

ST CATHERINE UNIVERSITY

Book Report:

Discover Your Spiritual Type: a guide to individual and congregational growth

THEO 6770 World Spiritualities

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The book

Corinne Ware is the author of *Discover Your Spiritual Type: a guide to congregational growth*. This book skillfully expounds on the practical application of Urban T Holmes' spiritual typology (Ware, 1995, p.116). The author claims: "The purpose of this book is to enlarge the reader's consciousness of God, of others who worship God, and of oneself." (Ware, 1995, p. xiii) The book is structured beginning with a foundation for spirituality, then moving through the definitions of the spiritual types, the testing tool, the application and usefulness of spirituality typing, a brief observation of historical examples and finally an open invitation and suggestion to use this model in a wider scope of study regarding the whole of spiritual consciousness as well as its parts.

This book has an overall non-denominational approach, however, there are strong Christian references citing the bible and modeling Jesus as the example for the process of individuation and wholeness; this might be an aversion to non-Christians. The Meyers-Briggs type indicator is also cited; it is cautioned to be used as a complementary tool as it is not synonymous to the spiritual types. (Ware, 1995, pp. 32-33) Ware does reference the work of Carl Jung on the subject of individuation as well.

Chapter two discusses the terms: individuation and integration, from various perspectives. This chapter seemed rather confusing and alludes to the two terms being interdependent paradoxes; the parts: each of the spiritual types and the whole: the integration of all the parts. Individuation is described as being opposed to oneness and the whole (Ware, 1995, pp. 10); and, yet, in at least three places individuation is deemed critical to growing spirituality and necessary for maintaining health (Ware, 1995, pp. 11, 114 & 117).

Ware includes two versions of the test which use terminology specifically for Roman Catholic and Jewish traditions. The test may be applied to individuals or congregations to determine spiritual type tendencies. Ware outlines details for congregational workshop intensives to deepen the group participants understanding, integration of concepts into life and advance growth into wholeness. She also outlines personal transformative exercises for individuals or for use as tools for a spiritual director.

Methods and approaches

The four essential poles creating the spiritual wheel include speculative (knowing through facts) opposing affective (knowing through intuitive feeling), and kataphatic (viewing God through imagery) opposing apophatic (viewing God as non-concretized mystery). The four spiritual types are pairings of two adjacent characteristics.

Type I, speculative/kataphatic, is a thinking spirituality that seek guidance from scripture and sermon. The extreme of this type is rationalism leading to a dogmatic, dry spirituality. Spiritual growth for this type includes sensing or feeling spirituality in addition to thinking through an experience.

Type II, affective/kataphatic, is a heartfelt spirituality that incorporates scripture and life experience as a means of personal renewal. The extreme of this type is pietism leading to an exclusion of all others who experience spirituality in different ways. Spiritual growth for this type might be to try new experiences without the fear of violating their principles or being punished by God.

Type III, affective/apophatic, is an introspective, intuitive feeling of the omnipresence of God. The extreme of this type is quietism or seclusion from their outer world. Spiritual growth

comes with a balance of meditation and contemplation with social interaction and perhaps a sharing of insights through writing.

Type IV, speculative/apophatic, is a data gathering mystic, focused on crusading on God's behalf. The extreme of this type is encratism, driven by a single-minded focus. Spiritual growth for this type may be enhanced by embracing the self-organizing principles of divine nature.

How this book can affect interreligious dialogue

I see great potential for this tool to be used as a door opener for interreligious dialogue. Its usefulness crosses denominational boundaries as it is applicable to any religious tradition. If adopted, *intra*-faith congregations can see the variance from within its own system; the awakening can lead to a more diverse interfaith conversation, understanding and acceptance.

I also see this as a fantastic tool to help introduce spirituality and wholeness into businesses and perhaps even healthcare organizations. Business entities may capitalize on the strengths of spiritual diversity; a balance of each individual part completes the oneness of the whole. Ware discusses two requirements for any group becoming whole: "having a common vision... [and] the ability to allow differences while maintaining uniqueness". (Ware, 1995, p. 115) Fostering an environment which allows individual expression to shine leads to greater job satisfaction; which is a known incentive that increases productivity for the overall organization.

I speculate to wonder, if individual organizations adopt this spiritual tool, with its diverse pool of religious traditions among its employees, could it be a catalyst for a increasing dialogue leading to regional and dare I say global spiritual acceptance? Could we perhaps realize global peace, heaven on earth? I admit, Type IV tendencies are now showing; perhaps I should retreat into a Type III behavior patterns and meditate on it for a while.

Works cited:

Ware, C., (1995) *Discover your spiritual type: a guide to individual and congregational growth*. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute