

Topic 21: Conclusion

Overview: The conclusion of this course brings us back to the beginning. Our starting point was that schools of spirituality emerged through persons who had an insight or impulse that responded to a particular need at a particular time in history. This impulse became a school when others would carry and develop the insight in subsequent centuries. The challenge for the twenty-first century is how we move towards a synthesis of all that has gone before us. The current impulse is towards unity and synthesis. Living within “silo” spiritualities is not the way to address the changing needs of our times. We need to cross borders among spiritualities. In addition, theology and spirituality must engage in dialogue with psychology, the social sciences, economics, and science. We are on the cusp of new mysticism.

The Twenty-First Century

- Today, the human family is going through a global transformation.
- Teilhard’s evolution of human consciousness is unfolding.
- Where are we now, and how do we come back to the image of the one heart of God, the colors of the rainbow, and peeling the last layers of the onion?
- We need to look at the bigger picture and see the universe in a new way. This requires disengaging ourselves from any particular religion or spiritual tradition in order to see things from a global perspective.

Border Crossing

- We are living in an axial moment, moving into a deeper consciousness and a greater unity, especially in the convergence of new spiritualities.
- These Seven Great Schools of Spirituality are traditions on the move. They build upon each other, and are converging and on the brink of a new creation in the blending of spiritualities and traditions.
- Now, we are called into unitive thinking and challenged to move beyond silos and to allow walls to collapse in order to move into the oneness of God. While we may be rooted in a particular spirituality, we should attempt to move beyond our comfort zones.
- Rahner’s three epochs:
 - 1) When the first Jews became Christians
 - 2) The conversion of Constantine
 - 3) The 21st century: Rahner predicted the rise of a world religion.

- Through technology and globalization, we are both brought closer together and pulled further apart.
- Now, we live in a new moment of grace. There is a coming together of disciplines: theology, spirituality, psychology, social sciences, economics, and science. The same can be said of religious traditions. We need to get in touch with our collective wisdom.
- We are called to move beyond an individualistic mysticism to a “we” mysticism.
- We are now living in a time of transition. We are called to a radical transformation through the transformation of human consciousness. As walls break down, we open ourselves to the prompting of the spirit.
- The convergence of spiritualities is a work of beauty.

Characteristics of the New Spirituality

- Holistic, Ecumenical
- Socially just. Peaceful
- Life Affirming, Developmentally oriented
- Ecologically responsible
- Gender inclusive, An end to dualism
- The marriage of contemplation and action

Review Questions

1. To which spirituality are you most attracted? Why?
2. What contemporary issues are most important to you, and what does that tell you about your spiritual home?
3. What are some of the ways that you might move out of your comfort zone and begin to embrace a new way of praying?
4. How might the dialogue among religions converge into a synthesis of spiritual traditions? In what ways can we learn from other Christian traditions and non-Christian traditions, especially Jews and Muslims?
5. Some say that it is a curse to be born in a time of transition. We live in such a time. Do you feel cursed or blessed?
6. The Second Vatican Council called for a renewal of structures and a change in our approach to the world. How might the council be a guide as we grasp for new expressions of spirituality?