RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AT THE CINEPLEX

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INTRODUCTION

When I was a child, two things were constant in my life: Sunday Mass and Saturday afternoons at the movies. Both have been treasured companions in my religious education and spiritual development. Mass provides an encounter with Christ, community, sacraments, and teachings on how to live. Film complements and enriches what I experience at Mass by presenting life-giving lessons with values from the silver screen. As I grew, I developed a deep sense of gratitude for the gifts of these teachers throughout my lifelong process of religious education, a process where I continue to learn about religion and being religious in a particular way.

As a teacher of religious studies I believe that meaningful learning does not conclude with the completion of a particular goal. I recognize that the needs of the learner and the learning environment are constantly changing. It is my ongoing responsibility (following the example of my teachers) to provide students with resources that engage them in meaningful learning activities. For example, while my life long education has been greatly influenced by media (especially film at the cinema), it is nothing like the constantly changing media culture of my students. Theirs is a world dominated by cell phones, computers, tablets, and smart boards through which they can instantly access all kinds of information, entertainment, and education.
In this world it is essential that we communicate with students in ways that foster meaningful learning, which includes the use of appropriate resources. Film is one such resource I employ for today’s media savvy students. It engages them in meaningful conversations, often based on the language of their beliefs. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate how the resource of film expresses the full range of Gabriel Moran’s three teaching languages. In doing so it enriches the various components of religious education.

The central question of the article is: *Can film express the full range of Gabriel Moran’s teaching languages in religious education?* The languages are: 1. Teaching with an end in view, 2. Teaching to remove obstacles, and 3. Teaching the Conversation. In this article I will discuss how I employ select films in conjunction with the appropriate teaching language as a key component in Religious Education courses. I will do this by providing an overview of Moran’s teaching languages, a sample of select films, and the process of hermeneutics.

**TEACHING LANGUAGES**

*Teaching with an End in View*

Moran lists several key points inherent to teaching with an end in view, the most significant being the community. He writes, “Every community has a set of beliefs. The family of languages described here is intended to persuade people to act on the basis of those beliefs” (Moran 1997, 85). In teaching with an end in view, “language is used to show someone how to get to an end that is known and can be chosen” (Harris and Moran 1998, 34).

The Rite of the Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is an excellent example of teaching with an end in view. The Rite is a life-long journey of faith and conversion that prepares a non-baptized person for full acceptance into the Catholic Church. It is a communal process of
spiritual and educational formation. These are evident in scripture readings, rituals, lectures, and homilies.

Moran notes, “Embodied in the community’s existence is the conviction that the end is known, the good to be attained by this group is evident” (Moran 1997, 86). The role of the teacher is to “link the past with this end in the future so that the energies of the present are unleashed” (Kravatz 2010, 105). It is an approach that draws upon, and connects with, the “memory, faithfulness, hopes and conviction of the community (Moran, 1997, 87). Three examples are offered to demonstrate the language of teaching with an end in view; they are storytelling, lecture, and preaching.

Storytelling has been a part of communities since the dawn of humanity. Stories are drawn upon to teach, entertain, and enlighten. For example, consider the telling and re-telling of rituals, myths, and moral teachings that are essential elements of religions. The beauty of storytelling is the clarity; it needs little or no explanation.

Lecturing, the second form of teaching with an end in view, has a particular instructive purpose. Moran writes, “Lecturing is a highly ritualized act in which a person addresses the community; the end that the lecture has in view is some rational conception of humanity” (Moran 1987, 95). He notes specific steps or actions that are necessary for a meaningful learning lecture experience. Therefore, it is essential for the author to use sincere and passionate words. Their goal is, “to change, however imperceptibly, the listener’s actions as a human being” (96).

Preaching, the third form of teaching with an end in view is very much like lecturing. The difference is lectures are read, whereas homilies are spoken to be heard. Homiletics is very much connected with the church. A well-prepared, meaningful, and well-delivered homily aims to deliver a clear message that will help make the Good News come alive for Christians in the
daily routines of their lives, for it is in their daily lives that Christians engage in acts of social justice, kindness, and compassion. Two memorable examples of Doctor Martin Luther King and Archbishop Oscar Romero demonstrate the value of teaching by preaching. Both men delivered addresses in times of significant social upheaval. Doctor King’s speeches, delivered throughout the civil rights movement of the 1960s, were passionate and inspiring. His words rose from the depth of his experience as a minister and civil rights leader. Archbishop Romero’s homilies reflected a faith filled passion for the persecuted people of El Salvador. Like Doctor King, his words came from the depth of his being. The homilies delivered by these men provided hope for persecuted people and led to actions for social reform. Their examples demonstrate how the Good News has meaning for the community.

In summary, storytelling, lecturing, and preaching all teach with an end in view. These languages represent a valuable resource for addressing the needs of the religious and non-religious communities. They aim to show people how to get to an end that is chosen. The film, *Of Gods and Men*, will be presented in conjunction with *Teaching with An End in View*.

*Teaching to Remove Obstacles*

Can we remove obstacles by teaching? Moran’s response is: yes we can, by means of a particular language form. Teaching to remove obstacles is a language of therapeutic properties, whose intent is to calm, soothe and heal, properties that we all need in our lives. Moran (1997) illustrates the language of teaching to overcome obstacles with a series of paired terms. The pairs are welcome/thanks, confess/forgive, and mourn/comfort. The pairings are used to bring attention to the nature of therapeutic language, which is one of constant giving and receiving.
Teaching via lecture is a popular academic approach that seeks to provide rational explanation supported by facts, logic, and reasoning. However, human beings need more than rational explanations; we need comfort, healing, and therapy. Teaching to overcome obstacles addresses this need for therapy by helping to heal the fragmented person. In doing so, it frees and opens up the individual to the possibility of choices, which they can make of their own free will. Because of this aspect the teacher and the learner can be on either side of the pairs, and can easily reverse positions, thereby facilitating healing and the learning process.

*Praise/Condemn* is linked with the first family of teaching languages, specifically the homiletic family of languages. Preachers, storytellers, and lecturers frequently use language that condemns or praises. Unlike most of the therapeutic languages, which have a strong interpersonal character, praise/condemn aims to free the person from an egocentric view of the world. Praise looks outward and is concerned with an open view toward the universe. “It simply is the special response of the human being to being human within a universe of surprise, beauty and invitation” (Moran 1997, 112).

The term to condemn is paired with praise in a relationship of opposites. For example, in the natural world we can praise human achievements and therefore, condemn whatever destroys or opposes accomplishments. Within this pairing, there are situations where the teacher needs to condemn unacceptable anger that could harm the community. Moran (1997) contends; “If human beings can be taught to recognize the impact of their actions, then they will accept responsibility, which sometimes includes guilt” (113). Condemn can also be used in situations that are harmful and unacceptable to society. For instance, in exploring environmental pollution, drug addiction, and homelessness; politicians, teachers, and social workers can call
attention to situations in which it is appropriate to condemn the status quo and work for meaningful change.

Welcome/Thanks are unlike praise and condemn, which oppose one another. Welcome/Thanks are reciprocal and interlocking expressions. Through the reciprocal exchange of welcome and thanks, we heal and are healed in return. The pairing is centered in open and welcoming receptivity to creation in all its variety of forms, beauty, and mystery. “It is an attitude that overflows into expressions of gratitude toward other human beings” (Cunnane 2004, 55). Moran (1997) claims that expressions of welcoming are the natural response to receiving all that creation gives us.

In this language, it doesn’t matter who speaks first, the person who welcomes or the one who gives thanks. What is important is the recognition that “we are thoroughly dependent upon the kindness of strangers” (Moran 1997, 116). Thanking is a natural outflow of our ability to think.

Confess/Forgive is a pairing of languages that pertains to human imperfections and vulnerabilities. The pairing focuses on the occasions when we fall short, make mistakes, or break promises due to laziness or fear. When this happens, we need rituals of confession and reconciliation to renew our split with the community. Confess/forgive reflects the view that there has been a rupture in the community and forgiveness leads to restoration.

A rich example of confess/forgives occurs at the conclusion of John’s Gospel. It is the scene (Jn. 21:15-19) where Jesus has finished having a meal with several disciples. Jesus proceeds to ask Peter three times if he loves Him and three times Peter responds, “Yes, Lord you know I love you.” (21:17). In this brief exchange we witness the tender way reconciliation is attained, community is restored, and a leader accepts his calling to love and serve. Peter knows that there will be other times when he, like Jesus, will teach by forgiving and also by confessing.
Mourn/Comfort represents the final pair of therapeutic languages. The language deals with the process of dying. The language of mourning is central to all teaching languages. Cunnane explains: “the emotions concerning grief and loss need to be given expression if people are to focus on joy and sadness in their own lives, as well as the lives of others” (Cunnane 2004, 56).

The language of mourning should lead us to experience the language of comfort, a term meaning to bring strength. I believe that being present to those who mourn, and praying with them, is far more important than words. Showing up is an essential step in mourning and a key ingredient in therapeutic language. The film, The Kid with a Bike, will represent the language of teaching to overcome obstacles.

Teaching the Conversation

Teaching the conversation represents the third of the teaching languages. The first language dealt with the goals of the community, whereas, the purpose of the second concerns healing the fragmented community. The third language crosses over the previous two with a specific focus on conversation. It is a language that deals with language in relation with itself.

Teaching the conversation is based on the premise that teaching is a form of conversation. The language reflects Moran’s point that “to be taught is to enter the human conversation.” (Moran 1997, 124). In this setting, the teacher acts to choreograph, not a movement of body, but a movement of language. The purpose of conversation is not to triumph over an opponent by demonstrating one’s knowledge of oral skills, or attain a particular goal. The intent of the language “is to allow the force of life in the form of the will to reemerge in the context of ordinary life” (Moran 1997, 107). In teaching the conversation, the participants (teacher and
student), “search to understand the words between us and distinguish a way that leads to greater understanding” (140).

Within the third language, Moran (1997) presents three forms of teaching the conversation. They are dramatic performance, dialectical discussion, and academic criticism.

*Dramatic performance* such as a stage play or select film, are examples of the way therapeutic languages function. For example, the first language can engage us in storytelling, while the second can provide therapy for the hardships of life. The third language moves and transcends the community to reflect on life itself.

*Waiting for Godot,* one of the greatest plays of the twentieth century, is a paradigmatic example of the language of dramatic performance. The play focuses on two key characters (Vladimir and Estragon) who seem to be going nowhere and at the end appear to have gone nowhere. The performance, like the clowning of the Marx brothers, contains a constant series of puns, running jokes, and misunderstandings between the two clowns. Plays, like *Waiting for Godot* are well-constructed works that “force us to reflect on the nature of conversation.” (Moran 1997, 132). The language of dramatic performance, as carried out in a play or film, reveals the teacher “as not an individual but the interplay of actor with actor, actors with audience.” (132).

*Dialectical discussion* essentially means dialogue: a conversation between two persons that moves from one to the other. However, dialectical refers to a more reflective use of language. Dialectical discussion leads to a concerted and deeper use of language through conversation and reading of texts. Cunnane comments, “dialectical moments occur when someone is able to walk in the shoes of another and experience the world from that viewpoint” (Cunnane 2004, 58).
Dialectical discussion demonstrates a willingness to listen, not only to the words the other person is saying, but also to the texts of a book. In this language the aim is not just to hear the words that are spoken; rather it represents a concerted effort to find meaning in the words within the discussion. In these discussions, the teacher choreographs the movement of language. A Scripture study course is a good example of dialectical discussion. In this setting, the facilitator (teacher) guides the discussion without excessively interfering with the conversation. The discussion begins with the students reading and listening to a select scripture passage, such as 1 Samuel 3: 1-10, “God Calls Samuel”. The students then sit in prayerful silence for approximately 10 minutes to reflect on the passage. They are then given the opportunity to share their thoughts (if they choose to) with the group. By attentive listening, the participants gain insights into the many ways the sacred texts reveal their meaning to each participant and the class, and most importantly, how these insights can be carried over into everyday life.

Academic criticism is the last of the teaching languages within this family of languages. It is unique for it incorporates the previous forms of language. It has the potential to be the most powerful of the teaching languages. By acknowledging the previous languages, “academic criticism is provided with materials on which to work in the forms of stories, lectures and sermons from the first forms of languages, and is equipped to achieve the distance it needs from the second family” (Cunnane 2004, 58).

A unique characteristic of academic criticism is the inclusion of students with the teacher in discussions that draw upon their knowledge of a particular subject. In this language, the teacher’s task is to facilitate a movement of language by inviting the students to express their opinion on the subject at hand. The teacher then provides feedback and invites the student to further study of the subject.
A classroom discussion in a morality class is an example of academic criticism. In my morality class students, led by a peer who acts as the moderator, participate in a conversation on the death penalty. Each student expresses their view while their colleagues and I respectfully listen. There is no judgment, only interplay of opinions on a very important issue. The process reflects a fluctuation of language through which the participants grow in knowledge of the key issues related to the death penalty. In this discussion, students and teacher are treated as equals who have each attained an understanding through the language of academic criticism.

In conclusion, academic criticism is in immediate contact with other languages. It is primarily concerned with meaning and intellectual growth. It is an ideal language for teaching religion as an academic subject. The film, *My Dinner with Andre*, will represent the third of the teaching languages.

**SELECT FILMS**

*Of Gods and Men*: Teaching with an End in View

The language of teaching with an end in view is centered, and drawn from the beliefs of the community. The language is used to demonstrate how to get to an end that is chosen. It is centered on “the memory, faithfulness, hopes and conviction of the community” (Moran 1997, 87). The vocation of the Trappist monks featured in *Of Gods and Men* is centered on the aforementioned qualities. The monks vowed to live their vocation and get to the end that is chosen.

*Of Gods and Men* was released in 2011 and directed by French filmmaker Xavier Beauvois. The film deals with the kidnapping and murder of eight French Trappist monks by Islamic extremists. However, it is much more than a murder story. The heart of the film concerns the
choices the monks wrestle with following the invasion of their monastery by a group of militant fundamentalists. After coming face to face with the invaders, the security of their monastic life is shaken. Their faith is rattled and personal well-being is threatened. The monks are no longer immune to the violence that has claimed so many innocent lives. They wrestle with a painful choice; do they continue to live their vocation at Our Lady of Atlas, thereby risking death, or leave to serve in another country? It is a choice they made through prayer, reflection, respectful conversation, and commitment to vocation.

An interpretation of the film, *Of Gods and Men*, from the perspective of teaching with an end in view can be a rich resource for addressing the learning needs of religious and non-religious communities. Specifically, the interpretation can offer unique insight into the issues and challenges we face in the postmodern world. In addition, it offers a wonderful example of what it means to faithfully live one’s vocation.

My students are reminded that Christian life is centered on vocation, a calling to love and serve God in a particular way. This is evident in the vocations of matrimony, social justice, education, healthcare, and ordained ministries. For the Trappists of Our Lady of Atlas, vocation was centered on a life of prayer, compassionate service, humility, and labor.

*Of Gods and Men* teaches what it means to be religious by focusing on prayer, and the virtues of compassion, mercy, and fidelity to one’s vocation. To appreciate these values, as revealed through storytelling, one needs to engage in the following steps. First, it is essential to follow the first step in film analysis, which is to view the film in its entirety, without interruption. The second step involves viewing select scenes that deal with a specific topic, such as compassion. I these steps when presenting *Of Gods and Men* in my Franciscan Vision courses, which focuses
on key components of social justice; including care of creation, human dignity, and rights of the poor.

In sum, the language of teaching with an end in view offers us important lessons on vocation. *Of Gods and Men* is profoundly religiously educative. It supports the thesis of the study, namely, film can express the full range of teaching languages.

*The Kid with a Bike: Teaching to Overcome Obstacles*

The subject of this section is the language of teaching to remove obstacles as embodied in the film *The Kid with a Bike*. Teaching to remove obstacles is a language of therapeutic properties. The language addresses the need for therapy by helping to heal the fragmented person, one who needs comfort, healing, and therapy. These properties are evident throughout *The Kid with a Bike*.

*The Kid with a Bike* (released in 2012) is a film about suffering, love, radical kindness and redemption. These qualities are displayed throughout the film by the central characters, a boy named Cyril and a woman named Samantha. Cyril is aching to be reunited with his father who has abandoned him and sold his bike. He is devastated when he realizes that his father no longer wants him. He experiences the pain of rejection, loneliness and suffering. Like all human beings Cyril needs someone to love and care for him, to provide healing and overcome obstacles.

Samantha is the person who responds to Cyril’s need. They meet during a chance encounter at a medical clinic. He runs into Samantha and grabs onto her as he flees the persons who want to return him to an orphanage. Jean-Pierre Dardenne describes the scene, “in this encounter where he holds her in his arms causes her to the fall to the floor, and won’t let go of her. A little like a reverse Pieta, because it’s he who holds her” (Robbins 24).
Samantha recognizes and responds to Cyril’s need. She comes into his life to help him find his father. She also retrieves his bike. Film director Jean-Pierre Dardenne comments “Samantha’s love can save him, and he ultimately understands that she loves him and will provide him with a childhood. Samantha is ready to take the risk” (Anderson, 2012, 24). Hers is an act of radical kindness, which the filmmakers consider to be the film’s central theme.

As discussed teaching to remove obstacles is composed of a series of paired languages; welcome/thanks, confess/forgive, and mourn/comfort. The pairings are evident in The Kid with a Bike.

Welcome/Thanks is displayed in the scene where Samantha returns the bike to Cyril. The pair is expressed verbally and through body language. Cyril thanks Samantha for her act of kindness as she departs the orphanage. He pedals after her and through his body language reveals his thanks for Samantha’s act of kindness. Welcome/thanks is expressed more deeply when Cyril asks Samantha if he can stay with her on weekends. She agrees. Through her act of kindness Cyril’s healing begins. He has found someone he can trust.

Confess/Forgive pertains to human imperfections and vulnerabilities. The times when we fall short, make mistakes, or break promises. The pairing highlights the importance of confession and forgiveness, which leads to restoration. In a key scene Cyril runs away from Samantha and travels by bike and bus to see his Dad. When they meet it becomes clear to Cyril that his father no longer wants him. He returns home with the realization that his future lies with Samantha. He apologizes to Samantha and asks if could stay with her. She forgives Cyril and they walk away with her arm resting on his shoulder.

Mourn/Comfort, the third of the paired languages helps us deal with death, the final experience of life. Mourning helps us deal with sadness and grief. On the other hand comfort
expressed for persons who are suffering helps to bring strength. *The Kid with a Bike offers* an example of this pairing. Samantha takes Cyril to see his father with the hope that they will be reunited. The father tells Cyril the sad news that he no longer wants to care for his son. Cyril is devastated. On the way home he begins to cry and turns to Samantha for comfort. She gently holds him and strokes his head. In this scene we witness the language of mourning/comfort expressed through gentle comfort that helps us deal with the sadness of losing a loved one.

To summarize, this section demonstrates that the language of teaching to remove obstacles in conjunction with *The Kid with a Bike* has profound religious and pedagogical themes. It does so with examples of the three paired languages (welcome/thanks, confess/forgive, mourn/comfort), which can be used to calm, soothe, and heal, properties that we all need in our lives. In doing so they can help form our perspective, nurture us, and make us whole. The language and film reflect the comments of Maria Harris: “Education is the work of lifting up and out those forms through which we might refashion ourselves into a pastoral people” (Harris 1989, 41).

*My Dinner with Andre: Teaching the Conversation*

Teaching the Conversation is the third of the teaching languages. It is based on the premise that teaching is a form of conversation. Teaching the Conversation is presented in conjunction with the film *My Dinner with Andre* (1981). The objective of the pairing is to demonstrate that select films, such as *My Dinner with Andre*, embodied with the language of teaching the conversation are religiously educative.

Teaching the conversation reflects Gabriel Moran's point, “to be taught is to enter the human conversation” (Moran 1997, 124). In this setting, the teacher acts to choreograph, not a movement of body, but a movement of language. The language is concerned with speech about speech. The intent “is to allow the force of life in the form of the will to reemerge in the
context of ordinary life” (Moran 1997, 107). In teaching the conversation, the participants (teacher and student) “search to understand the words between us and distinguish a way that leads to greater understanding” (140). This is evident throughout My Dinner with Andre.

My Dinner with Andre is about a dinner conversation between two friends, Wally and Andre, who have not seen one another for several years. Both men are involved with the theater. They meet for dinner at an upscale restaurant in New York City. During the course of the meal they talk nearly non-stop about a number of topics ranging from the Sahara desert to a cold cup of coffee. However, My Dinner with Andre is much more, it is a film about two friends engaged in a conversation about their choice of lifestyles.

The central question in the conversation is: how does one find meaning and purpose in a world that seems to have lost meaning? In doing so, Wally and Andre wrestle with questions common to all people, such as, who am I, where am I going, and how should I live? The two men address the question from opposing viewpoints; Wally takes the pragmatic approach, while Andre is the idealist. The film is open to a wealth of interpretations. Some viewers see it as a simple film, while others talk about its beauty and depth.

My Dinner with Andre demonstrates how conversation can be a rich form of education. David Tracy speaks to this point: “We consistently find that understanding happens in precisely this deeply subjective, yet intersubjective, shareable, public, indeed historical movement of conversation” (Tracy 1981, 101). This is especially relevant to contemporary students who are more accustomed to brief conversations, quite often through electronic media.

Moran presents three forms of Teaching the Conversation, the languages of dramatic performance, dialectical discussion, and academic criticism. The forms are evident in My Dinner with Andre.
The language of dramatic performance functions as a means for reflecting on language. Samuel Beckett's play, "Waiting For Godot" and the film, *My Dinner with Andre* are examples of dramatic performance. Throughout the two works the characters engage in a series of gags, seemingly meaningless conversations, and misunderstandings. However, the conversations are well-crafted productions that "force us to reflect on the nature of conversation" (Moran 1997, 132). As such they represent key components in the teaching process, thereby offering teachers and students a means to deepen learning through active engagement in the language itself.

The language of Dialectical Discussion focuses on a desire to find meaning through a willingness to listen. The goal is not just to hear the spoken words; rather it represents a concerted effort to find meaning within the words of the discussion or conversation. In the context of the teaching language, dialectical discussion “refers to their being two voices and a movement from one to the other” (Moran 1997, 133). Through this movement participants can gain insights into the ways the language or texts reveal their meaning to the student and the community.

The conversation in *My Dinner with Andre* is permeated with the back and forth movement of dialectical discussion. The stories, statements, and opinions expressed by Andre and Wally are clear, engaging, and sometimes bizarre. Equally important is the attentive and respectful listening conveyed by both men. In short, their dinner conversation is a fine example of dialectical discussion.

Academic Criticism is the third form of teaching the conversation. It is unique in the ways it incorporates the previous forms of languages. The language, like dramatic performance and dialectical discussion, shares the questioning of language itself. However, it differs from dramatic performance in that it recognizes the student not as a spectator but as a participant. In
academic criticism, the teacher’s task is to facilitate a movement of language by inviting students to express their opinion on the subject at hand. Their words then become the subject of criticism. For example, after viewing and analyzing *My Dinner with Andre*, the teacher criticizes the student’s opinion of the film. The student is then invited to engage in further study of the film. The language is ideal for intellectual growth and the study of religion as an academic subject.

In summary, the third section presented *My Dinner with Andre* in conjunction with the language of teaching the conversation. Like the previous two sections, the pairing supports the aim of the study: film can cover the full range of teaching languages. In doing so, the language of dramatic performance, as embodied in *My Dinner with Andre*, offers teachers and students a means to deepening learning through active engagement in language itself.

**HERMENEUTICS**

The hermeneutical process is a key component in religiously educative films, such as the three presented in this article. Hermeneutics, coupled with the narrative and film analysis, offers students a deep understanding and appreciation of what the text reveals. Scott comments: "We interpret the film. The film in turn, interprets us, culminating in richer meaning. This expands our horizons and deepens our humanity" (Scott 2007, 19).

The hermeneutical cycle proposed by Hans Gadamer Georg (1976) can be applied to the select films. The cycle involves three steps: the individual's preunderstanding of the text, the process of interpretation, and the game of conversation. A key point in the process is the recognition by the practitioner that they will never have a final experience. For film, like all art forms, is constantly changing. Each time a person engages in the process he/she gains new and richer insights into the unfolding layers of text.
*Of Gods and Men* offers a number of scenes as examples of hermeneutical interpretation. One key scene focuses on Brother Christian as he takes a long contemplative walk. As he strolls, we pay attention to what he experiences around him; the sounds, movement of sheep and goats, the landscape. He stops by an old tree; rubs his hands over the bark, sensing and respecting its age and beauty. The scene concludes with Christian sitting and praying on a rock, the silence interrupted by a passing flock of birds. The aesthetic experience conveys a sense of intimacy and transcendence, one that is spiritually enriching and essential in a life of faith.

*The Kid with a Bike* presents a variety of opportunities for engaging in the hermeneutical process. Several of these scenes feature Cyril a central character in the film. As the viewer engages in the hermeneutical process a richer portrait of Cyril emerges. He suffers from the absence of love and loneliness related to abandonment by his father. Cyril deals with his situation by riding his bike, which provides him with a sense of freedom. Through the hermeneutical process we obtain a glimpse into Cyril's spirit and emotions. The viewer recognizes that the bike is his escape; it takes him away from his painful loneliness towards a new life with Samantha.

The game of conversation is the third step in the process of hermeneutics. This step is evident in *My Dinner with Andre*. In the game what matters is the play that is played, where the game plays us. As a result of playing, the players lose themselves in the game. Here the film’s text is revealed in the front between the film’s text and interpreter (audience). The interpretive process then begins again, which leads to new and deeper insights and understanding.

In a key scene Andre and Wally discuss the question of how one finds meaning and purpose in a world that lacks meaning. Andre is an idealist who believes that one needs to venture beyond one’s personal boundaries, whereas Wally favors a pragmatic approach where
meaning can be experienced within everyday life. As the viewer (audience) watches and listens there is recognition that the conversation follows a similar pattern. Andre discusses and presents his thoughts on a particular topic. Wally listens and replies with his viewpoint. What the audience witnesses is a conversation of opposing viewpoints, which are balanced within the overall narrative. Their conversation offers teachers and students with a means to deepen learning through engagement with the conversation.

In sum, the hermeneutical process is a key component in religiously educative films. A select scene from three films (Of Gods and Men, the Kid with a Bike, and My Dinner with Andre), in conjunction with one of Moran’s teaching languages, supports this point. The person who engages with the process can experience layers of meaning revealed in each film. Therefore, the hermeneutical process can provide students and educators with a tool to gain insights and appreciation into select films.

**Conclusion**

I began the article by stating that meaningful learning does not conclude with the completion of a particular goal. Therefore, it is the teacher’s responsibility to provide students with resources that engage them in meaningful learning experiences. Film is such a resource, one that can be employed with today’s media savvy students. The goal of the article is to demonstrate how select films express the full range of Gabriel Moran’s teaching languages. In doing so they can enrich religious education.

The article concludes with an explanation on how I employ the three select films, in conjunction with one of Moran’s teaching languages, to address the educational needs of a particular learning group. For example, the film, Of Gods and Men, coupled with the language of teaching with an end in view is appropriate for an upper level college class where students
have attained a mature and growing understanding of vocations. One example is the course I teach on Franciscan social justice. After viewing the film students participate in small group discussions to reflect on and discuss the vocation of the Trappist monks, with attention given to the unique challenges they encountered in living their calling. Discussion is given to the differing opinions the monks expressed in making painful choices and the steps they took to remain true to their vocations. Following the group discussions students construct a reflection paper in which they discuss specific lessons learned from the film in areas such as compassion, faith, and mercy. The class concludes with students discussing lessons they could apply to the challenges they might face in their own vocations.

The Kid with a Bike, coupled the language of teaching to overcome obstacles is a suitable match for lower level college students or parish youth groups. I suggest these groups because young students can easily relate to the obstacles facing Cyril. Like Cyril, today’s young students commonly wrestle with obstacles that need to be confronted, calmed, soothed, and healed. They too can benefit from therapeutic properties that can be experienced in overcoming obstacles.

The learning begins with students working in pairs discuss and write down the obstacles that Cyril wrestles with as he seeks to be healed. This is followed with a discussion on the key role Samantha plays in Cyril’s healing. Students are instructed to list examples of the three-paired languages (welcome/thanks, confess/forgive, and mourn comfort) that are presented in the film. The students conclude the discussion by sharing their work and describing a scene that spoke to them without dialogue, such as the one where Cyril is cycling home to be re-united with Samantha.
The third film, *My Dinner with Andre*, coupled with the language of teaching the conversation is appropriate for a group of students who are experienced with conversation as a way of learning. One example is an upper level course on Matrimony that involves a good deal of conversation in both small and large groups. Prior to the presenting the film students learn that they are not simply spectators, rather they are participants in a dinner conversation that takes place between Wally, Andre, and themselves. As they view the film students gain insights into the conversation skills of the two men, by listening to the different opinions, non-verbal skills, acknowledgment of what is said, and mutual respect. Following the viewing the students discuss what they learned about enriching communication through meaningful conversation. Their final assignment is to compose a paper in which they discuss the lessons learned from *My Dinner with Andre* and how these lessons can enrich communication in Marriage and society.

In conclusion, the article fulfills the goal of the study; *film can express the full range of Gabriel Moran’s teaching languages in religious education.* The article demonstrates how film can be religiously educative, thereby meeting the needs, values and beliefs of today’s young students. In doing so, *Religious Education at the Cineplex can* enrich the various components of religious education.
RECOMMENDED FILMS

1. Teaching Language: Teaching with an end in Sight
   - Of Gods and Men
   - A Man For All Seasons
   - The Diary of a Country Priest

2. Teaching Language: Teaching to Overcome Obstacles
   - The Kid with a Bike
   - Departures
   - The Way
   - Tender Mercies
   - Wild
   - Good Will Hunting

3. Teaching Language: Teaching the Conversation
   - My Dinner with Andre
   - Sunset Limited
   - Waiting for Godot
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