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<u>**Re-Souling Spirituality:**</u> <u>**redefining the spiritual dimension in schools.**</u>

Abstract:
This article argues that our present model for defining spiritual development within the English school context unhelpfully lends itself to a binary of spirit-body, evoking potential distracting questions about whether or not the soul/spirit actually exists as a separate entity from the body, a question more specifically suited to the religious education curriculum. Instead, using an interdisciplinary approach, the author argues for an alternative model of spirit-soul, based on definitions taken from the contemporary Wholeness movement, in which spirit is perceived as that in us which seeks vision and transcendence, and soul as that which seeks engagement, depth and rootedness. Although the model provides us with an alternative binary, no duality is intended. Rather, the argument is that personal and community maturity implies balance and wholeness of body, soul and spirit, which is more clearly exemplified within this proposed new conceptualisation.

Key words: spirit, spirituality, soul, soulfulness, spiritual development, wholeness, educational models.

Spirituality within English Education
In this article I draw on Christian theology and etymology, the social sciences, and personal development studies to argue that the model that has been developed to define spirituality in English education since the 1988 Education Reform Act is inadequate, and a better model is possible. The paper does not explore what the new model might mean in practice for teachers, but simply makes the case for a renewed consideration of what we mean by spirituality and spiritual development.

The 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA, 1988. This Act still defines the foundational nature of English schooling) reiterated 1944 requirements that the curriculum was required to promote the "*spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society*" (DfE, 1988 (c.40) Part 1, Ch. 1, Sect. 1:2). It thus became necessary to try to establish what was meant by spiritual development and spirituality. The National Curriculum Council first attempted this in 1993 (NCC, 1993), stating that spirituality consisted of beliefs, a sense of awe, wonder and mystery, experiencing feelings of transcendence, self knowledge, relationships, creativity, and, feelings and emotions.

OFSTED (the Office for Standards in Education, England's inspection organisation) then provided the following definition, which they continue to quote in later guidance for schools and inspectors (e.g. OFSTED, 2004. p8):

> *Spiritual development relates to that aspect of inner life through which pupils acquire insights into their personal experience which are of enduring worth. It is characterised by reflection, the attribution of meaning to experience, valuing a non-material dimension to life and intimations of an enduring reality. 'Spiritual' is not synonymous with 'religious'; all areas of the curriculum may contribute to pupils' spiritual development.* (OFSTED, 1994. p.86).

The latest OFSTED Handbook (updated August 2016) offers no actual definition of spirituality, but indicates that spiritual development of pupils is shown by their:

- *ability to be reflective about their own beliefs, religious or otherwise, that inform their perspective on life and their interest in and respect for different people's faiths, feelings and values*
- *sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them*
- *use of imagination and creativity in their learning*
- *willingness to reflect on their experiences.*

<div align="center">(OFSTED, 2015. p.35)</div>

In many ways this guidance is a reiteration of previous statements, albeit with a slight diminishment in reference to the *'valuing a non-material dimension and intimations of an enduring reality'* referred to above. The original definition still stands however, expressed in the later guidance as an encouragement for both religious and non-religious pupils to show consideration and respect for those who do hold beliefs and assumptions about a spiritual dimension which is beyond the seen world.

Limitations of the present definition
These definitions, like many others produced since 1988, attempt to create a language for this dimension which is inclusive of religious experience and historically approved religious understandings of spirituality, but they also provide for the experience of *all* pupils, religious or not (Wintersgill, 2008). The reference to the 'inner life' and 'non-material dimension' identified in many such definitions however, implies an unhelpful binary of body & spirit, or inner life & materiality. This binary is, for example, seen in the writings of the late John Hull, who defines the spiritual as that which *transcends the merely biological* (Hull, 1999). Hull actually insists that the spirit is not something separate from the body, any more than moral or mental activity, but is a dimension of the whole person which enables transcendence of the human bios, just as technology can extend human capacities, enabling the hand to be stronger or the foot to go faster, etc. (ibid. p4). However, the act of juxtaposing spirituality against biology creates a duality of assumptions which can't be avoided: spiritual compared with biological. In every other respect I think Hull is right: in terms of our educational quest, we must not assume that spirituality or morality or thinking or culture is possible outside of the body. Religious teachers or other authorities may insist that there is an aspect of the self which exists separate from the body and which continues to function after the body is decayed, but that is a religious belief, which, although worth exploring, is beyond the assumptions of the educational enterprise bequeathed by the 1988 Education Reform Act. Such debates must be an essential component of religious education classes (Wright, 2015), but they cannot be our focus in promoting the spiritual development of all children, or else we make ourselves guilty of providing a denominational bias, which is prohibited in the same education act. There is a need then for an alternative model, one which does not unintentionally evoke the religious question of whether or not a non-material entity (a soul or spirit) exists.

Research on spirituality
Parallel with the debate concerning the meaning of spirituality and spiritual development within a school context, attempts have been made to research the grounded experience of adults and children in the UK and elsewhere. Work begun by the Alistair Hardy Centre in Oxford was continued by David Hay and Rebecca Nye, and more recently, in her study of secondary school

pupils, by Barbara Wintersgill. Nye's work, originally under the supervision of David Hay, produced a four dimensional model which has been widely accepted for understanding the *relational consciousness* expression of spirituality found in young children, delineated as: relation to self; relation to others; relation to God or Other; relation to the physical world (Hay and Nye, 1998). Wintersgill's more recent PhD study at the University of Warwick explores the perspectives of secondary school age pupils, mapping the terrain of their understanding of the terms spiritual and spirituality (Wintersgill, 2008). Although these are helpful contributions to the debate, neither offers an alternative model of spirituality to that provided by OFSTED, and we are therefore left still lacking a concept which avoids the polarity of body and spirit, and which is simple to understand and holds traction for everyday use by non-specialist classroom teachers.

Exploring terms and concepts
The secular discomfort with the words 'spirit' and 'spirituality' is unsurprising since the concept has historically always been within the hegemony of religions. But even if we allow for a less explicitly religious interpretation, we can still recognise use of the word in everyday parlance: *the spirit of the age* (what gives it power); *being full of spirit* (being very lively or full of life), etc. Perhaps our problem is that we feel trapped by, and have allowed ourselves to become hostage to, the precise wording of the ERA. It is as if we have accepted that spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) are the definitive concepts for explaining who and what we are as human beings.

The Christian Church has always debated the make-up of human nature, identifying the body, mind, soul and spirit from Biblical references such as Deuteronomy 6v4, 1 Thessalonians 5v23 and Mark 12v13, even though no precise translation/comparison may be made between the original Hebrew and Greek terms and their present English counterparts (Bratcher, 2013). Following an Augustinian theology, these have often been summarised as the physical (that which is tainted by sin and ceases at death) and the spiritual (that which lives on after death, being the 'spark of the divine within us'), known variously as the soul or spirit.

Modern psychology offers a more holistic conceptualisation of us as body and psyche, with the mind and emotions being an expression of the latter but shaped and effected by our physical body and brain (e.g. Eysenck and Keane, 2015). From an early social sciences perspective however, spirit and spirituality was the domain of religion and superstition, the opiate (Marx), effervescence (Durkheim) or neurosis (Freud) of the people. For a time, the combined power of this sidelining of spirituality in mainstream thinking, along with the rejection of the dualisms of ancient Platonic thinking, and the hegemonic assumption that spirituality equals religion, resulted in antipathy to what might be termed 'spiritual' by those in our society who had no connection with religious practice. That has now changed however, and there are increasing numbers of people who are happy to call themselves 'spiritual' but who hold no religious allegiance (Davie, 1994). What is meant by such spirituality is often very vague however, including everything from group magical practices to an individual search for personal meaning or self- discovery (Heelas and Woodhead, 2004).
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One possible solution to the dilemma of ownership and confusion of terms is to re-engage with the concept of 'soul' as a distinctive and separate concept from spirit, and to look for definitions of each which are equally acceptable to religious and secular conceptualisations. Definitions provided

by the USA personal development movement (also called Human Potential, or Self Help movement) may offer such an alternative model. This movement draws on insights from humanistic psychology and Abraham Maslow's theory of self-actualization (Maslow, 1943), but offers insights and motivation for both religious and secular people within our contemporary western society. Elizabeth Puttick describes the movement as, *"one of the most significant and influential forces in modern Western society"* (Puttick, 2004).

Spirituality outside of education
The field of critical reflection on spiritual development within the *Human Potential* or *Health and Wholeness* context is now well established, particularly within the USA, but also more widely. Historically spiritual support was provided under the auspices of the Church as spiritual direction, discipleship training, catechism, etc. However, as evidenced by relevant sections in bookshops, today a raft of texts and courses on counselling, personal development, wholeness and inner healing have mushroomed, for both believers and non-believers alike. These are particularly numerous in the USA, and take the form of experiential rituals as well as traditionally taught courses. Bill Plotkin for instance describes himself as a "depth psychologist, ecotherapist and wilderness guide", involved in running "nature-based soul-initiation programmes" since 1980 (sleeve, Plotkin, 2013).

Plotkin describes 'soul' not as a thing, but as an essence, your 'place' in the world, that which gives you meaning. Understood in this way, every living thing has its soul. For instance the 'soul' of a lion is to live and reign in the African Savannah. This, in Jungian terms, is the archetypal assumption about a lion, but, as Walt Disney's stories inform us, each individual lion has its own particular and personal soul: a friendly lion, a grumpy lion, etc. The lion is fully itself, not when it expresses the 'ideal' of lionhood, but when it is most truly its individual self. This is its soul. So, likewise, each human is most fully human when s/he discovers her true 'place' in life: as an artist, or teacher, or mother, or musician. These are not necessarily career paths - although they might be- and they are not personality 'types' as proposed by such systems as the Eneagramme or Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) [these are two popular systems for identifying nine (Eneagramme) or sixteen (MBTI) different 'types' of people], although, again, they might be. Rather, Plotkin suggests that we should think of soul as how we 'are' in the world; our place, our locus of authenticity or power: if we can discover this he argues, then we will be truly ourselves. James Hilman (1996) similarly likens our soul to our seed or acorn, our deepest intentional self, which wants to blossom into a beautiful tree or flower, but which might also be constrained by surrounding life forces, preventing or limiting us in doing so: the distracting forces of political, religious or cultural systems, or limitations imposed by social, medical or other constraints. According to Victor Frankl, such greater sense of meaning is what we are all ultimately in search of in our life (Frankl, 2004).

Soul, understood in this way, is not the same as spirit. "The movement towards spirit", says Plotkin, is a journey of ascent, a journey of transcendence, while the movement toward your soul is a journey of descent… to our earthly roots, into the wildness of soil" (Plotkin, 2003. p.27). "Both are sacred… in that both are spiritual or transpersonal- they exist beyond the personal, beyond the conventional mind or personality" (ibid. p26): "(s)oul is that sacred Other whose purposes each person has been uniquely designed to serve… spirit is the ultimate Other that encompasses all that exists" (ibid. p26). So, concludes Plotkin, "(t)hey might each be referred to as the 'sacred Other'"

(ibid. p26). Thus for Plotkin, as for John Hull whom we referred to above, spirituality is an activity which for each of us happens within the biological sphere of everyday life, but one which has the potential to take us beyond the "merely biological" (Hull, 1999). Thus, our own spirit and soulfulness may tap into and engage with an even greater dimension of spirit and soul, interpreted by us individually as either an idea or meme, or as God or Gaia.

Spirit in Christian teaching and secular understanding
This allowance for, or acceptance of, spirit as life force or 'power' behind the universe resonates well with traditional religious interpretations of spirit. In the Judeo-Christian tradition the Spirit of God is that which moves over the waters of creation (Gen. 1v2) to give life to the world. It is the breath which animates man (Gen. 2v7), and the wind which gives life to the Church (Acts 2v2). St Paul says that without Spirit the Christian is dead (Rom. 8v1-8): he has only his own will, which, from God's perspective, is estranged and thus 'dead'. To the religious person then, spirit is God, or Buddha nature, etc., but equally, to the secularist it could be 'nature', or the laws of physics, logic, mathematics, etc. It is what gives life to empirical reality, the essence which makes things function as they do.

In summary then, from an individual person's perspective, soul represents the downward, everyday life focus in our search for meaning, and spirit represents the upward, out-of-this-world – or 'larger picture'- emphasis. For the religious person, that larger Spirit is God, the source of power and purpose. Approaching life from an entirely materialistic perspective however, spirit might include the historical or social forces which have a uniting power or influence on communities, or the ongoing influence and effect of language and ideas. One might in that sense admire and be amazed by the beauty of chance or the evolutionary process. So, we might use concepts such as the 'spirit of enterprise' or the 'power of ideas', but place the emphasis on the power of the human spirit or of the universal 'Gaia' rather than on any external or other-worldly influence.

What provides 'spirit' for the materialist therefore is hope in humanity or trust in the scientific method to give meaning and a sense of purpose. By way of contrast, a Christian would see spirit as that which emanates from a greater power, the universal Spirit who gave life to the world and who sustains it by His ongoing participation. The Christian is filled with spirit in the reassurance of his/her hope in this God to sustain and to provide an ultimate resolution to the ills of the world.

Each of these spiritualities has a power to give life and energy to their adherents, but each is limited only to those people who are subject to, or under the influence of, that particular language or set of ideas. Others, who speak another language or live in a different philosophical landscape, will be moulded according to a different set of criteria, and into different ways of thinking and seeing reality: i.e. their spirit will be enlivened by another set of ideals and hopes.

Every individual or group will be infused and motivated by some such spirit however, if indeed they have any life and dynamism in them at all, although it is perhaps conceivable that someone is almost entirely without spirit, what we might call spiritually 'dead' or 'depressed'. Thus spirit might not be very strong in some people and might be overwhelming in others. It is what we often recognise in practice as passion or motivation. The purpose of education of the spirit is therefore

both to nurture that fire, but also to help individuals and communities to seek clarification and understanding of its nature and source.

So, if spirit is that which animates and gives everything life, and soul is the essence or distinctiveness of the individual, then, according to Plotkin, spirituality and/or soul-work is the practice of embracing and trying to engage with each of these dimensions. For the scientist it is the search for ultimate laws which drive and sustain our universe as well as the striving to be true to one's own individual nature. To the Christian, it is the search for God and the desire to understand and to live according to one's own true calling as a child of God. To the Buddhist it is to grasp the Buddha nature which is in everything, and to live that out as a unique and individual path.

The link between body and spirit/soul
Abram (1997, pp 237-8) suggests that historically, the invention of writing helped to establish a break between us and the physical world around us. He points out that the Greek word *psyche* (soul, or mind) also meant *breath,* or *a gust of wind*, and is derived from the verb *psychein,* meaning *to breathe* or *to blow.* Likewise, the Latin word for soul (*anima*), from which we get our English words animal, animism, and unanimous (being of one mind or soul) also signify *air* and *breath*, just as the Latin word *animus* (that which thinks in us) derives from an older Greek term *anemos,* meaning wind. The Greek word for spirit (pneuma), in the same way, provides the basis of the word for air, respiration, breath, pneumonia, etc.

Abram argues that, just as the Navajo today describe the wind or air in personal terms (Abrams, 1996 p.230), so likewise, other early societies would have experienced the elements as living beings who gave life to humans and communicated with them. When that air ceased from infusing them (i.e. they stopped breathing) they were dead, or their spirit had gone to another sphere. The early Hebrew scriptures also speak of the wind or spirit (*ruach*) who at creation moved over the surface of the waters in order to bring life, and then, on creating an earthling (*adam*) from dust (*adamah*) blew on him to create a *neshamah* (a consciously aware being) (Gen. 1-3). In this way, suggests Abram, the souls of people were originally linked to nature and the invisible and intangible surrounding atmosphere.

According to Abrams, changes in written formats also contribute to, or reflect, this separation of soul and landscape (Adams, 1996 pp225-). With the development of written vowels by the Greeks in the eighth century B.C.E., and along with a Platonic rejection of dependence on the human senses in favour of the world of ideas, bodiless ideas and an abstract, rational psyche increasingly became possible. No longer was breath needed to bring written text to life (early Hebrew text was written without vowels, so that the text could only come to life when spoken -see Abram, pp 239-260), and with the development of phonetic letters, devoid of any necessary link to the natural environment, texts and cosmologies allowed for an interior life which was totally independent of the world of air, sky and landscape. It is this internalised concept of spirit and soul, based on a dualistic and disenchanted world-view, which has been passed on to us: an interior world, unconnected to the landscape, a world which is separate, autonomous, and independent of the physical world around.

Within ancient cultures, as outlined above, the development of one's rootedness was typically much more related to the landscape (Abram, 1996): we might think of Australian aboriginals, for whom *dreamland* is intricately enmeshed with learned songs and stories about the surrounding terrain. Likewise, American Navajo consider the earth and wind to be sacred mysteries, whose powers are made visible in the smoke from a sacred peace pipe and in the words revealed by the four winds of the earth (ibid. pp225-239). Today, even for us as contemporary city-forged dwellers, a walk in the countryside, or time spent at the allotment, is said to 'restore one's soul', allowing a reconnection with the earth.

Former societies thus lived a spirituality of interdependence with the cosmos, whereas we have developed an assumption of duality and separation, making spirituality/soulfulness a search for the restoration of that link. I am not suggesting that we return to a pre-enlightenment or pre-Platonic worldview, but it is clear that we moderns must work much harder to make sense of our inner yearnings for rootedness and connection.

Jay Griffiths (2013) explores the idea of such connection further in her elucidation of the concept of *kith.* Although generally we have come to conflate 'kith and kin' to mean our family and those close to us, Griffiths argues that they are actually two quite distinct elements of our rootedness, *Kin* referring to our genetic and family roots, whereas *kith* refers to our place of upbringing, the landscape and setting of our formative years. Griffiths argues that all of us yearn to know our kith, to know our place in the world. In my proposed usage of these terms, we might say that our souls long to find their home.

Universality of these ideas
This model of spirituality, encompassing an upward-striving spirit and downward, or inner-facing soul, and creating a binary of spirit and soul rather than spirit and body, also better reflects the double nature of mankind expressed in contemporary culture, rather than the model offered by OFSTED . The fact that two dimensions of personhood are commonly used to describe human wholeness (such as: yin-yang; male-femaleness or anima-animus; right brain-left brain; classic-romantic, or Apollonic-Dionysian personality; intellectual-emotional types; etc) is better reflected in this model than in the spirit-body duality implied by the OFSTED model. Patrick Harpur (2010) expands this model further as summarised by me in Fig. 1 below.

SPIRIT	SOUL
■ **Vision:** of God	■ **Vision:** of Nature
■ **Metaphors:** of ascent & light	■ **Metaphors:** of descent & depth/ darkness
■ **Longing:** for transcendence	■ **Longing:** for worldly engagement
■ **Prefers:** truth and justice	■ **Prefers:** myth & image
■ **Resists:** death & disease	■ **Savours:** death/darkness
■ **Is** utopian	■ **Is** Arcadian

Based on: Harpur, P. (2010) *A Complete Guide to the Soul.* St Ives: Random House.

Fig 1.

Harpur also suggests that contemporary Western society, and historically, Protestantism, has tended to emphasise the dimension of spirit rather than that of soul; however, he says, because of our natural desire to achieve balance or homeostasis, there remains a longing for an Arcadian idyll, expressed in contemporary interest in historic gardens, old buildings, antiques, archaeology, genealogy and nature programmes (Harpur, 2010). I would further contest that our contemporary English education system, with its explicit emphasis on achievement, goals and standards, is likewise driven by spirit aspirations, but avoids or downplays the more messy and relational emphasis of soul.

Spirituality and psychology
So, if we are to emphasise this new binary of spirit and soul, does this diminish spirituality to the realms of personal psychology, making it no more than a search to understand one's personality, to discover one's true self? This is no place to explore such a topic with the depth that such a question deserves, but I would suggest that the answer is both a yes and a no. Psychology is the science of observation and of critical reflection, but it does so from the perspective of the objective mind or ego, the critical and analytical functions of the self. Spirituality is broader and more all-encompassing than this. It includes a self-critical and analytical study of such matters, but also an application of this to everyday life, an active and experimental engagement with spirit and soul, a living out of that 'greater motivating force' and a grounded search for one's personal 'place' in life. Psychology observes from a distance, whereas spirituality also enters into, and participates in, the living out of this experience in an active, everyday sense.

Plotkin argues that the aim of spirituality is complete homeostasis: that we know our own 'place' (our soul) in the world, that we know how we 'fit' with ourselves and with the greater force of the universe (spirit), but we also know how to relate to the souls of other people, to the souls of other creatures, and to the soul of the natural world, to God, or Buddha nature, or the laws of science, or whatever is our vision of ultimate reality (Plotkin, 2008).

A better model for Spirituality across the curriculum
To me this construct provides more clarity and is thus more meaningful for articulating the task of English schools in nurturing the spiritual (along with moral, social and cultural) development of pupils (and of society) than has till now been provided by educationalists on the topic. Understood in this sense, the role of schools is to nurture the soul and spirit of individuals, and to do the same for the school's own spirit (aims) & soul (ethos) and for that of the society that surrounds them. In nurturing spirituality, schools should help both children and society to make better sense of themselves and of the bigger world around.

Just as morality has several dimensions, including right action as well as rationality and an understanding of motivations and intentions (Wilson, 1990), so spirituality is concerned with both the upward and the downward/inward dimensions of exploration, the search for what motivates (spirit) as well what gives rootedness, meaning and 'power' (soul) in life. In fact all of the curriculum should be asking of individuals and of society, *Who are we, and what is our purpose?* and, *What animates and gives life to us all: individually, communally, and universally?* These are questions which should permeate all of the curriculum: mathematics should seek to understand the power of order and number in the universe; geography and science should explore the physical

influences that shape and have shaped our world; sociology and history will contextualise the powerful influences of ideas and inventions; and the study of religions will help pupils to understand how people have explained and given meaning to their lives throughout the ages.

Conclusion

Drawing on insights from a range of disciplines, a clearer and more engaging model of spirituality than that provided by OFSTED can be articulated. Such clarification could provide new stimulus for the development of this dimension in English schools. Theological insights reveal the inter-connectedness of materiality and traditional Christian concepts of spirit and soul. Ethnography and etymology highlight historic links between community and self-understandings and the environment. And theory from applied psychology within the Human Potential movement points to a view of the self which holds in tension, and seeks balance between, the two dimensions of outward yearning or aspiration, and the inner work of finding depth and connectedness.

Adding the concept of soul to that of spirit, and, understood as defined above, this alternative model of spirituality mitigates the spirit-body binary which is implied by other contemporary definitions of the spirit dimension. It delivers a clearer framework for application to the school context than that provided by OFSTED, by offering a more meaningful construct than the all-encompassing term *spirit*, and it uses language which rings more true to both religious and secular contexts. It potentially provides a more helpful and refined framework for auditing provision for spirituality across the curriculum, and, offering a more concise and precise definition, highlights the inappropriateness of graded assessments for certain aspects of spirituality and of soul-work. Most importantly however, it provides an explicit challenge to our spirit-focussed drive for achievement and success, highlighting that such a one-dimensional emphasis is both unbalanced, and ultimately, unhealthy (Hull, 1996).

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