as examples of this

mode in EN. Person-to person transmission of the experience of the Gospel is identified as a valid, important and even primary mode of evangelisation (Paul VI, 1975b, para. 46). Cases of personal encounter are numerous. They range in various degrees from the handing on of faith in families by parents, life witnesses of Christian values in society, exhortation, celebration of the sacraments, to the catechesis happening in Sunday schools or in new communities of catechumens. An encounter at a one-to-one level is the main characteristic of this mode which also includes friendship, respect for the other individual, witnessing and personal transformation.

Community Mode: This operates more on a one-to-many basis. Jesus proclaiming the good news to the crowds (Mt 4: 25; Mk 8: 2) and the apostles preaching to the multitudes on the day of the Pentecost are examples of this mode of encounter. In modern times, retreats, youth groups, Eucharistic celebrations and Gospel choirs are examples of this togetherness for evangelisation. At a global level, World Youth Day stands out as an instance where these encounters happen at both vertical and horizontal levels. At a vertical level, the love of Jesus and the invitation of the Pope influence young people to come together. At a horizontal level, fellowship, personal recognition and a spirit of co-responsibility mutually inspire them to come together. The role of the media is emerging as being important in this encounter. Music, drama and other literary forms may be used as catalysts in this mode of evangelisation (Wyckoff and Richter, 1982).

Technological/professional Mode: A third mode of evangelisation, which can be considered comparatively distant, relates to the use of the media. EN (Paul VI, 1975b) says that these times are characterised by the mass media as a means of social communication, which is elementary for both the initial proclamation of the Good News and further deepening of faith.

Written communication, printed communication and electronic communication are the modes included here where the 'presence' of a person is comparatively virtual. This technical mode can incorporate elements of the two other modes described above. This arises because, on the Internet, a personal presence can be simulated, using electronic symbols. While this presence is not corporeal, people still consider online presence to be very intimate and personal. (Details of this online presence are dealt with in chapter 3 on Internet Communication.)

EN says that the means of social communications indefinitely increase the area in which the Word of God can be heard. The media is recognised as a powerful means of proclaiming "from the housetops" (Mt 10: 27). The challenge is ever present or ever increasing, according to the newness of the media: through them the evangelical message should reach vast numbers of people but with the capacity of piercing the conscience of each individual (Paul VI, 1975b, para. 45). This topic, being related more to the technicalities of communication, is probed more deeply in the next chapter. "You too, dear young people, are the receivers and the trustees of this heritage" (John Paul II, 1999b). The relationship of the Church with youth is considered in the context of evangelisation and this new medium of the Internet, in the next section, by reviewing relevant experiences and teachings of two recent Popes, Paul VI and John Paul II.

2.3 Pioneers of Modern Evangelisation: Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II

Pope Paul VI gave a new momentum in the life of the Church by introducing the term evangelisation and Pope John Paul II developed it further in his teachings and practices. Various events in the life of these Popes have been identified as instances of evangelisation in modern times. First of all their teachings concerning the media and youth are considered. The

aim is to identify the development of concepts related to the media and youth during these two papacies in the context of evangelisation.

Pope Paul VI

Various teachings and instances from the life of Pope Paul VI are directly relevant to this research. Practical dimensions of Pope Paul VI's relationship with youth and the media are considered below in the light of teachings of the Church during his tenure of office.

Enkindle the light of Youth with the Light of Christ

The message of Pope Paul VI to Youth in Vatican II recognised its essential goodness and the necessity to enkindle it with the light of Christ. He spoke as if the whole council reformation was intended for the youth of the world: "It is for you, youth, especially for you that the Church now comes through her council to enkindle your light, the light which illuminates the future, your future" (Vatican II, 1965g). This Pope's commitment to youth can be traced back to his priestly life as a spiritual advisor to the students of the University of Rome in 1931 (Clancy, 1963). Later, as chaplain of the Federation of Italian Catholic Students (FUCI), he was able to translate the message of the Church in a language intelligible to young people, ensuring that they were open to the intellectual and spiritual discourse of the Church (Hebblethwaite, 1993).

Vatican II appealed to youth to look upon the Church and find the face of Christ, the genuine, humble and wise hero, the prophet of truth and love and the companion and friend of youth (Vatican II, 1965g). This appeal addresses the genuine need of young people for a model and a hero to follow, and the deep longing of youth for friendship.

The Desire of the Church's to Journey with Youth

Paul VI (1975a) also makes a direct address to young people in the Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete in Domino* on Christian Joy. In the sixth section entitled 'Joy and Hope in the Hearts of the Young' the Church adopts an optimistic approach in trying to understand youth. Although youth is seen as a short-lived period for individuals, it is a permanently recurring period, over generations, being replicated continuously over time. The document identifies 'a correspondence between the soaring impulse of a young person, being young, and the dynamism of the Holy Spirit' (Paul VI, 1975a, para. VI).

The same document claims that there is great confusion among many young people arising from materialism trying to present itself as the gateway to the future. This may be true also in relation to contemporary youth. The Church is encouraged to initiate spaces of encounter "between the human being which, for a few decisive years, has youth at his command, and the Church in her permanent spiritual youthfulness" (Paul VI, 1975a, para. VI).

This Pope's optimism for youth also rests on the older generation: "Youth will not fail the Church if within the Church there are enough older people able to understand it, to love it, to guide it and to open up to it a future, by passing on to it with complete fidelity the Truth which endures" (Paul VI, 1975a, para. VI). This document maintains that 'this generation is waiting for something else', the joy of divine truth. The Church believes that it has the responsibility to make use of the opportunities available through the media of communication to share this joy (Paul VI, 1970). (A more detailed analysis of youth and youth initiatives taken by the Church follows in the next chapter.)

Instruments of Social Communications and Young People

While various pronouncements on the media were made by some of Pope Paul VI's predecessors, the Catholic Church's interest in communication rose to a new level during Vatican II when the council issued a separate decree, *Inter Mirifica* (Vatican II, 1963). This interest of the Church was progressed further in the detailed analysis of the process of communication in *Communio et Progressio* (1971). These two documents begin by identifying the media as 'means of social communications'. In contrast to earlier times, in *Communio et Progressio*, communication was seen as an instrument of evangelisation:

Christ commanded the Apostles and their successors to "teach all nations" to be "the light of the world" and to announce the Good News in all places at all times.

It is now necessary that the same message be carried by the means of social communication that are available today. (1971, para. 126)

The Pope's experience and the Church's faith in the possibilities of the 'marvellous technical inventions' (Vatican II, 1963, para. 1) are obvious also in this document:

The modern media offer new ways of confronting people with the message of the Gospel, of allowing Christians even when they are far away to share in sacred rites, worship and ecclesiastical functions. In this way they can bind the Christian community closer together and invite everyone to participate in the intimate life of the Church. (*Communio et Progresio* 1971, para. 128)

The Pope identified Christ as the perfect communicator and incarnation as the perfect form of communication (*Communio et Progresio*, 1971, para. 11).

The process of communication and its nuances are discussed in detail in the next chapter (3). The instruments of Social Communication seem to have an important role to play in the process of evangelisation, especially in relation to youth. The institution of World Communications Day (WCD) by Pope Paul VI in 1967 underlines his lifelong trust in modern technologies and the media of communication. The importance of the evangelisation of young people, which was highlighted repeatedly by this Pope in various WCD speeches, is equally significant. During eight of the eleven consecutive years of WCD, from its start in 1967, he made direct mention of young people. In the 1967, 1969, 1970, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1976 and 1978 WCD messages, he used the words 'young people', 'youth' and 'new generations' (Drumm, 2006). This shows that the Church views the media as a significant influence on the development of young people a point worth noting in the context of the present study. Moreover, a better use of the media can bring significant change in the development of young people. "Young people who have received a solid moral and religious formation and who are inspired by a genuine ideal are therefore to be encouraged to engage in the different activities of social communication" (Paul VI, 1969). According to Pope Paul VI, the Church needs to use the media for evangelisation. He identified dialogue as the method to be adopted by the Church to foster this participation.

Dialogue as a Method of Evangelisation

Gaudium et Spes (Vatican II, 1965f) states that humanity, as well as the Church, by its very origin and foundation, is communitarian. At the same time, unity among members of the human community, as well as the Church, is a key factor for development and salvation. The communitarian character of humanity and its necessity for unity is made possible through interaction which involves an exchange of ideas. Therefore communication is fundamental to achieve interaction between the members of a community. This communitarian aspect of the

Church, which is also an inherent necessity for unity among humanity, as described in Vatican II, is actualised through dialogue among and between human beings and dialogue between them and God. According to *Gaudium et Spes*: “This communitarian character is developed and consummated in the work of Jesus Christ. For the very Word made flesh willed to share in the human fellowship” (Vatican II, 1965f, para. 32). Jesus Christ is the zenith of this communication, as discussed earlier, and incarnation is the perfect model of communication (*Communio et Progressio*, 1971, para. 11).

Consequently, “the very nature of the gifts which Christ has given the Church demands that they be extended to others and shared with others. This must be obvious from the words: ‘Go, therefore, teach you all nations’ (Mt 28: 19)” (Paul VI, 1964, para. 64). A sincere desire to share spiritual patrimony also motivates the Church to have dialogue with the world. Evangelisation motivates the Church to begin dialogue.

Pope Paul’s first encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam* (Paul VI, 1964), as its title indicates, informs the evangelist about the path the Church can take in the modern world. Here the path mentioned by the Pope is one of dialogue. If the main theme of *Ecclesiam Suam* is dialogue, it can be seen also as a recurring theme running through almost all the documents issued during the reign of Pope Paul VI. For example, the documents of Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 1965f), *Gravissimum Educationis* (Declaration on Christian Education, 1965b), *Dignitatis Humane* (Declaration on Religious Freedom, 1965e), *Nostra Aetate* (Declaration on The Relation of The Church to Non-Christian Religions, 1965c), *Ad Gentes* (Decree on The Mission Activity of The Church, 1965a), directly speak about dialogue. (e.g., *Gaudium et Spes*, para. 21, 23, 25, 28, 40, 43, 56,

68, 90, 92; *Gravissimum Educationis*, para. 8, 11; *Dignitatis Humane*, para. 3; *Nostra Aetate* para. 2,4; *Ad Gentes* para. 11, 16, 20, 34, 41)

Another important document dealing with dialogue in communication is *Communio et Progressio* (1971), which was discussed earlier. These documents deal with the concept of communication and dialogue as a method for reaching out to the world, as well as an indispensable means of strengthening the bond between her members (*Communio et Progressio*, 1971, para. 114, 122). (Further discussion on dialogue is included in chapter 3.)

Evangelisation and Evangelii Nuntiandi (EN)

“Our century is characterised by the mass media or means of social communication, and the first proclamation, catechesis or the further deepening of faith cannot do without these means” (Paul VI, 1975b, para. 45). As an encyclical from the Vatican which gave new dynamism and momentum to the fundamental duty of the Church, EN deserves a special mention with regard to media as well as young people:

Circumstances invite us to make special mention of the young. Their increasing number and growing presence in society and likewise the problems assailing them should awaken in every one the desire to offer them with zeal and intelligence the Gospel ideal as something to be known and lived.

(Paul VI, 1975b, para. 72)

Evangelii Nuntiandi was published by Pope Paul VI (1975b) on the tenth anniversary of the closing of the Vatican Council II. The objective of the last encyclical of Pope Paul VI, as described in EN itself, was to make the Church of the twentieth century ever better equipped to proclaim the Gospel. It urged the Church to revise methods of evangelisation by studying

how the Christian message can be brought to the modern generation. His previous experience in 1955 when, as Archbishop of Milan, he proclaimed the Good News to the modern world during the great mission of Milan, may have motivated him to formulate this document (Clancy, 1963, p. 102). Fidelity to both the message of the Good News and to modern men and women, to whom the message is to be transmitted, is the central axis of evangelisation (Paul VI, 1975b, para. 2-4).

According to EN the presentation of the Gospel is not optional but rather a duty incumbent on the Church by the command of the Lord Jesus (Paul VI, 1975b, para.5).

The document identifies ecclesial communion of churches and hierarchy as being responsible for evangelisation (Paul VI, 1975b, para. 60-71). Article 72 is about young people, as their growing presence in society and associated problems compels the Church to evangelise them. The necessity of serious preparation for evangelisation is endorsed (para. 73-74), while the role of the Holy Spirit as the primary agent of evangelisation is emphasised: "Techniques of evangelisation are good, but even the most advanced ones could not replace the gentle action of the Holy Spirit" (para. 75). Evangelisation was inaugurated at Pentecost, under the inspiration of the Spirit (para. 75). Article 76 speaks about the need for authenticity among those engaged in evangelisation. The necessity for reform and an invitation for a renewed fervour in the process of evangelisation are detailed in later Articles.

The foregoing discussion has touched on some of the themes in EN which are relevant to this study. However, there are a few important issues still to be considered in the context of online evangelisation of youth.

Quantitative and Qualitative Dimensions of Evangelisation

It is true that EN endorses the necessity of using the means of social communication for evangelisation: “The Church would feel guilty before the Lord if She did not utilise these powerful means that human skill is daily rendering more perfect. It is through them that She proclaims ‘from the housetops’” (Paul VI, 1975b, para. 45). As the area in which the word of God is spread increases horizontally, there should also be a vertical increase in the depth of the spreading, “piercing the conscience of each individual, of implanting itself in his heart as though he were the only person being addressed, with all his individual and personal qualities, and evoke an entirely personal adherence and commitment” (para. 45). Communicating the Good News calls for quantitative as well as qualitative courses of action. It cannot be claimed that Pope Paul VI had the Internet in mind when he mentioned the challenge of using various means of social communications, as it had not been developed for general use at that time. Even if it seems that a strong, sustained and continuous personal contact can be achieved online, concern about presenting the message of conversion with the vigour of ‘piercing the conscience’ would not be inappropriate. (This issue is discussed in more depth in chapter 3.)

In considering the qualitative aspect of evangelisation, another question arises regarding evangelisation and sacramental presence. According to Article 47: “Evangelisation thus exercises its full capacity when it achieves the most intimate relationship, or better still, a permanent and unbroken intercommunion, between the Word and the sacraments”. It continues by explaining that “the role of evangelisation is precisely to educate people in the faith in such a way as to lead each individual Christian to live the sacraments as true sacraments of faith”. The embodied sacramentality of evangelisation in contrast to the disembodied virtual relationship on the Internet invites serious consideration. These issues

are explored later in chapter 3. Also three questions posed by the Pope in Article 4 of EN seem to be valid in the case of online evangelisation:

In our day, what has happened to that hidden energy of the Good News, which is able to have a powerful effect on man's conscience?

To what extent and in what way is that evangelical force capable of really transforming the people of this century?

What methods should be followed in order that the power of the Gospel may have its effect? (Paul VI, 1975b, para. 4)

The Church's concern about evangelisation is not a decorative one, as EN comments in Article 20. It is not achieved by applying a thin veneer, but must be undertaken in a vital way, in depth and right to the very core. Christian culture should encounter, enter into dialogue with and evangelise other cultures, which is the deep vision of the Church. (A detailed analysis of youth culture from a post modern and contemporary perspective is presented in chapter 4 on youth.)

Hebblethwaite (1993) describes Pope Paul VI as the first modern Pope. This designation is appropriate to him, given his unprecedented approach in addressing the world, its modernity and related issues for the Church. His interest in the media of communication, the proclamation of Christian and human values against opposing cultural tides and his sincere concern about the integral development of young people, were three main interests of his life. This trio of interests, together with his teachings inform this research more than any other events in his eventful life. His method of dialogue opened new paths of evangelisation. During the last decade of the papacy of Paul VI, the Internet, an innovative way of communication, was evolving towards its present shape and revolutionising communications.

By the end of the same decade, Karol Wojtyła was elected Pope to continue the mission of Paul VI with whom he was associated during Vatican II.

John Paul II

In one of the longest papacies ever, Pope John Paul II led the Church into the new millennium with realism and confidence. Much of the writings of John Paul II are relevant to young people and the media. For example, his Apostolic Letter *The Rapid Development* states: “This is especially true for young people, who show a natural propensity towards technological innovations, and as such are in even greater need of education in the responsible and critical use of the media” (John Paul II, 2005, para. 11). A collaborative participation of youth in the management and administration of the media was suggested by the Pope in promoting dialogue to bring reciprocal knowledge, peace and solidarity in the world. Major themes identified in the teachings and life of Pope John Paul II are now considered.

Evangelisation of Youth

The pontificate of John Paul II tells the entire Church that the future of evangelisation is centred on young people. That is why he wrote in *The Threshold of Hope*: “The Church looks to the youth with particular hope for a new evangelisation” (John Paul II, 1994a, p. 118). This is because young people are the future of the Church, as well as of the world. As this Pope has identified the goodness of youth at a profound level, he invests his hope for the future of the Church in the treasure of youth. He exhorts the whole Church to be aware of this discovery: “The Church and its each member should strive for a discovery, a discovery of the fundamental importance of youth” (John Paul II, 1994a, p. 119). His own discovery of youth made him look at it from the following perspectives.

Youth as Treasure: The importance of youth, together with its social and psychological implications, in the theology and ministry in the Church, was highlighted in the apostolic letter of Pope John Paul II on the occasion of International Youth Year in 1985. In this letter the Pope describes Youth as a special treasure in discovering the human “I” with its unrepeatable and concrete properties and capacities inscribed with the whole plan of future life (John Paul II, 1985b, para. 7-9).

Youth as Growth: In the same letter, *Dilecti Amici*, the Pope describes the process of growth and its potential, recalling the youthful years of Jesus of Nazareth (John Paul II, 1985b, para. 7-9). He views this as the growth of all the energies through which normal human individuality is built. It is at an upward stage, unlike the downward stage of the growth of adults whose youth is already behind them. He affirms that contact with the visible world and nature is a necessary factor for this growth to bring with it the gradual accumulation of all that is true, good and beautiful (John Paul II, 1985b, para. 51). For young people in the contemporary world, growth and development seem to be strongly intertwined with the virtual reality of the Internet, whereas the older generation grew up dealing with nature and modes of its physical existence. In his letter, he invites the pastors of the Church to show young people the path of “growth”. In order to achieve this, it can be said that pastors need to understand the Internet, enabling them to engage with young people online. This could be as an implicit invitation for Youth Ministry to be undertaken on the Internet even though it was only in the initial stages at that time. (John Paul II, 1985b, para. 55).

Based on his personal experience of youthfulness and his role as a pastor in Poland in the early years of his priestly life, he acquired a very deep understanding of young people. Having a deep love for them, he came across the paradox that “Young people are the same

ever” (John Paul II, 1994a, p. 118). However they grow up in different contexts. He stressed the difference in their current context which again reveals his understanding of the universal reality of contemporary youth. A theology of youth ministry also needs to consider youth historically, identifying its historical constants and variants. A study of youth in the context of various cultural realities across the globe is also required, as explained in the next chapter.

As the future of evangelisation is centred on young people, he urges the Church to discover the treasures of youth. This suggests that he has identified these treasures, having studied them very closely in anthropological, psychological, historical and sociological perspectives and interpreted the findings in the light of the Gospel. The findings of his analysis of youth are reflected in his teachings. Youth evangelisation is a rich seam that runs through all the activities of Pope John Paul II.

Youth as Leading Characters of Evangelisation

John Paul’s wisdom and understanding of young people is indicative of a deeper vision when he says; “Youth must not simply be considered as an object of pastoral concern for the Church but as ‘leading characters in evangelisation and participants in the renewal of society’” (John Paul II, 1988, para. 46). The possibility of a dialogue between youth culture and the Church is opened up in the same document:

The Church has so much to talk about with youth, and youth have so much to share with the Church. This mutual dialogue, by taking place with great cordiality, clarity and courage, will provide a favourable setting for the meeting and exchange between generations, and will be a source of richness and youthfulness for the Church and civil society. (John Paul II, 1988, para. 46)

Is it possible to have a favourable setting where the Church and youth can have a mutual dialogue 'with great cordiality, clarity and courage'? In the Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities, Pope John Paul II, in a series of seven articles, proposing cultural dialogue and evangelisation in universities, observes that, "By its very nature, each Catholic University makes an important contribution to the Church's work of evangelisation" (John Paul II, 1990a, para. 49).

"Then I saw them swarming through the city, happy as young people should be, but also thoughtful, eager to pray, seeking "meaning" and true friendship," (John Paul II, 2001a, para. 9). The Pope's optimism regarding young people was clearly expressed in the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, promulgated at the closing of the Great Jubilee. In young people, 'whatever their possible ambiguities', the Pope identified a 'profound longing for genuine values which find their fullness in Christ'. In his commitment to young people, John Paul II offered Jesus Christ, as their supreme friend and teacher of all genuine friendship, to accompany them in their life (John Paul II, 2001a, para. 9).

John Paul II viewed youth as 'leading characters' in the process of evangelisation and participants in the renewal of society. Dialogue, which is a form of communication, can be used by the Church to initiate and deepen this partnership. Thus communication becomes vital for both the Church and for youth. In documents such as *Ecclesia in Asia* (John Paul II, 1999c), *Ecclesia in Europa* (John Paul II, 2003), *Ecclesia in Oceania* (John Paul II, 2001d) and *Ecclesia in Africa* (John Paul II, 1995) the Pope envisioned the settings where youth evangelisation could be accomplished. He chose these Apostolic Exhortations to speak about the differences in the context of the Church in these changing geographical and cultural realities. Details of these changes are discussed in chapter 4 on Youth.

Called To Behold the Young (World Youth Day)

On the day he inaugurated his pontificate, Pope John Paul II began his dialogue with youth saying, “You are the hope of the Church! You are my hope!” (cited in Rylko, 1998, p. 170). The evangelisation of young people was a mission personally taken up by Pope John Paul II. In the Apostolic Letter to the Youth of the World on the Occasion of International Youth Year, the Pope wrote:

You are the youth of nations and societies, the youth of every family and of all humanity; you are the youth of the Church . . . so your youth is not just your own property. It is possession of humanity itself. (John Paul II, 1985b, para. 1)

Bishop Stanislaw Rylko (1998), then Secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, says that the Pope challenges the results of sociological research and surveys which paint a dark picture of contemporary youth. In *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, the Pope observed that “in youth . . . there is an enormous potential for good and creative ability” (cited in Rylko, 1998, p. 171). In them he saw a great prophetic force. The Pope wants to involve young people, with their prophetic dynamism, in the great work of new evangelisation in the world today. Rylko views this as the vision of a father and a friend who looks into the depths of the hearts of young people today and who is able to go beyond appearances, even when these are negative (Rylko, 1998, p. 171). On the occasion of the institution of World Youth Day (WYD) in 1985, the Pope explained the reason for his decision: “Every young person must feel accompanied by the Church: this is why the whole Church, united with the Successor of Peter, must feel more deeply committed at the global level to youth” (cited in Rylko, 1998, p. 172).

This is a key theme of this whole study. The Pope wants young people to be accompanied by the Church. He envisages this accompaniment as a commitment by the members of the Church on a global level to journey with young people in a genuine way. The global presence of the Catholic Church and the global reality of the medium of the Internet seem to complement the ministry of accompaniment envisioned by this Pope. John Paul II's vision of accompaniment is evidenced in WYDs where, since their inception, anywhere between three million and five million young people gather in one place and at one time to see and hear the Pope (Trigilio et al. 2006, p. 276). One clear setting of youth evangelisation identified by the Pope merits particular mention here: the media of communication, considered briefly in the next section.

Media as a Virtual Areopagus

Like his predecessor Paul VI, John Paul II was acutely aware of the enormous possibilities of the media as a means of presenting the Word of God. Throughout his life, he was like a medium transmitting the Good News to millions, especially to young people. The relationship between the innovative global network of the Internet and the 2000 year old history of the Church is next for consideration.

As a child, John Paul II had such a strong experience of a cultural centre at the town square that later, when he became Pope, he referred to the modern media as the first *areopagus* of the modern age:

After preaching in a number of places, St. Paul arrived in Athens, where he went to the *areopagus* and proclaimed the Gospel. The first *areopagus* of the modern age is the world of communications, which is unifying humanity and turning it into what is known as a 'global village'. (John Paul II, 1990b, para. 37(c))

Just as the first cultural interaction between Christianity and stoicism occurred, in the space of *areopagus*, cyberspace can be seen as the space for cultural interaction to occur in the present day. This is evident from his references to *areopagus* in the encyclicals *Fides et Ratio* (John Paul II, 1998a), *Redemptoris Missio* (John Paul II, 1990b), Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (John Paul II, 1994b), Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, (John Paul II, 1995) and the Apostolic Letter *Rapid Development* (John Paul II, 2005). The importance of this concept was reiterated in the Pope's use of the term in his messages on the occasion of various communication days (1998, 2000, 2005).

When John Paul II was elected Pope in 1978, the Internet itself was in its infancy. From the sending of the first e-mail in the early 1970s, this concept developed and spread (Peter, 2004). 'The Internet' was discussed by Pope John Paul II for the first time at a public meeting in a homily given on World Communications Day, 2001. Almost two months before that, in a homily at a meeting of the conferees of Social Communications, the Pope addressed them about the emerging media culture and the preparation of the document *Ethics in Internet*: "I am pleased that in these days you have been considering a similar document on the theme of Ethics in Internet, which would indeed be very timely, given the rapid spread of cyber-communications and the many moral questions involved" (John Paul II, 2001b). This is the first time in the history of the Church that a Pope used the word 'cyber-communications' at an official meeting.

John Paul II was the first Pope to have an e-mail address: *john_paul_ii@vatican.va* (Tschabitscher, 2007). It was significant that he was the Pope of the Millennium, when the Internet and communications technology were changing the whole concept of communication. The Pope's understanding of this development seems to be reflected in the

publication of two documents from the Pontifical Council for Social Communications: *Ethics in Internet* (Foley, 2002b) and *The Church and Internet* (Foley, 2002a). The Apostolic Letter of John Paul II *Rapid Development* (John Paul II, 2005) is another important document addressed to those who are responsible for the media.

Virtuous and the Virtual - The Church and the Internet: “Christ is both the content and the dynamic source of the Church's communications in proclaiming the Gospel” (John Paul II, 1992, para 6). John Paul II traces the history of communication to the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles and, with the gift of tongues, restored the communication which had collapsed at Babel. “Pentecost is only the beginning. Even when threatened with reprisals, the Apostles are not deterred from proclaiming the Lord: ‘We cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard (Acts 4:20)’” (John Paul II, 2000a).

As an institution with a 2000 year history during which communication played an integral part, the question facing the Church in relation to the latest development in the world of communication, the Internet, is explored in this research. The document of Pontifical Council for Social Communications *Aetatis Novae* (John Paul II, 1992) identified five constructive ways in which the Church can avail of the media to present Christ as ‘the content and dynamic source’: (1) At the service of persons and cultures; (2) At the service of dialogue with the world; (3) At the service of human community and progress; (4) At the service of ecclesial communion and (5) At the service of a new evangelisation (para. 6-11). These five dynamic ways can be captured in the two phrases, the Church *ad intra* (the Church in itself) and the Church *ad extra* (the Church in relation to the world) (Hebblethwaite, 1993, p. 311). The Catholic Church is a communion of persons, families, parishes, dioceses, and churches.

Again the Pastoral Instruction *Aetatis Novae* teaches that “communication mirrors the Church’s own communion and is capable of contributing to it” (John Paul II, 1992, para. 6). The existence of the Church *ad intra* as well as *ad extra* shares one common purpose, namely evangelisation.

In relation to the document of the Council for Social Communications, issued ten years after *Aetatis Novae*, Foley (2002a) observed that: “The Church has a twofold aim in regard to the media” (para. 3), in relation to the world outside the Church, as well as in relation to the communication in and by the Church herself. “. . . how is the Church to adapt its mission to the particular age, environment, educational and social conditions of men’s lives?” as Pope Paul VI (1964) asked much earlier in *Ecclesiam Suam* (Paul VI, 1964, para. 86). Dialogue seems to be the appropriate method to be adopted here. It is essential that “new pathways of dialogue between the Church and the cultures of our period be forged. This dialogue is absolutely indispensable for the Church, because otherwise evangelisation will remain a dead letter” (John Paul II, 1983a, para. 4). The Church and the Internet seem to possess some similar characteristics. Both exist on a global level; both have human participation as their source of strength; communication is a vital element of both of these global entities. Some questions still remain: Is the Internet a space for dialogue? Can dialogue be initiated and sustained fruitfully on the Internet? Can friendship be initiated and sustained in virtual space?

Before concluding this review of the teachings of John Paul II two other issues need to be considered in relation to evangelisation- language and culture.

The Problem of Language in Evangelisation

Pope John Paul II has observed that “the human capacity for language made the human world, including the world of literature, possible” (cited in Weigel, 2005, p. 40). Evangelisation as ‘transmitting revelation’ (GDC, 1998, para. 39) can be considered as a continuation of Revelation. In this *New Heaven* and *New Earth* of the Information Age, is there any change in the basic formula for revelation? The culmination of God’s self communication is in Jesus (Vatican II, 1965d, para. 2). Evangelisation, as the continuation of revelation, is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow - sharing the Good News. The primordial substance of evangelisation is the same. It is the Son of Man, the Saviour, the Good News, the Logos, the Messiah, the redeemer. What is different in the process of evangelisation as signified by these various titles for the one Son of Man? While the difference in language is obvious, the difference in meaning is subtle, depending on the context in which these names evolved.

John Paul II (2001a) refers to Jesus Christ as the supreme friend of youth (para. 9). While the Logos from Greek philosophy assumes yet another name, the substance is the same: Jesus Christ. The language is different; as the language of proclamation varies according to time and space. As Christological, anthropological as well as cultural dimensions of evangelisation emerge at this juncture, Cardinal Avery Dulles advises that, “evangelisation must be heralded with new energy and in a style and language adapted to the people of our day” (Dulles, 2006, p. 5).

Reading the Signs of the Time and the Problem of Culture in Evangelisation:

In order to carry out its task of evangelisation, the Church has to go through a process in two steps: (a) reading the signs of the time and (b) interpreting them in the light of the Gospel in a language which is intelligible to each generation.

These two activities do not exhaust the process of evangelisation, as will be seen in later sections. Rather they constitute its initial stages. The task of the Church is to bring good news or, in one word, 'evangelise'. The signs of the times can be read in many ways. By observing young people, interacting with them and through friendship, an evangeliser can get to know their yearnings and aspirations:

Your role is great, because you must help the Church to become a creator of culture in its relationship with the modern world. We would be unfaithful to our mission to evangelise the present generations, if we left Christians without an understanding of new cultures. (John Paul II, 1983a, para. 10)

Young people are like the fig tree in the Gospel of Mark, "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know the summer is near" (Mk 13:28). At a different level, in order to understand 'the dramatic features of the world in which we live' (Vatican II, 1965f, para. 4), one has to understand the culture of young people and traverse the path they travel. Also learning about the media and taking part in it can be a way of becoming familiar with the salient features of our time.

The second task in the process of evangelisation is interpreting the observations made from reading the signs. This interpretation happens both through the light of the Gospel and the teachings and traditions of the Church. Its purpose is to answer the ever recurring questions

of: the meaning of this present life; the meaning of the life to come; and the relationship between them. Pope John Paul II has addressed these perennial questions in his conference with young people. If the evangelisation is aimed at young people, the answers need to be intelligible to them. A major issue for this research centres on how to reformulate the message of the Good News, which the Church wishes to convey, in a language that is intelligible to contemporary youth.

John Paul II brought new zeal and energy to evangelisation by re-interpreting it in the context of contemporary culture. The term 'new evangelisation' itself signifies the need for renewal of the methods used in evangelisation: "Look to the future with commitment to a New Evangelisation, one that is new in its fervour, new in its methods, and new in its expression" (John Paul II, 1983b). Since the concept of new evangelisation involves dealing with the new culture, it is discussed in the chapters on the Internet and on youth.

In his work, *Witness to Hope*, George Weigel (2005, p. 18) quotes the motto "*Veni, vidi, Deus vicit* (I came, I saw, God conquered)" used by Polish troops in 1683. The same slogan can be attributed to the papacy of the first Polish Pope. Wojtyla came, he saw, God conquered young people through him. John Paul II (1988) exhorted young people to 'go into the vineyard too' (Mt 20:4) (*Christifideles Laici*, para. 2). More recently, he asked the Church to 'put out into the deep' (Lk 5:4) of cyberspace, endorsing the objective of this study (John Paul II, 2002, para. 2).

2.4 Summary and Conclusions

Evangelisation was the theme of this chapter. The first section put the research in context identifying evangelisation, youth and the Internet as its main three spheres of interest.

Accordingly the study of evangelisation presented here is primarily in the context of how it relates to youth and communication, including the Internet. Following on from this, a comprehensive examination of evangelisation was presented. The final section focussed on the life and work of two modern Church leaders, Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II. Their teachings in relation to the media and youth were explored in detail.

In the course of the discussion, the etymology and various definitions of evangelisation were explored. Ontological aspects of evangelisation were considered, together with some of its essential elements. As it was established that it has both a sacramental and a non-sacramental dimension, this means that cyber-space can be a medium for evangelisation.

The next part of the debate focussed on ecclesial aspects of evangelisation. The Internet, with its global reach and capacity for interactivity, could enable a more participative mode of communication. The operation of Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) was reviewed. Essentially they are new ways of helping people to grow in their faith. It is submitted that cyberspace provides another new path for evangelisation.

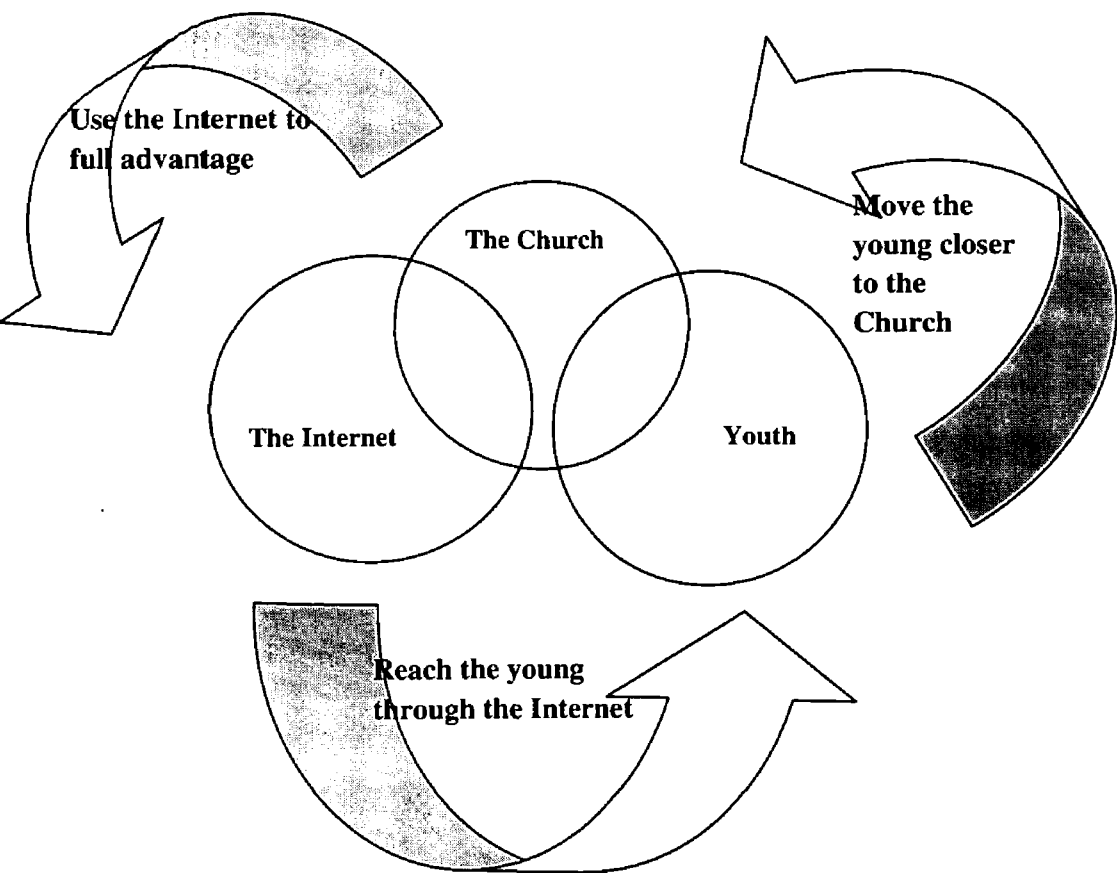
Three major modes of evangelisation – personal (one-to-one); communitarian (preaching to groups) and technological (use of the media) were explored. While the latter technological mode may not be as personal as the other two, it has the capacity to reach vast numbers of people. In addition, it can facilitate smaller groups, interacting in a more intimate manner.

The review of life and works of Pope Paul VI established his deep interest in the media and in youth, both in his earlier life and in his teachings during his papacy. His successor, John Paul II, shared his commitment to young people. His inauguration of an annual World Youth Day

in 1985 endorsed his particular emphasis on youth and evangelisation. The review of this Pope's teachings also highlighted his great interest in the world of communications. His writings endorsed his deep appreciation of the enormous possibilities of the modern media as a means of presenting the word of God. He was the first pope to encounter the world of cyberspace.

In sum, the fundamental importance of evangelisation in the Church has been established in this chapter. This research is a journey to bring the mystery of the Incarnate Word into the cultural matrix of the Internet in order to reach the world of youth. The findings on evangelisation, particularly as it relates to youth and the media, seem consonant with this goal. This forward journey is depicted in Fig.2.2 below.

Fig 2.2 Various Currents Involved in the Onward Journey of the Church



Participation in the Internet may open dynamic spaces facilitating intellectual and spiritual encounters between the Church and young people. The global presence of the Catholic Church and the global reality of the medium of the Internet seem to be complementary to the ministry of accompaniment envisioned by Pope John Paul II. Communication is also a common denominator between the Church and youth as participants in the common goal of renewal of society. Therefore this is an instance where the spheres of the Church, youth and the Internet can come together in sharing the common pursuits of human existence.

Evangelisation is the purpose of both the internal and external communication of the Church. Dialogue founded on friendship can be a vehicle of evangelisation in this age of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Souls coming together in cyberspace to share the Good News may open innovative ways of evangelisation.

In order to get a fuller appreciation of the opportunities for evangelisation afforded by the internet, this modern medium of communication is explored in depth in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

THE CHARACTERISTICS AND POTENTIAL OF THE INTERNET AS A MEANS OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

In the previous chapter communication was shown to be essential to the Church, arising from this vital role in evangelisation. An analysis of the concept of communication is the focus in this chapter. The first part deals with communication at a general level while the second part explores communication on the Internet. This is followed by a review of some online religious initiatives.

3.1 Communication

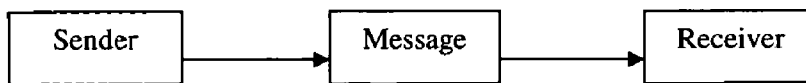
Beginning with a broad review of communication, the concept is explored in detail in this section. Then various theories on the topic are set. Other aspects considered are: mechanical approaches to communication; multimedia communication and models of communication.

Communication: An Overview

McClave (1997) defines communication as the process by which ideas, information, opinions, attitudes and feelings are conveyed from one person to another. In daily life, a person uses different ways of communication as a means of expression. Ideas and events can be expressed through verbal language and sound. Also they can be in written codified symbols of a language. In addition there is non-verbal communication which uses human senses, signs, symbols and sounds. Ideas can be encapsulated in pictures and drawings, diagrams and other symbols. Methods of communication involving technology are used by both institutions and individuals. Overall, these are the forms of communication used to

express ideas (Pearson and Nelson, 2000, p. 76). Fig 3.1 below shows a simple model of communication where the sender is a person who initiates communication by sending a message (Gray and Starke, 1988, p. 387). The receiver is a person who completes the process by receiving the message.

Fig 3.1 Simple Form of Communication



According to Pearson and Nelson (2000), communication can be classified in five categories:

- a) *Intrapersonal*: This refers to communication happening within the self;
- b) *Interpersonal*: The communicative exchange which occurs when two people engage in communication is called an interpersonal communication;
- c) *Group*: This is the communication involved with a collection of individuals who share some common attributes;
- d) *Mass*: This form of communication refers primarily to the scale of communication arising from the institutional practices of the mass media engaged in the industrial production and circulation of meaning;
- e) *Extrapersonal*: This category covers communication between machines, with little human intervention (p. 76-77).

Turning to the Internet, an analysis of communication in relation to this medium shows that it includes elements of the above categories. Online communication involves both the *interpersonal* and *group* categories and it can include some elements of *mass* communication. Also, since there is a subjective element in Internet communication, it can help *intrapersonal* communication. As we are considering communication which occurs between human beings,

machine assisted *extrapersonal* communication is not discussed here. Before moving on to the new form of communication online, some theories of communication are considered next.

Theories of Communication

There are various definitions of communication. For the School of Mass Communication, it is the act of imparting, conferring or delivering messages, such as words or ideas, within or between groups of people (Demers, 2005, p. 57). According to this school, the most popular statement about the process of communication comes from political scientist Lasswell (1948) who said that the best way to study communication was to answer five questions, as set out below.

Lasswell Model of Communication:

A simple model of communication, involving the message, sender and receiver, was studied and graphically represented by Harold Lasswell in 1948. It is known as the Lasswell formula: *Who says what to whom in which channel and with what effect?* The act of communication is considered comprehensively in this model. As the Lasswell model seems to represent a basic and common form of human communication, the questions raised by him are applicable to any communication. In *A Social History of the Media: from Gutenberg to the Internet*, Briggs and Burke (2005) refer to the influence of the Lasswell formula when forming their social concept of communication:

We have been influenced at the outset by the simple but deservedly famous classical formula of the American political scientist Harold Lasswell (1902-78), describing communication in terms of who says what to whom in which channel and with what effect (p. 4).

In the context of this research, the answer, based on the Lasswell model, is: The Church wants to convey the message of the Good News to the young through the channel of the Internet, with the effect of deepening faith. Although there is some criticism¹ of these linear models which represent a one-way process, the elements included in the process need to be considered as they identify the fundamental features involved in any communication.

Another study by Danesi (2000) captures communication according to the mode of delivery. According to this observer, in the human species, communication can include the following modes of delivery: gesture, i.e., the use of hands; vocal, i.e., the use of vocal organs; writing, i.e., the use of pictures or graphic symbols; visual, i.e., painting, sculpting etc.; mechanical, i.e., radio, computers, television etc.; signalling, i.e., body signal emission (natural or intentional) (p. 58). This brief overview of new theories on communication highlights the complexity of the topic. Further insights into communication are now considered.

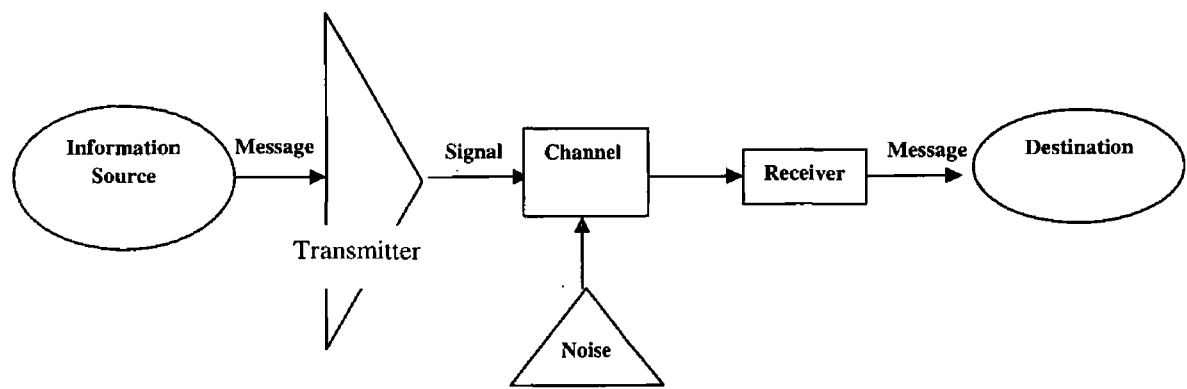
Mechanical Approaches to Communication

Communication happening on the Internet can be defined as Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). Among the six modes of communications identified by Danesi (2000), where would CMC occur? It is not wrong to say that the communication happening on the Internet is mechanical, at least in part. The mechanical or technical features of communication were studied for the first time by Claude E. Shannon (cited in Guizzo, 2003). Warren Weaver developed the mathematical laws governing the transmission, reception and processing of information. Another linear model of communication, which is similar to the Lasswell formula, was developed by Shannon and Weaver a year after Lasswell's. It is

¹ 'Communication is not a unilateral transfer of information from person to another, from sender to receiver, as if it were a monologue. That understanding sometimes called the transportation model – is too linear and implies that the receiver is passive and not involved in the process beyond simply receiving what is sent' (Granfield, P. 1994, p. 3).

intended to be a scientific guide to the possibilities of sending a message. This model (Fig 3.2) is considered to be the most influential of all the early transmission or mechanical models:

Fig 3.2 Shannon & Weaver Model of Communication



Source: Pearson and Nelson, 2000, p. 79

In any communication, the communicator or source of information is important. In the same way the message, channel of communication, external or internal interruption of any kind which hinders the intended message reaching the target, e.g., noise, as in the above model, must be taken in account. The receiver of the message also plays an important role in the process of communication. The Shannon and Weaver model adds more elements to the Lasswell model. One is the importance of the 'transmitter'. In online communication, a personal web page where the message of the Good News appears is the transmitter. Next is the 'noise'. This represents the adverse factors or challenges that need to be considered in formulating the message in a manner which is comprehensible to young people. A postmodern youth is continuously bombarded with all kinds of information from the world of technology. New gadgets such as ipods, mobile phones, palm tops with the Internet etc., create a virtual world around them, ready to impart information and provide them with various forms of entertainment.

Multimedia Communication

Communication on the Internet is not just a mechanical one, as mentioned above. It is a combination of various modes. Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) is a multi-media communication. The term *multimedia* is derived from two Latin words, *multum*, meaning multiple and *medius* meaning middle. The Medium has three modes: *Artifactual* media (books, paintings, sculptures and letters) – artifactual mode of encoding and decoding a message; *mechanical* media (telephones, radios, television sets, computers and videos) – mechanical means of transmitting a message; *natural* media (the voice - speech, the face - expressions and the body - gesture, posture, etc.) – the natural means of encoding and decoding a message (Danesi, 2000, p. 142).

When it is said that the Internet can support multimedia, it means that it uses multiple forms of information content and information processing (e.g., text, audio, graphics, animation, video, interactivity) to inform or entertain the (user) audience (Castells, 2000, p. 394). Therefore the scientific model of communication, as proposed by Shannon and Weaver, is not sufficient to explain fully all of the nuances of communication occurring online, since online communication covers a combination of various modes of communication. An amalgam of all these models is required to explain various aspects of the medium of the Internet. This suggests that the Internet is not just a medium but rather a collection of media. Its enormity and capacity to hold vast amounts of data and information, as well as its capacity for retrieval of instances of interaction, makes it a unique 'medium'.

Models of Communication

Early models of communication have evolved over time. This can be seen from the works of Pearson and Nelson (2000) who identify four models. They are:

- a) *The Action Model*: This model reflects a notion that communication happens when one person sends a message and another person or group of persons receive it without giving any feedback.
- b) *The Interaction Model*: Here the sender sends a message and the receiver receives it and responds with another message.
- c) *The Transaction Model*: In the transaction model, communicators simultaneously send and receive messages.
- d) *The Constructivist Model*: This model posits that receivers create their own reality in their minds. The sender sends symbols to be interpreted and the receiver constructs his or her own meaning. According to Pearson and Nelson (2000), this model significantly reframes the communication process.

For the purpose of this research, the last model seems to be more relevant, considering the parties involved with perhaps cultural differences, their freedom of interpretation and their ability to negotiate. This appears to capture what occurs during a communication between two parties who are involved in important communication. The forum model proposed by Granfield (1994) shares similar concepts as it holds that there is a dynamic relationship between the sender and the receiver. The receiver actively participates in this dialogic exchange on the basis of experience, understanding and interpretation.

The discussion now moves on to a more detailed explanation of the Internet, providing a clearer understanding of online communication

3.2 Unweaving the Web

An overview of the Internet is presented in this section. It commences with a definition of the Internet. This is followed by an explanation of its origin and development, how it works and its major uses. Then, various other aspects of the net are delineated. Next, interactivity and relationship in CMC are examined together with some concerns about cyber communication.

The Internet

The word 'Internet' is the abbreviated form of 'International Network'. There are numerous definitions of the Internet. The conventional definition describes it as the global network of computer networks (Martin, 1997, p. 295) where a network is a group of connected computers that exchange information and share equipment. The following description, which reflects the technical and scientific definition of the term "Internet", is given by The Federal Networking Council (FNC). "Internet" refers to the global information system that:

- (i) is logically linked together by a globally unique address space based on the Internet Protocol (IP) or its subsequent extensions/follow-ons;
- (ii) is able to support communications using the Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) suite or its subsequent extensions/follow-ons, and/or other IP-compatible protocols; and
- (iii) provides, uses or makes accessible, either publicly or privately, high level services layered on the communications and related infrastructure described herein (Federal networking Council (FNC), 1995)².

In his book *A Brief History of the Future*, Naughton (1999) provides an interesting perspective on the Internet:

² Many of the functions of the FNC were transferred in the year 1997 to the Large Scale Networking (LSN) group and other Interagency Working Groups (IWG) and the website of FNC has been changed to www.itrd.gov (Federal Networking Council, 1995).

The Net is really a system which links together a vast number of computers and the people who use them. It is the phenomenon of hundreds of millions of people freely communicating via such an efficient and uncensored medium that gives the Net its special character, and its extraordinary power. (p. 40)

An overview of the history and development of the Internet now follows.

Origin and Development of the Internet

The seeds of the Internet were planted in 1969 when the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) of the U.S. Department of Defence began connecting computers at different universities and defence contractors. The creation of a large computer network was undertaken in order to survive a nuclear attack or other disaster (Naughton, 1999).

The invention of packet switching in the year 1964 by the RAND corporation in U.S. led to the formation of the first wide area network (WAN) in 1968. Later, the Pentagon funded the connection of a four-node network called ARPANET (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network). The network grew slowly and the first public demonstration took place in 1972, linking forty machines. In 1973, the network crossed the Atlantic to Norway and England (Martin, 1997, p. 294). The growth of the Internet has been a continuous and rapid process from 1973 onwards with the development of TCP/IP-the specifications of its working and features such as E-mail, Usenet, Telnet, FTP etc. in due course. Next a short description is given of how the Internet works.

How the Internet Works

Technically, the Internet works like a pipeline that exchanges text, data files, and programmes from one user to another. It uses a set of rules and procedures known as protocols to control timing and data format. The set of commands and timing specifications used by the Internet is called Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol, usually abbreviated as TCP/IP. Internet activity can be defined as computers communicating with other computers, using TCP/IP. It works by converting the messages into small data packets when they are sent and reassembling them at their destination (Cowpertwait and Flynn, 2002, p. 423.)

The basic architecture of the Internet is what is known as a client/server model. A server, a computer running special software capable of sharing files with other systems, hosts a range of services such as e-mail and web pages that are accessed by client software running on a remote computer. An Internet Service Provider (ISP) is required to access these services and files. It operates a network using common software rules, or protocols, and this is linked to other networks and agreements to pass traffic between them. This combination of networks comprises the Internet which consists of two main parts, the hardware or communications network and the protocols governing data transfer across that network (Whittaker, 2002). Next the main uses of the Internet are described.

Major Uses of the Internet

Email as a new means of communicating around the world, File Transfer Protocol (FTP) and Usenet, as new forms of acquiring information for educational development, and Internet Relay Chat (IRC) as a popular real-time and interactive communication tool among teenagers, make the Internet a very innovative communication medium. Thus this research

study sets out to show that this new age technology can become an effective tool for the Church, enabling Her to play a significant role in the development of young people.

As cyberspace becomes part of daily life for more and more computer users, the uses of the Internet are on the increase. These include online services of many companies for e-commerce, electronic banking and, obviously, ministry in the Church. In other words, as Michael Heim describes it, “computers stick the windows of the soul behind monitors, headsets and datasuits” (Heim, 1993, p. 101). According to Naughton (1994), “The Net is already changing the way we communicate. . . . It challenges traditional notions of sovereignty. . . . Like all powerful technologies it has an immense capacity for both good and evil” (p. 44-45).

Characteristics of the Medium of the Internet

Seamlessness describes the facility in the Internet to link related concepts infinitely. This facility to move users from one document to another, following highlighted sub-topics of their choice, is one of the defining characteristics of the Internet. It is known as hyperlinking or hypertext linking and provides a top class cross-referencing service. The links may be within the same page, on the same site or anywhere in the world (Williams and Nicholas, 2001). Talbott (1995) captures the nature of hypertext linking: “Clearly, a generation raised on adventure and video games-where every door conceals a treasure or a monster worth pursuing in frenetic style has its own way of appreciating the hypertext interface” (p. 13).

Issues of authenticating data and information overload, together with difficulties in navigation due to opening up new windows, come into play when using hypertext. The vast

amounts of knowledge and its seamless nature, with an unprecedented association of related topics, make the Internet an immense space providing new venues to explore each moment.

Other important attractions of the Internet are currency and speed of delivery. Anything which is posted on the Internet reaches the end user more quickly than all the traditional news wires. Currency is a highly rated information need. The global reach of the Internet has had its greatest impact. Accessing documents located on the other side of the planet is as easy as it is for those on a web server in the same building. The development of audio and video, enabling users to tune in to what were previously local radio and TV stations, has added enormously to the global nature of the Internet. A negative result of the global reach of the Net is the facility to disseminate racist, sexist and other extremist information to the world. Some other features of the Internet now follow.

Egalitarianism: In their book, *The Internet and the changing Information Environment*, researchers Williams and Nicholas (2001) report that some people champion the Internet for its egalitarianism. According to this view, on the web, everybody is equal.

Comprehensiveness: The Web is considered to be a Pandora's box. Many factors contribute to the Internet's growing subject and topic inclusivity. They are: (a) Growth of organisational web sites of all kinds, including governmental, commercial, academic and non-profit making; (b) Migration of information from one format to another such as pamphlet or other printed copy, to an electronic format; (c) Growth of personal information and communication and its embrace of academic, professional, personal and leisure sources (Williams and Nicholas, 2001, p. 23-28).

Two-way Interactivity of the Internet: Manuel Castels (2000) states that the Internet, in its different incarnations and unfolding manifestations, is already the universal, interactive computer communication medium of the information age. The interactive aspects of the Internet have enhanced its appeal as a truly different and alternative phenomenon from other media. Types of interactivity include bulletin boards hosting readers' fora on various subjects and chat rooms. Here, a user is able to engage in dialogue with another user, generally by means of a text-based or image-based interface. When we consider the current young generation, this interactivity is of great importance.

While the communication that can take place through letters, e-mail, etc. lacks the quality of face-to-face communication, it is not quantitatively as large as that in mass communication. Therefore it is labelled Medio Communication coming between direct, face-to-face address and mass communication (Watson and Hill, 2006). In this study, the terms 'cyberspace communication' or 'online communication' will be used as appropriate, rather than the term 'Medio'. Some characteristics of the Internet of particular relevance to this research are considered now.

The Internet as Convergence

In Neuman's view, "the argument that the media are converging and linking to comprise an all-encompassing network has considerable force and implications" (cited in McQuail, 2000, p. 87). The integration of text, numbers, images and sound, the different elements of the media which have developed separately over centuries, is a convergence occurring in cyberspace arising from the invention of the computer. The concept of convergence has a broader sense - convergence of different communication media such as mailing facilities (substitute for surface mail), radio, telephone and television, happening through the one

medium of the Internet. Briggs and Burke (2005) refer to convergence in a different sense, identifying a convergence of cultures and societies. “Different societies and cultures which started their historical journeys separately were now said to be traveling together on the same ‘information super-highway’ ” (p. 216). (This concept is discussed later in more detail.)

Religions also co-exist in this new medium. Digital convergence is an important process happening on the Internet, with unexpected implications. Howard Rheingold (2000) confirms this idea: “In research-and-development laboratories, today, one popular buzz-phrase is ‘digital convergence’, which means that a lot more than virtual communities and libraries of text are going to live on the net in the near future” (p. 68).

Packet switching, which is a basic element of Internet technology, is the first step of convergence. It does not need a central control system because each packet and the entire network routers know how to get information around. Packets contain digitised information, voice, sound, text, graphics, computer programs, etc. and can be sent over the airwaves (Rheingold, 2000).

This is one of the first requirements of ‘going online’. Any individual, or organisation wishing to migrate to cyberspace, first of all, has to digitize the data. Digitization is the process of translating the data into a form of discrete symbols. The basic form of these discrete symbols consists of electromagnetic symbols in binary zeros and ones (Whittaker, 2002, p. 193). Any information that can be digitized can be presented online by the respective interested parties. If we examine the history of the Internet, we see that educational and research institutes were the first to go online. “The first node was delivered to UCLA in 1969, and the network expanded to four nodes by the end of the year. In 1970, Harvard and MIT

came online” (Rheingold, 2000, p. 68). This may be because education is mainly dealing with information. Other institutions closely related to daily life rather than just dealing with information, soon followed.

Convergence and Cornucopia

Abundance ensues from convergence. “New technologies should make possible greater individual choice of what to see and hear – and of when to see and hear it” (Briggs and Burke, 2005, p. 217). The power of choice or opportunity to choose is a sign of abundance. Thus, convergence in the Internet makes more opportunities available and gives more power to individuals to choose the best of what is available.

The invention of the computer was a turning point, accelerating the convergence of the communication media. The computer, in its present form, is the result of the collaborative efforts of a considerable number of researchers over decades. Microcomputers integrated various methods of communication: “Hundreds of thousands of components could be carried on a microprocessor, and as their versatility became recognised a stimulus was given to digital over analog technology in all the media which were soon to become their main users” (Briggs and Burke, 2005, p. 224).

Like a magnet attracts particles of steel, the Internet brought together a number of spheres of human living to the information super highway. The title given ‘Mosaic’ given to the first ever browsing software, infers an assortment. It was described in the *New York Times* in December 1993 as ‘the first window into cyberspace’ (Briggs and Burke, 2005, p. 244). Convergence on the information super highway brought together a complex mixture of various areas of human existence. When human minds began to express themselves in this

new space, 'cyberspace' emerged as a new dimension of human existence, addressing the need of human beings for the information superhighway and the making use of it for individual human needs by becoming part of it. In the contemporary world cyberspace has become part and parcel of human living for many. It is an embedded media. Also it has created an opportunity for human beings to exist online creating a mutual 'embeddedness'. This makes cyberspace a human space, unlike other media in the past.

Virtual space/cyberspace

The convergence of individual human beings is the ultimate aim of any communication medium. The Internet has made this convergence possible. Technically, the Internet is just a collection of personal computers connected *via* fiber optics. As a communication medium, it does not resemble a space conducive to human existence like other spaces of human interaction. Yet the Internet, when understood as 'virtual space', transforms the idea of 'space' away from the three dimensional reality to the poly-dimensional interior world of the self'. (Mirzoeff, 1999, p. 92).

Spiller (2002) traces the origin of the word 'cyberspace' to the Greek term *kubernetes* meaning steersman, as used originally by Plotinus in the third century BC. Cybernetics also traces its origin to the same Greek word, indicating how systems work and respond to outside stimuli. 'Cyberspace' was a word used for the first time by science fiction writer William Gibson. As Spiller observes, Gibson added a spatial metaphor to the concept of the coining of the word 'cybernetics' (Spiller, 2002, p. 7). He envisaged a 'cyberworld' created by the matrix of the interconnected sum of all the world's computer networks (Briggs and Burke, 2005, p. 252). 'Virtual space' was not the same as 'cyberspace'. The word 'virtual' means the 'simulation of a real thing' (Cowpertwait and Flynn, 2002, p. 438). All the simulated

experiences are collectively called virtual reality. There are writers who equate the virtual spaces of the experience of the Internet to medieval soul spaces with some spiritual connotation (Spiller, 2002, p. 18).

In more recent times, the Internet is seen by many as a virtual or simulated world (Cowpertwait and Flynn, 2002). In this discussion 'cyberspace' and 'virtual space' are used interchangeably, even if they are viewed differently by various writers. They connote a world of infinite possibilities. For some, cyberspace is where you are when you are on the telephone; for others, it is a world of computer simulation; it is a computer-science concept of place; it is the agent of technological disappearance; it is forever dissolving, reconstituting, cyclically distilling and recombining. For some, it augments empirical scientific space with another space with different rules; for others it is a space that has inspired some to imbue it with a spiritual dimension – a technological gnosis, as put forward by Spiller (2002). Spiller's view is compelling where he states: "to provide a definitive description of the phenomenon that is cyberspace is an impossible task" (Spiller, 2002, p. 8). With its paradoxical entities already present and increasing at each moment, cyberspace cannot be given a definitive description, because it alters constantly. However, even if it is difficult to give an agreed description of cyberspace, its capacity to allow people to create a new and versatile social space in which they can 'meet and interact' with one another needs to be highlighted.

Also, people view this human interaction online in different ways. Some people find various landscapes in cyberspace in which different human needs can be met. Knowledge landscapes, homesteading on the electronic frontier, the Information Superhighway, the matrix of computer networks, the virtual public sphere, the Net and the Web are some of the terms that signify these different perspectives. 'Cyberspace', as a human space, functions at different

levels in its technical viability to make it an interactive space. In other words, human beings use it for their own purposes.

Interactivity and Relationship in CMC

In their book *Computer Mediated Communication* (CMC), Thurlow, Lengel and Tomic (2004) quote Swedish Computer Scientist Jacob Palme who lists a number of reasons why people enjoy CMC genres such as Internet forums: (a) Status and self esteem, e.g., being able to communicate with experts; (b) Confidence, e.g., being able to keep up with your area of expertise; (c) Comradeship, e.g., being able to counter loneliness through interaction with people sharing your interests (d) Inspiration, e.g., being able to exchange ideas; (e) Generosity, e.g., being able to get and give advice and support. These indicate that online relationships can be similar to those which are enjoyed in a face-to-face encounter and that the qualities of human interaction in cyberspace may be similar to those in the real world.

Similar arguments are made by McQuail (2000) in relation to mediation. It is a process with several elements which occurs through the mass media. He details three of these elements. The first part of the process is the relaying of second hand (or third party) versions of events. Secondly, he refers to the efforts of actors and institutions in society to contact people for their own purposes and also for the supposed good of the public. Thirdly, mediation accomplished through the media implies some form of relationship.

Thurlow et al (2004) report that, in a survey of 176 relatively long-term newsgroup users, researchers Parks and Flyod found that personal relationships were indeed common and sometimes even romantic. Friends communicated with each other on a weekly basis and, perhaps not surprisingly, the more frequently people interacted online the deeper the

relationship became. Relationships in MOOs are discussed also by Thurlow et al (MOO: an acronym for MUD - Multi User Dungeons, is a text-based online virtual reality system to which multiple users are connected at the same time (Castells, 2000, p. 387 and Turbee, 1997). In a survey of 235 regular users of MOOs, Parks and Roberts found that nearly all respondents had formed ongoing personal relationships: friends, close friends or romantic partners. Levels of relational developments were typically high and marked by depth, interdependence and commitment (cited in Thurlow et al. 2004).

In contrast, McQuail (2000) offers more cautious comments regarding cyber relationships, noting that they “are likely to be more distant, more impersonal and weaker than direct personal rites”. He observes that a much larger share of communication and our contact with others and our environmental reality is mediated *via* information and communication technology these days, on an individual and private basis. In exploring the typology of interaction in these new kinds of media, he quotes Thompson who notes that ‘it has become possible for more and more individuals to acquire information and symbolic content through mediated forms of interaction’ (cited in McQuail, 2000, p. 65). Thompson distinguishes two kinds of interaction besides face-to-face contact. First there is mediated interaction through some technical medium such as paper, electric wires etc., enabling information to be transmitted to individuals who are remote in space or time, or both. In this interaction the participants do not share the same spatio-temporal references systems and have to consider the need to supply contextual information and make do with fewer symbolic cues than in face-to-face contact. Mediation of quasi-interaction is another type of interaction which refers to relations established through the media of mass communication (cited in McQuail, 2000, p. 65).

There is evidence to suggest that, a sense of deep commitment can emerge in CMC. Some people even say that they value their online relationships more than those offline. When people start to get close like this, it is only natural that they also start forming themselves into groups. 'The extent to which messages in sequence relate to each other and especially the extent to which later messages recount details of earlier messages' is the definition of interactivity on the Internet, provided by Thurlow et al (2004, p. 156). They say that the focus should be on the 'glue' that keeps message threads and their authors together. These authors term this a communication imperative. As human beings, we are born to communicate. This means that we invariably circumvent any practical or technological obstacles which might otherwise prevent us from having the kind of relational fulfilment we desire. Therefore it is not a matter of what technology affords or permits us to do but of how we appropriate the technology and make it do what we want it to do.

An observation by Gallagher (2003) is pertinent here: "The new culture is fascinated with interconnections and with personal interiority. It values diversity and convergence in thinking. This will be one of the many strands of postmodernity and of its possible greater openness to the religious dimension" (p. 36).

McQuail (2000) identifies the following dimensions that are relevant and help differentiate 'new' from 'old' media: the degree of interactivity, social presence, autonomy, playfulness and the degree of privacy. These can be considered as some essential elements to be taken into consideration by the Church in order to present itself effectively in the mosaic of the Internet.

Major Concerns around Cyber Communication

This culture of virtual reality accelerates or can pose many threats. In other words, there are some ethical issues to be considered when exploring the multi-faceted culture of the Internet. The 'Digital Divide' is a term used to describe a form of discrimination dividing the rich from the poor, both within and among nations, on the basis of access or lack of access to the new information technology (Foley, 2002b, para. 10, John Paul II, 2002). Ward (2006) clarifies this issue in his writings on *The Post-Modern God*, "cyber space is yours only at a price. The cost begins with purchasing the computer and its software. . . . And not having access to this announces poverty, intellectual and material" (p. xvi).

The document issued during the reign of Pope John Paul II on *Ethics in the Internet* states that the Internet, along with the other media of social communications, is transmitting the value-laden message of Western secular culture to people and societies which, in many cases are ill-prepared to evaluate and cope with it (Foley, 2002b, para. 10). The same Pope raises an important issue regarding the ephemeral nature of the Internet. He argues that it offers extensive knowledge and no values, favouring a relativistic way of thinking and sometimes feeding the flight from personal responsibility and commitment developing a way of leading the contact made in the virtual world into the real world, and building on the first contact made through the Internet, are some other issues that arise regarding evangelisation.

The question of identity also raises serious issues about cyberspace where any user who has knowledge of the technology can get access to the Internet with a computer and modem (Whittaker, 2002, p. 166). Since the face and biological features of a person are not present on the Net, a user does not have to reveal his/her identity in order to be present on it. Turkle (1996) observes that the Internet is an element of computer culture that has contributed to

thinking about identity as multiplicity; people are able to build a 'self' on it by cycling through many selves. Also he raises another area of concern with this new technology relating to the use of this new medium for sex, pornography and obscenity. McQuail (2000) also express some reservations, noting that "the relationships established or mediated by the new communicating machines are often transient, shallow and without commitment, forms of social interaction that can be achieved to order, as it were" (McQuail, 2000, p. 129).

Having explained various aspects of the Internet, the next section considers online initiatives in the religious sphere.

3.3 Sacred Space and Cyberspace

This section commences with an analysis of online initiatives which come under the broad umbrella of religion. Then the discussion becomes more focused, exploring Christian initiatives online. Next, regarding young people as 'cybersouls', the possibility of presenting Jesus Christ online is explored. Communication is presented as a core activity of the communal existence of the Church. Finally, an analysis of Catholic cyber culture is undertaken.

Online Initiatives in the Religious Sphere

Many writers have contributed to the debate about religion online. For instance, in her book *Give Me that Online Religion*, Brasher (2004) argues that online religion is a very positive development and is crucial to the future of religion. She presents cyberspace as a vital cultural vehicle for the emergence of religious experience and expression in future society (p. 11). The ability to provide the spiritual sphere in a tangible way through the Internet creates opportunities for a new incarnation – new evangelisation.

For Cobb, cyberspace has an “intrinsic value that ties it irretrievably to the larger sacred fabric of the universe” (cited in Campbell, 2005, p. 55):

The divine expresses itself in the digital terrain through the vast global computer networks that are now beginning to display rudimentary self organising properties. If we can allow ourselves to understand the deeper, sacred mechanisms of cyberspace, we can begin to experience it as a medium for grace.

(cited in Campbell, 2005, p. 55)

This can be considered as a rather extreme view. Brasher also has reservations about Cobb's theory, commenting that “it is a fascinating, if unprovable, theory” (Brasher, 2004, p. 11).

Margaret Wertheim puts forward the argument that the Internet allows people to reconnect with ideas of the spiritual, immaterial world that have been silenced by the dualistic cosmology of Western science. Her historical examination of public notions of space argues that cyberspace is a non-physical space, “outside the physical space that science has articulated”. Cyberspace provides a viable way to re-introduce the spiritual world into the postmodern context (cited in Campbell, 2005, p. 54).

In his collection of essays entitled *Cyber_Reader*, Spiller (2002) considers that Wertheim is comparing the medieval spiritual soul-space with cyberspace. Campbell (2005) also depicts cyberspace as a sacred space, allowing individuals to consider the influence of the Internet at many levels, including a spiritual dimension. Here, according to Campbell, the spiritual appeal of cyberspace lies in the paradox that it is a repackaging of the old idea of Heaven, but in a secular, technologically sanctioned format. She comments: “The perfect realm awaits us, we are told, not behind the pearly gates but the electronic gateways labelled .com and .net

and .edu” (Campbell, 2005, p. 54). This represents the awaiting of millions of people who are estranged from the experience of the spiritual in the postmodern era. While the reasons of this estrangement are not detailed here, it can be noted that a distancing has occurred whereby the present young generation is unable to connect to the old ways of worship. This is a form of digital divide between the Church, with almost 2000 years of tradition, and the present generation, which surpasses the Church in its expertise of the digital. The Internet can address this by acting as a connecting space between traditional spiritual practices and the postmodern generation. A comment by Brasher is pertinent:

Examining the evolution of online religion in cyberspace gives some intimation of the direction human spirituality may take in the third millennium. Some people already navigate the virtual world with grace and ease; others are hard at work constructing their first virtual surfboard. Whether you choose to surf or run, the tidal wave of computer inspired spiritual change is coming. (Brasher, 2004, p. 43)

Technology as God project or Electric Gaia

Campbell (2005) asserts that no unified overarching spiritual narrative exists in cyberspace. Rather, “like the world beyond the screen, the Internet exists as a marketplace of spiritual options” (Campbell, 2005, p. 57). This makes the Internet a hallmark of postmodern culture. The consideration of *Technology as God project* is one of the theories put forward by Campbell (2005). Technopaganism or neo-paganism is a religious practice that seeks to consciously ritualise cyberspace. The purpose of technopaganism is to bring magical space and cyberspace together. This allows individuals to practice ancient pagan rituals online. It illustrates how individuals can use technology not just as a tool or space for worship, but to adapt beliefs so that engaging with the technology becomes an act of worship. Wertheim

offer another view, opining that cyberspace invokes a *collective immaterial arena* here on earth (cited in Spiller, 2002, p. 302).

A similar 'quasi-mystical' concept of the Internet lies in comparing the online presence to eternal time. Brasher's (2004, p. 52) view is in keeping with this approach: "It is always present. Whatever exists within it never decays. Whatever is expressed in cyberspace, as long as it remains in cyberspace, is perpetually expressed". The quasi-mystical appeal is that cyberspace exudes a taste of eternity to those who interact with it.

This corresponds to the idea of post-modern life put forward by Ward (2001) in the *The Post Modern God*. He argues that surfing the net is the ultimate post-modern experience:

Time and space collapse into omnipresence and multi-locality. . . . The electronic tide maintains you on the crest of impending satisfaction fast-forwarding to the endless pleasures yet to be located and book marked. Time disappears; boredom is deflated. (Ward, 2001, p. xv)

Pope John Paul II (2002) raises some concerns about this radical difference in the experience of reality and the human response to it. Regarding the experience of the concept of online time, Pope John Paul II refers to the post-modern life of the new generation as follows:

The Internet radically redefines a person's psychological relationship to time and space. Attention is riveted on what is tangible, useful, instantly available; the stimulus for deeper thought and reflection may be lacking. Yet human beings have a vital need for time and inner quiet to ponder and examine life and its mysteries. (para. 4)

The quest for a virtual experience may be interpreted as a sign of the quest for the spiritual. However, more research is required in order to comprehend the impact of the experience of online eternity. This is outside the scope of the present study.

In Campbell's (2005) view, another concept of *Electric Gaia* is revealed when she refers to the work of Jesuit theologian and anthropologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin who is referred to as the patron saint of Cyberspace. In his theological writings, de Chardin (1881-1955) envisioned an evolutionary space called the noosphere: "the earth's thinking envelope" (cited in Campbell, 2005, p. 31).

The Noosphere and the Internet

"The purpose of evangelisation is the interior conversion of the personal and collective consciousness of people, the activities in which they engage and the lives and the *milieu* which are theirs" (Paul VI, 1975b, para. 18). Regarding young people as 'cybersouls', this section explores the possibility of presenting Jesus Christ online. To begin, it takes the concept of the *noosphere*, developed by Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), and applies it to the Internet. Drawing on de Chardin's work, the Internet is considered as a space which connects human consciousness in a way that leads to a collective reflection.

Defined as the sphere of the mind, de Chardin envisioned the noosphere as a global consciousness that can bring harmony to humankind. Cobb (1998) draws on de Chardin's idea in attempting to create a 'theology of cyberspace'. Barlow (1997) also equates the present Internet with the *noosphere* (cited in Campbell, 2005, p. 58). This entails looking at the Internet as a means of bringing humans together to form a unified community.

De Chardin (1978) envisioned three stages of development in the universe: the biosphere; the *noosphere* and the Christosphere or Theosphere. The biosphere is the earth's living envelope whereas the *noosphere* is its thinking envelope. De Chardin's description of the *noosphere* suggests a prototype of the present Internet:

There was something more: around this sentient protoplasmic layer [around the biosphere or physical world], an ultimate envelope was beginning to become apparent to me, taking on its own individuality and gradually detaching itself like a luminous aura. This envelope was not only conscious but thinking . . . in an ever more dazzling and consistent form, the essence or rather the very soul of the Earth. (cited in Campbell 2005, p. 32)

As it is very pertinent to this study, a deeper understanding of this concept is considered important.

De Chardin's Vision: A Prototype of Evangelisation Online:

In de Chardin's vision, *noosphere* emerged after the biosphere through 'increasing technical efficiency' (Aykara, 1997, p. 33) to totalise mankind. It comprises the existence of Earth's thinking envelope and its contours, transformation through reflection and psycho-social convergence, accelerating the shift towards ultra-human states called planetisation (De Chardin, 1978, p. 29 - 32).

De Chardin (1978) is viewed as a process theologian. In line with the views of the scholars mentioned above regarding his vision of the *noosphere* and its similarity to the global entity of the Internet, the convergence of consciousness is a possible outcome of the Internet. Castells opines that "computers, communication systems, and genetic decoding and

programming are all amplifiers and extensions of the human mind” (Castells, 2000, p. 31). De Chardin also contemplated a human phenomenon of co-reflection and a co-conscientising to underpin the apparent commonplace superficiality of the Earth’s technico-social disposition. In his opinion, this co-reflection, with decisive importance for both our ‘understanding and our will’, is moving in the direction of a complexity-consciousness of planetary dimensions (De Chardin, 1978, p. 86). Understanding and decision, reflecting upon online activities, the power to know, the power to choose and the power to decide, have been given to an individual who is browsing. It is suggested that, these activities of the mind seem more important in online interaction.

Mooney’s (1964) reflection on de Chardin’s vision is in line with the working of online modules such as ‘threading’ and associated individual reflections posted on a topic which make a collective reflection possible:

What Teilhard had in mind, therefore, when he speaks of the ‘planetary maturation of mankind’, is a certain collective act of reflection, something which is quite credible if we once concede his analysis of evolution and admit his law of complexity-consciousness. (Mooney, 1964, p. 47)

This is the point of “the progress in the complexification of matter being matched by a corresponding progress in consciousness” (Gray, 1969, p. 90). But De Chardin (1978) finds a danger in this process: “left to itself, our consciousness (however intense it may be in each one of us) of sharing in a planetary Flux of co-reflection is capable of building up the sort of religion of mere ‘evolutionary humanism’ ” (p. 91). There is a deepening of interiority (which may be also called growth of consciousness), according to the growth in complexity of

matter. The energy coming out of the developed interiority is not necessarily only good as it can also cause “a growth in the possibilities of evil” (Gray, 1969, p. 92).

The world can only avoid this danger if humanity can make up its mind about the human phenomenon of co-reflection in order to find its full expression and its true place in the Christian phenomenon. It is a movement from the physical grounding of knowledge to a mystical plain. De Chardin (1978) states that “the time has come for Christianity to develop a precise consciousness of all the hopes stimulated by the dogma of the Universality of Christ when it is enlarged into this new scale” (p. 93). Being aware of the hardships, he comments: “how can we conceive that Christ ‘is immensified’ to meet the demands of our new Space-Time, without losing his personality” (p. 93). Castells (2000) states that the power of traditional senders like religion, morality, authority, traditional values and political ideology was transmitted through historically encoded social habits. His concern is valid for the Church in the context of evangelisation: “Not that they will disappear, but they are weakened unless their power becomes multiplied by the electronic materialisation of spiritually transmitted habits. . . . Superior spiritual powers still conquer souls but lose their superhuman status” (Castells, 2000, p. 406).

Interpreting his concern in the context of evangelisation, it becomes clear that participation in communication on the Internet can strengthen the Church’s evangelisation process. If the Internet connects the minds of young people, building online networks may be an opportunity for the Church to evangelise young people in a profound way. This possibility is discussed in chapter 4 in the light of de Chardin’s vision. Now, the debate moves on to explore Christian initiatives Online.

Some Christian Initiatives Online

“Consider, for instance, satellite telecasts of religious ceremonies which often reach a global audience, or the positive capacities of the Internet to carry religious information and teaching beyond all barriers and frontiers” (John Paul II, 2001c, para. 3).

The use of the Internet by Christians began in the 1980s (Hutchins, 2007, p. 243). The Church Computer User Network (CCUN), an ecumenical and national organisation started in the US by the United Methodist Church, is an early example of Christian initiatives online (Campbell, 2005, p. 64). Hutchins (2007) refers to evangelicals as using Bulletin Board Systems around the mid 1980s. Campbell (2005) identifies three dominant expressions of cyber participation by Christians: (1) cyberchurches; (2) e-vangelism and (3) Online Christian communities. Each of these is now considered.

Cyber churches

Campbell (2005) adopts Dixon’s approach in defining two forms of cyber churches: (a) As the body of all Christians who interact, using global computer networks and (b) as an electronically linked group of believers, aiming to reproduce in cyberspace aspects of conventional church life. Hutchins (2007) did some interesting research in a case study of three cyber churches where he tried to comprehend the intensity of religious experience taking place in them. In this study he contrasts two kinds of interactions. One is textual interaction and the other is graphical. “The first virtual worlds were text-based, in that their environments and the events occurring within them were described using words rather than images” (Bartle, 2003, p. 1). Hutchins (2007) talks about the ‘immersion’ of a player in these virtual worlds. Distinguishing between the two, he says that text is better for intimate, intense, imaginative worlds where thought is more important than action. He identifies

graphics as being good for gregarious, large-scale, beautiful virtual worlds where action is more important. He is trying to challenge an argument in the Vatican document 'The Church and Internet' which suggests that virtual reality is no substitute for shared worship in a human community. Although interesting, his findings do not seem to pose a challenge to the stance of the Catholic Church, from a theological or communications point of view.

Campbell (2005) gives the example of the cyber church founded by Charles Henderson. It is a consortium of ecumenical churches and individuals who meet online every Sunday evening for conversations, using Internet Relay Chat (IRC). The WebChurch and Virtual Church of the Blind Chihuahua are other examples given by Campbell (2005) in her book *Exploring Religious Community Online*. She notes that, while dozens of cyber churches exist and continue to emerge online, in various forms, more are in the broadcast form rather than being interactive.

E-vangelism

Careaga (2002) coined the term *e-vangelism* which means *sharing the Gospel in cyberspace*. It involves using the Internet as a tool for missionary work to reach out to those who are estranged from the Church. According to Campbell, this focuses on presenting a purposeful Christian presence in cyberspace through a variety of means such as websites, chat rooms and e-mail lists. The Gospel Communication Network, launched in 1995, is presented as one of the first organizations to see the Internet as a potential "mission field". Other examples are: Who is Jesus (<http://www.ccci.org/wij/>?); Gospelcom's Online Evangelism web guide (www.gospelcom.net/guide) and Brigada's Online Web Evangelism Guide (www.brigada.org/today/articles/web-evangelism.html). Another site is e-vangelism.com by Careaga (Campbell, 2005, p. 66).

Online Christian Communities

The improvement in participation for an individual is a unique innovation on the Internet. My space, bebo, orkut and other similar social web sites have given more power to the individual in the sense that anyone who is familiar with the technology can participate in online social interaction, transcending real life impediments. Horsfield and Teusner (2007) uphold this view: "In this decade we have watched the Internet evolve, moving from Oldweb to Web 2.0, facilitating interaction between users and resulting in the exponential growth of Internet sites around the world" (p. 287).

The phrase Web 2.0 signifies a new set of Internet applications such as social networking sites, wikis, filesharing networks, folksonomies and syndication sites. These social interactions are on the increase. Depending on how the Church responds to these new cultural spheres, it may be able to reach out to young people in the future. This may be the context in which the Vatican showed an interest in establishing an interactive site in 2006: "People will be able to find each other and work together online, and then go back and use what they have learned or done in their own communities" (Zenit, 2006). Campbell (2005) identifies the gathering of the "digital body of Christ" in online Christian Communities as a third significant form of online Christianity. This facilitates interactions with believers who are separated by geography but share some sort of religious connection. Also she cites ReaperNet (<http://chat.reapernet.com/>) as one example of online Christian Communities facilitating two way interaction through various computer technologies such as chat room and e-mail. Websites like xt3.com can be considered as initiatives by the Catholic Church initiating online interactions for young people.

Online Youth

Careaga (2002) suggests using the Internet as a tool for youth ministry. The findings of a study by the Barna Research Group (US) in 1998 regarding a future online Church for young people are presented by Campbell (2005). The group proclaimed that the cyber church was about to come. It was based on a national survey of teenagers where one out of six said they expected to use the Internet as a substitute for current church-based religious experience. Their activities, as presented by Campbell (2005), include interaction with others in chat rooms or e-mail exchanges about religious beliefs. Much earlier McLuhan (1967) observed that, "The young today reject goals. They want roles. . . . Young people are looking for a formula for putting on the universe – participation mystique" (McLuhan, and Fiore, 1967, p.100, p.114). Applying this to online activity, it suggests that young people may require a participative experience in cyberspace, whether it be broadly religious, Christian or Catholic. The role of the Church may be to prepare interactive and participative cyber communities which are appropriate for the young. This can help narrow the distance between the realm of the Divine and the sphere of young people. The Internet has become a medium where a plethora of human experiences and needs can be met, using its ever increasing number of websites. Considering young people as Cybersouls, based on what is available in cyberspace, how can the evangelisation of the young be achieved online? What are the facilities on the Internet that could enable the Church to initiate a relationship with young people? What are the factors that could help start a spiritual dialogue with young people? If spaces of spiritual dialogue can be created, how can they be sustained? These are some of the issues to be explored in this research. Some significant areas related to the building up of an online space for evangelisation of young people are discussed below.

Catholic Cyber Culture

In one way, Church communication can be viewed as mass communication because, on a day-to-day basis, the Church is dealing with a very large number of people. The same message of the Good News is being imparted to many people on a regular basis. However it is not quite like other mass communication media. It takes place in small communities, at different locations in the world, at different times of the day or night. Yet, in the communication of evangelisation, the same message is communicated all over the world, i.e., the message of the Good News. Therefore, before delving further into the possibilities of sharing the Good News Online, the relationship between communication and the Church needs to be clarified.

Communication and 'Communio' in the Catholic Church

According to Henrici (1994), "the Church is not simply an organisation constituted by communication – as are all organisations. The Church is constituted in order to communicate" (p. 45). It was established in the previous chapter that communication is necessary for the fundamental evangelical mission of the Church – spreading the Good News. This chapter shows that communication itself is fundamental to the Church and can be established from the point of view of the ecclesiology of *communio*:

Koinonia/communion, founded on the Sacred Scripture, has been held in great honor in the early Church and in the Oriental Churches to this day. Thus, much was done by the Second Vatican Council so that the Church as communion might be more clearly understood and concretely incorporated into life. (Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, 1985, para. II-B-b-I)

Founded on the scripture (1 Cor 10:16-17) and regarded as central to the life of the Church from early times (Vatican II, 1964a, para. 4)³, Vatican II also upheld the theme *communio*. Thus, the Church has been seen as “a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Vatican II, 1964a, para. 4). Here the term *communio* refers back to the communion of a triune God, the communion of three persons in the trinity. The ontology of this relational communion is expressed in the Catholic Encyclopedia in the following way: “For God, substantial being is being related” (Kress and Malanowski, 2003, p. 28). Consequently, God’s very being is the relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This means that God’s very substance is a communicated being. Here communication becomes fundamental to the Trinitarian communion. Human beings are invited to be in communion with this inescapable ‘being with’. This *communio* is the model as well as the goal of human life. The relationship between communication and communion becomes explicit here. This was fundamental to the philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas because he used the word *communicatio* (communication) for *communio* (communion) and *communitas* (community) (Granfield, 1994, p. 4). Thus it is evident that communication is fundamental to community as well as communion.

The following description of this *communio* shows that it is a dynamic union. Theologians use the term *perichoresis* to describe this *communio*. This means that, “God is so full of being that his oneness is manyness, a manyness that in no way divides or separates, negates or isolates his oneness” (Kress and Malanowski, 2003, p. 28). According to the synod of Bishops in 1985, basically it is a communion with God through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. The Word of God and the sacraments are the means of this communion. Baptism is its

³ The main references of *Lumen Gentium* are from Sacred Scripture but it gives supplementary notes referring to the early Fathers as follows: S. Cyprianus, De Orat Dom. 23: PL 4, 5S3, Hartel, III A, p. 28S. S. Augustinus, Sermon. 71, 20, 33: PL 38, 463 s. S. Io. Damascenus, Adv. Iconocl. 12: PG 96, 1358 D. supplementary notes *4, *Lumen Gentium* art. 4 also preliminary notes of explanations art. 2.

door and the foundation. The Eucharist is the fount and apex of the whole Christian life (Vatican II, 1964a, para. 11). The communion of the Eucharistic Body of Christ builds up the intimate communion of all the faithful in the Body of Christ which is the Church (1 Cor. 10:16) (Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, 1985, para. II-B-b-I).

Concrete Instances of 'Communio': The communication of God's very relational being is reflected in the various instances of *communio* in the world and the Church. Kienzler (1994) identifies five instances of this communion in relation to the Church:

- (a) *Communio* - Community with God: In the light of the documents of Vatican II (1964a para. 4; 1964a, para. 2) the instituting of the Church is like an icon reflecting the Trinitarian fellowship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit (1964a, para. 2)⁴.
- (b) *Communio* - Eucharistic Community: The Trinitarian communion is made visible in the Eucharistic communion (Vatican II, 1964a, para. 7)⁵.
- (c) *Communio* - The Unity of the Church: Communion originated from the trinity, was made concrete in the Eucharistic communion and is now imbibed and reflected in the structure and order of the Church through ecclesial communication.
- (d) *Communio* - Communion of the Faithful (*Fidelium*): The communication which occurs within the Church manifests a communion between individual members as an assembly of individually communicating persons⁶ (Vatican II, 1964a, chapter 1 and chapter 2, para. 7).

⁴ "What has revealed the love of God among us is that the Father has sent into the world His only-begotten Son, so that, being made man, He might by His redemption give new life to the entire human race and unify it" *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Vatican II, 1964b, para. 2).

⁵ "Really partaking of the body of the Lord in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread, we are taken up into communion with Him and with one another. "Because the bread is one, we though many, are one body, all of us who partake of the one bread". In this way all of us are made members of His Body, "but severally members one of another"." *Lumen Gentium* (Vatican II, 1964a, para. 7).

⁶ "As all the members of the human body, though they are many, form one body, so also are the faithful in Christ. Also, in the building up of Christ's Body various members and functions have their part to play. There is only one Spirit who, according to His own richness and the needs of the ministries, gives His different gifts for the welfare of the Church." *Lumen Gentium* (Vatican II, 1964a, para. 7).

- (e) *Communio* - Sacrament for the World: This *communio* of the Church is intended to be the sign of salvation for the world. The commitment to justice, peace and freedom for all human beings and nations and to a civilization based on love, is a fundamental perspective of the Church today (Kienzler, 1994, p. 85-88).

According to *Lumen Gentium* (Vatican II, 1964a), *communio* is used to designate the entire 'mystical body of Jesus Christ': those in glory who are purified and those still on pilgrimage (para. 50). *Communio* includes all processes and elements that make communion possible. It is a mutual sharing of the self. It is a dynamic, mutual and creative mediation/communication of the self. Community is the result of this *communio*. The Church is at the receiving end of the gift of God himself; at the same time, the Church is modeled on the Trinitarian community in its communication and communion. Having established the importance of communication in the *communio* and *communitas* (communion and community), next, the nature of communication in the Church is considered.

Communication and 'Communio': Plude (1994) attempts to adapt the Church's communication to the cyber age in her article 'Interactive Communication in the Church'. She uses the term 'interactive technologies' to include 'the impact of communication satellites, telephony, computer technologies and the integration of communications and computers. Pottmeyer's understanding of three dimensions of Church communication are described by her as follows:

- (1) Communication within the Church (*communio fidelium, communion ecclesiarum*);
- (2) Extra-ecclesial communication (the Church as the sacrament of the Kingdom within the unity of mankind); and
- (3) The self-communication of God (history of salvation) (Plude, 1994, p. 187-190).

She establishes that all Church communication converges within the framework of divine self-communication. Thus the Church's role is one of a sign or witness. Similarly, Sierra-Gutiérrez reflects upon communication as self mediation:

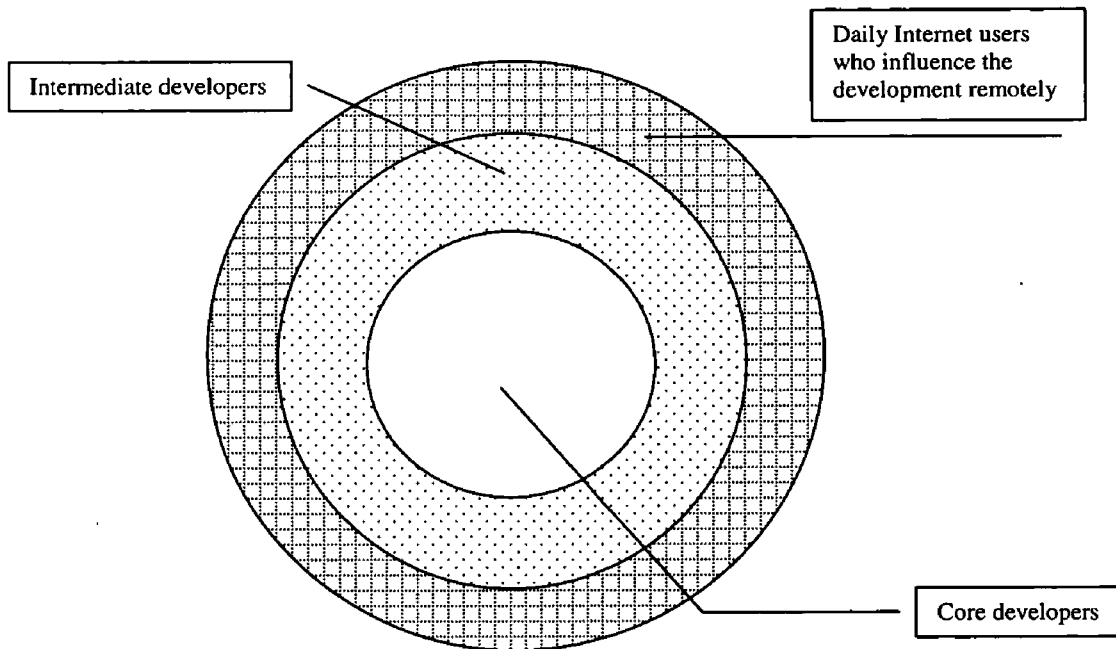
Communication, conceived as a mutual self-mediation of human beings, their meanings, and values becomes dynamic and transformative. It is a space where a co-production, a co-reference, a co-creation of new shared meanings, a co-transformation of wholes constituted by common meanings and values is performed. (Sierra-Gutiérrez, 1993, p. 273)

It has been established that communication is fundamental to the Church in view of the ecclesiology of *communio*. As a new instrument of social communication, the Internet can be instrumental for the Church in its pilgrimage towards reaching the Trinitarian *communio*. As communication happening within *communio* is understood as self-mediation, a personalised form of online interaction would be required to initiate the journey of the Church towards this goal. These questions are addressed in the next chapter. Some areas of the participation of the Church on the Internet are discussed below.

Spheres of Interaction between the Church and the Internet

Three categories of people are connected to the Internet, using it as a medium of communication like any other medium. As shown in Fig 3.3, these are: core developers; intermediate developers and daily users with remote influence on development.

Fig 3.3 Three Categories of Internet Users



Some questions arise at this juncture. (1) What level of intimacy exists between the Church and the Internet? (2) Where do the Church and its baptised members stand in the above circles? (3) Has the Church got any power to influence the core development of the Internet? The participation of the Church in the above three levels of Internet use can provide ways of improving internal communication in the Church. In addition, this can open up opportunities of influencing the medium. In turn, eventually this can lead to initiating new avenues of evangelisation.

In the previous chapter on evangelisation, it was established that the Internet can be used by the Church for two main purposes: (1) improving internal communication in the Church; and (2) evangelisation. The Internet, with its apparent richness arising from its characteristics of speed of communication, geographical reach, data storage and retrieval and the ability to combine multimedia, seems to be suitable as a means of effective communication. This is based on viewing the Internet as a medium of communication.

In the three categories in Fig.3.7, the outer group of people who migrate to the Internet prove that it is not just similar to any other traditional medium. They turn the Internet into a space for *social* interaction, making themselves present online by creating a personal page. By uploading their personal profile, photos and video clips, they make it a dynamic space. This seems to be a skill which many young people have acquired. They create a space for dynamic interaction between themselves. This includes people using web 2.0, referred to earlier in the previous section. It is a significant and unique aspect of cyberspace. The intermediate developers made it possible for the influx of daily internet users to logon. By participating on the Internet as either intermediate developers or core developers the Church will be enabled to forge a more effective and systematic engagement in its interaction with young people.

In this context of social networking, Fernback (1997) draws on the work of Urry who suggests that cyberspace is not matter but rather a set of culturally bound relations as well as an empirical construct. This is a humanistic approach to cyberspace. The Catholic theology of evangelisation is also humanistic, according to the teachings of Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II, as discussed in the previous chapter. Some of thinking about cyberspace and catholic evangelisation share the same common ground – humanism. In similar vein, some potential areas where the Catholic Church can take initiatives are considered below.

A Catholic Cyber Prospect

In earlier times before the advent of the Internet, the Church experienced 'interconnectedness' in different parts of the world. The same message was being shared and the same memory was being relived in the Eucharist and the sacraments. The vehicles of the Good News were the existing forms of communication such as orality, literacy and ritual/visual presentation. Handing on the tradition was achieved both orally and in writing.

In addition, at the core of evangelisation, the sacraments were letting people participate and, by involvement in the rituals or visual presentation, the message was made personal and experiential. (Here aspects of evangelisation are being considered from the perspective of communication. The purpose of the study is not to analyse the aspect of grace and the divine nature of the sacraments.) The Good News was the common denominator in all churches in different parts of the world. This interconnected nature of the Church was upheld by the hierarchical structure as well as by the different apostolic traditions.

This does not mean that new technology, leading to McLuhan's 'global village', has nothing to offer the Church. On the contrary, the new electronic media can impact on it in many ways. By availing of new developments in technology, the Church, similar to any other institution, can improve its communication of information both internally and externally. However, if the Church fails to take fuller advantage of the possibilities open to it through great use of information technology, it is losing out on a powerful medium. Three of its advantages are described below:

(i) The Internet, being a global storage and retrieval system, can help retrieve the cultural memory of the world. If the Church, with its global presence, participates, the cultural diversity of the globe may be recalled. As Fernback (1997) observes, 'cyberspace is a repository for collective cultural memory' (p. 37). In the context of the European Union, the Internet can be used for retrieval and recollection of the spiritual memory of Europe.

Not only in Europe but all over the world, a recollection of the Christian culture can be instructive in informing the younger generation of the spiritual patrimony of respective places. It is more applicable to Europe, where Catholic culture has been a major influence in

the past. The Roman martyrology gives the names of saints and spiritual centres of the World. They were the cultural centres of the world at a particular time. The monastic Christian culture paved the way for modern culture in many locations. Bosch (1991) captures one such memory relating to the importance of monks.

The monks were poor and they worked incredibly hard; they ploughed, hedged, drained morasses, cleared away forests, did carpentry, thatched, and built roads and bridges. Even secular historians acknowledge that the agricultural restoration of the largest part of Europe has to be attributed to them. They turned the tide of barbarism in Western Europe and brought back into cultivation the lands which had been deserted and depopulated in the age of the invasions.

(Bosch, 1991, p. 231-232)

While, the memory of this patrimony is fading, the Internet, it seems, can retrieve it. This requires a collective approach. In the context of World Youth Day, when young people move from their home country, there are two ways of recollecting the Christian Cultural memory. One is by identifying the spiritual memory of the place where the particular World Youth Day is located. A second way is to identify the Christian history of the place from which they have come. For example, in the context of Spain where WYD 2011 took place, there are many saints there in the Roman martyrology. As there are a lot of immigrants from various parts of Europe in Spain, a recollection of the importance of Christian culture in those locations from which they migrated to Spain could be insightful.

(ii) "The Internet is another in a line of modern technologies that undermine the traditional notions of civil society that require unity and shun multiplicity, while giving the impression that they in fact re-create such a society" (Jones, 1997, p. 25). The Internet seems to be a

medium which can be used like a web, holding links between the multiplicity of traditions, spiritualities, cultures, languages, liturgical practices and geographical distances that compose and define the Catholic Church. It is built in such a way that if a node is destroyed at one end of the whole system, the Internet, as such, cannot be destroyed. It is a matrix of computers, linked around the globe, that can work by sending data from other nodes and through alternative routes, if some nodes and routes are destroyed. Similarly, a bird's-eye-view of the Church over time and space suggests that the Church itself can be viewed as a matrix of different spiritualities, liturgical traditions, founded on various cultures and a collection of individual churches. Theological schools try incessantly to extract meaning from the historical and cultural differences in the Church over time. Its survival system worked through its diversity. Alternatively, when the Church faced serious set-backs, its diversity could be viewed as a survival system developed over time. Thus decentralisation of its spiritual capacities or spiritual good is not new for the Church. The Internet, with a similar surviving mechanism, can facilitate the Church in spreading its message in the future.

(iii) Thirdly, the participation of the Church in cyberspace can make it a space free of constraints. The Internet is a place advocating decentralisation of authority. This trend of decentralisation sometimes gives the impression that the Internet is a space where there is no control at all because the control system is not as visible as in a single control unit. Are there moral laws and ethical guidelines that define the Internet, making it a space of interaction not for an archaic but for a civilised society? Advocates of free speech and libertarians try to proclaim the Internet as a free space. The possibility of anonymity for people interacting online has made it easy for others to prey on those who are vulnerable through online interaction. As in the past, when the law of retaliation (*lex talionis*) ruled in Old Testament times, legislation found new frontiers on the Internet. Since the Internet provides such a huge

space for human interaction, the participation of the Church in its cultural spheres can help the Internet change its image among 'lay' people who fear its negative aspects. Christian humanism is founded on human development and the ultimate freedom of the human spirit. Cyberspace is a human space. At the same time, if cyberspace can be free to the level of enjoying the ultimate freedom of ancient societies, there is a possibility that barbarism can rule in its secret shades. "Based on this perception of cyberspace as a vast treasure-trove of materials ready for appropriation, we often make use of whatever we find without seeking the person who has extended him-or herself [sic] towards us" (Mahfood, 2008).

This section on Catholic Cyber Culture has explored the fundamental necessity of communication as a constitutive reality of it being *communio*. Spheres of interaction between the Church and the Internet were then analysed before finally discussing some future possibilities online.

3.4 Conclusion

Initially, a general theory of communication was presented, followed by a review of the changes in models of communication with the introduction of the Internet. Then the discussion moved to the technology of the Internet. In unweaving the web from its origin and development, the progression of the Internet from an information sharing medium to a social space was outlined. This led to a review of the characteristics of the medium. Major changes in communication, making the Internet a medium of individual interaction, were then considered before analysing some concerns about cyber communication.

The next section dealt mainly with how cyberspace has influenced the realm of religion. Initially, online initiatives in the broad sphere of religion were considered. Regarding young

people as 'cybersouls', the possibility of presenting Jesus Christ online was explored. Then the Christian view of the Internet was examined. Finally, the Catholic concept of communication was analysed before considering some possible initiatives online. As youth evangelisation online is the focus of this explanatory study, the next chapter presents an in-depth analysis of youth.

CHAPTER 4

EMPOWERING YOUTH IN CYBERSPACE

The sharing of the Good News with young people through the Internet is the focus of this research. The three main areas for consideration in the study are: evangelisation in the Catholic Church, the Internet as a means of evangelisation and the involvement of young people in the process of evangelisation. Following the introductory chapter, the concept of evangelisation within the Catholic tradition was considered in chapter 2 while chapter 3 identified the possible features of the Internet that could be used for evangelisation. Young people are the focus of this chapter.

With a view to exploring the possibilities of empowering young people, the first section of this chapter examines the concept of youth. Next, some of the important characteristics of young people in this information age are identified. Following this, issues regarding young people as natives of post-modern era are reviewed. Then, various possibilities of cyber relationships between young people are discussed. Finally, the theoretical foundation of a project of online faith development for young people is considered.

4.1 The Concept of Youth

What does the word 'youth' signify? Is 'youth' a mere biological period in the process of human development? According to Boran (1999), an expert in youth ministry, "Youth starts with puberty and finishes more or less when the body finishes growing" (p. 106). Other scholars in the area of youth ministry categorise youth within a particular age group. "I define youth ministry as the Church's ministry to, with, by and for young people from ages fourteen

to twenty-five" (Zanzig, 1987, p.41). However, Fulton et al, (2000) in a research context, consider that youth can range well beyond the age 24 and point out the anomaly in such categorisation. In identifying the exact population of young adults for youth ministry, Warren (1982) observes that it is difficult to specify this population by age. He considers that a particular age group as well as need groups are to be identified in order to achieve an effective youth ministry:

Those concerned about ministry to young adults will have to continue specifying the particular population they are concerned with: young marrieds under thirty; young singles under thirty; divorced persons of a particular age range; young adult homosexuals; Vietnam veterans; or the unemployed. My own use of "young adults" will refer to persons between twenty and thirty-five.

(Warren, 1982, p. 113)

Some concerns arise at this juncture. The first relates to those factors that constitute the category of people called 'youth'. The next concern is about the terms or phrases that are used by the above scholars in referring to youth.

The latter will be addressed first. All these scholars seem to have used the terms youth, young people and young adults when referring to this physiological period in human life ranging from adolescence to adulthood. Also these terms have been used interchangeably without much distinction between them even if, literally, they have different meanings. According to the Oxford Dictionary (1987), the first meaning of the word youth is given as 'the state of being young'. It is also used as a term to signify a young person (second meaning). As a third meaning, 'youth' is used as a collective term meaning 'young men' and 'women'. The word 'young' is an adjective and has the first meaning (when contrasted with 'old') as not far

advanced in life, growth, development etc. Thus the word 'youth' seems to mean both a stage of life as well as a person or people of that age. In this study, the term 'young people' and 'youth' are used interchangeably. Further information on the term 'youth' and 'young people' in the next section sheds more light on the concept of being young. The factors which constitute the category of people referred to as 'youth' are detailed in later sections.

The Phenomenon of Youth

In an article entitled "Archetypal Patterns of Youth", Eisenstadt (1963) provides some insights on 'youth'. He sees 'youth' as a biologic phenomenon defined in cultural terms. Even if every human being passes through various ages and at each age he/she performs different tasks, Eisenstadt (1963) argues that, in most societies, the period of transition from childhood to full adult status or full membership in society is given a special emphasis. According to Boran (1999) youth is a phase in human life embracing adolescence and post-adolescence in which many important decisions are taken. "What it means to be young is also shaped by culture" (Boran 1999, p. 106). He points out the social, psychological and cultural implications of this period. A holistic vision of 'youth', which contains all the crucial elements of any definition of age, is found in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1977). It combines the biological, social and cultural changes happening in the stages of life of a human being: "... youth thus begins with the onset of puberty and, after a number of years in which further experience and training are received, finally fits the individual for full citizenship in his own particular society and culture" (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1977, p.1090).

Youth cannot be considered merely in biological or psychological terms. There are external factors or agents that help to draw out, shape or develop youth as we understand it today.

Eisenstadt (1963) sheds light on this aspect of the development of youth: “‘Youth’ is the stage at which the individual’s personality acquires the basic psychological mechanism of self-regulation and self-control, when his/her self-identity becomes crystallized” (Eisenstadt, 1963, p. 32). Viewed in this way, youth essentially carries the implications of a transitional and developmental process of attaining the maturity of adulthood. Those agents that shape youth also become important. Can the Church act as a catalyst in this development of youth? If the Church wants to adopt this role, an understanding of those social and cultural factors that influence young people in the contemporary world needs to be developed.

Youth Labels

Some of the labels used to refer to young people over the past few decades provide an insight into their nature. Baby boomers, Generation X and Net Generation (NetGen) (Generation Y) are some categorisations given in relation to young people (Hill, 2001). Beaudoin (1998) claims that the Generation X (those born after the late 1960s) tries to find meaning through immersion in popular culture, whether it be movies or music. Image is the foundation of their experience. In contrast, a conversation quoted by Rabey (2001) is tinged with a slightly negative view:

What is TNL (Tuesday Nite Live)? asked the ministry’s newsletter. It’s a Generation X thing. What is Generation X? It’s a generation of young adults who have been stereo typed as slackers, but who really are the best hope for the future.
(Rabey, 2001, p. 3)

While Rabey (2001) indicates a labelling of young people tinged with negativity, Fulton et al. (2000) deem that both media and academia consider this generation as postmodern:

Both media and academia often charge that the West has entered a postmodern, post-Christian or post religious society and that this change has increased the rate of decline of religious belief and belonging, and damaged personal and social morality, with particular effects on the young adult generation (sometimes referred to in the literature as *Generation X*). (Fulton et al, 2000, p. 2)

This view also suggests a negative picture of youth in the postmodern setting. Careaga (2001) identified three generations which constitute the majority of Net users today: baby boomers (born between 1945-late 1960), Generation X (born between 1960-1980) and the emerging Net Generation, as he calls them. There are some scholars who name those born after 1980 as *Generation Y*, or millennials (Malphurs and Malphurs, 2003). Burke-Sullivan (2008) considers that young people of *Generation Y* want human community. She identifies them as experts in electronic and virtual communication who seem to crave actual physical presence.

These three categories capture what constitutes youth today. They find their meaning of life through immersion in the image centred popular culture. Also postmodern youth are strong participants in the modern medium of the Internet. One major factor underlying the three main classifications is identified by Hill (2001). He detects those young people whose social reality is constructed from the messages they are exposed to by the commercial media and the Internet. These young people are the main subject of this research.

Young people setting out to face life on their own take responsibilities and initiatives by themselves. This development may be applicable to Church activities as well. Letting young people take initiatives and giving them the power, independence, authority as well as credit for those initiatives may be a necessity for the Church in order to be 'young again'. In a

similar vein, innovation in communications technology is opening up new ground for young people, giving them more power. 'The do-it-yourself generation', a label used by Crawford and Rossiter (2006), may be a suitable appellation to capture these features of young people. While this categorisation may identify some of the characteristics of young people, Crawford and Rossiter (2006, p. 216) issue a marking note in this regard, observing that: "Today's young – those aged 18-30 – are universal in their rejection of what they see to be extreme, oversimplified pigeonholes".

Why is there such interest in youth today?

There seems to be an increased interest in youth today. At a general level, there is a visible and explicit interest in young people. There are bill boards featuring advertisements oriented towards young people or depicting images of them. Both business and media target youth. Many bank websites have a special section for them. The world of entertainment is also orientated towards youth. Governments have special youth departments and so have international bodies such as the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN). Also there are voluntary organisations which are dedicated specifically to youth development. Similarly, the Church is interested in young people.

Apparent Alienation

Researchers suggest that there is an apparent absence of young people from traditional spaces of worship, giving rise to anxiety among the older generation. Malphurs and Malphurs (2003) report that only 34 per cent of *Generation X* and 29 per cent of *Generation Y* attend a church. A similar downward trend in the faith commitment of young Catholics is noticed by Briggs (2008), based on the decrease in Mass attendance from 37 per cent in the early 1970s to 19 percent in 2002. An acceleration in the drift from the Church is observed also by Kay and

Francis (1996). In other institutions, a similar trend is noticed. 'Changing expectations' and 'apparent disaffection of young people with traditional forms of participation in public life' are two phrases used by the EU as reasons for initiating a youth portal entitled the European Youth Portal (European Union, 2008).

This focus on youth is not just a recent phenomenon. Much earlier, a similar alienation on the part of youth was observed by Cardinal Joseph Cardijn which inspired him to found the international organisation of Young Christian Workers (YCW) in Belgium in 1925. Powers (1967) considered YCW, together with its associated projects, as the largest Roman Catholic Organisation of the laity of that time. When Cardijn returned for vacation during his first year as a seminarian, he discovered that his old school friends had abandoned the Church and religious practice and no longer looked upon him as a friend. He considered that this change of attitude on the part of his friends was connected with an unprepared entry into the working environment (Trauth, 1967). The impact of industrialisation was a contributory factor at that time. This observation is endorsed by Boran (1999):

As technology advanced in the industrial society, the demands for qualified workers also grew. . . . For the first time in human history there were such large agglomerations of young people in the same place. To a certain extent youth became isolated from the rest of society and took on characteristics of a society apart. (p. 107)

These earlier developments show that alienation of young people is not new. Rather, there is evidence to suggest that, early on in the last century, the progress of industrialisation impacted on young people, leading them to become alienated from the Church. The establishment of YCW is an example of the Church's response to concerns about the impact

of industrialisation on youth during that period also it responded to concern about youth and delinquency, as can be seen in the next section.

Juvenile Delinquency

Juvenile delinquency was another key phrase in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which brought the plight of young people to the attention of the wider society. Research conducted by Healy and Alper (1941) goes back as far as 1876 in relation to criminal youth and their 'reformatories'. Similar studies were published by Mays (1972) Rutter and Giller (1983), Amos and Wellford (1967) and the U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare (1971). In relation to juvenile delinquency, Powers (1967) corroborates the need for the individual development and empowerment of a young person. In his article 'Prevention through Religion' he states that the challenge of the churches is to provide the religious and moral "climate" conducive to healthy growth to maturity (cited in Amos and Wellford, 1967). According to Johnston (1975), when such juvenile unrest brought young people into focus, the Church responded to this through the companion of youth, John Bosco. Oratories for young boys and girls established by John Bosco (1815-1888) became a beacon of light, recognised widely in Europe from 1847 onwards. In addition to these examples of a more focused interest in youth, there is a broadened interest in the concept, which is now considered.

A Universal Search for Youth: A broad thrust is discernible which underpins the interest in youth. This is evident in the fundamental quest for the spirit of youth in the universe. It is reflected in the myths of rejuvenation and events in nature. Accounts of special elixirs such as particular fruits and herbs that would make one young again are found in all cultures across the globe (Eliade cited in Clift, 1987). According to Clift (1987), this quest for 'youth' is also seen in Christianity in Jesus' invitation for spiritual renewal: No-one can see the kingdom of

God unless he is born again (Jn 3: 3). Thus the interest of the Church in young people may be interpreted as an innate and fundamental quest for rejuvenation, which is a natural quest in the broader universe.

This romantic cult of youth is reflected in its contemporary expressions, according to Jagodzinski (2004, p. 233): "Metaphorically, they are the phantasmatic and fecund energy that potentially animates all persons regardless of their chronological age. Youth, from this perspective, mediates lived experience and transcendence." He refers to the postmodern culture of youth, highlighting various spaces enfolded by them such as cyberspace, seemingly disparate and meaningless modern entertainments represented in movies such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *X-files*, trends in the lyrics of pop music, new postmodern hieroglyph found in music videos that can only be read by youth and video games (Jagodzinski, 2004). This gives rise to the need to be familiar with the culture of young people. Some of its characteristics are now considered.

4.2 Characteristics of Cyber-age Youth

As discussed earlier, Careaga (2001) identified three generations which constitute the majority of Net users today: baby boomers, Generation X and the emerging Net Generation. The emerging generation, who are citizens of the cyber world, are considered here in order to explore and understand their culture. As the Internet philosopher Turkle (1996, p. 77) observes, "Today children are growing up in the computer culture; all the rest of us are at best its naturalized citizens". Some of the features of the cyber generation are set out below.

Popular Culture

Beaudoin (1998) cites pop music scholar Simon Frith in order to explain pop culture. He says that there are three ways of defining pop culture: as produced by a culture *for* the people (people consume what is fed to them); as the culture *of* the people (people consume what resonates with their own values); as the culture *by* the people (popular ways in which people live daily life). He points out that Xers are creators as much as receivers of pop culture. Their culture can be identified in the following terrain of their lives.

On the Net

The search by young people for free spaces where they can be in control, where they can feel free, where they can be with friends of the same peer group and not under the supervision and control of adults, is identified by Boran (1999) as one of the core elements of youth culture. This results in the 'generation lap', as Careaga (2001) labels it, as the children are lapping their parents in their knowledge of computers and the digital revolution. They navigate on the Internet almost by instinct, while their parents grapple with trying to understand how it works. A study on the network society reveals these details of Internet use: "The average age of Internet users in the US in the year 2000 was 36 years and in the UK and China it was below 30. In Russia only 15 % of the Internet users were older than 45" (Castells, 2000, p. 377).

The above statistics, which confirm that young people are the natives of the Internet, provide a persuasive argument for opening a space of ministry of relationship to young people on the Internet. Beaudoin (1998) said that, even though the number of young people using the Internet was a small percentage of the total population, it was possible to identify their influence on popular culture. This situation is changed now. As mentioned in chapter 1,

Internet use by age shows that usage is highest in 12-29 year group, reaching 93% by 2009 (Lenhart et al, 2010). This endorses the popularity of the medium for the young generation in the US. The 500 million users of Facebook (Elliot, 2010) provide similar evidence of popularity of net usage by young people. Another survey is quoted by Vogt (2011) which says that over 96% of young adults have joined a social network. This being the trend in the cyber world, the context in which many young people live their lives needs to be taken into account. This is considered next.

Disintegrating Families

Some of the challenges which face youth today are identified by Boran (1999, p. 116): "Young people are born into an environment where there are no role models and no atmosphere that will nurture growth". Careaga (2001) cites a study in the United States, undertaken in 1997, which found that four out of every five children between the age of nine and seventeen consider a one-parent home normal. Faced with this reality, in his view, Churches that build ministries on the assumption that two-parent households are the norm will need to change their approaches to ministry. The Church can no longer guarantee the faith formation of young people as it happened in the past when families were instructed to take care of their children (Careaga, 2001). However, it is suggested that new ways can be found to introduce this relationship of God to His People through the use of the Internet.

4.3 Natives of the Post-modern Era

Young people of today are natives of the post-modern age. The cultural shift from the modern to the postmodern, which began in the 1960s, is astonishing. Anyone born after 1960 is "native" to this era. Other generations are naturalized citizens. So, whether native or naturalized, we all are part of the postmodern world (Gallagher, 2003).

Post-modern thinking encourages questioning and a critical response to modernity, especially in terms of humanism and enlightenment thinking. Ministry in post-modern mode raises a series of questions for modernist assumptions. People no longer speak of universal principles and laws, valid for all times and places. Instead they look for the particular historical, cultural, social and familial values that may have contributed to this particular set of principles and laws being useful in a particular set of circumstances. In the absence of grand narratives, particular movements, with clearly defined limited objectives, are now in vogue (Ward, 1997). As Boran (1999) sees it, in a post-modern culture, the place of residence is increasingly less important. It is possible to live in a rural area and be as well informed about the latest fashion in New York or London as youth who live in a large city in any part of the globe. In such circumstances, networking is of importance. Those ministering to youth and others can become more and more connected across the globe through the use of the Internet and local initiatives and practices can assume a greater significance for many more people.

According to Careaga (2001), young people steeped in this postmodern culture and heavily influenced by what the entertainment industry feeds them, pick and choose the ingredients for their own personal spirituality from a variety of belief systems. He adds that they have a self centered, practical and personal faith form that is more about stress reduction than salvation, more therapeutic than theological. However the presence of the Church on the Internet may provide spiritual insights to this post-modern generation who look for all kinds of information online. The challenge arises in finding new ways of packaging the spirituality and faith of the Catholic tradition in ways which befit the technology of the Internet, as well as the culture and taste of the post-modern generation.

Generational Conflict

As Careaga (2001) sees it, the post-modern, multicultural, global, networked society and the forces sweeping our cultural landscape today - forces that N-Geners accept matter-of-factly as "just the way things are"- pose dramatic challenges for the Church. Beaudoin (1998) argues that, while most people in the past would not consider fashion and Music TV as a spiritual need, to Generation Xers they are as dear as any of our grandparent's religious devotions. Careaga (2001) quotes Christian sociologist Barna who considers that the Church stands at the crossroads today and must choose between two paths:

She must choose between defending the traditional structure, which impedes effective ministry, or embarking on a new path that allows her to conform to her biblical mandate and still respond to the practical needs of her members.

(cited in Careaga, 2001, p. 63)

Here Careaga identifies a possible bipolar tension for the Church in evangelising youth. It involves making a 2000 year old faith, tradition and practices relevant to the present young generation. Jagodzinski (2004), Livingstone (2002), and Lundby (2006) also hint at a conflict which can originate in this postmodern situation. Jagodzinski (2004) argues that, today, the gulf between what is youthful and fresh and what is adult and outdated has grown considerably. At the same time, Livingstone (2002) sheds light on a specific issue. She observes a generation gap in the media literacy between parents and children: "Young people are ready to learn in ways less than familiar to the generation of their parents and teachers" (Livingstone, 2002, p. 232). Lundby (2006) also identifies this conflict:

There could be interesting cultural conflicts or encounters between those adults passing on the religious tradition without much competence in digital communication and the young people used to digital communication but not very familiar with the religious tradition. (Lundby, 2006, p. 19)

This conflict may be solved to some extent by a mutual learning process. If the adults learn the culture and language of youth, this can help them share the religious tradition they inherited, rewritten in the language and culture of youth. In other words, the traditional structure can act as a centrifugal force for the Church to reach out to the polymorphic culture of young people. Beaudoin's (1998) words, which provide an understanding of this youth culture of youth, can help forge a new direction in the ministry of the Church to young people:

Nourished on the milk of popular culture, Generation X has developed a keen way of finding meaning in fragmentary and disparate pop culture moments

The image is the unit of experience. . . . Fashion conveys the image of the self and the self as the image. (Beaudoin, 1998, p. 45, 47)

Here Beaudoin is optimistic about postmodern youth. They are like ships sailing in a postmodern sea. The postmodern world-view is acknowledged as embracing preferences, being sceptical towards institutional authority, and personal experience as being equal to analytical or rational thought, denying any meta-narrative of meaning-making structures. A gloom seems to have descended on the initiatives for the development of young people, as this section on popular culture and other post modern developments suggests. Next, an attempt is made to reconstruct this image of youth imposed on them by postmodernism.

Reconstructing Youth

“Young people in our society are not only silent. They are a step beyond silence: they are mute” (Warren, 1989, p. 27). Examples such as this which paint a dark picture of youth do not help when juvenile delinquency and other problems of this age become the gauge of understanding them. For instance, two youth ministers, Kennedy and Doyle (1998), have tried to provide some insight into young people from Ireland. Their description includes: a very destructive cycle of production, promotion and consumption; industrialisation and the un-gaugeable impact of TV viewing; the influence of sexual content in advertising; the rise of non-marital and teenage births; an increase of juvenile crime (Kennedy and Doyle, 1998). Even if this provides one picture of Irish youth, there is another side to the story which is not represented in this negative and one-sided vision of reality. Warren (1989) says that very few young people are encouraged to articulate their life experience or even to consider their experiences as being valid. This may be as a result of this unbalanced generalisation.

In contrast, some recent trends endorse the initial suggestion that there is a resurgence of young people in the life of the Church. Evidence of this trend among young people is advanced by millennial writers such as Detweiler and Taylor (2003), Crawford and Rossiter (2006) and Briggs (2008). The New Ecclesial Movements in the Church, as well as the biggest international gathering of young people at World Youth Day, also suggest that some of the negative labels given to young people by postmodern thinkers may not necessarily have universal application.

Shedding Labels

One major concern of postmodernism was the loss of meta-narrative (Detweiler and Taylor, 2003) – one unifying life story that fits everybody. This postmodern thought raises some

questions. Was there ever a 'one world view' in the history of the world – one over-arching story labelled as meta-narrative? It sounds like the claim that John Gutenberg invented the printing press, when centuries before that invention, there was printing in China (Briggs and Burke, 2005). If the western world view was seen as meta-narrative, the argument regarding loss of a meta-narrative may be true. At the same time, questions of good versus evil or matter versus spirit could be considered as a meta-narrative and they continue to exist in all cultures and so remain valid.

The point here is that there was a belief in the suppositions of postmodern thought which labelled young people and alienated them from the overall picture. Some of the observations were true, i.e., that there are many spiritual choices now. In one way, this has made young people powerful because they are offered choices. Are young people able to choose the best? This depends, first of all, on how young people are introduced to the 'product'. Are these products marketed in their language and are they 'cool'? At the same time, the claims of religions are under scrutiny also because they are being compared in their entirety.

Rethinking about Postmodernism

The interpretations and conclusions of post-modernism prompt concerns. It is not the intention here to study post-modern philosophy in depth. At the same time, it can be seen that interpretations of post-modern philosophy by various people may not even represent the spirit of the time, or that there is another spirit driving the world which is not recognised by postmodern philosophers. "In other words, whatever postmodernism is, it cannot be mechanistic, systematic, or institutionalised, for all of these prioritize idea over person" (Bannon, 2007, p. 30).

If this interpretation of postmodernism truly imbibes the spirit of the time, what does it say about the intrusion of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into the personal spaces of human communication? The growth of new institutions such as business chains, celebrity models and their reality shows and rock bands with millions of young followers does not seem to agree with the claims of at least some post modern proponents. Therefore these claims need to be put under the microscope.

Metanarratives are not absent

Story telling continuously moves from one platform to another. It is like a train journey. Those who journey will read only what is written on the walls of the train or on the signposts in the stations. Instructions for travellers are written in such a way that they can be seen by travellers as they journey. Also they need to be catchy and presented in large script for the fast moving recipients of the messages. Turning to the Church, if it does not tell its story, others who are able to make these 'platforms' useful will reap the benefit.

It is true to say that young people try to make sense of life with what they find around them (Beaudoin, 1998). A ship can be anchored only in the water of its proximity. The eyes of young people can grasp the images around them, their ears like the tunes and they go after the pied pipers, with their fundamental quests for meaning and identity. The grand narratives in the postmodern world may be found to have 'mutated' or taken on a new form to reach young people. This is confirmed by Detweiler and Taylor (2003):

The literal truths, the cold, hard facts are tired. The big mythological truths of *The Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter*, and *The Matrix* have taken their place. As postmodern philosophers announce that grand, overarching metanarratives are

dead, Hollywood spends hundreds of millions of dollars on interlocking trilogies that garner global acclaim and interest. (p.38)

A resurgence of realities from the literal world to the post-literal era of the world is reflected here. They continue: "These are much more than the escapist fantasies. They are the post-literal cries of an audience, suffering from a lack of metanarratives, searching for supra-human experiences to fill their transcendence gap" (Detweiler and Taylor 2003, p. 38).

A recent study of young people, conducted by the Australian Council for Educational Research, indicates a similar optimism about young people and their spiritual yearnings. In this study, Crawford and Rossiter (2006) show how youth spirituality is structured. They identify a self-transcending dimension to youth spirituality which also exhibits a social dimension. In addition, a generational difference is noticed which tends to form their spirituality in ways that are different from those of the previous generation. Also the secularisation of spirituality, differentiating between spirituality and religiosity, spiritual relativism, subjectivity of youth spirituality and an appreciation of Pentecostal/Charismatic spirituality, can be detected in their research.

The re-emergence of young people

It is submitted that, after the postmodern era, this change will occur with more power and strength because young people are able to experiment personally with what is available around them and choose what they consider to be the best. Some endeavours such as *Opus Dei*, which operates like a hardliner movement, confirm this suggestion. New Ecclesial Movements, as mentioned by John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (1988), also show signs of this optimism. In the Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (John Paul II,

1990b) on the 'Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate' in 1990, the Apostolic Exhortations *Ecclesia in Europa* (2003) and the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (2001a), the late Pope strongly endorsed the New Ecclesial Movements as a force for new evangelisation. By 1998, there were more than 50 such movements and new forms of community life. In the words of the late Pope: "There is great need for living Christian communities! And here are the movements and the new ecclesial communities: they are the response, given by the Holy Spirit, to this critical challenge at the end of the millennium" (John Paul II, 1998b, para. 7).

The existence of such new communities can be traced back to the same period of the beginning of the so-called postmodern generation, i.e., those born after the 1960s. These ventures were very new to the traditional Church (John Paul II, 1999a) and this may explain why they were not seen to contribute significantly to the growth of faith. This is made clear by the Pope: "Their unexpected newness . . . has given rise to questions, uneasiness and tensions; at times it has led to presumptions and excesses on the one hand, and on the other, to numerous prejudices and reservations" (John Paul II, 1998b, para. 6).

It is suggested that the Internet and communications technology can be used by the Church as a tool to empower young people in the contemporary world. Much earlier examples of empowering young people can be found in both the old and New Testaments. The Lord said to Jeremiah at the time of his call, "Do not say I am only a boy, for you shall go to all to whom I sent you" (Jer 1:4-10). David, the youngest among the sons of Jesse, was chosen by Samuel to be anointed as king. Jesse said: "There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep. And Samuel said to Jesse, "send and bring him" (1Sam 16:1-13). In the New Testament, five thousand people were fed from five loaves and two fish brought by a young

man. "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish" (Jn 6:1-14). Jesus said to the widow's son at Nain: "Young man, I say to you, rise" (Lk 7:11-17). "New wine must be put into fresh wineskins" (Lk 5:38). Could the Internet provide "fresh wineskins" to be used to empower youth, thereby rejuvenating the Church?

Young people can be said to dwell in an image-centered world. They are creators as well as receivers of popular culture. Their presence on the Net has significant influence. Their religious / spiritual formation is not guaranteed in their homes. In the post-modern age, their spiritual quest is quenched by fashion and music TV. Therefore it is considered that an image-centered ministry is needed, in order to foster relationship with these young people. This can be accomplished through the modern medium of the Internet. Would this international network (the Internet) foster connectedness between people? The nature of relationships on the Internet is explored next in order to ascertain if it facilitates building relationships between individuals, between individuals and God and between communities.

4.4 Cyber Relationships: Locale of Youth Ministry

Despite the limited social presence of online links, the Net successfully maintains strong supportive community ties, and it may be increasing the number and diversity of weak ties. The Net is specially suited to maintaining intermediate-strength ties between people who cannot see each other frequently.

(Wellman and Gulia, 1999, p. 185)

Heim (1993) explains the term *interface* as the Greek *prosopon*, which means one face facing another face. Two opposite faces make up the relationship. One face reacts to the other, who then reacts to the first one and so on *ad infinitum*. He considers this relationship as being

alive and distinct from the two faces but in a state of correlation (Heim). According to this author, the same word *prosopon* later helped to describe the Trinitarian Godhead. The Father and the Son subsist together as an interface or distinct spirit. This ancient word suggested spiritual interaction between eternity and time. Heim considers that, in the information age, the interface shades into cyberspace which people inhabit and feel themselves moving through it into a relatively independent world with its own dimensions and rules (Heim, pp. 71-82). Based on the cumulative experiences in cyberspace, online relationships are considered in the next section.

Online Relationships

Castells (2000) identifies the *networking logic* or set of relationships used within information technology as an important characteristic: "The morphology of the network seems to be well adapted to increasing complexity of interaction and unpredictable patterns of development arising from the creative power of such interaction" (Castells 2000, pp. 70-71).

He is referring here to the physical connectivity and the resulting complexity of interactivity which reveals the underlying power of the Internet to become a network of human interaction. Research conducted by scientists McKenna and Bargh of New York University's psychology department in 1998 provides a vivid picture of the Internet's impact on relationships. They found that people were indeed using the Internet to form close relationships. McKenna and Bargh (2004) state:

The evidence suggests that rather than being an isolating, personally and socially maladaptive activity, communicating with others over the Internet not only helps to maintain close ties with one's family and friends, but also, if the individual is

so inclined, facilitates the formation of close and meaningful new relationships within a relatively safe environment. (p. 582)

In his book *Media Psychology*, Giles (2003) provides some interesting insights into online relationships. He argues that, for some authors, the experience of socialising via computer is barely distinguishable from face-to-face interaction, even if both are profoundly different. Relationships in cyberspace lack gestural and other non-verbal cues that convey paralinguistic verbal utterances, supplementing the verbal content of our communication, although “emoticons” have evolved as partial substitution for such gestures (Giles, 2003, p.271). The text-based nature of online communication may bestow advantages over face-to-face communication for some Internet users. It is particularly helpful for those users who feel marginalised in face-to-face interaction due to both concealed and conspicuous reasons. Giles points out that, for some champions of the Internet, cyber-relations are just different from other relationships and their unique nature has the potential to change the way humans interact in general. Cyberspace has the potential for a new concept of self. This may be confirmed by the studies of Castells (2000) who notes that: “New information technologies are not simply tools to be applied, but processes to be developed” (p. 31). This is highly significant for on-line ministry. As Giles (2003) observes: “Cyberspace offers the potential for a completely new concept of self, in which we are no longer constrained by geography, embodiment, personal history, and so on. In this parallel universe we can re-invent ourselves” (p. 268).

At the same time, Beaudoin (1998) suggests that, in the search for perfect speed (ever-faster computers and breakneck modem connection rates) and full presence (advanced multi-tasking, supercharged networks, increased hours and modes of access and “real” simulation),

cyberspace is a metaphor for two quests. The first is full interpersonal interaction, which he interprets as the *I-thou* relationships of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber. The second is an attempt to transcend human experience, imagining the Web as a metaphor for God. He implies that young people's immersion in cyberspace evidences their yearning for full presence in both divine and human relations.

Giles (2003) identifies how an empowerment through the Internet takes place between societies which are dispersed across the globe. Here the Internet facilitates the creation of diasporic cyber communities. Also communities across the globe can attain a new identity through the connectivity of the Internet, emerging as virtual communities which are discussed in the next section.

Virtual Communities

Kelly (1994) considers that:

Cyberspace is the mall of network culture. It is the territory where the counterintuitive logic of distributed networks meets the odd behaviour of human society. And it is expanding rapidly. . . . Cyberspace is a resource that increases the more it is used. (Kelly, 1994, p. 185)

His observation gives a glimpse of aspects of society where it is trying to replicate itself in cyberspace. Virtual communities show the essential nature of human beings living in cyberspace - the need to 'connect'. Rheingold (2000), the author of *Virtual Communities*, confirms this argument:

Virtual community sits atop a hierarchy of abstractions – language, technology, computing, networking, many-to-many discussion. Virtual community is also built upon a succession of technologies and ways of life we choose to use and live in and are shaped by, because they gave many people freedom and power.

(Rheingold, 2000, p. 147)

A San Francisco based online group called, Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link (WELL), started by a number of aging entrepreneurs, is a well-known online community. Sociologists maintain that the social glue which binds the WELL into a genuine community is a complex blend of participants' social skills, their amazing collective fund of expert knowledge and their willingness to support community members when they are in trouble (Naughton, 1999).

Castells (2000, p. 386) provides a definition of Virtual Communities: "A virtual community is generally understood as a self-defined electronic network of interactive communication organised around a shared interest or purpose, although sometimes communication becomes the goal in itself". He indicates that tens of thousands of such communities were created throughout the world in the 1990s, most of them based in the US but increasingly reaching out on a global scale. There are studies which criticise the quality and implications of online communities, saying that they decrease participants' communication with family members and social circles, while increasing their loneliness. An analysis by Wellman and his collaborators in 1996 proved, however, that virtual communities need not be opposed to physical communities (cited in Castells, 2000). Virtual communities are different forms of community with specific rules and dynamics which interact with other forms of community. They are communities, albeit not physical, and they do not replicate the patterns of communication and interaction in physical communities. While they are not unreal, they

operate in a different plane of reality (Wellman et al., cited in Castells, 2000). Discussion on youth ministry can encourage the formation of such communities in the Internet where the relationship of young people can be facilitated in the light of faith. It has been established that secular communities are active in cyberspace. The possibility of establishing faith communities in cyberspace is now explored.

Cyber Communities of Faith

Beaudoin (1998) states clearly that cyberspace - particularly the Internet - is an appropriate medium to serve as a communal centre for Generation-X. He notes that there are many opportunities for communitarian action on the Internet, including organising relief for victims of natural disasters, circulating protest petitions and gathering like minded people from around the globe. Since these communities can be as bonded as some physical communities, they are no less real. He finds great potential for Xers in cyberspace and states that it can accommodate both like-minded and indifferent users who want to form cyber communities of faith.

He asserts that cyberspace gives Xers a voice in religious matters, using technology with which they are comfortable. For a generation so hesitant to talk about its faith, cyberspace affords opportunities for intimate faith discussion without necessitating face-to-face communication. The Net gives Xers scope to deepen their spiritual life by connecting with other spiritually curious Xers and people from around the world with a different religiosity. He claims that dedication to a cyber community can be as gratifying and important as allegiance to any real religious institution. In this way, Xers challenge religious institutions to rethink the definition of community. He views virtual communities as augmenting real communities rather than being a substitute for them (Beaudoin, 1998).

Cyberspace has been hailed by many as an historical revolution in which technology is no longer a means of mastering the human environment but, as Lajoie (1996) states, becomes the human environment. The Church articulates the need to utilise the new media space for the development of young people. Studies on ministry show that youth ministry is basically relational. Since the Internet helps to achieve relationship through this medium and also because the life of post-modern youth is thoroughly linked with cyber culture, the question of undertaking ministry to young people in this globally 'created' environment has been a main concern of this research.

The theology of ministry, articulated in a relational perspective, captures youth ministry as reaching out to young people and ministering to their culture of 'connectedness'. The reality of cyber relationships and cyber communities makes the Internet a suitable environment for the faith development of young people. The openness of the Church to understand the 'irreverent' (Beaudoin, 1998) spiritual culture of the young generation opens the way for accomplishing a ministry online. In time, this ministry may help to move young people from the terrain of cyberspace to the real world of relationships. Participation in the sacraments and liturgy, which is considered to be the ultimate and real experience of Christian faith, can be realised at the second stage, after the young people have been contacted through the Internet.

Building on the argument so far, the task now is to devise a method for implementing youth ministry online. A tentative approach to accomplishing this task is presented in the next section.

4.5 From Hyper Text to Hyper Being: A Proposal

Young people's freedom, their ability to judge and choose in a non-controlled setting and their desire to emerge as mature and responsible citizens are the reasons which underpin this new thinking about postmodern youth. The challenge of how to acknowledge, develop and empower the younger generation still remains. It is submitted that the Internet to which young people are attracted in great numbers, has great potential here.

The wisdom of the philosopher William James (1892) captures the concept behind hypertext: "My thought belongs with my other thoughts, and your thought belongs with your other thoughts. Whether anywhere in the room there be a mere thought, which is nobody's thought, we have no means of ascertaining" (section 2). There is a marked difference between a page in a book and a page on the Internet. The growth in the technology of hypertext on the Internet has opened up new frontiers, linking human beings together. It can be labelled the technology of hyperself or hyperperson in Web 2.0.

This leads to the notion of a cybersoul whereby an individual is connected, just as texts are connected, by hypertexting online. As discussed in chapter 3 on the Internet, if de Chardin's "appearance of life in evolution" is attributed to this point of the evolution of the Internet, the evolution of Web 2.0 may be referred to as a critical point of 'hominization' (Mooney, 1964, p. 39) in cyberspace. This denotes the latest development of individual human presence in virtual communities where an individual seems to have achieved power in the media, unlike in the past.

The Reality of the Virtual

Syneidesis is the Greek root of the word consciousness. According to Dewart (1989), it stood for "the knowledge obtained through consultation with someone who has privileged access to confidential or generally unavailable information" (p.45). This was in contrast to understanding based merely on one's own resources. The reliability of this inside information depended on the authenticity of the source.

Later on, Dewart says that it came to mean any knowledge obtained from consultation with oneself. The conscious experiencer is, as a consequence: a) able to understand and appreciate the reality of the real; b) capable of experiencing his own reality; c) able to create a positive identity for himself after appreciating both his reality and that of the world (Dewart, 1989). Here consciousness is constituted through the interaction of the self with the reality of the real.

In relation to online experience, these findings about consciousness may be questioned by those who log on to the Internet, seeking some information. A person who searches the Internet may be able to get more knowledge about almost everything online rather than actually having those objects in front of him/her. More information about the constitutive elements of an object and its nuances may be gained from the Internet than from interacting with the reality of the object. The knowledge landscapes of the Internet may provide a person with the wheel, so that he or she does not have to invent it. Then, the wisdom behind the method and process of experiencing one's own reality in relation to interaction with the world and the created identity of oneself through this interaction, may have to be looked at from the point of view of online experience as well. Here the reality of the virtual becomes the norm of constituting consciousness. Castells' (2000) observation corroborates this

argument: “. . . the human mind is a direct productive force, not just a decisive element of the production system. Thus, computers, communications systems and genetic decoding and programming are all amplifiers and extensions of the human mind” (p. 31). In this research, the reality of the Church is being presented in this new medium of virtual reality.

McQuail (2000) identifies the following dimensions that are relevant and help differentiate ‘new’ from ‘old’ media: the degree of interactivity; social presence; autonomy; playfulness and the degree of privacy. These can be considered as some essential elements to be taken into consideration by the Church in order to present itself effectively on the mosaic of the Internet, when interacting with youth. Some further reflections on interactivity now follow.

The Postmodern Experience of the Self and Interactivity

In sketching the profile of the self in action, Schrag (1997) begins with the celebrated Cartesian phrase *cogito ergo sum* – I think therefore I am. According to him, the variation in the experience of the postmodern self transforms the phrase into ‘I choose therefore I am’. A further ‘deconstructive redescription’ of the experience of the self amends this into ‘We interact, therefore we are’. In *A Matrix of Meanings*, Detweiler and Taylor (2003) confirm this: “The postmodern person yearns for community and connectedness” (p. 78). As Schrag, (1997) sees it, “Community is constitutive of selfhood. It fleshes out the portrait of the self by engendering a shift of focus from the self present to itself to the self as present to, for, and with the other” (p. 78). This seems to be true in the case of the Internet also: *we interact virtually, therefore we are*. This interactivity, in the context of evangelisation, is considered next.

Interactivity and Faith Development of Youth: New Approaches

How is the Church using the Internet to reach out to young Catholics? This question is posed by Heaven (2008). Observing that the Catholic Church lacks a robust online presence, he suggests that, while schools, parents, chaplains and parish priests do a lot of work with youth in the Church, the Vatican and the bishops should provide an interactive, readily available source of guidance for Catholics online. The issue of reaching out to young people by using the latest technological medium of interaction for them is a major challenge for the Church.

The phenomenon of sharing faith needs to be considered. Various terms such as sharing faith, religious instruction, religious education, faith development and catechesis may be used by different parties involved in the process. Two broad areas, religious education and catechesis, are discussed below.

Religious education can be used as a generic term, assuming different meanings according to the source of education, its agents and content (Osmer and Schweitzer, 2003). Kieran and Hession (2005) explain that first of all, it can be an “educational process by which people are invited to explore the human religious traditions that protect and illuminate the transcendent dimension of their lives” (p. 32). They observe that this definition is more associated with education as an area of study. Also religious education can encompass mere study of religion within an academic structure, without the intention of deepening the faith (See Warren, 1989). For instance, a Catholic student could study Hinduism or Buddhism in great depth while having no intention of adopting either of those beliefs. “The effort of particular groups to transmit their respective ways of life to the younger generation” represents another way of religious education, according to Moran (1983, p. 12). In the strict Catholic understanding of

religious education, it is seen as a programme of religious formation and faith development, using the language of catechesis (Kieran and Hession, 2005).

The word 'catechesis' originates from the Greek verb *katechein*. 'To resound', 'to echo', or 'to hand down' are its derivative meanings (Kieran and Hession, 2005, p. 61). In its *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC, 1998), the Church includes catechesis as one moment within the whole process of evangelisation:

Catechesis is one of these moments - a very remarkable one - in the whole process of evangelisation. The "moment" of catechesis is that which corresponds to the period in which conversion to Jesus Christ is formalised, and provides a basis for first adhering to him. (GDC para. 63)

Is the Church able to implement catechesis effectively? Moran (1983) identifies a tension between religion and education: "Put in starkest contrast, education is concerned with finding or creating order in this world, while religion is a going beyond this world" (p. 184). He identifies historical trends which highlight this tension between religious education and Christian religious education, noting that education in religious matters was central to life in the seventeenth century. People from families, church and school came together to teach the Bible, doctrine or morals. Continuing, he reports that the establishment of Catholic schools by the Church was in response to a secular trend prevailing in the eighteenth century which did not encourage Catholic education in regular schools. While this development gave religious instruction an educational context, Moran reports that the nineteenth century saw a separation of religion and education. He uses the phrase 'Christian education' when referring to the learning of Christian beliefs (Moran, 1983).

There can be a difference between religion as part of the curriculum and Christian religious education in the language of catechesis. Religious education as part of the curriculum may not meet the requirements of catechesis, as understood by the Church. Kieran and Hession (2005) note that, currently here in Ireland, religious education as part of the curriculum is catechetical, having sacramental preparation as a central purpose. They observe that this model is under strain in view of the decline of Catholic religious culture and practice in Irish society in general.

This gives rise to the need to distinguish between religious education of youth as an important and particular duty of the Church, as opposed to religious education as part of the curriculum in a Catholic school setting. These two approaches may differ in their methodologies as well. The phenomenological philosopher, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), considered that "Man's life, his very spirit, is being studied according to the methods of natural science, with the effect that nature and spirit are considered equal realities, and with the ensuing danger that the spirit is naturalised" (cited in Ramos, 1989, p. 404)

The GDC (1998) speaks about the divine pedagogy of catechesis:

Catechesis as communication of divine Revelation, is radically inspired by the pedagogy of God, as displayed in Christ and in the Church. Hence it receives its constitutive characteristics and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it sets out a synthesis to encourage a true experience of faith, and thus a filial encounter with God. (GDC para. 143)

As the Church may not exercise full control over the curriculum and syllabus in a school setting, it is doubtful that the Church can fulfil its task of catechetical duty in this setting.

Also some pupils may not be able to attend Catholic Schools. For instance Warren (1989) reports that fewer than half of the Catholic children in the US attend Catholic schools. In such circumstances, it is necessary to reach out to them by other means.

Therefore, the methodology, structure and climate in which information regarding faith is imparted may need to be reviewed. In cases where there is no catechetical programme other than a curriculum-oriented religious education, young people may not have an opportunity to learn and assimilate the Catholic faith. This indicates the need for a new way of handing on the faith to them. It is submitted that the development of a new catechetical programme on the Internet is one way of contributing to effective faith formation for young people. In the context of this new locale of interactivity which is widely used by young people, an appropriate methodology needs to be developed which facilitates sharing information online regarding supernatural realities. The Internet can help the Church in taking “another road” (Lk 2:12) in order to evangelise young people.

Social Networking and Youth

As mentioned earlier Mc Quail (2000) identified the need for playfulness in new media. The key word among young people is ‘fun’. On the online networks, there is active participation between young people in order to create fun, using their own creativity and the ‘raw materials’ provided online which can create an atmosphere of fun. What are those ‘raw materials’ available online which produce fun? They include the possibility of uploading music, videos, the opportunity to ‘talk’ and ‘block’ as well.

‘Excitement’ is a word used by young people to represent expectations about life. Boredom seems to be the opposite of it. Entertainment can provide excitement for a young person. It is

a time when somebody is either involved in an action or observing some action where one is able to forget about oneself. As Granfield (1991) observes, spirituality “is primarily practical; it looks to action, to love in action. We achieve union with God by an ongoing series of decisions that open up the mind to consciousness of the divine presence” (p. 148). If the Church is able to provide opportunities for young people either to take part in this action of mystical union with God or journey with others who hold similar interests, this can generate instances of excitement. Young people expect and experience fun and excitement in life. These expectations might be understood as material expressions of one person’s longing for a mystical experience. In other words, their longing for the ultimate is reflected in their longing for the world.

Social Networking

Social networking enables young people to be concrete about their relationship with their friends. It helps them to be direct and clear about relationships. Some things which they are not able to articulate in a face-to-face interaction can be expressed without inhibition in the online ‘talks’. Social networking provides a more comfortable milieu for young people. The natural ‘log on’ to the Internet and consequent social networking sites may be compared to ‘initiation ceremonies’. The online interaction has a whole new language which attracts the young while being almost alien to most of the older generation.

The underlying principles behind the concepts, it seems, have yet to be put under the microscope. Some considerations are:

- (a) The independence young people enjoy because of a space they own online;
- (b) An iconic simulation of their real life interactions where they are able to experiment and learn the boundaries and horizons of relationships in their own privacy;

- (c) Objectification of one's own self online where some interactions are made known around the world and the rest end up in private spaces;
- (d) Absence of another person may give young people the opportunity to tread on their own, without inhibition; and
- (e) Questions of identity of the person who is interacting; the usefulness and the real nature and intensity of relationships online, are also to be ascertained. The physical connectivity of the Internet throughout the world, its ability to provide personal representation and participation and its ability to manage the interactivity with accountability, can make online interaction feasible.

According to Granfield (1991): "The mind begins with the data of sense and consciousness proceeds through insight and judgement to the mystery that we call God" (p. 17). The data of sense that can be received in an online relationship are mainly visual. Online relationship is only a part of the means through which data are received into the consciousness, since we live in this world. But it happens that the information on a person's profile acts like a repository, as individuals can access it and retrieve it whenever they wish. This profile and information moves with them wherever they move in this world. Friends also move along and their spaces are available for them to write messages or comments on them. Once they accept another person as a friend, they give permission to that person to write on their 'scrap' or 'message wall' and *vice versa*. In one way, the reality of another person in one way is present to them more frequently or on a 24X7 basis. While there is a lot of agreement, there are limitations also to this presence.

Consciousness Connected

Just as a magnet attracts particles of steel, the Internet attracted a number of spheres of human living to the information superhighway. 'Mosaic', the first ever browsing software, as its title indicates, means an assortment. It was described in the *New York Times* in December 1993 as 'the first window into cyberspace' (cited in Briggs and Burke, 2005, p. 244). Is the Church represented in this mosaic of convergence in cyberspace? Is cyberspace opening a window to the world of the young? Convergence on the information superhighway has brought together a complex mixture of various areas of human existence.

'Facebook' (or My Space) is a space of myself. Participating individuals look at this personal representation of themselves every day, can change their profile, add new inspirations to it, e.g., photos, videos, can go back to it, change it whenever they wish. Thus such a personal space represents and reflects a conscious self. Like human consciousness, it may not expose all that is in the consciousness of a person. Since this exposition of the self takes place in a public space, it may present only that which the person feels can be shared with others. Also it may be the case that one is able to objectify one's personal self in the *tabula rasa* of a personal page on the Internet. Here the word *tabula rasa* is used to mean a clean slate or tablet from which the inscription can be erased any time, ready to be written upon again. On a blank page, individuals create an identity for themselves, write their own profiles and post photos which represent them. As happens in the process of interaction with the objects of the world, their identity evolves. In this online space, individual identity is symbolised digitally and made visible to others. This also becomes a space of individual interaction.

It is considered that if the icon of the Church is missing on a person's monitor in the mosaic of various available icons, the Church is going to miss out. Over the centuries of evolution,

the Church has become a matrix of many cultures and numerous spiritualities. This 'many-ness' within the 'one' Catholic Church may enable it to understand, journey with and welcome the postmodern generation who are fed on the 'many-ness' around them. By 'many-ness' here is meant the influx of knowledge available at the tip of one's finger. Availing of the Internet, the Church can become visible and accessible to that generation.

Interiority and the Internet

William James (1892) argues that "The only states of consciousness that we naturally deal with are found in personal consciousness, minds, selves, concrete particular I's and you's" (section 2). A subject is conscious when operating minimally in the dream state, normally in the waking state, or optimally in the mystical state. There is an awareness of its various levels of consciousness: experiencing, understanding, knowing, feeling, deliberating, and choosing with freedom and responsibility (Granfield, 1991). A person who has logged on to the Net is not just at the minimal level of consciousness but at a more active, open and higher level due to choosing to log on. This arises because there is a basic alertness of the brain with its visual readiness and openness of the self looking for friendship, movement/activity and excitement. Searle (1992) submits that "Conscious states are caused by . . . features of the brain" (para. 2).

Therefore the argument here is that, in an online interaction, there may be more opportunity to 'talk' to the brain (mind) without the distractions of the senses. There may be more clarity in thought, since it has to be written in an intelligible language. Reflections (as in meditation) on a communicated matter may then raise questions in the mind. Since the matter can be retained and retrieved, clarifications may be received promptly with reference to the available data. The state of consciousness of a person who is interacting online may be compared to

that initial step (stage) in the growth process towards enlightened consciousness. The description of some qualities of a person who is on the journey towards super consciousness, as found in *Gita*, is described by Vyas (1984): “Sense-objects cease for him, who does not enjoy them with his senses; but the taste for them persists. This relish also disappears in the case of the man of stable mind when he sees the Supreme” (p. 135).

Even if this describes a person who has almost attained a mystical experience, online information sharing may open up further opportunities for enlightenment through knowledge. This thought may interest the behavioural scientists who value the importance of sensations and neural mechanisms. Therefore, initiating instances of interaction, as described above, leading to stimulation of the mind, can open up research opportunities founded on understanding the characteristics of the phenomenon of online interaction.

Interaction Online

The transition from normal consciousness to an enlightened consciousness is a creative process and involves movement. This final destination of achieving the unity between the self of God and the self of man is the goal of Catholic thought. Mysticism is common to a lot of religious traditions and stands as the starting point of interaction between them. The unifying factor can be mysticism, accepting the individual differences in their evolution and practices. Therefore the language of mysticism can be a starting point of evangelisation online which may be of interest also to other religious traditions. In addition, mysticism may speak to all because it is peaceful, tolerant and eco-friendly. Interaction on the Internet, however, is not embodied but electronic. Even then, in this context, the Internet evangeliser does not have to be concerned about online sacramentality, since mystical presence is not necessarily a result of sacramental celebration. This does not mean that mystical experience is completely free of

embodied activity. Online interaction can share information regarding mystical experiences which, in turn, can stimulate the experience in human consciousness to prepare for contemplation.

An important issue raised by Deikman (1968) is relevant here:

The content of the mystical experience reflects not only its unusual mode of consciousness but also the particular stimuli being processed through that mode.

The mystic experience can be beatific, satanic, revelatory, or psychotic, depending on the stimuli predominant in each case. (p. 233)

The point to be made here is that the Church can provide the information which can act as a stimulus. If the Church is not providing enough to stimulate people to be in communion with the presence of their supreme friend, Jesus Christ, there are a lot of alternative stimuli available in the world around them. Young people's consciousness will easily be stimulated by what is readily available to them, which may eventually develop a mystical experience in them that, as mentioned above, is different from the beatific or the divine. As the Sufi scholar, Shah (1968) has rightly pointed out, "It is said that when a horse cannot find grass, it will accept hay. For want of the green grass of Truth they accepted the dry hay with which he filled their mangers" (p. 283).

Online Faith Friends

Human beings tend to appropriate the technology to suit our requirements (Thurlow et al, 2004). Making use of the medium of the Internet to converse with the minds of young people is expected to develop their interiority. It is proposed that the interconnectedness of personalities may be an infrastructure to build this task online (Gallagher, 2003). Creating a

space of interactivity by authenticating a faith friend and allowing him/her to journey together with any young person online may be a way of deepening interiority.

The process of developing interiority may be looked at from various mystical traditions. Buddha believed that one can overcome the causes of sufferings by right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration (Nicholas-Hays and Breaux, 1998). In the traditional Buddhist setting, a student seeks refuge to a lama who initiates a new student in a ceremony. These scholars (1998) explain that “going to a refuge is a symbolic way of acknowledging that we are alienated from the true self and that we are entrusting ourselves to the guidance of the Awakened-Mind within us” (p. 52). Also, in Hindu thought, a person who seeks “must necessarily approach a *guru* who is characterised by composure of mind, self-control, love, etc. Even one that is well-versed in the *sastras* (doctrines of truth) should not set about seeking Brahma-knowledge by himself” (Indich, 1980, p. 112). Jesus who was *Emmanuel* - God with us - also clarified the nature of this accompaniment of God, “I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father” (John 15: 15). The friendship of Jesus involves learning through accompaniment. Some practical elements of the concept of a faith friend are discussed below.

Faithfriend as a Mentor

The concept of a ‘faith friend’ is relatively new in terms of on-line evangelisation but does relate to more widely used professional development concepts such as ‘mentor’ or ‘coach’. There is an existing literature on mentoring or coaching relating to human resource management for employees of various organisations. As Smith (2007) explains:

In mentoring, junior members of staff are allocated a senior member of staff outside the normal line of command. . . . The junior member . . . will have an opportunity to review, in confidence, his or her progress, air worries or concerns and obtain guidance". (p.367)

The creation of a mentoring culture in the area of initial teacher education is suggested by writers such as Starcevich (2009), Donaldson (2008), Sweeny (2008) and Rowley (1997) while others (e.g., Heathfield, 2010; Zachary, 2005; Lindenberger, 2005) identify its importance as part of continuous professional development.

As well as this general literature on mentoring, there is a specific literature of relevance to evangelisation which is considered briefly below. Traditionally, those preparing for baptism are given a sponsor who is expected to accompany the baptised person as a God parent on his or her life journey (Saunders, 2003). Also, the notion of a spiritual director is firmly established within the Christian tradition. Sellner (2002), Anderson and Reese (2000) and English (1998) identify this type of mentoring accompaniment in the Christian mystical tradition. Mentoring, in the context of faith, is described by Matthaëi (1996) as "a nurturing relationship that facilitates the meaning-making, meaning discerning activity of life, in response to God" (p. 15). In the present study, Faithfriends (FFs) are expected to act as spiritual mentors to young people (referred to as Cybersouls – CSs) who want to deepen their understanding of faith.

According to Anderson and Reese (2000), a mentor "is one who is able to create a space of trust and intimacy" (p. 12). Intellect, memory and will are considered by the great mystic,

John of the Cross, as faculties of the soul that requires instruction for purification⁷. Parks (2000) understands mentoring accompaniment as being supportive, challenging, inspirational and in dialogue with the mentored. Mattheai (1996) considers that faith mentoring has relational, incarnational and contextual dimensions. As envisaged in this research the attitude of a FF should incorporate the above dimensions. It is expected that a FF will develop a relationship with his/her CS. It is incarnational because FFs are representing a particular youth movement or community while they are expected to be proficient in their faith practices. Their adeptness in ICT skills will ensure their proficiency in the context of cyberspace. Active collaboration, a conducive atmosphere and attitude, a professional relationship, a spiritual dimension and an interactive process orientation are suggested by English (1998) as some basic guidelines for mentorship. Accordingly, active collaboration of various contributors including the Church, youth movements, designers of catechetical programmes and ICT resources, is required in this mentoring space.

The Eastern texts also insist on the necessity of being guided by a *guru* (dispeller of darkness) (Indich, 1980), for safety's sake as well as in order to attain the spiritual goal. In western religion, a spiritual "advisor" serves as a guide and teacher. The presence of a motivating and organising conceptual structure and the encouragement of a teacher are undoubtedly important in helping people to persist in their journey of faith (Deikman, 1968).

4.7 Conclusion

By analysing the world of contemporary young people, this chapter helped to clarify how an online ministry of evangelisation to young people can be initiated by the Church. To begin, a broad review the concept of youth was undertaken. It dealt with the etymology of youth,

⁷ John of the Cross, Theresa of Avila and many other mystics in the Christian tradition have been proposed by English (1998), Anderson and Reese (2000) and Sellner (2002) as exemplars of effective faith mentoring.

presented various views on young people and highlighted the contemporary interest in them people. In addition, ways of learning about young people were considered.

The next section identified some of the main characteristics of young people today while their position as natives of the post-modern era was considered in the following section. Then cyber relationships were reviewed. These were seen as presenting an opportunity for the Church to reach out to young people. Various forms of online communities were analysed also in the context of building faith communities.

Finally, the possibility of developing such a connectedness was explored, viewing the Internet as a tool to empower young people on their faith journey briefly introducing the concept of a Faithfriend mentoring a Cybersoul.

This chapter concluded the overall review of the literature. The next step in the study was to proceed to the fieldwork. Details of this part of the project are given in chapter 5, 6 and 7 which now follows, beginning with an account of the *Cybersouls* web portal in the next chapter (chapter 5).

PART – II
FIELDWORK

CHAPTER 5

CYBERSOULS: DESIGN, PILOTING AND IMPLEMENTATION

The focus turns to the fieldwork in this chapter. It describes the design, development, piloting and implementation of the online project, *www.Cybersouls.ie*, building on the review of the literature and the theoretical perspectives of the previous three chapters.

This online project was developed in order to investigate the research questions which are set out below. The chapter begins by delineating various aspects of the design of the project. Then the piloting process is discussed and its implementation is described. This is followed by an account of the data collection and case study selection.

5.1 Design of the *Cybersouls* Project

The research questions which guided the study are set out in this section, together with the main objectives of the project. Then the research design is detailed.

Research Questions

The key research question which inspired the design of the project is to examine how the Internet can be used as an environment for mentoring young people on their religious faith journey. This is set in the wider context of investigating how an effective web presence can be developed to help value based communities, such as the Catholic Church, relate to young people on a global level.

Related research questions which contributed to shaping the project are set out below:

- (a) How can the Church make use of technology to *reach out* to the youth in their new habitats or socialising spaces?
- (b) What skills and tools would be needed by the Church in adapting to the new medium of the Internet?
- (c) Considering the various 'moments of evangelisation' developed over the years in the Church, to what extent is the Internet useful as a tool to continue this task?
- (d) How can the freedom and digital ingenuity of a young person be a source of momentum for New Evangelisation?
- (e) How can the information shared online influence the consciousness of young people to inform their understanding about faith?
- (f) What is the potential of the Internet as an environment for the evangelisation of young people?
- (g) How can the Internet empower young people as active participants in evangelisation using the Internet?
- (h) What are some of the pastoral and theological opportunities afforded by the Internet as a means of evangelisation?
- (i) The Internet provides the tools; the Church provides the atmosphere and young people are the participants. How can these seemingly distant cultural spaces be mutually inculturated?

These related research questions were subject to regular review during the study, as advised by Yin (2003).

Operationalisation of the Research Questions

At a more practical level, the above research questions paved the way for the following objectives to be achieved in the project:

- To establish the potential role of the Internet as an instrument in the evangelisation of young people;
- To facilitate transformative virtual meetings of young people and Faithfriends described in detail later in order to animate faith in Jesus Christ, from a Catholic perspective.

Specific Objectives

1. To share faith related information between:

- Members who log on to the site (referred to as Cybersouls) and
- Leaders and members (Faithfriends representing Catholic youth movements such as Jesus Youth (CS)).

2. To enhance faith through online mentoring using social networking technology, by:

- Inviting Cybersouls to join a faith-related community engaging in online faith development activities;
- Posting offline activities online, so that those who log on may also come together to worship and engage in other faith related commitments offline and *vice versa*.

3. To identify young people from different parts of the world who have a common interest in faith, from a Catholic perspective, enabling them to:

- Share their narratives of faith;
- Discuss faith related anxieties and struggles;
- Identify opportunities and challenges in their faith journey;
- Share online resources for promoting faith development.

Details of the project design are described below.

The Cybersouls Project: Elements of the Design

It falls, in particular, to young people, who have an almost spontaneous affinity for the new means of communication, to take on the responsibility for the evangelisation of this 'digital continent.' Be sure to announce the Gospel to your contemporaries with enthusiasm. You know their fears and their hopes, their aspirations and their disappointments (Benedict XVI, 2009)

Cybersouls is a project centred on young people. Its aim is to develop faith through online networking. Paving the way for this project, the previous three chapters have considered the concept of evangelisation in the Church, the nature of communication online and the participation of young people in this process.

This research is set within an online initiative of evangelisation of young people. Here, Faithfriends, a concept detailed later, represent a value based community (the Catholic Church). Young people who want to deepen their faith online are identified as Cybersouls. Those who accompany the Cybersouls are called Faithfriends. In this project, the specific catechetical content of faith development, termed *Scrolls*, provides the content focus for the interaction between these two parties, namely Faithfriends and Cybersouls, using the opportunities available on the Internet.

The project is centred on the following online activities:

- A member of Jesus Youth or any other appropriate youth movement agrees to be an online Faithfriend;

- Cybersouls register online to take part in the project and are then assigned a Faithfriend to accompany them during the project;
- Materials to promote faith development, called *Scrolls*, are provided to facilitate this interaction.

A detailed explanation of Faithfriends, Cybersouls and *Scrolls* is given below.

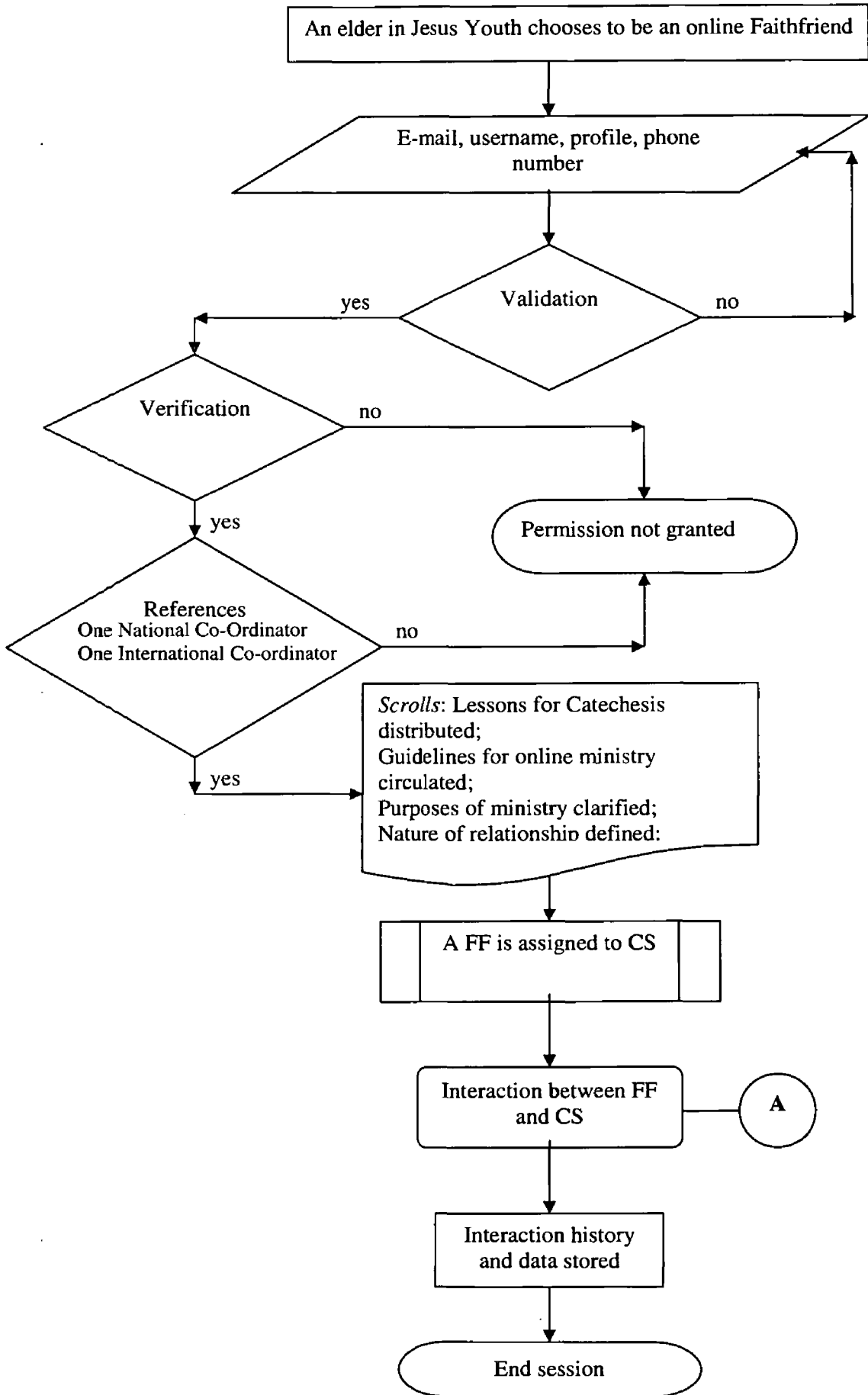
Faithfriend

A Faithfriend (FF) is a person who has a deep grounding in the Catholic faith. He/she is an elder in Jesus Youth or any other relevant youth movement who makes himself/herself available for the faith development of a 'cybersoul' (CS) who would like to deepen his/her faith. A FF has a representative function while guiding the *cybersoul* on his/her faith journey, she/he should exhibit the following qualities:

- Love and compassion – as Jesus himself exhibited;
- Dynamism, creativity, youthfulness etc. – to represent the Catholic youth movement;
- Understanding and living the teachings, traditions and practices of the Church;
- Be competent in using the Internet.

The online presence of a *FF* is charted in Fig 5.1 below.

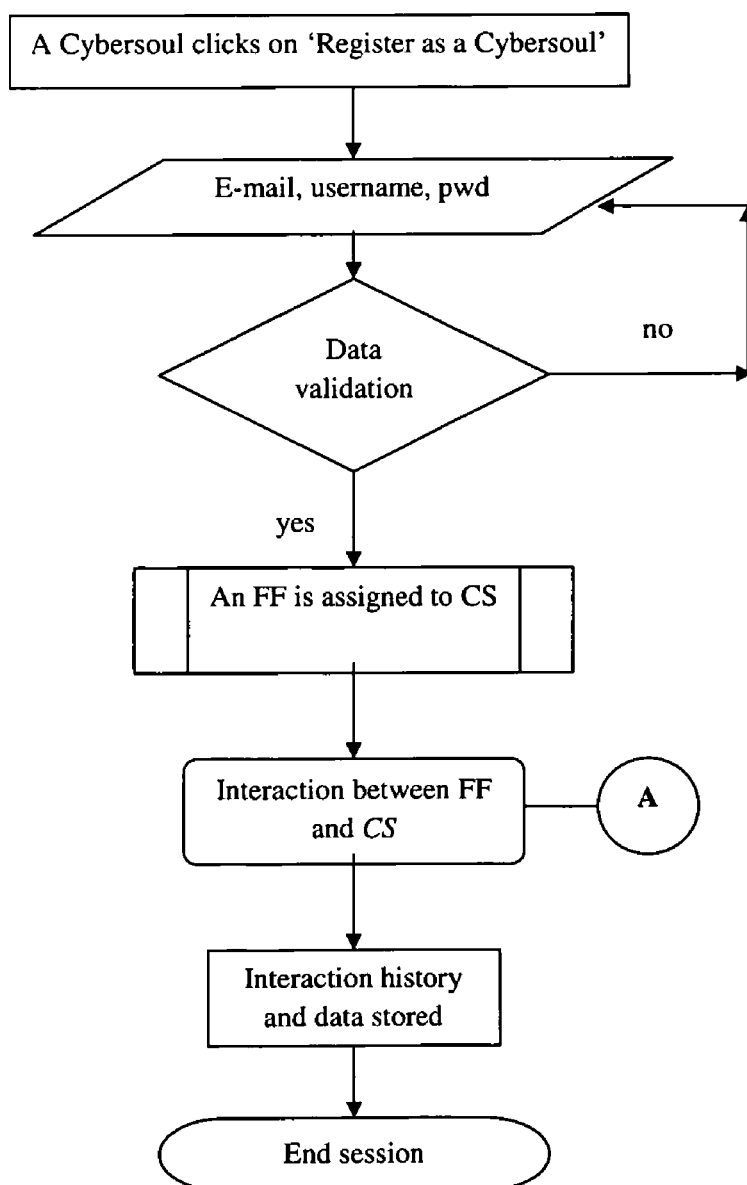
Fig 5.1 A Jesus Youth Member Chooses to be an Online Faithfriend



Cybersoul

'Cybersoul' (CS) is the name given to a young person who wants to deepen his/her faith, using the Internet. A CS may be a person who has spent time in the socialising (hanging out) area of faith or a person who, having been introduced to faith, would like to deepen his/her knowledge. In addition, people with little or no previous knowledge about faith but who would like to join can be facilitated. For a CS, the requirements for registration and login are quite limited when compared to a FF. The following flow chart (Fig 5.2) shows how CSs are given online entry:

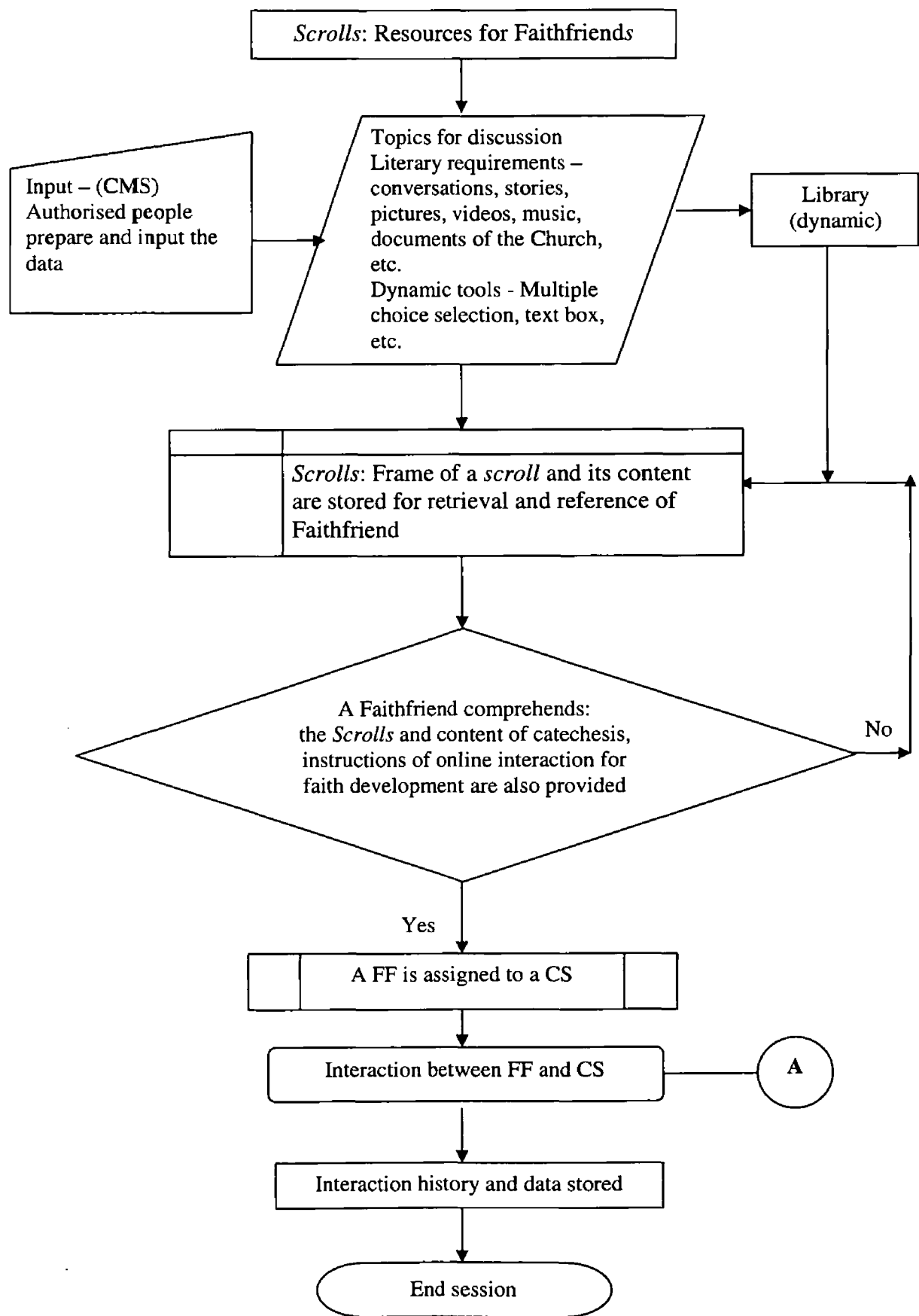
Fig 5.2 Cybersouls Begin the Registration Process



Scrolls

In this project the word '*scroll*' denotes all faith development materials prepared to facilitate the interaction between a CS and a FF. The preparation of this online faith development material had to be undertaken prior to the entry of both FFs and CSs. The faith journey of a CS accompanied by a FF draws upon the deposit of faith in the Church over 2000 years, handed down from previous generations and forming a living tradition. The development of *Scrolls*, the online catechetical programme of www.cybersouls.ie, is depicted in Fig 5.3 below.

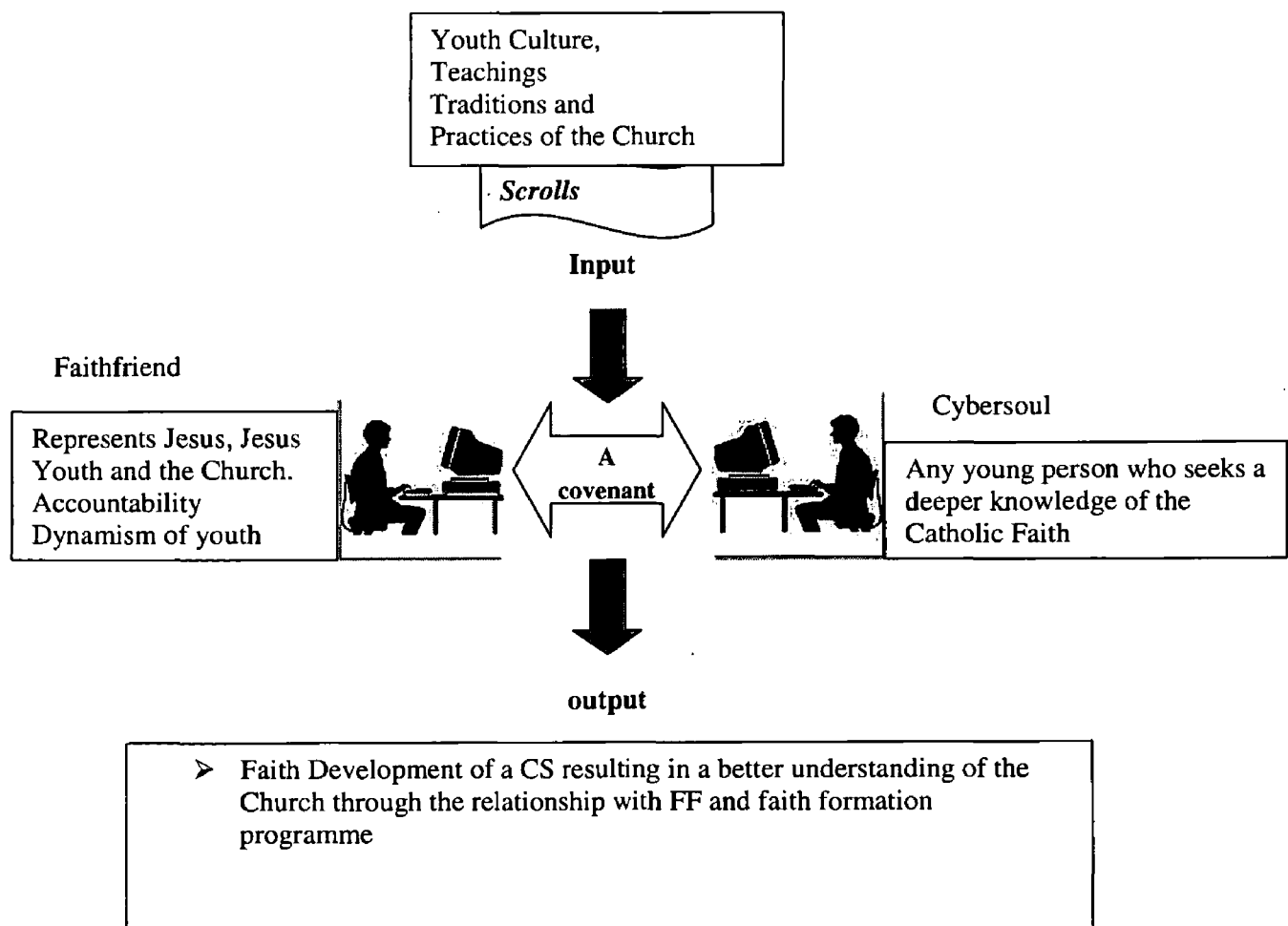
Fig 5.3 *Scrolls* (Lessons for Online Catechesis)



In the above three flowcharts (Fig. 5.1; 5.2 and 5.3), the interaction between FFs and CSs, labelled as A, is the process of interaction where the faith development *Scrolls* are shared. This can be considered as an instance of a research case under investigation. The research questions were addressed within the activities of this process. Also, for both FFs and CSs, sharing information about the research project and obtaining their informed consent to participate were required and achieved.

The following diagram (Fig 5.4) gives an integrated overview of the interaction in *www.cybersouls.ie*:

Fig 5.4: Interaction between a Cybersoul and Faith Friend



Development of the Project

The project co-ordinator, who was also the researcher, conceived the idea of the research project initially in consultation with his research supervisor. The researcher then prepared an initial outline and developed the project further in the light of the literature review presented earlier in the three chapters on evangelisation, communication on the Internet and young people. Detailed specifications, of each module as set out above provided the necessary guidelines for the web developer. Readily available technologies⁸ and software were used to develop the website. (The various roles of the co-ordinator and the web administrator are detailed later in the section on implementation.) Before its implementation, the project was piloted to gain a clearer understanding of various elements involved in the project. This process is detailed below.

5.2 Piloting of the Project

This section commences by explaining the particular need for undertaking a pilot run, given that the project is taking place in cyberspace. The attendant challenges of this type of research are described together with the benefits of electronic data retrieval. Finally, an account of the actual piloting of the project is presented.

The Need for Piloting

The novel nature of this research gave an added impetus to the need of piloting the project before embarking on the main study. The project was being undertaken in cyberspace, a social situation where young people are invited to use technology to express their own ideas

⁸ *Technologies & Softwares used:* Apache HTTP Server - Web Hosting; HTML, Javascript, XML - for building user interface; PHP – server side programming; MySQL – Database; XAMPP and FILEZILLA as local server and uploading files. All the above commonly used software were made available in the development of the website and were obtained with GNU licence (Free Software Foundation, 2007), freely available online. The web-administrator who singlehandedly coded the site contributed his efforts and time voluntarily to the project.

about faith, reflect on faith practices and apply their new understanding in real life. This is a dialogical process where an invitation-response model applies. At the same time, information is shared between a FF and a CS. *The Scrolls* provide the information on the teachings of the Catholic Church which is shared in such a way that a better understanding about the Church may be formed within the consciousness of young people. Also the presence or the absence of a response from the young person to the invitation of the FF may provide feedback to that FF on which she/he can reflect. Therefore, the challenges associated with this new research accentuated the need for piloting.

The Challenges of This Research

The fact that the project took place in cyberspace differentiates it from other research. The unusual nature of this research is emphasised when similar cases are identified by Gergen and Gergen (2003, p. 599) as a new challenge in case study research. They consider computer communication, in general techno-revolution, as the most significant cultural transformation of contemporary history. In this shift of circumstance, they have made efforts to conceptualise the changes in the whole scenario of research: new research sites are launched because of the invention of Internet communication. Here they observe that not only the effectiveness and the efficiency of reaching out to the population have been changed but also that new ways of conceptualising research methods are evolving.

Another issue related to the innovation of information technology, especially the Internet, is conceptualised by the same researchers as the *impact* of meaning making in the society. In this context, they question the relevance of traditional research methods which depended on the communication technology of the past (Gergen and Gergen, 2003, p. 599). In response to this issue, new ways of qualitative analysis arose, using various software and computer

technologies which are still in the developing stages (Weitzman, 2003, p. 310; see also Lazar et al, 2010). Due to its newness, the piloting of the project also looked at different ways of data retrieval.

Electronic Data Retrieval

The possibility of storing and archiving the electronic interactions on the Internet makes it an ideal space for facilitating the collection of research data. In contrast, in other research, data collection techniques such as questionnaires or interviews are used, with the help of some technology (written, audio etc.) to capture data. An advantage in this new medium is that electronic data is more readily available. The initial preparatory discussions for this project were carried out online and this electronic data was also archived.

As discussed earlier in chapter 3 on online communication, examples of various models of communication, such as transmission, interaction and constructivist models, can be identified. The model implemented in this project adopted an interactive approach with a constructivist objective, rather than a linear approach where mere transmission of messages occurs. Another unusual feature of this model is that it incorporated a dimension of personal accompaniment which, compared to other models available online, can be seen as a unique factor in this research. Effective ways of online accompaniment were also tested during the piloting phase.

Piloting led to some changes in the design and approaches. The first pilot version of the website allowed for the registration of participants, validation and authentication modules, data entry forms, interactive materials, instructions, personal representation pages, monitoring of interactivity and data retrieval facilities. These various elements tested during the piloting phase are set out in Fig 5.5 below:

Fig 5.5 Online Activities Involved in the Project	
<i>Developing Instructional Faith Development Materials</i>	Writing themes: Spirit: Interactive – questions, answers. Resources: Teachings of the Church – Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), Bible, Jesus Youth charism, youth culture. Uploading online using an editor Evaluation: content, methods of interaction, effectiveness, appeal to young people, A theological advisor approved the themes.
<i>Identifying Faith Friends</i>	A Team of at least 10 JY leaders Qualifying terms: Experience in JY, good credentials, knowledge in mentoring, familiarity with the teachings of the Church, thorough understanding of themes of <i>Cybersouls</i> and its purposes, knowledge of netiquette, recommended by the required JY Co-ordinators
<i>Setting up the Site</i>	Designing and customisation to ensure the following: Themes that interest young people; Encouraging interaction and empowerment; Facility to develop themes and making them available to view; Opportunity for frequent evaluation of the site and interactions; Making sure that all trajectories of interactions are traced; Saving the messages shared; Having the whole corpus of data from the discussions on preparations to the online interactions stored and made available to the researcher.
<i>Information and invitation</i>	Techniques for promotion Electronic - E-mail, main page Jesus Youth website, within the module of social networking; JY retreats; Prayer meetings.
<i>Research design and data analysis</i>	Identifying the problem: Online Evangelisation of Youth. Identifying the possible solution: Accompaniment by Faithfriends. Identifying the systems involved: The Church, the Internet, young people. Identifying the groups of people involved: Faithfriends, young people, web team, theme builders, concept discussion groups and the researcher. Implementing the solution: In the preparatory discussions; in the language and text of the design; in the literature review; in the implementation of the design; Data retrieval: Documentation of all data; Data collection; Applying the research methodology; Data Analysis; Report of the Findings; Application of the findings.

Online Piloting of the Project

In order to pilot the project, the researcher identified five potential FFs and ten potential CSs belonging to the Jesus Youth movement who were from Ireland and so within the reach of the researcher. The FFs were allowed to register by clicking on the home page in the same

interface given to the CSs. Later, when the data entered were verified, they were promoted to the level of FFs. The piloting process highlighted some practical issues regarding the registration of Faithfriends which were rectified immediately. They were given a separate and private link to register and the amount of data collected from them differed from those of CSs since they had to be verified as authentic. This piloting phase helped to develop clearer norms of identifying and choosing a FF as described below.

Norms of Identifying and Choosing a Faithfriend (FF)

All FFs had to be practising Catholics. It was crucial that they were able to interact with young people, to speak their language and understand them. As stated previously, a knowledge of the Internet and computers was another pre-requisite for FFs. Moreover a confidence to accompany a young person online on his/her journey of faith was important. Again, as mentioned earlier, co-ordinators in Jesus Youth, an international Catholic youth movement, undertook the task of identifying FFs who met the above requirements nominating them to the co-ordinator.

Once a FF was identified, the co-ordinator contacted that person and obtained his/her consent. Then an invitation was sent to that FF online to register on the site. Once registered, the co-ordinator confirmed the details and authorised each candidate to act as a FF. The acceptance of a person as a FF was not automatic. This authorisation to become a FF ensured that the person was authentic and avoided the possibility of inappropriate people acting in this role.

An induction process for authorised FFs followed. As it is possible to create tester accounts, in this project the accounts Cstester1 to Cstester50 were created in order to simulate a CS

being allocated to a FF. Initially, the co-ordinator simulated the role of a CS. Then, once the FF was comfortable using the site and was ready to accompany a CS, a real person who wanted to deepen the journey of faith was allocated to him/her. Initial identification, consent, recommendation, authentication and induction were involved in the preparation of each FF.

Piloting also shed light on the versatility of interactivity in relation to a *scroll*. Provision was given by the editor of the *scroll* to include dynamic snippets of comment buttons and other tools to enhance interactivity in a dynamic manner.

5.3 Research Ethics

Another task which had to be completed before implementation was to obtain the approval of the research ethics committee for the study. As part of this process, a Plain Language Statement was prepared to inform the participants about the research and their involvement in it. An Informed Consent Form was also set up to obtain the consent of each participant taking part in the research. Both of these were included in the *Cybersouls* portal. As the project involved human participation, an application detailing these preparations was sent to the Research Ethics Committee of Mater Dei Institute of Education where this research was undertaken. After thorough examination, the project was approved as it met the required ethical standards.

5.4 Implementation of the Project

Incorporating the modifications identified through piloting and in line with the project specifications, the website *www.cybersouls.ie* was launched on 25th June 2010. (Screen shots of some pages of the website are provided in Appendix A, B, C and D.) Prior to the launch, ten FFs had been identified, mainly from Jesus Youth. A contact list was prepared and an e-

mail was sent to some young adults on this list, inviting them to join. A facebook page was set up and, after 50 days, a daily registration rate of at least one new CS was reached. This level of registration was deemed to be sufficient for the purpose of the research as by 100 days the number of CS was expected to reach 100. The collaborative participation of all parties involved, leading up to the launch of the website, clarified various elements to be considered in the implementation of the project. As the processes involved in the implementation were ongoing, they were subject to regular review. The activities involved in the implementation process are identified below.

A Collaborative Implementation

The participants in the *Cybersouls* project were grouped into three categories: Administrative Level, Faithfriends Level and Cybersouls Level. The scope of participants at the various levels varied according to their roles and tasks, as explained below.

Administrative Level

The co-ordinator of the project, the web-administrator and the author of themes constituted the team responsible for the administration of the total project. The researcher undertook the roles of co-ordinator and author of the *Scrolls*. A senior academic in Roman Catholic Religious Education in Ireland and author of catechetical publications, Dr Patrick Devitt of Mater Dei Institute of Education, Dublin City University, approved the *Scrolls* before the co-ordinator uploaded them onto the website.

Role of the co-ordinator: As previously mentioned, the researcher assumed the role of the co-ordinator. In addition to undertaking the steps involved in initiating the project, his other responsibilities as co-ordinator involved:

1. Developing the specifications of the project;
2. Formulating the initial design of the outline of the project and time line;
3. Decision making in relation to aspects such as graphics, colour, language, vocabulary, layout and flow of control within the actual operations of the web-project;
4. Regular communication with the web-administrator;
5. Identification of future FFs and CSs;
6. Initial pilot run of the project before the actual launch;
7. Creation of various catechetical materials (*Scrolls*);
8. Obtaining approval for the *Scrolls*;
9. Registration and authentication of FFs;
10. Induction of FFs by allocating tester CSs;
11. Publicity of the website, inviting CSs to register;
12. Allocation of a FF to each registered CS;
13. Monitoring the interactions for any fraudulent/inappropriate behaviour etc.

Most of the above responsibilities were ongoing during the design, development, piloting and implementation of the project.

Role of web-administrator: The Web-administrator of the project was a professional systems analyst. During an initial discussion in which the co-ordinator shared the concept with him, he indicated that the proposed project was feasible. His roles involved:

1. Undertaking a feasibility study of various modules in the project;
2. Identifying the software and hardware requirements;
3. Registration of name and web-space for the project;
4. Actual coding;

5. Carrying out a dry run of the project with dummy data;
6. Modification of the modules after the dry run etc.

Faithfriends Level

Faithfriends (FFs) are those who are directly in contact with the project administrators. The project was initially introduced to them through the Jesus Youth movement when its co-ordinators in various countries sent a list of proposed FFs to the co-ordinator. The responsibilities of a Faithfriend involved:

1. Registration with reference to the local co-ordinator of the movement who authorises a FF;
2. Activation of the account via his/her e-mail;
3. Undergoing an induction into the site;
4. Initiating the accompaniment of CSs as and when it is felt he/she is ready for such an interaction;
5. Making use of various modules in the site for faith enrichment, especially *Scrolls*.
6. Reporting any issues relating to the site or to communication between a CS and a FF to the co-ordinator.

Faithfriends were informed that they might need to accompany as many as five active CSs on the *Cybersouls* website. (A screen shot of the registration form of FFs is provided in Appendix B).

Cybersouls Level

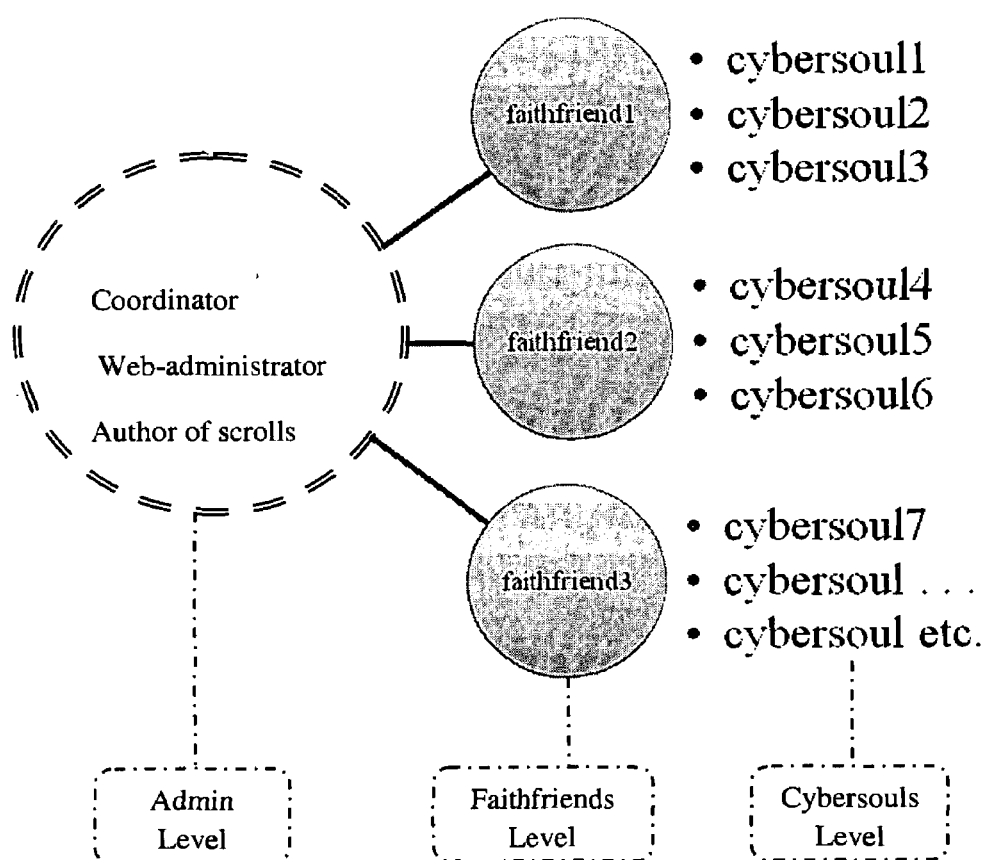
Cybersouls (CS) were those who registered of their own free will with the intention of deepening their Catholic religious faith. For research purposes, as participation in the site was

restricted to those over 18, any prospective participants were asked to confirm this age requirement.

Once they registered and activated their account using their e-mail, a FF was put in touch with them in the *Cybersouls* website. This gave them an opportunity to send messages to their FF, the co-ordinator as well as the web-administrator.

An overall picture of all participants in the *Cybersouls* portal according to their roles and hierarchical levels is set out in Fig 5.6 below.

Fig 5.6 Overall View of the Roles of Participants in the *Cybersouls* Project



The one-to-one interaction between a CS and a FF was recorded digitally. These online interactions occurred mainly when *Scrolls* were being considered. (Screen shot of a sample scroll is provided in Appendix D.) Also there were additional opportunities for sending

messages between FFs and CSs besides the discussions attached to a *scroll*. All CSs were able to communicate directly with the co-ordinator and web-administrator at any point. It is to be noted that the portal is named after the third level i.e., *Cybersouls* which clarifies the nature of the study primarily as being inductive⁹. The next section sets out various methods used in data collection.

5.5 Data Collection and Case Study Selection

The various methods of data collection undertaken in this study are described below. A mixed methods empirical design was adopted which prioritised a qualitative analytical approach as the primary research technique. The rationale behind choosing a qualitative study is next for consideration.

A Qualitative Approach

Three conditions are put forward by Yin (2003, p. 5) when identifying which research strategy is to be chosen for a study: (a) the type of research question posed; (b) the extent of control an investigator has over actual behavioural events and (c) the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events. Accordingly, a case study approach is chosen when, a “how” or “why” question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control (Yin, 2003, p. 5). The space for online interaction within the *Cybersouls* project is not a tightly controlled setting. The freedom, privacy and power to choose are the same as for anyone who has access to the Net. Online evangelisation is contemporary as it is a relatively new phenomenon. Hence, all the conditions specified by Yin (2003) are relevant to the research project.

⁹ An inductive approach is adopted in the coding of the data in the analytical process. At the same time the theoretical knowledge acquired in the literature review gives it a deductive dimension. Levins and Silver (2007) suggest the use of a combination of these two approaches as a method of coding when using software.

The case studies under consideration here also have some unusual features. In this research, online communication is the tool being used for evangelisation. Cyberspace is the actual space where this communication takes place. Also, since online communication is mainly multimedia, various components involved in conveying the message are to be considered. Collaborative communication involves incoming and outgoing messages. When mutually interactive communication occurs between a CS and a FF in relation to the message of the Good News, the faith development of a young person may be said to be initiated. Thus a multiple-methods approach or triangulation was adopted since varieties of data, theories and methods were used in order to achieve validity of the results (Berg, 2009). Hence, in this research, a mixed methods approach with a qualitative focus was adopted to maintain the validity of the outcome.

“Contextuality is an aspect of the dynamism and complexity of a case. Case study researchers recognise that cases are shaped by their many contexts – historical, social, political, ideological, organisational, cultural, linguistic, philosophical and so on” (Mabry, 2008, p.217). The research of online evangelisation, based on using the *Cybersouls* project, took place in concrete life situations. It is situated within the new meaning-making systems of technologies of social communication. The next section reports on the process of data collection and the selection of case studies for analysis.

Data Collection

Data from the *Cybersouls* portal was collected at various times during the project:

- At the time of registration (Screen shots of the registration forms of FFs and CSs are provided in Appendixes B and C.);

- Through the use of a questionnaire sent to CSs at the cut off point of the project¹⁰ (Screen shot of questionnaire form is provided in Appendix F.);
- On an ongoing basis through the interaction between a FF and a CS in the context of a particular *scroll* (Screen shots of an example of interactions in a case are provided in Appendix I.).

All data mentioned above were posted on the website digitally. Thus it was easy to export the data in a suitable form into the software for analysis. The data was collected at different times from different settings in order to facilitate comprehensive data collection. Triangulation in data collection¹¹ was achieved by collecting data from multiple sources. As Thurmond (2001) notes:

Triangulation is the combination of at least two or more theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches, data sources, investigators, or data analysis methods. The intent of using triangulation is to decrease, negate, or counterbalance the deficiency of a single strategy, thereby increasing the ability to interpret the findings. (p.253)

Lazar et al (2010) also observe that quantitative data can be used as a triangulation tool for corroborating results in relation to case studies.

Computer Assisted Database Compilation using NVivo

The above mentioned data was extracted in table format from the website. This was transferred into MSWord format, to be converted into text files for importation into NVivo.

¹⁰ The data of interaction the participants developed within 100 days from a CS's interaction with a FF was considered for the project. The questionnaire was sent on the 100th day of the registration of the first Cybersoul.

¹¹ "The use of multiple data sources to support and interpretation is known as data source triangulation" (Lazar et al, 2010, p.295).

As a computer aided qualitative data analysis system (CAQDAS), NVivo is used globally as an efficient tool for undertaking analytical work (Saldana, 2009). QSR International developed this software (NVivo Training, 2011). NVivo enables the management of multiple sources of data, making it a versatile tool for qualitative analysis (Bazeley, 2007). The range of facilities it offers include: coding relevant data in various sizes and organising it in linear or dynamic structures, memoing codes with their contextual information and recalling the data source or codes in line with the research requirements.

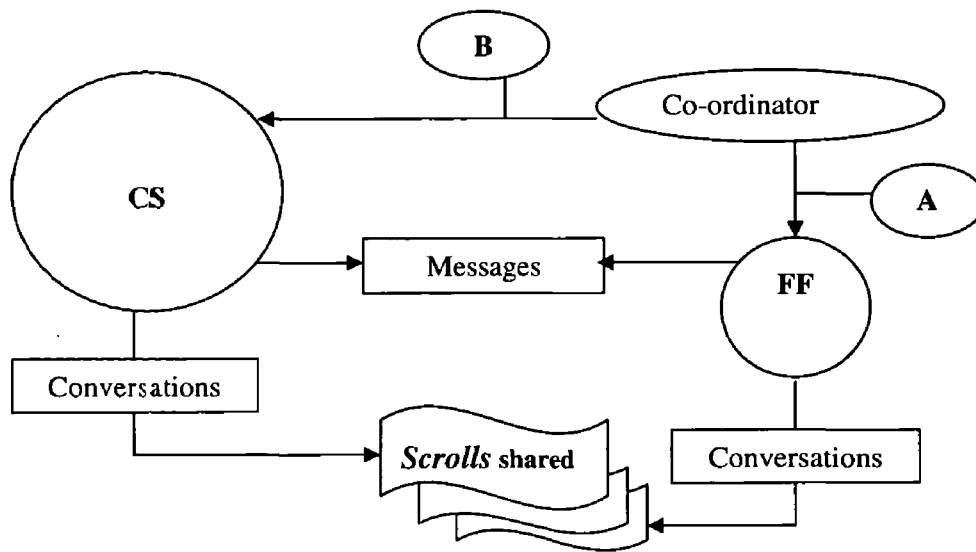
The *Cybersouls* database was designed with the intention of making use of the robust architecture of NVivo. This enabled the researcher to extract unforeseen patterns which could arise during the analytical process. "NVivo's sophisticated query tools let you uncover subtle trends and patterns" (QSR International, 2008b, p.3). The scope of collected data is next for discussion.

Scope of the Data

The data collected for more detailed qualitative analysis relates to the interactions between a CS and a respective FF during the first 100 days following the launch of the site.

A drama frame is a way of picturing qualitative data based on the roles, settings, and scripts. "The drama frame is well suited for studies concerned with communication as performance" (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002, p.236). A drama frame of the *Cybersouls* project is presented in Figure 5.7 below illustrating the communication between participants.

Fig 5.7 A Drama Frame of Communication in *Cybersouls*



The co-ordinator initiates Task A (see Fig 5.7). This involves both online and real world activities which precede the cyber activities. First of all a FF had to be identified. This identification was clarified in the earlier section on piloting.

In the above Data Frame (Fig 5.7) Task A was comprised of contacting a FF, authenticating each one, giving him/her an initiation into the online interaction by acting as a CS and, finally, being allocated a real person. This preceded Task B which is an automatic process when a CS clicks on the button Register as a Cybersoul on the home page. Certain details were sought to open an account in the *Cybersouls* website: *Login Name, E-mail ID, Password, Retype Password, Your Name, Gender, Country of origin, and address and contact (optional)*. At this point each one was asked to confirm being over 18. A tick box was provided for anybody who did not wish to take part in the research. Also at this stage participants were asked to type in a value from an image to distinguish between computers and humans in order to avoid accounts being created automatically to spam the website. (This is technically known as *captcha* (Carnegie Mellon University, 2010)). This was the first data

collection point in relation to an individual CS (A screen shot of the registration form of CSs is provided in Appendix C).

The information collected was kept in the secure custody of the coordinator. He regularly examined the data submitted for any suspected fraudulent information and allocated a FF at the earliest opportunity.

Data Importation: As this was an online project, the traditional process of transcribing data to adapt them to digital format was not necessary. Demographic details of all participants - both CSs and FFs - were first imported into Excel and then, as attributes of case nodes imported into NVivo. Data were organised into a folder hierarchy by data type (for example, that of FF and CS) so as to track their source. NVivo stores data in 'nodes' which are repositories for themes and categories. One such node type is a case node which is a single file which stores each participant's contribution from any source, be it their fundamental interaction or their individual messaging (Bazeley, 2007).

These case nodes, once populated, were linked to the demographics tables and their returns from the quantitative survey. This facilitated integration between the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the data. Thus, intangibles such as attitude and beliefs (for example, data coded in a node which hosts all references to personal opinion) could be intersected with tangibles such as belongingness to a church for detailed analyses in order to help the researcher understand the phenomena under scrutiny (Lewins and Silver, 2007).

Coding in NVivo: NVivo helps to code data in a very efficient manner. Autocoding and manual coding are two different methods of singling out data. At a practical level, autocoding

is more appropriate in the first stage of analysis, when the data is to be reviewed from various angles. Manual coding is more suitable in the second stage of the study when grounded theory is applied. This is done later in chapter 7 where a detailed analysis of conversations is carried out. Autocoding was undertaken in the initial data processing stage, as can be seen below.

Initial Data Processing: Digital data in relation to a total 56 Cybersouls who had completed three or more *Scrolls* by day 100 were obtained from the space of interaction on the website *www.cybersouls.ie*. These were copied into MSWord. The next step was to arrange the data according to the requirements of NVivo8. Compatibility of the data format with NVivo was established in order to increase the speed of data processing and to facilitate autocoding. Various levels of headings were created in MSWord. These are identification marks in NVivo, which help to separate each case. Hence, all labels of *Scrolls* were aligned as 'Heading1', the names of FFs as 'Heading2' and the names of CSs as 'Heading 3'. Following this process the autocoding of data to:

- Heading 1 separated, coded and ordered data related to all *Scrolls*;
- Heading 2 captured data in connected with a FF;
- and Heading 3 coded and displayed data in relation to a CS.

This initial autocoding helped to comprehend the actual size and spread of the data. A huge volume of data was generated, well beyond the scope of this study. This gave rise to the need for careful data reduction. As Berg (2009, p.54) counsels: "Qualitative data need to be reduced and transformed in order to make them more readily accessible, understandable and to draw out various themes and patterns". Lazar et al (2010) also point out the need for some

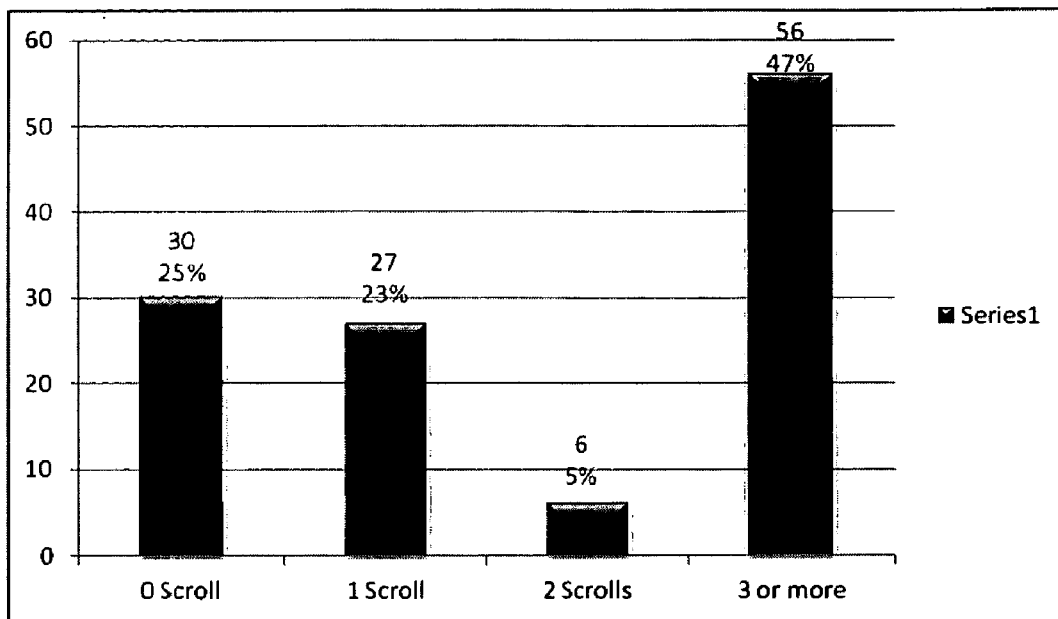
precautionary measures to be taken in relation to data collection when it is being used for research purposes:

All of the automated methods for computerised data collection are capable of producing voluminous data sets. This can pose a substantial problem for researchers. It is well known that while filling disks with data is easy, analysis and interpretation of that data is often much harder. Choosing appropriate data granularity and proper data management are crucial components of any automated data collection system. (p.308)

Selection of a Representative Sample of Data

Initially, a self selection method (Lazar et al, 2010) empowered each participant to take part in the research. This was achieved by asking all those who wished to take part in the *Cybersouls* project, while registering, to choose to become part of the research. As mentioned earlier, by day 100 of the site's operation, 119 participants had registered. Of these, 56 CSs (47%) had completed three *Scrolls* or more; six participants had ceased interaction after the second *scroll* and 27 (23%) did not continue after the first *scroll*. Thirty (25%) of those who registered initially did not continue. These results are shown in Fig 5.8 below.

Fig 5.8 Usage of *Scrolls* by Cybersouls



The high performance rate of the *Cybersouls* site, with 119 *Cybersouls* registering during the first 100 days of its operation, was very gratifying and generated an enormous amount of data (Screen shots of examples of interactions within a case are provided in Appendix I.) However, since this is primarily an exploratory study, using a qualitative approach, data for analysis had to be chosen carefully in order to keep it manageable within the time frame of the study. Robust techniques were applied when choosing a representative sample for analysis. Firstly, a sample set was created, using the responses to the questionnaire as a basis for selection. This is called *Survey Sampling* (Lazar et al, 2010). Another sample set was created based on the data created by the level of usage of the website. This is entitled *Usage Sampling* (Lazar et al, 2010). These sampling processes are explained below.

Data Reduction by Survey Sampling

One way of reducing data was to create a subset of participating CSs representative of different sets of favourability. This was achieved by investigating if there was an underlying

construct of “favourability” in relation to eight questions on a Likert-type questionnaire sent to CSs. These questions sought information on aspects of favourability towards the *Cybersouls* project. The following Likert items were used:

(CSQ-1) The scrolls/themes in this website helped me to reflect seriously about my faith.

(CSQ-2) I like interacting via social networking sites such as Facebook, Bebo, Orkut, Myspace etc.

(CSQ-3) I feel part of the online *Cybersouls* community.

(CSQ-4) I am closer to my parish/community because of the *Cybersouls* website.

(CSQ-5) I understand my Catholic faith better now.

(CSQ-6) I would recommend the *Cybersouls* website to a friend in order to deepen his/her faith.

(CSQ-7) My Faithfriend in the *Cybersouls* website has helped me to deepen my faith.

(CSQ-8) Taking part in the *Cybersouls* project has enlivened my faith.

Participants were given a choice of responses: *Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly agree*. In addition, they were offered an opportunity for further comments: *If you have any additional comments to make about the Cybersouls website, kindly make them below.*

The survey was constructed using Google Forms and a web-link was provided on in the *Cybersouls* website. (Screen shot of questionnaire form is provided in Appendix F.) Participants were given a time frame of two weeks to reply. The survey was made available to the 119 CSs who had registered by day 100 of the site operation and a total of 58 CSs responded, yielding a response rate of just under half (49%).

Since survey data collection was offered in Google Forms, the transfer of the collected data on to an excel spreadsheet was easily achieved. The data obtained from this survey were mainly used for two purposes:

- (a) To obtain a general picture of participants’ views on the website. (These findings are presented in chapter 6.);
- (b) To obtain a reliable sample set.

The creation of the sample set for qualitative analysis is detailed below.

Constructing a Reliable Scale of Favourability: Pallant (2001) points out that it is important to check the reliability of a scale defined as a set of items with high levels of correlation indicative of an underlying construct. A method of assuring reliability is to examine whether the data from individual scale items are internally consistent, i.e., if they all measure the same underlying construct favourability. Cronbach’s (1951) alpha coefficient is a commonly used indicator of such internal consistency. It is used for scores which fall along a continuum (Siegle, 2003). First, a Cronbach’s alpha test was undertaken which included all the eight items in the questionnaire listed above.

The data relating to the 58 Cybersouls who had completed the survey were transferred to SPSS. A Cronbach’s alpha test was applied to the data obtained on the eight questions from these 58 Cybersouls.

Table 5.1 Initial Case Processing Summary with 8 Variables			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	57	98.3
	Excluded ^a	1	1.7
	Total	58	100.0
a. List wise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.			

As can be seen from Table 5.1 above, one of the items relating to one CS was incomplete. Thus only the valid data from the remaining 57 CS was included in the test for internal consistency:

Table 5.2 First Result of Reliability Test		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.720	.755	8

Conventionally it is accepted that, if the value of Cronbach's alpha is above 0.7, there is a good internal consistency within the survey. In this test, as can be seen in Table 5.2, the coefficient is 0.720 which, though adequate is at the bare minimum.

Table 5.3 Inter-item Correlation Matrix in Survey								
	CSQ-1	CSQ-2	CSQ-3	CSQ-4	CSQ-5	CSQ-6	CSQ-7	CSQ-8
CSQ-1	1.000	-.171	.240	.310	.375	.274	.410	.545
CSQ-2	-.171	1.000	-.177	-.053	-.105	-.041	-.160	-.076
CSQ-3	.240	-.177	1.000	.450	.400	.343	.383	.316
CSQ-4	.310	-.053	.450	1.000	.534	.349	.456	.439
CSQ-5	.375	-.105	.400	.534	1.000	.471	.599	.601
CSQ-6	.274	-.041	.343	.349	.471	1.000	.169	.349
CSQ-7	.410	-.160	.383	.456	.599	.169	1.000	.554
CSQ-8	.545	-.076	.316	.439	.601	.349	.554	1.000

Note: Table 5.3 depicts the inter-item correlation matrix for the eight items in the survey. As can be seen, survey item CSQ2 has a negative value whereas all the other items are in positive correlation to other variables.

It can be seen from the inter-item correlation matrix shown in Table 5.3 above that one particular question does not seem to measure the same construct as the other questions due to the negative values of the correlation. The item in question is: *CSQ-2 - I like interacting via social networking sites such as Facebook, Bebo, Orkut, Myspace etc.* The item-total statistics

in Table 5.4 below, with eight preliminary variables, also indicate that a higher alpha value would be obtained if that particular item were deleted.

Table 5.4 Item-Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
CSQ-1	21.6316	7.844	.435	.337	.689
CSQ-2	22.0000	9.750	-.156	.064	.826
CSQ-3	21.8246	7.647	.440	.296	.687
CSQ-4	22.4912	6.504	.583	.384	.650
CSQ-5	21.9123	6.867	.681	.571	.635
CSQ-6	21.5088	8.004	.443	.312	.689
CSQ-7	21.9298	7.602	.563	.491	.667
CSQ-8	21.9474	7.194	.640	.516	.648

Accordingly, after deleting the variable represented by question CSQ2, Cronbach's alpha test was applied again to the remaining data collected from 7 questions from the 58 *Cybersouls*. As is evident from Table 5.5 below, this resulted in a reliability value of 0.825 which indicates that there is a strong internal consistency between responses to the seven questions and that a reliable scale underlies the *Cybersouls*' response to these survey items..

Table 5.5 Reliability Statistics with 7 Variables		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.825	.828	7

Then, using these seven questions, a "favourability" score of all CS who participated in the survey was calculated in SPSS and classified into three levels: *Less Favourable*, *Favourable* and *Most Favourable*. Three samples each were chosen from the *Less Favourable* and *Most Favourable* levels while four samples were chosen from the *Favourable* section giving a total of 10 samples. Those who completed a greater number of *Scrolls* were chosen from the *Most Favourable* and *Favourable* categories. In the remaining *Less Favourable* category the three

samples chosen included one who had finished the least number of *Scrolls*, one with a medium level of *scroll* completion and one who had worked through a large number of *Scrolls*. This yielded an overall total of ten CSs for inclusion in the detailed qualitative analysis, using survey sampling.

Usage Sampling

Reviewing the overall usage of the *Cybersouls* website, the researcher observed that there were some CSs who had not completed the questionnaire but were still continuing to interact on the site. It was considered useful to include data in the sample for detailed analysis which related to some of these CSs. There were 13 participants in this category from which three were chosen for inclusion, based on their usage of *Scrolls*, i.e., one who had finished the highest number of *Scrolls*, one the second highest score and a third with the lowest completion rate.

The Final Sample Selected for Qualitative Analysis

Combining the ten *Cybersouls* selected from the survey sampling with the additional three identified through usage sampling, gave an overall total of 13 *Cybersouls* chosen for qualitative analysis, as detailed in Table 5.6 below.

Table 5.6 Selected Participants for Qualitative Analysis							
Case	Level of favourability	CS	Gender CS	Favourability score	<i>Scrolls</i> finished	FF	Gender FF
1	Less Fav	CSA32	M	16	3	FFA19	M
2	Less Fav	CSA51	M	18	11	FFA21	M
3	Less Fav	CSA19	F	20	5	FFA14	M
4	Favourable	CSA35	M	21	11	FFA4	M
5	Favourable	CSA45	F	21	11	FFA15	M
6	Favourable	CSA52	F	21	7	FFA22	F
7	Favourable	CSA30	M	22	6	FFA6	F
8	More Fav	CSA11	F	23	24	FFA10	F
9	More Fav	CSA46	F	24	21	FFA10	F
10	More Fav	CSA50	M	28	23	FFA1	M
11	Usage	CSA6	F	N/A	5	FFA5	M
12	Usage	CSA9	F	N/A	5	FFA8	F
13	Usage	CSA7	F	N/A	4	FFA6	F
Total		13			136	11	

These 13 cases selected for qualitative analysis provide data relating to the on-going communication which took place between a CS and a FF during the identified number of *Scrolls* they had completed together. There are eight female and five male CSs in this cohort. They interacted with four female and seven male FFs; as two female FFs (FFA10 and FFA6) accompanied two Cybersouls each in Case 8/9 and Case 7/13 respectively.

There are differences between the participants in the selected sample in relation to a range of demographics. Their gender, country of origin, vocational status and knowledge and practice of their faith are some of the factors which may have impacted on the effectiveness of the CSs interventions. Also, there was a wide variation in the completion rate of *Scrolls* which ranged between three and 24. This cohort of 13 CSs, together with the interactions of the 11 FFs who accompanied them, yielded an overall total of 136 *scroll*-based interactions for consideration.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter focussed on the *Cybersouls* project. The research questions have been set out and their operationalisation explained. In addition, various elements of the research design were clarified.

The piloting of the project was described, prefaced by a discussion on the need for piloting and the challenges of this research. Also the approval of the research from an ethical perspective was established.

Next, details were given on the collaborative approach used in the implementation of the project.

A description on the data collection process clarified the methods and approaches adopted in this part of the research. Finally, the sampling techniques used to select the cohort of thirteen cases for qualitative analysis were explained. The next chapter considers findings of the questionnaire sent to the CSs and selected case descriptions.

CHAPTER 6

QUESTIONNAIRE FINDINGS AND DESCRIPTION OF SELECTED CASES

This chapter commences with a presentation of the findings arising from the online questionnaire sent to CSs. This is followed by a review of the research questions. Next, having clarified some of the approaches to the analysis of case studies, using NVivo, the focus turns to the cohort of thirteen cases chosen for more detailed analysis, as identified in the previous chapter. The main characteristics of each of these cases are presented and the chapter concludes with a consolidation of these findings.

6.1 Findings: Online Questionnaire

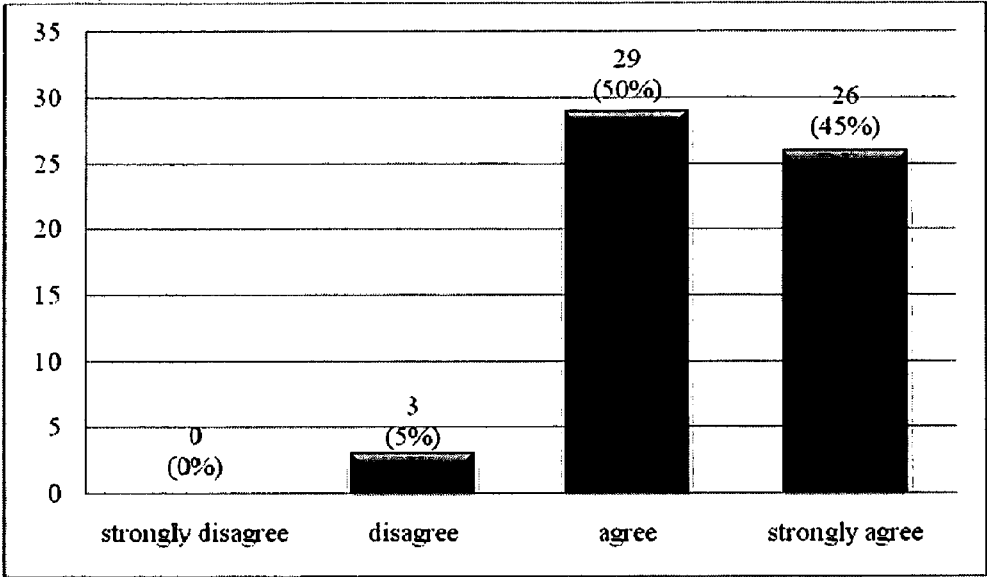
As mentioned in chapter 5, an online questionnaire was sent to the 119 Cybersouls who had registered by day 100 of the site's operation, seeking their views on various aspects of the *Cybersouls* project. The questionnaire had eight specific questions, as listed previously in chapter 5, together with an option to include additional open response comments at the end. A total of 58 Cybersouls responded, giving a response rate of 49%. The findings relating to this questionnaire now follow.

Question 1: Impact of the Scrolls on Faith

The impact of the *Scrolls* on the faith of participants was explored in this final closed question. Here, once again, the results were very positive, with 95% (55) of the respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing that the *Scrolls* had helped them to reflect on their faith. Detailed results are provided in Fig 6.1 which now follows. Also this addresses the research

question: What skills and tools would be needed by the Church in adapting to the new medium of the Internet?

Fig 6.1 The Scrolls/themes in this website helped me to reflect seriously about my faith

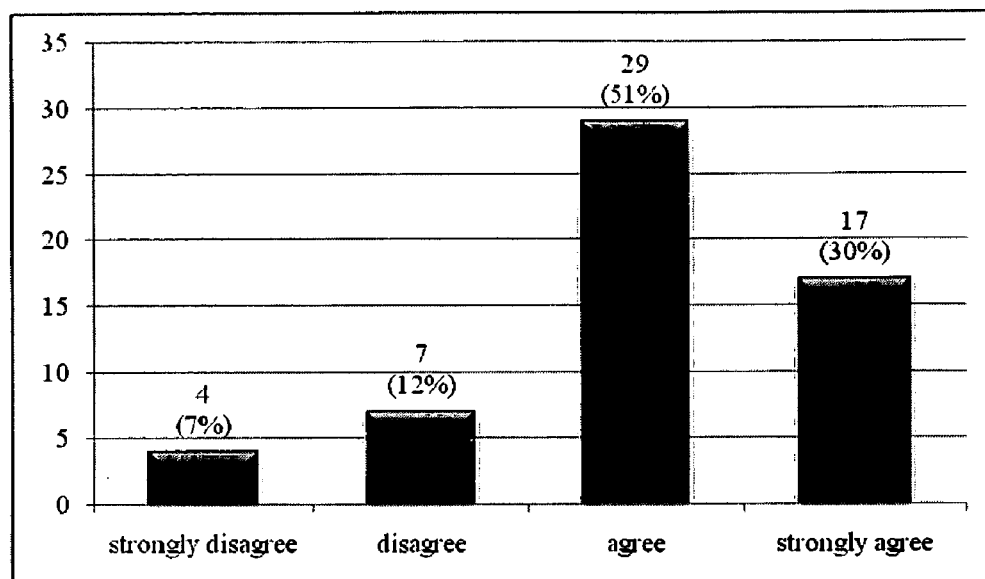


This question concerned one of the main features of the website, namely *Scrolls*. They contain some of the Catholic themes which were later shared by a FF with a CS and the conversation and interaction progressed around them. The use of multimedia, layout, language and a facility to interact were incorporated within a *Scroll*. How these features are synthesised and how they have been utilised by the participants is discussed in detail in chapter 7.

Question 2: Social Networking

This question investigated preferences regarding the usage of other social networking sites.

Fig 6.2 I like interacting via social networking sites such as Facebook, Bebo, Orkut, Myspace etc.

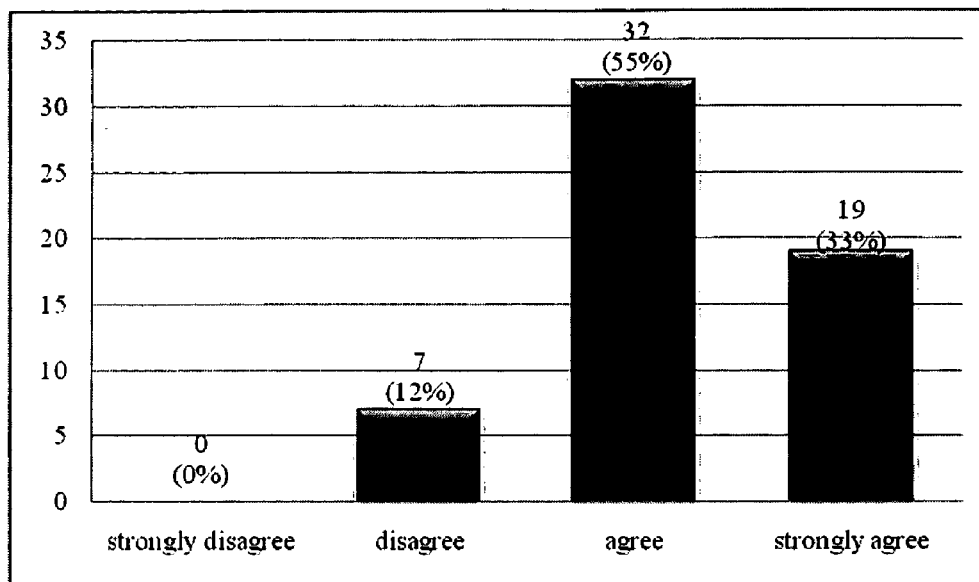


The response, as seen in Fig 6.2 above, shows that the majority of the sample (46/81%) are positively disposed to social networking on the Internet. The remaining eleven (19%) indicated that they did not like to interact by using social networking sites. Given the overall positive disposition to using other social networking sites, it can be concluded that participants are in a position to compare the *Cybersouls* website with other sites. Also this findings is valuable in order to substantiate claims made later in the more detailed analysis.

Question 3: The Online Cybersouls Community

The communal dimension of the online site was explored in this question. As depicted in Fig 6.3 below, similar to the positive trends in the first four questions, the vast majority of respondents (51/88%) CSs feel part of the online *Cybersouls* community leaving only seven (12%) who disagreed with this statement.

Fig 6.3 I feel part of the online *Cybersouls* community



A community feeling can be considered as one of the driving forces of online interaction. The Church being a community, and young people sharing common defining elements, as discussed earlier in the respective chapter 5, this issue is closely connected to the research questions. A response from CSA7 regarding this question is interesting:

I feel like I am part of *Cybersouls*. But I don't have a community feeling. Maybe it's because of the kind of interaction. I only have contact with my faith friend right and so I don't usually have the feeling that there are many people out there along with me. Maybe it's because I don't interact with the other members.

(Comments from CSA7, Survey in *Cybersouls*, 2010)

At present, the main interaction on the website is between a FF and a CS i.e., a one-to-one relationship. While this seems to have generated a community feeling for most of the respondents, a more public forum may bring an added dimension to this 'community feeling', given the view expressed by CSA7 above. Various levels of interaction occurring between

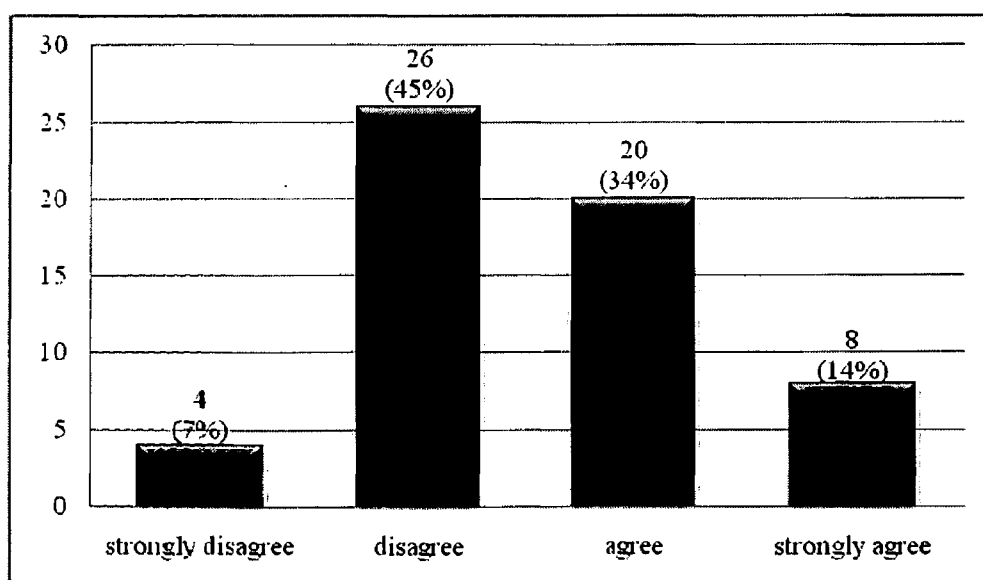
participants, which may define communities in the *Cybersouls* website, are considered later in the detailed analysis.

Question 4: Website Usage and Parish/Community Involvement

The possibility of involvement in the *Cybersouls* project forging closer links for participants with their parish/community was probed in this question. What are some of the pastoral and theological opportunities afforded by the Internet as a means of evangelisation? This is a research question posed in chapter 5 with a view to finding out how the Internet can be used as a conduit to inspire young people to take part in the real life activities of the Church at parish or community level.

Results, shown in Fig 6.4, below, differ from the mainly positive responses reported in relation to the previous four questions. Here, opinions were evenly divided as just over half of the respondents (30/52%) CSs disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that they were closer to their parish community because of their involvement with the *Cybersouls* website, leaving 48% who agreed/strongly agreed with the statement.

Fig 6.4 I am closer to my parish/community because of the *Cybersouls* website



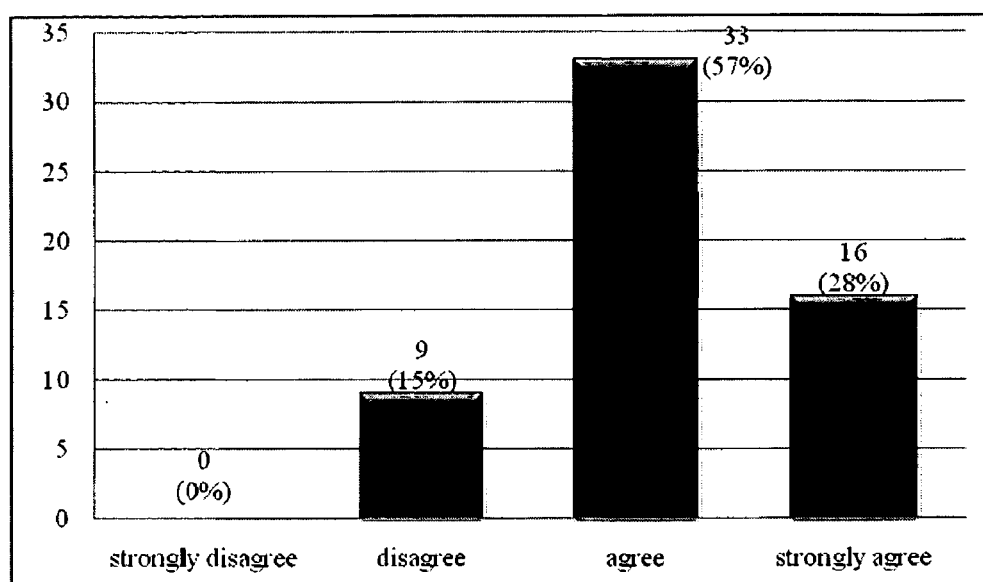
Comments made by some respondents in relation to this question are worth noting. One, who disagreed with the statement, explained: "I do not belong to a parish. So I don't know in what way Cybersouls will help in my parish activities and relations" (Comments from CSA7, Survey in *Cybersouls*, 2010). This raises the issue of alienation of young people, as mentioned in chapter 4, where they seem to be absent from the traditional places of worship (Briggs, 2008). However, taking into account the short time span of this study, the fact that almost half of the participants endorsed the statement can be interpreted as a positive achievement of this web portal.

In addition, some of the interactions and discourses between CSs and FFs, which are detailed later, indicate a more positive attitude to this question.

Question 5: Understanding of Faith

Catechesis is one of the moments of evangelisation, as detailed in chapter 2. A core objective in setting up the *Cybersouls* website was to provide an online facility enabling young people to get a better understanding of the Catholic Faith through catechesis. Here, Question 5 probed for information on another major research question: 'considering the moments of evangelisation, to what extent is the Internet useful as a tool?' The relevant findings are presented in Fig 6.5.

Fig 6.5 I understand my Catholic faith better now

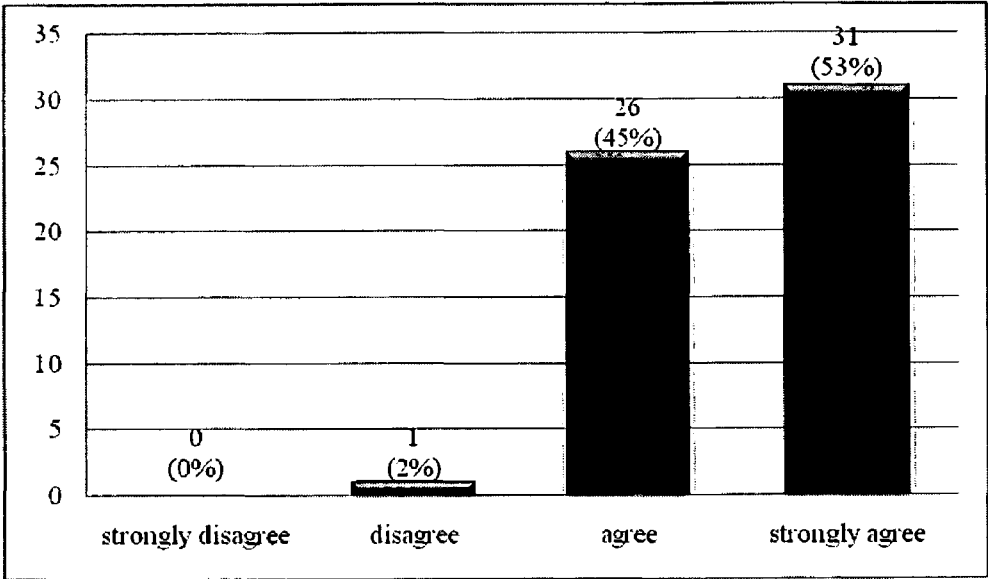


As can be seen from this figure, a significant majority of the sample, (49/85%), either agreed or strongly agreed that the *Cybersouls* website had given them a better understanding of the Catholic faith. It is noted that nobody strongly disagreed with the statement while only nine (15%) disagreed with it. This question is connected to the capacity of the Internet to act as a medium of information-sharing on faith. It addresses the research question: 'What is the potential of the Internet as an environment for the evangelisation of young people?' Results suggest that the Internet does have a potential in this regard.

Question 6: Recommending Cybersouls Site to Others

The aim of Question 6 was to ascertain how participants felt about recommending the *Cybersouls* site to a friend as a means of deepening faith. As can be seen in Fig 6.6 below, there was almost full endorsement of this idea, with only one respondent voicing dissent. As those who strongly agreed with the proposition (31/53%) outnumbered those who agreed with the proposition (26/45%), this adds more strength to this positive outcome.

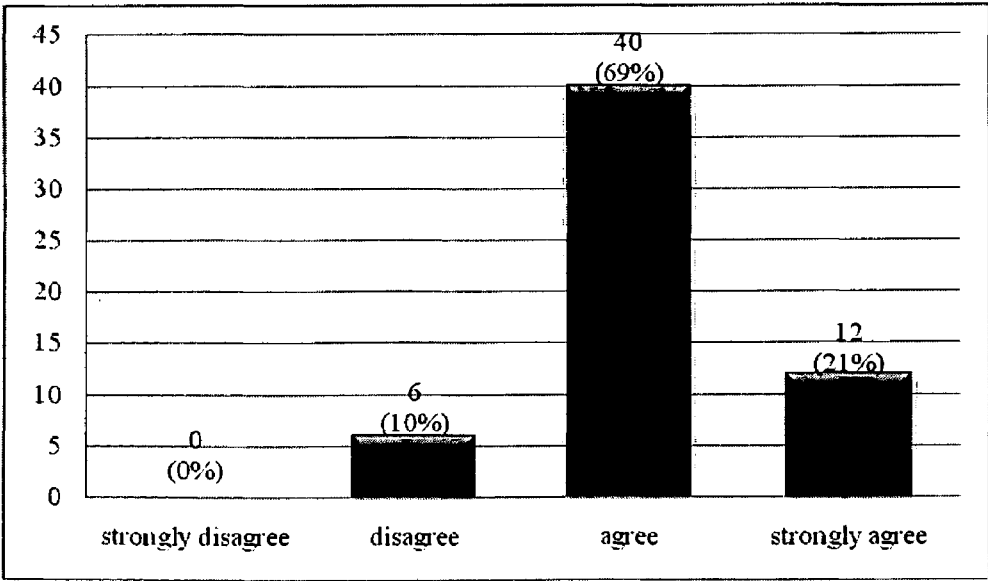
Fig 6.6 I would recommend the *Cybersouls* website to a friend in order to deepen his/her faith



Question 7: Impact of Faithfriend on faith

FFs were the focus in Question 7. Their effect on the faith of participating CS was investigated. Findings are depicted in Fig 6.7.

Fig 6.7 My Faithfriend in the *Cybersouls* website has helped me to deepen my faith

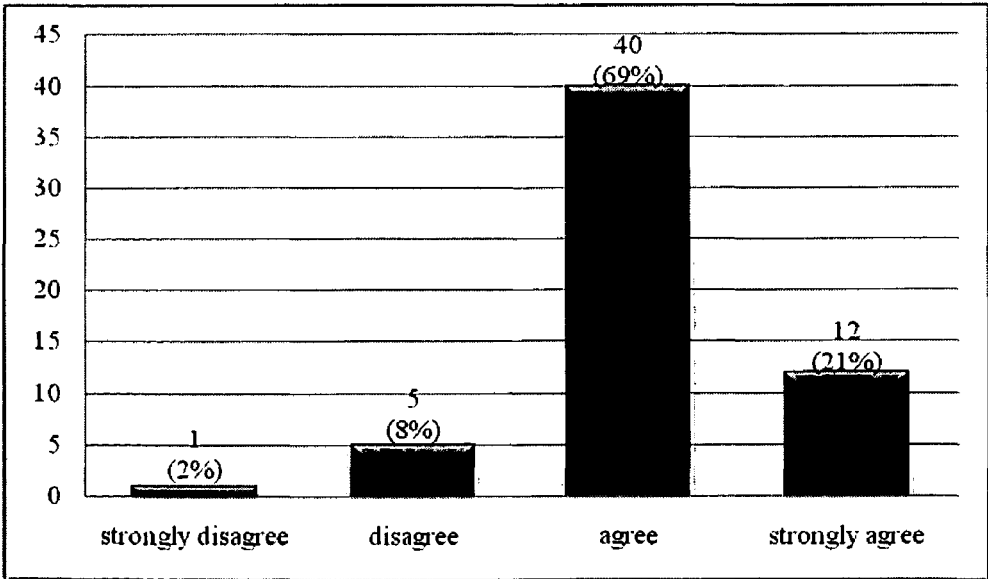


The presence and response of a FF is a way of evangelising youth online. How can the Church make use of technology to reach out to youth in their new habitats or socialising spaces? Question 7 addresses this research question. A total of 22 FFs was allocated to the above 58 CSs who replied to the questionnaire. Some FFs had more than one Cybersoul allocated to them. Considering the differences in personalities, their individual and cultural difference and other factors that varied with each FF, it is noteworthy that, here again, 52 (90%) either agreed or strongly agreed that their FF had helped to deepen their faith. The factors relating to FFs which contributed to this positive outcome are considered later in the more detailed analysis of findings. Offering FFs online may present an opportunity for the Church in this regard. The involvement of FFs is a major element of this research project, making it unique and breaking new ground.

Question 8: Impact of Cybersouls project on faith

This question sought to find out from respondents if their participation in the *Cybersouls* project had enlivened their faith. Results are set out in Fig 6.8 below.

Fig 6.8 Taking part in the *Cybersouls* project has enlivened my faith

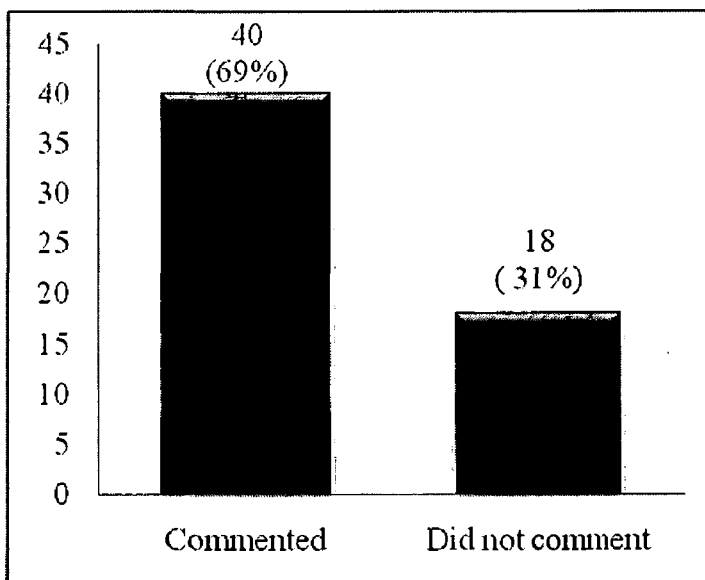


Findings indicate that the project had a positive impact on the faith of participants. A total of 90% (52) of the 58 CS who responded either agreed or strongly agreed that the *Cybersouls* project has enlivened their faith. This overall positive response suggests that the objective of deepening their faith has been a reality for the majority of respondents, providing information related to the primary research question of examining how the Internet can be used for the evangelisation of youth online.

Question 9: Additional Comments

The final question (9) was an open question which sought additional comments from CSs about the website. The response rate is set out in Fig 6.9 below.

Fig 6.9 Additional Comments



As can be seen, 40 (69%) availed of the opportunity to make general observations on this online project. An analysis of the responses now follows. As some of the comments covered more than one issue, the total number (56) exceeded the number of respondents (40). The analysis enabled the comments received to be grouped into six areas – (a) general views on

the website; (b) compliments on the site; (c) appraisal of FFs and (d) *Scrolls*; (e) specific aspects of the site which were of interest and finally (f) some suggestions.

The majority of the comments, 28 in total, were in Group (a) and they were all positive. Fifteen of them expressed general satisfaction with the site, e.g., “a brilliant concept” (CSA30); “a very good website” (CSA44); “it’s been a great help to me” (CSA42). A further five respondents specified the usefulness of the site for young people. A comment by CSA43 captures this aspect rather well: “It is good for the new generation . . . is like serving the old fine wine in a newly fashionable mug”. Of the remaining eight comments, three (CSA13, CSA33 and CSA53) related to the spiritual nourishment provided by the site; two (CSA26 and CSA28) said, “it helped me to think about my faith” and another duo (CSA20 and CSA52) commented on how well organised the site was. The remaining comment (CSA50) was that “*Cybersouls* should replace facebook”!

Turning to Group (b), the eight comments here expressed congratulations/thanks to the researcher for setting up the site, e.g., “Thank you very much for creating such a wonderful resource” (CSA11).

FFs were the focus in Group (c). All five comments here were positive, endorsing the help and support provided by Faithfriend; e.g., “Faithfriends are very helpful” (CSA18); “My Faithfriend has been a huge moral support to me” (CSA26).

While only four comments related specially to the *Scrolls* (Group (d)), they all expressed reservations about them, e.g., “I think the *Scrolls* are a little bit complicated” (CSA34); “*Scrolls* may not be easy for an average user to understand” (CSA37).

In Group (e), three respondents identified particular aspects of the site which appealed to them, e.g., “the dialogue sessions” (CSA30); “connecting with another practicing Catholic” (CSA39).

The final Group (f) consisted of eight suggestions. Two of them advised making the site more popular and better promoted (CSA35 and CSA27). A third respondent, CSA19, suggested that the site needed to be a bit clearer and easier to navigate; while CSA37 considered that it should be “optimised for mobile devices”. The remaining four put forward suggestions regarding possible changes to the site. These included recommendations about books books/movies/videos/web sites based on a catholic point of view (CSA35); having discussion forums for members on faith related subjects (CSA40); adding an FAQ section (CSA37) and giving some topics for reflection and then asking for feedback (CSA38).

This concludes the review of the comments received in response to the invitations in Question 9 of the questionnaire. Findings indicate an overall positive response to the *Cybersouls* website including the critical and creative suggestions, apart from the reservations about the *Scrolls* recorded by four participants.

Questionnaire: Overview

All 58 *Cybersouls* who responded to the questionnaire indicated a generally positive attitude towards the *Cybersouls* website, apart from the response to one question (Q 4). The above findings capture their attitudes towards two main features:

(1) In relation to the various components of the *Cybersouls* website:

The majority of respondents seem to be positively disposed to all questions related to the various components of the site, having made use of them. Regarding FFs and *Scrolls*, their

attitude is generally very positive. The structure of the website and other issues raised by certain CSs are considered later in the more detailed analysis.

(2) In relation to the effects of the site on their personal and community life:

Some of the CSs commented that the *Cybersouls* website had helped them in a general way in their personal life and in their relationship with God. At the same time, just over half of the respondents indicated that the site had not increased their affinity to a parish or community. A comment from one participant is interesting in this regard: "I feel that it is too early for me to answer the questions" (Comments from CSA22, Survey in *Cybersouls*, 2010).

It is considered that the running of the website for a longer period and further post-doctoral research at a later stage, following the completion of this pioneering project, may provide additional insights over time. As mentioned in chapter 5, since a regular review of the research questions can bring greater clarity to the study, this task is now undertaken.

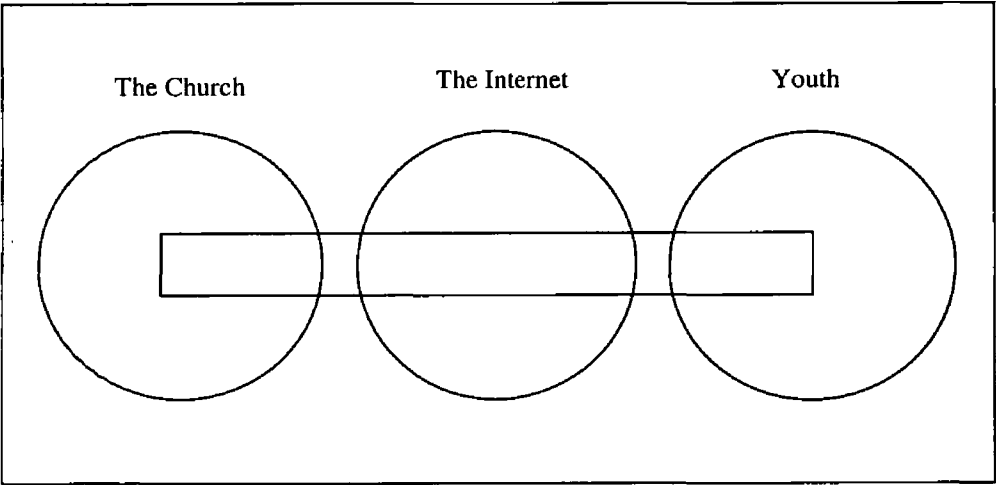
6.2 Review of Research Questions

All the research questions set out in chapter 5 emanate from the main research question exploring how an effective web presence can be developed which can help value-based communities such as the Catholic Church to relate to young people at a global level. The research questions can be clustered under three main areas the Church, the Internet and Young People.

The possibility of the convergence of these three spheres at a given time is at the core of this thesis. This synthesis can occur in various ways, depending on the levels of interaction and their mutual benefit. There are three linear ways for this interaction to take place. An example

of a linear model is given in Fig 6.10. In this configuration, *the Internet* is just a medium benefiting the interaction between the Church and young people. Here, young people, as well as the Church, may be using the Internet as a medium for their own private communication.

Fig 6.10 Linear Merge of the Three Spheres

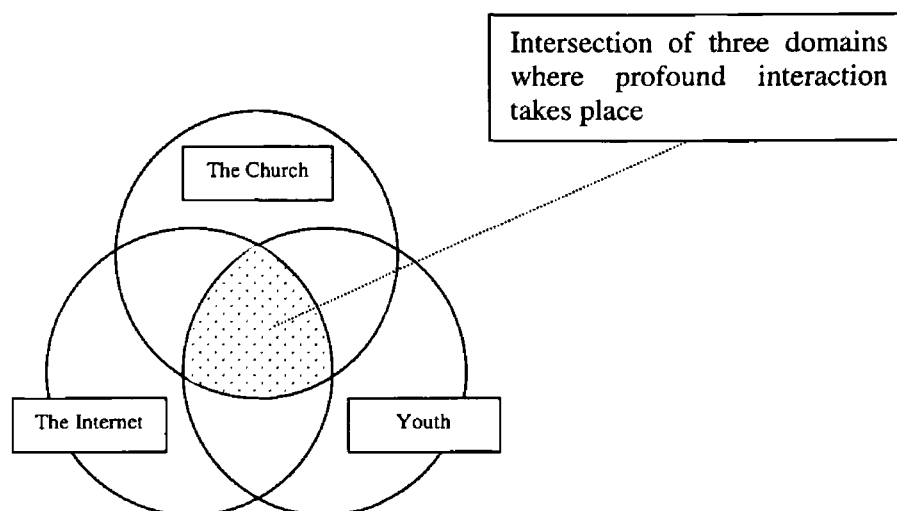


In the second linear model, *youth* replaces the Internet at the centre. In this situation, the Church may be using the energy of young people for its growth from *one side* while the Internet may be catering for the needs of young people from the other side. But neither may contribute to the development of young people in the long run.

In the third linear interaction of these three spheres, *the Church* is positioned at the centre. Young people may be interacting with the Church for their immediate and temporal benefits. The Internet may be targeting the traffic of the Church for its own benefit, while not giving anything in return to the Church.

The ideal situation is to have a dynamic synthesis of these three spheres where each one can benefit from the presence of the other two, as shown in Fig 6.11.

Fig 6.11 Dynamic Merge of Three Spheres



Research Questions Pertaining to Various Spheres of the Research

The Church

- (a) How can the Church make use of technology to *reach out* to the youth in their new habitats or socializing spaces?
- (b) What skills and tools would be needed by the Church in adapting to the new medium of the Internet?
- (c) Considering the various 'moments of evangelisation' developed over the years in the Church, to what extent is the Internet useful as a tool to continue this task?

The Internet

- (d) What is the potential of the Internet as an environment for the evangelisation of young people?
- (e) How can the Internet empower young people as active participants in evangelisation using the Internet?
- (f) What are some of the pastoral and theological opportunities afforded by the Internet as a means of evangelisation?

Youth

- (g) How can the freedom and digital ingenuity of a young person be a source of momentum for New Evangelisation?
- (h) How can the information shared online influence the consciousness of young people to inform their understanding about faith?

Convergence of these Spheres

- (i) The Internet provides the tools; the Church provides the atmosphere and young people are the participants. How can these seemingly distant cultural spaces be mutually inculturated?

Evangelisation can come about at the centre where the union of these three spheres occurs. This gives rise to some questions: Can the Church and the Internet be kept on the same plane of interaction? Can the world of youth fall on the same plane as that of the Church and the Internet, as depicted in Fig 6.11? The quality of communication on the Internet and the sacramental nature of the Church are issues which arise here in impacting on this dynamic of the three spheres. In general, it may be considered that the Church stands for the Divine; youth represents humanity and the Internet models the Universe. This alliance holds immense possibilities for the future of humanity:

The Church has so much to talk about with youth, and youth have so much to share with the Church. This mutual dialogue, by taking place with great cordiality, clarity and courage, will provide a favourable setting for the meeting and exchange between generations, and will be a source of richness and youthfulness for the Church and civil society. (John Paul II, 1988, para. 46)

The *Cybersouls* research project attempted to bring together these three spheres, offering a favourable setting for this mutual dialogue, as envisioned by Pope John Paul II, providing a source of richness and youthfulness for the Church and civil society. The research questions are fundamentally connected to the above three spheres and their convergence, as set out in Figure 6.10. The detailed analysis investigates if the above spheres intersected in the *Cybersouls* project.

6.3 Case Studies using NVivo

Before embarking on the details of the selected case studies, some pertinent issues regarding the case study method are considered.

Strategies for Case Studies

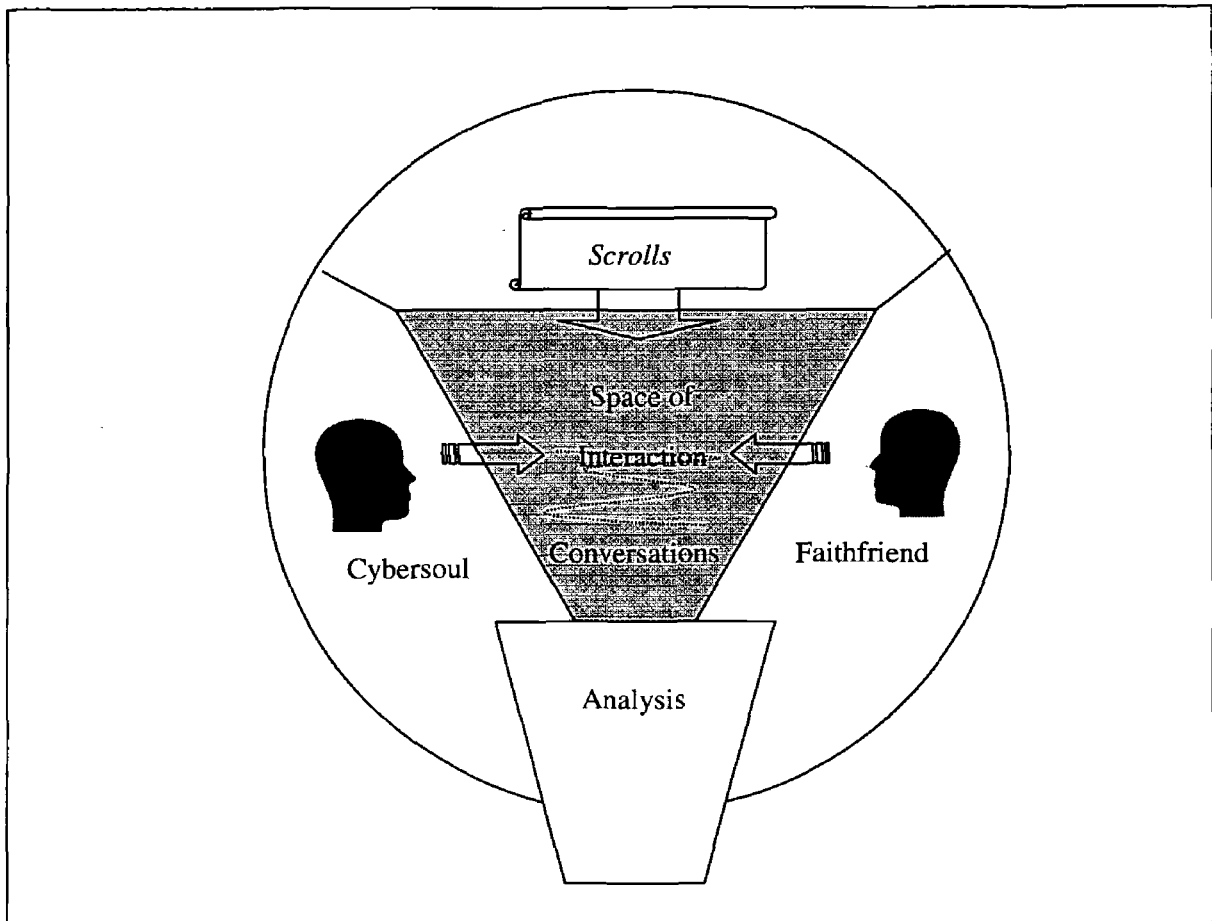
Relying on theoretical propositions, developing case descriptions, depending on both qualitative and quantitative data and examining rival explanations, are cited by Yin (2009) as strategies to be carried out during a case study. Thus, in the last section the theoretical propositions were reiterated in the review of the research questions. A major task in this chapter is the development of case descriptions. This is achieved primarily by quantifying the main qualitative and descriptive elements of each case, as detailed below.

The case descriptions of the interactions between the 13 CSs and the 11 FFs which occurred on the *Cybersouls* website was initiated, using NVivo 8, as described in the previous chapter.

Lazar et al (2010) suggest forming an integrated description of the unit of analysis before probing into the larger trends buried in the data. As explained earlier, the data relating to the interaction of the 13 cases were separated manually in MSWord and imported on to NVivo. (This also facilitated a considerable reduction of the load of the software.) Autocoding of this data in NVivo, using Heading 1 and Heading 2 together, separated the data relating to the 13 CSs according to the number of *Scrolls* completed by each one. Different combinations of autocoding produced different sets of data and the list was presented in a table in an excel sheet for cross reference and analysis. This autocoding helped to identify major components to be considered in the more detailed analysis now presented.

The set of all interactions between a CS and a FF is considered to be a case in this study. The following Figure (6.12) provides a straightforward example of a case to be analysed.

Fig 6.12 Elements in a Case



The participants, called CSs and FFs, vary according to each individual case selected for investigation, as listed in Table 5.6 in chapter 5. Also considerable variation occurred in the number of *Scrolls* completed and the conversations shared between them (see Table 9.1 List of *Scrolls* in Appendix E). There are both quantitative and qualitative differences in the data created within each case being considered. For instance, the time taken for a participant to finish *scrolls* varied, as the pace of finishing a *scroll* was not set by the co-ordinator. Rather FFs and CSs were given the freedom to set the pace in each case, at their own convenience.

6.4 Case Descriptions

In order to distinguish them more clearly than just using their coded references, the names of birds taken from the Bible were assigned to the 13 CSs in the cohort for analysis while corresponding names of trees, were assigned to their 11 FFs as detailed in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1 Pseudonyms Given to Selected CSs and FFs

Case	CS Ref. No.	Pseudonym	FF Ref. No.	Pseudonym
1	CSA32	Dove (Gen 8:8)	FFA19	Acacia (Ex. 25:5)
2	CSA51	Eagle (Lev 11:13)	FFA21	Almond (Eccl. 12:5)
3	CSA19	Falcon (Job 28:7)	FFA14	Cedar (Ezek. 31:3-5)
4	CSA35	Hawk (Lev 11:16)	FFA4	Cypress (1Kings 5:8)
5	CSA45	Heron (Lev 11:19)	FFA15	Fig (Gen. 3:7)
6	CSA52	Ostrich (Lev 11:16)	FFA22	Oak (Gen. 35:4)
7	CSA30	Swallow (Ps 84:3)	FFA6	Sycamore (Luke 19:4)
8	CSA11	Owl (Lev 11:17)	FFA10	Olive (Deut. 24:20)
9	CSA46	Peacock (1 Kings10:22)	FFA10	Olive (Deut. 24:20)
10	CSA50	Pigeon (Lev 1:14)	FFA1	Palm (Ps. 92:12)
11	CSA6	Raven (Lev 11:15)	FFA5	Pine (Isa. 41:19b)
12	CSA9	Seagull (Lev 11:16)	FFA8	Poplar (Gen. 30:37)
13	CSA7	Stork (Lev 11:19)	FFA6	Sycamore (Luke 19:4)

In this analysis, following some general observations, the nature of the communication which occurred in each case is described. The main task centres on the identification of factors pertaining to each case which are significant for the research. Quantification of some of the qualitative research findings is applied as a research method in this section. Also the level of conversation in each case is identified. This refers to the number of times a conversation has been exchanged between a CS and FF at any one point of interaction. A FF sends a *scroll* addressing the CS, and a conversation is initiated in relation to the *scroll*, with exchanges occurring between the two (FF-CS-FF-CS . . . etc.). Silverman (2001), referring to this as adjacency pairs, points out that it is an important element of conversation analysis. The analysis of the 13 individual cases now follows.

Case 1 – Interaction between CS Dove and FF Acacia

General Observations: CS Dove and FF Acacia are both male. In the initial interaction with his FF Acacia, CS Dove mentioned that he was an active participant in the youth movement Pure in Heart. His initial conversations showed great enthusiasm towards joining the *Cybersouls* website. Acacia was selected as a FF primarily because of his participation in Youth 2000, being recommended by a leader of the movement.

Communication using Scrolls: Three *Scrolls* were completed between CS Dove and FF Acacia. Two of these were on 'Introduction' and one on 'Suffering'. Nine conversations in total took place during their interactions - five conversations by the FF and four by the CS. The maximum time taken for CS Dove to respond was 8 days, while FF Acacia took a maximum of 22 days to reply to his CS. The average number of words in the conversations of CS Dove was 44, whereas FF Acacia had 157 words on average.

Comments: Factors to be considered here include the time taken for each participant to respond to the other; the average amount of communication; and the intensity of personal communication. There seems to have been only one level of conversation between this CS and his FF. Another possible influencing factor is the response of the FF which may or may not have addressed the issues raised by the CS. The ability of the FF to connect with a CS and *vice versa* are important factors to be taken into account. These are issues which need to be probed in the detailed analysis.

Case 2 – Interaction between CS Eagle and FF Almond

General Observations: As in Case 1, both CS Eagle and FF Almond are male. The significant number of *Scrolls* completed (11) naturally yielded more conversations to be analysed. Eagle,

the CS, is actively involved in the Jesus Youth movement. He showed great enthusiasm and expectations during the interactivity of the *Cybersouls* project. Almond, being the co-ordinator of Jesus Youth in Ireland, was selected by the project co-ordinator to become a FF, having been recommended also by the International co-ordinator of Jesus Youth. As a Jesus Youth co-ordinator, he has undergone leadership training to accompany young people.

Communication using Scrolls: A total of 11 *Scrolls* was completed between the CS and his FF in this case – three on ‘Introduction’; four on ‘Suffering’ and another four on ‘Happiness’. This resulted in 59 conversations being shared between them – 31 by CS Eagle and 28 by FF Almond. The higher number of conversations initiated between the two indicates that deeper communication occurred in this case. The minimum time taken by the CS to respond to a *scroll* or conversation was 1 day while the maximum time was 22 days. In the case of his FF Almond, the time taken ranged between 1 day and 10 days. The average number of words in an Eagle (CS) conversation was 141, while FF Almond had only 81 words on average.

Comments: This case indicates that it is the CS rather than FF who provided the greater input in terms of the amount and content of communication and depth of contribution during the discussions. While the CS typed in and shared 4,371 words, only 2,268 words, i.e., just over half of that, was shared by this FF in the course of the 59 conversations initiated between the two. At the same time, FF Almond seems to have been very regular in communicating and responding to Eagle, his CS. He was encouraging and showed his appreciation of the conversations initiated by his CS. They responded to each other three times in succession. This level of interaction also shows an increase in the depth of interaction between the two in comparison with that which occurred in Case 1. The common element in this case, which

seemed to assist the interaction, was that both are participants in Jesus Youth. Therefore, their shared cultural background seems to have led to a positive outcome.

Case 3 - Interaction between CS Falcon and FF Cedar

General Observations: The interaction between Falcon, a female CS and Cedar, a male FF, is considered in this case. While CS Falcon had been introduced to Jesus Youth, she did not continue her participation. Likewise, her engagement in the parish as an altar server and in a parish youth group did not endure. In her initial interactions, she commented on her unfamiliarity with the *Cybersouls* website with her FF, Cedar. He is an active member of Jesus Youth and was recommended as a FF by a co-ordinator of this movement. It is worth noting that the contribution of a FF can be thought provoking and intense. This FF seemed to have a really interesting way of developing a conversation and continuing it.

Communication using Scrolls: Five *Scrolls* were completed by both of these participants within the stipulated time. Four of the *Scrolls* were from the 'Introduction' while the fifth dealt with 'Suffering'. While working through these five *Scrolls*, 35 conversations developed between the two. This indicates that a commendable level of discussion took place in relation to a *scroll*, with enough time given to developing the discussions. The maximum time taken by the CS to respond was 7 days, while the maximum time taken by her FF to respond was 9 days. The average number of words in the conversations of CS Falcon was 110 and that of her FF Cedar 120 words. All these figures point to a good level of compatibility between the two.

Comments: The total of words shared amounted to 2,090 for the CS and 1,920 in the case of the FF. As there were 7 conversations, on average, attached to a *scroll*, this is indicative also

of the depth of discussion which occurred. A detailed reading of the conversations also confirms the quality of discussions. The language, structure and the process control of the website *www.cybersouls.ie* seem to have facilitated the development of conversations. It is noted that conversations between the CS and her FF reached a maximum of five levels in succession at one point of interaction. This indicates that a promising and deep level of communication and discussion occurred in this case. (In order to provide an example of the detailed exchanges between a FF and a CS, an account of interactions in Case 3 is provided in Appendix I.)

Case 4 – Conversation between CS Hawk and FF Cypress

General Observations: Hawk is the CS and Cypress is the FF in this duo. Both of these participants are male. CS Hawk is active in Jesus Youth. The level of enthusiasm in his conversations seemed rather low. Cypress, his FF, had studied theology and is a graduate in Computer Science. He is active in parish activities and the parish priest recommended him to become a FF.

Communication using Scrolls: In this case the CS and his FF completed 11 *Scrolls* between them. Four 'Introduction' and four 'Suffering' *Scrolls* were finished, together with three *Scrolls* on 'Happiness'. A total of 35 conversations took place relating to the 11 *Scrolls* shared between them, giving an average of three conversations attached to each *scroll*. This is lower per *scroll* when compared with Case 3. Yet, for the 11 *Scrolls*, with one exception, all were completed and finalised within a maximum of 4 days by both the CS and his FF. However, the average word count was on the low side – 54 for the CS and only 34 for the FF.

Comments: During his 16 conversations attached to the 11 *Scrolls*, the CS in this case used only 864 words. As his FF only used 646 words in 19 conversations, these figures suggest a lower level of activity on the part of this particular FF both in enhancing the interaction or contributing to it. Also in comparison with Case 2, where 11 *Scrolls* had also been completed, the communication seemed to be limited. At the same time by reading the texts in the 11 *Scrolls*, responding to interactive questions and watching the videos displayed etc., both of these participants have spent time and energy while engaging in their exchanges. This makes the case interesting.

Case 5 - Interaction between CS Heron and FF Fig

General Observations: A female CS Heron and a male FF, Fig were the participants in this case. She is active in her parish and appeared to be enthusiastic about this project. Fig is a computer graduate who showed interest in the study. The co-ordinator recruited him to become a FF on the recommendation of a parish priest.

Communication using Scrolls: The FF initially sent the first *scroll* of introduction and subsequently together they completed a total of 11 *Scrolls*. Two 'Introduction' *Scrolls* and two on 'Suffering' were sent by the FF and were duly completed by the CS. These were followed by a further four *Scrolls* on 'Happiness' and another three on 'Faith' were completed by the CS within the stipulated time. A total of 70 conversations developed between them - 36 from the CS and 34 from her FF. The maximum time taken by the CS to reply to her FF was 14 days while the FF took a maximum of seven days to respond. However, the time taken to reply varied from 1 to 9 days in the case of the CS and from 1 to 5 days for her FF. The conversations of the CS had an average of 186 words while those of the FF averaged 78 words.

Comments: These are some interesting features in the communication between CS Heron and FF Fig. First of all, the increase in the level of communication between the two is noted. Secondly, as the exchanges reached four in succession at one point, this is indicative of an intense level of communication. Thirdly, the regularity and dedication shown by both of these participants in communicating are commendable. Fourthly, the variation in the contributions made by both of them, especially the CS, makes this case rich in data. Even if the total number of words shared by her FF (2,652) is far lower than that of the CS (6,692), the number of conversations (CS – 36 and FF - 34) seems to be close. It can mean that this FF has tried to address each CS conversation, even if in fewer words. It can also be concluded that, in this case, the CS contributed more to driving the conversation forward.

Case 6 - Interaction between CS Ostrich and FF Oak

General Observations: Two females - CS Ostrich and FF Oak are represented in this case. This CS came in contact with Jesus Youth and was introduced to the website at one of its prayer meetings. Oak was the FF assigned to accompany Ostrich. Having made a year's commitment as a leader in Jesus Youth, she worked as a missionary.

Communication using Scrolls: A review of the interaction of CS Ostrich and FF Oak within the stipulated time frame showed that seven *Scrolls* had been completed – one 'Introductory' *scroll*, four on 'Suffering' and another 2 on 'Happiness'. This resulted in a total of 32 conversations. The maximum time taken by CS Ostrich to respond was 7 days while her FF Oak took a maximum of 22 days to reply. The longer time taken by her FF to respond to her Ostrich may have affected the process of accompaniment. Also this may have impacted on

the average number of words in a conversation which stood at 60 for the FF and only 45 for the CS in this case.

General Comments: The average of over four conversations per *scroll* suggests a comparatively good rate of interaction. At the same time, as the highest number of successive conversations was only two, this may be indicative of a lack of depth and a lack of creativity and dynamism on the part of both participants. Yet, an initial enthusiasm and development of friendship could be detected in the textual interactions. While the newness of the concept may have been an issue, it is not clear why the FF here took so long to respond to her CS.

Case 7 – Interaction between CS Swallow and FF Sycamore

General Observations: This describes the interaction between CS Swallow and his FF Sycamore. The Cybersoul, Swallow, was very enthusiastic about the *Cybersouls* portal and FF Sycamore was assigned to accompany him on his journey of faith. She is very active in *Pure in Heart* and was recommended as a FF by a parish curate. Her enthusiasm was evident in her communication with her CS. (This FF also accompanied another CS in Case 13.)

Communication using Scrolls: Six *scrolls* were completed between Swallow and his FF Sycamore - one each on 'Introduction', 'Faith' and 'Sacraments' and the other three on 'Happiness'. Within these six *Scrolls*, they completed 69 conversations between them, 31 being initiated by the CS and 38 by his FF. It is also interesting to note that both the CS and his FF responded considerably regularly and frequently to the other person's communication. FF Sycamore responded the same day to her CS's conversations which took an average of 3 days for a reply. The average number of words in the cybersoul's conversation was 44 while that of his FF was 110.

Comments: FF Sycamore seemed to have had the upper hand both in terms of the number of conversations (38:31) and the pace of response. However, as the level of communications reached a maximum of six in their conversations, this indicates that they achieved considerable depth in their interaction.

Case 8 – Interaction between CS Owl and FF Olive

General observations: These were two female participants in Case 7, the CS Owl and her FF Olive. Here again, they both are female participants. As they completed 24 *Scrolls*, they exceeded the completion score in all the other cases. CS Owl's interactions indicate that she enjoyed the accompaniment of her FF online. Olive, an active leader in Jesus Youth who had undertaken its leadership training programme, was recommended by a co-ordinator of Jesus Youth as a FF.

Communication using Scrolls: As reported above, the CS and her FF in this case completed 24 *Scrolls* together. These included four *Scrolls* each on 'Introduction', 'Suffering', 'Happiness', 'Faith', 'Prayer' and 'Sacraments' which were covered over 79 conversations. It is interesting to record that the maximum time taken for a *scroll* to be completed was less than one week. The average number of words in the conversations of CS Owl is only 35 while the corresponding average of her FF is 57.

Comments: When compared with some of the previous cases, the average number of words in the conversations is less. Likewise, the total number of words exchanged between this CS and her FF is comparatively smaller. Therefore it is to be assumed that, in this particular interaction, it was not the volume of interaction but rather the frequency of response and

regularity of conversations that were significant in driving communication. In a conversation the CS, Owl, said that, each evening, she eagerly awaited the response of her FF.

Case 9 – Interaction between CS Peacock and FF Olive

General Observations: Olive, the same FF, as in Case 7, also accompanied another female CS, Peacock in Case 8. Here again, the completion of *Scrolls* reached a high score (21). The CS, Peacock is an active member of Jesus Youth. As mentioned in the previous case, a coordinator of Jesus Youth recommended Olive as a FF.

Communication using Scrolls: A total of 21 *Scrolls* was completed in this case. Four *Scrolls* each were completed for the first five themes: 'Introduction', 'Suffering', 'Happiness', 'Faith', and 'Prayer'. Finally, one *scroll* on 'Sacraments' was finished. This work involved 78 conversations between the CS and her FF, 38 from CS Peacock and 40 from her FF Olive. The maximum time taken for CS Peacock to respond to her FF was 12 days. As in the previous case with the same FF, the response time was short, the maximum time taken being four days. The average number of words used by the CS was 45 while her FF used 33.

Comments: In this case and the previous one (Case 7), where Olive acted as a FF, both CS were completely new to her. The common factor which may have helped the interaction was that all three participants are female. Other than that, this case included totally different features which could have occurred due to cultural differences. Even though the total number of words shared by the FF in the two cases varied considerably (Case 7 – CS: 1,080, FF: 2,539 words; Case 8 – CS: 1,733, FF: 1,324 words), two features are common to both of these interactions - regularity of contact by the FF and the frequency in sending a *scroll*.

While the responses of both CSs also showed considerable variation, both of them seem to have taken part in the project with enthusiasm.

Case 10 – Interaction between CS Pigeon and FF Palm

General Observations: Pigeon, a CS, was accompanied by Palm, the assigned FF, in this case. Both are male participants. CS Pigeon is active in the Jesus Youth movement. His initial conversations in the introductory *Scrolls* revealed his enthusiasm and eagerness in relation to the project. FF Palm, as a Jesus Youth leader, had received training in youth leadership. The co-ordinator of Jesus Youth in Ireland recommended him as a FF.

Communication using Scrolls: This duo completed 23 *Scrolls*, the second highest level among the cases selected for analysis. Four *Scrolls* each were completed on the first five themes: 'Introduction', 'Suffering', 'Happiness', 'Faith', and 'Prayer', in addition to three *Scrolls* on 'Sacraments'. CS Pigeon read the *Scrolls* and responded to the interactive questions carefully. Exchanges between this CS and his FF took place over 114 conversations – 50 by CS Pigeon and 64 by his FF Palm. While the maximum time taken by the CS to respond was 14 days, he took more than a week to do so on only three occasions. Otherwise there was evidence of continuity, dedication and regularity in responding to a *scroll* sent by his FF. The maximum response time of FF Palm was only four days. This suggests that this FF kept up the momentum in responding to his CS. The average number of words in the conversations of CS Pigeon was 120 while that of his FF was 75.

Case 11 – Interactions between CS Raven and FF Pine

General Observations: CS Raven interacted with FF Pine in this case. Raven is female and Pine is male. As mentioned in the section on selection and reduction of data, the CSs in cases

10, 11 and 12, while continuing their interaction on the website, did not respond to the survey questions. CS Raven, is an active member of Youth 2000. At the introductory stage she expressed eagerness about the project, coupled with some apprehension. Pine, the FF accompanying her, as a Jesus Youth leader, was recommended by a co-ordinator of this youth movement.

Communication using Scrolls: Four 'Introduction' *Scrolls* and one on 'Suffering' constituted the total of five *Scrolls* completed between CS Raven and FF Pine over the course of 28 conversations. The response time between these two participants was short, the maximum time taken by the CS to respond to her FF being just two days, with her FF replying in the same time period. (This is very close to a 'live chat'.) The conversations of the CS averaged 61 words while her FF used 94.

Comments: The interaction between CS Raven and her FF Pine seems to have taken place within short intervals which may have been an important driving force in their communication. Also, reflecting on the volume of communication initiated by her FF to that of the CS, there seems to be a danger that the CS may have been somewhat intimidated. As the maximum level of communication was only two, this may be indicative also of a lack of depth in the conversation.

Case 12 – Interactions between CS Seagull and FF Poplar

General Observations: Both participants in this case are female - CS Seagull and her FF Poplar. Seagull's initial enthusiasm for the project was moderate. As a Jesus Youth leader, FF Poplar had undertaken its leadership training programme.

Communication using Scrolls: Similar to Case 10, five *Scrolls* were completed this time, over 24 conversations between CS Seagull and her FF Poplar - four in 'Introduction' and one in 'Suffering'. It seems that CS Seagull took more time to respond to her FF. The maximum time she took to reply was 24 days while her FF responded in 7 days. The average number of words communicated by the CS in a conversation was 36, with a corresponding average of 55 from her FF.

Comment: In this case there seems to be an imbalance between the number of words communicated by the FF when compared to that of her CS. It is observed however that their interactions, even if brief, were substantial. They seemed to encompass reading, reflection and serious learning. CS Seagull communicated 549 words and received 770 words from her FF. These contributions need to be analysed in more depth in order to identify the undercurrents in their interaction.

Case13 – Interaction between CS Stork and FF Sycamore

General Observations: The interaction in this case is between CS Stork and her FF Sycamore who also accompanied another CS in Case 7. Stork, the CS under consideration, has participated in *Youth 2000* and the youth movement *Pure in Heart*. She showed great enthusiasm and appreciation for the project. FF Sycamore was assigned to accompany Stork on her journey of faith. She is very active in *Pure in Heart* and as mentioned in Case 7, was recommended as a FF by a parish curate. Her enthusiasm was evident in her communication with her CS.

Communication using Scrolls: Four *Scrolls* were sent by FF Sycamore to her CS Stork - One on 'Introduction' and the other three on 'Suffering'. It is remarkable that, within just four

Scrolls, they completed 86 conversations between them, initiating 46 each. It is also interesting to note that three *Scrolls*, involving around 80 conversations, were completed within a record time of three days. The average number of words in the CS's conversation was 60 while that of her FF was 80.

Comments: To have developed around 80 conversations within three days, as happened in this case, is very significant. Some elements relating to their cultural affinity may become apparent in this case.

Case 13 completes the consideration of the individual cases selected for more detailed analysis. All the above mentioned conversations were subject to close scrutiny, using NVivo. A composite analysis of the findings is presented in the next section.

6.5 Consolidation of Case Studies

General Comments: A total of 24 participants was involved in the 13 cases under review – 13 CSs and 11 FFs, two FFs covering two cases each. Regarding the gender balance, there are five male Cybersouls and seven male FFs, whereas there are eight female CSs and four female FFs. This indicates that the male/female ratio is almost inversely proportional between CSs and FFs, with males predominating on the FF side and females on the CS side.

Usage of Scrolls and Conversations: A total of 136 *Scrolls* was completed over the 13 case studies (see Table 5.6). However, the completion rate for individual CSs varied considerably, ranging from three to 24. More than ten *Scrolls* were completed in six cases, while the completion rate of the remaining six varied from three to seven. The participating CSs and their FFs shared 718 conversations between them, giving an average of 55 per case and

almost five conversations per *scroll*. In total, 339 conversations were initiated by CSs while 379 were initiated by FFs.

The cumulative word count in the 13 cases amounted to 57,499. This will be considered in more detail in the next chapter. A wide spread was observed in the number of words shared, the highest number being 10,754 and the lowest only 961. More than 5,000 words were exchanged between a CS and a FF in five cases; another four cases shared between 5,000 and 2,000 words while just over 1000 words were shared in three cases. The exchange of words was just below 1000 in the remaining one case.

Comparing the number of words shared between CSs and their FFs in individual cases, four shared a balanced number of words between them. In five other cases the FFs shared considerably more words. The number of words shared by a CS exceeded those of a FF in only three cases. The count of the succession of conversations at any one point gives an indication of the level of conversation between a CS and a FF. Considering this variable, it can be concluded that deep levels of communication were evident in most of the cases. Only three cases had less than three levels of conversation, while the remaining ten cases had three or more levels, the maximum level reaching seven. In some cases, while the time taken to respond to the other participant seemed long, the conversations seem to have deepened in quality. In contrast, in other cases, when more time was taken, there seemed to be less depth in communication.

Factors Influencing Interaction: Some of the factors driving the conversation can be identified in this descriptive study. The virtual presence of another person may be the primary catalyst for this online journey. Prompt and immediate response by participants, addressing

each question or conversation shared by the other party, acknowledgement, appreciation, clarification and contributing to the learning space may all be factors which impact positively on the conversation in the CSs' faith development journey. Additional factors, such as creative and dynamic interaction, using multimedia, also seem to have contributed to the journey of participants in the *Cybersouls* portal. The contribution of the *Scrolls* to the progress of journey is another aspect which needs to be evaluated. The influence of the newness of concept, the terminologies used in the website, its layout and user friendliness all need to be taken into account in further analysis. Overall, there is a rich data set to be studied in more depth which is expected to produce more significant insights into the nature of online faith development through accompaniment. This task is undertaken in the next chapter (7).

6.6 Conclusion

The chapter commenced with a presentation of the findings relating to the questionnaire. The analysis revealed an overall positive attitude in the responses of participants to the *Cybersouls* website. The strategies in using NVivo as a tool for analysing the findings related to the 13 Case Studies were then explained. Next, the findings in respect of each of the 13 case studies were presented followed by a consolidation of the results. The more detailed analysis of these case studies, is considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF SELECTED CASES

A detailed analysis of the data relating to the 13 selected cases is the main content of this chapter. Various methods and techniques used while conducting this analysis are set out in the opening section. The next section features the dynamics of online interaction in the project. Following on from this, the characteristics of virtual communication are examined. Finally, the concept of cyberspace as a space for evangelisation is examined.

7.1 Methods of Analysis

Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007) uphold the need to utilise more than one type of analysis, to increase its validity. This section sets out the methods which informed the researcher in undertaking the analysis of the data. Primarily, a qualitative approach was adopted in addressing this task.

One of the established and basic qualitative methods, Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), was the basic method applied. Grounded theorists suggest a careful, line-by-line reading of the text while looking for processes, actions, assumptions, and consequences (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). Constant comparison is a basic activity of this method (Charmaz, 2006). In this study manifest-content-analysis was adopted in quantifying various elements involved in the communication between CSs and FFs. The interplay of manifest and latent content analysis was applied as the need arose (Berg, 2007; Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

Fundamentally, the data under consideration here comprised sets of conversations between two individuals – a CS and a FF. Hence, various guidelines of *Conversation Analysis* (CA) and *Discourse Analysis* (DA) (Silverman, 2001) are also included. According to Silverman, CA involves “people’s methods for producing orderly social interaction in sequential order” (level of conversation), while DA “studies a discourse as texts and talk in social practices in rhetorical and argumentative organization” (p. 189). CA and DA were applied to the data embedded in the *Scrolls* provided on the website. The initial findings from the data were presented already in chapter 6.

Web-based in-depth interviews are mentioned by Berg (2007, p. 125) as a way of taking advantage of the technology available for research. *Cybersouls* can be categorized under asynchronous environments. The communication in the *Cybersouls* project is unique as it took place between a CS and a FF in a closed environment of *Cyberspace* in an asynchronous manner. It is not the same as e-mail, message boards or private bulletin posts referred to by Berg. Having had faith development as its purpose, it tried to initiate discussions based on faith material presented in *Scrolls*.

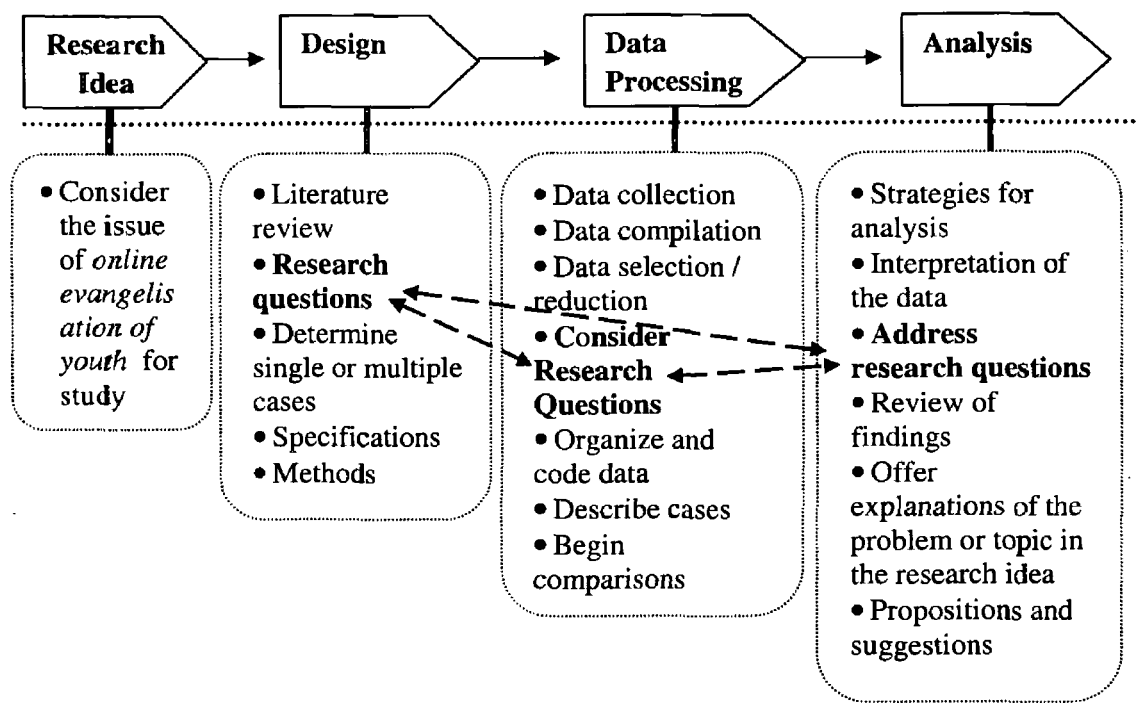
Key Word in Context (KWIC) is prescribed by Onwuegbuzie (2007) as an important method to assist qualitative inquiry. The application of this method assisted the researcher in extracting latent trends buried in the data while comparing codes relating to variables.

Theory Based Research

According to Yin (2003, p. 28) “for case studies, theory development as part of the design phase is essential whether the ensuing case study’s purpose is to develop or test theory.” This “theory-before-research” approach (Berg 2007, p.319) is adopted in this study. The theory

covered in the first three chapters assisted the research design and helped the researcher to identify the research questions. Possible theoretical landscapes for the study were discussed initially and this also informed the development of the research project. Berg adds that theory-before-research can support generalisations arising from the study. The model adopted in this study, as described in Fig 7.1 below, is an adaptation of the version given by Berg (p.321).

Fig 7.1 Research Model Adopted in this Study



Hence, case study being the methodology used as the encompassing method, this research has the characteristics mentioned in Fig 7.1 even if other methods of analysis were applied also during the data collection and analysis.

Application of the Methods in This Study

To initiate the detailed analysis of the 13 selected cases, the conversations of CSs and FFs were separated. A general open *invivo-coding* (Charmaz, 2006) in NVivo gave rise to more

than 250 codes each from the conversations of these participant types. This included careful reading, reflecting and constant comparing of the data. Significant words, phrases, sentences, meanings, emotions, undercurrents and anything else the researcher found significant in relation to the research were coded as case nodes in NVivo. These relevant codes constituted the foundational elements of emergent theory in a crude form. Pertinent memos connected to snippets of codes were entered as the coding progressed. These coded segments of the data were labelled appropriately and made available for further and closer observation. Grounded theory and content analysis were applied to this ongoing process.

Those codes were re-read, rearranged and classified as the patterns buried in the data began to emerge. Axial coding (Adams et al, 2008) was adopted here to sort the codes according to the central ideas prevalent in the data. The case nodes in NVivo were converted to tree nodes, to bring the related codes under emergent sub-categories and central themes. (A screen shot of the coding of themes using tree nodes is provided in Appendix G.) It was seen that some trends were common to both CSs and FFs. Then key words in the codes were identified in their context (KWIC). Conversations were looked at together in their order (CA) and meaning (DA) as they occurred between a CS and a FF in each case. As a result of analysing the data, three main themes emerged. These are: the Dynamics of Online Interaction; the Characteristics of Virtual Communication and Evangelisation in Cyberspace. As the dynamics of online interactions primed interactivity between FFs and their CSs, they are first for consideration. The thirteen cases under review have been listed in Table 5.6 in chapter 5. The allocated pseudonyms given (Table 6.1, chapter 6) to the CSs and FFs are re-used here in reporting on the analysis in this chapter.

7.2 The Dynamics of Online Interaction

The interactive and dynamic tools embedded in the *Cybersouls* portal and deeply connected to youth culture differentiate this journey from other approaches to evangelisation. *Scrolls*, used to carry the message of the Good News, are made up of texts, pictures and videos, providing a foundation for communication between CSs and their FFs. While the number of words in individual *Scrolls* varied from 111 to 600, all *Scrolls* incorporated both texts and pictures. They integrated a facility to comment, using either comment boxes or conversation snippets. Some were built with interactive modules such as radio buttons, ‘match the following’ and ‘yes’ or ‘no’ questions, while others used videos to convey a message. Meditative videos created and launched in Youtube were included to suit a particular theme in the *Cybersouls* project. In addition, videos from Youtube uploaded by others, which the co-ordinator found relevant to a specific theme, were included in a *scroll*. Cumulatively, the material on these *Scrolls* contributed to the dynamism of the communication in *Cybersouls*.

Dynamic Components

As can be seen in Table 7.1 below, the *Scrolls* contained a wide range of tools. A more detailed distribution of these components, by *scroll*, is given in Appendix H.

Table 7.1 Summary of Tools Used in *Scrolls*

Dynamic tools	Text	Picture	Video	Comment box	Yes /no	Match the following	Choose from the list	Number of Conversation snippets
Total	24	24	6	24	5	2	2	42

As can be seen in Table 7.1, six *Scrolls* incorporated at least one Youtube video. All *Scrolls* had ‘Comment boxes’ in order to evoke a response from the CS. Five *Scrolls* contained

'yes/no' questions while another two *Scrolls* each had 'match the following' and 'choose from the list' options. All *Scrolls* had been provided with at least one (maximum three) 'conversation snippets' which, if used, could increase the interactivity of the communication. The above compilation and use of catechetical material, using multimedia, is one advantage of the medium of the Internet in conversing with young people. This was expected to increase the connectivity with young people who now live in an image centred-world in Cyberspace (Beaudoin, 1998). Also, the use of these dynamic tools constructed a space in *Cybersouls* where dialogue and interactivity thrived. A subsequent analysis of the conversations revealed that all these tools had been used by participants in their communications. So it can be concluded that the development of a dynamic and interactive catechesis using multimedia (Castells, 2000) had engaged constructively with young people (John Paul II, 1979). Some of the conversations selected for analysis revealed explicit appreciation of these interactive approaches, as can be seen below.

Scrolls

As explained earlier, *Scrolls* contained the main catechetical material which carried the message of the Good News. All discussions which evolved in this portal were as a result of sharing *Scrolls*. The analysis of the conversations revealed that the terminology of '*scroll*' also conveyed an important message. A query in NVivo to search for the word '*scroll*' and its variants identified 20 instances of its use by participants in different forms which were embedded in their conversations. The first was a general mention of *Scrolls*, showing their acceptance and familiarity with using the terminology, e.g., "I find it enriching to be able to go online and have this great website and read the *Scrolls* assigned and be able to share the faith openly" (Sycamore, Case 7 Conversations, *Scroll* 1). This clearly demonstrated an appreciation of *Scrolls*. Another one refers to the word '*scroll*' with fondness "This makes

me more happy; that is why I wrote it in the above scroll . . . what you think?” (Pigeon, Case 7, *Scroll* 10). The participants have used the verb ‘scroll’ also to communicate: “I thought I *scrolled u back* on the previous ones. So waited for ur [sic] reply . . .” (Pigeon, Case 7, *Scroll* 19). His FF seemed to have used it in the same way, as a verb, “No need to worry. Whenever you have time scroll me back” (Palm, Case 7, *Scroll* 21). The above examples show the participants’ acceptance of the term and how they became comfortable with its usage. The culture of young people seems to favour terminologies like this online as a catch phrase. Similar usage in other online networking are: ‘writing on the wall’ (Facebook), ‘scrapping’ (Orkut), ‘tweeting’ (Twitter) etc. These types of terminologies seem to give the inhabitants of these online communities a unique ‘clan’ outlook. Therefore the usage of these kinds of ‘clannish’ terminologies can increase the connectivity to young people (Dulles, 2006). Instances of participants utilising and appreciating other dynamic tools now follow.

Images

Discussions seem to have progressed around the pictures used in *Scrolls*. A FF said that “The blind woman who is making her journey with the walking stick is an apt picture on what is faith” (FF Palm, Case 10, *Scroll* 13). This refers to a picture of a blind woman with a white cane, used to depict the enlightenment of faith. The FF captured the meaning clearly and the CS also continued the discussion along the same lines, showing how the images could influence the discussions online. On another occasion a CS connected an image of a pupa turning into a butterfly with the topic of prayer:

As the pupa turns into butterfly, prayer transforms our life from each & every bondage, sin or problem into a child of God's freedom. The more we pray the more we can experience the freedom & love of God. Prayer is the shortest distance between us and a problem. (CS Peacock, Case 9, *Scroll* 18)

These instances confirm that direct use has been made of the images for discussion, endorsing the claim that the use of multimedia ‘talks’ to the mind of youth online, as proposed in chapter 3.

Conversation Snippets

The fact that all participants made use of the conversation snippets was evident from the high number of conversations reciprocated and deepened. Conversation snippets, which could be initiated dynamically between two participants, were the main component that made this space one of dialogue and interactivity. This is clarified in later discussions. The dynamic interactive space of communication between a CS and a FF was constructed in a versatile manner with these conversation snippets.

Youtube videos

There were two kinds of videos used in the construction of *Scrolls*, as mentioned above, video meditations made specifically for the project and those posted from youtube. Both of them seem to have worked well with the participants. Six *Scrolls* were embedded with videos. The open coding in NVivo produced 20 instances of participants commenting about these videos. Some examples now follow. The first comment refers to a video meditation which was prepared as the fourth *scroll* on the theme of happiness. This meditation was part of a reflection on happiness called *Be joyful cos God loves you*.

As i went through the video the thing that struck me initially was the distance . . .

I have heard the story about the walk to Emmaus many times and read the bible passage also but till this day failed to take note about the distance which they travelled . . .” (CS Eagle, Case 2, *Scroll* 12)

This CS seems to have listened carefully to the meditation. The constructive reflection on this video contains 291 words in the original version, abbreviated to 47 quoted above. The reflection continued and there were two more levels of conversation (clarified later) between the CS and his FF where the discussion became more profound. The capacity of multimedia to proclaim the Gospel creatively on the Internet is visible in this example.

Another comment about a video meditation prepared specifically for the *Cybersouls* project probably confirms one of the important assumptions on which this study was initiated, i.e., how the so called 'nonreal' online communication can mediate the immediacy of the power of the word of God. This video meditation was part of the fourth *scroll* on suffering and was about embracing healthy change. CS Eagle's reflection on this meditation suggests that the content is applicable to every Christian: "The cycle of falling dying and rising is of great importance to every christian. I would say that falling is a thing that happens every now and then to human beings" (CS Eagle, Case 2, *Scroll* 4). However, the comment below clearly articulates Peacock's experience in the *Cybersouls* website.

Our words and music carries great power. It has the power of life and death. The music, voice and words of this meditation have an inner healing & life giving effect. Problems & sufferings even death can be solved with Jesus. The message of Holy Eucharist which is our bread of life is absolutely true. May God bless us all! (Peacock, Case 9, *Scroll* 4)

Peacock and her FF completed a total of 21 *Scrolls* involving 78 conversations. Such a comment from this active CS endorses the fact that careful preparation of videos which can contribute to the story line in a *scroll* can be effective in carrying the message of the Good

News. These kinds of creative uses of the media can mediate the immediacy (Granfield, 1991) of the Good News in cyberspace.

As referred to earlier, other videos from youtube posted to contribute to the story line in a *scroll* were utilised and appreciated by the participants. Some conversations confirm this, e.g.:

I think a lot of people will relate to this video. I find myself often using these exact excuses to avoid sharing my faith. I sometimes feel I dont know enough and the fact that I am young I feel people might not listen to me but when I really consider it, these are just excuses. (CS Owl, Case 8, *Scroll* 16)

The Internet, which young people are born into, was easily conquered by them and this is explicit in their additional postings of videos mainly from youtube and other links through which they tried to convey some message in their reflective spaces.

The data on conversations conveyed an important message in this section: the dynamic and interactive space created in the *Cybersouls* website was a space which could constructively influence the minds of young people through the careful use of some of the tools which were specific to communication on the Internet, as identified earlier in the literature review.

7.3 Characteristics of Virtual Communication

Various elements relating to the participation of CSs and FFs in this project and quantitative measures of their interactions were set out in chapter 6. Regarding the selected cases, their conversations are considered now, in more depth, in the light of the theory developed in the previous chapters.

Conversations were initiated by a FF after introducing a *scroll* to a CS. An example of an introductory conversation now follows:

Dear Owl, Welcome to this great venture. I am Palm, living and working in Dublin. I really appreciate your interest in deepening your faith. May the Holy Spirit lead us to the ultimate source of all wisdom, knowledge and love. Let's start our online faith journey here. (FF Palm, Case 8, *Scroll* 1)

The above conversation preceded the contents of a *scroll* and other conversations were reciprocated between a FF and a CS as the CS read and responded to the contents of a *scroll*. The following is an example of this kind of conversation between a CS and a FF. Notice the flow of communication between the two participants taken from Case 3.

(Content of *Scroll*): May this journey begin by lighting the candle of faith. Post a similar prayer here.

Falcon: Let this journey show us the true meaning of being devoted to Christ.

Cedar: Thats wonderful. Sometimes before starting a journey it is always good to know where you are and where are we going. Don't you think so? . . . GOD Bless you.

Falcon: Hi again! I'm going to try my best to answer your questions honestly. The most important thing that motivates me to know more about my faith is the security it brings. . . . Hope this message is not too long.

Cedar: Hi, Thanks for your honest answer. Very soon you will find that GOD will reveal more of his goodness in your life. . . . Do you cherish a one to one relationship with Jesus?

Falcon: I've always found myself talking in my mind about anything and

everything. . . . Here's a link to a song that I really like:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ID_pCr_Xrnc&feature=related

Cedar: The song's got a good caption. Is it just two of you in the family? . . . Also I was thinking of taking on the next scroll which is to do with another topic of "suffering" . . . let me know and I will pray for you as your friend in faith.

Falcon: I have two brothers and both my parents. . . . I hope that the Lord continues to give us his great blessings and keep us in his hands.

Cedar: Hi again, sorry I took some time to come back. Almost all the people that I know talks [sic] about a call of GOD in their life. . . . Do let me know if you need more clarification.

Falcon: I think, I'm understanding what you mean. But I cannot come up with an answer . . . I'm not sure if this has to be made into another scroll but if so, feel free.

(Case 3, *Scroll 1*)

An introductory conversation between two participants and the continuation of another set of conversations are given above to show how conversations occurred in the virtual reality of the *Cybersouls* project. The conversations considered here are asynchronous. This interactive and dialogical communication seems to possess features of a constructivist model of communication (Pearson and Nelson, 2000; Granfield, 1994). This communication model was presented in chapter 3 as part of the discussion on various models of communication.

A perceived tension between the real and the virtual was identified in the discussions in the previous chapters, asking how real the virtual is (Mirzoeff, 1999, Castells, 2000, Rheingold, 2000). Suppose the communication between the above participants had taken place face-to-

face. If they wanted to retrieve it the next day, it has to be recalled from their memory. Sometimes this can be a tedious task and may be only partly retrieved. In contrast, with communication online, a person can go back at any time and find the exact conversation there. This objectivity and tangibility of online communication make it more real in one way. In other words, the reality of the virtual is, in a way, more 'real' than the real itself.

At the same time, it is considered that the geographical distance between persons communicating can impoverish an online communication, in comparison with the real (McQuail, 2000). However, the data of interactive communication developed on the *Cybersouls* portal spoke eloquently about the depth and reality of online communication. NVivo enabled the coding of all similar communications from both CSs and their FFs. These were quantified in the previous chapter. An analysis of these codes in relation to the 13 cases being considered here revealed the following categories:

- a) Fluency of communication - language and words;
- b) Emotions and gestures;
- c) Development of interactivity, trust and relationship;
- d) Conscious reflection – personal, serious communication.

Let the data speak as each of these four categories is now considered in more detail.

a) Fluency of Communication

Ease of communication or fluency is something which may go unnoticed in our daily lives. This may happen also in the case of communication online. In general, the communications from the 13 case studies seemed to be normal, lively and fluent. The use of colloquial language is considered to be a sign of normality in communication (Danesi, 2000) and words

exchanged indicated liveliness and informality. Also, there were expressions of apology, gratitude and agreement. Some examples from the conversations between CSs and their FFs endorse these points:

Colloquial Language

Their language indicated ease and normality:

Ohh cool, I am back to track now, Am fully . . . (CS Pigeon, Case 10);

Wow! What a beautiful way you have taken suffering in your life!

(FF Oak, Case 6);

Addressing Personally

Addressing each other personally, even after the initial communication, showed liveliness as well as informality, making a personal impression:

Olive, I would like to let you know . . . (CS Owl, Case 8);

Aw great Swallow, I didn't know . . . (FF Sycamore, Case 7);

Expressions of apology

These showed how the communication of the other party was considered important by the receiver:

I would like to apologize for not being so active thus far but I will try harder from now on. Thank you for sticking with me. (CS Falcon, Case 3)

Hi Dove, Sorry for the delayed response but it has been a bit hectic in work! . . .

(FF Acacia, Case 1)

Similar expressions of gratitude and agreements were also identified in further analysis.

The above examples show that the language and words used by the participants in the communication in the *Cybersouls* portal were similar to those used in daily life. This confirms the notable level of fluency in online communication (Danesi, 2000) making it all the more real.

b) Emotions and Gestures

It was seen in chapter 3 that the Internet, when understood as a virtual space, transformed the idea of space away from reality to the interior world of the self (Mirzoeff, 1999). The way in which people viewed this human interaction online was different. Some people found various landscapes in cyberspace in which different human needs could be met. In other words, human beings used it for their own purposes. This section clarifies an important dimension of human reality, the world of emotions and gestures, captured in the virtual space of the *Cybersouls* portal.

Human communication contains emotions and gestures, making it qualitatively affective and hearty. Similar emotions and gestures were identified in the communication between CSs and FFs online, making the communication more human (Thurlow et al, 2004) as identified in chapter 3. The word of God is to be presented to this human presence. This presence, unveiled here, will contribute to more effective evangelisation in the future. Also it confirms that online space is not a sterile space. Some of the emotions and gestures captured in the interactions given below clarify this stance.

Excitement

The journey started by both CSs and FFs was seen to be explicitly exciting:

I go between thinking sometimes I am advanced to discovering very often i'm begining again, but its a start anyway. Looking forward to deepening my faith in this new way. God Bless'' (CS Heron, Case 5)

I'm really excited to accompany you on this faith journey! (FF Oak, Case 6)

The expressions of excitement differed in two ways. On the part of CSs, they wondered how the journey was going to unfold in this virtual space (given the newness of the venture) and expressed eagerness about deepening their faith (a personal journey). FFs showed fervour in accompanying them and sharing faith online. The need for deepening their faith journey on the part of CSs and the fervour of FFs in accompanying them and sharing faith online can be complimentary. This confirms the views that the optimism of youth and the willingness of elders to accompany complement each other (Paul VI, 1975a and John Paul II, 1998b). The participants were able to express their emotions vividly and it seemed that people had great expectation about such a journey online.

Apprehension

There were some expressions of *apprehension*:

As for what I expect from this endeavor, I hope to learn as much as I can and share as well. Sharing with someone I do not know and have never seen but still knowing that they only have good intentions for me gives a sense of comfort.

(Falcon, Case 3)

Only three of the 13 Cybersouls expressed concerns about being accompanied by a person unknown to them as well as their unfamiliarity with this new concept. It is observed that none of the FFs expressed this kind of an emotion. The induction they received may explain this.

The issue of trust may be an important factor for consideration, at least for some people. How to win the confidence of people in allowing themselves to take part in this kind of a personal journey may be an important question to be asked.

Appreciation

Instances of mutual appreciation were found in the conversations of both CSs and FFs:

Hey Sycamore! Sorry Im still figuring this out-just saw this beautiful post now!!

Wow. . . praise God for you Sycamore! How encouraging it is to read all of the above . . . (CS Stork, Case 13);

. . . very good reflection Eagle. when I think about beatitudes , yes. this is the great assurance (FF Almond, Case 2).

The occurrence of words of appreciation shows the beginning of a relationship on which this kind of a ministry could be built. Interactivity was beginning to take shape and the responses of both participants were crucial in developing it, as can be seen below.

Acknowledgement and confirmation

Continuation of a conversation occurred gradually arising from the acknowledgement and confirmation of the other party. Specific instances of these were identified in the communication, expressing the desire to continue the conversation and the new journey. The apprehension expressed earlier seemed to have given way to further deepening of the relationship, as seen below.

I agree with the above statements. Faith saves us from all worries.

(CS Peacock, Case 9)

What a wonderful thought . . . You should share these thoughts with someone else as well. May be someone else who is going through a similar situation.

(FF Palm, Case 10)

The above examples were not only indicative of the fluency with which a normal communication progresses through acknowledgement and confirmation of a previous thought but also showed some signs of eagerness on the part of the CS to continue the conversation, with the FF providing encouragement. Emotions and gestures play a crucial part in human communication and the presence of these in online communication increased its wholesomeness and confirmed its fluency (Thurlow et al, 2004). Also, this was the starting point of an online professional relationship where interactivity was beginning to take shape.

c) Development of Relationship, Trust and Interactivity

Cyberspace, as a human space, functions at different levels in its technical viability to make an interactive space.

Relational Space

Explicit signs of enjoying the interaction and accompaniment were found in the conversations of both participants, as can be seen in the examples cited below:

So its easier to talk about faith when I am talking to people who have faith.

(CS Heron, Case 5)

Ha Ha, you made me laugh so much there!!! You are funny!!! See the Lord always always brings Joy to his own. This is wonderful, it is strange how two faith friends can be so powerfully inspired without even having met one another, isn't it amazing how our Spirtuality [sic] works within us all.

(FF Sycamore, Case 13)

In the above example there are explicit signs of recognising the presence of the other companion. It is not just a specific word that makes this clear. The relational aspect is inherent in the set of words that constitutes the conversation. Both the CS and FF seemed to enjoy the company of the other party, showing that even if people had not met, strong relationships could be developed online (McKenna and Bargh, 2004). This ministry was expected to develop on relationships, as discussed in the theory in both Chapters 3 and 4.

Developing Trust

Relational interaction may be said to exist when trust developed between participants. This was evident in the sharing of personal issues between a CS and a FF:

When I was ten years old I experiencesd [sic] war in my country, it lasted for 4 years. I experienced hunger, loss, fear at that time I was angry with God and questioning him why we have to go through all this sufferings . . .

(CS Ostrich, Case 6)

It is observed that instances of sharing very personal struggles with their FFs showed that their CSs trusted them. This trust is a sign of relationship online (Thurlow et al, 2004).

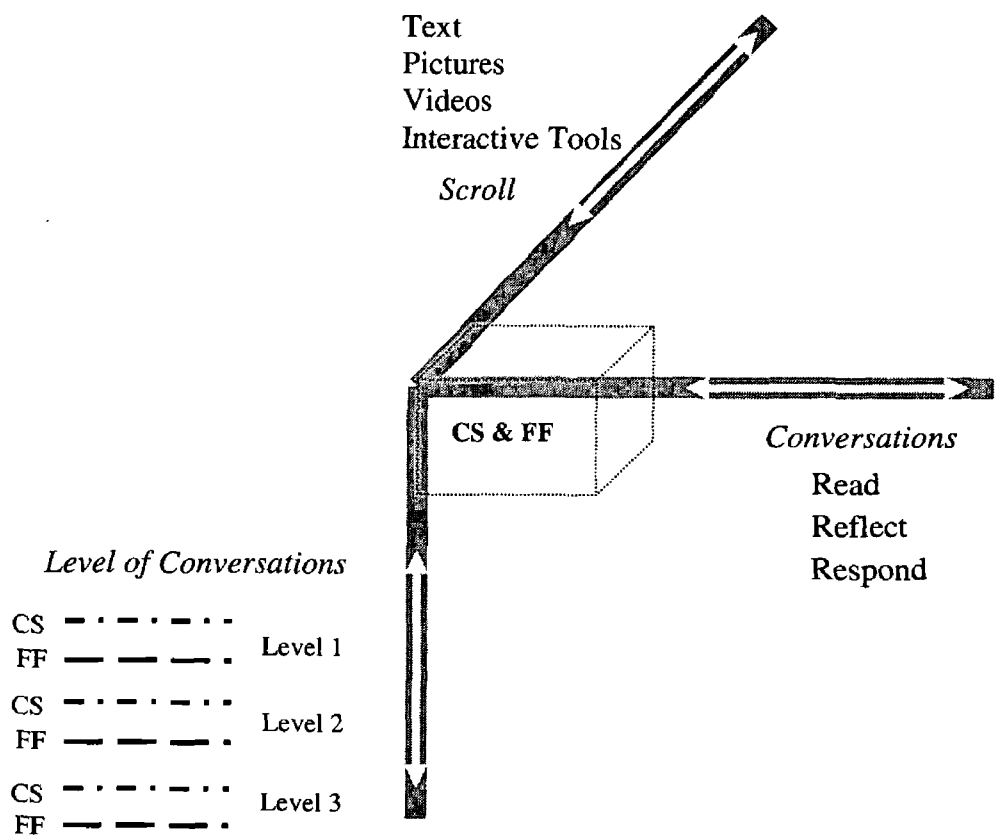
Interactivity

Dialogue and interactivity, built up on online relationships, seemed to develop on this dynamic space. There were three dimensions to this interactivity: *Communication using Scrolls*; *initiation of conversations* and further deepening of communications (*Level of Conversations*). These dimensions cannot be compartmentalised as elements of each may be interlinked to one another. They are next for consideration.

Communication Using *Scrolls*

At the outset, as indicated previously, a FF sent a *scroll* to a CS. It comprised of texts, pictures, videos and interactive tools as detailed earlier. Initial communication originated from the construction of a *scroll*, a FF understanding it and sending it to a CS who was notified of the process by e-mail. The interplay of communication between an external agent who prepared each *scroll* and the FF who then 'owned' it before sending to the CS made this a unique space, as seen in Fig 7.2 below. The externally pointed arrows indicate the increase in the number of *Scrolls*, while the internally pointed arrow shows the flow of communication from the external agent through the FFs to the CSs. The depth of this dimension depends on the number of themes covered.

Fig 7.2 Dimensions of Interactivity between Cybersouls and Faithfriends



Initiation of Conversations

Once the CS received notification of a new *scroll*, she/he logged in, read the content, reflected on it and responded to the questions or suggestions. The initial communication from a FF was considered complete only when the CS replied with a textual conversation at the specified location in the *scroll*. This added a second dimension as there was more than one opportunity for initiating conversations within a *scroll*, depending on its versatility. Again, regarding conversations an externally pointed arrow indicates the increase in the number of conversations, with the inward pointing arrow indicating the dialogical process between the duo of a CS and a FF. At times, a particular *scroll* was concluded with limited conversations and the pair proceeded to the next one, covering a great number of *Scrolls*. In such instances, however, the quality of the dialogue might have suffered.

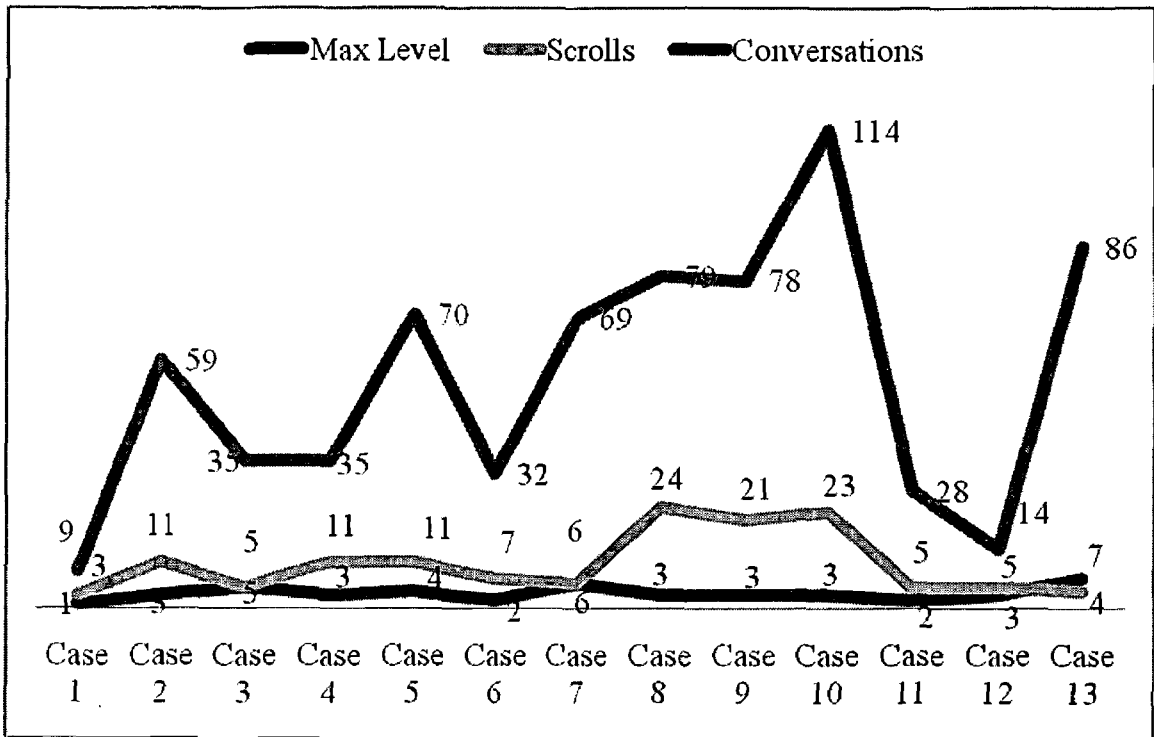
Level of Conversations

Communication deepened when the FF replied to the previous message and the conversation was reciprocated as often as the participants wished at a particular point in the *scroll*. Silverman (2001) identified this process as 'adjacency pairs'. Once again, the external arrow in Fig 7.2 relating to level of conversations indicates the number of times the conversations were reciprocated, while the internal arrow shows the reciprocity of the dialogue. The greater the number of adjacency pairs, the greater the opportunity for more reflection, dialogue and deepening of interiority. All of this took place within the closed space created by the interaction of the minds of two participants around one strand of a topic originating from the *scroll*.

Six prescribed themes were covered within the 24 *Scrolls*. The conversations initiated by a CS and a FF, which were their own interpretations on the content of *Scrolls*, showed their capacity to reflect, their engagement with the topic and their interest in accompanying the other party. The level of conversations indicated the depth of dialogue and interactivity. In addition, it provided a space for creativity and dynamic contributions. This upholds the qualitative dimension of evangelisation as discussed in chapter 2 (Paul VI, 1975b).

Fig 7.3 below captures the virtual reality of the interactive landscape which appeared in the *Cybersouls* portal.

Fig 7.3 Interactive Landscape in *Cybersouls* Portal



In this figure, the middle line depicts the number of *Scrolls* completed in each case. The maximum level of conversations reached in each case is shown in the bottom line, while the top line presents the actual number of conversations completed in each case. A considerable amount of information was processed during the completion of the overall total of 136 *Scrolls*, with 708 conversations developing between the 13 CSs and their corresponding FFs. The adjacency pairs or level of conversations varied from one to seven, indicating deep reflection and sharing of ideas by some participants. Only one case did not progress beyond level one, while two others reached level two. Another six cases stayed at level 3 and the remaining of four cases increased their level of interactivity achieving levels between 4 and 7. An abbreviated example of this interactive process shows how the levels of conversation developed.

The conversation between FF Sycamore and CS Swallow in Case 7 commenced when the FF initiated the discussion with an introduction to the *scroll* on the topic of Faith. Using the content of the *scroll*, the conversations progressed through various levels.

Level 1 { FF Sycamore: Dear Swallow, I feel faith is everything we have . . . It is what we cling to in tough times and. . . in the good times also . . .
What is Faith?
(Content of Scroll) . . .
What do you think about the above statements?
CS Swallow: These statements are profound and require a lot of consideration . . .

Level 2 { FF Sycamore: Faith is our only way to Heaven and prayer is our faith in action . . . Faith gives us tremendous Hope . . .
CS Swallow: I like the way you have structured this and it is very reassuring.

Level 3 { FF Sycamore: That is great to hear. I am so happy you found it helpful. I find at times when our faith is tested it is harder but staying with Adoration increases the love of God in our daily lives . . .
CS Swallow: I agree that the tests open us up spiritually and that the Holy Spirit becomes more powerful within us . . . Sometimes this is just so hard. I am sorry to hear of your . . .

Level 4

FF Sycamore: Thank you so much Swallow, I have come a long way since . . . and have a new life now . . . and I am Blessed with so many many christian friends . . . and of course my faith in God has increased so much from this heavy cross and . . .

CS Swallow: I was thinking the same thing recently. If it wasn't for the cross then our faith would not have been deepened.

Level 5

FF Sycamore: I understand this so much as I have been there myself with my cross in life. Always remember God is with you . . .

While the conversations relating to this part of the *scroll* ended here at level 5, at another location on the same *scroll* the discussion between CS Swallow and FF Sycamore proceeded to level 6. This is just one example of the rigorous interactive process which took place in the dynamic space of the *Cybersouls* portal. Examples of specific conversations cited in the next section show how intense and diverse the reflection which occurred could become.

d) Consciousness Connected

Conscious Reflection: Drawing on de Chardin's (1960) work, the Internet is viewed as a space which connects human consciousness in a way that leads to a collective reflection. This is discussed in the literature review (chapter 2) as a firm foundation on which this research was built. The dynamic space of connectivity was identified in the above interactive landscape. There is evidence of conscious and collective reflection taking place in the conversation which now follows.

I am having some problems, I mean when I try to be holy then some sort of force is coming to me and would make do some sin. This is what happening for the past couple of years. And this won't last, Lord will pull me back . . .

(CS Pigeon, Case 10)

This CS mentioned that 'over the past couple of years' he became aware of a particular experience. He reflected on his own action and, using the *scroll* sent by his FF, was trying to communicate with him. He noticed a pattern about his life which he could reflect on, comprehend and articulate.

A slight difference is discernible in a longer reflection, abbreviated below.

Another thing that came to my mind is about the change of dependancy [sic] as we grow up . . . Initially as kids its basically security . . . and they depend on their parents for that . . . and as time passes it becomes dependancy [sic] on friends who are our peers for friendship and support . . . At a certain period of time the search will be not only for friendship but also for emotional support a well . . .

This can in turn develop as relationships . . . (CS Eagle, Case 2)

Initially he reflected on childhood needs and on his own childhood. Then he recollected changes over time observed in his own life. This is a good example of deep and coherent reflection taking place on the *Cybersouls* portal. The following reflection from Case 5 endorses this point.

One of the biggest suffering sent to me was the death of my brother . . . it seemed so pointless, he loved life . . . My brother accepted his death and tried to make it easier for his siblings, telling us he was not afraid and that everything would be

alright. Have never written any of this down before so I feel quite upset now.
maybe its good to do. (CS Heron, Case 5)

It is interesting to note that CS Heron wrote about this very intimate and upsetting experience for the first time in *Cybersouls*. A range of words and phrases used by other participants such as 'I think', 'I mean', 'I often think', 'I understand', 'what comes to my mind' indicated the inclusion of an element of reflection when addressing a particular topic. They retrospectively thought about their own reality and reflected on it.

A similar reflective process was identified also in the conversations of FFs, e.g.:

Yes I think it hits us all when we think deeply on it. I know for myself I find it so much easier to bear now as I am so into the faith but for a time in my life when I was luke-warm [sic] some years back I would have to say this statement is so real but now I feel I am growing more and more each day and it is a wonderful journey of a soul that wants and yearns to see my Lord. (FF Sycamore, Case 7)

This sensitive piece is a vivid example of the reflective process in operation. The same FF also recalled her personal growth and the change that faith made to her life, articulating it clearly in other conversations. Her reflections were on her personal page of the *Cybersouls* portal, available for revisiting at any time.

A reflection from another FF contributed to the discussion of faith in a *scroll*:

I think Faith, in fact, is something that we practice every day in our lives . . . And we've exercised it from the very moment we were born. I suppose it's true that your mother even encouraged you to feel that we could trust her when we lay in

her arms. And we learned day by day that was true, she would not drop us, that she was reliable, and we could put our faith in her arms. (FF Fig, Case 5)

These examples directly address a crucial research question: How can the information shared online influence the consciousness of young people to inform their understanding of faith? Their capacity for recollection, comprehension, reflection and contributing to the discussion were evident in the examples cited above. How was this achieved? The influence of FFs, their probing questions, together with the questions posed in the *Scrolls*, seemed to prime this process. The discernible interest displayed by CSs was another contributing factor.

A collective reflection

As explained previously, the space was an interactive and dynamic space between two participants a CS and a FF. The reflection which took place in the *Cybersouls* portal was not confined to their private spaces. Rather, it occurred in the three dimensional dynamic landscape created at the interactive space between a CS and a FF.

Communal reflective action also occurred in this online site. The *Scrolls*, which were carefully prepared catechetical topics, acted as a shared foundation for discussions between the participants. Thus, within the cases under review, it was possible to have up to 26 different responses to the same topic when a particular *scroll* was shared by each of the 13 cases. An autocoding conducted in NVivo (according to caption of *Scrolls* and the name of the *Cybersouls*) gives the completion rate of *Scrolls* by case, in descending order, as set out in Table 7.2 below.

Table 7.2 Completion Rate of *Scrolls* within 13 Cases

Caption of <i>Scrolls</i>	Cases
Introduction - Part 1	12
Suffering: The Problem of Suffering - Part 1	12
Introduction: Knowing about Your Faith - Part 3	10
Introduction: A Prayer to Begin With - Part 2	9
Happiness: Expressions of Happiness and Its Yearning - Part 1	8
Introduction: Please tell me more - Part 4	8
Suffering: Embracing Healthy Change - Meditation - Part 4	7
Suffering: Suffering is not in Vain - Part 3	7
Happiness: True Happiness - Part 2	7
Suffering: Why Suffering? - Part 2	7
Happiness: Be Joyful, cos God loved you - meditation - Part 4	6
Happiness: What can offer you real happiness? - Part 3	6
Faith: What is Faith? - Part 1	5
Sacraments: An Old Mug - Part 1	4
Faith: How can we talk about faith? - Part 2	4
Faith: How did you come into your faith? - Part 3	4
Prayer: Healing Prayer - Part 4	3
Faith: How can we grow in faith? - part 4	3
Prayer: What happens in prayer? - part 2	3
Prayer: What is prayer? - Part 1	3
Prayer: Why do I not pray? - part 3	3
Sacraments: Celebrations of Important Moments in Life - Part 2	2
Sacraments: Sacred Moments in Life - Sacraments - Part 3	2
Sacraments: The Man who Climbed on the Sycamore Tree - Part 4	1

For instance, it can be seen that two *Scrolls* were each completed in 12 of the 13 cases. This meant that, in these two *Scrolls*, the same catechetical topic was shared by 24 participants (13 CSs and 11 FFs), all of whom read these *Scrolls*, reflected on the material, responded and continued conversations around them. Here the minds of 24 participants were connected to the same thought material. This constituted a collective reflection which happened in private spaces because the communication within a case was not available to participants of other cases. This was to protect the confidentiality of discussions. The possibility of opening up the discussion on a particular topic to other participants might be considered as a suggestion for the future. Then this collective reflection, occurring in an open space, could increase the

sense of community. Another possibility is the tagging of a topic which might help collective reflection and provide mutual support.

In the above discussions it emerged that the fluency of communication of the participants and their emotions and gestures rendered the human communications in virtual space similar to that in real life. Instances of interactivity, trust and relationship made it a relational and dialogical space. The creation of a dynamic interactive space and the examples of deep and collective reflection established that the convergence of consciousness is a possible outcome when using the Internet. It became clear that, in an online interaction, there might be more opportunity to ‘talk’ directly to the brain, without the distractions of the senses. There might be more clarity of thought, since the conversations had to be written in an intelligible language. Reflections on a communicated matter gave rise to further questions. Since all the communications are retained and can be retrieved, clarifications could be made promptly. It is submitted that all of these aspects of communication contribute to making virtual communication tangibly real.

7.4 Evangelisation in Cyberspace

“The media can cross walls and be secretly present touching the hearts of those who are seeking” (Babin, 1991, p. 202). It was seen in the previous section that the hominisation of the *Cybersouls* project made it an effective space where the Church might connect constructively with the minds of youth. FFs interacting with CSs in this dynamic space of interactivity, where the minds of these people came together, was seen as an infrastructure on which the Kingdom of God might be built. Findings showed that the interactive space of an

intense togetherness of minds is possible to achieve online, as argued earlier in the literature review.

In this section, the data obtained in the project examines how spreading the Good News is possible in Cyberspace. Various activities undertaken in the *Cybersouls* project were analysed to see how this intended evangelisation process worked out in practice. The preparations for initiating faith development - a moment of evangelisation - which took place in the *Cybersouls* portal, are reviewed. Considering the various 'moments of evangelisation' (Paul VI, 1975b; John Paul II, 1979) developed over the years in the Church, to what extent was the Internet useful as a tool in continuing this task?

Faith Education Online

The possibility of accomplishing faith education as one of the 'moments of evangelisation' (Paul VI, 1975b) was discussed earlier in chapter 2. It was discovered that some dimensions of evangelisation can be performed in spaces other than actual corporeal human communities. Thus, in this project, the evangelising of youth was envisaged as taking place in the *Cybersouls* portal through faith education, coupled with online accompaniment. Two areas of the research help to understand how this was achieved:

Content of Scrolls: These contained the catechetical material shared by FFs with their CSs. *Scrolls* provided the spiritual wisdom of the Church in a tangible way through the Internet, creating this opportunity for a new evangelisation.

Usage of Scrolls: Here, data relating to the interactions which developed around the spiritual themes shared by CSs and their FFs in the *Scrolls* is considered.

Each one is now considered in sequence.

Content of Scrolls

During the construction of the *Scrolls* it was ensured that the content was Catholic and contained language that ‘spoke’ to the culture of youth.

Resources Used

The catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC, 1994) as the official teaching of the Church, Scripture as the foundation of Christian living and the teachings of saints, augmented with general relevant stories as lived examples of these teachings, were used to build narratives in *Scrolls* which were both interesting and of good quality. Some examples will clarify this:

Quote used from CCC: “Prayer is “a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God (CCC, para. 2558)” (*Scroll 17: What is prayer?*).

Teachings of the Saints:

If God did punish us for our sins always – this world would not exist because our sins are massive and grave. If God did not grant material goods to some of those who pray, it shows that these temporal blessings are not his concern. When he gives prosperity to some people it is not prosperity but his love that is to be considered important (Augustine, *City of God*).

(*Scroll 7: Suffering is not in vain*).

Use of Scripture: “Read Matthew 5:3-10 or watch the above video on beatitudes and match the following: . . .” (*Scroll 11: What can offer you real happiness?*).

The preparation of the *Scrolls* was the starting point of assimilating the wisdom of the Catholic way of life in a digital format.

Character and Language of the Content

The construction of the *Scrolls* started with four short introductory *Scrolls* framed with the purpose of initiating accompaniment on the journey in faith development, and imbibing a spirit of knowing and praying for each other. The first major *Scrolls* addressed universal human conditions such as happiness and suffering. This approach was inspired by young people who were asked to raise questions to be addressed and published in the blog: <https://faithfriend.wordpress.com>, everyday in Lent 2010. “Why are there so many people suffering in the world while others are enjoying a great life?”, was a question asked by a young person in the parish. This approach ensured that the language and content of the *Scrolls* resonated with young people and addressed questions raised by them (John Paul II, 1979). An example of the language used now follows.

The theme of accompaniment of a FF was conveyed in an introductory *scroll*:

. . . I thank God for giving me a Faith Friend who will accompany me in my journey of Faith online. I pray that [name of the Faith Friend] be rewarded by the Lord for her/his support and prayer for me. Amen.

(*Scroll 2: A Prayer to Begin With*)

A prayer was included in the second *scroll* requesting that the accompaniment would proceed in a spiritual climate from the outset.

Considerable care was taken to ensure that the resources used to prepare the content of *Scrolls* were imbibed from the wisdom of the Church and that the language used to write them connected with the culture of youth (Dulles, 2006). The next step involved the digitisation of the *Scrolls*, as detailed earlier in the section on the dynamics of online interaction. Twenty four *Scrolls* were prepared, digitised and made available to each FF who read each *scroll* and wrote an introduction before sending it to the assigned CS. FFs used these *Scrolls* to proclaim the Good News to their CSs. Various elements of the usage of the *Scrolls* by both FFs and CSs show how the *Cybersouls* space became a spiritual space.

Usage of Scrolls

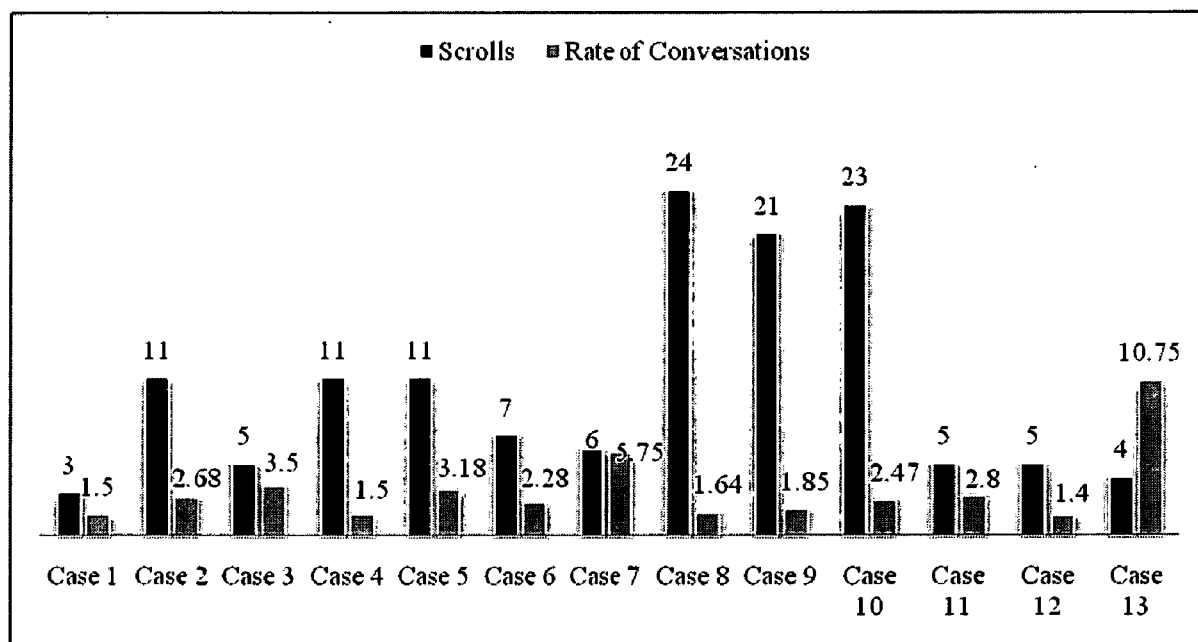
The question of how the Church can make use of technology to *reach out* to youth in their new socialising spaces is addressed in this section. The previous section, dealing with the content of *Scrolls*, showed how the Good News was presented to CSs, whereas how this was dealt with by the participants is considered here. The usage of *Scrolls* by both CSs and FFs revealed how the participants responded to the message of Christ online.

Spiritual Discussions

Signs of spiritual discussions were obvious in the quantification of the conversations and words shared between the CSs and their FFs. In general, when two conversations were reciprocated in a *scroll* between a CS and a FF, this could be equated with one completed instance of communication. For example, if a *scroll* was completed between a CS and an FF

involving two conversations (one each) attached to a *scroll*, the rate of completion of conversations¹² in that *scroll* was one. Chapter 3 on Internet Communication described the interaction model of communication occurring when a communication is reciprocated between two parties (Pearson and Nelson, 2000). A quantitative measure of this interactivity shows that sufficient conversations have been reciprocated, reflecting the characteristics of an interactive model. Fig 7.4 below shows the rate of completion of conversations between a CS and a FF, together with the number of *Scrolls* completed in each case.

Fig 7.4 Average Rate of Completion of Conversations between Cases



In all the cases depicted in this Figure, the average rate of completion of conversations exceeded one. This means that more than two conversations were initiated between the two participants on a particular *scroll*. In general this is indicative of a satisfactory level of

¹² The average rate of completion of conversations is obtained by dividing the rate of conversations in a case by the number of participants. For example in Case 1 there were three scrolls and nine conversations. Therefore the rate of *completion* of conversation was $9/(3*2) = 1.5$ i.e., the total number of conversations completed in a case divided by the number of scrolls, times the number of participants.

discussion being attached to a *scroll*. As can be seen in Fig 7.4, there are five cases where the completion rate is between one and two. Another four averaged between two and three per *scroll*, a further duo completed between three and four conversations, while the remaining two reached an average of more than five conversations in a *scroll*. This quantitative representation of an overall commendable level of interaction is augmented with more specific examples which confirm the presence of in-depth discussions.

Following the four introductory *Scrolls*, five main topics were covered in the remaining 20 *Scrolls*: Suffering, Happiness, Faith, Prayer and Sacraments. Both CSs and their FFs took part in the discussions on the themes covered in the *Scrolls*. In addition, in some cases, tangents of the themes arose, increasing the depth of dialogue. An example of a conversation in the introductory *scroll* is:

Dear Owl, *Welcome* to this great venture. I am Olive, living and working in . . . I really appreciate your interest in *deepening your faith*. May the Holy Spirit lead us to the ultimate source of all wisdom, knowledge and love. *Let's start our online faith journey here*. Olive.

(FF Olive, Case 8, *Scroll* 1: Introduction)

This is an introduction to the first *scroll* send by FF Olive to her CS Owl. The FF seemed to have a clear understanding of the concept of the *Cybersouls* portal. The phrase *deepening your faith* captured the intention of faith development. The small prayer in the message made it a spiritual space. A welcome statement and the spirit of initiation of accompaniment were evident in this conversation.

In Case 9, (which had the same FF, Olive), the effort made to get to know one another

confirmed the introductory nature of the conversation:

CS Peacock: "Thank you dear Olive, I will also keep you and your family in my prayers. *I am living n working in . . . I live with my . . .* God bless you always."

FF Olive: "*I am from . . .*"

CS Peacock: "*I am from . . .* (Case 9, Conversations, *Scroll 1*: Introduction)

A conversation on the theme of suffering provides further insights on the nature of the discussions on the *Cybersouls* portal:

Oak: Dear Ostrich, This topic is a hard one, but I think we can both prayerfully write our thoughts on suffering. I look forward to hearing from you! God bless you! (FF Oak, Case 6, *Scroll 5*: Suffering)

This was the introduction provided by FF Oak to that particular *scroll*. These two participants had already introduced themselves to each other in the introductory *Scrolls* and conversations. FF Oak commented on how hard the topic was and invited her CS to reply. Having read the *scroll*, her CS addressed the question "Do you want to share any personal experience of suffering?" (*Scroll 5*) as follows:

When I was ten years old I experiencesd [sic] war in my country, it lasted for 4 years. I experienced hunger, loss, fear at that time I was angry with God and questioning him why we have to go through all this sufferings, now I am grateful for everything that happened. It showed me new dimension in life and strenghtened [sic] my faith. (CS Ostrich, Case 6)

This personal experience of suffering in this CS's life was closely connected to the theme of suffering. The following is an extract from her FF Oak's reply which also included a personal

experience of suffering, showing empathy with her.

Wow! What a beautiful way you have taken suffering in your life! I too have experienced some suffering in my life - about a year ago I was diagnosed with thyroid cancer, but through that time, I was really able to experience God's grace in my life . . . and also was able to connect with all others suffering . . .

(FF Oak, Case 6)

This discussion on suffering was initiated by the FF. Her CS, having read the content of the *scroll*, replied to the questions asked and the discussion continued. It took a personal slant, also covering how one can learn from suffering. In the course of their conversations they discussed the cause of suffering and its prevalence in the world. They reached an altruistic reflection on the topic, thinking how it helped them to understand other people who suffered, in the light of the sufferings of Jesus. Supporting one another through prayers, they concluded the discussion with the last *scroll* on this theme, an audio/video meditation on healing through the Eucharist. This is an example of a discussion on a fundamental human and Christian theme which took place between a FF and her CS.

Another example of reflection on a different theme confirms that discussions which can pierce the human consciousness took place on the *Cybersouls* portal. In comparison with the previous case, this was a longer discussion and parts of the conversations which occurred in relation to two *Scrolls* are cited in order to understand how deep the discussions can be on a particular topic.

In Case 10, FF Palm introduced this new set of *Scrolls* on the theme of happiness. While there were four *Scrolls* on happiness, the focus here is on the first and the final one.

FF Palm: Dear Pigeon, In one of your previous *scrolls* you mentioned that all the others around you are enjoying the life. How do you define a happy life? . . .

(FF Palm, Case 10)

The introduction had three more lines with a quotation as a motto and prayer. The *scroll* continued, posing the following question to the CS: “Do you agree that every moment of our life is a pursuit of happiness?” The CS Pigeon replied to his FF, addressing this question very personally.

CS Pigeon: Yes , I create happiness inside me so others see me as a happy person . . . same with almost everyone who is around me, I am person who doesnt have a good house, even doesnt have a toilet, how could I enjoy my life ..Others think I am so happy . . . I create happiness.

FF Palm: Yes Pigeon . . . I know you create happiness around the people whom do you meet every day. At the same time you need to make sure that Christ is being formed in the other person. Only he can give the long lasting happiness . . .

(CS Pigeon and FF Palm, Case 10)

Notice the reply of FF Palm where he connects with the previous response of his CS and Pigeon tries to speak about Christ there. The *scroll* material continued and his CS responded to it. The conversation proceeded, being reciprocated between them, and the CS shared an issue with which he was struggling. The continuity of conversations is an indication of how young people can develop trust online and seek support through spaces such as these.

CS Pigeon: Today i dont find happiness in money or any other thing. I want see and experiance [sic] happiness from my soul . . . A pure soul free from all addictions . . .

FF Palm: Good thought for the day . . . may be for the moment. It would be great if you continue in this thought for the next few hours . . .

CS Pigeon: As an adult I do struggle . . . my heart is always seeking . . . , So I will seek in others . . . make me so happy for a day . . . I agree the fact if am truly into a relation with God then, the things wont [sic] matter me . . . even great saints had some problems . . . st. paul [sic] have one area he really struggled . . . so I have one dark room . . .

FF Palm: Pigeon Please see the following videos . . . I really appreciate your openness. St.Paul and other saints might have got some struggle in their spiritual life. But they were always trying to come out from that. . . . They did not keep any dark room in their life . . . But sometimes we do . . . A lazy mind is devils workshop . . . If you cannot see the videos please type [sic] in youtube.

CS Pigeon: ohhh please I dont ever rate myself with saints . . . I mean all the people with flesh have some sort of addiction. . . Today I am back into my business, this is a cool video . . . I am struggling and I need someone who is helping me to come out of this, knew the solution that I have to spent more time with Lord . . .

(CS Pigeon and FF palm, Case 10)

The discussion on happiness in the first *scroll* ended here and FF Palm sent another two *Scrolls* on the same theme. The conversations of his CS Pigeon seemed very personal, offering opinions about the topic, seeking directions about personal issues, asking for clarification about the conversations etc. The FF tried to give guidance and provided some thoughtful discussions and his CS responded to them. Then FF Palm sent the last *scroll* on happiness which is an audio/video meditation prepared for the *Cybersouls* website entitled 'Walking with Jesus'. He used the following introduction:

FF Palm: Dear Pigeon, When I listened to the meditation, i could feel the warmth of Christ's Love who was standing beside me when I did the meditation. Jesus is the only person who knows me inside out and could love me in the way I am.

(FF Palm, Case 10).

CS Pigeon meditated on it and commented positively on the video. It is amazing how a video posted on Youtube can have a profound influence on people. Then the discussion continued with some suggestions from his FF. CS Pigeon reflected on his desire for change. These were articulated clearly. He said that the problem he faced was a problem shared by many young people of his age.

CS Pigeon: . . . truly an amazing one, this reminds me a true hope for my future. I am afraid for the life at the moment, going through some sort of difficulties. This video reminds me, whether am I walking with Lord in my difficult situations . . . this lead into a situation whenever I [was] in trouble, [I will] be with Christ and offer him my weakness, this make a happy [sic] . . . So I would say I am walking with Christ and when time comes I will get His blessings amen.

FF Palm: You still amaze me Pigeon, When I read all your posts here, I wonder how much inspiring your thoughts are. Sometimes I think you are too spiritual, but at some other time I think you are not . . . I gave the retreat talk from . . . to . . . Its really worth. Please copy that in a stick and try to listen when you go to . . .

CS Pigeon: I am having some problems, I mean when I try to be holy then some sort of force is coming to me and would make do some sin . . . And this wont last Lord will pull me back, . . . My sins create a distance between me and God but He is coming again and again so this make my life more interesting . . .

FF Palm: I will fight the fight and press on towards the Goal.

(CS Pigeon and FF Palm, Case 10)

This is a classic example which shows how two people can initiate deep spiritual dialogue online. In this discussion, CS Pigeon stands as a representative of many young people of similar age who want to lead a spiritual life but can be challenged in ways connected to certain developments in technology such as online pornography. While the above discussion was centred on the topic of happiness, new tangents of dialogue emerged around it. This young person's revelations were indicative of the support and accompaniment which young people require these days. CS Pigeon's openness and desire for change were addressed by his FF Palm who referred him to a video from Youtube and asked him to listen to an audio retreat. All these suggestions were proposed to the person in the same language, the language of the Internet and communication technology i.e., a multimedia language (Castells, 2000).

This example of dialogue which took place in the *Cybersouls* website clearly demonstrates how this new ministry can communicate with, address relevant issues and influence the consciousness of youth. The discourse shows that in-depth discussions on faith can take place online, making it an intimately spiritual space.

7.5 Conclusion

An analysis of the 13 selected cases was the focus in this chapter. It commenced with an overview of various methods of analysis and detailed how they were applied in this study. Three main themes emerged from this initial process: the dynamics of online communication; the characteristics of virtual-human communication and evangelisation in Cyberspace. A detailed analysis of each theme was presented. The interactive tools were described and relevant data showed how the CSs relate positively to them. The section on communication in Cyberspace provided numerous examples to support the view that this is profoundly a human space. In the next section on evangelisation on the *Cybersouls* portal, an analysis of the data revealed the depth of discussion that developed around the material on the *Scrolls*, providing evidence that the kingdom of God can be disseminated effectively online. Therefore it can be concluded that, by presenting the Good News online in such a way as to influence their minds, the Church can reach out to youth in their new habitat of online networks.

Now that the in-depth analyses have been presented, a synthesis of the overall study, together with conclusions, are set out in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 8

SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS

The main strands of the study are woven together in this concluding chapter. It commences with an overview of the total project. This is followed by a synthesis of the research findings, addressing the research questions identified relating to three main spheres of the study and summarising key findings. Next, suggestions for expanding the project are identified together with possible areas for future research. Some final reflections conclude the study.

8.1 Overview of the Study

This section consolidates the study, briefly recapitulating the overall research path. The opening chapter introduced the project, explaining the background to the enquiry. It set out the primary objective of the thesis and described its overall structure.

The research project can be divided into two main interrelated strands: the literature review and the fieldwork. The literature review was conducted to clarify the rationale underpinning the study, to develop research questions and to establish, at a theoretical level, the feasibility of carrying out the research. Then the fieldwork put the theory to the test.

The review of the literature focused on material relevant to three topics – evangelisation, the Internet and youth. This was in keeping with the broad objective of the research which set out to explore the possibility of using the Internet for the evangelisation of young people.

The chapter on evangelisation (chapter 2) explored this concept, establishing that it is a core element of the Catholic Church's mission. Later in the discussion, the teachings of Popes Paul VI and John Paul II in relation to evangelisation in the modern world were examined.

Communication on the Internet was reviewed in chapter 3. It commenced with a general overview of the concept before presenting an in-depth examination of Internet Communication. This included exploring the possibility of using the Internet for youth evangelisation.

In chapter 4, the focus was on young people. Various aspects of youth were examined including cyber-youth and the possibility of virtual evangelisation in the context of Web 2.0.

The fieldwork commenced with the design of the *Cybersouls* project. This was detailed in chapter 5 which concentrated on the specifications of the project, leading to its piloting and implementation. Also, data collection and case study selection were described. The findings from the online questionnaire were presented in chapter 6, together with case descriptions for the cohort of selected cases. Finally, a detailed qualitative analysis of data relating to a sample of 13 cases was presented in chapter 7.

8.2 Research Findings

A synthesis of the research findings in this exploratory study is presented in this section. It will be recalled that the main research question was to test the efficacy of the online mentoring of young people (*Cybersouls* – CSs) by Faithfriends (FFs) intended to deepen their understanding, appreciation and appropriation of their faith tradition. The research findings revealed a positive outcome to the main research question, establishing that a web 2.0

environment can be developed effectively to accomplish online mentoring of young people by FFs.

Reviewing the findings in more detail, at a quantitative level, it will be recalled that, in the first 100 days of its operation, the *Cybersouls* portal attracted 119 CSs who were accompanied and mentored by 35 authenticated and trained FFs.

At a qualitative level, the detailed analysis of the interactions between the CSs in the 13 sample cases and their respective FFs provided evidence of the depth of the exchanges that could take place, as individual FFs mentored their particular CSs.

In addition, the positive opinions of participants regarding the *Cybersouls* portal, obtained through the terminal questionnaire, endorsed the effectiveness of this online approach to evangelisation.

Cumulatively, these findings confirmed that youth evangelisation can be achieved online by engaging FFs as mentors who accompany young people on their exploration and appropriation of faith. Other research questions also emerged in the course of the study. Relevant findings relating to these issues are next for consideration.

Spheres of the Research and Related Research Findings

Convergence of the spheres of the Church, youth and the Internet was achieved in the course of the research process. A review of additional research questions (a - i) undertaken in chapter 6 identified these three main areas of the study in relation to specific research questions. As the three spheres are not mutually exclusive, the questions pertaining to each

sphere are interrelated. Findings in relation to the three individual spheres and related research questions are now presented.

The Church and Evangelisation

It was established in the literature review that evangelisation is the primary and encompassing mission of the Church. In more recent times, the importance of making use of the media for evangelisation was reiterated by Paul VI and John Paul II. In this research, the concept of harnessing online communication to reach the youth of today emerged from the initial investigation. The possibility of a personalised mode of virtual evangelisation of young people, envisaged in the theoretical phase, was put into effect. The Internet, considered as an instrument of social communication by the Church, was identified as a very effective medium to accomplish a dialogical and constructivist model of evangelisation. Young people, as leading characters of the virtual *areopagus* of cyberspace, were the main participants of evangelisation.

The first three research questions (a/b/c) which relate to the sphere of the Church and evangelisation are:

- (a) How can the Church make use of technology to reach out to the youth in their new habitats or socialising spaces?
- (b) What skills and tools would be needed by the Church in adapting to the new medium of the Internet?
- (c) Considering the various 'moments of evangelisation' developed over the years in the Church, to what extent is the Internet useful as a tool to continue this task?

The field work demonstrated that the Church has to adapt to a collaborative and constructivist model of using the Internet to underpin an effective approach to the evangelisation of young people. Collaboration between youth movements in the Church and religious educators with a digital outlook can initiate effective spaces of evangelisation online. The challenge to the Church is to take part in the core development of the Internet in order to initiate spaces of effective evangelisation. Considering various moments of evangelisation, catechesis or learning about the faith tradition, which is an essential part of evangelisation, can be achieved online.

As indicated previously, three teams collaborated to get the *Cybersouls* project underway – the evangelisation team, the web team and the youth team, demonstrating the crucial need for off-line and organisational inputs in order to achieve online effectiveness. The scope of each team is now recalled briefly, details being provided earlier in chapter 5. The evangelisation team had to undertake a number of tasks. It had to prepare faith development materials and authenticate FFs. Regarding the preparation of the material incorporated in the *Scrolls*, attention had to be given to their authentic content, i.e., catechism, scripture, teachings, traditions and application to life. The approach involved dynamic story-telling, using interactivity and multimedia, taking full advantage of the potential of Web 2.0. Sensitivity to contemporary youth culture had to be reflected in the language used, while design aspects such as layout, aesthetics and interactivity had to be addressed in a manner that engaged young people.

Turning to the web team, skills were needed to draft the specifications for the online site and then to design and develop it. Finally, the tasks of the administrative team included authenticating FFs and managing them online. It can be concluded that the Church needs to

develop a collaborative approach to bring together the required resources in order to take part in the 'core development' of the Internet.

The Internet and Communication

Prefaced by a broad appraisal of communication, the earlier discussion on this topic then moved to consider communication, using the Internet as a means of social communication. The Internet was seen as providing an environment for developing relationships and offering an opportunity for accompaniment and mentoring. From a communications point of view also, the constructivist model was found to be effective in the process of evangelisation, facilitated by two way interactivity on the Internet. Cyberspace, as a space incorporating multimedia, has the potential to connect the minds of young people constructively.

The following three research questions related to the sphere of the Internet:

- (d) What is the potential of the Internet as an environment for the evangelisation of young people?
- (e) How can the Internet empower young people as active participants in evangelisation using the Internet?
- (f) What are some of the pastoral and theological opportunities afforded by the Internet as a means of evangelisation?

The research confirmed the capacity of the Internet to create socialising spaces, making it a conducive environment for youth evangelisation. Building on the full potential of web 2.0, the proficiency of multimedia and social networking enhanced the effectiveness of evangelisation using this medium. This suggests that the capacity of the Internet for

incorporating multimedia needs to be exploited, recognising its efficacy for dialogue and interactivity. Digitising the Catholic materials relevant to the religious education of young people, creating multimedia (images, audios and videos) and utilising other online resources are ways of making use of the full potential of web 2.0. An image centered and interactive story telling methodology, enabling catechesis, to be adapted to the language of young people, can stimulate their interest, leading them to become creative and active participants in evangelisation. This online research afforded young people the opportunity to display their freedom-to-learn, resourcefulness and proficiency in cyberspace. Therefore it can be said that this digital empowerment of young people creates authentic pastoral and theological opportunities for evangelisation.

Young People as Participants

Some of the characteristics of modern youth were identified in chapter 4. These included having an innate curiosity and a desire to be active learners, rather than being told what to do (see Careaga, 2001). The high level of Internet usage by the younger generation (Elliot, 2010; Lenhart et al, 2010) suggests that it caters for some of these needs. Youth culture necessitates the adaptation of the Good News to the digital space. Introducing authorised FFs as mentors in the web 2.0 environment and allowing them to accompany young people on their journey of faith can constitute an effective means of evangelisation.

Two other research questions involved the sphere of youth:

- (g) How can the freedom and digital ingenuity of a young person be a source of momentum for New Evangelisation?

- (h) How can the information shared online influence the consciousness of young people to inform their understanding about faith?

Table 8.1 below provides a general picture of the activities undertaken by FFs and their CSs in this study:

Table 8.1 Online Activities of FFs and CSs		
Faithfriends	Cybersouls	
Reading <i>Scrolls</i>	Reading	
Writing an appropriate introduction	Reflecting	
Sending the <i>scroll</i> to the Cybersoul	Responding	
Reviewing the response of the Cybersoul		Opinion sharing
Asking further questions for clarification		Addressing questions asked in the <i>scroll</i>
Addressing any issues raised by Cybersouls		Addressing questions asked by the Faithfriend
Answering any questions	Sharing issues regarding faith	
Asking questions to develop the process of reflection	Asking for prayer and support	
Concluding and sending new <i>scroll</i>	Clarifications	
Sending reminders Contributions: Greater in both quantity and quality - confirms their capacity for accompaniment	Contributions: Quantitatively smaller but developing qualitatively	

There seems to be a close link between the presence and efforts of FFs and the online activities of CSs. It may be said that the presence of a FF constituted a motivating factor for the CS to engage. Also the fluency of communication with their FFs seems to have influenced the conversations of CSs.

In addition to their ICT skills, understanding of youth and the faith tradition, some of the more specific factors relating to the functions of a FF that motivated a CS to take part in reflective activity were identified as follows:

1. The frequency and regularity of the interaction of a FF is a key factor. While moderating and observing the interactions on a daily basis, the researcher noted that, having communicated with the FF, the CS logged in daily or at times more frequently in anticipation of a reply from his/her FF.

An analysis of the regularity of replies from a FF shows that, for the 13 cases analysed in depth, replies were more regular in five cases. The frequency pattern showed that a quick reply increased the likelihood of conversations being reciprocated. In contrast, when a FF failed to reply on a regular basis, deeper reflection was less likely to occur.

2. The capacity of a FF to initiate communication and sustain it also seemed to influence the reflective process. Acknowledgement, clarification, asking and addressing questions and expressing appreciation were some of the constructive approaches adopted by FFs in their interactions.
3. Relationship and trust were important. It was noted that, in cases where the conversation was very formal, the interaction failed to develop. In contrast, when the FF was able to develop a relationship that at the same time respected boundaries, trust and interactivity thrived at both a quantitative and a qualitative level.
4. Fluency in online communication is a factor which can help the flow of communication between two people. Having the linguistic ability to express normal human situations may help the other person feel 'at home'. This can be vital in developing a professional relationship, leading to deep communication, as was evidenced in some of the findings.

5. The ability to develop conversations can be underpinned by the knowledge and wisdom of a FF. Creative thinking may be helpful in developing a theme when interacting with a CS.
6. Sharing the knowledge of faith, engaging in a dialogue of personal reflections on faith, making comparisons and clarifications, are all expected to increase the depth of one's interiority. This development was discernible in the case studies where FFs had to respond to a range of issues raised by their CSs.
7. Findings show that, together with their personal reflective stories, FFs referred to Christ as a friend, protector, guide, helper and companion. Also they used other explicitly theological terms to represent Christ. This may be interpreted as showing that FFs had a good understanding of their own role of accompaniment being focused on Christ.
8. A general respect for the other person was discernible on the part of FFs, being expressed in gentle queries and a sincere interest in their respective CSs. A general acceptance of boundaries between the communicators was evident in the exchanges between FFs and their CSs.

Cumulatively, these factors enabled FFs to have a positive influence in their interactions when mentoring individual young CSs. The careful selection and training of FFs ensured that they had the ability to act as effective mentors.

Taking a composite view of the research results relating to these spheres – the Church, young people and the Internet – some of the important factors emerged in the research are depicted in Fig 8.1 below:

Fig 8.1 Important Factors in the Research			
<i>Spheres Involved</i>	The Church	The Internet	Young People
<i>Constituting Factor</i>	Evangelisation	Communication	Culture
<i>Goal</i>	<i>Communio</i>	Interaction	Empowerment
<i>Raw material</i>	The Good News	Instruments of Social Communication	Participants
<i>Method</i>	Incarnation	Dialogue	Accompaniment
<i>Onus on</i>	Global Church	Core Web Developers	Young People
<i>Strength</i>	Youth Movements	Web 2.0	Freedom and Ingenuity
<i>Adaptation Material</i>	Catechesis	Multimedia	Minds of Young People
<i>In Practice</i>	Faithfriends	<i>Scrolls</i>	Cybersouls
A Qualitative Study of Youth Evangelisation on the Internet using <i>Cybersouls</i> Portal			
<i>Achievement</i>	Evangelisation in Cyberspace	Dynamics of Online Interaction	Virtual Communication

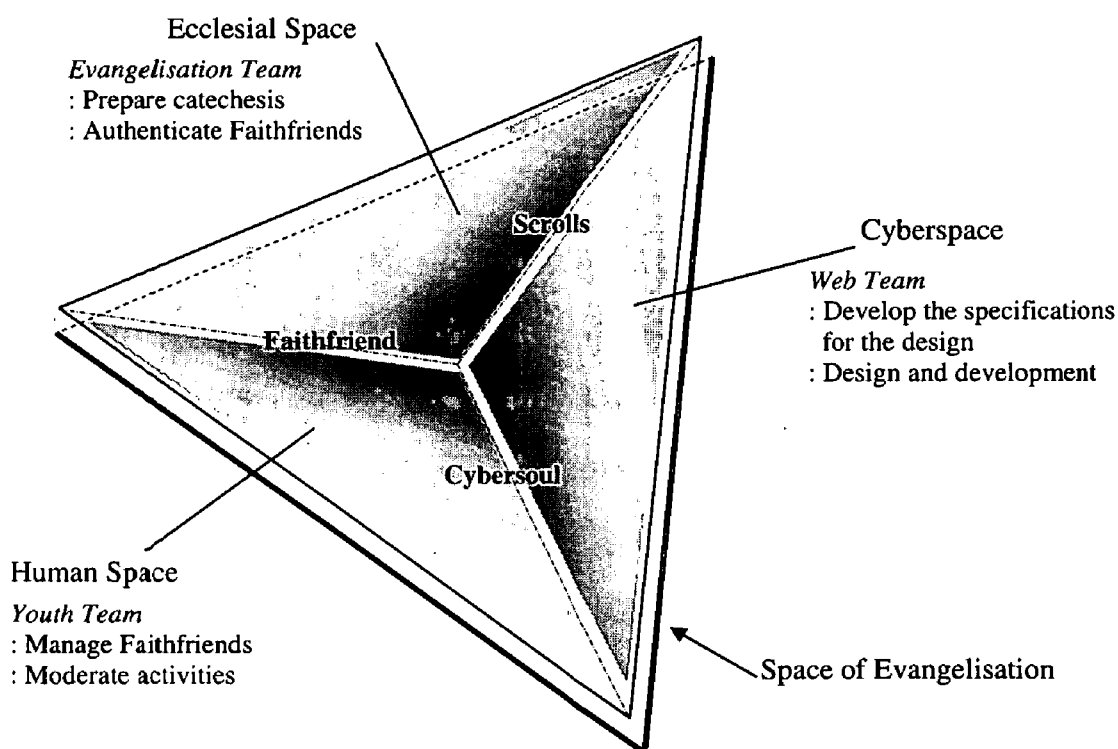
Convergence of the Spheres

The possibility of the convergence of these three spheres, the Church, youth and the Internet as envisaged in the literature review, was achieved in an effective manner. This gave rise to an important overarching research question, as set out below:

- (i) The Internet provides the tools; the Church provides the atmosphere and young people are the participants. How can these seemingly distant cultural spaces be mutually inculturated?

In the theoretical discussions which preceded the fieldwork, the dynamic convergence of the spheres of the Church, youth and the Internet was proposed as a space for evangelisation. Then, moving on to the fieldwork, the *Cybersouls* project was developed to test the efficacy of the Internet as a tool for evangelisation. A thorough analysis of the data which emerged supports the thesis that the Internet can be used constructively for youth evangelisation. This achieved the main objective of the research which was to establish the potential role of the Internet as an instrument in the evangelisation of young people. Figure 8.2 below captures the overlay of the three spheres that emerged to construct this dynamic space of evangelisation.

Fig 8.2 Convergence of the Three Spheres Forming the Space of Evangelisation



The cyberspace of *Cybersouls* was creatively prepared with a view to making it a human space of accompaniment to facilitate discussions on matters of faith. Here, cyberspace, human space and ecclesial space merged to create a space of evangelisation. The preparation of *Scrolls* needed both the wisdom of the Church as well as knowledge of dynamic online

tools. The selection of FFs needed to assure their authenticity, maturity in faith and connectivity to youth. CSs are at the intersection between Cyberspace and human space. Thus the efficacy of an online environment of evangelisation is dependent on the calibre of the offline resources and organisational capacities that are utilised.

Setting up the online *Cybersouls* site and facilitating the registration of young people marked the starting point of this evangelisation for CSs. Then online FFs, authenticated by the coordinator, were effective in accompanying and mentoring these young souls who wanted to deepen their understanding of faith. Research findings showed that, using the dynamic catechetical material, termed *Scrolls*, to engage the CSs, FFs achieved a high level of success in this regard. The profound human space created between the interaction of the CSs and their FFs was enriched by the catechetical material on the *Scrolls*. The Good News seems to have permeated cyberspace where its wisdom resonated with the consciousness of young people through dialogue and prompted reflective thought.

Drawing together the evidence gathered in the course of this investigation, the key findings of the research can be summarised as follows:

- (i) Effective mentoring by a Faithfriend enhances the potential of the web 2.0 environment for youth evangelisation. Such effective mentoring depends on careful selection and training of Faithfriends, particularly their knowledge of the faith tradition, proficiency in ICT skills and understanding of youth culture.
- (ii) A collaborative and constructivist model of using the Internet underpins an effective approach to evangelisation with young people.

(iii) Making use of the full potential of web 2.0, the proficiency of multimedia and social networking enhances the effectiveness of online evangelisation.

(iv) The efficacy of an online environment of evangelisation is dependent on the calibre of the offline resources and organisational capacities that are utilised.

8.3 Suggestions for Expanding the Project

In the light of the research conducted, some suggestions for expanding the project now follow.

Virtual Representation of Individuals: The participants in the *Cybersouls* website had individual 'web-pages' with their names on them. Unlike other social networking sites, their photos and other demographic details were not permitted to be displayed online in these profiles. Some participants may wish to provide and make available online of a more detailed profile.

Linkage to Offline Activities: More collective reflection could lead to the possibility of having offline meetings in groups. Also, specific offline activities could be arranged for online participants who reside in the same area. This would help to ensure the process of evangelisation as its sacramental elements could be catered for in the setting of a real life community.

Interest Groups: Allowing interest groups such as youth movements and parish youth groups to register is another suggestion for expansion. In addition, a code could be provided on the *Cybersouls* web portal to make this site part of their web presence.

Mobile Applications: Adapting the web portal of *Cybersouls* to the up to date browsing experience, by incorporating mobile applications, could be another way of expanding the project.

The Role of Faithfriends: Some issues regarding aspects of the role of FFs may need to be further considered.

- The extent to which their role is confidential.
- The question of addressing disclosures that may arise in the context of the legal obligations in a particular country and the Internet Law and Regulations?
- The conceptualisation of the role a FF - whether she or he is a spiritual director or merely a fellow traveller.

8.4 Possible Areas of Future Research

This was an exploratory study, limited by both time constraints and personnel, being confined to one researcher. It is hoped, however, that having made a start in this innovative area of research, it will provide an impetus for further enquiry in this field. Possible topics for consideration are set out below.

Creating a Sense of Community: The possibility of opening up the discussion on a particular topic to other participants was a suggestion made in chapter 7. It is considered that this collective reflection, occurring in an open space, could increase the sense of community. Research exploring how relationships similar to real life relational ties in a community can be fostered in an online community would be beneficial in progressing this possibility.

Learning from One Another: The tagging of a topic or a discussion created by an individual might encourage collective reflection and provide mutual support. This could open up the possibility of learning from other participants. However, limitations would need to be placed on tagging, taking into account the sensitivity of a case, together with issues of confidentiality and privacy. The development of online peer support for faith education is another area of research for the future.

Evangelisation: Quantitative Dimensions: The research in this project was focussed primarily on a qualitative dimension of evangelisation. Testing quantitative aspects of evangelisation is another area which merits investigation. The need to cater for a larger number of CSs would require the selection and training of a greater number of FFs. Also it would necessitate the construction of more of the dynamic and interactive tools and resources appropriate to the expectations of young people. The development of additional suitable material for use in *Scrolls* constitutes another important research task.

Moderation: A growth in the number of participants would involve identifying further resources for moderation of the website. Some of the activities of CSs and FFs can be automated. Automatic analysis of the words and phrases they use in their interactive spaces online can be a way of achieving this. CSs who have achieved a certain level of accomplishment online could be given more power to undertake some responsible tasks. Exploring these possibilities would involve additional research.

Stages of Faith: Research is needed regarding how to deal with CSs at different stages of their faith development, as participants may vary from beginners to advanced. Preparing appropriate faith materials for each of these categories is another challenge in undertaking

online evangelisation. Appropriate research would provide useful insights into addressing this challenge.

Religious Education and the Internet: This research established the robust general enthusiasm which young people have for the Internet and confirmed its specific potential for use by the Church as a means of youth evangelisation. These findings have implications for future developments in the wider field of religious education. Further research, investigating the possibilities afforded by the Internet in the arena of religious education, would make a valuable contribution to ensuring that online opportunities are incorporated and used to best advantage in this educational setting in the future.

8.5 Final Reflections

The *Cybersouls* research project is an example of the Church being represented in the mosaic of the convergence of Web 2.0 in cyberspace. This has opened a window to the world of youth. The convergence of the faith of the Church and youth culture on the information super highway has brought together a complex mixture of various aspects of human existence. Initiating instances of interaction, as undertaken in the *Cybersouls* project, provided opportunities for evangelisation founded on understanding the characteristics of the phenomenon of online interaction. This addressed the research question: "What would be involved in building on this information shared online in order to transform young people?" From the time of making the project available to young people online, their registration, login and use of the site, they were enabled to display the potential of the medium. The registration of a young person was a critical point of allowing individual participation in this project. Then, in their private living spaces, the participants were able to take part in the project

without the constraints of any physical community around them. An expression of their freedom and power to communicate was visible here.

The detailed analysis of the data obtained in the *Cybersouls* website allowed the conversations to 'speak'. The tools of online communication and their capacity to facilitate interactivity made dynamic story telling possible in the language of young people who are active participants of this medium. The profound nature of this virtual human space became evident in some of their conversations. The depth of the discussions undertaken in this research proved its capacity for influencing human interiority to accomplish a qualitative dimension of evangelisation. The examples of dialogue which took place in the *Cybersouls* website revealed clearly how this new ministry can communicate with and influence the consciousness of youth. The ensuing discussions showed that in-depth dialogue on faith can take place in online spaces, making it an intimately spiritual space.

Evangelisation has been central to the mission of the Church since its inception. Over an extended time period, developments in the wider world, e.g., the invention of printing, have impacted on how the task of evangelisation has been addressed in different ages. In the contemporary world, the advent of the Internet provides yet another new means of spreading the Good News, especially to young people who have embraced this medium with such enthusiasm. This exploratory study has tested and established the efficacy of the Internet for the evangelisation of youth by engaging Faithfriends to mentor them in deepening their understanding, appreciation and appropriation of their faith tradition. "While acknowledging that "there is always a 'more' that goes infinitely beyond what we have already grasped" (Hought, 1986, p. 21), it is hoped that the insights provided in this research advance in some measure the engagement of young people in building the Kingdom of God in the years ahead.

APPENDICES

Home page of the web portal www.cybersouls.ie

Welcome

Welcome to an online journey of faith! This is a brand new concept of spiritual development for young adults. We offer Faithfriends to accompany you on your journey of faith online. Faithfriends are authorised by Jesus Youth, who will share interactive, exciting and inspirational materials to any person who wants to deepen the journey of faith. If you want to learn more about faith online, register as a Cybersoul - a Faithfriend will accompany you. [Read More](#)



Login

Login Name/E-mail ID:

Password:

☐ Remember Me

[Forgot Password?](#)

CASTING OUT INTO THE DEEP!

"Behold, I am with you always, until the end of time" (Mt 28:20)

This is a brand new concept of spiritual networking online, a new tool for accompanying young adults in their journey of faith online.

Faithfriends who are authorised by a Catholic youth movement, will accompany you if you want to deepen your journey of faith online.

Anybody over 18 is invited to register and login to be accompanied by a Faithfriend in this online journey.



The Project

The Project: Cybersouls is a project for young adults, who aim to deepen their faith journey online networking. It is designed to devolve the faith of young people through their online interaction with Faithfriends. 'Cybersouls' is a term given to those who want to initiate their faith journey online while Faithfriends, primarily authorised by the Jesus Youth movement, would accompany Cybersouls on their journey. Here, either you are a Cybersoul or a Faithfriend.

The Research

The Research: The project started as part of a PhD research in Mater Institute of Education, Dublin, Ireland. Fr Sony Sebastian, CMI, a research student of the Institute, is the principal investigator. The data obtained during the first six months of the project is expected to be used for the research. This is clearly mentioned in the registration process. [Read More](#)

Youth questions

- What is happiness?
- Is there a God when he sees all those people die in (East?) Syria?
- What are you going to do when you finish school?
- Does my deceased father still know me?
- Why is it necessary to fight and argue about what we believe in?

Jesus Youth



Mater Dei Institute



Archdiocese of Dublin



[About](#) [Terms of Use](#) [Privacy Statement](#)

Registration form of FFs

Cybersouls
Welcome to an online journey of faith!

[Home](#) | [About](#)

Register as a Faithfriend

Mandatory Fields

Login Name: 10
 E-mail ID: 10
 Password: 10
 Retype Password: 10
 Your Name: 10
 Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
 Date of Birth: Month Day Year 10
 Country of origin: Select Country 10
 Present Address: 10
 Contact Phone: 10
 Present Parish Details 10
 Parish Name:
 Place of Parish:
 Country of Parish: Parish Country
 Are you active in any youth movement?
 eg. Jesus Youth, Youth 2000, YMCA etc. (Please specify) 10
 Reference Person Details 10
 Name:
 Contact Tel. No.:
 E-mail ID:
 Designation:
 eg. Youth Leader, Parish Priest, Co-ordinator etc. (Please specify)
☒ I consent to the use of online activities for research. 10
 Note: Please read Terms & Conditions below before you finish registration. [Printable Version](#)
Terms and Conditions
 Research Project: Cybersouls is an online project. It is designed to develop the faith of young people through their online interaction with Faithfriends. Cybersouls is a term given to those who want to initiate their journey of
☒ I Agree to the Terms & Conditions above
 Enter Security Code shown above: 10

Read Terms and Conditions
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Designed by jodeweb

Registration Form of CSs

Cybersouls
Welcome to an online journey of faith!

[Home](#) | [About](#)

Register as a Cybersoul

Mandatory fields

Login Name: (12)

E-mail ID: (12)

Password: (12)

Retype Password: (12)

Your Name: (10)

Gender: ☒ Male ☐ Female

Country of origin: (2)

Address and contact(optional): (12)

Are you over 18: ☒ Yes ☐ No (2)

☒ I consent to the use of online activities for research. (2)

Note: Please read Terms & Conditions below, before you finish registration

[Printable Version](#)

Terms and Conditions

Research Project: Cybersouls is an online project. It is designed to develop the faith of young people through their online interaction with Faithfriends. Cybersouls is a term given to those who want to initiate their journey of

☒ I Agree to the Terms & Conditions above

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Please don't forget to visit [http://www.cybersouls.com](#)

Sample Scroll



Why Suffering? - Part 2

Suffering in the World

Instructions to Faithful

The discussion on suffering continues from previous scroll . . .

'Why is there suffering?' is a very natural and crucial question puzzling us for centuries. In general, sufferings are occasions which cause pain for us. In this life we constantly experience sufferings of many different kinds and size – physical and moral evils, illness, death, injustices, wars, natural disasters, earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, etc.

Suffering is a human condition as much as it is the condition of all conscious living beings.

- ❗ If God, Father almighty, the creator of heaven and earth, cares for all his creatures, why does so much evil occur?
- ❗ Why are there so many people suffering in the world and why are others enjoying a great life? This, for human beings, is a mystery which often evokes the cry, "Why?"

The apostle Paul tried to answer this question, saying, "Death (suffering) came into the world through sin (Rom 5:12)."

What do you say about the speech of St Paul?

Does that mean that all suffering is caused by sin? It is true that some suffering is caused by our actions. This, however, may not seem completely true in the case of people who suffer through no fault of their own.

As a friend of mine said to me, "We have only a small vision, but God has the full picture." We may not be able to comprehend 'why' God permits suffering for some people. Because of the complexity of the problem, there's no simple or quick answer.

A Natural Approach to Suffering – empirical or material approach

Some people suffer because of material poverty or illness; others do not. In general, poverty is considered to be a cause of suffering. Ill-health in mind and body are examples of suffering. Therefore, this should mean that those who are wealthy and healthy don't suffer. But even those who seem to be enjoying a great time may also be suffering in a different way.

- ❗ Would wealth, health or other material goods bring happiness to us and enable us to say, "I will not suffer anymore?"
- ❗ Is it okay to say that suffering is not just for some people; that all people suffer one way or other?

Please ask any of your questions or type your replies to the above questions here

Table 9.1 List of Scrolls	
Order of Scrolls	Name of Scrolls
1	Introduction - Part 1
2	A Prayer to Begin With - Part 2
3	Knowing about Your Faith - Part 3
4	Please tell me more - Part 4
5	The Problem of Suffering - Part 1
6	Why Suffering? - Part 2
7	Suffering is not in Vain - Part 3
8	Embracing Healthy Change - Meditation - Part 4
9	Expressions of Happiness and Its Yearning - Part 1
10	True Happiness - Part 2
11	What can offer you real happiness? - Part 3
12	Be Joyful, cos God loved you - meditation - Part 4
13	What is Faith~ - Part 1
14	How can we talk about faith? - Part 2
15	How did you come into your faith~ - Part 3
16	How can we grow in faith? - part 4
17	What is prayer? - Part 1
18	What happens in prayer? - part 2
19	Why do I not pray? - part 3
20	Healing Prayer - Part 4
21	An Old Mug - Part 1
22	Celebrations of Important Moments in Life - Part 2
23	Sacred Moments in Life - Sacraments - Part 3
24	The Man who Climbed on the Sycamore Tree - Part 4

Questionnaire Form

Your views on 'Cybersouls' website please

As part of my research project I need to get your views on the Cybersouls website. So, kindly complete this short survey before Friday 15 October 2010. It will only take few minutes.

* Required

Taking part in the Cybersouls project has enlivened my faith. *

Tick one of the options below

- ☐ strongly disagree
- ☐ disagree
- ☐ agree
- ☐ strongly agree

I understand my Catholic faith better now. *

Tick one of the options below

- ☐ strongly disagree
- ☐ disagree
- ☐ agree
- ☐ strongly agree

My Faithfriend in Cybersouls website has helped me to deepen my faith. *

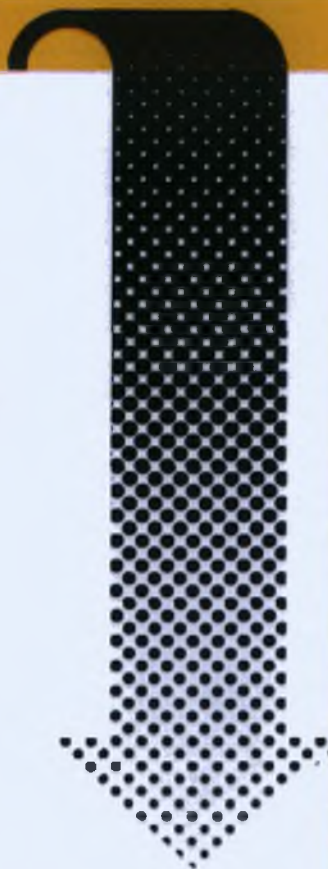
Tick one of the options below

- ☐ strongly disagree
- ☐ disagree
- ☐ agree
- ☐ strongly agree

The scrolls/themes in this website helped me to reflect seriously about my faith. *

Tick one of the options below

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ disagree
- ☐ agree
- ☐ strongly agree



Questionnaire Form

I am closer to my parish/community because of the Cybersouls website. *

Tick one of the options below

- ☐ strongly disagree
- ☐ disagree
- ☐ agree
- ☐ strongly agree

I feel part of the online Cybersouls community. *

Tick one of the options below

- ☐ strongly disagree
- ☐ disagree
- ☐ agree
- ☐ strongly agree

I like interacting via social networking sites such as Facebook, Bebo, Orkut, Myspace etc. *

Tick one of the options below

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ disagree
- ☐ agree
- ☐ strongly agree

I would recommend the Cybersouls website to a friend in order to deepen his/her faith. *

Tick one of the options below

- ☐ strongly disagree
- ☐ disagree
- ☐ agree
- ☐ strongly agree

If you have any additional comments to make about the Cybersouls website, kindly make them below. *

Screen Shot of Coding of Themes (Tree Nodes) in NVivo

The screenshot shows the NVivo software interface. The left sidebar displays a tree view of nodes, including 'Free Nodes', 'Time Nodes', 'Dates', 'Relationships', 'Mentions', 'Search Folders', and 'All Nodes'. The main window displays a list of nodes with their sources and references.

Tree Nodes

Name	Sources	References
Consent of Scrollie	1	31
Cybercode according to scrollie	0	0
Cyb-eauix Interactions	0	0
Scrollie according to a Cybercode	0	0
scrollie scrollie	0	0
Themes CS	1	1
Themes CS		
Name	Sources	References
Characteristics of Virtual Communication	4	124
Dynamics of Online Interaction	4	139
General observations	3	78
Online Evangelisation	14	147
Total conversations	2	108
Themes FF&	0	0
Themes FF&		
Name	Sources	References
Characteristics of Virtual Communication	0	32
Dynamics of online interaction	6	100
Faithful Interactivity etc	1	11
Miscellaneous	1	4
Online Evangelisation	0	96
Total conversations	9	302


Table 9.2 Dynamic Tools Used for Interactivity and Conversation in *Scrolls*

Topics	Scroll	Text	Picture	Video	Comment box	Yes /no	Match the following	Choose from the list	Number of Conversation snippets
Intro	Scroll 1	x	x		x			x	2
Intro	Scroll 2	x	x		x				1
Intro	Scroll 3	x	x			x		x	3
Intro	Scroll 4	x	x		x	x			2
Suffering	Scroll 5	x	x		x				3
Suffering	Scroll 6	x	x		x				2
Suffering	Scroll 7	x	x		x				1
Suffering	Scroll 8	x	x	x	x				1
Happiness	Scroll 9	x	x		x	x			3
Happiness	Scroll 10	x	x	x	x				2
Happiness	Scroll 11	x	x	x	x		x		2
Happiness	Scroll 12	x	x	x	x				1
Faith	Scroll 13	x	x		x				2
Faith	Scroll 14	x	x		x	x			2
Faith	Scroll 15	x	x		x				1
Faith	Scroll 16	x	x	x	x				1
Prayer	Scroll 17	x	x		x				1
Prayer	Scroll 18	x	x		x				2
Prayer	Scroll 19	x	x		x				1
Prayer	Scroll 20	x	x	x	x				1
Sacraments	Scroll 21	x	x		x	x			3
Sacraments	Scroll 22	x	x		x		x		3
Sacraments	Scroll 23	x	x		x				1
Sacraments	Scroll 24	x	x		x				1
Total		24	24	6	23	5	2	2	

Screen Shots of Interactions of Case 3

Case 3 - FF Cedar and CS Falcon. (Pseudonyms are used to protect confidentiality.)

Scroll 1



Introduction - Part 1

General Introduction

Dear **Falcon** How are you? Welcome to this journey of faith online. I am very happy to journey with you online during this project. As I see it, this is a very new venture of journeying together on the Internet in order to understand, learn about and deepen our faith. Hope to get to know you more over the coming days. GOD Bless.

Cedar

Instructions to Faithfriend


How are you?

Welcome to this journey of faith online.

I am very happy to journey with you online during this project.

As I see it, this is a very new venture of journeying together on the Internet in order to understand, learn about and deepen our faith.

So that I can get to know you a little better, may I ask you some questions which you are free to answer?



In your opinion where do you stand in relation to your own journey of faith?

☐ Not started/I do not know
☒ A beginner
☐ Advanced
☐ Well advanced

May this journey begin by lighting the candle of faith. Post a similar prayer here.

Let this journey show us the true meaning of being devoted to Christ.

Case 3, Scroll 1 (cont'd)

Thats wonderful. Sometimes before starting a journey it is always good to know where you are and where are we going. Don't you think so? Imagine going to a distant place, I am sure I would plan it out, the time required, fuel for the car, extra tyre etc. So that I can get to know you a little better, may I ask you some questions which you are free to answer? You have identified yourself as a beginner in this journey. What is the most important thing that motivates you know more about your faith? What would you expect as an outcome of this endeavour? Hope I don't I sound very serious with the above, but feel free to ask me any questions and I will try my best to answer them. Let me know if there is anything specific that you would like me to pray for you. GOD Bless you.

Posted by FF Cedar

Hi again! I'm going to try my best to answer your questions honestly. The most important thing that motivates me to know more about my faith is the security it brings. That does seem selfish but I feel a certain protective shield around me because of my faith in Christ and going to church every Sunday. Interacting with my friends who might be less religious or maybe not religious at all, I appreciate that I have God to turn to, to talk to, and to pray to. While this shelter motivates me, I hope to also learn to become a good Christian for life and to practice the same beliefs that my parents taught me so well—that church is essential and God is always with us. As for what I expect from this endeavor, I hope to learn as much as I can and share as well. Sharing with someone I do not know and have never seen but still knowing that they only have good intentions for me gives a sense of comfort. I would like to apologize for not being so active thus far but I will try harder from now on. Thank you for sticking with me. I also have some questions for you that you can answer if you want. Where do you stand in your development of faith? And were you born into a Christian family or did you take the decision yourself? Hope this message is not too long.

Posted by CS Falcon

Hi, Thanks for your honest answer. Very soon you will find that GOD will reveal more of his goodness in your life. The word of GOD tells us that you have come to know Jesus because GOD the father has attracted you to him. If he has called you, then he certainly has a plan for you. This has pretty much been my experience. Although I was raised a christian, I came closer to GOD and my faith through an incident in my family and I believe is a miracle when everyone around had little expectation that my father would survive a bloody accident. Praise GOD that my father is completely healthy now. The faith journey that I had begun then has seen its ups and downs. But where I am now, I wouldn't have dreamt five or six years before. GOD has taken me through many situations which I know I am not at all capable of. I would say being in that relationship with my Jesus is a great treasure in my life. I laugh, cry, upset, pray with him. Do you cherish a one to one relationship with Jesus?

Posted by FF Cedar

Case 3, *Scroll 1* (cont'd)

I've always found myself talking in my mind about anything and everything. And I always felt that I was talking to God. There was never a doubt in my mind that was what I was doing. I feel like God can hear everything and God knows everything. I feel like this was the beginning of having a one to one relationship with Jesus. To me the lines between God and Jesus are blurry because I talk as if I'm speaking to both entities. I am glad to hear your father is happy and healthy. Actually just over a week ago, I was in a car accident with my brother--my very first car accident. Fortunately it was of no fault of mine and no one was seriously injured. But I can't help but replay the few seconds over and over. I swerved onto the opposite lane and crossed the road onto the grass on the other side. We were so blessed because there was no oncoming traffic and we were only feet away from crashing into an electricity pole. I praise Jesus everyday that my brother and I didn't get hurt. I know I wouldn't forgive myself if something had happened to my brother. I feel that God hands down infinitely more blessings than I deserve. Here's a link to a song that I really like. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ID_pCr_Xmc&feature=related

Posted by CS Falcon

The song's got a good caption. Is it just two of you in the family? Say hello to your brother for me please. Also I was thinking of taking on the next scroll which is to do with another topic of "suffering". Before that could you also share the area of faith that you would like to grow more. I am asking this because, for our faith to grow it is very important that we take that extra step out of our comfort zones. For example we may be comfortable in our current situation and happy to stay there as long you can. From the word of GOD we know that unless a mustard seed falls to the ground and dies, it cannot grow up (mat 13). From this parable Jesus teaches us about the death to our worldly things that we are attached to and grow up into heavenly things. So may be take a quite time to sit with Jesus and pray to holy spirit and he will reveal many things to you. If you have identified an area in your life that you would like GOD to intervene, may it be prayer, word of god, charity.. let me know and I will pray for you as your friend in faith.

Posted by FF Cedar

I have two brothers and both my parents. I'm not entirely sure what you mean by me sharing the area of faith that I would like to grow more. Could you please clarify? Also I would like God to intervene for me in my family life. I want all my family, nuclear and extended, to be safe and healthy. There are so many tragedies which take place everyday to countless people and I want to pray that my family may feel the least amount of pain possible. We have been blessed abundantly and I hope that the Lord continues to give us his great blessings and keep us in his hands.

Posted by CS Falcon

Case 3, Scroll 1 (cont'd)


Hi again, sorry I took some time to come back. Almost all the people that I know talks about a call of GOD in their life. Many a time when someone has an encounter with christ, then they cannot sit still, they would want to spread that love and bring others to him. I am reminded the story of women who had many husbands, to whom Jesus asked for a drink. When she realised that Jesus was no ordinary person, she went and started talking about him to the entire village and inviting them to come and listen to him. Even after 2000 odd years of the death and resurrection of our lord, people are still facinated about their encounter with Jesus. This encounter with Jesus is infact a call that GOD the father is placing in the hearts of his children. The purpose of the call is because GOD wishes to reveal more of him to us and to grow in a relationship with us. And GOD has placed a similar call in your life too Falcon Maybe it is a desire to know more about GOD through the scriptures, may it is some talent that you have, may be it is a desire to spend more time in prayer etc. This is what I meant by the area of faith. If you haven't really had such thoughts then it is a good idea to spend few minutes every day, asking GOD reveal more about his call in your life. Do let me know if you need more clarification.

Posted by FF Cedar

I think I'm understanding what you mean. But I cannot come up with an answer for where my area of faith is or what my call is. I feel like I will have to be introspective and also ask God what he has in mind for me. Thank you for your explanation. And also thank you for your prayer. I don't know exactly how this will proceed if I should ask a question or not. But I was curious on your views of non-Christians and life after death for them. I'm not sure if this has to be made into another scroll but if so, feel free.

Posted by CS Falcon

Case 3, Scroll 2



A Prayer to Begin With – Part 2

General Introduction


Dear Falcon

Now that we have a little understanding about each other, let us explore a bit more about our faith and other questions starting with the one you just raised. Lets say the following prayer.

Lord Jesus, I thank you for the friendship that you had given us in your name. I ask for your holy spirit to hover over our communications and discussions, so that your wisdom and knowledge is shared and utilised for the glory of your kingdom. As we embark on this journey, I ask you to wash us and protect us with your precious blood, that you so generously shed in Calvary for us. Mother mary, we ask for your intercession, so that the Father's will is fulfilled in our lives as we embark this journey of faith. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

I have said this prayer for you that this online journey which we are making together may be guided by the Holy Spirit. I will request you to say the same prayer that the same Holy Spirit may be our guide in this journey.

Prayer



Lord Jesus, I ask your Holy Spirit to guide us both in this online journey of faith. May this online presence remind us that God's loving presence is very close to us because you have said, "Behold, I am with you, always, until the end of time" (Mtt 28:20).

May we learn from the wisdom of the Church which will be shared in this online space and through this interaction may we increase in our understanding and love for you.

May my patron saint (say the name of your patron saint you received in your baptism or confirmation) be praying for me now. I thank God for giving me a Faith Friend who will accompany me in my journey of Faith online. I pray that (name of the Faith Friend) be rewarded by the Lord for her/his support and prayer for me. Amen

May the guardian angels God has entrusted us with always be on and by our side while we read, understand and discuss the knowledge of faith shared here.

Write your prayer here

"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." Rom 12:15

Thank you for the wonderful prayer. So do we proceed by discussing the question of people that are not Christians and life after death for them? Is this the question that we will focus on for this scroll?

Posted by CS Falcon

Case 3, Scroll 3



Knowing about Your Faith - Part 3

General Introduction

Dear Falcon

Thank your prayers, sorry for the delay in assigning this scroll. The past week has been very tiring and rewarding at the same time. Last week GOD blessed us with a beautiful baby boy. Please pray for us as we try to be good christian parents.

Time for the next scroll! Your question about the fate of non christians and what happens to them after life is quite an interesting one. It has been very confusing for me when I was initially growing up.

Rather than giving you an answer as to yes or no, I would like to invite you to ponder more as to why is this a question in your heart. Is it just to satisfy your gap of knowledge about this scenario of unbelievers or is it because you are worried and you really want them to get to heaven? The catholic church gives us many teaching about unbelievers, if they will go to heaven, will there be a judgement etc. But when you read the bible you will know that Jesus was not interested in the laws, but in the final vision of why the law was established. The laws were instantiated so that the people observing the laws may become worthy of heaven. So the importance is the people and not the law.

So this question is basically the call of the GOD in your life to understand where your faith is. The Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" (Gen 3:9)

This is one of the first questions asked by God in the Scripture.

Knowing about our faith will tell us where we are. Some questions like have I received baptism, how many times do I go for the sacraments, do I pray for the non believers, do I live an active christian life that proclaims my faith without much use of words, will help you realise where you are in this journey to GOD our father.

! Instructions to Faithfriend



But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" (Gen 3:9)

This is one of the first questions asked by God in the Scripture.

Knowing about our faith will tell us where we are. These questions may help us understand your faith.

Case 3, Scroll 3 (cont'd)

Have you received baptism?

☒ Yes☐ No

Do you receive the sacraments regularly?

☒ Yes☐ No

How often do you receive the sacraments?

☐ Daily☐ Weekly☒ As often as I can☐ No, I do not receive the sacraments

Since there are several sacraments, I believe the two most people receive frequently are holy communion and reconciliation. I receive holy communion weekly but reconciliation I receive every few months. So that is why my answer to "How often do you receive the sacraments?" is "As often as I can." Congratulations on your new baby boy. I will pray that he stays healthy and happy as he grows. The question of what happens to non-Christians after they pass away is something that was brought up in a conversation between me and one of my closest friends. She believes in God and has many strong values but I know that she does not receive her sacraments regularly. I know that Christians themselves are split into several categories like Roman Catholic to Presbyterian. But anyways what we discussed was about non-Christians. Such as people who have worship different deities. (Different religions such as Hinduism and Judaism.) Most families who pass on their religion to their children and most of these children pick up the religion and practice it because they were taught it. They have no thoughts of Christianity or Jesus Christ. So we were saying that it is not their fault or anyone's because it is handing down traditions/family customs. I understand that true heaven is reached by the people's actions but with the ten commandments, one stating "Keep holy the Sabbath day," and another stating "You shall have no other God besides me," the result is confusing. Children are taught that the ten commandments must always be the basis—you have to follow these to be a good Christian but what about non-Christians who are truly wonderful people? This is a deep argument and I do not expect a straight answer but it is interesting learning what other people think.

Posted by CS Falcon

Hi Falcon

 Thanks for your prayers and wishes. I will convey them to my wife.

 Have a read of this article: http://www.cephas-library.com/catholic/catholic_pope_says_nonbelievers_can_be_saved.html. Let me know what you think.

Posted by FF Cedar

Case 3, Scroll 3 (cont'd)

H Falcon May be you can ignore the previous article in the message. I should have read more before I asked you to read it. Basically I wanted to convey that any body from any cast or religion who really want to know GOD, he will reveal himself to them. I believe this from the numerous conversions that I have read and heard during preachings. But most of us are content with what we have. There is no thirst to really know him or there is no guidance. Often many people experience a kind of void or thirst in their life which is only fulfilled by GOD, but unfortunately not many from other religions know about it. And they find other means to try and satisfy that. St Augustine has rightfully said that man can only find his completeness in GOD. According to the catholic faith we believe that any one from another religion, although he does not know Christ, but because he was righteous in his deeds, such as keeping the society laws and there was absolutely no opportunity to know about the Gospel, such a person will enter heaven. But who are we to judge. For example I do not know if a person is obedient to the laws of the society or not. GOD alone knows that. So in the end we cannot really say if a person will enter heaven or not, weather believer or non-believer. The only person who will be able to proclaim that will be himself, because of his communion with GOD. This is why Christ was able to say that those who have seen him has seen the father. He and father are one. Christ extends this invitation to us in asking us to be perfect like his heavenly father. This is why it is very important that we live a transparent lives so that people who interact with us can see our faith in action. St Francis famous words - "preach gospel at all times, use words if necessary". Another clarity that I would like to bring to you is that we are not justified by our actions, but only by GOD's grace. If that were the case, then Christ did not have to come and die for us. This grace we receive through sacraments. Let me know your thoughts. It is getting very exciting.

Posted by FF Cedar

H Cedar I'm sorry on taking a whole week to respond to your message. I have been in the middle of doing a lot of things and becoming overwhelmed. I am praying that these coming few months will be productive and fruitful for me. I am starting to understand what you mean by being righteous in his/her deeds and that being the "gateway" to heaven. And I use the term "gateway" very loosely because as you said who are we to judge. That point reminds me of the conversation I had with my friend because that is exactly what she brought up. She thinks it does not matter what we think because ultimately it is not up to us and it does not concern us. It is between that man/woman and God. I do not want to stray away from this subject but I'm hoping that we are winding up to a conclusion. My next train of thought enters into something that you wrote--St. Francis' words "preach gospel at all times, use words if necessary." That is a very meaningful quotation. It brings me to the idea that we Christians should always preach the word of God. As much as I agree with this and wish all my loved ones to join me in following God's teachings, how deep does this saying go? Does it mean everyday, every moment spread the word of the Lord? I was just wondering when it comes to circles of friends, how are we to spread our faith without seeming overbearing or unwelcome? Please feel free to respond to this train of thought or expand on the earlier one.

Posted by CS Falcon

Case3, Scroll 3 (cont'd)

Thanks for your prayers. To elaborate on preaching gospel at all times: If you agree with me, preaching is also in other words of conveying the message of Jesus. Whatever we use, words, actions or thoughts are basically a vehicle to take what is in me to some one else. So if I have the message of the gospel in me, then I can use words to take it out of me and give it to others. I can act and do things in a way for example showing the other cheek when other beat me on the one cheek, is a way of telling others that I am living the message that Jesus gave me to others. When I think with the message of the gospel in me, then all my future plannings automatically get the message of the gospel and others who are part of it also gets the message.

Posted by FF Cedar


Okay I understand. We can preach through actions and words which do not bluntly say religious things. After all, God's teachings are universal not only in religion. I think when people see you as a healthy, wholesome person who has good family communication and nice friends, they see someone they admire. And through that, they can learn about God as well. Here's another song that's playing on the Christian radio station near us. I really like it. It's about family problems and hurt. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAKBXXz1fo&ob=av2e>

Posted by CS Falcon

Falcon are very much correct. When you have an excellent relationship with everyone around, a healthy life style etc you will become the admiration of everyone. But when you try and be a good christian, it is something more and may be something different. Simply put being a christian is taking up your cross and following Jesus wherever he leads you. This may not get you the admiration of all, but will certainly get you the admiration of the most high GOD. It is from this conviction the Holy Spirit helps us to produce the fruits of love, peace and joy. When people see our lives very adamant at following the will of GOD, eagerness to spread the gospel's message of love, then they will notice or admire us in another way, which has the potential to lead them to eternal life. So it is up to us, how I choose to be an admiration?

Posted by FF Cedar

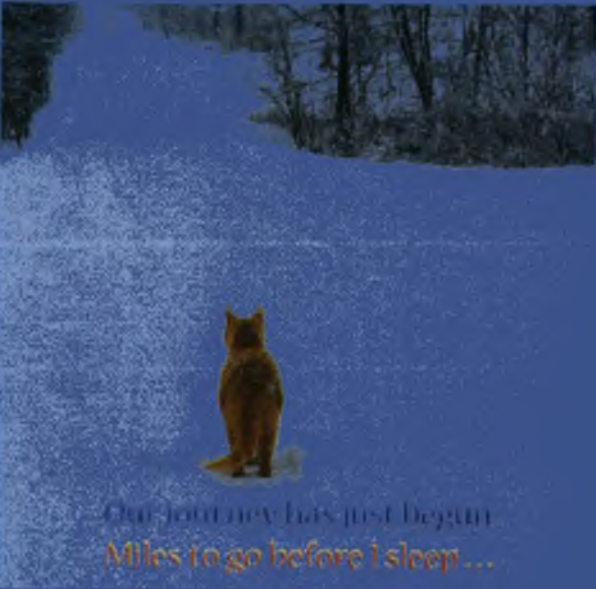
Case 3, Scroll 4



Please tell me more - Part 4

General Introduction

Dear how have you been? How is everyone at home? Hope you are ok with the above question. Please do let me know if my responses are ok for you or if there something that you would like me to change. Do let me know if I am too fast or too slow. Prayers,



We are still in the beginning stage of this journey. Hope it is ok to ask some more questions to know each other.

Please do not hesitate to ask any question about myself also at any time.

Our journey has just begun.
Miles to go before I sleep...

Are you part of any faith related movements?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please indicate the movement or your own Parish Choir or Youth Mass etc. in the space below e.g ,

☐ Jesus Youth,

☐ Youth 2000,

☐ Legion of Mary,

☐ Catholic Youth Care,

☐ Pure In Heart,

☐ Parish Choir,

☐ Youth Mass,

☐ Ministry of the Word,

☐ Eucharistic Ministers etc

Other, please specify below.

Please indicate if you are part of any of the above? (tell me more)

Case 3, Scroll 4 (Cont'd)

I was previously part of Jesus Youth of America, the Parish Choir, and Youth Masses at my Church. Since I am at college now, it is harder to go to my regular Church so I am not as active in that community. I also used to be an altar server for three to four years when I was younger. I try to go to mass at my college Chapel or Church when I have the time. As of now, I do not consider myself part of any of the above. What about you?

Posted by CS Falcon

I was a little confused on where to post so I answered your question as a start to this conversation.

Posted by CS Falcon

hi, thanks for sharing that. Myself, I am part of the jy movement. I try to attend the prayer meetings every week. Its a great source of love of god. How is everything else with you? Do you miss everyone at home, since you are away from them? How is your personal prayers going?

Posted by FF Cedar

I am doing well. I am pretty close to home and I try to go home every weekend. But this semester at school has been more strenuous than last year since I am working as well as taking classes. I am busy all the time and exams are starting. I have one at least every week. I pray every night and I try to remember to pray in the morning as well. I also pray before taking my exams. How is your family?

Posted by CS Falcon

hi, sorry to have taken so long to come back to you. Happy to know that you are progressing well. Everyone at home are fine. Baby ryan is growing very fast. Can I suggest that you say this prayer when you wake up daily along with your other prayers: Holy spirit fill me with your love and wisdom.

Posted by FF Cedar

Thank you for the prayer suggestion. I'll try to keep that in my mind as I go through my days.

Posted by CS Falcon

So what more do we need to discuss in this scroll? Getting to know each other in what aspect? Sorry if I'm a little confused, I am just much better with directions :)


Posted by CS Falcon

Falcon we will get to know as we go along exploring the scrolls, but more importantly get to know our savior better. I will assign the new scroll soon.

Posted by FF Cedar

Okay.


Case 3, Scroll 5 (cont'd)



The Problem of Suffering - Part 1

Suffering in the World

Dear Falcon There are some very interesting thoughts described above. Since this topic is about suffering which is one of the core aspects of christianity, I think it will be good to take some time to go through and thoroughly understand this topic well. Please answer the above questions and shoot some questions if you have any. Also when you get time, read some text on the origin of suffering. eg. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suffering>



! Instructions to Faithfriend

Why are there so many people suffering in the world while others are enjoying a great life?

The Problem of Suffering
Human beings have been puzzled by the enigma of suffering from ancient times. Before the time of Christ, in the life of Buddha there were many instances of understanding suffering around him.

One afternoon his father took young Buddha to the annual Ploughing Festival. The king began the ceremony by driving a fine pair of beautifully decorated bullocks. Buddha sat down under a rose-apple tree and watched everyone. He noticed that while people were happily enjoying themselves, the bullocks had to work terribly hard and plough the field. They did not look happy at all. Then he noticed various other creatures around him. He saw a lizard eating ants. But soon a snake came, caught the lizard, and ate it. Then, suddenly a bird came down from the sky, picked up the snake and so it was eaten also.

- ✦ Buddha thought that all these creatures might think that they were happy for a while, but that they ended up suffering.
- ✦ Jesus, the Son of God, suffered on the cross and died for us.
- ✦ In 13th Century, Saint Francis of Assisi was so moved by the suffering of people around him that he used to live like them.
- ✦ In recent times, Mother Teresa was inspired to alleviate the suffering of people considering them each individually as another Jesus Christ himself who suffered for human kind.

So, suffering is a puzzle that baffled us for centuries which continues to pose various questions in our mind. This question was asked by a young person from Ireland: Why some people are suffering while others are having a good time?

What do you think of the story above and the enigma of suffering?

Thank you for sharing the story about the young Buddha. I've never heard it before and it was interesting. And about the enigma of suffering, I think that is a question that almost everyone in this universe has thought of at one point or another. Either when seeing others who suffer so much or when something unfortunate happens to you, saying "Why me?" I think it's a complex, abstract concept. Of course, by

Case 3, Scroll 5 (cont'd)

Falcon, how are you? First of all thank you for being patient with me for taking a long time to reply to discussions. Now along with the story of budha, let me share a scenario that a priest friend once told me. One day for dinner, mom told her two boys, 'I have prepared your favourite dessert today. So quickly finish your vegetables and rice.' But the boys did not like the vegetables. But the elderly boy patiently sat and completed his food. The younger one kept on crying and refused to eat his dinner and wanted to eat his dessert first. So the good mom had to use the rod on him occasionally to make him finish the dinner. At the end of the dinner both the boys got the dinner they have been eagerly waiting for. Now tell me what do you think of the sufferings of these boys or boy?

Posted by FF Cedar

I think another option may have been to let the younger one be and not use the rod on him. This way he wouldn't finish his dinner and thus, would not get dessert. And see his older brother get it because he was a good boy and ate all his dinner without fuss. Hitting the younger one to forcefully make him finish dinner is one way to do it but it seemed that the fairest thing to do was let the older boy receive dessert and the younger boy not because he didn't finish his dinner. Hopefully, he learns from his mistakes (or his sufferings).

Posted by CS Falcon

hi, that's really interesting to see how you are thinking of a different end to the story. Can I ask you, why you think this sort of end is preferable? In the above story both the boys received the dinner and dessert. Sometimes GOD the father is the mom in the story. The good mom does not like the children to go hungry and not have the nutrients that are required for their growing years. Coming back to the topic of suffering the point I wanted to make here was that the elder boy did not have any suffering but the younger one did. The elder boy already had the discipline in him to wait for the dinner to be completed before having the dessert. The dinner or the vegetables in the story is GOD's will for our lives. The dessert is the reward which is heaven itself. Most of the sufferings in this world is because we are in search of shortcuts like the younger boy, who was impatient to get to the dessert without finishing the dinner. When you look at the elder boy, there is peace around him, he is the joy of his mother and he is confident of his dessert. This doesn't necessarily mean that the elder boy thoroughly enjoyed his dinner. There may be times when he found it dry and pale. But he was determined to go through it, because he wanted the dessert. It is the same with all of us who try to follow GOD's will. At times the roads will get bumpy. At times we are not sure if there is any point of doing all that. In the story above the elder son completely trusted his mother. However dry or tasteless his dinner was, he was ready to go through it because he was sure of his reward. Let me know what your thoughts are on this? Also think about the younger boy. Why do you think he did not like to go through the dinner?

Posted by FF Cedar

Case 3, Scroll 5 (cont'd)

I think I interpreted your story in a different, more literal way. I saw the older brother as more mature and experienced than the younger one. I feel that he ate his dinner and waited for dinner patiently because he knows that his mother will not let him eat dessert without finishing his vegetables. Since he is older, he knows more. He understands that no matter what, dinner comes before dessert. The younger boy is more immature and still growing and understanding. My thought of letting the younger boy skip dessert was so that he could learn what his mother wants. He makes mistakes and sometimes disappoints his parents (or God) because he is still learning what is right and wrong. This is why I thought that it would be preferable for the younger boy to skip dessert. I understand now you meant the dessert to be a metaphor for the rewards in heaven. This way, it is different. It would be best for the younger brother to understand what is right and finish his vegetables. But this story can be interpreted in a different way. We are the younger boy--we always make mistakes and disappoint the Lord but he looks to us to correct our mistakes and not to sin again. This way people can learn from us (as the younger brother can see his older brother receive dessert). And I guess having grown up in such a different society in America, I do not think hitting a child is ever a good idea. There are other ways to show what the child did wrong without inflicting pain. I hope now that you understand what I mean.

Posted by , CS Falcon

thats good thinking. It is true that the ways we are brought up is different, but hey the gospel did survive for more than 2000 years communicating the same message and still challenging and transforming lives. So i think you and i can draw a little bit of hope from that. What i wanted convey is that they pain or suffering in the form of a rod which gives physical pain or pain due to the lack of not being able to have somethings leads to a form of suffering. And the primary cause of this is lack of obedience. Is that an acceptable conclusion?

Posted by , FF Cedar

That suffering comes from a lack of obedience to God. Yes, I think that's an acceptable conclusion. Is that what you were thinking?


Posted by , CS Falcon

I

Case 3, Scroll 5 (cont'd)

Do you want to share any personal experience of suffering?

I can't say that I have gone through anything as extreme as suffering. It's been a blessing.



This is a question which has few overtones. We believe that God is omnipotent (all-powerful). How can an omnipotent God allow suffering? Uneven distribution of wealth, health, and happiness may also be attributed to the work of God. How can this be if God is love and the source of justice? Simply, how can God allow some people suffer because of no fault of their own? The discussion on suffering will be continued in the next scroll as well.

Is the question of suffering clear to you? Do you want to add anything more to this?

I don't think the questions of suffering will ever be crystal clear to me. It's true, why are people suffering—good people? When others who might not be following the true path to God are millionaires? It's the belief that material things can't measure up to what it really means to be with God. Seeing what you have isn't believing... you have to believe without the evidence.

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