

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES: A LENS FOR RESTORING THE SOUL

Instead of postmodern, I speak of *primal-modern* spirituality, which seeks to link our primal yearnings with our modern learnings. Howard Gardner's work on "multiple intelligences" offers a holistic lens for "restoring the soul" in all of life. Some are highly developed in a person, others less, yet everyone has some aptitude in each. Here's a brief spiritual spin on nine ways of leaning.

1. **Linguistic/verbal:** As a child cannot live isolated from speech, so a spiritual seeker needs a community of pilgrims to develop the language of love.
2. **Logical/mathematical:** Theological insight means reflecting on the *experience* of the Holy – faith seeking understanding, using reason and tradition. Pascal's mystical spirituality began by meditating with mathematical mystery.
3. **Spatial/visual:** Arrange a room, design buildings, explore geography, cross-cultural events, holy places – outer and inner space and imagination.
4. **Musical/rhythmic:** "One who sings prays twice." Singing, drumming or piping your troubles makes the blues beautiful and celebrates life's rhythms.
5. **Kinesthetic/bodily:** Gestures begin a symphony, decide a baseball game, and express the soul: bowing, kneeling, dancing, handcrafting, athletics.
6. **Interpersonal:** Extroverts tend to encounter the Sacred in community, introverts in small groups or one-to-one; both need genuine relationships.
7. **Intrapersonal:** Solitude, sorely neglected in technological society, nurtures the introvert's joy and preserves the extrovert's sanity.
8. **Naturalist:** The Sacred is revealed through the "book of nature" – its awe and beauty, its patterns of devastation and renewal.
9. **Existentialist.** "Why are we here? Where are we going?" Philosophers and artists, mystics and poets voice everyone's questions about life's meaning.

Spiritual intelligence lies in all nine. For centuries René Descartes' maxim "I think, therefore I am" skewed modern culture toward printed, logical, technological intelligence. Actually you may "know" the Holy in your experience, in your gut, your heart – your primal brain. The primal-modern spiritual quest is to link our primal knowing with modern knowledge. Some criticize Gardner for having no categories for "spiritual" or "emotional" intelligence, yet such a separation would fly in the face of the incarnational faith: A logical insight can spawn an emotional high; geographical space can ignite one's spirit.

Creative story participates in all nine modes: witness stories as operas, musicals, ballads, dances, and dramas. A Hassidic story tells of a rebbe, a respected Jewish teacher, who was crippled for years. Struggling to light the first Hanukah candle, he began to tell how his grandfather used to sing and dance. As the old man was telling it he hobbled on his twisted feet and began singing and dancing. And that is how to tell a story. *The body takes the shape of the soul.* These intelligences are so usable because they allow the Word to become flesh in every sphere of life. They invite us to learn to yearn to love always, all ways.

See http://www.pbs.org/wnet/gperf/education/ed_mi_overview.html

Adapted from *What Would I Believe If I Didn't Believe Anything? A Handbook for Spiritual Orphans*

