

A Unified Spiritual Faculty: the Least Visited Realm

[Robert Rose-Coutré]

The proposition of this article is that there exists an *undissectible faculty* that combines spirit, intellect, imagination, emotion, rationality, intuition, and reason into a unified mode of existence, which is necessary before meaning in life is possible. The *undissectible faculty* is farther reaching than concepts such as 'enlightened' or 'illuminati' which focus on a subset of these qualities. There is no word for it in English; however, in some contexts, the word 'Spiritual' itself is intended to mean this unified *undissectible faculty* -- this particular concept of 'Spiritual' encompasses intellect, imagination, emotion, rationality, intuition, and reason, as well as the more common use of 'spiritual'. In this article, I'll use the term 'spiritual' with a lowercase 's' to refer generally to more common senses of the word; and 'Spiritual' with a capital 'S' to refer to this article's concept of the unified *undissectible Spiritual faculty*.

My emphasis is not so much on achieving a synthesis of the several components of advanced consciousness (spirit-intellect-imagination-emotion-rationality-intuition-reason), but rather to reverse the process of deterioration and fragmentation of the whole. My argument is that

- an authentic Spiritual mode of existence is alien to most people;
- an authentic Spiritual mode of existence was less alien to most people fifty or more years ago;
- authentic, or at least meaningful, human experience exists today in the barely recognizable subset of the modal pieces that we call spirit, intellect, imagination, emotion, rationality, intuition, and reason;
- in the last fifty years, the undissectible Spiritual faculty was ravaged in a slaughterhouse of the most horrible kind: atrophy.

This article presents a countervailing path of inquiry against the atrophy of the unified Spiritual faculty.

Imbalance Is Fatal ↻ Most human experience is fragmented and meaningless because there is no way to truly experience an intuitive lifestyle without a strong rational faculty, and vice versa; no way to truly experience imagination without reason (and vice versa); no way to truly experience emotion without rationality (and vice versa); no way to truly experience spirituality without reason (and vice versa); and the same with any two or more of the several components or modes of existence (spirit-intellect-imagination-emotion-rationality-intuition-reason). People experience exsanguinated approximations of emotion or rational thinking or imagination or spirituality, etc., when their development is weighted more towards one than another, or towards a few components rather than the whole. Removing one or more of these undermines the others. Approaching them as separable undermines all of them. The imbalance is fatal to the Spiritual faculty.

Vitiated Utterances ↻ Clichés such as ‘I’m just more emotionally based’ or ‘She’s more intuitive, I’m more rational’ are the vitiated utterances of an enervated existence. Promoting a philosophy of life that emphasizes some of these modes of existence over others is comforting to a lethargic and fragmented mind. Pushing such people to explore the whole of this integrated Spiritual faculty pushes them outside their comfort zone: beyond their intellectual capacity, beyond their imaginative capacity, beyond their emotional capacity, beyond their rational capacity, beyond their intuitive capacity, beyond their ability to reason, and ultimately far beyond their Spiritual capacity. Recognizing the potential for an intact undissectible Spiritual faculty can be blocked by the very absence of it. The absence of it is a result of using some parts at the expense of other parts, which deteriorates the whole faculty -- then no part is adequately developed.

Leading an everyday life that integrates all of these modes of existence may be an impossible stretch for many people, or perhaps just a very difficult one.

Nevertheless, a Spiritual life -- that is, a unified spiritual-intellectual-imaginative-emotional-rational-intuitive-reason-based existence in everyday life -- is necessary for meaningful human experience.

The Inadequacy of the Semiotics of Spirituality ∞ The inadequacy of the semiotics of spirituality resides in its dearth of language games: spirituality does not hook into empirical experience and sense data as they're usually understood. Commonly held concepts don't come to mind when discussing a realm of thought where spiritual, intellectual, imaginative, emotional, rational, intuitive, and reason become an integrated whole. Naturally, if the unified Spiritual mode of existence I refer to is undissectible, then 'Spiritualness' must be greater than the sum of the parts that I've listed. And of course, it is. But that's as close a description as our semiotics will allow, as far as I can tell. But I think it's close enough. The language games invoked by those attributes, and by the phrase 'greater than the sum of the parts', are close enough to universally understood to be objective enough to be clear enough for purposes of this article.

The Other Realm Is the Actual World ∞ Spiritualness can be thought of as a place, as a feeling, or perhaps as an 'other' experience that doesn't fit very well into human conceptual thinking (but perhaps 'you know it when you see it'). In the common use of the term 'spiritual', it's not necessarily religious or related to a concept God. Some who believe in God are not spiritual at all; some atheists are very spiritual; some believers are so spiritual it's hard to have a rational conversation with them, some atheists are so rationally non-spiritual you can't have a conversation with them, either. When Westerners adopt Eastern spirituality it looks so contrived you wonder how they fool themselves into such a state of other-worldly pretense. But, as it happens, most people truly live in an other-worldly cloud of unknowing -- and are quite comfortable being pretentious there.

Far more obscure than the merely spiritual is the undissectible Spiritual faculty, which fits even less into human conceptual thinking. Yet it is central to human existence. In one sense, the *alienness* of the unified Spiritual faculty makes it seem other-worldly. In a different sense, the lack of the Spiritual faculty leaves people outside the boundaries where authentic human experience begins. Thus, most people live in an other-worldly cloud without the tools of mind to apprehend the undissectible Spiritual faculty, and remain forever blocked from it.

To illustrate what I mean, think of the non-real TV or video-game world. Some people (we'll call them 'Parents') complain that today's younger generations confuse video with reality. The difference between the Parents' idea of 'real world' versus the 'non-real video world', is like the difference I mean between the world as experienced through the Spiritual faculty versus the Parents' real world. There is a deeper, more animated, more clear, and more complex world perceivable through the undissectible Spiritual faculty than exists for most 'Parents' in their

real world, or any other people limited to a subset of the unified Spiritual faculty. This is not to pick on parents, but to offer the analogy [TV/Video-World : Commonly held Real World :: Real World via some faculties : Real World via the undissectible Spiritual faculty].

Atrophy Is the Enemy ☞ My earlier bullet points stating my argument include the claim that the undissectible Spiritual faculty has suffered under the onslaught of atrophy. Atrophy occurred in two ways: (1) babies growing up without using brain cells, which die off; (2) one generation after another now having grown up without using brain cells. The latter pattern occurred from the 1950s to the present and has introduced a de-evolution of the species, that is, atrophy. (How and why this atrophy has occurred is a long and separate article, but atrophy is certainly very well documented in dozens of studies of vocabulary, attention span, emotional development, psychological development, analytical depth, concentration, conflict-handling, logical reasoning, sustained chains of thought, anger-management, composed and civil argument, self-governance, self-discipline, self-control, courtesy, compassion, charitable instincts, articulacy in general, self-generated creative thinking, imaginative variety, etc. -- all of which have declined precipitously and suddenly in the past fifty years -- which coincides exactly with the widespread use of TV and then other video forms that effortlessly feed entertainment to the brain while disfiguring it. For example, brain cells that would otherwise be developed, literally atrophy and die in children while they are watching TV -- these cells cannot be replaced. But this is just a part of the atrophy I am talking about. My argument is that this atrophy and disfigurement extends to the Spiritual faculty that is at the center of what makes us human. That is why we will probably devolve into a different and lesser species.)

The atrophy of the undissectible Spiritual faculty gradually breaks it into lesser parts. The remaining quasi-components are unevenly fragmented, more or less differently in different people. The degraded condition leaves humans unaware of their reduced perceptual and experiential potential, as they grope through life in an other-worldly state of fragmented meaninglessness. Most people live and breathe in this other-worldly state of fragmented meaninglessness -- it is simply the 'real world' in which people pass their everyday lives today. It is the world of a disfigured species choking on fragmented ideas, simplistic concepts, unfocused senses, and emptiness.

God and Religion ☞ I would associate the undissectible Spiritual faculty with God, though not with religion. But I don't make this association in the common meaning of mindless spirituality. Rather, I mean it in the sense of fully developed spirit, intellect, imagination, emotion, rationality, intuition, and reason, which requires effort from earliest childhood, which used to come naturally as a matter of course in most people, and which is required for a meaningful connection to the creative force of life and energy in the universe. The creative force is, of course, God. The creative force, or God, is the energy that generates in us our spirit, intellect,

imagination, emotion, rationality, intuition, and reason. So naturally, developing all of these as a unified Spiritual faculty is the only way to experience a meaningful connection to the creative force, God.

People's Minds Are Windows to God ∞ I have lived my pre-adult life and my adult life in a passionate pursuit of intellectual study and life-exploration of spiritual experience, metaphysics, epistemology, theology, aesthetics, history, politics, psychology, analytical philosophy of language, phenomenology, empiricism, social constructs, and concept formation (that is, my `inquiry into life'). My guiding principles have been to pursue accuracy in every inquiry; and to be open to the results of my inquiries, whatever they may be. Throughout my life, I investigated and studied *the Bible*, Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching* and Lao Tzu's other writings, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tsuang Tzu, Gottlob Frege, Immanuel Kant, Robert Stalnaker, Oscar Wilde, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Goethe, Jean Paul Sartre, Bertrand Russell, T.H. and Aldous Huxley, Schopenhauer, Leibniz, Plato, and many others of this type. By `this type' I mean sources where I found connection with the creative force of life. These people's minds can serve as windows to God. Opening to the work of previous minds in the search for meaning is the most effective way to advance in one's own unified Spiritual faculty.

Feeding the Fallacy of Discrete Components ∞ Authentic Spirituality develops when effort is exerted from infancy through adulthood and the Spiritual faculty is organically formed as a unified mingling of spirit, intellect, imagination, emotion, rationality, intuition, and reason, and with your physical body. The healthier the person, the harder it is to separate any one of these `components' from the whole. The healthier you are, the more it makes sense to you that the separation of these attributes is an unnatural, artificial, and disfiguring malady of heart, mind, and soul. Our language has separate words for these components or modes. Our language identifies them as separate concepts, and thus the discrete language games feed the fallacy that they should be separate in a person. This is a rational conclusion, if the faculty of rational thinking is functioning alone, without intuitive and spiritual participation. They (spirit-intellect-imagination-emotion-rationality-intuition-reason) are separable only when they are disabled. Their undissectible integration has always been an illusive state of development, but not an impossible one. Today, for most people, it has become impossible. In the last fifty years, the several modal components of mind have fallen completely apart. Almost no awareness of their integrated relationship remains in human consciousness.

What People Enjoy ∞ In my life of inquiry, I have come to very few conclusions. One of my few conclusions is that people enjoy their own and others' Spiritual deformation, while basking in disorganized thinking and self-righteousness (atheists, agnostics, Christians, and others alike); all the while hanging their opinions and hopes upon broken chains of reasoning. People arise from logic-neutral pedestals and attack others without composed, civil argument, and without spirit, intellect, imagination, emotion, rationality, intuition, and reason.

Christianity and the Spiritual Faculty ∞ The most vitriolic attacks I've seen have been from secular humanists against Christians -- a tendency that I found disturbing when I largely shared the secular humanist worldview. Changing to a worldview that might even be described as a Christian worldview, I found the tendency much less disturbing. In my ongoing inquiry into understanding and meaning, the life of Jesus hardly seemed to deserve vitriol (although he certainly felt it when he walked the earth). It's clear that most verbal attacks were against the social phenomenon of Christianity, and in that case much of it well deserved. Nevertheless, Christianity (with a specific meaning defined in the next paragraph) is an important element in *my* inquiry into the integration of spirit, intellect, imagination, emotion, rationality, intuition, and reason. However, one needn't be a Christian to pursue the integrated path of inquiry I describe.

One meaning of Christian is being a member of the social phenomenon of Christianity. Another meaning is privately adopting 'Christ-ishness' as a model. My claim to being a Christian is a third and less-discussed way: regenerating existence with the undissectible Spiritual faculty. My lifetime study and reading have found no person who embodies spirit, intellect, imagination, emotion, rationality, intuition, and reason in a more advanced, integrated, and complete way than Jesus of the New Testament. But that's not necessarily an easy position at which to arrive.

Sorting through the destructive Christian constructs, dysfunctional Christian societies, Christian hatefulness and oppression, Christian shallowness and ignorance, I found that all these negative attributes, or negative predicates, are true in almost all cultures in all times of history. These negative predicates seem more glaring among Christians because of the jarring contrast against typical Christian claims. These negative predicates did in fact lead me to conclude Christianity as a method was a sham and a joke played on the gullible masses, like all religions. I still see it being used that way. After having been a Christian in my early life, I rejected Christianity as a social phenomenon throughout much of my 30s. But my 'inquiry into everything' continued, and still continues. I remain open to correction as my inquiry into life never ends. Accuracy and an open attitude in my analysis of results are important to me. Irrespective of commonplace Christian hypocrisy, religious oppression, burning people alive, and other foibles of religiosity, my inquiry into an experience of God and of Spirituality continues to be the source of meaning and of a more complex perception of the actual world.

The Epistemologically Real God versus the Metaphysically Actual God ∞ In one book I wrote, I provide an analysis of how language games interact with accumulated human attributes to formulate named concepts of things, which names migrate from having concrete referents to referents that are abstract objects. One such abstract object is named 'God'. For anyone who 'believes in God' (a phrase laden with many meanings), you have at least two Gods to consider: #1.

A metaphysically actual God whom you can never analytically or logically know, except as a name given to the creative force of energy and the generation of the undissectible Spiritual faculty, which chronologically and logically precedes humans; # 2. An epistemologically real God who is a mental construct -- the result of language games -- the accumulation of particular human attributes -- a constructed abstract object as the abstract merging of idealized human attributes. Humans chronologically and logically precede God # 2.

God # 2 (epistemologically real) can be analyzed and described in detail, with as many different descriptions as there are people. This is the God of rational debate, theological volumes, famous paintings, and religious wars. God # 2 is the God of emotionalism, intellectualism, imagination, of many other isms, and too often the God of the certainty of being 'right'. God # 2 is a web spun from an interweaving cycle of language games playing upon a subconscious archetype. God # 2 is subject to demotion under various opposing intellectual modes of apprehension, such as strict naturalism or empiricism. But strict naturalism and empiricism, the corrupted outcomes of apprehending only one or few of the modal components of the Spiritual faculty, cannot help you understand the meaning of life.

God # 1 (metaphysically actual) is the God of Jesus, the God of Lao Tzu, the God of American Indians who were filled with energy by a Great Spirit, the God of untold humans living throughout history and throughout 'creation' who remained open in their search for accuracy beyond empiricism. God # 1 is the God that people 'sense' through the undissectible Spiritual faculty of spirit-intellect-imagination-emotion-rationality-intuition-reason.

Lao Tzu, the Great Spirit, and Jesus ➤ An analysis of the sayings of Lao Tzu, for example, reveals a striking resemblance to the sayings of Jesus, as well as to the expressions that derive from the Great Spirit by some of the Algonquin Federation of Native Americans. These are examples of apprehending and communicating with a unified Spiritual faculty. These three examples and many others express positive, healthy, and 'mystical' experience into practical concrete insight, guidance, advice, problem-solving, internal and external healing, social improvement, individual improvement, and other useful endeavors. These are excellent and useful results of the unified Spiritual faculty, but the key is the Spiritual faculty itself. Having it is the meaning central to human existence.

One difference that interested me between Lao Tzu and Jesus is that Lao Tzu removed himself from the ugly conditions of society; whereas Jesus placed himself in the center of the ugliness, bitterness, and misery of society in the most dangerous and unpopular fashion. One reason I use a phrase like 'connection to the creative force of energy and life' is that it is most appropriate to the life of Jesus. Jesus led a life that illustrates a complete and meaningful connection to the energy of the universe, to all of the modes of the Spiritual faculty. He brought this advanced Spiritual capacity to people and expressed it in the form of helping

others. All the Christian destructiveness, dysfunction, hatefulness, oppression, shallowness, and ignorance, is not relevant in an open pursuit of accuracy in the analysis of the attributes of Jesus.

Thich Nhat Hanh and Jesus ∞ One great Buddhist leader who maintained an open pursuit of accuracy in the analysis of the attributes of Jesus is Thich Nhat Hanh. He said in his *Living Buddha, Living Christ*, 'But my path to discovering Jesus as one of my spiritual ancestors was not easy'. This 'not easy' aspect of discovering the Spiritual depths in Jesus is a common refrain, which speaks volumes on the distortion of the social phenomenon of Christianity. In speaking of the Christian oppression of his people in Vietnam in the 1960s, 'In such an atmosphere of discrimination and injustice against non-Christians, it was difficult for me to discover the beauty of Jesus' teachings'. After developing deep friendships with truly spiritual Christians, 'who truly embody the spirit of understanding and compassion of Jesus', Thich Nhat Hanh was able to 'touch the depths of Christianity'.

Thich Nhat Hanh found fellows in faith in the persons of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Father Thomas Merton (a Christian who produced an excellent translation of the 'most spiritual of Chinese philosophers' Chuang Tzu), and Father Daniel Berrigan. In a very open-minded statement, and a truly Buddhist statement pertaining to the depth of experience with Jesus, Thich Nhat Hanh also wrote 'I thought that because Buddha had taught for forty-five years and Jesus for only two or three, that Buddha must have been a more accomplished teacher. I had that thought because I did not know the teachings of the Buddha well enough'. Thich Nhat Hanh went so far as to participate in the Eucharist, and certainly understood Jesus as one who had mastered the Spiritual faculty as I've described it in this article.

Cringing ∞ People often cringe at the word 'Jesus', because the conglomerated language games at play in concepts of 'Jesus' are rife with televangelists, tent-revivals, ignorant politics, wars, and other sad truths of history. Meanwhile, it is easy to convince people of the undissectible faculty of spirit-intellect-imagination-emotion-rationality-intuition-reason in a person like Lao Tzu, and rightfully so. But it should be even easier to convince people of the undissectible Spiritual faculty in the life of Jesus. An open pursuit of accuracy in the analysis of the attributes of Jesus reveals mastery in the integration of the modal pieces that we call spirit, intellect, imagination, emotion, rationality, intuition, and reason.

Bobby Fischer and Jesus ∞ When I hear the name Bobby Fischer, I feel an uplifting sense of energy because the very name makes me think of mastery and discipline. The very thought translates to a physical excitement. But if I were his opponent and wanted to beat him, I would cringe and get sweaty palms at the sound of his name. I think the language game is the same when we say people cringe when they hear the name Jesus. If you want to learn from him, perhaps follow his example of

mastery and discipline, you will feel an uplifting sense of energy. But if you want to compete against him or overcome his energy, you cringe with manifold layers of discomfort.

Appreciating the Example ~ It is important to see through fallacious arguments that point to 'bad things done in the name of Christianity' and arguments conflating the actual man Jesus, who was killed trying to help people, with other people's activities: such as the Salem witch trials, the Crusades, the obnoxious evangelism of the Religious Right, the flaccid ineffectuality of the liberal Christian humanist phenomenon, the Chronicles of Narnia, the old Moral Majority, misogyny, slavery, bumper stickers, and any other abuse, injustice, or any other instance of 'Christian people' acting like other people (i.e., corrupt, self-serving, and destructive). After you peel away the irrelevance of anything 'done in the name of Christ' and investigate the undissectible Spiritual faculty of Jesus, you can reject the Christian social phenomenon and appreciate the example of Jesus the individual. But such an investigation is reduced to a banal historical or psychological critique unless the Spiritual faculty is in tact in the investigator, and unless understanding *meaning* is the objective.

There is another world of language games to explore in the analysis of why 'God lets people get cancer' or 'God permits murderers like Hitler or the bankers who propped him up' or 'God allows earthquakes', 'God stands by and watches people starve to death', etc. But that's a different article.

Conclusion ~ In closing, I would say that the most obscure and unvisited realm of consciousness is the realm of healthy development with the undissectible Spiritual faculty of spirit-intellect-imagination-emotion-rationality-intuition-reason. Jesus mastered this faculty, and therefore obtained the ultimate connection with the creative force of life, God. People who recognize the unified nature of spirit-intellect-imagination-emotion-rationality-intuition-reason, and develop this undissectible Spiritual faculty, come to live everyday life with an ever-increasing connection with the creative force of life -- God -- and they have done so through this same path of inquiry (or whatever they called it), throughout the past 100,000 to 500,000 years of human history in all corners of the world. Only in the past fifty years is this Spiritual human inquiry in decline.

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