



Religious Education between Formation, Knowledge and Control

Edited by Povl Götke and Johannes Nissen

Papers from the 11th Nordic Conference of Religious Education

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Foreword

The 11th Nordic Conference of Religious Education with the theme *Religious Education between Formation, Knowledge and Control* was hosted by the Faculty of Theology, Aarhus University from 6 to June 2011.

The focus of the conference was on different ways of understanding and approaching religious education in a modern context. During the last decades, the field of religious education has become polarised. While some have advocated that the core intention of this area of education is religious formation and socialisation, others have rather highlighted communication of knowledge and critical information. Whichever position one might take, the framework of religious education is to some extent dictated by governmental control. Different positions were given the floor during the conference, opening up for discussions on what the task of religious education should be in a globalized future.

This publication contains a number of papers from the conference. All those who presented a paper at the conference have been invited to contribute to this book, but some were not able to accept the invitation. Hence, the full programme of the conference is attached at the end of this book.

We wish to express our thanks to all conference participants. Special thanks go to participants who have contributed to this book.

Povl Götke and Johannes Nissen (Editors)

Opening Address

Pia Rose Bøwadt

As the Danish member of the national coordinating committee of NCRE, it is a pleasure to welcome you to the 11th Nordic Conference on Religious Education with the theme “Religious Education between Formation, Knowledge and Control”.

Teaching religious education (RE), dealing with RE and researching RE today can hardly be said to be boring. On the contrary, dealing with RE in the widest sense of the term is challenging and often very complex. In a world where discussions about religion in the media have become an everyday occurrence, teaching RE has become more necessary than ever before.

My former teacher at this University often mentioned that, in the seventies, the Marxist-minded students were critical towards his teaching in philosophy of religion. They repeatedly objected: “What has that to do with society?” Today, it is not difficult to see that knowledge about religion is important if one wants to be able to take part in or decode political or societal debates. Knowledge about religion is crucial today. Therefore, it is also crucial to discuss RE in both primary and lower- secondary schools, in high schools, in teacher training colleges and at the universities.

The current debate about religion is characterised by political opinions and symbolic political utterances. Statements about religion are used as a political marker. According to a survey conducted in Denmark in 2010, politicians were the group that commented most frequently on religious matters in the media, and not just anyone among the politicians but often the leaders of the political parties. Experts, pastors and bishops were far down the list.

Together with a colleague I have been interviewing some politicians from the Danish parliament with the aim of writing a textbook on the relationship between politics and religion for use in teacher education. A remarkable outcome of these interviews is that it is difficult and complicated for the politicians to put limits to religious symbols and religious utterances in public places. When it comes to the question about the burka, the politicians largely agree. They begin their sentences with expressing reservations; personally they don't like the burka, but they will not prohibit it although it may be necessary for some companies to ban the burka. The crucial issue for the politicians is here the question about individual rights. Wearing a burka is a matter of personal freedom and a matter of religious freedom. Only the politician from the Danish People's Party (*Dansk Folkeparti*) will not allow the burka. But still, the majority does not like the thought of interfering in people's choice of clothing.

When it comes to the question about religious noise in the public space, politicians are more cautious, at least in relation to the call to prayer from a minaret. They generally agree on allowing minarets as part of the mosque – again except for the Danish People’s Party – but as mentioned, they are more reluctant about the noise. One leftist politician sees no problem in her children having halal slaughtered meat and in there being shower curtains in her children’s day care, but when it comes to minarets, there is a problem. “I don’t want a minaret in my backyard, that would be equality for equality’s sake”, she says. Why does she draw the limit here? Does it concern the difference between the individual and the collective, or the difference between private and public? Or does it concern something different?

One issue that many people in Denmark agree upon is halal slaughtered meat, in the sense that they do not wish to force anyone to eat pork if they do not want to. There is a clear limit there. To force people to eat something against their will feels like a violation. Recently, even a member of the Danish People’s Party uttered that halal slaughtered meat is alright with him as long as pork is also being served – although the Danish People’s Party is usually against special treatment of Muslims.

Why then this reluctance when it comes to religious noise in the public space, and why reservations about the call to prayer from minarets? Of course, there is a difference in allowing something which does not affect one – for instance, that the guy next to you in the canteen is eating halal slaughtered meat – and allowing something which does – for instance, the call to prayer 5 times a day. The sense of hearing is exposed and vulnerable. You cannot easily close your ears. What about the sense of sight? In Denmark there are not many who will prohibit religious symbols in the public space. Apparently, one can bear the sight but not the sound? One can be considerate when it comes to issues that do not affect one directly?

I recently talked to a preschool teacher, who stated that she forced children with another ethnic background than Danish to sing; that was a part of Danish culture, she said, but a few minutes later she said that she would never force these children to eat something against their will. What is the difference between singing and eating? Which activity is the largest violation of the body?

Maybe one can become wiser and learn more about these issues by searching for help in the phenomenology of the body. Where are the limits of the body? Which senses are challenged the most when it comes to religious utterances of different kinds?

In the answers given by the politicians, there is a lack of consistency and logic in regard to the limits, at least if one expects to find consistency and logic in regard to questions about religious freedom, equality of religions, multiculturalism, individual rights and so on and so forth. And perhaps it is because it is not about these topics but, as suggested previously, about limits of the body?

One can hardly blame the politicians. These questions are not easy to answer. But today RE must take these questions into account. RE must qualify pupils and students to deal with them. And we, who are dealing with RE, must consider the role of religion in society today. I hope that the upcoming four days will provide ample opportunities to discuss these issues.

Finally, I would like to thank the organising committee, Associate Professor Johannes Nissen and Associate Professor Peter Lodberg, both of them from Aarhus University, and Senior Lecturer Povl Götke from the Centre for Theology and Theological Education Løgumkloster.

Diversity, Controversy and Good Relations. Practical Possibilities for Religious Education. Interfaces from Northern Ireland

Norman Richardson

Jonathan Sacks, the prolific Chief Rabbi of Britain and the Commonwealth, has proposed a striking analogy: “Religion,” he writes, “is fire – and like fire it warms but it also burns. And we are the guardians of the flame.” (2002:11)

The words about guardianship of the flame were surely addressed to religious believers of all faiths, but I believe that they have a particular resonance for those of us who dare to attempt to teach Religious Education, and perhaps even more for those who attempt to teach teachers of Religious Education.

Religious Education (RE) presents many challenges in our contemporary European and global context, and few religious educators can be under any illusion that it is a controversial and much misunderstood area. Many of the misperceptions and difficulties may well arise from the subject's history and from people's experiences of RE when they were in school. It is certainly my experience that whether one is talking to government ministers or civil servants, or to parents of children currently in school, they may completely fail to hear the strong educational rationale that we offer for RE because of their own very different and often negative encounters with religion in schools – or, worse still, with those who taught it to them. This is an issue that has been identified as a key current action point by the UK Association of University Lecturers in Religion and Education (AULRE): how can we persuade officials and the public to hear what we are actually saying about RE rather than what they are hearing emotionally from their less than satisfactory past experience?

This public perception of RE may be influenced by various other factors. For some it is the fear of extreme religion, described recently by one British academic as “the fundamentalist volcano” (Chater, 2011). For others it may be a secularist dismissal of all things religious, like the British philosopher Tony Grayling (2007) who has described religious believers as dangerous and “away with the fairies”. Richard Dawkins (2010) has directly targeted RE itself, especially in faith schools, claiming it to be “the wicked practice of forcing religious belief on pupils”. Those who think in this way clearly do not wish to find religion in the public square, and certainly not in the public school.

But the uncertainties about religion and education also come from within and from a confusion of strong opinions about what should or should not be taught, and how and when. Despite some degree of international academic consensus about the purpose and pedagogy of teaching religion in contemporary public schools, reflected in statements such as the

Toledo Guidelines (OSCE, 2007) or the findings of the REDCo project (2006-9)¹, many religious communities – especially at the level of hierarchies – have been reluctant to let go of an area that has traditionally been their preserve and has enabled them to continue to exercise influence and even control over a public and its children that may otherwise appear to be moving away from them. Thus from some faith groups there remains a demand for a form of school-based religious *instruction* (even though they themselves may describe it as „education“) that wishes to convey what is perceived to be religious truth, and in order to achieve and justify this the call is made for separate faith schools of various kinds.

These familiar issues are the backdrop to what I would like to share with you as I offer some reflections from our religious education context in Northern Ireland to yours in the Nordic countries. We may have many different experiences, with diverse histories and distinctive cultures, but my perception is that we share some very common issues in our hopes and concerns for good quality Religious Education. These seem to me to centre on the ways in which we encounter and respond to **diversity**, to **controversy** and to the question of whether religious education can have a positive influence on **good human relationships**, at an individual and a community level.

Almost all of my professional life has been spent in Northern Ireland, first as a specialist RE teacher in schools, then as an ecumenically based Churches' Peace Education officer and more recently as a teacher educator focusing particularly on religious and cultural diversity. The year in which I qualified as a teacher – 1969 – was the year of the main outbreak of what has come to be known as the Northern Ireland „Troubles“, and this has remained a significant background factor in all my work. Unless one had chosen to live in a bubble it could hardly have been otherwise! I would therefore like to use this context, not in order to deliver a paper on Northern Ireland and its complex of divisions, but rather as a way into the reflections, the symbols and the learning that I would like to share and which I think may have wider relevance to those concerned with the teaching of religion wherever they may be based. Firstly, however, I think that must try to clarify just a little of that context.

Northern Ireland – Religion and Education

Northern Ireland these days is often described as a society emerging from conflict, and this seems to me to be an apt description. While the times when riots, bombs and murders were part of our everyday experience are now thankfully long past, there are still many issues of that conflict that have to be dealt with. We have found agreed political structures that seem to be working quite well, but the promise of a shared society, free from secta-

¹ REDCo is a project based in the University of Hamburg focusing on the role of education in exploring “how European citizens of different religious, cultural and political backgrounds can live together and enter into dialogue of mutual respect and understanding” (www.redco.uni-hamburg.de/web).

rianism, still appears some way off. We are still a significantly separate society, with many living in areas where they feel “safe” with “their own people”, with many quite distinct cultural and sporting traditions and patterns and, of course, with separate parallel systems of schooling which mean that about 90% of all children attend schools where they do not meet their Protestant or Catholic peers. Some people are still caught in the hatreds of the past; mutual understanding, forgiveness and reconciliation can be difficult, demanding and costly. Many more seem to prefer ways of avoiding the issues that tore our community apart in the past and may still have the capacity to do so in the future. Their hope is that by *not* dealing with uncomfortable differences the problems might go away – but history tells us a different story. Some people are in denial of their part in what has divided us – the fault still lies with someone else: the British, or the Protestants, or the Irish nationalists, or the Catholics. What „they“ have done to „us“ remains a significant *leitmotif* for some. The place of religion in this is also disputed. Some blame religion for all of Northern Ireland's ills, not least by the apparent insistence of religious leaders on religiously separate systems of schools; others deny that religion plays any part, preferring to emphasize the political, territorial, colonial and economic dimensions of the conflict. Religion nevertheless remains a significant dimension alongside and within all these other factors, even for people who no longer practise the faith traditions in which they were raised. The use of “Catholic” and “Protestant” as shorthand terms for cultural, political and national expressions of identity continues to bear witness to this.

The „fire“ of religion (to continue Sacks“ analogy) certainly warms many people in Northern Ireland; Catholic and Protestant church attendance is still relatively high compared with many other parts of Europe; a comparison with levels of religious observance in North America seems more appropriate. Conservatism in both major traditions still appears to be regarded as normative, including a significant level of protestant fundamentalism and creationism – some of which I experience regularly even amongst the student teachers with whom I work on a daily basis. Awareness of other religious expressions remains very limited, partly due to less exposure to a multicultural society than many other parts of Europe, and partly to a narrowly conceived official Religious Education Syllabus, authored by denominational representatives, that declares itself to be “essentially Christian” and limits teaching about world religions to a relatively small corner.² This, I fear, may be a significant factor in how the warming and comforting quality of the religious fire can all too easily become the flame that burns. Such a fire can certainly be intensified by strong antagonisms but may also be fanned by ignorance and indifference – a cosy, unaware, uninformed and uncritical state that can become the basis of prejudice and even xenophobia. One of the frighteningly unwelcome consequences of the peace process between the Catholic and

² For more information on the Religious Education situation in Northern Ireland see the website of *EFTRE* – the European Forum for Teachers of Religious Education: www.eftre.net. In the section entitled *RE in Europe*, click on Northern Ireland on the map.

Protestant communities seems to have been a major rise in the incidence of racism, evident from news reports, police statistics and academic research on prejudiced and bigoted attitudes (see, for example, Borooah & Mangan, 2007). Some people seem simply to have replaced their antagonism towards a different local community by antagonism towards different ethnic „newcomer“ groups.

Much has been said and written about the shortcomings of the Irish Churches in failing their members and the wider society in relation to helping to build a cohesive community. Similar critiques may be found of organised religion in any region, any society, any context, but in Northern Ireland the prominent role taken by the Christian Churches has sometimes left them open to particular censure.

In 1965, at the opening of Northern Ireland's ecumenical Corrymeela Community Centre, Tullio Vinay, a Waldensian Pastor, anti-fascist activist and founder of the *Agape* Community in Italy, urged Corrymeela to become “a question mark to the Church everywhere in Europe”, in order that they might “review its structures and task” and to set them “free from the instinct of preservation” (Davey, 1993:76f). While Corrymeela and some other inter-church groups have taken that principle into all their work since then, two decades later an Inter-Church Group on Faith and Politics issued a report in which they observed that:

“The churches have been chaplains to their communities, comforters, reflectors of feelings, understanders, restrainers. They have often helped to moderate the crisis, but at the same time have been largely unable to provide the spiritual resources, vision and hope which would enable people to find new paths and ways forward.” (Inter-Church Group, 1985).

It has often been said that the role of the Christian churches – and by extension perhaps of any community of faith – is to comfort the troubled and to trouble the comfortable. In this latter role their representatives in Northern Ireland may be judged to have been somewhat lacking! A prophetic role was often required of the Churches before, during and following the years of crisis, but with some notable individual exceptions, many people would judge that it was not given. I fear that these failures – mostly sins of omission – may also be reflected in the approach that the four largest Christian denominations have taken towards the school subject of Religious Education, for which they have been given responsibility by government.

Those who have lived through the conflict in Northern Ireland have become very familiar with what are often called „flashpoints“. Geographically and demographically speaking these are the areas of interface between our separate communities, sometimes between rival and antagonistic communities, places of conflict or potential conflict – the borderlands of adjacent „ghettos“. These areas were the first indicators of trouble in the 1960s and earlier, and many of them remained highly charged right throughout the Troubles, in some cases continuing to this day. But there are other more subtle interfaces – located in

people's minds and thereby perhaps much harder to penetrate and challenge. These are the political, cultural and religious regions where individuals and communities may find their own identities but also where they encounter diversity – the reality of difference. Diversity is a very real part of our global reality, even in societies such as Northern Ireland which have remained relatively mono-cultural. When such difference is recognised it may lead to cautious exploration and perhaps to the discovery of something new, unexpected and exciting; it can deepen and enrich people's experience and become a rich pool of knowledge and understanding. In this sense diversity is an important source of education by challenging what is known and pointing towards what more may become known and experienced. But it may also result in explosive, aggressive reaction and rejection of difference. Or it may lead to an *avoidance* of the difference, of the potential flashpoint. Avoidance is a very familiar strategy in Northern Ireland as in other situations of potential conflict, but the great danger is that avoidance does not deal with the contentious issue – and this is unhelpful and unhealthy for a society because it simply preserves or conceals the issue until the next time something stimulates it.

Problems with Walls

Interfaces present us with challenges, both philosophical and practical. An interface can go both ways; it can be a place of antagonism, aggression and avoidance, or it can be a place of opportunity and encounter. Like in Belfast – or in Berlin, or Cyprus, or Jerusalem – we often build walls at our interfaces (out of real bricks or just mental ones), but we can also use them to build bridges – intersections where traffic may travel across both ways, rather than turning back. There are many parallels with political life, with religion and with education. I do not wish to suggest that there are easy, simplistic solutions to our many problems and issues that can be fixed by fine talk and grand images, but I believe that we can and should work constructively towards the bridge-building model of inter-religious and intercultural communication. How we deal with religion in education – a region of many interfaces – seems to me to be one of the crucially important factors and one over which teachers and academics in the field may be able to exercise at least some influence.

In the interface between religion and education that we call Religious Education there are many potential encounters with difference, for ourselves as for our students. Some of them may take on the appearance of barriers, of walls, but they also have the potential to be bridges.

A significant wall of this kind is that which is based on fear of the unknown and anxiety about the other who is different. It is a wall often built on lack of awareness, lack of knowledge, fear of controversy or offence and sometimes even on wilful ignorance. Sometimes these walls offer us some chinks – small gaps by which we may gain glimpses of those on the other side – but perhaps only enough to confirm our worst fears. Perhaps such walls are reinforced by the desire for separateness, for the purity and wellbeing of one or more

communities, for schooling that carefully nurtures members of one religion and immures them from others, and sometimes even by a theological principle that seeks holiness by disassociation. The wall not only gets in the way of genuine encounter – it excuses any need for it. We have such walls in Northern Ireland, but they are not unique to us.

Another is the wall of language, or rather the silence which inevitably comes not just from a failure to communicate but more from a lack of any basic means of communication. So many people seem to have lost – or perhaps never to have had – a language of religious communication. The vocabulary has failed; there is no interpreter; not even a basic sign language. In such a linguistic vacuum religious literacy is not possible and so communication fails. There is, at best, monologue where dialogue is so desperately needed. Sometimes there is only silence because people are unwilling to expose their uncertainty. Perhaps this linguistic wall grew from early religious education, in school or in the faith community, which failed to find a level of understanding and then to build on it from there. Perhaps this is why religious maturity, as noted by many researchers over more than half a century (Gordon Allport, Ronald Goldman, James Fowler, John Westerhof and others), seems for too many people only to highlight a stunted growth.

Then there is the wall of introspection – a spiritually self-satisfied and self-sustaining state that seems to have no need of different others. Those who impose such barriers may sometimes be seen to cross them, but only in order to try to persuade some of “the others” to come over onto “our side”. In this walled land, often one of religious certainty or absolutism, „education“ may be reduced and redefined to become only that which confirms known truth; new truth is not possible to those who already know it; all is revealed that needs to be revealed. In such a world the genuine education of others may simply be replaced by proselytization. This, too, is a place where monologue prevails. We have more than our fair share of these walls in Northern Ireland, but they are also to be found in many other places, perhaps especially those with a history of religious, cultural and political separateness, or of parallel existence rather than shared community.

The existence of such mental and spiritual walls can often be self-sustaining. Attempts to challenge them, to deconstruct them, to replace them with bridges, can lead to an intensified defensiveness and to the wall being reinforced. Religious hierarchies sometimes react in this way, as when the existence of religiously separate schooling in Northern Ireland and elsewhere is charged with some responsibility for creating or sustaining divisions in society. When taking part in a Toledo Guidelines seminar in Sarajevo to explore the possibilities for professionally oriented RE that might help to contribute to social cohesion amidst the divisions of the Balkans I was very conscious of the role that several church representatives took, as “guardians of the gate” in order to protect their interests that they perceived to be under threat – much to the intense irritation of many of the teachers present.

Possibilities with Bridges

Dare we see the task of education – and of Religious Education in particular – as a means of bridge-building, a response to the walls that threaten understanding, communication and community? This is not to suggest naively that RE, or even just education in general, is some kind of simplistic panacea for all the ills of society. But it is to suggest that there is an important contribution to be made from within the concerns and skills that we collectively represent. Some of this is distinctive to Religious Education, but to some degree we do of course share this with other curriculum areas, under various names in different countries – with Citizenship, Ethics, Personal Development, Social Education, Human Rights Education, Peace Education ... however they may be termed or grouped in any particular place.

As religious educators I believe that we have particular access to certain bridge-building tools to enable us to work at our task of deconstructing walls; they are also the tools that we will seek to pass on to those whom we teach.

The key bridge across the wall built on fear of the other is surely one of encounter. I believe that one of the most important tasks of the religious educator in school or university is to create many opportunities for encounter with difference – ideally on a person to person basis, not just through didactic teaching or text books. Educational encounters are of necessity meetings between equals. Some years ago, having led a series of joint visits to local churches by students teachers specialising in RE from a Catholic teacher training college along with my own equivalent group of largely Protestant students, I was taken by surprise when the Protestant students – most of them conservative evangelical in persuasion – came to tell me that they had been embarrassed by having to talk about religion with their Catholic counterparts. They were quite used to talking about religion amongst themselves, or when engaged in proselytization, but to discuss religion as equals made them feel deeply uncomfortable! Yet surely there is no cure for this except for further encounter. This is no less true when the agenda is one of Christians and Muslims, religious believers and humanists or any other combination of differences. We can be told by others what people believe, of course, but this is no substitute for genuine meeting and learning that – just like us – the different others are themselves diverse in their beliefs, experiences and practices! Our experience in Northern Ireland, where there have been a great many cross-community encounters of a rather superficial kind, apparently lacking any real impact, is that when people do come together for encounter it must involve the opportunity to share perceptions and overtly explore the areas of difference and disagreement, not just of commonality, a point to which I will return shortly.

The educator in the church or other faith community has a somewhat different task, of course – that of building people up in their faith. But I believe that in our times the wise faith community will also look outwards and seek those bridges of encounter with difference in order to build a stronger basis for the faith of the members of their community. In many countries the educative role of the faith community has been too easily confused and

entangled with the religious education role of the school, often very unhelpfully. But in this respect their needs are very similar. A mature understanding of faith, whether of the believer or the observer, requires robust engagement with diversity.

Religious educators over recent decades have debated much over the value of a phenomenological approach to the teaching of religion in publicly funded schools, and strong positions have been taken on both sides. A capacity to stand back and bracket personal beliefs can be very helpful in certain contexts, for the teacher and learner alike, but it must not – indeed cannot – be one of remote disengagement or neutrality, even if this were possible. In recent decades there has been growing awareness of a model that emerged from England in the late 1970s – the concepts of *Learning About Religion* and *Learning From Religion* (see, for instance, Grimmitt, 2000) – and in my view these are helpful complementary dimensions of the process of understanding. The phenomenological approach is but one of several tools in the equipment of the religious educator, sometimes to be selected though with care. I believe it must be balanced by the humanity of openness and encounter.

When people encounter each other, however, there must be some knowledge and a language with which to learn and explore it. These are also major tasks of the religious educator. Which comes first – some knowledge or some language and vocabulary? I think the question itself points to the necessity for both to be seen as essential partners in the long-term process of developing religious awareness and understanding. In order to make sense of the often and perhaps necessarily random pieces of information, knowledge, religious narratives and stories that children and young people gather over time there has to be some capacity to make sense, to develop concepts. It may be rather like a jigsaw puzzle where there are always missing pieces and no clear picture to guide us, but with developing skill we can at least begin to see some of the connections. This is why those who argue that small children are too young to learn about religion are missing the point – though they are perhaps right in directing us to think very carefully about *how* young children are taught. Research in Northern Ireland (Connolly et al, 2002) has demonstrated that pre-school children are capable of being aware of cultural and religious symbols and differences to the extent that they begin to attach negative value to that which is different. Professor Paul Connolly (2002) has commented that if such trends are not recognised and dealt with by positive interventions they can and do often lead to overt racism and sectarianism by the teenage years. We need to invest significant time and effort into the religious education of young children, taking note of research on children's attitude development, as well as the studies on the religious education and faith and spiritual development of young children by Jerome Berryman, James Fowler, David Hay and others.

Creative Controversy

As children grow older, into later childhood and adolescence, they will also increasingly need resources to help them deal with different opinions, conflicting truth claims and con-

troversial issues. If we are to help our students of whatever age group to negotiate through the walls and onto the bridges then it is crucial that we help them to develop skills in dealing constructively with controversy. I believe that such skills are among the most vital of educational tools and essential equipment for the language of religious discussion. Far from being something to be avoided, I believe that the focus on controversial issues is an essential part of the educational process; in the words of David Bridges (1986):

“... Controversy is the dynamic, the growth point of any area of knowledge. Any intellectual domain which fails to generate it must soon atrophy and die”

Some of the most effective and important work in cross-community and intercultural dialogue in Northern Ireland has been based on processes of capacity building among teachers and students in relation to approaching controversial issues, including in ecumenical and inter-religious contexts. To some degree this is a counter-intuitive process, requiring those taking part to highlight their *differences*, not just their similarities, in order to build trust and confidence in recognising and understanding different and even conflicting points of view. If we only discuss these kinds of issues with those with whom we already agree, then we limit everyone's capacity for deeper learning. This approach seeks to build up an honest expression of personal views, skills in listening to others and open enquiry regarding their beliefs, symbols and practices. Much has been done in this context by examining contentious political and cultural symbols, and I have regularly adapted this for religious and inter-religious learning with my own students by means of the use of diverse artefacts from Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh traditions. All of this work requires time to build up trust and the development of positive human relationships.

Looking Outward

There are other bridges to religious understanding which (to extend the metaphor just a little uncomfortably!) criss-cross and intertwine with all the others. Among these are the bridges of global humanitarian awareness and concern. The insular and inward-looking walls that have so limited some of our communities in the past are challenged and diminished by an increased sense of global citizenship, by a recognition of global neighbours and strangers, by a sense of global inequalities and injustice and the cry of the poor for fairness and human rights. Young people are often quick to sense these very human global issues and to gain a sense of perspective from them. Religious Education has potentially a great deal to contribute to this kind of ethical world view so long as it is outward-looking rather than merely self-contemplating. In this regard we owe much to the work of Hans Kung and others who have inspired and supported work in the field of a global ethic (see, for example, Küng, 1997).

Through these kinds of processes is it then possible to contribute positively towards improved individual and community relationships, involving mutual understanding and re-

spect? I believe that such a purpose is both desirable and possible, and that good quality RE can help to create the conditions in which good relations can be established, though we should be realistic about the degree to which educators alone can contribute meaningfully to it. One of the realities of education, at whatever level, is that we seldom have the opportunity to see end products and outcomes beyond the short term. Just occasionally we observe moments of insight, the light of new understanding, the readiness to open up and share, the acknowledgement of thinking outside previously confined boxes – and these may be the little encouragements that we need to keep us focused. It is a process of planting seeds – mustard seeds indeed!

Teaching, Formation and Transformation

The teacher of religious education has indeed an awesome set of responsibilities. She or he must be a role model – but in the public school this should not be a model of „right belief or of exemplary devotion or faithfulness, for these are qualities that we may not demand of educators in the public sphere (however much they may be true in a teacher’s personal life). Rather, the model must be one of concern for critical understanding, of openness to new learning, of integrity of purpose, of readiness to deal with difference and controversy, of sensitivity to the diverse but universal journey of human awareness. In this sense the teacher himself or herself will become a crucial bridge for many learners, indicating not what our students should believe but rather how they may begin to discover their own path to awareness and spiritual understanding, with the potential for this to lead to the formation of personal values and beliefs.

What I have tried to describe is a process of *doing* Religious Education, based on some insights and experiences from my own situation. This is not to suggest that this is the only way of doing RE, or to suggest that we have succeeded in these processes in Northern Ireland; we still have a great deal to learn and a long way to go. Nor is this unique to any particular situation, as many of these insights have been gleaned from a wide range of sources, globally as well as locally, and the learning continues. But I do want to affirm what I believe to be the important potential of Religious Education to work creatively and powerfully in the role of building educational bridges to mutual understanding and a greater sense of human community. This is a Religious Education that does not see itself in the more traditional role of nurturing, affirming or defending faith; rather it is a holistic lifelong learning process that involves challenge, questioning, disturbance, critical engagement, a sharpening of personal faculties and human encounter with different others. And in this sense it is truly about humanness and formation; and it may even be transformative.

Shalom

When I worked as an ecumenical peace education officer in the 1980s and early 90s much of my work became based around the many-layered concept of the Hebrew word for peace:

Shalom – to work out what it meant for a divided society like Northern Ireland and in particular for education. I think this gave me an outlook and an approach that became very helpful as I moved on in to my next, and current, role in teacher education. I understood *shalom* as being about well-being and good relationships, about the healthy society based on justice, about a security built not on constructing high walls or barriers but on reaching out towards others. I learned the value of process through the saying sometimes attributed to Gandhi: “There is no way to peace; peace is the way!” This helps me to make sense of what is happening in Northern Ireland and it also helps me to understand what RE can contribute to such a process; it is, I believe, part of the process. I doubt if I have proposed anything in this paper that is new to most religious educators, but I hope that at least some of the things I have shared may be helpful in encouraging us that the processes of RE, in our different contexts and concerns, are eminently worthwhile and valuable.

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Response to Norman Richardson

Carin Laudrup

Introduction

In his lecture Norman Richardson, who teaches religious education (RE) to future teachers in Northern Ireland, raises several questions which are relevant not only to the situation in his own country which is recovering from thirty years of internal strife (The Troubles) but are core issues in the teaching of religion in all our countries. His lecture is primarily based on many years' experience in this field. Taking a bird's eye view this response will look at some of the focus points from a theoretical perspective through the eyes of a Danish sociologist of religion.

Walls and bridges

RE is a bone of contention no matter how, where and when we look at it. Believers as well as non-believers have strong views on how this subject ought to be taught and there is no trust lost on either side. Without exaggerating it is fair to say that there is a certain amount of trench digging. With „the Troubles“ as the backdrop Richardson has made the core issues abundantly clear. Truth claims, which are essential to the self understanding within religious communities, can build up walls behind which members hide, and thus they become obstacles which make it very difficult, not to say practically impossible, to promote the concept of “education for mutual understanding” (EMU). Walls are built so that (constructed) *ethnie* (Smith 1986) identities can be transmitted to future generations so that they internalize an essentialist belief in an immutable common religion, culture, history and language.

The American professor of social science Robert N. Putnam (Putnam: 1999) does not talk about walls, but prefers the more active word „bonding“ which he characterizes as a model of confrontation and exclusion. There are strong ties within the local network and people who bond tend to be unapproachable and secretive with limited resources and a strong local identity. Bridges serve as symbols of an alternative to bonding to both Richardson and Putnam. „Bridging“ in Putnam's terminology is a model of inclusive, cooperating open networks, with weak ties between the local network and the distant surrounding society. People who bridge meet across the divide of ethnicity, gender, and class. Putnam views these two models in the perspective of social cohesion, and based on vast statistical evidence concludes that bridging is what promotes the desired cohesion. In a more recent report from work in progress Putnam distinguishes between what happens with integration in the long and the short run. In the short run people tend to hunker like a turtle when they

are confronted with the challenges of people who are different from „us“. In the long run, however, it is essential to acknowledge that “...diversity itself can only be conceived in terms of socially constructed identities” (Putnam 2007: 159) and that “... .. it seems important to encourage permeable, syncretic, hyphenated identities; identities that enable previously separate ethnic groups to see themselves, in part, as members of a shared group with a shared identity” (ibid: 161) “..... my hunch is that at the end we shall see that the challenge is best met not by making „them“ like „us“, but rather by creating a new, more capacious sense of „we“, a reconstruction of diversity that does not bleach out ethnic specificities, but creates overarching identities that ensure that those specificities do not trigger the allergic, „hunker down“ reaction” (ibid. p 164).). For teachers of RE Putnam’s conclusion can serve as a guideline. It expresses the same view as Richardson does with his focus on Education for Mutual Understanding. This idea also brings to mind Emile Durkheim’s one hundred year old vision of a world religion, “the cult of man”, “moral individualism” and “the religion of humanity” since, according to Durkheim’s prediction, individuals in modern society will have nothing in common among themselves except their humanity. Durkheim was concerned with the moral functions of a democratic state. “This modern form of individualism originates from a desire for greater justice and from „sympathy for all that is human“. [] He even admits the possibility that the religion of humanity would eventually replace all other religions” (Cristi 2009: 58-59). Durkheim was quite ambiguous here. On the one hand he saw the growing German nationalism which led to World War One as a threat to modern societies, and on the other hand he acknowledged that French nationalism was a necessary step on the road towards the universality and universal religion which he saw as the moral foundation of future societies, because in the short run nationalism could strengthen the social cohesion and thus replace the function of religion which he had found in mechanic societies.

Deliberative democracy

A different approach to analyzing key issues raised by Richardson, issues which are basically questions of how modern heterogeneous societies work and how teachers of RE can contribute to educating pupils so that they become open minded democratic citizens, can be found with the German sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas and his thoughts on deliberative democracy (Eriksen & Weigård 2003: 170, 192-193). Like many other sociologists, particularly towards the end of the previous century, Habermas thought that religion was or would soon be a thing of the past and would not survive modern technological pluralistic societies. Habermas later changed his perspective so that he now includes faith groups as equal partners in the process of deliberative democracy. However, Habermas states, these groups must take part on equal terms with their non- religious fellow citizens in building democratic societies. This entails that no one person or religious organisation can hold an „absolute truth“, as this insistence on holding truth claims would preclude any

conceivable deliberation and as such does not have any place in a democracy. Talking about defining the ethics of citizenship Habermas states that “.. for all their ongoing dissent on questions of world views and religious doctrines, citizens are meant to respect one another as free and equal members of their political community” (Habermas 2006:5).

Another of Habermas’ concepts is that of constitutional patriotism understood as “a post-national, universalist form of democratic political allegiance” (Müller 2006: 278). Habermas is not alone in this way of thinking, a way beyond national or sectarian bonding, but he has promoted the concept perhaps more ardently than many other philosophers. In this perspective RE can contribute to an understanding of cosmopolitanism or bridging. This will require an acceptance of diversity which is another one of the key words in Richardson’s contribution to good relationships. Diversity is not just another word which replaces multiculturalism, but it is another way of conceptualizing modern societies which is important in order to move beyond an essentialist concept of culture.

Mind forged manacles

This image, borrowed from the English poet William Blake, illustrates what teachers are dealing with when they teach RE, and teachers of RE in Northern Ireland are not alone in facing these issues. (Religious) Education is a prime factor in shaping and constructing young people’s minds. Education, as part of their socialization, moulds pupils’ identities no matter whether that identity is a national, a political or a religious one. In a European context it is worth noting the importance the Council of Europe, with its 47 member states, attributes to RE as a means of inclusion (Keast 2007). Unlike our Scandinavian neighbours, RE in Denmark is synonymous with Knowledge of Christianity in the primary and lower secondary school system and is thus rather reminiscent of the situation in Northern Ireland. Many Danes like to think of themselves as modern and open minded and yet have no second thoughts about what in actual fact becomes „bonding“ or „wall building“ in relation to the ethnic and/or religious minorities in the country, who have the possibility of „opting out“ from these lessons, which adds to a feeling that this is irrelevant for them, thereby implying that „we“ the Danes are Christians. In the last two years, in grades eight and nine, other religions are introduced in the lessons, but the subject is still called Knowledge of Christianity. There is some movement towards the models of other (Scandinavian) countries. In the last couple of years some Danish schools are beginning to follow the British example of teaching citizenship as a way of counteracting the narrow Danish RE, in other words they are promoting „bridging“. Research into the implication and the various constructions of citizenship has been going on for a number of years at many universities. “Bridging” has become more or less a „buzzword“ in sociological and pedagogical academia, but nevertheless it is a highly relevant topic together with research into the construction of identities in post national societies such as e.g. European identities

(Rumford & Delanty 2005). Initiatives such as these add to the awareness of the meaning and advantages of „bridging“ rather than „bonding“.

In the Danish upper secondary school the subject taught is called religion, it is non-confessional and includes knowledge of other religions. How this affects the attitude to and understanding of religion can be found in a Danish study presented at the NCRE Umeå Conference¹ which concludes: “the present study argues that a broadly based RE in a neutral space where pupils can confront other religious views than their own can enhance diversity and promote open-mindedness which is one of the targets of the Council of Europe” (Andersen & Laudrup 2009:10).

Conclusion

The EMU project in Northern Ireland can serve as an inspiration for RE teachers in Denmark as a way of tackling what some teachers and politicians regard as a problem in a society „confronted with“ diverse cultures and religious systems. Inspired by ongoing research, such as Norman Richardson’s Education for Mutual Understanding, RE teachers, in their professional roles as teachers, might learn to regard religions as cultural resources rather than as bearers of absolute truths, and a religious identity as but one of several other constructed identities, in other words they leave any personal religious conviction out side the class room. If ideas and models such as the ones introduced in Richardson’s key note speech and this response to it can inspire teachers, teaching RE could serve the purpose of enhancing pupils’ democratic understanding and in that way they will be learning from religion by learning about religion.

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Religious Education in the Nordic Public Sphere, Norway

Ida Marie Høeg

Tolerance and Egalitarianism

Norwegians are becoming more tolerant of religious and world view differences. From 1992 up to now the tendency to accept foreign neighbours and neighbours of a different religion is increasing. Also when it comes to marriage Norwegians appear to be tolerant. 85 percent said in 2008 that they would accept a person from different religion marrying a relative. While tolerance for other religions is growing, there has been a slow but steady increase in scepticism of the privileges the Norwegian Church enjoys as a result of its status as the religious community of the majority, with the Lutheran confession as the state religion. There is a growing perception among Norwegians that religious communities and philosophy of life institutions should have the same status as the Norwegian Church, an attitude that reflects strong egalitarian impulses in Norwegian culture.

Decline in Christian Upbringing

The strong egalitarian attitude in Norwegian culture may be an expression of the fact that ethnic Norwegians have become more tolerant of other religions, but also that ethnic Norwegians have become less religious and feel less obligated in their daily existence to live according to a religious faith and practice. If we look at the support for Christian faith among the members of the Norwegian Church, they are letting go of more and more of their ties to the church and faith. Fewer attend church services and fewer believe in Christian dogma. When many adults have less contact with organised religion, their children also have looser bonds. In a survey of members of the Norwegian Church in 2000, only a third of the parents report that they want help from the church to give their children a Christian upbringing (Høeg 2001:91). In this situation it is important to bear in mind that it is not always the parents alone who determine the child's relationship with the church and Christianity. The children's preferences are also an important determinant. In Norway there is a tendency among parents to leave the choice of whether or not to participate in Christian children's and youth work to the children themselves (see Evenshaug & Hall 1997:103-104). If we look at the parents' own contributions to the religious upbringing of their children in the private sphere, we can observe that parents now do not pray with them to the same extent that they did 10 years ago. Today nearly four out of ten parents with children under 12 years of age say evening prayers with their children (Høeg 2010).¹

¹ In the Norwegian population, one in five parents say evening prayers with their children. In 1991, 28 per cent, and in 1998 25 per cent said evening prayers with their children. Of parents with children under 12

The Significance of Religion in the Public Sphere

However, tolerance, egalitarianism and the weakening relationship to the church and Christianity have not lessened discussion on the issue of which role religion should have in shaping Norwegian society, indeed it is quite to the contrary. Migration and globalisation trends in contemporary society have also strengthened the relevance of this question and clarified the significance of religion not only for minority groups in society but also for the majority; the members of the Norwegian Church. Among social institutions, the question of religion's contribution and relevance has primarily been discussed in connection with schools and day-care centres.

Christian Heritage and Religious Pluralisation

Today there are tensions between the Norwegian school as an institution for handling down Christian heritage and the Norwegian school as a multicultural school. The heated debate on the school subject Christianity, Religion and Philosophies of Life (KRL) culminated with the subject being discussed in the UN Human Rights Committee, and then being redefined as *Religion, Philosophies of life and Ethics* (RLE)² with new rules governing exemptions. This debate on the content and design of the subject has now subsided. Nonetheless, the issue of religion in school was reactivated when the school's traditions and established arrangements for Christian celebrations were challenged by pupils with religious or philosophy of life-related minority backgrounds. Both Secular Humanist and Muslim groups have raised critical questions about Christian traditions in school.

Meanwhile, in recent decades there has been a process in schools and day-care centres where Christian tradition has been moved from nursery children's and pupils' everyday lives to the private sphere. This secularization process is no longer taking place unnoticed, as it did only a few years ago. We find forces in society that defend religion as naturally belonging to public education and find that religion therefore should have influence. One would think that active Christians are the ones who advocate a de-secularization of schools

years of age, close to four of ten say evening prayers with their children, and one in ten of parents of teenagers do this (Høeg 2011).

² Act of 17 July 1998 no. 61 relating to Primary and Secondary Education and Training (the Education Act), **section 2-4**. *Teaching in the subject Religion, Philosophies of Life and Ethics*: "Religion, Philosophies of Life and Ethics is an ordinary school subject that shall normally be attended by all pupils. Teaching in the subject shall not involve preaching. The teaching in Religion, Philosophies of Life and Ethics shall provide knowledge of Christianity, other world religions and philosophies of life, knowledge of the significance of Christianity as a cultural heritage and of ethical and philosophical topics. The teaching in Religion, Philosophies of Life and Ethics shall promote understanding, respect and the ability to carry out a dialogue between people with differing views concerning beliefs and philosophies of life. The teaching in Religion, Philosophies of Life and Ethics shall present different world religions and philosophies of life in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner. The teaching of in the different topics shall be founded on the same educational principles."

and day-care centres. That is not the case. In recent years we have seen that regular church members are the ones who emphasise the importance of religion in schools, and that some Muslim groups support the Christian tradition that has characterised the Norwegian school. Indeed, political parties are supporting the position that Christianity as well as other religions should be made available in schools and day-care centres.

The schools' culture of celebrating

The schools' culture of celebrating holidays can be a fruitful concept for understanding and defining in which contexts religion is activated and expressed. The concept includes activities and celebrations with a religious content that the students and teachers express within the framework of the school subjects and through the schools' general activities (Haakedal 2010). This encompasses regular and occasional events in and outside the school grounds. Most schools select such religious holidays as Advent, Christmas and Easter, participating in national celebrations such as 17 May, or arranging carnivals and seasonal festivals. In addition, some schools choose to have a simple ceremony at the beginning and the end of the school day, and before the summer holidays, and also perform memorial ceremonies if a student, employee or parent dies. Furthermore, some schools mark the religious holidays of religions other than Christianity, for example, Eid al-Fitr.

Negotiations on Religion

Today, negotiations are taking place in every day-care centre and school, governing the schools' culture of celebrating holidays. Three positions seem to be prevalent. The first position is represented by groups who are open to the religious and belief-related diversity that the students represent, and believe that this pluralisation should be expressed in both day care and primary school. This is particularly evident when we examine the specific examples of how schools and day-care centres have to find practical solutions for how to relate to religious traditions. The solution seems to be that Christian and other religious holidays will be recognised. This is an approach to religion and beliefs that characterises schools located in multi-cultural areas with a large proportion of Muslims (Linderud).

The second position is to continue the development that has been taking place since the end of the 1970s, where religion is considered a private matter and the school's mission is to be a secular institution. The prevalent attitude here is that religion easily creates distance and polarization among pupils. This means that the school should not favour or downgrade one or another religion. When it comes to the Christian holidays, the 17th of May and death rituals, the solution is often that the religious customs and traditions are removed or only expressed to a limited degree (Heggedal).

The third position is occupied with the objectives clause (*formålsparagraf*) stating that the school is to be based on Christian and humanist values and the Norwegian cultural heritage. For these institutions it is therefore important that Christmas and Easter should be marked as Christian feasts, and that the religious elements that have always been a part of the national day are still present. The right to exemption that the Directorate of Education maintains as an important principle for school worship services is underlined by this group of parents and teachers. It is suggested that an important principle is to listen to the parents' decisions and to offer an equivalent alternative for all those who do not want to attend the school worship service (Tveita).

I will illustrate this by using two examples from the Norwegian School discourse on religion in Norwegian society, where the lines of conflict over the importance and influence of religion are particularly evident.

Heggedal, the 17th of Mai

Approaching the national day, the 17th of May, the traditional celebration in a small community thirty kilometres outside Oslo, called Heggedal, was the object of a tremendous debate when the Parents' Council Working Committee (*FAU, foreldrerådets arbeidsutvalg*) at the local school decided to move the prayers said by the local minister out of the school programme for the 17th of May. For the last 36 years this community has had the practice where there has been a break half way through the children's parade at one of the oldest farms in the area. During this break the local minister has made a speech with prayer and blessing for all the participants in the children's parade, both the children and their parents. The Parents' Council Working Committee's decision to change the programme was based on the fact that this tradition was not consistent with a pluralistic society. They wanted to take the minister's part out of the compulsory programme so that listening to the prayers could be voluntary. The change in the traditional programme sparked a two-year long debate in which the church, the editor of the local newspaper, local inhabitants, the school minister and the Parents' Council Working Committee participated. The debate was so intense that the issue was brought to Stortinget, the Norwegian Parliament, where prominent politicians expressed their support *aider* (either) for the group that wanted to maintain the tradition or for the Committee that wanted to change it. After deliberations, the politicians agreed on the principle of the Committee's right to design the school programme for the 17th of May. A compromise between the Committee and the local opposition was reached the first year; a few days before the 17th of May the local minister was reintroduced, but from now on he would only give *a speech* without prayer or blessing.

Religion has always had strong connections to the 17th of May. Even today in small communities in rural areas, the service can still be a compulsory part of the programme for the schools, even though the overall impression is that the dominant position of the church in

the school programmes has been reduced. Taking this cultural situation into consideration, the Heggedal example illustrates that the on-going secularisation of the school can no longer be seen as an obvious and natural process which can carry on without resistance and disputes. For many inhabitants in Heggedal it seems legitimate to fight for the position of the church in the programme. They appear to be deeply interested in letting the church play the role as a symbol of tradition, the home area and the cultural heritage. Struggling to let the church be visible in the school's celebration programme can also be viewed as an expression of the changed conditions for religions in the public sphere. Not only do minority religions claim to be a part of public life, the majority religion claims this as well.

Mortensrud, Death in school

Another situation which also provokes many negotiations over religion is when a local community loses a child and the school a pupil. In such a situation many decisions have to be made in a short period of time, including whether or not the school should involve the local church community or the local minister in the memorial ceremony and grief work. If the pupil has a non-ethnic Norwegian background or belongs to another religion than the Lutheran church, the school has to decide how to address the pupil's faith institution and the representative of that institution.

A little more than one year ago, the district of Mortensrud in Oslo, where half the inhabitants are non-ethnic Norwegians, was hit by a tragedy. A husband killed his wife, their three children and finally himself. The family members were Muslims, the husband's background was from Iran and the wife's from Turkey. Two of the children were pupils at the local school.

This school is one of many schools in Oslo with a large number of religious minority students which arrange Christian and Muslim festivals at school and have pupils attend church every year before Christmas. In such a bereavement situation it would have been in line with the school's open policy to involve the religions of the pupils and to involve the representative of the deceased pupil's faith institution. Another alternative would have been to involve the Muslim community in talks on the Muslim approach to death and the Muslim burial the two girls were given. But none of this happened. Instead, they let the Church of Norway and the local minister play a crucial role in the school's grief work.

This is a situation which clearly illustrates the challenges of religious diversity in the Norwegian school, and how difficult it can be to act according to the principle of taking the pupils' religious background into consideration when it comes to death and bereavement where religion traditionally has and still has relevance. This school does not like most of the schools in multicultural areas in Oslo have any established relation to a Muslim community or an Imam which they can use as a resource in such a situation. Instead they base their strategies on already established connections with the local church, even when the

majority of the students are non-ethnic Norwegians and non-Christians. In a situation of death and bereavement probably will an approach to other faith communities than the church of Norway be difficult due to the fact that such an approach would probably lack social support and legitimacy in the Norwegian culture.

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Aims and Orientations for Religious Education in the 21st Century – A Theological Perspective

Uta Pohl-Patalong

Religious education has developed into a highly demanded subject. In recent years the insight has increased that pedagogical efforts are significant for the future of the Christian faith – especially within the context of multi-religious society. Religious socialisation, the process of growing up within a Christian context and getting in touch naturally with forms of expressing faith play a formative role, whether or not people define themselves as Christians. This is not surprising in itself, as belief is an approach to the world and a basic life-orientation which is established in childhood and youth. Conversions to Christianity during adulthood are naturally possible, but they rather form an exception than a rule. This circumstance provides reason enough to acknowledge the significance of religious education in general.

It is, however, less obvious how these efforts in religious education are to be shaped and how their meaning and aim are to be described. What exactly do we want to achieve and when can we regard the efforts of religious education to be successful? What is guiding us within the different areas of religious education? The questions are particularly significant regarding religious education at school. The subject “religious education” forms part of the general educational mandate of the schools, and as such is subject to religious neutrality in Germany as well as Denmark.

1. Object or Subject? Looking backwards

The discipline “religious education” has dealt with these basic didactical issues since its establishment at the end of the 19th century. The research of religious education in the 20th century can be categorised by the answers given to the question of duties and intentions of religious education. Many of these lines of discussion can be summed up as the opposite of “object” and “subject”: Should the focus lie on the “object” of religious education at school and during confirmation class, and therefore on the content of faith, or should people and their various questions and needs be at the centre? In Germany the question was debated most fiercely in the 1970ies. For the elder generation of theologians – influenced by the so-called “Dialectical Theology” – the focus of religious education was on the *content* of Christian faith, especially on the Bible and catechism. In their opinion, Christian faith needed to be expressed clearly without being diluted by human topics or religious needs. The younger generation of theologians in this time however reacted to empirical studies regarding religious education as out of touch with real life, neglecting the pupils’ concerns. They wanted to put the *subjects* in the foreground and align religious education with the

questions and concerns of the pupils. A major controversy followed during the following years. A significant article contributing to this debate published in Germany is titled “Muss die Bibel im Mittelpunkt des Religionsunterrichts stehen?”¹ (= “Does the Bible have to be the Focus of Religious Studies?”) . The author, Bernhard Kaufmann answers this question with a clear “no”. For him, religious studies have to focus on the issues of the pupils at school – or at least on what teachers considered to be their issues. Biblical narratives only play a role in so far as he considered them helpful for answering questions concerning the pupils’ living environment. Kaufmann’s concept is known as “problem-oriented religious education”.

In the 1980ies, however, certain Christian traditions and especially the bible were re-discovered for religious education. For instance, within the German theological context developed the so-called “biblical didactics”.² This concept acknowledges that the language of the Bible, especially of the Psalms, reflects the fears and hopes of the children and teenagers and enables them to express their religious needs. After the phase of differentiation the insight grew that the alternatives of “object or subject” miss the point. Subsequently equal emphasis was placed on content and people, on the Bible and children in religious education. As such, religious education does not solely concern either the content or the person, but both equally.³ This realisation, which in my opinion is essential, should by now form the consensus in religious education. However, further development in religious education has shown that this formula, which appears to be a “golden compromise”, does not solve the problem satisfyingly. To clarify precisely aims and orientation of religious education, it is apparently insufficient to simply avoid pitting content and subjects against each other, as both need to be taken into account equally.

The fact that the relationship between content and subject is still disputed will be demonstrated on the one hand regarding the current situation of religious education, and on the other regarding the newest conceptual considerations.

First, the situation of religious education will be examined.

¹ Bernhard Kaufmann: Muß die Bibel im Mittelpunkt des Religionsunterrichts stehen? Auf dem Weg zum Religionsunterricht im Lebenskontext und Dialog, in: K.-E. Nipkow / F. Schweitzer (ed.), Religionspädagogik. Texte zur evangelischen Erziehungs- und Bildungsverantwortung II/2: 20. Jahrhundert (TB 89), 182-188.

² Cf. Ingo Baldermann, Einführung in die biblische Didaktik, Darmstadt 1996

³ Cf. as one for the first authors Klaus Wegenast: Bibeldidaktik 1975-1985. Ein Überblick, JRP 3 (1986), 127-152, 130.

2. Between common religiousness and Christian tradition – the situation of religious education

The situation of religious education is probably complex in all European countries, as it is influenced by various factors that differ in each country. A central aspect, at least in Germany, and as far as I know in Denmark as well, seems to be the tension between common religiousness and Christian tradition. Herein the opposition between subject and object appears in a new light. I call the two extremes, between religious education is taking place “subjective religion” and “objective religion”. They can be defined as follows:⁴

- “Subjective religion” refers to personal religiousness of individuals, and is not necessarily attached to an institution. It is also not necessarily Christian. This diffuse religious dimension is issue of religious education and is accepted as such by those involved.
- “Objective religion”, on the other hand, refers to constructed forms of religion which people encounter on the outside such as biblical texts or forms of church and liturgy. “Objective religion” is associated with religious education formed on the basis of Christian traditions and conscious of a specific position.

“Subjective religion” is the subject of religious education because the personal involvement and religiousness of the pupils need to be taken seriously. Religious education should not only provide information, but help the pupils to ask religious questions, find answers for themselves and develop their own religious identity. It is no longer possible to presuppose a natural Christian socialisation of the pupils. On the contrary, one has to expect various levels of knowledge and heterogenous religiousness: accordingly, school reflects the religious plurality of society. On the one hand, various religious communities exist beside the Christian churches. On the other hand, a diffuse religiousness can be encountered that adopts and assimilates various pieces of religion, often combining them (syncretism). Nowadays people define themselves as authority concerning which religious content they adopt and where their orientation lies. The essential question is whether the religious content matches personal experience and convictions and can offer support regarding vital issues. The present religiousness is consistently put in relation to the individual way of and coping with life. This leads to a wide understanding of religion surpassing the content of Christian tradition.

From the point of view of educational theory the orientation according to the (often diffuse) religiousness of these subjects can hardly be avoided. The process of education cannot be understood as distant information about objects. The individual is engaged in these objects not only on a cognitive level, but with all dimensions of personhood. This applies to any process of education, hence particularly “religion” cannot be learned in a distant mode

⁴ Cf. Uta Pohl-Patalong: Räume für Religion. Kirche und Schule im Kontext religiöser Pluralität, PTh 97, 2008, 186-205.

as it addresses the innermost depth of the individual. Consequently, religious education also has to incorporate “subjective religion” for reasons of educational theory.

At the same time, religious education in Germany and Denmark, at least in the Folkeskole, is still shaped by Christian faith and the corresponding confessional creed (in protestant religious education in Germany this refers to the content and the teachers, while simultaneously being open towards all pupils). Subsequently religious education refers to “objective religion”. On the one hand, the theory of religion provides a reason for not defining religious education as neutral in terms of religion: The model of religious education which ignores religious denomination, as is sometimes demanded in Germany, does not appear appropriate regarding the object. “Religion in itself” or a general religion of humankind does not exist. Such a construct blurs the background of certain religious creeds and opinions, and most importantly it does not reach the depth of the subject that religion actually aims at. From this point of view, mere information about religion appears similarly absurd as physical education without children moving. Religion is always connected to inner participation, personal involvement and identification, which in turn is only possible in forms of tangible and thus objective religion.

In the context of the social development mentioned above, which in Germany is additionally challenged by the increase in Islamic religious education, the Christian profile is at present emphasised and discussed more strongly than it was several years ago. In Germany we can observe (often with a certain degree of astonishment) that the social importance of Christianity and church is currently increasing at least in certain respects. For instance, Christian schools are in high demand, services for the first day at school are strongly frequented, and teachers of religious education are being addressed concerning their ritualistic and pastoral skills for general school matters. In society as a whole, Christianity and church are also in demand as interlocutors for ethical, pedagogical and social topics. However, in our pluralistic society they have become one voice among many. They are subsequently forced to adopt a stronger Christian profile and to reassert their original topics and content.

The significance of “objective religion” in religious education is supported further by the theory of education: Education aims at subjectivity, but is not restricted to the inside of the individual – it is rather a reciprocal event between the inside and the outside. An impulse from the outside is necessary to initiate a process of education. This applies especially to the object “religion” since we assume that God influences and changes us as an active subject. Again, the necessity of religion as external factor becomes obvious.

In summary, religious education obviously reflects on subjective and objective religion equally. But how are they related to each other? Let us take a look into the concepts of religious education of recent years.

3. Between children's theology and performance – current concepts of religious education

In the current debates concerning religious education the unsolved tension between “subjective” and “objective” religion is obvious. Occasionally, individuals and content, i.e. subjective and objective religion are simply juxtaposed. This can for instance be observed in the considerations of the “EKD-Kommission zur religionspädagogischen Ausbildung” from 1997. This document claims that future teachers of religious education need to acquire the skills, “die unterrichtlichen und erzieherischen Aufgaben des Religionsunterrichts *theologisch sachgemäß* und *schülerorientiert* wahrzunehmen.”⁵ Two points of reference are thus referred to without being specifically related to each other.

More commonly, we find evidence in various concepts that highlight one aspect or the other. Here follows one example for each.

3.1 Children's theology – oriented towards subjective religion

Children's theology can be understood either as “theology for children” or as “theology with children” from a semantic and factual point of view.⁶ The focus and main characteristic of this approach, however, is the “genitivus subjectivus”, i.e. a “theology by children”: children are understood as subjects of theology. Accordingly, their significance differs from the problem-oriented model of the 1970s which focused on the question of the pupils, but rather answered questions than asked them. The concept of children's theology encourages children to develop and express their own imagination and understanding of God and the world. These thoughts are considered valuable without being labelled as right or wrong or used as a starting point for a “correct” statement subsequently recited by the teacher. Methodologically, such an atmosphere for learning is created by discussions providing the children with space for their own theological discoveries through impulses and adequate questions.

This model presupposes an understanding of theology that is not restricted to a scientific theology. Children's theology is understood as communal or layperson's theology everyone is believed to be capable of and which is not denied to children from the outset. In contrast to the scientific theology the systematic theologian Wilfrid Härle characterises children's

⁵ Kirchenamt der EKD (Hg.): Im Dialog über Glauben und Leben. Zur Reform des Lehramtsstudiums Evangelische Theologie / Religionspädagogik. Empfehlungen der gemischten Kommission, Gütersloh 1997, 47.

⁶ Friedrich Schweitzer: Was ist und wozu Kindertheologie?, in: Anton A. Bucher u.a. (Hg.), “Im Himmelreich ist keiner sauer”. Kinder als Exegeten (JaBuKi Bd. 2), Stuttgart 2003, (9-18), 11ff.

theology with the aspects of “elementary questions”, “embodiment of thinking”, “radical questions”, and above all “alienation of trust”.⁷

A critical perspective of the concept of children's theology derives from the opposition within the area of conflict, i.e. the question concerning the theological “object” or the “objective religion”. Rainer Anselm, for instance, does not conceive the religious ideas of children as theology, since they lack the normative element and abandon subjectivity. Anselm thus initially provides a valuable piece of information: part of the essence of theology is the fact that it “normativen Fragen nicht ausweicht (does not avoid normative questions)”⁸. However, Anselm's justification is as difficult as it is interesting concerning relationship between subjective and objective religion: Anselm justifies the normative function of theology with the “Bedürfnis des Einzelnen nach Gewissheit (need for certainty of the individual)” that is not fulfilled by children's theology. However, his statement restricts the role of theology to that of providing certainty. Naturally, this is one possible function of theology, but it can just as well shake up faith, disturb and question it, or lead to a religious reorientation. The encounter with Christian traditions can also alter one's subjective religion, be it in a beneficial and supportive capacity, or questioning and unsettling.

In the context of children's theology this has the following meaning: Although theological discoveries of children are highly appreciated an important opportunity for their religious development would be wasted if the efforts of religious education were restricted to the acknowledgement and appreciation of subjective religion. Children's theology itself emphasises that children are not to be limited to their pre-existing ideas, they rather have to be offered thoughts on which to further develop their subjective religion. This assessment applies even more strongly to the emerging theology of adolescents because adolescents are more hesitant to offer religious thoughts of their own accord, but rather react to incentive. This brings us back to “objective religion”: Christian tradition and content can serve as incentive for children and adolescents to deal with and explain, develop or change their subjective religion.

Let us now consider the alternative.

⁷ Wilfrid Härle. Was haben Kinder in der Theologie verloren? Systematisch-theologische Überlegungen zum Projekt einer Kindertheologie, in: Anton A. Bucher u.a. (ed.) “Zeit ist immer da. Kinder erleben Hoch-Zeiten und Fest-Tage” (JaBuKi Bd.3), Stuttgart 2004, (11-27) 22ff.

⁸ Rainer Anselm: Verändert die Kindertheologie die Theologie?, in: Anton Bucher u.a. (ed.): “Vielleicht hat Gott uns Kindern den Verstand gegeben”. Ergebnisse und Perspektiven der Kindertheologie (Jahrbuch für Kindertheologie 5), Stuttgart 2006, 13-25, 22.

3.2 Performative religious education – oriented towards “objective religion”

Performative religious education provides an example for a concept indebted mainly to “objective religion”. Its focus lies on the confessional and institutional forms of religion. This concept employs the semiotic approach that religion can only truly be learned through its forms, places and ways of expression. The Gospel achieves “nur im Modus der Inszenierung repräsentative Wirklichkeit”⁹. “Religiös wird man durch religiöse Praxis und nicht, weil ein primäres inneres religiöses Bedürfnis sekundär nach religiösen Ausdrucksformen sucht. (One becomes religious through religious practice, and not because a primary inner religious need is searching for religious forms of expression)” According to him, acting and experiencing have to be given precedence over explanation and reflection. Since the minority of pupils would have experienced this in their families or in church it is the duty of religious education. The pupils encounter religious activity and are given the chance to use them – temporarily at first. Besides biblical narratives liturgical elements such as singing, praying or blessing are staged in religious education, where the pupils are invited to participate on trial.

The performative approach therefore enters the area of conflict from the other side, namely from the objective forms of Christian – protestant – religion. This approach enables the encounter of “objective religion”. The problem remains whether the performative approach regresses beyond the acceptance of the religious subject and the encouragement to develop an independent opinion and to question tradition.¹⁰ Those in favour of the performative approach claim that a critical debate with the acquired content and forms is not excluded and that it is possible to decline them.¹¹ Therefore, the alternatives are to participate in the existing forms of objective religion or to decline them. The subject's own creative thoughts and individual religiousness are hardly taken into account.

Additionally, the performative approach neglects the fact that forms of “objective religion” can only be interpreted subjectively and gain significance in this manner. They only receive meaning for one's own life if connected with own experiences and given a subjective meaning. In this case, the subjective access to Christian traditions should not only be considered but also intended and supported. Further, the lack of Christian socialisation at home does

⁹ Thomas Klie: Konfirmandenunterricht – Trauerspiel, Musical oder Komödie? Dramaturgische Aspekte kirchlicher Unterweisung, PTh 89 (2000), 175-191, wieder abgedruckt (und zitiert nach) in: Bernhard Dressler / Thomas Klie / Carsten Mork (ed.), Konfirmandenunterricht. Didaktik und Inszenierung, Hannover 2001, 317-335, 331.

¹⁰ Cf. For example Godwin Lämmermann: Religionspädagogik zwischen politischer und ästhetischer Signatur. Eine nicht ganz unpolemische Auseinandersetzung zur Rettung der Ästhetik vor den Ästheten, ZPT 57 (2005), 358-368.

¹¹ Cf. Bernhard Dressler: Religionsdidaktische Optionen. Eine topographische Lageskizze zum Unterschied zwischen Religionsunterricht und Konfirmandenunterricht, in: ders. u.a., Didaktik und Inszenierung, 133-151, 140.

not automatically mean a lack of subjective religiousness for the pupils. The major task of present-day religious education appears to be the recognition and appreciation of this subjective religiousness, while at the same time stimulating it with forms of objective religion. Subjective and objective religion are thus linked with each other: The crucial point is the relationship between these two aspects.

Subsequently, the clarification of the aims and direction of religious education becomes even more urgent. How exactly are subjective and objective religion to be related to each other? What is our aim regarding religious education? I would like to propose the following.

4. Discovering the Value of Christian Tradition for everyday life – concerning the aims of religious education

In order to evaluate the relationship between subjective and objective religion on the level of religious education, I would like to recall the present religious situation: As demonstrated above, today's access to religiousness has become its significance for one's personal life. A defining aspect concerning the acceptance and acknowledgement of religious content, thoughts, beliefs, practices and orientations is the degree of their use for everyday life. In religious education this tendency is often reflected by pupils asking: "What use is this to me?"

The question regarding use and relevance for every day life is addressed to Christian tradition in today's religious education – partly as open question, partly provocatively.¹²

From the point of view of theology and religious education this question is often criticised as utilitarianism. It is said to follow the logic of modern societies and the current instrumentalisation of "education" and would not do justice to Christian faith – because faith does not ask for superficial usefulness, but rather addresses the individual deeply as a person. This *concern* may naturally be agreed to, however, the *rejection* of the question falls short in my opinion. It wastes the opportunity to inquire theologically after the relevance and use of Christian tradition and Christian faith for everyday life provoked by the character of current religiousness. I interpret this question as claim, but also as an expression of hope that Christian religion could and should prove useful and helpful for our daily life.

This hope seems to address a fundamental dimension of Christianity and leads into a genuinely theological debate. If we look back on the history of Christianity, the expansion of the faith in the resurrected Jesus Christ can barely be imagined if such a belief had not

¹² Cf. z.B. Joachim Kunstmann: Religionspädagogik. Eine Einführung, Göttingen 2004, 274: "Die Frage nach dem Lebensbezug, die von den Kirchen wenig bedient wird, scheint für die Weitergabe der Religion darum zum entscheidenden Punkt zu werden. Nicht Wahrheit, sondern *Bedeutung* und *Betroffenheit* bestimmen über ihre Aneignung und über ein entsprechendes Interesse – „Wahr“ ist, was betrifft. Das ist für das traditionelle christliche Denken eine höchst ungewohnte Wendung, die auf teils entrüstete Ablehnung stößt."

proved to be relevant and useful for people's lives. The New Testament scholar Gerd Theißen defines the “success” of early Christianity in the Hellenistic world. He defines religion as “kulturelles Zeichensystem, das Lebensgewinn durch Entsprechung zu einer letzten Wirklichkeit verheißt”¹³ and the judaeo-christian tradition as means in the “Dialog mit dem einen und einzigen Gott... Lebensgewinn zu erzielen”¹⁴. The two testaments of the Bible can be interpreted as witness that people experienced the contact with the one and only God as relevant for their lives. Accordingly, one can find traces in the Bible for defining the relationship between objective and subjective religion which are also relevant for religious education. The issue concerns the “use for everyday life” of “objective religion” for the subject. The central point is not the simple fulfillment of short-term desires, but rather a complex correlation that addresses the depth of the individual. At present life itself has become a creative challenge. It has to be one's “own life”¹⁵, that cannot simply be lived as it goes by, but has to be decided, adjusted and moulded anew from a multitude of options every day. An increasing number of people experience this not only as a challenge, but rather as a major effort with uncertain results. Children and adolescents are also aware of the demand. The support for this uncertainty in life is also sought in religious context, but an answer is not always expected in Christian faith. The problem of plausibility is apparent: On the one hand “life” is a central theological topic¹⁶, on the other hand theological competence for life is often disputed. Hans-Günter Heimbrock, on of the few scholars of religious education who has dedicated himself to the concept of life sums up: “Beunruhigend ist..., dass... im alltäglichen Leben nicht wenige Zeitgenossen... den Zusammenhang von christlicher Religion und Leben weniger eng sehen, ja – kirchliche Verkündigung und religiöse Erziehung pauschalisierend eher mit Lebensferne gleichsetzen.”¹⁷ It is indeed possible that the “use for life” of the Christian tradition has so far not become plausible – it cannot be raised as normative statement, but has to be detected and perceived. For instance, how does the theological insight of the unconditional justification of humankind by God impact on the attitude to life? What does the possibility of a real new beginning due to the willingness for forgiveness achieve in the life of an individual, or the distinction between the last two aspects? In my opinion it is a central duty of religious education to describe more precisely than before and through dialogue with other disciplines the relevance of Christian faith for

¹³ Gerd Theißen: Die Religion der ersten Christen Eine Theorie des Urchristentums, Gütersloh 2000, 19.

¹⁴ Gerd Theißen: Exegese und Homiletik. Neue Textmodelle als Impuls für neue Predigten, in: Uta Pohl-Patalong / Frank Muchlinsky (eds.): Predigen im Plural. Homiletische Aspekte, Hamburg 2001, 55-67, 56.

¹⁵ Ulrich Beck: Eigenes Leben. Ausflüge in die unbekannte Gesellschaft, in der wir leben, München 2003.

¹⁶ Dietrich Korsch calls it a permanent item of Theology, Cf. Dietrich Korsch: „Leben“ als Thema gelebter Religion, in: Albrecht Grözinger / Georg Pfeleiderer (ed.): „Gelebte Religion als Programmbegriff Systematischer und Praktischer Theologie, Zürich 2002, 191.

¹⁷ Hans-Günter Heimbrock: Kann das Leben die Religion ersetzen? Religionstheoretische Überlegungen zur Konjunktur eines Begriffs, in: Markus Witte, Der eine Gott und die Welt der Religionen. Beiträge zu einer Theologie der Religionen und zum interreligiösen Dialog, Würzburg 2003, 387-409, 391.

everyday life. Religious education is especially challenged by the fact that this question is asked more forcibly by one side of religious education, the common religiousness. This question can become didactically productive when dealt with by the other side of the area of conflict, namely the Christian tradition.

From this angle the pupils' explicit or implicit question how relevant Christian content and ecclesiastic forms of expression are or can become for their lives is not only legitimate, but also very productive. The aim of religious education therefore is to make the usefulness and relevance of Christian tradition transparent. Disputes concerning the primacy of either tradition or the living environment are therefore definitively obsolete: Both aspects belong genuinely together, since the relevance of the one concerns the other.

I would like to make this basic identification of the aims of religious education transparent with the help of four examples:

5. Usefulness for Life in dialogue – Guidelines

5.1. Proof of different forms of relevance for life

The claim that Christian faith is beneficial for life and promises an increase of the quality of life constitutes the working-hypothesis for religious education. In the context of theory of education it has to be understood as external impulse which is dealt with subjectively by pupils. Whether or not this hypothesis applies to all pupils cannot be predetermined, but rather needs to be established in a longer working process. The result of this process remains open due to the character of public schools and due to theological reasons – “faith” as a learning target cannot be established.¹⁸

In addition, the role of the subject is not limited to the alternatives of acceptance or refusal. In terms of religious education, it is significant to open up various alternatives of experiencing Christian traditions as relevant and helpful for one's own life. It must be possible to discover variegated meanings, interpretations and values. This means that pupils are not restricted to learning a single message and meaning already established, but they are rather encouraged to find a personal access to Christian traditions and forms of ecclesiastic expression. Religious education should not be limited to showing a single pre-existing way to improve life, it rather needs to introduce a possibility.¹⁹ From the didactic point of view,

¹⁸ “Ob aber Lernende sich von der probeweise angenommenen Hypothese eines Blicks auf die Welt aus der Sicht des christlichen Glaubens so überzeugen lassen, daß ihnen daraus eine ihr Leben tragende und ihr Leben verändernde Kraft erwächst, liegt nicht in der Reichweite didaktisch operationalisierbarer Intentionen.” (Bernhard Dressler, *Bildende Religion – gebildeter Glaube*, in: ZPT 50, 1998, 395-409, 404). He calls this a “Wahrnehmungsperspektive, die gewissermaßen im Zuge eines Probedenkens an Evidenz gewinnen kann.”

¹⁹ Cf. Uta Pohl-Patalong: *Die Bibel im Konfirmationsunterricht – Rezeptionsästhetische Erwägungen und methodische Konsequenzen*, EvTh 63 (2003), 296-310.

teachers should not aim at fixed targets of learning, they should formulate them abstractly (accordingly not “pupils need to understand that ...”, but “pupils should be capable of discovering that ...”).

5.2. Reference to experience and reflection

The relevance of Christian tradition for everyday life can naturally be employed in debates on certain questions. However, this relevance is not limited to such use, it also extends to all levels and senses of personhood. Regarding religious education, at this point one may follow up the debate related to the expression “aesthetical education”, which emphasises the meaning of emotions for the learning process. If the discovery of relevance for life would be limited to rational plausibility, the learning process would remain on the surface of reproducible knowledge and would not do justice to comprehending the person. The usefulness for life of the Christian tradition should not only be made plausible, it should also be made (at least partially) accessible to experience. In this regard, the insight of performative approach to explain “objective religion” and to show that it can be experienced is convincing. In my opinion, it is even more important that references to experience and phases involving reflection alternate. Experiences need to be reflected continuously from a distant perspective and need to be canvassed regarding the “usefulness for life”.

5.3. Critical survey of different forms of religiousness

At this point it should be obvious that the reference to life should include a critical attitude towards certain forms of life and also towards certain forms of religion.²⁰ This critical attitude is in need of criteria.²¹ Rudolf Englert refers to the task of formulating criteria as “ideologiekritische Unterscheidungsarbeit” (ideology-critical task of differentiation), for which religious education can profit from biblical and historical sources.

“Die jüdisch-christliche Tradition ... zeigt ein starkes religionskritisches Interesse. Fragen nach der Authentizität eines religiösen Erbes, nach den Kennzeichen des wahren Propheten, nach der rechten Weise der Gottesverehrung, nach den Grenzen der „vera religio“ werden ... in großer Schärfe gestellt ... In dem Maße, wie entsprechende Unterscheidungskriterien über den jeweiligen religiösen Binnen-Diskurs hinaus plausibel zu machen waren (z.B. in der frühchristlichen Apologetik, in den reformatorischen Kontroversen... usw.) war man gezwungen, sich den Legitimationsstan-

²⁰ “Wir lernen daran neu, dass religiöse Inhalte nicht einfach per se gut sind, sondern dass es sehr wohl gerade heute auch um eine theologische Klärung der diffusen religiösen Szenen geht, die uns angeboten werden. Religiosität kann manchmal auf eine subtile Weise sehr destruktiv sein.” (Ulrich Schwab: Den Faden suchen. Zum Profil einer Religionspädagogik in der Moderne, PTh 91 (2002), 417-428, 423.)

²¹ Cf. Friedrich Schweitzer, Religionspädagogik (Lehrbuch Praktische Theologie Bd.1), Gütersloh 2006, 155.

dards der jeweiligen Zeit zu stellen und seine Sichtweise zu begründen. Aus entsprechenden Auseinandersetzungen verfügt das Christentum über ein Unterscheidungskwissen, das für einen kritischen Umgang mit religiösen Deutungsmustern von bleibendem Interesse ist.“²² (“The Jewish-Christian tradition ... displays a strong interest in criticising religion. Questions concerning authenticity of religious heritage, characteristics of a true prophet, the right way to worship God, the boundaries of „vera religio“ are ... raised sharply ... To the same degree, to which respective criteria for differentiation needed to be made plausible in inner-religious debates [e.g. in Early-Christian apologetics, in protestant controversies etc.] it was also necessary to face standards of legitimation of the corresponding era and justify its perception. Due to the respective debates Christianity commands a knowledge of differentiation that is constantly significant for criticism of religious patterns of thoughts.”).

In the context of religious education all forms of “subjective“ and objective“ religion do not only need to be on a par with each other, but they are also questioned for their contribution for life, individually as well as socially. Accordingly, religious education conveys a kind of “religious quality awareness” to pupils, which enables them to deal with their own religious perspectives and the religiousness of others sensibly, and to some extent also critically.²³

5.4. Dialogue with other religions and forms of religiousness

Within the context of religious pluralism such an orientation necessarily leads to the question whether or not and to what degree Christian traditions are more (or differently) helpful for life than other religions or forms of religiousness. This inter-religious dimension which also includes diffuse forms of religiousness is an elementary part of religious education, as is also emphasised in “Gymnasiums” in Denmark. Similarly, in all other European countries protestant religious education always deals with its contents in the presence of other religions and forms of religiousness. Therefore, a dialogue with different world-views is initiated, which is rightfully accepted as indispensable element of social coexistence. A comparable approach is incidentally expected from Jewish and Islamic religious education, as the aspect of “usefulness for life” is also taken into consideration in the corresponding position and needs to be compared with the position of other religions.

In the context of religious pluralism, religious education must neither be limited to a mere Christian perspective, nor merge with undifferentiated plurality. Therefore, religious education presupposes a differentiated and reflected perception of different perspectives

²² Rudolf Englert, Religionspädagogik in der Schule, in: Friedrich Schweitzer / Thomas Schlag (ed.), Religionspädagogik im 21. Jahrhundert (Religionspädagogik in pluraler Gesellschaft Bd.4), Gütersloh/Freiburg 2005, 79-93, 90.

²³ A.a.O., 90f.

which is connected with a position of its own. Thus, this subject proves to be capable of plurality without the lack of a clear-cut perspective.

Didactically and methodologically various options exist in order to follow these basic guidelines. I would like to conclude by introducing one approach I am personally aligned with, namely the Bibliolog.

6. Bibliolog as approach for religious education – Methodological concretisation

Forms of “objective religion” can occur in many different shapes. For theological and didactical reasons, I prefer to focus on biblical texts. They especially challenge the reader to deal with them subjectively. By discussing these texts openly, pupils can make numerous discoveries of their own and gain knowledge without being limited to expressions of creeds. Dealing with them also has the advantage of not being restricted to decide either in favour of or against faith. In this case, certain methodological approaches are helpful in order to clearly relate subjective experiences to biblical traditions, or, in other words, in order to develop “subjective religion” with the help of “objective religion”. One of numerous approaches corresponding with this aim is the so-called Bibliolog.²⁴

The Bibliolog represents a relatively new (but in recent years increasingly popular) approach to interpret biblical narratives, which aims at filling “blank positions” and “gaps” of narratives with identifying oneself with certain biblical figures referred to in biblical texts. The Bibliolog was invented, or rather discovered by the American Jew Peter Pitzele on the background of his expertise in psycho-drama and studies in literature. This approach is indebted to rabbinic hermeneutics representing a modern form of Midrash, according to which passages of the Torah can be interpreted by a creative completion of its gaps. Rabbinic hermeneutics distinguishes between the so-called “black fire” (i.e. the content of the letters of a biblical text) and the “white fire” (i.e. the space between the words). Fanning the “white fire”, i.e. the gaps between the letters, opens up possibilities to connect one's own experiences in life with biblical passages and thus to approach the text from a new perspective. Subsequently, one is no longer in a distant position towards the text, but rather becomes part of the narrative. However, the aim of the Bibliolog is always the awareness of the text. At the same time, the identification with a certain role of a biblical character enables participants to keep a distance – the biblical figure is responding to the text, not the participant. Therefore, this approach is easily made accessible to pupils with various different religious affiliations.

²⁴ Cf. Uta Pohl-Patalong; Bibliolog. Impulse für Gottesdienst, Gemeinde und Schule. Band 1: Grundformen, Stuttgart (2009) ²2010

The process of a Bibliolog is as follows: A facilitator introduces into a biblical narrative and stimulates the fantasy of pupils regarding the situation of the given passage. Within this process insightful information gained by historical-critical and socio-historical methods plays a significant role. When a passage obviously contains “white fire”, the facilitator reads out a sentence or a short passage. He then assigns the pupils a certain role from the biblical narrative, addresses them as such and asks them questions which are unanswered at the current stage of the narrative.

The pupils have the liberty to answer the question (one after the other) in the appropriate role (i.e. in the first person singular). The participating pupils identify themselves with the biblical figure, thus exploring the figure “from within”. At the same time, they replenish their role and their understanding of the biblical figure with their own personal experiences.

The facilitator listens to the pupils’ comments and amplifies them. By employing this technique of “echoing” even quiet statements of participants are made audible, and statements only implying emotions are emphasised. If participants only hint at facts in their answers, the facilitator can employ the technique of “interviewing” to obtain a clear answer. In any case, the facilitator needs to be in line with the participants, it is not his or her task to lure the participants into mentioning a certain aspect the facilitator himself or herself might find more interesting or feel to be neglected.

The facilitator returns to the text itself after some comments have been made. Then the next part of the narrative is read. The facilitator interrupts the reading again, when questions remain unanswered in the text. The participants receive a new role, either the biblical figure referred to already now facing a new situation, or a new character. Again, the pupils are given the opportunity to make a statement.

After a few scenes the Bibliolog ends. The facilitator discharges the participants from their role(s) and leads them back into the present. The various statements of the participants and the corresponding different approaches remain adjacent to each other without further qualification or the attempt to unify them into a single message.

I would like to demonstrate the way a Bibliolog functions by applying it to the resurrection narrative according to Matthew. The facilitator introduces the participants to the situation of Jesus’ followers after his arrest and crucifixion. This situation is not only characterised by grief and pain, but also puts into question what they considered relevant for their lives during the past years. This introduction provides the notional and emotional background for the three women on their way to Jesus’ grave in order to anoint his body with oil as was customary at that time.

The first possible question might be addressed to Mary Magdalene: Mary, you and your companions are now, early in the morning, approaching the grave of the one who has played such a significant role for you during the past years. I can only imagine that your head is full of thoughts. What are you thinking right now?

Some possible answers are:

- “It is terrible. He really is dead. He is not here anymore.”
- “He already told us that he was going to die. However, I have never been capable of imagining it. And now?”
- “I don’t know how to carry on. So far it has been him who told us what to do next. Who will tell us now?”

A second role could then ask – after the earthquake, the descending angel whose appearance is similar to a lightning and the frightened watchmen: “Mary, what is your first reaction to these events?”

A third role should take into consideration the reaction of the women as the angel in the white garment announces the resurrection of Christ, which is characterised as “fear and great delight”.

“Mary, you experience fear and great delight. What kind of fear do you feel – and what kind of delight? Is one emotion stronger than the other or are they both linked together?”

Finally, the women might be asked what kind of thoughts and emotions they will take with them on their way to the other disciples to inform them about the recent events.

After dealing with a couple of passages the Bibliolog ends and the participants are discharged from their roles and return to the present. Afterwards the experiences made during the Bibliolog can be worked with in more detail, according to the proposals made above. It is important that the differences between the biblical text and the subjective interpretation and development of the gaps (i.e. the “black” and the “white fire”) remain clear to avoid the interpretation gaining more significance than the text itself. Methodologically such a distinction is made by keeping the roles close to the *Vorlage* (i.e. the biblical text), by permanently relating to the text and reading the entire text again as conclusion.

The Bibliolog does not only offer the opportunity to become acquainted with the biblical resurrection narrative, but also to encounter it as an event that changes one's own life. The identification with biblical figures creates an atmosphere in which one's own experiences and considerations can be related to the biblical narrative, which at the same time can be questioned and expanded. Thus, a basis for reflection and debate is provided on a cognitive level, which can be re-connected with everyday experiences. Subsequently, “objective” and “subjective” religion are combined in a productive relationship, which allows the relevance of life in one area to be addressed in the other.

Religious Education in Danish Primary Schools

Lise Yde

This article focuses on a specifically Danish problem related to RE. In the context of this 11th Nordic Conference concerning RE, the purpose of the present article is to present these problems to a relevant audience. My comments are not founded on a specific didactic theory and are, as such, merely reflections on the current situation.

First of all I should clarify that the article concerns the teaching of RE (under the name of *kristendomskundskab*, a term which is hard to translate properly other than as “knowledge of Christianity”) in Danish primary schools, in particular 7-10-year-old children. The point of departure of my project concerns children’s reflections on normative themes.

The teaching of RE in Danish primary schools is framed by certain expectations related to children’s ability to and/or interest in asking “the right questions”. To the legal statutes of *kristendomskundskab*, called “Fælles Mål” (=“Common Goals”)¹, this specific confidence in (or assumption about) children’s abilities to ask questions conditions the didactic angle of Danish RE. The conviction that children are capable of asking these questions therefore governs what is being taught in *kristendomskundskab*. However, these assumptions are neither sustained nor scientifically valid. Instead, it is mentioned in “Common Goals” that the education “must be attached to the pupil’s experiences, knowledge, and contemplations of common life questions through narration, conversation, and dramatization.” (p. 11, my transl.) How children actually reflect upon normative themes, such as morality and religious categories, is, however, yet to be examined. It is food for thought that the teaching of RE in Danish primary schools seems to be founded upon a presumption or generalization regarding children’s theological/philosophical questions and concerns.

The problem of RE in Danish primary schools

For further exploration in this matter it is necessary that I explicate several relevant angles. Studies of RE have been conducted (i.e. Larsen/Sørensen, 2005); however, this study revolved around the importance of Christianity as part of the subject matter of *kristendoms-kundskab* and the importance of Christianity to the individual student and his/her understanding of the subject². As of yet, no Danish study has been conducted concerning child-

¹ Undervisningsministeriet (the Danish Ministry of Education), 2009, *Fælles Mål for kristendomskundskab*, states that RE in Danish primary schools revolves around different ways of interpreting life (p. 17). This alleged dimension of interpretation is crucial throughout the wording of the “Common Goals” of the subject.

² *Nogle historier gemmer jeg lidt for livet* (RPC, 2005)

ren's normative reflections. Instead, the legal statutes state that "the importance of the religious dimension to the individual and his/her relationship with other individuals" constitutes the core of the subject matter of *kristendomskundskab*. Furthermore, the legal statutes express certain expectations regarding the children's abilities to reflect naturally upon concepts, which, within the frame of "Common Goals", are represented as normative and academically founded. This, however, proves to be a theme for further discussion, since these concepts represented in the "Common Goals" seem to lack scientific foundation. Further investigations of the "Common Goals" and the scientific validation of the legal statutes are therefore likely to prove a problematic theoretical frame for RE in Danish primary schools. This in turn raises some interesting didactic problems, since educating and teaching without proper knowledge of the predispositions of the pupils in question must indeed be rather difficult. Thus, it should be worth obtaining knowledge of the children's predispositions. I elaborate on this in the following.

Classroom observation in the 1st and 9th grade

In the spring of 2010 I visited an average Danish school in an average Danish town. My intention was to observe the teaching of RE and hereby gain knowledge of teaching RE from a practical point of view. After having consulted two of the school's RE teachers, I decided that the observations might as well include both primary as well as secondary school pupils. I assumed this would prove advantageous to the project because I would be able to gain knowledge of both the subject matter as well as gain a sense of the children's progression regarding their levels of reflection. The two teachers, who are both educated RE teachers, had prepared me by offering me curricular lists as well as literature. Equipped with this, I entered the 1st grade classroom.

My expectations turned out to be affected by the fact that I never taught children of this age and that I therefore upheld a somewhat unrealistic level of expectations regarding what can be achieved in the company of 1st grade children in 45 minutes. On the other hand, I was surprised as I went on to 9th grade. In any case, since then I have chosen to concentrate on RE in primary schools, namely 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade. A small review of the observation classes should help clarify this choice.

What can be said about classroom observation?

First of all, I should emphasize that an exhaustive study should be conducted with the purpose of obtaining knowledge of children's normative reflections in a school context. My observations are sporadic and are as such neither scientifically valid nor comparative since my only observations concerned pupils in the 1st and 9th grades. In spite of this, I intend to interpret the two levels of RE and compare what I found to be the pupils' reflections to the wording of the legal statutes, the "Common Goals".

The statutes, when it comes to 1st-3rd grade, primarily focus on the pupils' acquisition of knowledge regarding religious concepts (p. 5), and the suggested starting point is therefore the above-mentioned "ability to ask". In Common Goals the wording is as follows: "[E]ducation must encourage and develop the pupil's openness and willingness to ask questions about life [itself]" (p. 11). And it is specifically recommended that teachers introduce themes such as "what is God" (p. 18). In observing 1st grade pupils, I noticed that questions of this sort were not introduced at all when the children were taught Norse mythology (which was the topic of the RE class in question). This is perhaps less of a mystery when considering the narrow definition (of "God") in "Common Goals": "an old man with a beard...a man (Jesus)...something inside of me (the soul)..." (ibid.) None of these definitional suggestions seem to correspond with the character of Thor, and it might be fair to ask if Norse myths – or other myths for that matter – are not just good stories – especially if none of the above (metaphysical) questions are mentioned. And are we not underestimating the children's abilities by not giving them the chance to even consider these questions at all? One could fear that the above-mentioned questions are of a more Christian-theological kind and are therefore not necessarily applicable to Norse mythology. Anyhow, further investigations of children's normative reflections should be able to clarify and, perhaps in the long run, adjust the expectations of what is (and should be) relevant in an RE dimension.

What remains is this: It seems problematic that we proceed in education with some sort of idealistic dimension of *Bildung* built into the legal statutes of RE – in Denmark even *kristendomskundskab*. Reading Norse myths might be just as relevant in classes on Danish literature? I have a hard time believing that children's reflections regarding normative themes are prompted by listening to a wonderful story of a very strong man, while at the same time drawing a picture. It is possible that children of the age of 7-10 years are not able to follow a more complicated analysis, but we have no source of knowledge that actually sustains this.

On the other hand, it should be noted that, with the 9th grade pupils, it seemed to be both effective and relevant to go through topics related to Islamic culture. The pupils seemed to capture the methodology of a comparative study and mastered the overview and the competences that follow the legal statutes, which state that pupils of this age are supposed to be able to "relate to and discuss the basic questions of existence as well as consider choices of belief, on the grounds of the subject matter and their acquired academic knowledge of RE." (p. 7) The pupils were able to reflect on these issues and put them into context, and at the same time Muslim pupils, together with pupils of Danish-Christian backgrounds, compared their own experiences and drew parallels.

I thus conclude that, initially, in order to establish and implement a more relevant RE in Danish primary schools, it would be pertinent to conduct a study of children of the age of 7-10 years to gain further knowledge of the level of their normative reflections.

Suggestions of a theoretical framework to a study of this nature

One strategy would be to adapt a theory as well as a methodology from cognitive science of religion (CSR). Studies of children in relation to normative themes have already been conducted (i.e. Barrett, 2004), and it is hard to overlook the scientific theory as well as empirical knowledge of why and how religion affects the cognitive development of humans. Among these studies, Marc Hauser's Moral Sense Test is of particular interest. This study concerns how individuals react upon moral themes and the study is framed by the question of whether the human ability to react upon normative themes is biologically grounded (Hauser, 2007)³. The test (which, by the way, is recommended when teaching philosophy and RE in secondary schools here in Denmark) is interesting because it operationalizes suggestions like the cultural impact of religion and the effect that human psychological and cognitive development have upon these areas. The strategic research performed for instance at Aarhus University, at the Department of Culture and Society suggest furthermore that it is rather the effect of culturally embedded religious systems that shape our minds (i.e. Geertz, 2011 and Donald, 2001).

In a study performed in 2009⁴, I found that this theoretical framework of the so-called "Aarhus school of CSR" could be applied when conducting a closer investigation of the former legal statutes of Danish RE or *kristendomskundskab* (the "Common Goals" of 2004). Through a thorough word count in the legal statutes, I discovered a high number of terms that could be defined as theologically inspired. At the same time the terminology used in the statutes was highly influenced by Wolfgang Klafki's categorical ideal of *Bildung* (1983). Alongside this, I conducted a discourse analysis of the "Common Goals" of 2004. The purpose was to disclose any coherence between institutions and ideals of *Bildung* or education on the one hand, and the handing over of culturally embedded and value laden themes on the other. My main point was to prove that it is not so much philosophy (or theology) alone as it is the cognitive features of our minds that "build" or shape our identities alongside a process of learning, perhaps an even more important point within themes of normative character. The very fact that RE in Danish primary and secondary schools is still regarded as being a subject of *Bildung* may account for why Christianity and Christian terminology became a necessary part of this analysis. After all, the subject is until this day called *kristendomskundskab*.

³ "We agree with Dupoux and Jacob that human moral capacities are, in ways yet to be understood, grounded in our biology" (Dwyer/Hauser 2007)

⁴ My MA thesis is entitled *Bildung and Distributed Cognition*, 2009

Conclusive remarks:

It may seem harmless that the Common Goals of RE contain a huge number of theological-ly and philosophically embedded terms as the very subject matter proceeds under the name of *kristendomskundskab*. However, to a holder of an MA in Religious Studies this makes little sense. If the primary goal of Danish RE is that pupils are taught *about* religion, I would suggest that actual and scientific research is brought into consideration when it comes to didactics. Both the lack of knowledge about children's normative reflections as well as the concepts and scientific grounding of the legal statutes are topics of debate. I therefore propose that such a source of knowledge – a proper study of these themes – be conducted with regards to the future development of didactics of RE based on the scientific study of religion.

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A Three-Dimensional Humanistic Approach to the Apocalypse 12

Johan Thorendahl

Some obstacles arise, when a teacher attempts to present a combined Jesus character from both 'mythical' apocalyptic literature and more common 'historical' tellings in evangelical traditions. This is due to the old apocalyptic worldviews, which often might create resistance among the teachers audience. Therefore we need a didactic counterbalance to this weighty problem, which relates to central concerns both in liturgical church-preaching and non-confessional humanistic school-teaching, expressed in the following question:

How can a teacher merge historic and apocalyptic aspects of the Jesus character and transfer these aspects to a modern humanistic audience without making these five faults: **1)** mixing different 'worldviews' in a non-philosophical way, **2)** losing his own 'humanistic' accountability, **3)** damaging the internal 'theological' interpretation too much, **4)** forgetting facts concerning the 'historical' genesis of religion and religious motifs, and **5)** missing the possibility to support 'existential growth' in his modern audience.

In my attempt to answer this question the Apocalypse chapter 12 serves as an example of such a difficult background with a strong mythology about the Jesus character. The didactic methods to unfold and handle this complex topic in NT, concerning opposite perspectives in Christology, is inspired by a theory from the German educationalist Dietrich Benner in connection with a three-dimensional humanistic approach to teaching. The combination of these two is here thought to be a valid hermeneutic method to avoid the faults (1-5). The three-dimensional approach is more precisely spoken **a)** an 'existentialistic' approach regarding the humanizing potentials of AP 12 (M. Grimmitt). **b)** a 'narrative' approach, here focusing on the reinterpretation of older traditions in AP 12 (K. Nielsen), **c)** a 'historic-critical' approach, which also links an Egyptian myth about the moongoddess Isis to the genesis of AP 12 (J. H. Kalms).

ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTION

Naturally my introductory presentation must be adjusted to the space limit, which result in the following circumstances: in the present paper an information of the content of teachers classes in the Apocalypse 12 will be toned down in favour of partly superior thoughts about the general educational aims related to our formulated problem (1-5) and partly a brief presentation of a three-dimensional method, that should have ability both to qualify the hermeneutic connection between quite opposite Christological perspectives and create motivation among the students (a-c).

GENERAL EDUCATIONAL AIMS

Our very first matter is how a teacher can maintain the unity of Christ in the New Testament, when he teaches some pupils or students, here thought to be more than 16 years old. In this connection our main concern is to avoid that the 'historical' and 'mythical' aspects of Jesus Christ splits up in two separated parts, namely a historical part with some reliability to the students - and a mythical part with little or maybe no credibility at all. Undertaken classes which fit the latter description "little or maybe no..." would thus indicate, that the teacher has failed to integrate mythical aspects in his humanistic teaching. In this case a major pedagogical question is raised: how can a teacher counterbalance this situation? Below, some claims and assertions are listed up, which serve as an attempt to give an answer (to faults 1-5).

1. Working with worldviews. First of all a teacher must elaborate a clear distinctive knowledge concerning the three fundamental worldviews (Martine C. Gertsen¹) and carefully debate these worldviews with his class relating them to their very different opportunities/limitations to create meaning and quality of life. The teacher must in that way make a clear distinction between different ideas of 'truth', especially a natural scientific worldview, where nature 'answers' via observations and experiments, a humanistic worldview, where man 'answers' by subjective feelings, reason and experience, and a metaphysical worldview, where religion 'answers' through revelations as in AP 12. To act properly as a philosophical humanistic teacher all these worldviews must be introduced with respect. As a consequence the biblical faith in Jesus can only represent a metaphysical worldview, because the historical Jesus is subordinated and engrafted in the mythical story. Thus our problem is diminished, if the teacher alternate between the mythical formula: "*according to the holy story...*" and considerations on existentialistic 'truth'. Alternatively a full mixture of Christianity and humanism only provokes a reasonable rejection of the mythical Christ by many students in the class.

2. Humanistic accountability. Today our societies are highly secularized and dominated by pluralistic lifestyles, expanding multiculturalism and many families with little biblical knowledge. Therefore it seems right to propose an 'existentialist education' as a common platform, which can integrate everybody from this value-relativism. Michael Grimmitt² calls this kind of religious education a 'humanizing-process'. Consequently the teacher must focus on common human experiences and questions from mans everyday struggle with life. Therefore a teacher only keeps his humanistic accountability by respecting basic conditions in the humanistic worldview and diverted existential 'questions' as a

¹ Worldviews, see ex. Gertsen, Martine Cardel "En verden uden grænser. Tværkulturel forståelse og kommunikation", Gad 1994, in the chapter "Virkelighedsopfattelse og værdier" s. 35-65.

² The 'existential' general education as 'humanizing-proces', see ex. the british professional educationalist Grimmitt, Michael "Religionskundskab og menneskelig udvikling" Odense Universitetsforlag 1998. (K. Rendtorffs oversættelse og efterskrift)

point of departure for his teaching. Attached to this questioning he shall introduce different 'answers' to partake as explanations (also) from religious worldviews. This means, that a teacher must introduce a multiplicity of explanations and be able to change perspective between these ideological positions and to 'metacommunicate' about it together with his class. Thus the historical-mythical Jesus is both a unity from one perspective "according to the holy story...", but also disassembled from another humanistic perspective. - Alternatively a teacher performs an illegitimate unilateral 'ownership', which creates sound resistance from the class - and less knowledge.

Dietrich Benner's general educational theory³. Benner's theory is about 'human education' in a broad inclusive sense. It is important in our difficult Christological connection because the German educationalist argues in a needed dialectic way. In his theory he states, that religious teaching must represent both a 'relativistic and independent' function in society - at the same time. In his comprehensive theory he speaks of six subject areas in the humanities, which together constitute the most important values in modern society. These subjects are: politics, work, ethics, art, religion and pedagogy. And the central point in his dialectic understanding means briefly spoken, that one subject ex. religion according to one 'relativistic perspective' must restrict its own explanations from the five other subjects, so they remain independent - and that religion according to the alternative 'independent perspective' shall be able to operate freely emancipated from the other subjects. This general educational theory seeks to avoid several kinds of fanaticism, where one of the subjects so to say 'colonize' the other five. This could be politics = ideological manipulation; or ethics = moralism; or religion = confessional indoctrination. The general education of a citizen shall thus create a polite ability by the citizen to change perspective. This dialectic combination of relativism and autonomy implies in regards of religion, that the 'metaphysic worldview' has its own ability to increase the existential growth, and shall not colonize - nor be colonized by the other subjects with their respective models for explanations. This dialectic 'functional' education theory sets the teacher free to walk into the mythical realm of Christological symbolism in Apok. 12 - without evoking any predictable resistance from his class, as long as he 'metacommunicates' his role playing to the students and links it to the external relativism.

3. The internal 'theological' interpretation. We have hitherto discussed an existentialistic approach to religion. But a modern teacher of old apocalyptic texts, let it be Ap. 12, must also be qualified with a careful knowledge about 'biblical narration' and be aware of old important cultural and philological 'codes' to interpret the structure of archaic myths, namely a 'historic-critical' knowledge. The latter knowledge must improve the narrative interpretation by the teacher. A constructive attempt to understand the internal theologian interpretation is, that the teacher adopts the Holy Scriptures own 'narrative' efforts to

³ For the German educationalist, see ex. Keld, Skovmand "Religion som fællesmenneskelig praksisform" (Religionens status i Dietrich Benner's dannelsesfilosofi" s. 24-36 1(2007)Religionspædagogisk Forum.

interpret and unite the historical-mythical aspects of Christ - by his comparing and collecting biblical statements. A teacher should thus also dare to do the 'hermeneutic walking' into the realm of symbolic interpretations without the reservations and guidelines from the humanistic relativism. Such exercises creates a sensibility (and knowledge) about Christian symbolism, plus typological and allegorical interpretations, and it acts as a firm counter-balance to for instant some teachers fear of contact with mythical Christology or embarrassed custom reducing such myths to fairy tales or other teachers powerless lack of mythical knowledge, when ignorant pupils finds misleading funny interpretations. That means also, that a consistent sociological approach to 'religious education' needs to be supported with a strong mythical scriptural-theology, if the sociological approach also seeks to teach about the 'main character' (Jesus Christ) in New Testament.

4. The 'historical' genesis of religion. The teacher will often be met by pupils and students posing critical questions to mythical passages as for example in Ap. 12, and asking: "*Who made this up?*" or "*The author has lots of fantasy!*" The difficulty in such questions is the prejudice and assumption about the authors individualism based on the students humanistic worldview, which they are backdating to the time of the text. But a questioner needs answers. Thus the teacher according to Benner's theory should politely change perspective to the 'humanistic worldview' and explain about the historical genesis of the motifs in Ap. 12. He has two relevant options: a) somebody invented the myth, or b) the myth represents a reinterpretation of older internal biblical or external traditions in a long history-of-traditions. The latter point is always most plausible in a biblical context, and the Danish scholar Kirsten Nielsen⁴ has written a comprehensive study of biblical reinterpretation, while Jürgen H. Kalms⁵ in connection with Christology in Ap. 12 presents a heathen myth about the moongoddess Isis as an external tradition behind the story, and finally Hugo Rahner⁶ have pointed to heathen parallels and early ecclesiastical reinterpretations of the so-called '*mysterium lunae*' in the Apocalypse. - This scientific knowledge about mythical lunar wisdom in ancient traditions and later reinterpretations and reuse of these traditions can act as a more serious and satisfying 'educational' explanation to pupils and students about the genesis of Christian myths - than silence or loose assumptions.

5. Support existentialistic growth. Our so-called "three dimensional approach" (existentialistic, narrative and historical) represent a useful dialectic triangle of both interwoven and independent perspectives for teachers of religion. To some degree inspiration is

⁴ Kirsten Nielsen "For et træ er der håb", Gad København 1985.

⁵ Kalms, Jürgen H. "Der Sturz des Gottesfeindes : traditionsgegeschichtliche Studien zu Apokalypse 12", Neukirchener : Neukirchener Verlag, 2001 s. 119

⁶ Rahner, Hugo "Symbole der Kirche : Die Ekklesiologie der Väter" Salzburg : Otto Müller, 1964.

also drawn from the Danish authors Børge Troelsen⁷ and John Rydahl, who has presented these didactic approaches. Relevant is also the Danish publication “Religionsdidaktik”⁸ and it is certainly reasonable to connect these thoughts closer with the British scholar Michael Grimmitt and his concept of ‘religious education’ as a humanizing process and ‘existential growth’. But the theory in his chief work lacks a description of the important historic-critical approach. Nevertheless M. Grimmitt in connection with D. Benner’s theory on ‘human education’ and the three mentioned approaches to religion - seems to be a suitable didactic cocktail capable of producing existentialistic growth in classrooms - and avoiding the mentioned faults (1-5).

These three dimensions or perspectives could then interact in a dialectic way partly ‘related’ and partly ‘autonomous’ (inspired by Benner). Each isolated perspective possesses also in principle its own educatory aim and working method (see model 1-2) and can also serve as three effective means of motivation (see model 3). All together this triangle of didactic perspectives gains a specific educatory outcome, exemplified by the teaching concerning Ap. 12 - by these central questions:

(a) Existentialistic question: “*What can we learn from Ap. 12 in our modern humanistic life?*” (b) Narrative question: “*What is the theological holy message of Ap. 12?*” and (c) historic-critical question: “*What can we learn in Ap. 12 about the early Christian theology?*”

Didactic model 1-3. Below the first model (1) shows a teaching-method according to the theory of Michael Grimmitt (presented by Troelsen & Rydahl). A central assumption in Grimmitt’s thinking is, that pupils and students must improve their personal abilities by being ‘humanized’ through education in philosophy and religion. But to accomplish that aim, they must partly learn “about” religion in a professional way following the British scholar Ninian Smart’s phenomenology of religion (blue square). But they must also partly learn “from” religion to improve their own existentialistic understanding of life (green square) according to ideas presented by the American existentialist theologian Paul Tillich. Thus a teacher shall establish a dialogue with a dialectical exchange between learning “about” and “from” religion. He should therefore in connection with Ap. 12 establish a meeting in his teaching between the scientific knowledge and the learners own experiences from daily life (ie. between past and present). These two approaches are on our model combined with a third narrative approach (ie. mythical) to both religion and experiences with a focus on symbolism (red background). The teacher should thus activate the three approaches by one of the religious dimensional subjects to the left, where “mythology” is chosen. Now the apocalyptical aspects shall transfer between the green and blue squares,

⁷ Troelsen, Børge og Rydahl, John ”Mening og sammenhæng, Forlaget Anis 1996, s. 139-189.

⁸ Buchardt, Mette (red.) ”Religionsdidaktik”, Gyldendal 2006.

while the red narrative square behind functions as a medium of the dialectical transmission.

The second model (2) exemplifies more directly these theories in connection with AP 12. In the blue square is the specified subject “*myths of creation*” and below the history-of-traditions behind the text named after their diversity concerning the nature of enlightenment (heathen, physical, wisdom, ethical and rebirth). They must now interact in a dialectical way with the students own personal experiences (examples in green square), so that the didactical double aim is achieved. - And the red square behind indicates the narrative aspect of the subject, which includes learning “about” the history-of-traditions and the learning “from” these to be aware of personal biographies and their development. Thus it should facilitate the understanding of the apocalypse and its ‘quotations’ from older texts. But the evolution of traditions can also sharpen awareness of students own slowly changing life-stories. These biographies also create meaning in their lives and shape their personal identity. Thus biographies both personal and social shared must also be reinterpreted and adjusted to new circumstances now and in the future - just as in the case of AP. 12.

The last model (3) illustrates how the teacher can motivate students in a differentiated way, which must be adjusted to the students varying competences. Some students may be interested in the historical approach (blue area). We can call these types ‘*Sherlock Holmes*’. Others want to invest their fantasy in the amazing theological apocalyptic worldview (red area), but needs the teachers professional help to overview the complex mythology. Let’s address these types as ‘*H. C. Andersen*’. And many wish to inquire the connection between the mythology and some basic questions in their own lives (green area). Why not name these types ‘*Socrates*’.

If a teacher is capable of using this triangle of perspectives in a professional way, and to metacommunicate about his changing of chosen perspectives, then I presume, he will also increase his ability to merge Christological telling from NT (historical with mythological) in a non-confessional way, while keeping his entire humanistic accountability. And at the same time these mentioned strategies can be used as a sort of classroom management.

Religious Education in a Democratic State – The Ghanaian Experience

Seth Asare-Danso

Abstract

Since the introduction of formal education in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) in 1843, Religious Education has undergone enormous changes as a result of educational policy initiatives introduced by governments. This paper provides a historical analysis of the effects of Education Acts and Reforms on Basic School Religious Education Curriculum in Ghana from 1957 to 2007. It examines the nature of Religious Education in the Gold Coast / Ghana during the Colonial period (1850-1950), the Nationalist period (1951-1966), the era of Military Regimes (1966-1992), and the era of Democratic Regimes (1993-2010). A content analysis of educational policy documents and interviews were used for the collection of data. The findings of the research revealed that the teaching of Religious Education has gone through an evolutionary process through the introduction of various Education Acts and Reforms. Besides, it revealed that various terminologies have been used for the teaching of Religious Education within this study period. These were Religious Instruction (RI), Religious Knowledge (RK), Scriptures, Bible Knowledge (BK), Cultural Studies (CS) and Religious & Moral Education (RME). The study revealed that the effects of Education Acts and Reforms provided three models of Religious Education, namely “Single Subject” model, “Integrated Subject” model and “No Subject” model. Finally, reactions from religious groups and civil society revealed that majority of Ghanaians have preference for the “Single Subject” and the “Integrated Subject” models, but they are not in support of the “No Subject” model. The study recommends that governments formulate educational policy that makes Religious Education a core curriculum, externally examined, and comprehensive in scope to cover other religions, due to the pluralistic nature of society.

Introduction

Between 1957 and 2007, Religion has been taught in Ghanaian Basic Schools under different titles due to educational policy initiatives made by governments. The titles were *Religious Instruction*, *Religious Knowledge*, *Scriptures*, *Bible Knowledge*, *Cultural Studies* and *Religious & Moral Education*. Even though many scholars have written extensively about the historical development of Education in Ghana (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975; Graham, 1976; Bening, 1990; Addae-Mensah, 2000; Cobbina, 2003), there has not been a single study on the development of Religious Education in Ghana. This provided the motivation to research into this topic. This paper therefore presents the evolutionary

processes that Religious Education curriculum has gone through over the past years. It examines the nature of Religious Education in the Gold Coast / Ghana in the pre-colonial, colonial, nationalists, military and democratic era. A theoretical framework provides the basis for the analysis of the research findings. Finally, the paper concludes with a summary of the research and suggestions for policy making.

Religious Education during the Pre-Colonial Period (up to 1850)

Religious Education in Ghana could be traced to the pre-colonial period when the subject formed an integral part of Traditional African Education. The African has been described as being notoriously religious (Mbiti, 1969) and incurably religious (Parrinder, 1962). Religious Education was provided by acquiring knowledge about the Supreme Being, the ancestors and the lesser gods through songs, proverbs, folktales and myths, just to mention a few.

Religious Education during the Colonial Period (1850-1950)

The Colonial governments used the castles that were serving as trading posts for the establishment of the Castle Schools at Elmina, Cape Coast and the Christiansborg, Osu (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975, pp.17-20; Graham, 1976, pp.1-7). The curriculum comprised Reading, Writing, Arithmetic and **Religious Instruction** (Wise, 1956, p.9). The content was based on Christianity, and Bible passages were used to indoctrinate pupils.

The Basel Mission followed this pioneering role by establishing their first schools at the Christiansborg, Osu in 1828, Akropong in 1843 and Aburi in 1847 (Odamtten, 1978). **Religious Instruction** was part of the school curriculum (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975, p.19).

The colonial government adopted the Basel Mission educational policy (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975; Graham, 1976) and used it from 1861 to 1987. Under Governor Guggisberg, he outlined *Sixteen Principles of Education*, which was presented to the Legislative Council in 1925. The 7th principle stated: “*Character training must take an important place in education*” and the 8th principle stated: “*Religious teaching should form part of school life*” (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975, p.57).

Religious Education under the Nationalist Period (1951-1966)

Under Dr. Nkrumah’s Accelerated Development Plan of 1951, Religion was given the title **Religious Instruction**. According to the Ministry of Education Report, 1957, the subjects that were taught at the primary school level were:

“... Personal Hygiene, Village Sanitation, English, Writing, Arithmetic, Physical Education., Games, Hygiene, Religious Instruction, Ghanaian Languages, Nature Study, Geography, History, Centres of Interest, Music, Art & Crafts, Needlework, African Drumming and Dancing” (MOE Report, 1957, p.8).

The 1961 Education Act provided that Religion should be put on either the first or the last period on the school time-table so that parents who did not want their children to study Religion could withdraw them from the class during the lesson period (MOE Report, 1957, p.10). **Religious Instruction** was used until the 1960's when the title was changed to **Scriptures** (King (1990). The content was based on the Bible.

At the University and the Seminary levels, the title **Divinity** was used. The Religion Department began at the University of Ghana, Legon as the “Department of Divinity” in 1948. The name was changed to the “Department for the Study of Religions” in 1962, in order to accommodate the study of other Religions in addition to Christianity. This was confirmed by Reverend Professor John Samuel Pobee, a retired Lecturer at the Department during an interview.

After the attainment of political independence in Ghana, President Nkrumah's Government proposed to introduce “**Moral Teaching**” in place of “**Religious Knowledge**” in the Basic School curriculum in 1962 but the change could not be effected (Minutes of Synod Committee 25-26 April, 1962, para.1776).

Religious Education under Military Regimes (1966-1992)

General I. K. Acheampong's military government (1972-1975) appointed an educational review committee headed by Professor N. K. Dzobo. The committee presented its report to the government in 1973 and based on its recommendations, Religion was introduced with the title **Cultural Studies**. This new subject integrated Religion, Music and Culture (Ministry of Education, 1972, p. 9).

At the Secondary School level, Bible Knowledge was the title used at the General Certificate of Education “Ordinary” level, whereas Christian Religious Studies (C.R.S.), Islamic Religious Studies (I.R.S.) and West African Traditional Religion (W.A.T.R) were used at the General Certificate of Education “Advanced” Level.

In 1987, during the military regime of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) under Flt. Lt. J. J. Rawlings, **Cultural Studies** was completely withdrawn from the Basic School curriculum. Mrs. Sarah Agyeman Duah confirmed this in an interview with her at her office in Accra. She was the Director for Curriculum, Research and Development Division of the Ministry of Education.

Religious Education under Democratic Regimes (1993-2007)

Concerns raised by the public following the removal of Religion from the school curriculum caused a National Education Reform Review Committee (NERRC) to be set up in 1994. Based on its recommendations, Religion was reintroduced, under the title ***Religious & Moral Education (RME)*** and a syllabus was developed by the Ministry of Education, Ghana in 1998.

In 2002, a committee was set up by President J. A. Kuffour to review the educational system in Ghana. It was headed by Professor Jophus Anamuah-Mensah, who was then the Vice Chancellor of the University of Education, Winneba. The Committee proposed that fewer subjects should be taught at the Basic School level and recommended that:

“At the lower level, reading, writing, dictation and comprehension texts should incorporate concepts of Religious and Moral Education, Culture, Science, Hygiene, Agricultural Science, Life Skills and Civics and should be taught in an integrated manner” (Meeting the Challenges of Education in the Twenty First Century, 2002, p.4).

Consequently, the subject was removed from the Basic School curriculum in 2007. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Ghana described the integration of Religion into other subjects as making Religion “an appendix” to those subjects (Gurney, 2007).

Public Reactions to the withdrawal of Religious Education from the curriculum

The withdrawal of the subject from Basic School curriculum attracted several criticisms from Ghanaians. Frimpong-Manso (2007) used the December 10, 2007 issue of the Daily Graphic to capture the following headlines:

- Pastoral letter on Education Reform – GES Dams Bishops (Daily Graphic, Nov. 20, 2007)
- Christian Council backs Catholic Bishops on Review of aspects of Educational Reform (Daily Graphic, Nov. 22, 2007)
- Restore Religious and Moral Education in Schools (The Mirror, Nov. 24, 2007)
- Resolving the Controversy on RME (Graphic Editorial, Nov. 24, 2007)
- Ministry to respond to Bishops’ letter (Ghanaian Times, Nov. 24, 2007)
- Methodist, Islamic Groups support teaching of RME (Daily Graphic, Nov. 26, 2007).

In response to these public agitations, President Kuffour used his 2008 May Day Anniversary Speech to instruct authorities of the Ghana Education Service to re-introduce **Reli-**

gious and Moral Education as a subject on its own from the 2008/2009 academic year.

Theoretical Framework

Whaling (1999) provides four models of learning as Theology, Humanities, Natural Science and Integration. This framework has been used to analyse the data collected.

According to him, during the Christian Medieval period when the Christian church was used as the main civilizing force, *Theology* or *Religion* became the centre of learning. This model could be located within the Missionary and Colonial periods when Religious Education was a core curriculum.

It was followed by the *Humanities* model which placed emphasis on literature, human philosophy, ethics, history, language and culture. This could be located within the Nationalist period when the 1961 Education Act emphasised the study of the *Humanities* in order to provide the human resources needed for the development of Ghana after independence in 1957.

With the third model, learning was centred on *nature* or *the Natural Sciences*. In Ghana, Science and Technology has been given prominence in the educational system since the Nationalist period, thus overshadowing Religious Education in schools.

Whaling (1999) has expressed the view that we are currently in a modern age of globalisation where there is the need for the *integration of knowledge*. This provides a fourth model of learning, i.e. *Integration*.

It appears as if the teaching of Religious Education in Basic Schools in Ghana seemed to have found its place at the integrated model stage. This may explain why in 2007 Religion was integrated into certain subjects like Citizenship Education (Teaching Syllabus for Citizenship Education, 2007).

New Theoretical models for teaching Religious Education

Making deductions from Frank Whaling's theoretical framework, I have come out with three models of Religious Education which have been used in the Ghanaian educational system. These are the "**Single Subject**" model, the "**No Subject**" model, and the "**Integrated Subject**" model.

The "**Single Subject**" model was used when Religion was taught as a single subject under the designations or titles like *Religious Instruction*, *Religious Knowledge* and *Scriptures*. The "**No Subject**" model was used when the first attempt was used to replace *Religious Instruction* with *Moral Teaching*, following the introduction of the 1961 Education Act. A second attempt was made during the 2007 Education Reform when certain aspects of Religion were to be taught using the syllabuses of certain subjects like *English Language* and

Citizenship Education. The “**Integrated Subject**” model was used when Religion was integrated with other subjects (Morality and Music) to become *Cultural Studies* and when it was integrated with Morality and Education to become *Religious & Moral Education*.

Conclusions

This paper examined how educational policy initiatives of governments affected the teaching of Religion in Ghanaian Basic Schools from 1957 to 2007. It has provided the various terminologies used for the teaching of Religion within the study period. These were *Religious Instruction*, *Religious Knowledge*, *Scriptures*, *Bible Knowledge*, *Cultural Studies*, and *Religious and Moral Education*. A theoretical framework has been provided for the purpose of analyses. The study has provided three models for the teaching of religion in Ghana. These are the “**Single-Subject**” model, the “**Integrated-Subject**” model and the “**No-Subject**” model. The study has revealed that majority of Ghanaians have preference for the “Single-Subject” and the “Integrated Subject” models, rather than a “No Subject” model. The study recommends that governments formulate educational policy that makes Religious Education a core curriculum, externally examined, and comprehensive in scope to cover other religions, due to the pluralistic nature of society.

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Interviews

Interview with Mrs Sarah Agyeman-Duah, Director, Ghana Education Service Curriculum, Research & Development Division (CRDD) at her office at the Headquarters of the Ministry of Education in Accra on 11th March, 2008.

Interview with Rev. Prof. J. S. Pobee, a retired Professor of the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, Legon at his office at the Holy Trinity Anglican Cathedral, Accra on 25th March, 2008.

Dutch Church-State Relations and Religious Education: Tensions and Challenges

Paul Vermeer

1. Introduction

The Dutch educational system has often been acclaimed for its plurality and for the scope it provides for denominational schools (cf. Thiessen, 2001). It is indeed a varied landscape which includes, in addition to public schools, a wide range of Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, Muslim, Jewish and even Hindu schools – all fully funded by the state. However, this is not altogether an advantage to religious education. Specific arrangements between church and state free the latter from all responsibility for religious education. The practice of religious education or in Dutch schools is therefore very diverse, with conflicting interests and conflicting pedagogical approaches, little prestige and, in general, poorly motivated students.

This paper describes the current situation in three steps. First, there is a discussion of arrangements between church and state in the Netherlands (section 2) and secondly, a more detailed description of the Dutch educational system (section 3). Finally, the position of religious education within the system is discussed (section 4). Taken together, these three steps make it clear why the Dutch educational system no longer offers a favourable climate for religious education.

The remainder of the paper addresses the question of how to improve the status of religious education in Dutch schools without violating the relationship between church and state. This is done in two further steps. First, a brief research review shows that Dutch secondary students still consider religion an important subject that should be studied at school (section 5). Secondly, religious education in Dutch schools is reviewed by advocating a mix of state-supervised and confessional religious education (section 6).

2. The relationship between church and state in the Netherlands

Traditionally, three church-state arrangements exist in Western Europe: concordatary systems, national church systems and separatist systems (Ferrari, 2002: 6-7). In a concordatary system, bilateral provisions govern the relationship between the state and each religious group. These provisions are called *concordats* if they concern the state's relationship with the Roman Catholic Church, *agreements* if they concern its relationship with any other denomination. Examples of countries with a concordatary system are Italy, Germany and Spain. A national church system is one in which a national church enjoys prefer-

ential treatment by the state – at the expense, however, of effective state control over the organisation and activities of the church in question. Examples of countries with a national church are Norway, Denmark and England. Countries that have neither concordats nor national churches are called separatist countries: a heterogeneous residual group with individual church-state regulations. France, with its principle of „laïcité“, falls under this heading; but so does Belgium, where the Roman Catholic Church enjoys certain privileges such as payment of its clergy's salaries by the Belgian state although there is no concordat between church and state.

The Netherlands also comes under the heading of separatist countries. There is no bilateral regulation of church-state relations, nor is there a national church in the Netherlands. Instead, the relationship between religious groups and the state is based on three principles: recognition of the right to religious liberty, separation between church and state, and state neutrality (Van Bijsterveld, 2006: 228). The right to religious liberty is recognised in the Dutch constitution (article 6) and grants individuals and groups the right to hold a religious conviction and to express it publicly. The other two, while not provided for in Dutch written law, are principles commonly recognised by the state in dealing with religious groups. The separation of church and state means that the state does not interfere in religious or church matters and, by the same token, that religious groups or churches do not interfere in state concerns. Finally, in its dealings with churches and religious groups, the Dutch government not only recognises the right to religious liberty and the separation between church and state; it is also strictly neutral. That is to say, the Dutch government does not favour one church or religious group over another but regards them all as fundamentally equal.

3. The Dutch educational system

The Dutch educational system is the outcome of the so-called „school struggle“ of the nineteenth century (Vreeburg, 1993: 79-83; cf. also Westerman, 2001). The right to freedom of education was first established in the Dutch constitution and recognised in the Netherlands in 1848. It confers on churches or religious groups the freedom to establish schools, and it gives parents the right to send their children to church schools instead of public schools. This freedom was curtailed, however, by the fact that church schools received no state funding whereas public education did; which, in turn, led to a call for state-funded religiously affiliated schools. The matter was settled in 1917 by a historic agreement, known as the „pacification“, between Christian political parties and the liberals and socialists. As from 1920, then, public schools and religiously affiliated schools have received equal funding in the Netherlands. As a result, the number of religiously affiliated schools has risen steadily throughout most of the twentieth century. This Dutch system of state-funded public and private schools is called the „dual system“ and, as shown in the table below, now includes approximately twice as many religiously affiliated as public schools.

Schools per denomination and size, 2005/2006

	Primary education			Secondary education		
	Number	%	Size (x 1000)	Number	%	Size (x 1000)
Roman Catholic	2098	33.7	522.8	161	25.8	242.5
Dutch Reformed	1860	24.4	377.4	129	19.3	181.6
Re-Reformed	120	1.8	27.9	8	2.3	22.0
Orthodox Reformed	129	1.4	21.5	4	1.0	9.7
Interconfessional	40	0.7	10.2	45	8.1	75.7
Islamic	47	0.6	9.2	2	0.2	1.6
Hindu	5	0.1	1.5	--	--	--
Evangelical	6	0.1	1.0	3	0.1	1.1
Jewish	2	0.0	0.4	--	--	--
Other private schools	434	6.5	100.1	124	17.3	163.0
Public	2393	30.8	477.5	190	25.9	243.2
Total	7134	100.0	1549.5	666	100.0	940.5

(Source: Statistics Netherlands, *Jaarboek Onderwijs 2007*, pp. 155, 169)

For a better understanding of the „dual system“ we need to take a closer look at the differences between public schools and private or religiously affiliated schools. These differences are linked to three basic liberties: freedom of establishment, freedom of organisation and freedom of persuasion (Akkermans, 1997: 44). Freedom of establishment, as already explained, has to do with the right of churches (or groups of parents) to establish a school and apply for state funding. Freedom of organisation concerns the freedom of churches or parents to organise a school according to their own principles and ideas, and to determine the content of the curriculum. This freedom to determine the curriculum, however, is not an absolute right: it is limited by standards set by the Dutch government. Finally, freedom of persuasion concerns the right to express a religious conviction or secular ideology at school. For instance, these basic liberties would give a group of Muslim parents the right to establish a Muslim school for their children (freedom of establishment), to limit the enrolment to Muslim children (freedom of organisation) and to have compulsory daily prayers at school (freedom of persuasion). Of course, these rights and liberties do not apply to public schools. That is to say, public schools are established by the state, are not or-

ganised in terms of religious principles or ideas, and are strictly neutral with regard to religion and worldview.

4. Religious education in the Dutch educational system

The aforementioned three basic liberties are typical of the way the church-state relationship has developed in the Dutch field of education. The right to establish a school on religious principles is seen as a legitimate expression of the right to religious liberty. Furthermore, the neutrality of the state emerges clearly from the fact that representatives of all persuasions are free to establish schools and apply for state funding. Applications for the funding of private schools are adjudged solely on the basis of educational standards and not in terms of ideological or religious standards. Finally, as regards the separation between church and state, the Dutch state does not interfere in any way with the expression of a religiously affiliated school's identity. This circumstance in particular has profound implications for religious education at school.

Officially, religious education in Dutch schools is confessional. There is no religious education in public schools. Only in primary education does the law demand attention – objective attention, so as not to jeopardise the neutrality of the state (cf. Westermann, 2001) – to the various religions and worldviews in Dutch society; but even there it does not have to be a separate subject. As a result, most public primary schools touch on religion and worldview in passing, in subjects such as geography or history: a practice that is also common in public secondary schools. Separate RE classes form part of the curriculum only in religiously affiliated schools and are permitted as a legitimate expression of the school's religious identity. Thus, officially, religious education in Dutch schools is always confessional. Moreover, since it is seen as part of a school's religious identity (in other words, an expression of the right to freedom of persuasion), religious education is not supervised by the state: such a measure would violate the separation between church and state and the state's neutrality. The state therefore imposes no general educational aims with regard to religious education, there is no such thing as a national syllabus or curriculum and no general professional and educational requirements for RE teachers; nor is the quality of religious education classes assessed and evaluated by the school inspectorate. In short, the status of religious education is completely different from that of any other subject in public and private schools. Apart from paying the salaries of RE teachers, the Dutch state does not concern itself with religious education in any way.

For this reason, the actual practice of religious education in the Netherlands has become very diverse. Because of its confessional nature, it initially served as a kind of secondary religious socialisation taking place at school as an extension of the primary religious socialisation in the family. However, the profound secularisation of Dutch society has made it virtually impossible – at schools affiliated to mainstream Christian denominations such as

the Roman Catholic and the Dutch Reformed, at any rate – to continue this practice (Vreeburg, 1997; cf. also Vermeer, 2010). In most of these schools, religious education has actually lost its confessional character, though officially it is still treated as a confessional subject for which the state bears no responsibility. Moreover, the churches themselves seem to have lost interest in religious education at school as they became aware that it is no longer an appropriate medium for the transmission of faith. In the Netherlands, therefore, religious education is virtually absent in public schools and increasingly marginalised in most religiously affiliated schools.

5. Dutch students' views on religious education at school

While religious education at Dutch schools is becoming increasingly problematic, opportunities do exist. Most importantly, there is evidence that Dutch students are still interested in religion as a field of study. Over the past few years there have been several inquiries into the views of Dutch students on religious education at school. As part of the REDCo project, which is a comparative study into the practice of religious education in several European countries (cf. Jackson et al., 2007), Ter Avest et al. (2008) and Bertram-Troost et al. (2009) have studied the views of Dutch students in this regard. Their results show, first of all, that while most Dutch students do not attach personal importance to religion or discuss religious topics with their friends, they do regard religion as an important subject that should be studied at school. They consider it important because knowledge of the Christian faith and other religions enhances general knowledge and understanding of the world – which, in turn, increases respect and understanding for people from different faiths. When it comes to their personal development, however, most students are not much concerned with religion and religious education. Dutch students in particular seem to prefer an „education about“ approach, so to speak, rather than an „education from“, let alone an „education in“ approach to religious education. As part of the Religious and Life Perspectives (RaLP) project – a comparative study of the religiosity and worldviews of young people in Europe – Van der Tuin (2009a) questioned Dutch secondary school students about their views on religious education. His findings confirmed the REDCo results: Dutch students prefer a more objective approach to religious education, one that distances it from their own lives.

Apart from the REDCo and RaLP projects, interesting research is being conducted by the thematic network „Teaching religion in a multicultural European society“ (the TRES network) into the views of religious education teachers in sixteen countries. The views of Dutch teachers were also investigated by Van der Tuin (cf. Van der Tuin & De Beer, 2009) and are generally in accord with the students' views. That is to say, RE teachers in the Netherlands prefer a cognitively based „education about“ approach. Moreover, they seem to favour the more cognitive teaching methods such as discussion, explanation and relevant reading. According to Van der Tuin and De Beer (2009: 149), this massive preference for

the informative „education about“ approach among Dutch RE teachers is the more conspicuous in view of the „education from“ approach that is basic to much of the teaching material used in religious education classes. Not only do Dutch RE teachers not seem to deal with their subject confessionally: they also do not resort to the alternative „education from“ approach advocated by many religious pedagogues and designers of teaching materials. Nonetheless, these religious education teachers seem to be doing what their students want: informing them about religion.

Admittedly, the results of the REDCo and RaLP projects and the TRES network are based on very small samples and probably do not represent all Dutch students at religiously affiliated schools. Nevertheless, the overall finding of these studies (that students are still interested in religion as a subject to be studied at school, if taught in an objective and informative way) was in part confirmed by a study I conducted myself into the interreligious orientations of Dutch students (Vermeer & Van der Ven, 2004). This study used a nationally representative sample of students attending Catholic secondary schools with pre-university or pre-college programmes. It showed that these students reject any claim to unique religious truth made by any religious tradition and, moreover, that they were not particularly interested in religious dialogue in the classroom. Instead, most of them took a relativistic view of the problem of religious diversity, strongly endorsing the idea that all religions are equal and directed towards the same truth. In interpreting these results (Vermeer & Van der Ven, 2004: 53), I also took this to be evidence that Dutch students in general prefer an informative, „education about“ approach and are not particularly interested in discussing their own beliefs and opinions in class.

To summarise, then, there is evidence that students are still interested in religion as a subject to be studied at school. Moreover, students want religion to be dealt with informatively and seem to prefer an „education about“ approach, which is precisely what the Dutch RE teachers participating in the TRES project also prefer. So what is the problem? What prevents teachers and students from using the opportunity to improve the position and practice of religious education in Dutch schools? These questions take us back to the relationship between church and state.

6. The future of religious education in the Netherlands: plea for a mixed model

Recently, Knauth and Körs (2011) reflected on the findings of the REDCo project in terms of what they call a „contextual setting approach“ and showed that religious education at school is determined largely by national and cultural contexts. To this end they offered an ideal-typical description of three types of contextual settings that prevail in Europe. The Dutch context they rightly describe as „plurality conscious but separate“. By this they mean that while the state acknowledges the plurality of religions in society, it responds by supporting separation rather than integration. In the case of the Netherlands this means, as I

have explained, that every religious group or denomination is entitled to have its own separate schools and, more particularly, its own way of implementing religious education. As I have also tried to explain, this currently generates a climate that is not altogether favourable to religious education and, in fact, confronts us with a dilemma.

To improve the situation of religious education in Dutch schools one could, for instance, deny religious groups the right to their own schooling and deconfessionalise religious education. However, that would constitute a violation of a basic human right. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, parents are entitled to choose the kind of education they would like their children to receive (article 26); and this, according to the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in turn implies that parents have the right to choose their children's religious and moral education in conformity with their own convictions (article 18). Clearly, these rights are recognised by the Dutch dual educational system with its underlying three liberties. On the other hand, the system of separate confessional religious education also has its limitations nowadays. The continuing and pervasive secularisation of Dutch society means that most religiously affiliated schools no longer function as media of religious socialisation; and this, as we have seen, has resulted in a marginalisation of RE at school. Nobody seems to take responsibility for it any more. Most churches have apparently lost interest in religious education at school, while the state respects the autonomy of religiously affiliated schools in this regard. The net result is that religious education at school is on its own. There is, however, a way out of this dilemma.

In my view, a mixed model – compulsory state-supervised RE combined with confessional religious education – could be such a way out. To ensure freedom of organisation and persuasion, confessional religious education would remain the responsibility of the school board, church or religious group the school is affiliated with; and in order to ensure freedom of establishment, the state would continue to fund confessional religious education. In addition to confessional RE, the state should introduce a deconfessionalised type of religious education as a compulsory subject in all public and religiously affiliated schools. It is crucial that this subject should be deconfessionalised and taught in an informative and objective way, because that would safeguard the separation between church and state as well as the neutrality of the state. Of course, objective education is difficult to achieve – even, according to some, impossible and undesirable (cf. Westerman, 2001); but objectivity is essential if one wants to incorporate compulsory religious education into the Dutch dual system of education. Furthermore, the demand for objectivity enables the state to formulate educational aims and to lay down syllabuses, curricula, and professional and educational requirements for RE teachers without jeopardising its own neutrality. But most importantly, the objective approach accords with the wishes of the students themselves.

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“Core Values timeout”. A Counter-Hegemonic Discursive Device in Police Jargon

Malin Sefton

This article centres on Swedish police students’ perceptions of the informal practice of “Core Values Timeout” (Sw. värdegrunds-timeout) in the police force. The analysis is based on empirical data from fieldwork conducted at the Swedish National Police Academy. The results show that the timeout works to oppose the official Police Core Values policy, but also an implicit core value based on non-discriminatory speech and behaviour. The timeout works as a counter-hegemonic discursive tool for maintaining a humorous jargon, and functions as a socio-pragmatic device for parallel practices of inclusion and exclusion. The timeout can be seen as a response to the Police Core Values, i.e. the core values generate the counter-productive effect of making visible the non-acceptable behaviour and politically incorrect values practised in the organisation.

Theory U and Religious Education

Ullrich Zeitler

Homo religiousus

I take spiritual openness, relational awareness and trust building to be major objectives of religious education. They are also supportive of or probably even constitutive of human relations in general. In this sense, religious education is not only part of confessional religious practices but also of importance for non-confessional social and inter-cultural education. Focus on religious education is supposed to be indispensable to general education (“Bildung”).

One central objective of religious education is to promote spiritual awareness (or openness). Studies by David Hay and Rebecca Nye (19..) have emphasized that spiritual awareness is not just something people have chosen to get themselves involved in, but a basic anthropological constant. Spiritual awareness expresses itself also in purely secular experiences and is, therefore, not bound to specific religious practices. In other words, all people are spiritual and, consequently, “it is possible to be spiritual, without speaking of God”. (Freudenreich/Mette 2005)¹ Spirituality includes awareness sensing, mystery sensing and value sensing, each of them are connected with being human. If these are religious qualities, each human being is religious. Man is *homo religiosus*. (Van der Leeuw 1963)

Religious education has epistemological and educational potential which is worth exploring. This has been realized by professionals in various fields, some being more experimental, development-oriented and more venturesome than others, among the former are leadership theories, e.g. spiritual leadership. The latter, not quite so alternative theories, include caring ethics, which focus on relational awareness and trust building as most important competences in ethical decision-making.

In this article, caring ethics is not further discussed although it is reasonable to include in the curriculum of religious education. Instead, I should like to focus primarily on spiritual leadership. Spiritual leadership theories reflect the insights of religious education and theological reflections and contribute, in turn, to the clarification and first and foremost the operationalization of theological concepts, if not theology’s reluctance to deal with business would form a barrier for communication. Therefore, the potential of synergy of theology, science of religion, religious educational practice, leadership and organizational development theory is worth having in mind, when discussing the further development of religious education.

¹ This rather broad use of the term “spirituality” follows Willigis Jäger’s idea of “integral spirituality”. Jäger insists on a confession-free universal experience of ground of human beings. (Compare Süss (2005), 635).

In what follows, my research question is how a particular theory of organizational development and leadership, i.e. Otto Scharmer's "Theory U", may shed light on, conceptualize and operationalize the constitutive role of spirituality in education, social and professional development. By using a language and conceptual framework from a non-religious context we may achieve, that the reliance on spirituality in religious education receives greater acceptance in a multi-cultural society.

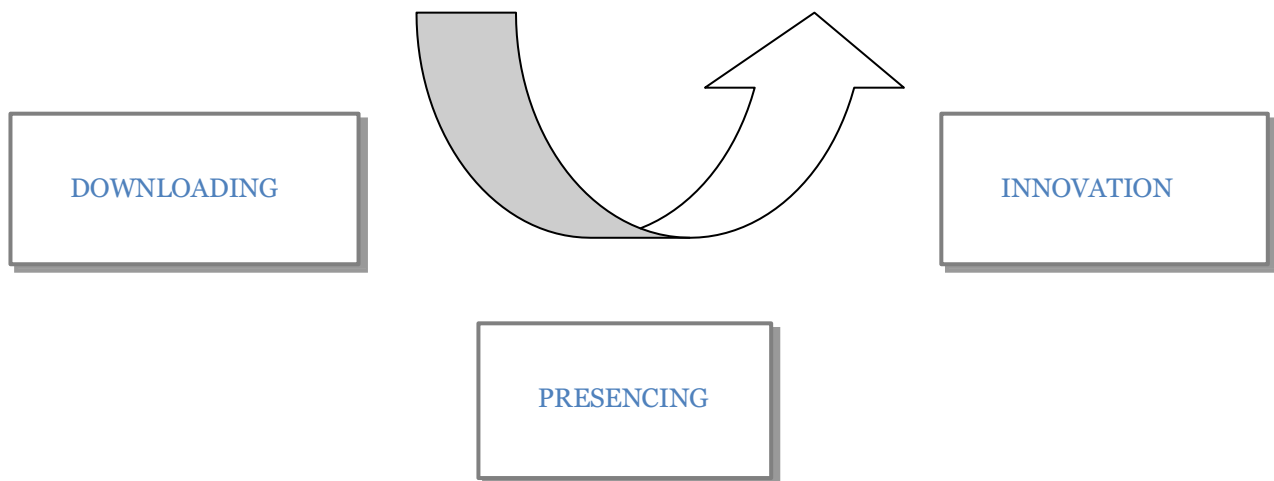
There is no shortcut to improved practice

Spiritual awareness plays a major role in C. Otto Scharmer's "Theory U" (2007), in particular in his key concept of "presencing". C. Otto Scharmer's Theory U (TU) turned out to be one of the most influential and discussed contributions to organizational development and leadership theory through the last decade (Scharmer 2007). TU challenges our common practice and conceptualizes a way – based on multiple empirical experiences – of how to develop professional practice. He underpins his arguments with numerous examples from his consulting work with private enterprises, educational institutions and the health care system.

TU is based on the Einsteinian assumption that "problems can never be solved with the same mind that created them" (Scharmer 2007, 168). That is why, if we want to make progress and find durable solutions, we need to stop "downloading" and operate from "future as it emerges". Scharmer formulates a radical critique of experienced based learning, the concepts of best practice and, eventually also although less explicit, evidence based practice. (Ibid., 7)

The short cut from downloading patterns of the past to re-affirmative practice (reproduction) seems at first sight to be the most reliable way; but sooner or later it will show up inadequate and are the problems already manifest, there will be no way that old practice can identify solutions for practice-immanent problems. In order to achieve sustainable solutions, according to Scharmer, we have to make a detour via a restart on the basis of some kind of spiritual renewal.

Scharmer proposes a learning theory which makes creative learning and performing (innovation) dependent upon "letting go", "presencing" and "letting come, an imperative detour which opens up for future as it emerges. Without going into detail but simplifying, we could reformulate Scharmer's U-model as a triple structure with the following three ingredients: downloading, presencing and innovation. There is no short cut from downloading to innovation. Any innovation which avoids the reproduction of unsustainable solutions must make a detour roundabout via presencing.



This triad is not exclusive, it has been seen before. In fact, the triad - downloading-presencing-innovation (co-creation) – reflects a common structure in daily life and professional development. Fortunately so, because if it would not reflect practice, it would simply be irrelevant and inadequate. Analyzing which processes in our life have generated transformation, the dialectical conceptual framework, as represented in the U-turn, seems to be a reasonable model for interpretation.

Not surprisingly, we can find examples from the field of Christian social practice (diaconal work), too. For example the homepage of Blue Cross Denmark explicates three key value concepts which show conspicuous similarities with Scharmer's model. These values are professionalism, empathy and new opportunities. (www.blaakors.dk) An analysis of the similarities between TU and Blue Cross is given another place. (Zeitler 2012) Yet, it is important at that place to emphasize – to avoid misunderstanding – that professionalism is not identical with downloading, but that professionals - besides building on past experiences, plausible theories and well-proofed methods and professional guidelines - also need to reassess these standards and practices on the basis of spiritual and relational awareness of trust building practices.

This seductive triad in TU – downloading-presencing-innovation – is similar in formal structure to Hegel's dialectical movement in his conceptual analysis of the absolute spirit. The dialectical structure of our comprehension of reality is still quite attractive due to its strict logic, dynamic form, epistemological clarity and aesthetical beauty. The easiness of the way this dialectic emerges and develops in Hegel's work indicates its closeness to reality as we are driven by reason to comprehend it. Not surprisingly, the triad is repeatedly coming up in many later theoretical outlines and makes it easy to discover similarities between these theories. In this article, a dialectical thinking will be implicit in the discussion of religious education although there are important qualifications to be made with respect to the nature of dialectics (Cf. footnote 1). In each of the forthcoming section I want to highlight a specific problematic related to each of the three key concepts of TU representing three steps in the development of reason.

Downloading or letting go

Problematic one: Is defending Christian values consistent with a program which insists on bracketing history and on transforming practice? Or: In Schleiermacher's term: How is it possible that piety does not exclude the consciousness of freedom, but is its precondition? (Scholtz 1984, 130) To answer this question, a double way may be envisaged: (1) One way is to challenge the supposed conservatism of Christian religion and theology. (2) Another way is to take Christian values as a solid foundation of the openness of future. I take both ways to be two parts of the same argument.

The radical version of TU is demanding a totally "letting go", the suspension of habitual patterns, not unlikely the Buddhist practice of emptying.² "After suspension you have to tolerate that nothing happens." (Scharmer 2007, 36) In this stage of "presencing" you have left the boundaries of "my position" and entered a state of positionlessness or universal presence: "a place of deep connectedness and essential emergence begins to open up". (Ibid., 281) Christian religion is not unfamiliar with this kind of meditative practice (mysticism). The question, however, is whether this thinking makes sense in everyday religious education.

Leaving aside exegetic exercises and "mellemregninger", one answer to this question might be (1) that faith, hope and confidence in God's grace have as a necessary prerequisite the transcendence of human standards and practices and future openness which both confirms and challenges Christian values in a paradoxical way. (2) Faith, hope and confidence in God's grace is necessary in order to make sense of and deal with unpredictable changes in future. In other words, religious faith and future openness depend on each other and in this sense are religious values supportive of a meditative transforming practice and not an obstacle to it. This meditative transformative practice should in some way be implemented in religious education if Christianity should make sense and we should prepare future generations for a future which is constantly changing and in principle unpredictable.

Now, although our world is constantly changing and unpredictable, this is hardly a condition we can meet in every moment of our life. As deadly and incomplete being with limited rationality and vulnerable emotionality, we need to think and act **as if** the world for while didn't change, **as if** most things in our life for a while were reliable. Consequently, we do not want to change things all the time. It is quite clear for Scharmer, too, however, that he did not intend to transform each moment in our everyday life into a meditative transformative exercise. Instead, what we need is occasional mindfulness. Many occasions are not planned or intended, but non-intentionally evoked – like breaks, respites, intermissions, crises, disruptions, waits, or certain life events which give space to new possibilities or, as Scharmer formulates, to future as it emerges. Religious education can work with these op-

² Emptying corresponds to Christian "kenosis" and the Buddhist "sunyata" as paths to spiritual understanding. Cf. Kristiansen, Roald, "Ethics and Emptiness". Japanese Religion 16, no.4.

portunities when they suddenly appear in children's life or it can provoke these occasions on the basis of certain didactic considerations. Working with paradoxes from the New Testament, is a way to stimulate transformative processes.

Still, not everybody would be satisfied with this interpretation. One might challenge the above conclusion by referring to the fundamental **historicity** of religious knowledge. According to Calvin Schrag, religious knowledge is historical knowledge and belongs to our historical consciousness. Following Kierkegaard, he sees repetition as a central category of religious practices. However, this is no argument against the idea of an unpredictable transformative practice, but rather an argument for how a believer with Christ radically can change practice and history, in other words, this is an argument for the revolutionary potential of Christianity. According to Schrag: "Christ is contemporaneous as a living reality in each decisive action". (Schrag 1968, 207) History constitutes for Christian people their destiny while remaining within the purview of freedom. As a consequence, there is no conflict between Christian doctrines and freedom, understood as freedom to pursue future possibilities. Schrag explicates:

The authenticity of faith involves a triumph over worldliness in such a way that the world is transformed into a new mode of existence, a mode in which past possibilities, understood concretely in the light of God's redeeming activity, are appropriated, projected as future possibilities, and preenacted in the present decision. (Ibid.)

A different way of articulating the transforming power of Christianity is the eco-theological approaches of Charles Birch, Roald Kristiansen and others. In the 1990ies, there was a great emphasis on the role of religion in the process of making our planet more sustainable. The consideration of the expected, but principally unknown needs of future generations moves attention from basically unsustainable past practices to future prospects and radically new discourses. Charles Birch was one of the pioneers within this new agenda. Birch underlines the necessity of "letting go" in order to be responsive to the will of God:

To respond to the Spirit of the universe, which is God, is to give up the security of habitual, customary and socially approved actions and to live in terms of a radically new and open future. ... We are changed by having revealed to us new possibilities of truth, beauty, goodness, peace and adventure that enable us to transcend the past quite profoundly. (Birch 1993, 234, 233)

Following Birch, religious education must begin with identifying those agendas which Klafki has called epochal key problems. This awareness of what our time demands presupposes an openness for future and the ability of letting go what is responsible for the problems we are facing.

Going back to leadership theory, the charismatic Danish lecturer Nils Villemoes speaks of the necessity of "letting go" in leadership in terms of constructing or giving space to a fictive world, or phantasy world. It is often in a fictive world that new opportunities appear.

To see these opportunities it is necessary for the leader to make himself free from the existing. (Villemoes 2011, 26) This ability is fundamental in a rapidly changing world and must be incorporated not only in leadership training but general training in general.

Presencing – the source

Problematic Two: What is the source of religious education and how can this source be characterized in the light of TU? Is everything in our world in some way rooted in religious experiences (spirituality)?

Spiritual leadership theory suggests that the source of organizational development lies in some kind of spiritual or mental state or condition. In TU this state is called “presencing”. Presencing is an artificial word constructed by blending “presence” and “sensing”. Presencing signifies a heightened state of attention that allows individuals and groups to shift the inner place from which they function. (Scharmer 2009, 1) Scharmer approaches a new consciousness and a new collective leadership capacity to address challenges from a perspective of future as it emerges. The reason for the need of a new consciousness is the fact that most of us and in most situations are “blind to the source dimension from which effective leadership and social action come into being” (ibid.).

This inner place from which we operate is sometimes identified with spirituality. Scharmer uses this word at several occasions. (Scharmer 2007, 82, 90-92), At other times, he uses words like “grace” and “communion” (Ibid., 13, 197). At this stage (in the bottom of the U) we are doing “generative listening”, i.e. “listening from the emerging field of the future” (ibid., 13). Presencing is close to the experiences of top athletes when they describe how they move from regular to peak performances. These athletes experience “a slowing down of time, a widening of space, a panoramic type of perception and a collapse of boundaries between people” (Scharmer 2009, 3) The essence of presencing is letting go of the non-essential to letting come of the new. At this stage what is at stake is the development of a sense of future possibilities.

The idea of presencing is a familiar idea in theology and philosophy of religion. Friedrich Schleiermacher is just one example and his influence on religious education is strong. Schleiermacher speaks about the “moment of revelation”, where all distinctions are dissolved and merged and determined by something bigger which is both manifest and emergent. This is the place and time of birth for everything living and for religion. (Oettingen 2007, 15) “All religiousness is a transformation of consciousness under the influence of the operations of the universe.” (Ibid.) It is notable that Schleiermacher also emphasizes the importance of a “creative phantasy” in religious education. (Ibid., 18)

Another milestone is Paul Tillich’s “religious dimension” or “deep dimension” which is meant to signify the necessary space for meaningful interpretation of even paradoxical and inconceivable theological issues and existential, ethical dilemmas, in front of them all the

idea of a personal God. In Eberhard Harbsmeiers words, this is the place which need to be the starting point for religious education and dogmatic instruction. This is the place or *ba/basho* from where the narrow way and gate branches off. (See next section.) “For education this means that - before attacking children with pious stories about the personal God and behave as if nothing has happened – one should open up for what religious education has named the religious dimension where the religious talk about the personal God makes sense.” (Harbsmeier 2006, 83-84) Tillich’s approach is anticipated by G.W.F.Hegel who in his radical young period expressed views on religiousness which correspond to Tillich’s. Hegel confronts “objective (dogmatic) religion” which kills all creativity and religious understanding with “subjective religion” which is living and a matter of the heart. (Hegel 1972, 15-17)

Knud Ejler Løgstrup is another author for whom “presencing” is the access to art and religion. The Løgstrupian concept which equates presencing is “*allestedsnærværende sansning*”. Løgstrup summarizes the basis function of art and religion which are accessible through sensation as the domain where the elementary and basic life conditions can be made visible and the daily life can be put to stand (spirituality).

Finally, an excursion to the Kyoto School (Kitaro Nishida and successors) is inevitable. Nishida’s key concept is the concept of “pure experience”. In “A Study of Good” he explains:

When one experiences directly one’s conscious state there is as yet neither subject nor object, and knowledge and its object are completely united. This is the purest form of experience. (Cit. from Carter 1989, p.1; Nishida 1924/1990, 29)

Calvin Schrag labels this kind of pre-dualistic experience “sentient consciousness”. Sentient consciousness “preceeds any split between a subject and an object of consciousness” and is “a pretheoretical and predeterminate intentionality, disclosing a living and vital world in which consciousness simply experiences the presence”. (Schrag 1968, 204) But for Schrag, as for Nishida, the sentient consciousness is not enough if it only designates a passive state of mind. For Schrag, the moral, historical, thematic and aesthetic consciousness are those four other dimensions of consciousness which phenomenological analysis is detecting. For Nishida the consciousness is also a willing and acting consciousness – as for Scharmer and TU mind, heart and will are all playing a vital role in suspension, creation and performing. (Scharmer 2007, 40)

The place of pure experience, Nishida continues, the place where the sensing and willing self transcends itself and expresses itself as an acting self is “*basho*” (“The Place”). This movement of transcending originating in *basho* is religious consciousness. (Nishida 1973, 134-135; Zeitler 1993) *Basho* is Scharmer’s source, the place where being and non-being (in their contradictory relation) are emerging. (Nishida 1999, 81) The true place (*basho*) is not just a place for change, but the place where things come into existence and perish. (Ibid., 82) Locating reality in “nothingness” or “non-being” instead of being (as it is tradition in

European thinking) gives the opportunity to locate the potential for innovation. With Nishidas words:

Befindet sich Seindes in Seiendem, so ist hier der Ort ein Ding. Befindet sich Seindes im Nichts als objektiviertem Nichts, so wird das Ding, das vorher der Ort war, zum Wirkenden. Ein leerer Ort wird mit Kraft erfüllt und der Ort, der vorher ein Ding war, wird mit Potentialität gefüllt. (Ibid., 102)

This reflects Scharmers idea of suspension as the condition of how future possibilities can emerge. But at least as important is the idea in basho that between reality and knowledge there is not the slightest crack. (Elberfeld 1999, 89) This means that we are here at a place where man is man before any categorization, diagnosing and stigmatization. This is the place where religious education can begin, and where the spirit of the gospel and the source of the bodily and existential life-act can work together. This is the place where diaconia is feeling at home, a diaconia beyond distinction between Christian and Non-Christian. Gert Theissen explains the diaconal motivation for help by saying

”dass die von Gott erwartete Nächstenliebe vorbildlich von dem ausgeübt werden kann, der keine manifesten religiösen Motive hat.” (Theissen 1998, 382)

Motivation for help is ”sovereign” (Theissen, ibid. 394) and the good samaritan is an example of humanitarian help, not of Christian social service. (Ibid., 383)

Diaconal practice and religious education is about facilitating barrier-braking experiences, i.e. the counter-intuitive parables in New Testament which challenge our sense of justice and conventional moral sense. (Tange 1999, 16; Sløk & La Cour 2005) In this sense, religious education is transcending itself and is first realizing itself when it negates itself.

Innovative and sustainable solutions

Problematic Three: Is future totally open or may religious education provide guidance? And is guidance compatible with innovation?

Scharmer says, innovation demands an openness for future as it emerges. Being aware of what is emerging, unknown, not yet sensed and understood and different is, broadly speaking, a communicative openness. But what does this openness imply? Is this a borderless openness? Before turning to this question, an elaboration on the concept of openness may be helpful.

Claudia Welz connects future openness with the concept of trust in her book “Vertrauen und Versuchung” (Trust and Temptation). (Welz 2010) Trust is a person’s openness for other persons and other things and it is a basic experience from all kinds of human relations. (Welz 2005, 81) Welz shares Løgstrups idea that trust is a spontaneous expression of life which is unconditional present in each relationship (to a greater or lesser degree). In

trust we make relations and open us for future as it emerges. Trust as basic openness is future openness. If it wouldn't be so, it would be outdated. (Welz 2005, 85)

“In der Aufgeschlossenheit für andere liegt weniger Freiheit als Befreit-Sein zum Offensein. Dem in sich Verschlossenen ist es unmöglich, sich aus eigener Kraft aufzuschliessen. Grundlegende Offenheit als Aufgeschlossenheit ist demnach keine Selbstverständlichkeit. Sie ist ein Phänomen, das sich nicht dem eigenen Ich verdankt. Die im Vertrauen implizierte Öffnung liegt nicht mehr in der eigenen Macht.” (Welz 2005, 84)

If trust and future openness is beyond human power, trust must be rooted in something transcendent. In this understanding, trust in human relations must be subordinated trust in God. To have trust in God is, according to Welz, to trust the power of love (ibid., 84), to trust in goodness and to resist desperation.

“Vertrauen antizipiert das Erhoffte und widersteht der Verzweiflung, der desperatio, in der die Hoffnung aufgegeben ist. Hoffnungsvolles Vertrauen als Zukunftsoffenheit ist die Bereitschaft and das Gute zu glauben, das uns zukommen wird.” (Ibid., 86)

Moving up the right side of Scharmers U “is about intentionally reintegrating the intelligence of the head, the heart, and the hand in the context of practical applications”. (Scharmer 2009, 11) In this phase, one should avoid mindless action, endless reflection and endless networking. Instead, the basic need is “prototyping”. Prototyping is about creating “living examples by integrating different types of intelligence” (Scharmer 2007, 205) In this process you are not alone if you are open for your idea and the future which emerges. Quoting Alan Webber, Scharmer pronounces: “If you're open in relation to your idea, the universe will help you. It wants to suggest ways for you to improve your idea.” (Ibid., 209) The openness is not totally, some ways are more appropriate or right than others.

Turning to the Gospel and Christian education, the open future of human existence is dealt with in a famous quotation from Matthew 7, 13-14. According to Matthew, there are two ways to go: There is a narrow and an open gate or way. To begin with and in the perspective of an open future (“Zukunftsoffenheit menschlicher Existenz”), there evolves a need of communication and orientation. The narrow gate or way seems to be the obvious choice in the sense of the most economic choice. (Obermann 2008, 249)

Go in through the narrow gate, because the gate to hell is wide and the road that leads to it is easy, and there are many who travel it. But the gate to life is narrow and the way that leads to it is hard, and there are few people who find it. (Matth. 7, 13-14)

The narrow way is not only the way out of chaos and confusion, it is also a way of forming a person's moral sensibility, responsibility and obligation:

Dem Ruf auf den schmalen Weg der besseren Gerechtigkeit entspricht es religionspädagogisch, die Lernenden für die Wahrnehmung ihrer Verantwortung für den Nächsten wie für sich selbst zu sensibilisieren. Die paradiesische Ausrichtung des schmalen Weges sowie seine Orientierung an der besseren Gerechtigkeit impliziert religionspädagogisch, den schmalen Weg als lohnenswertes und lebenswertes Leben zu kommunizieren. (Obermann 2008, 249)

Finding and following the narrow way is some kind of prototyping in Scharmer's sense. Both seem meanwhile to forbid the critical potential which should be part of any innovative movement, including educational efforts. According to Skovmand (2007, 35), religious education need, therefore, to preserve the tension between the pre-critical and the critical dimension in order to promote children's open and active process of formation. It is a vital part of religious education and innovation to maintain the contradictory nature of all things – as part of religious dogmatics.

Transformative change according to TU is not an introvert activity, but basically cooperative in nature. The entire right side of the U is cooperative and Scharmer speaks consequently of "co-creation". (Scharmer 2007, 337) Ulrich Baltzer has convincingly argued that cooperative action cannot be reduced to individual actions. On the contrary, the individual actions are dependent on social action, as individual ethics is dependent on social ethics and not the other way round. (Baltzer 18-21) According to Baltzer, social actions are correcting tuned acts of approval ("korrigierende, abgestimmte Anschlusshandlungen"). (Baltzer 1999, 29)

The question is, how do social actions, social settings, institutions or communities determine individual actions? They provide and make individuals aware of opportunities and possibilities for actions. One may catch these opportunities and possibilities or not. (Hubig 1982, 71) Similarly, Scharmer argues that learning takes place and new formations emerge from the opportunities and possibilities which the universe and society make available. The co-construction of meaning is basically the invention of the co-creative process which emerges from the source which catches the obvious and most adequate, "tuned" opportunities of the future. (Cf. also Zeitler 2001.)

However, there are some cognitive mechanisms which may lead us to catch inadequate options. As Kahneman & Tversky (1996) demonstrated, there are three reasons for misjudgment: representativeness, availability and anchoring. Representativeness means our tendency to look for what is similar and typical. Availability is about catching what is easiest to catch. Anchoring means preferring what comes first to one's mind and which everything else is connected to. These dominant cognitive processes make up a major obstacle to catching adequate opportunities for future.

TU is a theory of organizational change and development. As such it reflects a certain view on education and learning. Among major classes of learning theories – behaviorism, cognitivism and constructivism – constructivism or "New Learning" is most likely to express the

basic epistemology of TU. New Learning theories are characterized by (1) a critique of learning theories which consider learning as transmission of knowledge and argue for learning as construction of meaning. (2) Learning is a social dialogical process. (3) Learning subjects are involved in social and cultural practice. (Jonassen & Land 2000, vi)

Johan Kampermann has recently argued that the basic ideas of New Learning are compatible with the discourse in religious education about religious competences within a Lutheran theological context. (Kampermann 2010). One important issue in this context is the familiarity of the learning subject in New Learning with the image of man in theological anthropology. The exchange between learning subject and the social and cultural context is result-open. In theology, the corresponding idea is the concept of man's openness for future. Human action is here a transcendent outline ("transzendenter Entwurf") (Kampermann 2010, 85)

So far, TU seems to follow a constructivistic line of argument. However, constructivism fails to recognize the dependence of our knowledge on an ontological structure which has decisive influence on our choices of action. As was indicated before, TU can best be described within a phenomenological framework, part of which is ontological ethics. (Schrag, Løgstrup, Nishida and others.) (Cf. Scharmer 2007, ch.6 which refers to phenomenology and Nishida.)

Concluding remarks

The challenge of religious education is continuously to find new ways of giving meaning to religious expressions (texts, symbols, rituals, practices). which are authentically rooted in the source of our present existence and sustainable anticipating and co-creating future life-expressions. The strength of TU is the models' drawing our attention to the source and future based structure of innovative thinking which is indispensable for sustainable religious education, i.e. an education which is in balance with reality. The simple reproduction and repetition (Scharmers' "downloading") of religious values may have some impact on the mental condition of human beings due to certain well-known psychological mechanisms. But it will probably fail to call forth innovative (reformatory) potentials. Sooner or later, blind reproduction will reach a stage where the contradiction to reality will be untenable and demonstrate an inadequate representation and expression of people's religious feelings and needs.

Philosophically, in particular ontologically and epistemologically, TU is neither innovative nor sufficiently conceptualized or thoroughly worked out. While TU is conceptually quite advanced within spiritual leadership theory, it is not a great work of philosophical scholarship. However, it is supportive of contemporary cosmo-phenomenological thinking and ontological ethics and may effectively disseminate knowledge of sustainable, innovative solutions due to its simplicity, conceptual clarity and practical impact. Last but not least,

TU may have an influence on religious education with respect to interpreting the conditions and possibilities of meaningful and sustainable learning and teaching.

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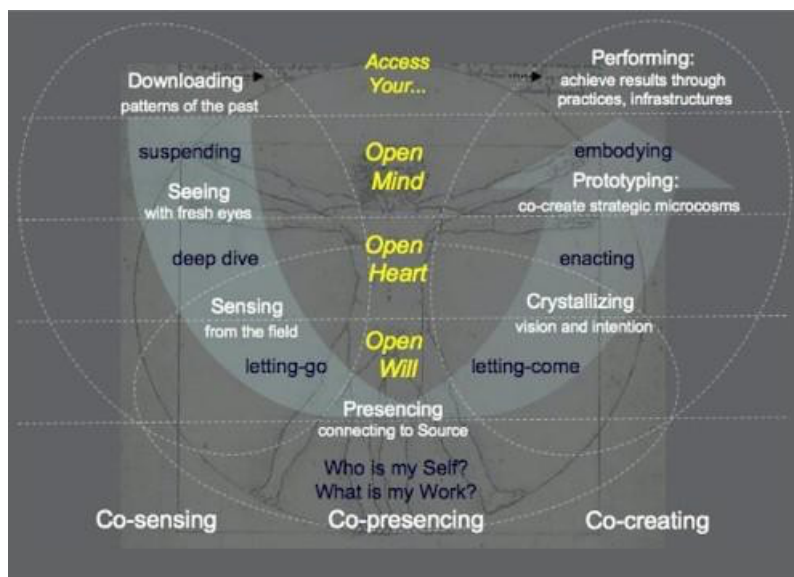
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Religious Formation of Youth in Nigeria: A Critical Appraisal from the Hermeneutical-Communicative Model¹

Mary-Chizurum Ugbor

Introductory Remarks

Religious education (henceforth RE) in post-modern and secularised contexts, eager to engage and educate pupils in their totality (the heart, mind, soul, and body), is open to multiplicity of religions and cultures through examining the complexities of the “relationship between individuals, relevant groups to which the individual belongs, and the wider religious tradition.”² This openness (even if this is achieved within the perspective of one’s faith tradition) offers meaningful and holistic approach to RE as it takes into account both the individual’s life perspectives and other kinds of influences that forms and shapes one’s religious identity.

However, the dichotomy between faith praxis and life experiences of individuals has become challenging to this holistic approach that it becomes difficult for young people to cope with the changing realities and uncertainties of human life that they encounter in contemporary world today. For instance, in the Nigerian context, this dichotomy reduces RE to morality, spirituality, evangelism, and conversion, which to some extent does not sufficiently take cognisance of the religious, cultural and anthropological influences on Nigerian youths today.

In the light of the foregoing remarks, this paper makes a contribution towards overcoming the polarity and tension between faith praxis and life experiences of pupils through presenting a model of religious formation that is sensitive to contemporary youths’ life complexities. The investigation reveals that the HCM model can contribute to the religious formation of pupils through engaging the multidimensional and trans-disciplinary issues that pupils bring to RE classes. This model however demands from both the educators and the pupils a multidimensional sense of responsibility.

This paper (divided into three sections) argues that some educational contexts, like Nigeria, are in need of a model like the HCM, especially with regard to youth issues and crises, in multicultural and multi-religious societies. The first section outlines the two predominant religious formation approaches in Nigeria: *conversion* and *evangelisation*. The

¹ Henceforth, HCM.

² Robert Jackson, *Religious Education: An Interpretative Approach* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1997), 66.

second section proposes the HCM as a model for religious formation of contemporary youths which can be relevant in the Nigerian context. The third and final section suggests, however, that in socio-cultural milieus like Nigeria, the HCM has some fault lines that need to be addressed so as to give youth, often impeded by adverse cultural forces, injustice or self-deception, the capacity to engage courageously with their ongoing and dynamic process towards human flourishing.

Religious Formation of Youth in the Nigerian Context

Historically, Nigerian education of youth has been influenced by three outstanding pedagogical cultures: the African traditional education,³ the Arabic-Islamic education⁴ and Euro-Christian or European pedagogy, via the colonialist project.⁵ Their contributions gave

³ The African traditional method in its education of pupils stressed practical relevance of pedagogical instruction within a community of persons. This approach positively transmitted religious, moral principles and code of conduct, cultural and community values to pupils. See the following, Daniel Edevbaro, *A Review of Social Policy Implementation in Nigeria with Emphasis on Education* (Helsinki, 1996); Babs Fafunwa, *A History of Nigeria Higher Education: New Perspectives in African Education* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1974), 15; Festus Okafor, *Africa at the Crossroads: Philosophical Approach to Education* (New York, NY: Vantage, 1974), 25; Felicia Okogba, "Planning and Implementation: The Key to Effective Education," in *Towards Education in Nigeria for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. S. Oisegie Oriaifo and Uche Gbenedio (Benin: University of Benin Press, 1992), 148. Nevertheless, African traditional education might be deemed a conservative and rigid process since the same body of experiences and knowledge are transmitted from generation to generation without critical appraisal to socio-cultural realities of the time. Furthermore, pupils accept whatever moral advice elders say without critically questioning and constructing their own worldviews and religious traditions. See A. Jekayinfa, "Indigenous African Education," in *Perspectives on History of Education in Nigeria*, ed. J.O.O. Abiri (Ibadan: Emola-Jay Communications, 2003), 36. The kind of traditional education that Jekayinfa's critically appraises encourages what Paul Freire refers as "banking system" that requires pupils to obediently receive, memorise, repeat, and moralise what has been taught to them. See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York, NY: Seabury, 1970), 58.

⁴ The Arabic-Islamic education was positively designed to promote both religious and secular dimensions but its concern was based on memorisation of the Qur'an and Hadith and the Shari'ah (canon law of Islam), the articles of faith and basic moral education and conversion. See Segun Adesina, *The Development of Modern Education in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, 1988), 4. Such Arabic-Islamic education in contemporary situation breeds passive learning that educates pupils without agency, which will not only prepare them but challenge them to handle issues and crises of life and make them responsible for their experiences, expectations and decisions outside the world.

⁵ On one hand, the missionaries with their Christian evangelism strongly focused on rote-learning (memorisation and repetition either catechism or the alphabet) as their educational aim was either "to win Africa for Christ" (Fafunwa; Okogba) or "to convert the heart before you can instruct the mind." Babs Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1974), 84; Okogba, 148. This principle of conversion of non-Christians to Christianity resulted to dissension, disunity and competition among the Christian missions in a desperate attempt to win converts to their mission. Unfortunately, this attitude till date (particularly between Catholics and Protestants, and Catholics and Islam) has not been overcome, thus leading to several interreligious conflicts and tensions, long after Fafunwa noted this as far back as 1974. See Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria*, 84. On the other hand, the British who finally established Western educa-

birth to two learning approaches: *conversion* (imposition of faith) and *evangelisation* (disconnected from every-day life experiences). These approaches are confessional, simplistic and ineffective in the long, even if attractive and convenient for catechetical purposes in the short run.

The two dominant approaches are favoured by the Christian and Islamic religions. It appears that the *raison d'être* of religious formation in Nigeria is to convert non-adherents, to make the learning subjects faithful practitioners of their respective faiths, and to become better Nigerian citizens. Faith-based schools thrive upon the presumption that people become better Nigerians and/or religionists through RE. This presumption does not pay attention to the distinction between morality and religion. The two do not necessarily have to coincide. This approach has been classified by Michael Rosenak as “normative ideational”⁶: an approach to RE (e.g. Nigerian C/IRK) which focuses more on „what to do“ to become better religionists, especially Christians or Muslims. This Nigeria's predominant approach over-stresses „norm“ and imposes moral rules and values. It equally favours a one-sided approach to moral education: the emphasis is simply living in conformity to already defined divine norms.

Certainly, the two dominant approaches to religious formation in Nigeria do not adequately help young Nigerians to confront and participate in open and constructive dialogue towards learning from their mistakes without being trapped in “a delinquent trajectory...”⁷ It is at this point one catches a glimpse of the promises of the HCM that responds to youths' existential crises and their respective and apparently endless searches for meanings in life.

tion and formulated the syllabi for Islamic Religious Knowledge (IRK) and Christian Religious Knowledge (CRK) paid no attention to the realities of multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural in Nigeria due to their political interest. See Aisha Lemu, "Religious Education in Nigeria: A Case Study," in *Teaching for Tolerance and Freedom of Religion or Belief*, ed. Lena Larsen and Ingvill Plesner (Oslo: Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief, 2002), 71. Instead, the British administrations in introducing modern education in Nigeria promoted a conservative outlook that preserved only the North's Islamic religious and cultural identity marginalised the Middle-belt and Christians' religious and cultural identities. See Peter Tanko, "Conflict in Northern Nigeria: Toward a Resolution," *Koinonia* 3, no. 3 (2007): 112-116.

⁶ It is an approach that favours „what is right, what the truth is, what one believes and practices as loyal adherents of a specific faith. See Arnold Eisen, "Commandments, Concerns and Education in the Covenant" <http://www.policyarchive.org/handle/10207/bitstreams/10088.pdf> (accessed 08.09. 2010); Michael Rosenak, *Commandments and Concerns: Jewish Religious Education in Secular Society* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1987), 17 and 112.

⁷ Ronnie Blakeney and Charles Blakeney, "Delinquency: A Quest for Moral and Spiritual Integrity?," in *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*, ed. Eugene Roehlkepartain et al. (Thousand Oaks; London; New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2006), 371.

THE HCM of Religious formation: A Challenge to Religious Educators

The HCM of religious formation aims at encouraging pupils to reflect critically on the tensions and conflicting interpretations present in the classroom and shape their search for spiritual, moral and identity in the light of the Roman Catholic faith and tradition in order to discover the similarities, differences and conflicts between their everyday experiences and faith tradition.

The HCM comprises of two dimensions: the hermeneutical and communicative dimensions of religious formation of pupils in classroom. Hermeneutics empower pupils to learn from one another, especially from the (religious) stories that are told from outside life experience and enable them to understand and cope with socio-cultural reality in view of reconstructing a well-defined sense of meaning for their own lives, opinions and utterances.⁸ Therefore, hermeneutics interpretation regarding religious formation of youth, refers to both “searching for” and “finding one’s own interpretations, and this finding is always a heteronymous process, whereby people „receive“ from each other and even from God new interpretations, new ideas, and even, potentially, new life.”⁹

The communicative dimension, however, demands taking pupils along on a journey¹⁰ and supporting them in their search for and reception of meaning.¹¹ Communication becomes a central element in the HCM of religious formation of youth because “encounter is always communicative,”¹² which brings about interaction between people who live from different worldviews and profess a different religion than their own.¹³ Accordingly, the communicative component is essential in religious classes since it “keeps individuality and sociality

⁸ Bert Roebben, *Seeking Sense in the City: European Perspectives on Religious Education* (Berlin: LIT, 2009), 117. Thus, the person’s capacity as a seeker of meaning is made central. This capability facilitates responses to experiences and tradition and as well considers the “multidimensional ways in which both experience and tradition may be interpreted” (Pollefeyt). Hence, the dichotomy between faith, praxis and life experiences is addressed in Leuven HCM approach to RE (Dillen). Annemie Dillen, “Hermeneutics in Real Life: Practical Theology in Flanders,” *International Journal of Practical Theology* 12, no. (2008): 377; Didier Pollefeyt, “The Difference of Alterity: A Religious Pedagogy for an Interreligious and Interideological World,” in *Responsibility, God and Society*, ed. Johan De Tavernier et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 320.

⁹ Annemie Dillen, “Religious Participation of Children as Active Subjects: Toward a Hermeneutical-Communicative Model or Religious Education in Families and Young Children,” *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 12, no. 1 (2007): 46.

¹⁰ Roebben, 117.

¹¹ Didier Pollefeyt, “The Difference of Alterity” 320.

¹² Pollefeyt, “Belgium: The Hermeneutic-Communicative Model - a Feasible Option?,” 37; Dillen, “Hermeneutics in Real Life: Practical Theology in Flanders,” 257 -287; Dillen, “Religious Participation of Children as Active Subjects,” 37-49.

¹³ Dillen, “Hermeneutics in Real Life: Practical Theology in Flanders,” 378.

together.”¹⁴ The force of communication in religious teaching, as Ziebertz argues, involves triple meanings: “intra-personal, inter-personal and inter-generative.”¹⁵ Thus, the communicative dimension of religious formation tends towards RE’s functions to pupils interests.¹⁶ It is noteworthy that the HCM promotes in pupils real opportunities to develop their needs and interests towards shaping their own identity and worldviews.

Due to the centrality of hermeneutics and communication for any religious formation of youth in multicultural and multi-religious contexts, the HCM favours a weak/soft pluralism¹⁷ that entails partnership and “difference of alterity”¹⁸ of the other person. The option for this pluralism gives room and respect for diversity and conflicts, but in terms of “polyphonic self” in which the multiplicity of the inner voices and the outer voices of other individual is given a listening opportunity.¹⁹ Consequently, the HCM challenges religious educators to move beyond hard pluralism that merely encourages tolerance, integration and recognises plurality. Yet, its recognition of plurality is absorbed into an authoritative corpus (i.e. „normative“ body) as the dominant community, language, culture, and narrative.

Furthermore, the HCM not only invites pupils-teachers and pupils-pupils to enter into conversation with the multiplicity of voices, views, and perspectives encountered in reli-

¹⁴ Ziebertz, “Religious Socialisation and the Identification of Religion,” 66; Hans-Georg Ziebertz, “Religiousness and Modernity,” in *Religious Individualisation and Christian Religious Semantics*, ed. Hans-Georg Ziebertz (Münster: LIT, 2001), 42.

¹⁵ The intra-personal dimension empowers pupils to communicate with themselves about their „living religion,” which they experience as fragile or stable. The inter-personal dimension requires that pupil’s questioning about life-meaning is reintegrated into social connections with others and enables them to form, communicate and reconstruct their own religious conviction. Finally, the inter-generative demands that the already communicated individual experiences (the horizontal dimension) are linked with past experiences and future promises (i.e. connecting the horizontal with a vertical structure). See, Ziebertz, “Religious Socialisation and the Identification of Religion,” 67; Ziebertz, “Religiousness and Modernity,” 42.

¹⁶ Ziebertz, “Religious Socialisation and the Identification of Religion,” 67.

¹⁷ Karl-Ernst Nipkow, “Oikumene - the Global Horizon for Christian and Religious Education,” *British Journal of Religious Education* 15, no. 2 (1993): 5-11; Keith Ward, “Truth and the Diversity of Religion,” *Religious Studies* 26, no. 1 (1990): 1-18.

¹⁸ Didier Pollefeyt, “The Difference of Alterity: A Religious Pedagogy for an Interreligious and Interideological World,” in *Responsibility, God and Society*, ed. Johan De Tavernier et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 309. In the concept of the „difference of alterity,” others are truly other irrespective of their difference of alterity. In this sense, difference of alterity promotes genuine interaction with, appreciates, recognises, and influences others (even to the point of transformation) that does not necessarily deny the possibility of radical alterity. See the following, Jack Reynolds, *Merleau-Ponty and Derrida: Intertwining Embodiment and Alterity* (Athens: Ohio University, 2004), 138; James Thompson, “Translating Form(s)-of-Life?: Remarks on Cultural Difference and Alterity,” in *Wittgenstein on Forms of Life and the Nature of Experience*, eds. António Marques and Nuno Venturinha (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2010), 106-112.

¹⁹ Carl Sterkens, *Interreligious Learning: The Problem of Interreligious Dialogue in Primary Education* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 79-80.

religious formation classes and contexts. The HCM equally calls on the teachers and pupils to embrace dialogue, engagement and commitment from a *preferential option for Catholicism*, for instance, in Catholic schools.²⁰ A *Christian preferential perspective*, Pollefeyt and Jan Bouwens argue, does not exclude solidarity with otherness or personal formation of all youngsters, regardless of their cultural and religious background. On the contrary, youth are taught to engage in an open relation with otherness and philosophies of life from a personal profile (whether or Catholic or not). Thus, in dialogue with those from different religious-cultural contexts, young people learn to know themselves and become able to take up their philosophical, religious and cultural growth.²¹ Hence, youth are challenged to dialogue, engage and take responsibility for those beliefs and values that might lead to (moral) transformation and to critique, condemn, and resist, what is contrary to this transformation.²²

It is worth noting that the HCM promotes in youth the freedom to express what they think about religion and “help students form their own identity and develop their own worldview, in dialogue with the Catholic tradition and other religions and worldviews.”²³

From the above ideas, the HCM sees religious formation of youth from a hermeneutical communicative perspective as a never ending creative process, a search for multiple meanings whereby youth are challenged to look at reality from the different perspectives. In that case, the HCM presents the Christian tradition to pupils in such a way that they grow towards making a proper and responsible decision regarding the contexts of secularisation, plurality, de-traditionalisation and diversity of realities. The realisation of this (in Nigeria context) shall further be explored in the next subsection.

1.1. Religious Formation of Youth in Nigeria’s Religious Education Culture:

Inspirations from the HCM

The HCM presents a style of religious formation that is sensitive not only to people’s life experiences in the world but also to pupils’ particularity of their religious identity. Unlike Nigeria monological religious formation – an absolute monolithic interpretation that remains permanently the same and incapable of functioning adequately in a heterogeneous

²⁰ Didier Pollefeyt and Jan Bouwens, "Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools: Empirical Methodology for Quantitative Research on the Catholic Identity of an Education Institute " *International Studies in Catholic Education* 2, no. 2 (2010): 207.

²¹ Pollefeyt and Bouwens, “Framing the Identity of Schools,” 202 and 207.

²² Jeff Astley, "Plurality, Dialogue and Religious Education," *International Journal of Education and Religion* 1, no. (2000): 211.

²³ Dillen, "Hermeneutics in Real Life," 368.

society²⁴ – the HCM through its multicorrelative²⁵ approach, explores the complexity of the human experiences by presenting it as a multifaceted interpretable reality that does not uncritically, automatically and exclusively correlate with Christian tradition(s).²⁶ Accordingly, religious formation of youth from the HCM locates its essence in addressing the socio-cultural dimensions of human problems with equal consideration for dynamic motivational issues. This enables the youth to mull over the wider possible religious and socio-cultural influences and responsible choices to make. Therefore, the goal of the religious educators from the HCM is to provide a process of religious and moral inquiry that would at once be undogmatic in tone and dynamically sensitive to both the complexities of the youth's developmental history as well as his/her religious tradition and faith.

In this regard, the HCM of religious formation is edifying. It critically informs religious educators to engage in a recontextualisation method in which the Catholic faith (in its confrontation with plurality) is re-interpreted in a contemporary cultural context, such that "it remains recognisable, credible, and meaningful for contemporary people (traditional development)."²⁷ Hence, the HCM's religious formation is made relevant to present situations and contexts of human history, and the signs of the time. In this respect, the educator as an explicit religious reference person in a youth care formation is concerned with the well-being of the person. Yet, the educator is equally in touch with the deeper and inner worlds of the pupils in relation to their search for meaning of life. This is why the HCM of religious formation (from a Christian pluralistic perspective) demands a threefold function from educators of religion, namely: "a witness, specialist, and moderator"²⁸ (henceforth, WSM).

²⁴ Carl Sterkens, *Interreligious Learning*, 80.

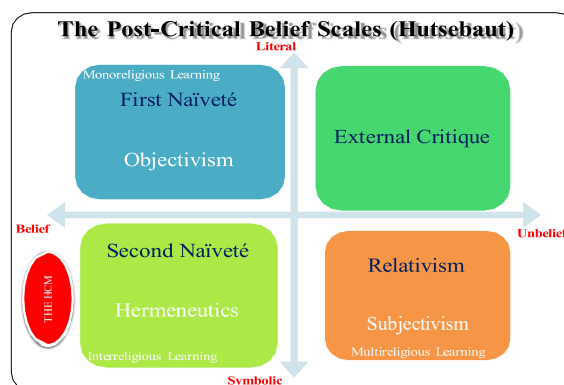
²⁵ The multicorrelative religious formation according to Pollefeyt based itself in Friedrich Schweitzer's framework of threefold hermeneutics: hermeneutics of the active subject, the context, and interaction with the traditional hermeneutics of text and tradition. Pollefeyt, "The Difference of Alterity," 311. To fully understand Schweitzer's hermeneutic condition of RE, see Friedrich Schweitzer, "The Hermeneutic Condition of Religious Education," in *Hermeneutics and Religious Education*, ed. Herman Lombaerts and Didier Pollefeyt (Leuven: Peeters, 2004) 73-87. What we find promising and interesting in Schweitzer's framework is his ability to expose how religious formation can face up to the challenges of modernity and post-modernity, which shapes the lifestyle and values of young people in the society. He provides an integrative and interrelated approach to religious formation with his hermeneutics of the child as an active centre of constructing reality, hermeneutics of tradition, and hermeneutics of contemporary experiences.

²⁶ Pollefeyt, "The Difference of Alterity," 311.

²⁷ Pollefeyt and Bouwens, "Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools," 202.

²⁸ Pollefeyt, "The Difference of Alterity," 312. The educator of religion acting as a witness must present his/her religious tradition not as the one only path to truth and life but as a guide that shows pupils the different ways of viewing reality and how to understand religion and points of reference in their search for spirituality, identity and meaning of life. The educator as a specialist must be ready to communicate religion and new perspectives on reality to pupils in the classroom as well as engaging pupils in a dialogical exchange. Finally, the educator as a moderator must offer freedom to pupils' multicorrective searching process and at

Summarising, the HCM of religious formation reveals a model that responds critically to human searching for religious significance, truth, meaning and future by taking into account the multifaceted philosophies of life, becoming involved with the people and radically responding to their vulnerability. This sensitivity highlights the difficulties many religious educators are experiencing in their youth formation especially in Nigeria, where the structure of overstressing „norms“ and imposition of moral rules and values becomes the starting point for their religious and ethical concern. Therefore, inspirations from the HCM argues that if religious educators want to form youth that will responsibly develop a symbolic-dynamic faith, ought to acknowledge the importance of the “Post-Critical Belief Scales,”²⁹ which employs a typology of four different ways people deal with belief contents:



From the illustration above, one can realise that Nigeria religious formation model falls within the first naïveté (i.e. monoreligious learning) that presents the Christian tradition either as absolutely normative or as denying any further interpretation to the meaning of tradition. The (Nigeria) un-nuanced presentation of Christian tradition leads especially young people, who are still searching for religious significance, truth, meanings and future, to perceive the biblical message as outdated and lacking any perspective on the future. Hence, religion is made unattractive and not in tune with contemporary sensitivities to human condition, various perspectives, voices and actors within the Christian tradition.

the same time, keep a hold on them by acting as a guiding companion in the construction their identity. See, Pollefeyt, "The Difference of Alterity," 323.

²⁹ The typology was first developed by a psychologist of religion, David Wulff and later by the Leuven psychologist of religion, Dirk Hutsebaut in the 1990's. For details, see David Wulff, *Psychology of Religion: Classic and Contemporary Views* (New York, NY: Wiley, 1991), 630-636; Dirk Hutsebaut, "Post-Critical Belief: A New Approach to the Religious Attitude Problem," *Journal of Empirical Theology* 9, no. 2 (1996): 48-66.

Contra to this, the HCM through “a post-critical belief or a symbolic affirmation of faith contents”³⁰ (which is located at the left pole in the diagram above) confronts (Nigeria) religious educators to move beyond not only the first naïveté but to also avoid the risks of the two right poles: *external critique* (that “stands for a literal rejection of the belief contents”)³¹ and *relativism* (that “stands for a symbolic approach to religiosity, but without belief in a transcendent reality”).³² The „post-critical faith“ according to the HCM represents the balancing of belief with critical reasoning while affirming “faith in a transcendent God and in a religious interpretation of reality in which the transcendent is not considered literally present but is represented symbolically.”³³

Therefore, the HCM of religious formation through a continuous critical process of symbolic interpretation moves beyond the *first naïveté* of the literal belief (a concern for the objectivity of the fundamental truth)³⁴ to *second naïveté* of the symbolical believer – a level that is conscious of the historical, social, psychological and cultural character of pupil's faith.³⁵ This idea is built upon Paul Ricoeur's three stages. The first stage is the “primitive naïveté,” characterised by the “immediacy of belief,”³⁶ a level of believing and accepting everything literally about religious belief. But, this primitive naïveté as Ricoeur argues can no longer remain the same as we experience tensions and conflict, start questioning and examining critically the pre-critical faith towards remaking and reforming our faith conviction. In consequence, the „immediacy of belief“ is lost to the critical thinking as to gain space for itself;³⁷ Ricoeur calls the second stage, “hermeneutics of suspicion.”³⁸ Therefore, “there is no recovery of simple faith; if faith is to survive, it must be an informed, critical faith.”³⁹ Once again, the third stage, second naïveté is sought in and through criticism. According to Ricoeur, faith is deepened where “the symbol gives rise to thought” and “it is by

³⁰ Pollefeyt and Bouwens, “Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools,” 197.

³¹ Ibid., 196.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 197.

³⁴ Pollefeyt, *Hoe aan onze (Klein) Kinderen Uitleggen Sinterklass niet Bestaat?*, 32. The literal faith style theologically “assumes a direct, immediate access to the transcendent reality. The literally believing human being stresses the possibility and the desirability to present God unmediated, to meet Him directly in words and rituals. He believes in a personal, immutable God and in fixed religious truth claims.” See, Pollefeyt and Bouwens, “Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools,” 195.

³⁵ Pollefeyt, *Hoe aan onze (Klein) Kinderen Uitleggen Sinterklass niet Bestaat?*, 32.

³⁶ Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Harper and Row, 1967), 351.

³⁷ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 351; Rebecca Huskey, *Paul Ricoeur on Hope: Expecting the Good* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2009), 172-173.

³⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics* (London: Continuum, 2004), Xvii.

³⁹ Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, Xvii.

interpreting that we can *hear* again.”⁴⁰ In other words, it is only when one undertakes a hermeneutical circle that one aims at a second naïveté: “we must understand in order to believe, but must believe in order to understand.”⁴¹

Ricoeur’s argument is visible in the HCM’s acknowledgement of the post-critical faith. The HCM say: “to believe is a continuous process of symbol-interpretation; the revelation of new layers of significance in the symbolic relationship with God. To believe is only possible and meaningful after interpretation.”⁴² In other words, it is only “after a renewed interpretation [that] religious contents become meaningful again [and second naïveté is obtained]. Destructive criticism on the literal understanding of faith is surmounted by a renewed faith understanding that lasts despite the ongoing possibility of rational critique.”⁴³ Interpretation is important for the deepening and correcting of one’s praxis of faith and making a well-informed, critical faith. Thus, the HCM through the „post-critical faith“ confronts objectivism, secularisation, de-traditionalisation and pluralisation.

Accordingly, the gifts of the HCM of religious formation of youth is that it empowers them to have sense of who they are, to be confident about their identity and at the same time confident to culturally meet the different *other*. Since, the HCM have formed them not to see the *other* either as a threat or as a stranger that need to dominate but as a neighbour that we can create a hospital state for. Employing Emmanuel Levinas’ idea of “my neighbour” Jeffrey Bloechl affirms the HCM’s description of a religious educator, “my neighbour is „the first one on the scene“... „He orders me from before being recognised.“ The very act of recognising him is itself already a response to him... my neighbour is „precisely *other*.“”⁴⁴ Therefore, this kind of religious formation makes the youth to be confident not simply as a community but also to be confident to meet the *other*. The youth is able to listen to the *other* story, engage with them and enter into their stories. By so doing, the lifestyle of the youth can be enriched and transformed by the *other* story.

Hence, if the HCM inspirations are contextualised in Nigeria religious formation of youth will challenge educators of religion to present RE as an “offer of meaning”⁴⁵ or “meaning function.”⁴⁶ This will offer youth the opportunities to learn, discuss and recontextualise their cultural life as well as their respective religious life.

⁴⁰ Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 348-351 „italics in the original text.”

⁴¹ Ibid., 351.

⁴² Pollefeyt and Bouwens, “Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools,” 197.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Jeffrey Bloechl, “Ethics as First Philosophy and Religion,” in *The Face of the Other and the Trace of God*, ed. Jeffrey Bloechl (New York, NY: Fordham University, 2000), 131.

⁴⁵ Pollefeyt, “The Difference of Alterity,” 316.

⁴⁶ Marisa Grawford and Graham Rossiter, “Religious Education and the Secular Spirituality of Youth,” *Religious Education Journal of Australia* 9, no. 2 (1993): 6.

2.2. Promises with Challenges

Irrespective of the HCM's openness and sensitive to diversity and plurality of religious traditions, the premises of this model is not without challenges. The first point is that the HCM in responding to the challenges of the secularise, post-Christian and pluralise society, (where Christian narratives have lost their grand narrative status and now have to compete with positions and formulations from non-Christian and even non-religious discourse) insists on the individual as an active or hermeneutical being in his/her present praxis, thus, tending to ego-centric presupposition that gives insufficient space to community discernment. Lastly, the second point is that the HCM's profile of a WSM-function of the teacher (in practice) is highly challenging when (mis)used in the secularised, post-Christian and post-modern context and in a non-Western context.

In the light of the above comments, the HCM will be more edifying in Nigeria if both challenges are considered and that will be explored in the next subsection.

2.2.1. The Role of Community in Religious Formation of the Young People

For the HCM, the task of the educator is aptly captured thus, by Pollefeyt: "teach pupils to deal with freedom of choice, teach them to deconstruct truth and then reconstruct a view of life with the building blocks of experience and tradition, in confrontation with the teacher's personal, Christian synthesis of faith."⁴⁷ Indeed this articulated task is reasonable because agreeable the HCM's effort is to move beyond the imposition of faith to preserving pupils' freedom to personally appropriate their experiences of faith. Nevertheless, one wonders if this freedom of reconstructing and deconstructing truth claims (if without proper training on how to go about, perhaps, by well-versed educators) leads to irresponsibility on the part of pupils. Additionally, an un-nuanced approach to the HCM's religious formation might contribute to what Katongole describes as "free-floating individuals who easily become prey to their own whimsical needs and choices" or "it feels good culture."⁴⁸ Katongole's argument warns against educators who encourage pupils to believe that freedom is the ultimate means of achieving their needs and choices without proper training that will heighten them in a particular tradition with relevant habits or virtues. Promotion of pupils' freedom

⁴⁷ Pollefeyt, "The Difference of Alterity," 321.

⁴⁸ Emmanuel Katongole, "Postmodern Illusions and the Challenges of African Theology: The Ecclesial Tactics of Resistance," *Modern Theology* 16, no 2. (2000): 247. I do not disregard the HCM's concern in stressing the need for responsibility in order to help the students to make an adequate religious choices. However, the challenges posed by secularise and pluralistic context is quiet tempting to some teachers who are unable to act as an authentic witness and as well, a moderator and holds its balance in the classroom. Therefore, a careful understanding of the HCM will be able to balance students' freedom with responsibility in and through acting as an authentic witness and a moderator.

must be integrated with ethical conduct which goes a long way in enabling them to decide responsibly when making valuable decision that promotes the mores in the society.⁴⁹

The observation above is premised on the ego-centred presupposition in the HCM as much as contemporary Western society, where, according to David Augsburger, the society “is the means and the life of each individual is the end. Ontologically, the society no longer exists; it is no more than an association of beings who contract to cooperate to reach their individual ends.”⁵⁰ Accordingly, the HCM as understood and articulated by its representatives is problematic, in as much as the *self* in Western tradition is “an independent observer and potential controller of a world that is experienced as profoundly separate from self.”⁵¹ Such an individualistic worldview stands in polar contrast to the views of collective humanity, Augsburger continues, since “personhood rises from peoplehood. Individual consciousness does not spring fully capable, already equipped, from the affirmation of self; it is enriched and supplied by the enveloping culture.”⁵² Therefore, a theology of humanness i.e. a theology in search of and articulating human meaningfulness that appears to inspire the HCM’s approach to RE involves more than individual autonomy and freedom of reconstructing and deconstructing truth claims.

Furthermore, the HCM’s emphasis on individuals’ autonomy in deconstructing and reconstructing truth claims and religious tradition is insufficient and largely unfeasible in contexts like Nigeria religious formation, where the individual’s present reality is viewed within the prism of his/her collectiveness. Given that the religious formation of young children and young adults as well as pastoral ministry to the youth centre around the search for meaning, spirituality and identity, there is a dialectical tension between individualism and communitarian centeredness. Nevertheless, the individual owes his/her existence to other people, including those who have died. So, individuals cannot and do not exist alone. Rather, they are corporately linked to one another. As John Mbiti, an African theologian writes “I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.”⁵³

It should be noted that this ethos is not articulated exclusively by African theologians. Non-African theologians point this out equally. For instance, Augsburger underlies this

⁴⁹ Just like teaching a child how to receive the ball from his/her parents or educators or friends in the game field. They are guided, supported and trained on how to move from the quarterback and manoeuvre through all the lines of defense, until he/she is able to make a touchdown. Failure to play well becomes a disaster and the team would become porous dysfunctional and the game would be lost.

⁵⁰ David Augsburger, *Pastoral Counselling Across Cultures* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster, 1986), 81.

⁵¹ Ibid., 85.

⁵² Ibid., 81.

⁵³ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd ed.(Oxford: Heinemann, 1989), 106. For further details, see, Chigekwu Ogbuene, *The Concept of Man in Igbo Myths* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999), 153-155; Victory Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria* (Fort Worth, Chicago, London: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, INC, 1965), 34.

fundamental relationship. He contends that without the whole, the part finds it difficult to survive: “tear yourself away from the social fabric that has created and nurtured you, and you are left not with an individual person but with the potential for organising a person.”⁵⁴ This means that each individual is both unique yet a member of a whole. When one suffers or rejoices, one does not suffer or rejoice alone. The community of persons with whom one shares some primordial ties suffers or rejoices along with one. Similarly, when the group suffers, the individual suffers also. Therefore, “the sociocentric personality does not live by roots alone, it is connected, like rhizome grasses, by a fibrous network of runners that unite, nourish and sustain all the shoots together, and the matting of roots and earth surrounding and beneath are inseparable from the selfhood and existence of the whole.”⁵⁵

Accordingly, for the HCM to sufficiently address in its religious formation the complexity of various youths confronted with socio-cultural dilemmas in the society, it needs to re-examine some neglected considerations. Principal among these is the necessity of integrating the individual responsibility of undertaking projects of personal expression within some forms of community. It is our view that this kind of integration offers the possibility of providing a „prophetic vision of resistance and hope” against the nihilistic playfulness of postmodern culture as Katongole suggests. In essence, the community can transmit its values adequately and have it live out to be rooted in an individual or a group. Such relatedness and/or common life of the community towards the religious formation of young children and young adult will empower them to participate, find, and sustain their identity in the life-structure so closely organised by the community. Hence, the religious decision of young adult becomes a collaborative duty of communities.⁵⁶

2.2.2. Tension between Theory and Practices in Terms of WSM Functions of Educators of Religion (Personal Teaching Experience in Flanders)

Theoretically, the HCM of religious formation has tremendously establishes the importance of educators of religion acting WSM in secularised and postmodern contexts like Europe. Practically, it remains difficult and perhaps, impossible for educators of religion to genuinely sustain WSM functions without one overriding the other.

A teaching experience, as a critical incident, in one of the Flemish schools highlights for me the tension between the educator acting as a witness and moderator of pupils’ search for meaning, and pupils. During my RE teaching experience involving secondary school stu-

⁵⁴ Augsburger, *Pastoral Counselling Across Cultures*, 81.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁵⁶ There are proverbs that emphasises community consciousness – “a tree does not make a forest.” If one finger touches oil, the oil spread invariably to other fingers. Also, when a person descends from heaven, he/she descends into a human society or human habitation and one finger cannot lift up a thing. All these expressions convey the understanding that an individual whether male/female belongs to the community and that any evil act of an individual affects all the members.

dents between the age of 12 and 17 years, it was brought home poignantly that the teacher of RE appears to be more of an expert in describing religions, without normative content. I suggest that the strength of the educator's identity, to some extent, contributes to the presence or absence of a „normative“ dimension in RE. I arrived at this thesis during my post-teaching evaluation session with the pupils' RE teacher. When we compared notes on how to handle the issue of the RE teacher's (religious) identity, the teacher said something quite striking: “for many years of my teaching I have not revealed my religious identity to pupils as to avoid converting them to his faith.” Indeed, this teacher, quite representative of postmodern pluralist educators, has been striving to remain open to, dialogue with, and accommodate the various religious convictions present in his class while simultaneously moderating the pupils' search for meaning. This laudable aim is not without critical remarks. Even if one may not accuse the postmodern paradigmatic teacher of RE of losing his/her identity, he/she has not really been fair to that identity. Even, if one is open to plurality of identities (religious, ethnic, racial, gender), the teacher cannot „bracket out“ in the open discussion his/her particular identity. If teachers of religion bracket out their (religious) identity and commitment, they lose a critical opportunity of offering students practical demonstration of the reasonability and joy in making and being identified with one's commitment without necessarily being apologetic and/or defensive.

The loss of the personal dimension of transcendence is another observation to be highlighted from my teaching experience. Due to post-modernity's acclamation of „death to the grand narratives,“ the idea of a personal God has diminished. This has been replaced by an idea of an impersonal force. So, instead of developing a personal relationship with God as a personal, and allowing this personal relationship play a critical role in their lives, a lot of the young peoples' attitude towards religiosity and transcendence is characterised by “*somethingism*,” which appears in contemporary world as a kind of “*cultural apophaticism*.”⁵⁷

Finally, the teaching experience also highlighted a potential and real risk regarding the HCM's religious formation. Interactive method of teaching is a key component of the HCM's RE. This method allots time and space to pupils in the class to actively participate through discussion, question, debate, and intergroup narrative sharing. Nevertheless, it appears there is the possibility of excess in this method. When there is an uncritical articulation and practice of this method, there is the possibility of pupils remaining within their respective comfort zones, thus sticking to knowledge and perspectives already known to them. In other words, the impression given to students that whatever positions they hold are valid and correct can create an atmosphere of intolerance to a teacher of religious for-

⁵⁷ Lieven Boeve warns that educators of religion should pay serious attention to the complexity of this religious phenomenon, „*somethingism*“ especially on how it challenges the contemporary understanding of the Christian faith. See, Boeve, *God Interrupts History*, 139-146.

mation who questions or differs from the presupposition of the dominant (HCM) approach.

It is high time; perhaps, the HCM rethought its approach to and practice of its interactive pedagogy. Its preferred method which has its gains might have to be balanced more with communication of information about any subject matter being taught. Students need to be well-informed first about the subject matter before opening the floor for interaction. This will enhance, deepen and broaden the pupils pre-knowledge about the wider perspectives of life. Undoubtedly, openness to plurality (religious, ethnic, racial, gender) by educators of religion is good. Notwithstanding, these educators ought to tread with caution to avoid either bracketing out their identity or embracing the philosophy of „anything goes“ or allowing the students to just think and talk all they want.

Concluding Remarks

This contribution has been informed by a fundamental argument that religious formation of youth in contexts like Nigeria need to acknowledge that the crises of young people should be the point of departure in any education towards making conscious and responsible life decision. So, holistic religious formation of youth worthy of the name in multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural contexts, like Nigeria requires a creative morality based on individual responsibility that will foster a stable communitarian ethic which equally respects autonomy and responsibility. In as much as religious formation ought to connect to the life and beliefs of the respective religions in multi-religious and multi-cultural contexts, religious formation should equally be shaped by the religions' vision of life and their beliefs in distinctive ways. Nevertheless, the religious formation of youth envisioned in this paper takes account of the tensions between the personal experiences of individual persons and cultural influences as to empower pupils to grow beyond being trapped in „a delinquent trajectory.“

Hindu Children and normality constructs in Religious Education (RE) in Norway

Tove Nicolaisen

The aim of this article is to discuss normality constructs in Norwegian RE and how Hindu children relate to these constructs. My examples are from a project about Hindu children in RE, based on classroom observations and interviews with seven children from the Sri-lankan Tamil and North-Indian Punjabi diasporas in Norway. When interviewed they were from eleven to fourteen years old. The methodology of the project is a combination of interpretive anthropological approaches (Jackson and Nesbitt, 1993; Jackson, 1997; Østberg, 1998) discourse analysis (Søndergaard, 2001; Laclau and Mouffe, 2001; Lenz Taguchi, 2004; Jørgensen and Phillips, 2005; Mills, 2007) and postcolonial perspectives (Verran, 2002; Loomba, 2005; Kramvig, 2006; Bhabha, 2008).

Normality constructs in the RE subject “Religion, Philosophies of Life and Ethics” (In Norwegian: “Religion, livssyn og etikk”)

I will argue that the RE subject appears for the pupils as a natural way of presenting religious traditions and as knowledge about an objective reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). This hegemonic RE discourse about religious traditions is based on the way curriculum, teaching and textbooks construct the religious world.

The approved RE approach in Norway is to focus on *distinct world religions*, inside and outside perspectives, and meeting “the others” in dialogue. The hegemonic discourse is about distinct religions and boundaries. This does, in many ways, correspond to a common Norwegian view on diversity, which is about different cultures existing side by side (Engen, 2003; Gullestad, 2006). Consequently RE-students can be put into “religion boxes”, mainly by belonging to one of the five “world religions” and by faith in the god(s) of their religion. In addition, some can be put in a “secular world view box” and some are difficult to categorise. Religions should be taught separately and you can belong to *one* of the religions and believe in the god(s) of your religion. This way of relating to religion does not correspond to a common Hindu view on diversity and the relations between religions (Jacobsen, 2003; Nesbitt, 2010). This Hindu view is oppositional to the hegemonic Norwegian discourse, since it is about inclusivity, overlapping, flexibility and indistinct boundaries.

RE also focuses on *religion as faith* and distinction between faith and practice. Perhaps then distinct “world faiths” would be a better description of the approach. This is different from Hindus’ characteristic of their tradition as “a way of life” (Gupta, 2006).

Another part of this normality construct I have called “*monotheism normality*”. This approach to the concept of god is of course based on Christianity, and also on Judaism and Islam. This view also has impact on what is considered *proper religious iconography*. The Hindu approach to the divine is different. It is about one and many at the same time, and can be characterised as polycentric and pluralistic (Eck, 1995).

I can of course not assert that all RE teaching is like that, but that is how the curriculum and most textbooks are organised, and that is what I have observed. This is not surprising, since it reflects a traditional Western approach to religion (Jackson, 1997; Geaves, 1998). These RE normality constructs represent a very rigid structure which is difficult to oppose. Since Hindu children are from a small minority in most RE classrooms, it is consequently a big challenge for them to talk about other approaches. The Hindu view can easily be presented by teachers as diverging from normality, and subsequently Hindu children can be given the role of “the other”. In my material I find examples of othering, but I also find examples of oppositional discourses expressed by Hindu children.

Hindu children opposed to hegemonic discourse

We shall see how Sumaty’s attitudes challenge the RE normality. This is from a discussion with friends:

... When I say that I believe in all gods, not only the Hindu gods, because I also wear a cross, then one of my friends asked, “Are you not a Hindu?” “Yes.” Then she said, “Why do you wear a cross?” And I said, “Because I also believe in Jesus.” And she said, “But then you are a Protestant.” Then I asked, “Why is that?” And then she said, “In the ten commandments we can read that you should believe in one god only.” And then I said, “But I believe in them all. There is nothing I can do about it. I not only believe in Jesus and the Hindu gods. I believe in Buddha. I kind of believe in Allah.” People think I am really stupid because I believe in many gods, but my opinion is that it is just one god, but that people has divided it into many religions.

So, actually it is just one god?

I think that it is only one god, but divided. But when I say that, they just answer, “Whatever”. Then I say, “I am just saying what I think.” And they say, “Yes, we understand that.”

The children in my study express openness towards other religions and stress the importance of respect. Sumaty also characterises a friend as “Hindu, but Sikh”, expressing the interrelatedness and overlapping nature of the Hindu and the Sikh traditions (Nesbitt, 2005; 2010). Another example of openness and respect is the good relations between Hindu and Christian Tamils.

One teacher used a metaphor to explain the Hindu view on religions, rendering a story about a guru who said that the religions are like cars on a motorway. They look and sound

different, but they are all going in the same direction. The Hindu children from this teacher's class agreed with the guru. This is in accordance with a common view among Hindus. Two primary characteristics of the Hindu tradition are diversity and flexibility. Throughout history new elements have been incorporated (Nesbitt, 2010; Jacobsen, 2003). This way of relating to religious diversity is different from the hegemonic Western discourses within Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The children, however, point to the family context when talking about their respectful attitudes to others. They have learnt at home, in theory and in practice, that "God is God", and that it is not dangerous to go to the holy places of other traditions and pray there.

Sumaty has difficulties, when asked by classmates, to explain why Hinduism has many gods:

They say that all religions have only one god, and we have so many.

It is considered normal to have one god. Having many is strange. Teaching and textbooks often underscores that Hinduism is polytheistic, something several of the children have been confronted with. This I have observed in the classroom, and the children have told me about it. In all cases I have observed or heard of, Hindu children agree. In class they confirm that they have many gods. From one side, this is correct, but at the same time the concept of god in Hindu traditions is more complex than that, which is difficult to explain in a pressure situation. In interviews some of the children explained, in a reflective way, the concept of god, but when they were confronted with the monotheism-polytheism dichotomy in the classroom, they accepted the other-making approach to this question. "Yes", they say, "we have many gods", thus, adapting to the hegemonic discourse, positioning themselves as believers in many gods in contrast to the hegemonic monotheism normality. A teacher used the concept of god in Hinduism to contrast monotheism in a very othering way.

When the Hindu concept of god is presented as a contrast to "our" monotheism, this can be characterised as colonialism, with the function to contrast "our" normality (Said, 2001). The fact that Hindus have many gods, says something about those of us who have one. When RE highly value monotheism, abstract presentations of god and religion as faith, it implies a lower value to the Hindu concept of god, Hindu iconography and religion as practice.

Sumaty told me that it was a bit embarrassing to go to the temple with the class. She was anxious that the others would think of her religion as weird and stupid. Some of the mates found it disgusting that the gods had many arms. And a bit disgusting that Ganesha had an elephant head. Earlier she had tried to explain about the elephant head, but "they would not understand". To Sumaty it had always been normal:

I have not thought of it as disgusting. Ever since I've known about God, I have not questioned his elephant head. It was a bit strange when they talked about it.

The hegemonic discourse Sumaty relates to here is about what characterises a normal religion and normal iconography. This discourse has no room for gods with elephant heads and many arms. It is a discourse about “us” and “them”. I think it is urgent to start a discussion about how to transcend binary oppositions between monotheism and polytheism, and about normal and strange iconography in RE teaching.

A Tamil child using hegemonic discourse

I will briefly present an example of how a Tamil boy used hegemonic discourse. Sanger was very concerned about the situation in Sri Lanka. The interview with Sanger was conducted in 2006, 2 ½ years before The Sinhalese army defeated The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2009. Sanger told me that he missed his own stories about ancient Tamil heroes in the classroom. He especially mentioned stories about Ellalan,¹ who was killed by the Sinhalese Dutthagamani, as told in the *Mahavamsa* (<http://mahavamsa.org/>). In lack of own stories he used the Exodus story from the Bible as an interpretation framework for the situation of the Tamils and, as I interpret it, paralleled the Tamils and the Israelites and Moses and Prabhakaran, the founder and former leader of LTTE.² Actually when rendering the Exodus story, at one point he used “we”:

Everybody thought we were going to die!

He was very enthusiastic, sometimes shouting YES!

Hindu children adapting to hegemonic discourse

As mentioned above, the Hindu children easily agreed to the allegation that Hinduism is a polytheistic religion when asked in class, even though some of them, when interviewed, were able to explain the Hindu understanding of god, focusing on the relation between one and many, impersonal and personal, and the meaning of iconographic elements. When adapting to this hegemonic discourse about concepts of god, they confirmed the monotheism – polytheism dichotomy. The meaning of – in other pupil's view - the weird Hindu iconography, was a problem they did not know how to address. They also easily adapted to talk about Hinduism as faith.

Another example of adaption is the way Tamil children adapt to the use of concepts about Hinduism. Western scholars have traditionally seen North-Indian Hinduism as normative

¹ Also called Elara

² Velupillai Prabhakaran was probably killed by the Sinhalese Army on May 17, 2009

(Jacobsen, 2004). Norwegian textbooks and subsequently teachers traditionally use North-Indian concepts; Ganesha for Pillayar, Skanda for Murugan, etc.

Say Ganesha, that is what they understand,

a Tamil mother told her son.

Future possibilities

The children in my study are clever. They are eager students of RE, do their homework and contribute to discussions in class according to the hegemonic discourse. So in many ways they have adapted to the RE-normality. They see education as an important value. Their divergent values concerning religion are, in my view, subdued because the value of success in school overshadows their religious values. They seem to have good capacity for adaptability when it comes to success in school.

This can be interpreted in different ways. Are they victims of a colonising discourse? Do they make smart choices to succeed in school? Are adaptability a part of their Hindu identity? I prefer the two last explanations since education is a very important value for most Hindus in Norway.

The RE subject was meant to be a meeting-place promoting dialogue and respect, but it could as well promote othering because the subject is based on Western understandings of religion and religious diversity. The RE-subject is compulsory for all children, but still the hegemonic discourse is in accordance with the aforementioned approach. Some of the attitudes of the children in my study clearly represent an alternative to the hegemonic RE discourse and the dominant teaching strategy concerning religious diversity.

Will the outcome be that Hindu children have to adapt and be like “us” to fit in? Will they continue to be “the other”? Can Hindu students have impact on classroom dialogue and be agents of change?

I will argue that within the hegemonic RE discourse there are elements that can lead to deconstruction of normality constructs. According to the curriculum, the teaching should be “objective, critical and pluralistic” (*Curriculum for Religion, Philosophies of Life and Ethics*, 2008). Taking pluralistic seriously implies that teaching must grant Hindu approaches the same status as other approaches and not be based on Western approaches to religion as separate faith communities and on monotheism normality. I think it is time to deconstruct monotheism normality and superiority and give more space to the complex Hindu concept of god. I also think it is time to be more reflective about different attitudes to diversity, encompassing also the inclusive Hindu approach. If not, normality in RE could easily be limited to those fitting into hegemonic discourses. I think the pluralistic approach to RE can open up for change.

Various perspectives can be used to describe a possible change in the hegemonic discourses. Verran (2002) uses “postcolonial moments”, pointing to how new knowledge can be constructed in an encounter between a colonising hegemonic discourse and an alternative oppositional discourse. Kramvig’s (2006) Norwegian term “møter: sammenstøt” (“encounters: confrontations”) can be used. The term describes how we are all partners in a relational web of power and meaning and how these relations can create new knowledge. We could also think of Bhabha’s (2008) “third space” as a description of a possible outcome of the encounter between hegemonic Western values concerning religion and the (not) corresponding Hindu values. It is necessary to have discussions based on deconstructive and reconstructive approaches to obtain a change in Norwegian RE approaches. British discussions about “learning about” and “learning from” in RE can also be helpful (Grimmit, 2000). In my view, RE should value both inclusive and exclusive traditions without othering either. Also various concepts of the divine should be granted equal status (Nicolaisen 2009; 2011).

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Beyond Pluralism – Is Relativism in Values Education a Threat or a Potential?

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Abstract

Pluralistic approaches are usually considered as fundamental to the understanding of RE and values education these days. But pluralism is often carefully separated from its more far-reaching versions, which understand plurality in relativistic terms. Moreover, the notion of relativism is often accompanied by strongly negative emotional reactions, as relativism is associated with dystopian visions of arbitrariness, blurred knowledge, and crackling moral values. The paper departs from a suggestion that, within a pedagogic perspective, these emotional reactions in face of relativism should be seen as a resource for learning processes in ethics and RE. From an ethical perspective, the paper explores some features of relativism as an implicit dimension of pluralism. Drawing on pragmatist perspectives (Putnam, *Ethics Without Ontology*) the paper suggests under the label relativised relativism a point of view which affirms relativism as a resource for learning in relation to religion and / or ethics. This is related to pedagogic arguments, focusing on learning as characterized by uncertainty and vagueness, and illustrated by the pedagogical function of utopia and dystopia (Papastephanou, 2008) as essential for learning processes. Applying Papastephanou's elaborations on utopia and dystopia in education I argue that they are important and stimulating elements of pedagogic situations and processes, as they encompass not only visions beyond status quo and thereby comprise a pedagogic potential of change.

A Study of the Louvain Hermeneutical-Communicative Model of Religious Education from an Asian Perspective

Lucas Tha Ling Sum

Abstracts

This article reflects the recent hermeneutical-communicative model of religious education, which takes secularization and pluralization seriously into account. The model's development is based on the pedagogical evolvement during the second half of last century in Europe. Although this model is developed in Europe, we will show that this model is also relevant in the field of religious education in the Asian context.

Introduction

Today, due to the impact of the rapid emergence of pluralism and secularism, religious education in Europe faces a wide range of challenges such as de-traditionalization, de-confessionalization, de-christianization.¹ In an attempt to meet these various challenges, a new approach to religious education, namely, a hermeneutical-communicative model, is recently developed at the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium.² This model attracts an increasing number of religion teachers in the field of religious education both in Europe and in the U.S.³

In this article, which we divide into three parts, we will study this new model of religious education. In the first part, we will explore the hermeneutical-communicative model. In the second part, we show how six theological shifts of religious pedagogics play as a basic and profound ground for the development of the hermeneutical-communicative model. Lastly, an attempt will then be made to see if this new model will also be applicable to the Asian context.

¹ Cf. H. Lombaerts & D. Pollefeyt, "The Emergence of Hermeneutics in Religious Education Theories," in *Hermeneutics and Religious Education*, eds. H. Lombaerts & D. Pollefeyt (Leuven: University Press, 2004), 4.

² This model is recently developed by Herman Lombaerts, chair of the Teacher Training Programme at the Catholic University of Leuven, and Didier Pollefeyt, professor of Religious Education and Pastoral Theology and chair of the Center for Academic Teacher Training at the same University. For the origin of this Louvain hermeneutical-communicative model of religious education see particularly H. Lombaerts & D. Pollefeyt, "The Emergence of Hermeneutics in Religious Education Theories," in *Hermeneutics and Religious Education*, eds., H. Lombaerts & D. Pollefeyt (Leuven: University Press, 2004), 3-53.

³ This model exists in other countries too such as R. Jackson in the UK, T. Groome in the U.S., F. Schweitzer, in Germany and so on.

1. A Hermeneutical-Communicative Model of Religious Education

The model tries to show students its theological credentials by taking the relationship between faith and experience and God and the world very seriously. This means that the hermeneutical-communicative model is not just a pragmatic solution to our problem, but it is a model based on the traditional dynamics of continuous recontextualization of the Christian tradition.⁴ Its hermeneutical approach to religious education is particularly relevant to the current situation of the world today.

First and foremost, we want to address the terms, „communicative“ and, „hermeneutics“ employed in this hermeneutical-communicative model of religious education for a better understanding of this model.

The word „communicative“, primarily refers to a communication between teachers and pupils, and among pupils, between experience and faith, and between human beings and traditions. The term „hermeneutical“, according to this model, refers to a critical interpretation of Christian tradition and the social context of the students.

In the approach of the hermeneutical-communicative model of religious education, “...an optimistic anthropology in which man’s capacity as a seeker of meaning is central.”⁵ Supporting students in their search for meaning in life is the central task of this approach to religious education.⁶

In addition to this, another important aspect of the purpose of the hermeneutical-communicative model is to teach the students “to look at reality from a different perspective.”⁷ In human life, the truth is that there are times of joy and happiness as well as times of sadness and sorrow. Students must look at both the bright side and the dark side of their lives, to further develop their life as a whole. Put differently, the new approach to religious education also focuses on helping the students to discover their own stories.

The active participation of the student in that process is indispensable. Therefore, “pupils are invited to discover the religious presuppositions that underlie their own opinions and utterances.”⁸ According to this hermeneutical-communicative model, “attention for the

⁴ This model of religious education exists in some other countries too such as R. Jackson in the United Kingdom, T. Groome in the United States., F. Schweitzer, in Germany.

⁵ D. Pollefeyt, “The Difference of Alterity. A Religious Pedagogy for an Interreligious and Interideological World,” in *Responsibility, God and Society: Theological Ethics in Dialogue: Festschrift Roger Burggraeve (BETL)*, eds. J. De Tavernier, J. Selling, J. Verstraeten & P. Schotsmans (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 320.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ D. Pollefeyt, “The Difference of Alterity. A Religious Pedagogy for an Interreligious and Interideological World,” in *Responsibility, God and Society: Theological Ethics in Dialogue: Festschrift Roger Burggraeve (BETL)*, eds. J. De Tavernier, J. Selling, J. Verstraeten & P. Schotsmans (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 320.

subject implies not only tuning the courses' theme to the pupils' experiences, but it means active involvement of the pupils, who have interpreted experiences, in the construction of the content in class."⁹ In this process, "the interpretations of the youngsters themselves are considered to be valuable building stones for the whole course project."¹⁰

Balancing fundamentalism or absolutism and relativism is one of central tasks of this model. This means that, "one does not have to teach *about* religion, presenting all religions as equal in a relativistic way. At the same time, one has to avoid presenting only one tradition or interpretation as the absolute truth...The hermeneutical communicative model seeks a middle way between extremes."¹¹

It should be noted that according to this model, "Christianity is not presented as an obligation-free, neutral and exchangeable perspective on reality."¹² The model also endeavors to "teach pupils to deal with freedom of choice, teach them to deconstruct truth and then reconstruct a view of life with the building blocks of experience and tradition, in confrontation with the teacher's personal, Christian synthesis of faith."¹³

In the process of this pedagogical approach, confrontation with conflicting interpretations of students is also vitally important, because it is in that encounter that, "students are made aware of their religious and ideological presuppositions and those of others."¹⁴ In this way, "the students' religious cautiousness is highlighted and they learn to be open for the „miraculous, multi-interpretable character of reality."¹⁵ In this context, we help students to know critically different religious perspectives and stories, so that they can deal with plurality with freedom of choice and search for meaning in their own lives.

In sum, the main goal of the hermeneutical-communicative model of religious education is to make the students to be more aware of different philosophies, ideologies, religions, views of human life, to respect the plurality not only among the students but also in socie-

⁹ D. Pollefeyt, "Belgium: The Hermeneutic-Communicative Model," in *How Teachers in Europe Teach Religion. An International Empirical Study in 16 Countries*, eds. Hans Georg Ziebertz & Ulrich Riegel (Berlin: Lit-verlag, 2009), 36.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ A. Dillen, "Hermeneutics in Real Life. Practical Theology in Flanders (Belgium)," *International Journal of Practical Theology* vol. 12 (2008): 257-387.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ D. Pollefeyt, "The Difference of Alterity. A Religious Pedagogy for an Interreligious and Interideological World," in *Responsibility, God and Society: Theological Ethics in Dialogue: Festschrift Roger Burggraeve (BETL)*, eds. J. De Tavernier, J. Selling, J. Verstraeten & P. Schotsmans (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 321.

¹⁴ D. Pollefeyt, "Belgium: The Hermeneutic-Communicative Model," in *How Teachers in Europe Teach Religion. An International Empirical Study in 16 Countries*, eds. Hans Georg Ziebertz & Ulrich Riegel (Berlin: Lit-verlag, 2009), 36.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

ty, to invite and support the students to philosophical self-enlightenment in respect and freedom; and to present the wealth of the Christian traditions in a witnessing and specialist way so that the students may be able to make decisions by themselves critically and contemplatively in the process of their search for meaning in life.

Let us now turn to the role of hermeneutical intersections which play one of the key roles in the hermeneutical-communicative model. When the learners are given an opportunity to speak about their own ideas, life philosophies and experiences, hermeneutical intersections come out as a “result of tensions, conflicting interpretations of specific existential themes that refer back to a multitude of presuppositions in the discourse of the on a certain subject.”¹⁶ The outcome of hermeneutical intersections provides some significant advantages. For instance, the hermeneutical intersections allow us to see plurality in the classroom not as a threat but as an opportunity for learning environment. Here “we speak of a „hermeneutical-communicative“ model because...it is positively involved with an actual process of communication in which visions of the different participants challenge one another.”¹⁷ Due to the process of hermeneutical intersections in particular, the role of the teachers becomes more demanding.

According to this hermeneutical-communicative model, the teacher has to function as a moderator, a witness, and an expert. The moderator is supposed to allow the students to practice their freedom in search for meaning and in making decisions in life. In the light of this thought the teacher is considered to be a good moderator when he or she “keeps a hold on pupils in their search for meaning, but at the same time sets them free when it is necessary to do so.”¹⁸

The central function of the teacher as a witness is to guide and show the students Christian perspectives way in their search of meaning in life. However, in so doing, the teacher should not be neutral. Rather, he or she is expected to be a living witness. To play the role of a specialist, the teacher has to be particularly familiar with both Christian tradition and religious traditions of other faiths. The three functions of the teacher mentioned above are equally important.

2. Six Theological Shifts of Religious Pedagogics

The five theological shifts of the basis of the hermeneutical-communicative model such as from monocorrelation to multicorrelation, from a deductive to an inductive to an abductive

¹⁶ D. Pollefeyt, “The Difference of Alterity. A Religious Pedagogy for an Interreligious and Interideological World,” in *Responsibility, God and Society: Theological Ethics in Dialogue: Festschrift Roger Burggraeve*, eds. J. De Tavernier, J. Selling, J. Verstraeten & P. Schotsmans (Leuven: Peeters Press, 2008), 321.

¹⁷ Ibid., 322.

¹⁸ Ibid., 323.

hermeneutics, from a closed to an open understanding of tradition, from a correlative to an anticorrelative didactical structuring, and from man as a religious being to man as a hermeneutical being, lay solid ground for the development of the hermeneutical-communicative model. Let us now address them in what follows.

2.1. From Man as a „Religious Being“ to Man as a „Hermeneutical Being“

The human being, who is created in the image God, has the capability of creativity to develop of his or her own life. This is the point of departure of the hermeneutical-communicative model. The hermeneutical-communicative model attempts to help people to experience that they are created in the image of God and they have the capability of creativity to develop their own lives. What is significant in this approach of the hermeneutical-communicative model of religious education, unlike the deductive approach and inductive approach, is that there is a belief in the abilities of people to be able, “to experience and interpret reality in religious terms, but also in other authentic contexts of meaning.”¹⁹ For example, “the deductive model reflects a more limited confidence in people’s own philosophical skills because all the focus is laid on what is handed down from the „outside“.”²⁰

In addition, to consider a person not *per se* as a religious being but as a hermeneutical being is of paramount importance in this model. This means that every human being, according to the assumption of the hermeneutical-communicative model, has an openness to the Transcendent, but that transcendence is not *per se* received and/or understood as such in every human being. Emphasizing the importance of seeing human persons as hermeneutical beings, Pollefeyt says:

“When religious education is grounded in an anthropology in which man [human being] is seen as a being who is open for a radically „other“ meaning than the natural, one cannot exclude a hermeneutical process of learning: the light from someplace else or the voice of God demands a subject that is capable of receiving, recognizing, interpreting and experiencing experiences in this sense.”²¹

The hermeneutical space is fragile and delicate because when we face the realities in our life, this openness can easily make us vulnerable, fundamentalist, and fanatic and so on.

¹⁹ D. Pollefeyt, “The Difference of Alterity. A Religious Pedagogy for an Interreligious and Interideological World,” in *Responsibility, God and Society: Theological Ethics in Dialogue: Festschrift Roger Burggraeve (BETL)*, eds. J. De Tavernier, J. Selling, J. Verstraeten & P. Schotsmans (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 317.

²⁰ A. Dillen & D. Pollefeyt, “Catechesis Inside Out: A Hermeneutical Model for Catechesis in Parishes,” *Journal of the Person and the Challenges* 1, no. 1 (2011): 151-177.

²¹ D. Pollefeyt, “The Difference of Alterity. A Religious Pedagogy for an Interreligious and Interideological World,” in *Responsibility, God and Society: Theological Ethics in Dialogue: Festschrift Roger Burggraeve (BETL)*, eds. J. De Tavernier, J. Selling, J. Verstraeten & P. Schotsmans (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 317.

Recognizing the extent of the persons' receptivity and creativity in their own development in order to help the students to find out the hermeneutical space in their lives and in others, and to develop their capability to critically and philosophically interpret the realities in their lives is one of the fundamental objectives of the hermeneutical-communicative model. In this line of thought, religious education is "a joint search and learning process on the basis of both shared and disputed interpretations"²² in life. Thus, to regard human being not only automatically as a religious being but also as a fundamentally hermeneutical being is one of the foundations of the development of the hermeneutical-communicative model of religious education. In what follows, we will continue to deal with a move from monocorrelation to multicorrelative approaches.

2.2. A Move from Monocorrelation to Multicorrelation

Viewed from pedagogical standpoint, the deductive approach to religious education was widely used in education in the 1950s. In this deductive approach, the Christian tradition was treated as, "a fixed set of doctrinal truths, dogmas, rituals and ethical convictions which were handed down as the Catholic teaching."²³ The core emphasis of religious education in this period was the handing on of dogma and doctrine. In the deductive approach, however, faith could hardly connect with human experience.

Since the religious class room was homogeneous Christian and the almost exclusive connection was didactically established between tradition and experience,²⁴ the monocorrelation approach was used. Monocorrelation, however, has proven itself somewhat obsolete in the heterogeneous and often non-Christian classrooms of today. When this approach is used, students often feel that little attention is paid to their human experiences. In addition, they even feel that their experiences are often manipulated by one single sided and imposed interpretation. Therefore, monocorrelative approach becomes undesirable.

The multicorrelative approach often replaces it. The hermeneutics of the subject, context and tradition are the foundational elements of the multicorrelative approach that allow human experience and Christian tradition to relate on an active and individual level. Pollefeyt argues the concept of monocorrelation in favor of multicorrelative method in religious education because this gives the opportunity to confront the riches and the complexity of

²² A. Dillen & D. Pollefeyt, "Catechesis Inside Out: A Hermeneutical Model for Catechesis in Parishes," *Journal of the Person and the Challenges* 1, no. 1 (2011): 151-177.

²³ D. Pollefeyt, "Difference Matters. A Hermeneutic-Communicative Concept of Didactics of Religion in a European Multi-Religious Context," in *Journal of Religious Education* 56, no. 1 (2008): 9-17

²⁴ See D. Pollefeyt, "The Difference of Alterity. A Religious Pedagogy for an Interreligious and Interideological World," in *Responsibility, God and Society: Theological Ethics in Dialogue: Festschrift Roger Burggraeve*, eds., J. De Tavernier, J. Selling, J. Verstraeten & P. Schotsmans (Leuven: Peeters Press, 2008), 309.

life in many ways with the riches and the complexity of the Christian tradition without imposing just one meaning, since in confrontation with (young) people in a plural world this becomes counterproductive. A move from monocorrelative approach to multicorrelative approach is one of the fundamental foundations of the development of the hermeneutical-communicative model.

2.3. A Move from Constitutive to a Representative Christology

Pollefeyt states that, “Jesus” life, death, and resurrection are seen as constitutive acts that will bring about the redemption of mankind.”²⁵ This means that the salvation of human beings cannot be brought about by anything but the redemptive works and life of Jesus.

“Representative Christology is characterized by an eschatological concept of truth, in which truth is considered to be a utopia”.²⁶ In Pollefeyt’s view, “The utopia here can be seen both in the sense of „*u-topos*” (no place) and in the sense of a „*eu-topos*” (good place)”.²⁷ The representative Christology and utopian²⁸ concept of truth characterize religious education. In this view, religious education is understood as “a joint search for truth and meaning, inspired by the life, death and resurrection of Christ.”²⁹ When religious education is considered as a search for meaning in life, confessional qualifications of religious educators become vitally important. Pollefeyt states that:

“Religious education as a search for meaning, wherein truth is understood as a utopia, requires a clear profile of teachers. They may be expected to be well trained and having acquired sufficient knowledge of Christianity as well as other religions and other philosophies of life. Teachers of Roman Catholic religion are expected to be Christ-inspired in their attitude to life, based on a confessionally constitutive Christology wherein there is a will to interact with people who profess a different religion than their own. Finally, they are asked to be able to let the Christian and other traditions interact creatively with modern-day culture.”³⁰

²⁵ D. Pollefeyt, “The Difference of Alterity. A Religious Pedagogy for an Interreligious and Interideological World,” in *Responsibility, God and Society: Theological Ethics in Dialogue: Festschrift Roger Burggraeve (BETL)*, eds. J. De Tavernier, J. Selling, J. Verstraeten & P. Schotsmans (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 305-330.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ We will elaborate the utopian concept in the light of a hermeneutic-communicative model soon.

²⁹ D. Pollefeyt, “The Difference of Alterity. A Religious Pedagogy for an Interreligious and Interideological World,” in *Responsibility, God and Society: Theological Ethics in Dialogue: Festschrift Roger Burggraeve (BETL)*, eds. J. De Tavernier, J. Selling, J. Verstraeten & P. Schotsmans (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 313.

³⁰ Ibid.

In fact, Pollefeyt defends a combination of a representative and a confessional constitutive Christology. They go hand in hand. For Christians, Christ is the unique mediator of salvation. Christians have no other possibility than to see salvation from the perspective of Christ. Christian education has to witness this. Despite this, Christians can also accept and appreciate that people in other religious traditions can experience meaning and can travel a way to salvation. It is important to see at the background of this combination, two central ideas. The first is that the truth is always eschatological („u-topic“). There is also no possibility to transcend our own confessional perspective. In this way, Christians will always look to reality from a Christian perspective. They are able to value also what is possible in other religions and world views, but never disconnected from Christ. In the context of Jewish-Christian dialogue, Pollefeyt has shown how God for Christians is always Trinitarian: Father, Logos (incarnated in Christ) and Spirit. He sees the Logos at work from the beginning of creation, also in other religions, and he makes clear how the Logos can never be disconnected from Christ, the Incarnate Logos.³¹

2.4. From a Deductive to an Inductive to an Abductive Hermeneutics

Methodologically speaking, there are two common approaches to religious education, namely deductive approach and inductive approach. Whereas the deductive approach moves from faith to experience, the inductive approach makes a movement from experience to faith.

Today, alongside the deductive and inductive approaches, the abductive approach is advocated. “Abduction is a movement away from what is there, not bringing in of something completely new (deduction) nor a derivation of something completely now from something already existing (induction). It is, on the contrary, a movement from the fragments of the tradition to larger wholes of interpretation and vice-versa.”³² The goal of the abductive approach is not merely bridging faith and experience as such, but rather, “to discover new insights by bringing together the „already known“ and new experiences, thought experiments, and explorations of alternative interpretations.”³³ In so doing, “the most difficult and paradoxical issue of the possibilities of deduction and induction, namely how new

³¹ See Didier Pollefeyt and Philip A. Cunningham, “The Triune One, the Incarnate Logos, and Isreal’s Covenantal Life” in *Christ Jesus and the Jewish People Today: New Explorations of Theological Interrelationships*, eds. Philip A. Cunningham, Joseph Sievers, Mary C. Boys, Hans Hermann Henrix & Jesper Svartvik (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 183-201.

³² Annemie Dillen & Didier Pollefeyt, “Catechesis Inside Out. A Hermeneutical Model for Catechesis in Parishes”, in *The Person and the Challenges: The Journal of Theology, Education, Canon Law and Social Studies* 1, no. 1 (2011): 151-177.

³³ D. Pollefeyt, “The Difference of Alterity. A Religious Pedagogy for an Interreligious and Interideological World,” in *Responsibility, God and Society: Theological Ethics in Dialogue: Festschrift Roger Burggraeve*, eds. J. De Tavernier, J. Selling, J. Verstraeten & P. Schotsmans (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 315.

knowledge can come from something that was already present or from something that is not yet present, is solved.”³⁴

2.5. A Move from a Closed to an Open Understanding of Tradition

Viewed from hermeneutical perspective, traditions always have close connections with human experience. As such, Christian tradition is regarded as a tradition that offers a dialogue with daily experiences and with the world. This indicates that, “Tradition is not fixed once and for all. Tradition is not treated as if it were a museum piece, but as something that has to be „learned, discussed, and recontextualized’ in a lively manner that can „awaken experiences and questions”.”³⁵

2.6. A Move from a Correlative to an Anticorrelative Didactical Structuring

As such, a correlation approach of religious education tries to establish a relationship between culture and faith. Viewed from a Christian incarnational perspective, tradition and human experience are closely linked. But, when it comes to a question of didactical structure, it is important that, “lessons are structured in non-correlative phases, which means that, throughout the concrete course of a lesson, the teacher consciously chooses not to give into the temptation of correlating „experience” and „tradition” too quickly,”³⁶ because there can be many complex and challenging issues between them. What will also then be important, therefore, is to keep asking questions about the gap and/or connection between human experience and tradition. This suggests that religious education has a long-term goal which is, “structured as a joint search in which there is room for questioning the evident.”³⁷ The salient point here is that once Christian tradition is treated as an open tradition, anticorrelative didactical approach is then indispensable.

3. The Implications of the Hermeneutical-communicative Model of Religious Education in the Asian Context

In making an attempt to apply the hermetical-communicative model to the Asian context, we will focus on the following fundamental questions: will this Louvain hermeneutical-communicative model of religious education be relevant or even feasible in the Asian con-

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 317.

³⁷ Ibid.

text? What significant insights do we get from this model? What challenges would face us if we apply it in the context of Asia? We will now endeavor to answer these fundamental questions by dividing this section into two parts, the significant contributions and challenges, in order to see whether this model will fit.

3.1. Significant Contributions

There are, indeed, many elements of the hermeneutical-communicative model that are relevant to the Asian context. However, we will single out only some points which we think are particularly urgent and significant.

Firstly, the hermeneutical-communicative model's great concern for and positive emphasis on religious plurality is particularly relevant to Asia, which the Asian Synod correctly calls, "a home to many world religions."³⁸ By comparison, in Europe, generally speaking, pluralism has only noticeably and increasingly emerged in the last few decades. But in Asia, unlike in Europe, plurality has existed from the very beginning. In Asia, one cannot talk of one's religion without considering other religions. Taking Asia's pluralism into consideration, Michael Amaladoss, director of the Institute of Dialogue with Cultures and Religions in Chennai, India, says, "I can no longer talk about God while ignoring the religious other."³⁹ This model does not consider pluralism as a threat. But rather, it sees plurality as an opportunity to learn and to enrich one's religion. Here, it is clear that the hermeneutical-communicative model is in line with the thought of the Asian Synod that also considers pluralism as enrichment.⁴⁰

Secondly, according to this model, the students are considered not as incapable subjects but as competent ones. Their different backgrounds and stories are well respected. The students are expected to be able to relate their daily experience with Christian tradition reflectively and critically and so actively to participate in the teaching and learning process. Obviously, this is one of the major goals of this model. The truth is that in many countries in Asia, if not all, the students are mostly passive in the religious classes. One of the reasons, in our view, is that memorization is often overemphasized.⁴¹ When the memorization is overemphasized and students do not actively participate in teaching and learning

³⁸ "The Synod's Proposition no. 41," in *The Asian Synod: Texts and Commentaries*, ed. Peter C. Phan, (Maryknoll, NY.: Orbis Books, 2002), 158.

³⁹ Michael Amaladoss, SJ., "Is There an Asian Way of Doing Theology," in *East Asian Pastoral Review* 45, no. 1 (2008): 10-27.

⁴⁰ See Franz-Josef Eilers, ed. *For All the People of Asia*, Vol. 3 (Manila: Claretian, 2002), 337-338.

⁴¹ See, for instance, how memorization is used in teaching Christian faith in many countries in Asia <http://www.ucanews.com/search/?schkeyword=memorization&schcountry=by+country&startdate=&enddate=&x=0&y=0>; accessed 26 February 2012.

process, they do not know, “how to reflect and think for themselves.”⁴² The hermeneutical-communicative model is, therefore, necessary if we are to engender a healthy relationship between Christianity and other religions.

Thirdly, in our view, the deductive approach is heavily used in many parts of Asia while little attention is often paid to the inductive approach. But, they do not exclude each other. On the contrary, they are complementary. In the hermeneutical-communicative approach, both deductive and inductive methods are employed together. Emphasizing the importance of the effectiveness of religious education, the proposed use of the abductive approach of this new model should be seriously considered. When religious education is done deductively and inductively, at least to a certain extent, it will be attractive and effective.⁴³

Fourthly, we must make a clear rejection of indoctrination, absolutivism, and relativism of the hermeneutical-communicative approach. The model balances itself in the middle of absolutism and relativism. Today, in Asia, these issues deserve special attention in the field of religious education to ensure that faith is a free and personal response to God.

Finally, the approach of the hermeneutical-communicative model to Christian tradition is remarkable. The Christian Tradition, according to this model, is not viewed as fixed and closed but rather as an open tradition. In this understanding, every person can participate in tradition and at the same time he or she can also learn from it.⁴⁴ From the point of view of religious education, this way of understanding about tradition is of great importance in Asia. It is because, again, in many parts of Asia, at least in our view, Christian tradition is often treated as a fixed and closed tradition.

Therefore, as this model proposes, Christian tradition should be dealt with as an open tradition in Asia too. In so doing, the students can not only take part in tradition but also learn from the tradition. This way of approach to tradition will then enhance the effectiveness of religious education. In short, the hermeneutical-communicative model is insightful. Let us now continue to address the challenge of the model for the Asian context.

⁴² Perter J. Wilkinson, *A Mission to the Burmese Buddhist: A Case History of the Nineteenth Century Apostolate of Paul-Ambrose Bigandet* (Rome: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1970), 328. For more information see Paul Ambrose Bigandet, *The History of the Catholic Burmese Mission* (Bangkok: White Orchid Press, 1997), 63.

⁴³ Cf. Renato de Guzman, “Communication with the Young: The Catechetical Dimension,” in *E-generation: The Communication of Young People in Asia – A Concern of the Church*, ed. Franz – Josef Eilers (Manila: Logos (Divine Word) Publications, Inc., 2003), 135.

⁴⁴ Cf. A. Dillen, “Hermeneutics in Real Life. Practical Theology in Flanders (Belgium),” in *International Journal of Practical Theology* 12 (2008): 257-387.

3.2. Challenges

After paying close attention to the current challenges of religious education and rising to meet those challenges, we agree that there is certainly a need to have qualified religion teachers. As seen, according to the hermeneutical-communicative model, the teacher must be specialist, witness and moderator. Viewed from the standpoint of an Asian context, however, this is evidently one of the greatest challenges of our model. In our opinion, the educational standards for religion teachers are fairly low.⁴⁵ Then the core question here is: can we still then talk of the qualities of the teacher according to the hermeneutical-communicative approach in the Asian context? Will it be possible to find teachers those who can function as specialist, witness and moderator? If yes, then how?

Despite its challenge, the answer for the above questions is yes. The Asian Synod emphasizes the necessity of specialists, saying, “There could be specialists for different groups of people, as children, youths, adults, workers in urban areas, etc.”⁴⁶ This shows the Synod's confidence in the possibility of finding a teacher who can function not only as a specialist but also as a witness and moderator. But, of course, when applying this model, the Asian context has to be taken into account. For example, an M.A. degree is not necessary for a teacher to be considered specialist, witness and moderator in Asia, though it is in Europe. In Asia, a B.A. will often suffice. Good training, however, is indispensable as there is an urgent need for local teachers, “who can communicate, initiate, and guide experience.”⁴⁷ By and large, the hermeneutical-communicative model of religious education, in our view, is feasible and relevant to the present Asian context.

4. Conclusion

In our view, the hermeneutical-communicative model of religious education is relevant not only to the European context but also to the Asian context. The model provides tremendous new insights in line with the demands of current situations in the field of religious education. Beyond a doubt, this new model deserves a close study and the special attention of contemporary religion teachers, especially those who have special concern for the effectiveness of teaching and learning in the midst of pluralistic society today. It is our great hope that the Louvain hermeneutical-communicative model will be of a great source for the success of religious education today and tomorrow.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Bert Cacayan, “Burma: Rich Country, Poor People, Impressions and Recommendations,” in *East Asian Pastoral Review*, 38 no. 4 (2001): 305-315.

⁴⁶ Gaudencio Rosales & C. G. Arevalo, eds., *For All the Peoples of Asia*, Vol. 1 (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992), 79.

⁴⁷ Michael Amaladoss, “Is There an Asian Way of Doing Theology,” in *East Asian Pastoral Review* 45, no. 1 (2008): 10-27.

Formation, Information and Transformation: Reflections on Religious Education – a Theological Perspective

Johannes Nissen

The aim of this paper is to reflect on the conference theme “Religious Education between Formation, Knowledge and Control” from a theological point of view. It is argued that a theological understanding of religious education (RE) should be characterised by the three words: formation, information and transformation. While the two first terms correspond to the title of the conference (“formation” and “knowledge”), it seems to be different with the third term.

The word “control” relates to the condition of RE in modern society. To what degree is RE in schools and faith communities controlled by the authorities and the state? Some scholars argue that the theory of the two realms should be seen as the basis for understanding the aim of RE. I am hesitant to this suggestion, but it is not my intention to discuss it in the present paper.¹ Instead of “control” I am using the word “transformation” which has a prophetic element. It is my thesis that the word “transformation” indicates an important theological task of RE. There is a transformative element in the gospel which means that the church should have a prophetic, critical voice in society.² In the same way, religious education must be liberative and open-ended.

Some notes on definition and methodology

One major challenge in describing the role of theology in the process of RE is how to define what we are dealing with. Quite a number of terms have been used and so far there is no consensus on which term might be the most appropriate. Suggested terms include religious education, Christian education, church education, Christian nurture and catechesis.

The term “Christian education” is often used of the Christian instruction in the setting of the church: “Christian education is education for the Christian life” (Dijkstra 1986: 184). A

¹ For a more detailed discussion of this issue see Sagberg 2006: 123-25. The use of the theory raises some crucial questions, like. Will a theological hermeneutic like the theory of the two realms be readily accepted in authentic publicness? Is it acceptable to RE teachers in a religiously plural world? Having discussed these issues Sagberg concludes by saying: “I do not advocate the theory of the realms as *the* hermeneutical theory of RE in a multi-religious and multi-cultural Europe. It is, however, one coherent theory that deserves attention” (p. 125).

² For a discussion of these questions see also my article, “Conformity, Nonconformity, and Critical Solidarity. The Church-State Issue and the Use of the Bible” (Nissen 2000).

theological understanding of RE should be seen as broader than this, and therefore I propose that we use the term Christian religious education, which is also suggested by a number of theologians engaged in studies of RE, e.g. Groome 1980; Moore 1983.

Religious education is an important discipline within practical theology. Hence, I will add some reflections on the methodological problems within practical theology with a specific view to Christian religious education.

In the course of the 20th century social sciences were introduced into university curricula. This fact evoked methodological problems which tended to ignore the theological identity of practical theology (Kim 2007: 430). New-orthodox theology has criticized this trend in practical theology by emphasising the internal dialogue within theology. This approach can be characterised as a *deductive* method that started by biblical and dogmatic theology and from there went to practical theology; it is in other words a *theory-to-practice method*.

Criticising this deductive approach other theologians insist that practical theology and RE should have a more inductive character. Thus, according to Edward Farley, practical theology is a discipline that theologically and critically reflects on Christian *praxis* as its subject matter, moving beyond pastoral activities and the life and activity of churches to affect change in society (Farley 1983: 127-135). This approach emphasised the *praxis* side of theology, bridging the gap between on the one hand the theory and *praxis*, and on the other society and theology and its non-theological partners.

Don Browning has proposed a conversation between two poles: the interpretation of the Christian tradition and the interpretation of the human situation. Following D. Tracy he defines practical theology as a “mutually, critical correlation between interpreted theory and praxis of the Christian faith and interpreted theory and praxis of the contemporary human experience.” (Don Browning 1991: 60-61). Don Browning corrects the concept of practical theology as applied theology (theory-to practice) and proposes a *praxis-theory-praxis* model using a comprehensive model of practical moral reasoning.

It seems to me that practical theology should affirm a hermeneutical cycle of “practice to theory and back to practice” – to use Don Browning’s expression (Browning 1991: 9). Therefore I would suggest a method that starts with the *praxis* of the present situation and moves beyond the clerical paradigm, which focuses only on the praxis of the clergy and the ecclesial paradigm that confines the praxis to the Christian vocation in the Church, in other words the praxis of congregations, churches and denomination. This method attempts to address the *praxis* of God that embraces both the ecclesial and non-ecclesial context. It “connects the church to society, correlates theology with its non-theological partners, and places us between hope and critical realism, providing a situation for open communication based on relationality, equality and openness to guide us in the future” (Kim 2007: 430-431).

To conclude, practical theology cannot be restricted to the setting of the church. A definition like Swinton and Mowatt’s is a good starting point for emphasising its orientation as

outward and not only inward: “Practical theology is critical theological reflection on the practices of the Church, as they interact with the practices of the world, with a view to ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God’s redemptive practise in, to and for the world” (2005; here quoted from O’ Brian 210: 367).

Models of Christian education

In an article entitled “Towards a Christian Education for an Inclusive Community”, Samson Prabhakar presented some interesting ideas on a Christian education – or as I would prefer to say Christian religious education. This seems to be in line with the author whose focus is not just on the internal life of the Church. To begin with he describes five existing models of Christian education (1996: 27-31). These are:

1. *Religious instruction model*: This model assumes that the teaching/learning process consists of the *transmission* of Christian religious beliefs, practices, traditions and norms to the learners. The context in which the transmission takes place is the church’ educational programme such as Sunday School.

2. *The faith-community model*: The argument here is that the aim of Christian education must be primarily *spiritual* rather than *instructional*. It criticises the overdependence of Christian education on secular educational theories and methods. Christian education is perceived more as a pastoral activity than as an educational activity. The primary question is not what to teach and learn, but “What is it to be Christian together in community and in the world?”

3. *Spiritual development model*. Instead of focusing on secular education of the Church for developing a theory of Christian education, this model focuses on the religious experience and the religious quest of *the individual*. The person’s spiritual life is the purpose and context of education. It demonstrates that the findings of developmental psychologists such as Erikson, Kohlberg and Piaget and of theologians of human developments such as Fowler are important. Christian educators like Fowler and Goldman are prominent exponents of this model.

4. *Liberation model*. Justice is the primary metaphor used in this model. The goal of Christian education is to enable the church and its members to be faithful to the calling of the Kingdom of God and to enable them to respond to the social realities creatively. Traditional Christian education is criticised for its individualism. This model encourages a style of education that provides persons with the tools of critical consciousness. The aim is to act for social transformation in line with the prophetic witness of the Gospel. Therefore the methods of education and the style of the teacher must respect the learners. The liberation models draws heavily on P. Freire for its methodology of education. Christian education, thus, becomes prophetic rather than merely kerygmatic.

5. *Interpretation model*. It seeks to enable the learners to interpret the Christian tradition and the learner's present experience in relation to each other. In this model we see a two-way agenda for Christian education, namely (a) the theological tradition becomes the source by which experience is made meaningful, and (b) the experience becomes the source for remaking the meaning of the tradition. It is more a transaction between tradition and culture, faith and life than simply applying certain faith-tenets to life. Prominent among those who propagate this model is Thomas Groome. He names his model of Christian education process "Shared Christian Praxis". His main concern seems to guide the learners in their attempt to "*discern God's will* in their lives". In his approach the teacher is more a guide than an instructor or socialiser. The student is a pilgrim on a journey, creating history. The teacher is also a pilgrim, but one whose vocation is to guide another on the journey.

Liberative teaching

According to Prabhakar these models are not to be taken mutually exclusive because one may find similarities in some of the aspects. I agree that there are interesting elements in each of these models, but they are not of the equal importance. Preference must be given to the fourth and the fifth models.

As indicated, Groome is seen to be a proponent of the fifth approach, but he might also be considered as a representative of the fourth approach. For Groome, education is a process of reflection on shared praxis. His emphasis, as with Freire, is critical reflection on practice, which leads back into reformed practice. This kind of reflection is done in community; hence, it is shared.

Groome's method proceeds through five movements (that coincide in many ways with Freire's movement in literary education). In the first movement the participants describe their own praxis or that of society, followed in the second movement by identifying the stories and visions that underline that praxis. In the third movement, the community reflects on the Christian story and vision, followed by a dialogical reflection between their own praxis and the Christian story/vision in the fourth movement. The concluding movement makes decision for renewed praxis. In this last movement, the dialectic leads to the reformation of action.

Another representative of the liberation model is Daniel Shipani who has given particular attention to the content of liberation within Christianity, namely, the gospel of the kingdom of God by which the church should be oriented, conceived and evaluated (Shipani 1984: 104). Appropriating this gospel becomes the purpose of Christian education, which he elaborates to include following Jesus Christ, promoting social transformation for freedom, knowing and loving God, and becoming more human (Shipani 1984: 128-131).

There are two basic stages of pedagogy – consciousness-raising and work for transformation. In the one stage, pedagogy serves to “unveil the world of oppression” and in the other, it serves to transform that world (Freire 1991: 40). Conscientization is quite different from “banking” education, in which the teacher stores information to students. Freire sees banking education as problematic, because it “attempts to control thinking and action, leads men (sic) to adjust to the world, and inhibits their creative power” (Freire 1991: 64).

The liberative pedagogy of Jesus

All education is either education for domestication or for freedom. Christian education has often taken the first form. Moreover, it has often had a deductive character. There is, however, a discrepancy between this education for domestication and the liberative pedagogy that is reflected in the portrait of the historical Jesus in the synoptic gospels.

It is true, of course, that the gospels in their present form are “narrative Christologies”, which spell out for us in story and saying the significance which the Jesus experience had for the evangelists and their communities. Nevertheless, in line with most scholars, I would argue that it is possible to give a portrait of the historical Jesus. One distinctive mark is Jesus as teacher. What, then, was this “teaching” of Jesus like? What sort of educational model did he follow? Geores Soares-Prabhu has demonstrated that it was a non-elitist, transforming, prophetic, dialogical and critical model. (Soares-Prabhu 1982).

The teaching of Jesus is *a non-elitist pedagogy*. It is not an academic teaching, restricted to the members of a scribal school trained in the law. His teaching is open to the “little ones”, unlearned in the law.

The teaching of Jesus is *a praxis-oriented pedagogy*. Word and deed go hand in hand in his teaching and one would be unimaginable without the other. In the concrete, action-oriented biblical culture to which Jesus belonged, words without deeds to “fulfil” them would have been as empty as deeds without words to expound their meaning. Indeed his pedagogy is an authentic example of the fine blend of action and reflection which Paulo Freire calls *praxis*. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world. “The effectiveness of the word spoken by Jesus – always a performative word or a language-event, which does not merely inform about, but which *transforms* reality – derives ultimately from the authority (*exousia*) with which it is spoken” (Soares-Prabhu 1982: 247-248).

All the teachings of Jesus, his words as well as his deeds, are like the parables, dialogical and critical: they involve the listener in creative response, and they put into question the accepted values of the world (Soares-Prabhu 1982: 254; Nissen 1997: 33). First, the teaching of Jesus is *dialogical*. For all its authority, the teaching of Jesus is not authoritarian. His pedagogy is neither indoctrination nor propaganda. Jesus in his parables does not attempt to inform or persuade; he tries only to make the listeners aware. Second, the teach-

ing of Jesus is *critical*. His parables are, in fact, continually subverting the world of his listeners (e.g. Luke 10:29-37; Matth 20:1-15). The listener's world is turned up-side-down.

It should be noticed that there is no element of indoctrination in the pedagogy of Jesus. The way in which Jesus communicates with his contemporaries indicates that he was convinced about the ability of his followers to act freely. As Groome has put it: "Members of the Kingdom are not objects acted upon by God's activity, but subjects called to respond to God's kingdom by living their lives in partnership for each other" (Groome 1980: 41).

A reversal of teaching

Biblical scholarship has pointed to other characteristic aspects of Jesus' pedagogy. Of special interest are the few but important texts about Jesus and children (especially Mark 10:13-16; Mark 9:33-37). To understand the significance of these texts one should realise how teaching was conceived of among Jews and Greeks (Weber 1979: 43). During the time of Jesus, both in Graeco-Roman and the Jewish world, teaching was one-way: from the adults towards the children. Whether the raw material present in a child had to be formed into a fully human being or whether a small immature member of the Covenant people had to be disciplined by the knowledge and fear of the Lord, it is the child who is at the receiving end and who is important only as a potential learner.

It is in the context of such Graeco-Roman and Jewish concepts of education that the incident reported in Mark 9:33-37, Luke 9:46-48 and Matth 18:1-5 must be considered. In all three accounts, the occasion of Jesus' actions and words is the disciples' question about who among them was the greatest. In Jesus' response, a child becomes central, not as the one who receives instruction but as the one whose very presence becomes the clue to answering the disciples' question. Consequently, *a reversal in the teaching/learning situation* occurs, which at the same time indicates a reversal of being: the first must be the last; the least one is great. In fact, Jesus' attitude to children was so new and astonishing that his disciples could not grasp it.³

Towards an inclusive community

This leads us to a third aspect of Jesus' pedagogy: the inclusive community as a fundamental part of his work. A model of RE from a theological perspective should be inspired by Jesus' vision of an inclusive community, that is a human community where no one is discriminated against on the basis of race, gender, caste, ethnic background and so on. An

³ Cf. Weber 1979: 12. These traditions on Jesus and the children form the background for a debate within recent years on *Children's Exegesis or Doing Exegesis with Children*. For further details see, among others, Iversen 2006: 55-56; Schweitzer 2006: 98-119.

important feature of the primitive Gospel tradition is that the disadvantaged – the women, the poor person, the stranger and so on – suddenly take centre stage. The poor and the needy came into this world not as mere recipients of gifts from the wealth but as those upon whom the future of the world is dependent. A “sinful woman”, a tax collector and an outsider represent the signs of the “economy of the Kingdom”. This is a “decentring of perspective” and a reversal of the world as it is presently known and legitimised. People are seen as subjects of their own history (Nissen 1994, 240). In short, Jesus redefined community membership in a new inclusive way.⁴

If Christian education is understood as an activity for preserving a particular set of beliefs, costumes and traditions, the result would be parochialism. Instead, Christian education needs to be understood as those activities of Christian community through which it intentionally attempts to create an inclusive community. According to Prabhakar Christian education for an inclusive community should be defined by three marks (1996: 32-39).

First, Christian education is an *activity of faith-formation for transformation*. It is not just meant for maintaining the status quo. Faith-formation that does not care for transformation is not faith-formation, but mere “faith-preservation”.

Second, Christian education is *an activity of empowerment of people*. Learning is an activity of empowerment. As such, it challenges our common perception of the church, society and systems of education as systems of domination: controlling the structural relations, resources, law, communications, characterised as mechanisms of control. Over against this, a Christian education that seeks to create an inclusive community would be based on the principle of solidarity and sharing.

Third, Christian education is *an activity of mutual-critical enrichment*. Ours is a context of plurality of religions, cultures, ethnicities, histories and ideologies. And we cannot ignore the plurality, because diversity is the hallmark of God’s creation. Moreover, plurality poses certain challenges to our faith life in any particular community. Looking at “others” in opposition to “ourselves” and seeing others as a threat to our own identities would easily lead to racial prejudices, religious prejudices, disharmony, fragmentation... and even violent conflicts. Christian education that seeks to build an inclusive community should focus on developing an “attitude of openness towards those who are different”... “It should foster awareness in the learners that “the others” are fellow-travellers in our journey in search of the mysteries of life.”⁵

⁴ Nissen 1994: 228. Cf. Burridge 2007: 409: “Whenever we are presented with a choice between being biblical and being inclusive, it is a false dichotomy – for to be truly biblical is to be inclusive in any community which want to follow and imitate Jesus”.

⁵ Prabhakar (1996: 38-39). The author underlines that the content of Christian education cannot be confined to Christian religious heritage and traditions but includes religious traditions and heritages of those others who are also in the world in which God is still active. Since faith-formation includes transformation in all aspects of human life, the content should include struggles of the people for justice and peace.

Religious education, identity and dialogue

The consequence of this emphasis on a Christian education for an inclusive community is a dialogical approach to education. In a similar way, Friedrich Schweitzer (2007: 97) has argued for a model of RE to support the development of religious identities and, at the same time, also support dialogical attitudes. This model is appropriate to respond to the situation of individualised religious because it aims to foster religious identities, yet also to create a dialogical setting that precludes segregationist attitudes and exclusivist identities. This model combines elements of separate denominational or religious groups and elements of an interdenominational or inter-religious type of RE by alternating between different groups and settings. It can also be called a dialogical model, because it aims to bring different groups into dialogue with each other.

Schweitzer proposes an education for tolerance. According to this proposal, the development of religious identities becomes an important task for education for tolerance. Such a development, however, must also be in line with the demands of dialogue and openness for other religions. Co-operative dialogical religious education is a model that seems to be suitable for the dual task of supporting the development of religious identities and, at the same time, openness and dialogue (Schweitzer 2007: 98).

A theological foundation for a dialogic pedagogy might be found in the Trinitarian mystery. It has been argued that the central mystery of the Trinity is one of *mutual* dialogue and *reciprocal* obedience among all three persons. According to Therese Ratliff there are three Trinitarian hallmarks of communication and dialogue, and these are attentiveness, receptivity and response. The task for RE becomes crucial, and we have to ask questions like these: What are the implications for such a theological vision if it is to reach beyond academic theory to the realm of practical, pastoral theology? How might we foster new ways of seeing and celebrating the dialogic nature of God as Trinity that can impact the dialogic spirituality of the church community? (Ratliff 2010: 435).

A dialogical approach to RE is an important part of *interreligious learning* which in these years is at the top of the agenda in RE. The question is how we should highlight the theological presuppositions and claims that are employed by theorists of interreligious learning.⁶

⁶ See, among others, Merrigan 2007. The author makes a distinction between three models of RE (193-194): (1) the *monoreligious* model. In this model values are based on one system of faith, for example Christianity; the aim is to “initiate” students into a specific tradition or faith with a view to full membership; (2) the *multireligious* model. This model is encouraging the avowedly neutral presentation of a variety of religious traditions. It is not concerned with encouraging students to make choice for any particular tradition; (3) the *interreligious* model. This model takes as its point of departure the commitment to a particular religious tradition but introduces the student to the central ideas of other traditions.

From transmission to transformation

In my previous reflections the focus has in particular been on the concept of education. But there are good reasons for focusing on “learning” rather than “education”. By definition education is a more narrow term. Moreover, it is a term that for many people implies self-conscious critical reflection and expresses cognitive understanding. Learning, however, is a much wider concept. It labels *any* enduring change brought about by experience (Astley 2002: 4).

Following Simon Oxley, I understand learning as a process of transformation for the learners and their context. This is in contrast to the learning seen in many church and state educational systems as being limited to adding information and skills through a process of transmission. With transformation, learners develop the ability to reflect critically on themselves and their contexts. With transmission, the learners may be passive and unreflective (Oxley 2002: 70).

As demonstrated above, the gospels portrait Jesus as one whose teaching was dialogical and critical. His communication was *oriented towards the recipients* (Nissen 1997: 33). There is an interesting contrast between the attitudes of Jesus and those of his followers. Jesus worked with questions. He responded to all those put to him by genuine enquirers and by trouble-makers. His answers, often in the form of a story, provoked the questioner to coming to his or her own judgment, and breaking the boundaries of current religious thought (Oxley 2002: 72).

Learning is not just something done by individuals in isolation from their environment and social context. It is first and foremost *learning in community*. People learn in, around and through the communities to which they belong. Most of us belong to several communities: family, neighbourhood, educational, work, interest/leisure, church and so on (Oxley 2002: 87).

Any community of which we are members “forms” us in the sense of orienting us to the world in a certain way, encouraging certain kinds of behaviour, and discouraging others. In Christian education the church as learning community is of specific importance (cf. Everist 2002).⁷ The Bible plays an important role in the formation of the moral and religious character of the individuals and of the Christian fellowship.⁸

⁷ The concept of the church as a learning community is affirmed by ecumenical education. If we want to take ecumenical education seriously, we must work to help churches to become learning communities rather than domesticating communities – to have broad or multiple perspectives rather than a single, narrow view of their faith and the world (Oxley 2002: 44).

⁸ Nissen 2006. On Bible reading as a transformative act, see esp. pp. 82-84.

Concluding remarks

The thesis of this paper is that RE from a theological perspective has a threefold task: formation, information and transformation. Mary Moore notes that an educational method needs to include transmission, reflection and transformation. All are dynamically interwoven (Moore 1983: 127-132). In a similar way, Thomas Groome highlights that his work *Sharing Faith* “encourages educators to engage and inform, form and transform the very „being“ of people in the world” (Groome 1991: 8).

This threefold task of RE has often been questioned at the academic institutions and in schools. It was argued that RE should limit itself to the task of bringing knowledge. In particular in the schools there has been a strong debate on indoctrination in last decades of the 20th century. The background is that RE in schools is non-confessional in Denmark and has been so since 1975. However, the alternative between proclamation and information (knowledge) is misleading. There is an element of influence in all kinds of communication – even in those cases where the communicator has the intention of being “neutral” or “objective”. Eberhard Harbsmeier is right in claiming that the informative and existential elements are present in all good education. Instead of the false alternative between proclamation and information he suggests a third paradigm, namely that of a dialogic pedagogy which gives room for the questions, the needs and the interests of the children (Harbsmeier 2007: 93-94; cf. Schweitzer 2006).

Formation, information and transformation are important aspects of all forms of education. If Christian religious education wants to maintain its dialogical character, it has to include all three aspects.

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Connecting Critical Social Analysis of Educational Practices and Philosophy of Education – A Methodological Exploration of Human Dignity as Educational Value and Anti-Racism as Values Education

Collective paper session (abstracts)

Introduction

Since the 1980'es, the field of Religious Education and Religious Education Research has more and more come to realize its own relevance for religious and cultural diversity and peaceful coexistence in western societies. The three contributors who asked me to chair their joint paper session, shed light on this objective for religious education from an educational point of view. Mette Buchardt's paper stands in the tradition of racism-awareness- and anti-racist trainings, where problems of coexistence and cooperation in culturally and religiously diverse societies are addressed as a problem of perception and awareness rather than a problem of finding an adequate ethical stance. In this tradition, many ethical positions are implicitly understood as sufficient, as *good enough*, provided that the persons involved come to terms with their own ethnocentric misconceptions of the Other. Karin Sporre's paper, on the other hand, relates, albeit critically, to a universalist tradition, where the problem of coexistence in diversity is addressed as a question of *the (sometimes the one and only) appropriate* ethical position. Sporre discusses the human rights and their bearings on cultural or religious particularity. Interestingly, both papers point to the limitations of their respective approach, and do so in a complementary way. Buchardt shows that the structural conditions of the school settings and its inherent values override the awareness of teachers acting in specific situations, thus pointing to the importance of educational politics and its values and ethics. Karin Sporre explores human dignity as a universal value that cannot be taken for granted, but is always at risk, demanding a high degree of specific awareness in culturally diverse issues. From the background of empirical classroom research, Osbeck shows the importance of specifically educational issues and perspectives in addressing cultural and religious diversity in the classroom, underlining the importance of research and theory based on the empirics of religious education itself.

Mette Buchardt, Section of Educational Theory, University of Copenhagen:

The tricky concept of experience and the vision and practice of anti racist education.
An exploration of a practiced concept – in critical dialogue with Freires Pedagogy of the oppressed.

In the tradition of the pedagogy of liberation, since especially the 1970s a critical understanding of racism developed as well as a new vision for anti racist strategies in the school

in general and in its different subject matters, e.g. Religious Education (RE). In this paper a case-study based on data from an action research project of anti racist and critical multi-cultural educational strategies in e.g. RE and other school subjects of Humanities, will be explored.

The practices tried out in the project produced racialism and culturalism and thereby were on the one hand counterproductive, but on the other hand showed new directions for a critical anti-racist didactics. Especially the practice around experience of the pupils, a concept much celebrated in pedagogy of liberation and the critical traditions in pedagogy of experience, seem problematic, but do also fruitful for further exploration. The paper brings the analysis of the practiced concept of experience in the action research project in critical dialogue with Freires understanding of the concept. This as a way to explore how educational research can go from critical analytical findings and into elaborating a prescriptive philosophical conceptual work in the tradition of a pedagogy of liberation and a pedagogy of the oppressed from Paolo Freire and Franz Fanon (e.g. Safa Dei, 2010), and as such contribute to further development of a vision for and a critical corrective to educational practice.

(To be elaborated and later submitted for publication elsewhere)

Karin Sporre, Department of Education, Umeå University. karin.sporre@pedag.umu.se

Human dignity – A concept in dialogue with educational practice?

In the paper two questions are raised: *How can a philosophical concept like human dignity be used to have a bearing on an educational practice, and in this particular case in relation to anti-racist education?* Another question following from the first one is: *What could be sketched as elements of the content of the concept?* After some methodological meta presuppositions material from a three feminist theologians, Immanuel Kant and the South African constitution were brought into the discussion. This lead to the following conclusions and questions:

- Human dignity is always at a risk. It has continually to be striven for, not the least by those at risk of being bereaved of it.
- In striving for human dignity the issues need to be critically viewed through the lenses of intersectionality, i.e. through relations as loaded with differences in power.
- Never use others only as a mean, nor become one for others.
- When diversity is present, could discrimination be counteracted by a recognized diversity?
- And, finally could diversity in unity be developed? If so how?

The paper has been expanded and developed into a book-chapter, Sporre, Karin: ”“Dignity lives from being lived.” Human dignity and education – a tentative sketch” in *Religionsdidaktisk arbeid pågår. Religionsdidaktikk i Hamar och Karlstad*. Lied, Sidsel & Osbeck,

Christina, (eds), Vallset: Oplandske Bokforlag, 2011

Associate professor Christina Osbeck, Faculty of Arts and Education, Karlstad University.
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*Connecting Critical Social Analysis of Educational Practices and Philosophy of Education
– An integrative and interpretative reading*

In the third presentation of the session a response to Sporre's and Buchardt's papers were given through an integrative and interpretative reading of the two papers. Here, the focus was the joint project of the papers and some principal questions that this project brings about. The overarching theme was interpreted as about what kind of research that can be understood as urgent, interesting and qualified in the RE situation of today. More general questions which the papers give rise to such as those about relations between empirical and theoretical perspectives and between descriptive and normative ambitions were underlined and commented.

The papers were in the response placed in a context where the RE field was sketched as earlier rather dominated by theoretical and proclaiming perspectives but more recently challenged by empirical and critical ones. Through such a context the current papers were described as pushing the research field further by pointing at limitations also of the later perspectives when it comes to influences in educational practices.

In relation to the joint ambition of the papers to contribute to an education that counteracts oppression and structural subordination through a richer and more nuanced understanding of each authors' central concepts, consciousness-raising pedagogy and human dignity, more detailed discussions were risen. Those concerned for instance the possibility to distinguish – despite of the institutional impact of school itself – between self-expressed pupil experiences (as an end in itself) and exemplifying experience (as a mean to teach a prefixed curriculum). Also a discussion about the possibility to combine an understanding of human dignity as something inherent with a perception of human dignity as at risk, something which you have to struggle for and possibly regain was held.

The concluding comment of the response addressed urgent RE research of today. The need for abductive approaches and classroom research such as the presented ones was stressed at the same time as practical and ethical difficulties with such research were pointed out. Also the importance of further research that pays attention to more detailed teaching and learning questions of RE in such studies were emphasized.

Religion, State and Education. Approaches from Historical Epistemology and Political Theory

Collective paper session (abstracts)

The symposium discussed phenomena of religion and morality in relation to education and in the educational system. This was done through approaches from Political Theory, e.g. the so called state-lifeform-theory (e.g. Højrup, Kaspersen) and Foucauldian inspired theories of governing and the relation between science and power, originally deriving from the French school of Historical Epistemology.

A crucial question was: Which kinds of knowledge can we as researchers produce about Religious and Moral Education – and about the moral economy in stateschooling, when we seek to explain religion and morality in schooling in relation to state, relations between states and the art of governing?

Presentations:

1. Assistant Professor Dr. Kerstin von Brömssen, Department of Literature, History of Ideas and Religion, Gothenburg University. kerstin.vonbromsen@religion.gu.se

Teaching as therapy - or normalizing technologies in a “new moral economy” in education for „life“ and „life skills“

This paper built on the theoretical works of Foucault (1977), Nicolas Rose (1999/1989) and Stephen J. Ball (2006) in discussing constructions of subjectivity, governmentality and normalizing technologies in education. The Foucauldian framework was used to discuss a relatively new “subject- area” in Swedish schools with different names such as “Life skills education” and/or “Social and emotional training” (SET). The empirical data for the paper consisted of analyses of schools’ policy-documents, books and manuals for the subject-area, as well as ethnographic data from education in the field. This kind of policy ethnography is a methodological approach used to look at the detail of policy implementation by studying a single case through ethnographic methods (Walford, 2003). The analyses showed how “policy entrepreneurs” (Ball, 2006) colonize the Swedish school arena with educational programs, usually in response to the discourse “the common value basis”(Sw. “värdegrund”). This discourse has been much articulated in Swedish society the last decade. The

educational programs put on the market consist preferably of a mixture of methods in a behaviouristic and/or cognitive behaviour conduct tradition, which could be describe as therapy rather than teaching and learning. The argument, inspired by Rose (1999), pointed

to changing ways of fostering children and youth; earlier in the name of ethics and moral, now in the name of “psy”; i.e. psychological techniques.

This paper is work in progress.

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2. Postdoc Dr. Niels Reeh, Department for Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen. nreeh@hum.ku.dk

From the Cold War to the War on Terror. Teaching of religion in Denmark in the light of the changed international context

The theoretical point of departure in the paper was the relational thinking of Norbert Elias (Elias 1978) and Thomas Højrup (Højrup 2003). From this starting point, the policy-making regarding the teaching of religion in Denmark was analyzed since the end of the Cold War. The paper argued that the Danish educational debate including the Danish policy regarding RE in the period was heavily influenced by the changes in the friend-enemy distinction in the international state-system from the Cold War to the War on Terror. The paper thus showed that the developments within the RE in Denmark must be seen in a perspective that takes the developments within the international state-system into account. This paper is to be published as soon as possible.

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3. Assistant Professor Dr. Mette Buchardt, Department of Media, Cognition and Communication, Section of Educational Theory, University of Copenhagen. buchardt@hum.ku.dk

The pedagogical transformation of „Religion“ into „Culture“ in Danish state mass schooling 1900s-1937: A gospel of labor and population

Forms of knowledge from the academic field of Theology and Comparative Religion Studies seem to have been active parts of reform intentions concerning not only Religious Education, but the Folkeskole (primary and lower secondary school) and school pedagogy in general. Especially between 1900s and 1937, the formative years for Danish welfare state schooling as a comprehensive school system which in principle comprise „the whole population“. Here the interests of factors from what today appears as two competitive academic disciplines seems to share a combined scientification and humanization strategy, which described and differentiated the „population“ through concepts such as „culture“ and „cultural difference“. The method as well as the goal for education seemed

to be to learn „the population“ to labor and to teach „it“ to become „a population“. In light of optics from Historical Epistemology used in new curriculum history (e.g. Baker 2009, Popkewitz 2001 inspired by Bachelard, Canguilhem and Foucault), the paper discussed this, not as a process of secularization, but rather as the production of a certain kind of state piety, which preached a modern form of chastity and morality to „the population“.

The paper, Mette Buchardt 2011: "The pedagogical transformation of „religion“ into „culture“ in Danish state mass schooling 1900–1937", is submitted for publication.

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4. Respondent: Professor Geir Skeie, Department of Education in Humanities and Social Science, Stockholm University. geir.skeie@uis.no

What is the role of the state in relation to religion and education?

For the state religion has been a powerful tool to control and discipline the population during several hundred years in the Nordic countries. This has taken many forms, but from the time when common education was introduced, also this was closely connected to the state churches. Later, the power of the state churches has diminished and education has become more of a system for qualification and for transmission of secularly based scientific knowledge. This does not mean, however that the state has seized to exploit the recourses of religion for purposes of power. The three papers are in different ways investigating the present role of religion and education in the light of modern Nordic welfare states and fruitfully, so. Several questions arise from the reading of their analysis. Reflecting on Buchardt's paper, one may ask how an investigation into other school subjects would look like, in particular history, and if religious education is a main arena for „learning to labor“? Is the „production of modern piety and chastity“ part of a process towards a new multi-religious middle class? Niels Reeh's paper might be seen as an example of a growing interest in religion and education from political and social science. If the state policy is focusing more on education as qualification and on disciplining the population through using religion as national heritage, could this also open possibilities of utilizing the critical potential of religion against the same policy? Von Brömssen is showing how religion and values in education can function rather instrumentally as a way to avoid political issues, but is this also possible because the individual is overloaded with expectations and politics are discredited? Finally, as all papers focus on the problematic role of the state, one may also ask more generally: What is the alternative to state control?

The session was chaired by Professor Karin Sporre, Department of Education, Umeå University. karin.sporre@pedag.umu.se

The Tension between Grundtvigian Formation and Scientific Education at the Folk High Schools, 1844-1920

Hans Henrik Hjerimitslev

It is well documented in the historiography that the Grundtvigian folk high schools played a seminal role in the religious and national enlightenment of the rural population in Denmark from 1844 to 1920. However, this one-sided historiographical focus on the formative aspects of the teachings at the folk high schools has resulted in a misleading downplaying of the practical and technical education, which was also apparent at the schools. This paper argues that in spite of the ambivalent relationship among many Grundtvigians to traditional education and natural science, the folk high schools were major players in the successful dissemination of agricultural and scientific knowledge to the rural youth in the decades around 1900.

Conference programme

Monday, 6 June 2011

11:00-12:00 Arrival and registration.

12:00-13:00 Lunch

13:00-13:15 Welcome, Auditorium 1

Associate Professor Pia Rose Böwadt, University College Capital, Copenhagen (Danish member of the National Coordinating Committee of NCRE).

13:15-15:00 1st Keynote lecture, Auditorium 1

Professor Geir Skeie, Stockholm University, Sweden and University of Stavanger, Stavanger, Norway: *Between formation and knowledge. Insights and challenges from Nordic research in religious education.*

Respondent: Senior Lecturer Christina Osbeck, University of Karlstadt, Sweden.

15:00-15:30 Coffee and tea

15:30-18:00 Paper presentations

Paper Presentations

Monday 6 June, 15.30 - 18.00

Auditorium 1

Religious Education, Pedagogies and Didactics

(chair: Keld Skovmand)

15.30 - 16.00 Lise Yde: Religionsdidaktik og fælles mål for kristendomskundskab

16.00 - 16.30 Johan Thorendal: A three-dimensional humanistic approach to the Apocalypse 12

16.30 - 18.00 Collective paper session: "Connecting Critical Social Analysis of Educational Practices and Philosophy of Education" (A methodological exploration of Human dignity as Educational Value and Anti-Racism as Values Education)

Chair: Bernd Krupka

Papers by Karin Sporre and Mette Buchardt

Respondent paper: Christina Osbeck

Auditorium 2

State and Religious Education

(chair: Kirsten M. Andersen)

15.30 - 16.00 Seth Asare-Danso: RE in a Democratic State: The Ghanaian Experience

16.00 - 16.30 Saila Poulter: Citizenship and RE in Finland: A Historical Analysis of a Current Political Theme

16.30 - 17.00 Paul Vermeer: Dutch church-state relations and RE: tensions and challenges

17.00 - 17.30 Malin Sefton: "Core Values Timeout". A Counter-Hegemonic Discursive Device in Police Jargon

17.30 - 18.00 Jenny Berglund: RE on the borders – how religion is taught and education thought – in northeastern European border communities.

Room 010

Theology and Church as Context and Perspectives for Religious Education

(chair: Hans Raun Iversen)

15.30 - 16.00 Ullrich Zeitler: Theory U and Religious Education

16.00 - 16.30 Harri Koskela: The Significance of the Loss of a Child for Parent's Spirituality.

Youth and Religious Education

(chair: Gunnar J. Gunnarsson)

16.30 - 17.00 Mary-Chizurum Ugbor: Religious Formation of Youth in Nigeria: A Critical Appraisal from Leuven Hermeneutical-Communicative Model

17.00 - 17.30 Caroline Gustavsson: Livsfrågor – en del av livstolkningsprocessen

17.30 - 18.00 Gunnar J. Gunnarsson & Gunnar Finnbogason: Young People's Life View in Multicultural Societies.

18:00-19:30 Dinner

19:30-21:00 Presentation of Research Project: Islam, Muslims and Danish Schools, Auditorium 2

Professor MSO Mark Sedgwick (project leader), Department of the Study of Religion, Aarhus University, Denmark.

Tuesday, 7 June 2011

8:30-10:00 2nd keynote lecture, Auditorium 1

Lecturer in Religious Studies, Norman Richardson, Stranmillis University College, Belfast, Northern Ireland, *Diversity, Controversy and Good Relations: Practical Possibilities for Religious Education* (preliminary title).

Respondent: Assoc. Professor Carin Laudrup (Department of Cross-Cultural and Religious Studies, University of Copenhagen).

10:00-10:30 Coffee and tea

10:30-12:00 Seminars

Three parallel seminars:

1. *Religion, State and Education. Approaches from Historical Epistemology and Political Theory*, arranged by Assistant Professor Mette Buchardt (Department of Media, Cognition and Communication, Unit of Educational Theory, University of Copenhagen) and chaired by Professor Karin Sporre (Department of Education, Umeå University).

2. *Religion and nation building: Religious education as formation between the individual and the State – the Grundtvigian case*, chaired by Michael Schelde, Director of the Grundtvig Study Centre, Aarhus University.

Hans Henrik Hjermitsev: *The Tension between Grundtvigian Formation and Scientific Education at the Folk High Schools, 1844-1920*

Wen Ge: *The New Christlike Humanity: The Possible Role of Christianity in Contemporary China's Ethical Reconstruction*

3. *Religious education and research in youth culture* chaired by Søren Østergaard, Director of Centre for Youth Studies and Christian Education (CUR), Copenhagen.

12:00-13:00 Lunch

13:00-22:00 Excursion and visit at the folk high school Rønde Højskole

13:00-17:30 Excursion to Djursland (coffee and tea included).

18:00-21:00 Dinner at Rønde Højskole. After dinner, lecture by Professor Ove Korsgaard (Danish School of Education, Aarhus University) on the ideas behind the folk high schools in Denmark.

Wednesday, 8 June 2011

8:30-10:00 3rd keynote lecture, Auditorium 1

Professor Lisbet Christoffersen, Department of Society and Globalisation, Roskilde University: *European legal framework for teaching in schools and religious communities*.

Respondent: Researcher Pamela Slotte, The Centre of Excellence in Global Governance Research/Erik Castrén Institute of International Law and Human Rights, Helsinki, Finland

10:00-10:30 Coffee and tea

10:30-12:00 Panel, Auditorium 1

Theme: Religious education in the Nordic Public Sphere

Former Dean Lars Qvortrup, Danish School of Education (DPU), Aarhus University, Denmark

Research Associate Ida Marie Høeg, Centre for Church Research (KIFO), Oslo, Norway

Emeritus Associate Professor Rune Larsson, University of Lund, Sweden.

Professor Antti Räsänen, University of Eastern Finland (UEF).

12:00-13:00 Lunch

13:00-15:00 Seminars

Parallel seminars:

1. *RS based RE - a matter of course*, chaired by Associate Professor Tim Jensen, University of Southern Denmark, Odense.

2. *Religious education in the context of the Church of Denmark* chaired by Senior Lecturer Leise Christensen (Centre for Theology and Theological Education Loegumkloster (TPC), Loegumkloster).

3. *Citizenship between nation and globalization* chaired by sociologist of religion, Assoc. Professor Carin Laudrup (Department of Cross-Cultural and Religious Studies, University of Copenhagen).

15:00-15:30 Coffee and tea

15:30-18:00 Paper presentations

Wednesday 8 June, 15.30 - 18.00

Auditorium 2

Interreligious Learning

(chair: Lakshmi Sigurdsson)

15.30 - 16.00 Tove Nicolaisen: "Hindu Children" and normality constructs in RE in Norway

16.00 - 16.30 Karin Nordström: Beyond pluralism – Is relativism in Values Education a Threat or a Potential?

16.30 - 17.00 Kirsten Grønlien Zetterqvist: Om midfulnes och livsmod – en begreppsanalys
17.00 - 17.30 Øystein Lund Johannessen: The Importance of Contextual Knowledge for an Inclusive RE

Auditorium 1

Religious Education, Pedagogies and Didactics

(chair: Keld Skovmand)

15.30 - 16.00 Christina Osbeck: To Teach and Learn in RE – a Research Survey

16.00 - 16.30 Camilla Stabel Jørgensen: How to investigate RE-texts written by pupils to explore the potential of writing as part of the RE-teaching – Theoretical and methodological suggestions

16.30 - 17.00 Åge J. Schanke: Hvordan ta i bruk digitale medier i arbeidet med å utvikle visuell og symbolsk fortolkningskompetense i religions- og livssynsfaget

17.00 - 17.30 Johannes Adamsen: Religion og det æstetiske med henblik på didaktiske overvejelser

Room 010

Theology and Church as Context and Perspectives for Religious Education

(chair: Hans Raun Iversen)

15.30 - 16.00 Tapani Innanen: Singing “the most beautiful Christmas carols” in Finland – an environment to learn liquidly modern religiosity?

16.00 - 16.30 Risto Aikonen: ICT in RE – the Case of Finland’s Comprehensive School

16.30 - 17.00 Lucas Tha Ling Sum: Engaging Belief: A Study of a Hermeneutical-Communicative Model of RE from Asian Perspectives.

17.00 - 17.30 Johannes Nissen: Formation, Information and Transformation: Reflections on Religious Education - a Theological Perspective

19:00 Closing dinner

Thursday, 9 June 2011

9:00-10:30 4th keynote lecture, Auditorium 1

Professor Uta Pohl-Patalong, University of Kiel, Germany: *Aims and orientations for religious education in the 21st century – a theological perspective.*

Respondent: Associate Professor Johannes Nissen, Faculty of Theology, Aarhus University, Denmark.

10:30-11:00 Coffee and tea

11:00-11:25 "Is there a future for NCRE?", Auditorium 1

Professor Sven Hartman, Department of Education in Humanities and Social Science, Stockholm University.

11:30-12:30 Evaluation and open business meeting of the Nordic Conference of Religious Education

12:30-13:30 Lunch and departure

Paper Contributors

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Abstracts from Paper Sessions

Religious Education, Pedagogies and Didactics

Religionsdidaktik og *Fælles Mål*

Af Lise Yde, cand.mag., Danmark

Med dette oplæg ønsker jeg at præsentere en række overvejelser, som en fremtidig religionsdidaktik, på folkeskoleområdet, eventuelt kan drage nytte af. Oplægget omhandler undervisningen i kristendomskundskab, som faget præsenteres i *Fælles Mål*. På baggrund af klasserumsobservation, foretaget på henholdsvis 1. og 8./9. klassetrin i en dansk folkeskole, ønsker jeg at knytte de erfaringer, jeg der har gjort, sammen med en teoretisk vinkel, som tager udgangspunkt i en kognitiv tilgang til religionsfaget. I oplægget vil jeg tage udgangspunkt i de problemstillinger, der ifølge mine teoretiske overvejelser er at finde, når faget skal formidles ifølge målsætningerne i *Fælles Mål*.

Det er på længere sigt ambitionen at afdække, hvordan faget kan forbedre sit faglige grundlag, og give et bud på, hvordan forarbejdet til en fremtidig religionsdidaktik kan suppleres med nærmere undersøgelser af børns refleksionsniveau i forbindelse med moralske og normative temaer. På konferencen er det derfor hensigten at udbygge et fagligt netværk, som ligeledes kan have glæde af mine overvejelser.

Folkeskolens undervisning i kristendomskundskab tager sit udgangspunkt i den forpligtende målsætning for faget, som udtrykkes i *Fælles Mål*. Folkeskolens *Fælles Mål* er konkrete udtryk for både faglige, pædagogiske og didaktiske målsætninger for den række af fag, som folkeskolen danner ramme omkring. Men de didaktiske overvejelser, der ligger til grund for den målsætning, faget skal opfylde, udtrykker uoverensstemmelser mellem forventning til henholdsvis formidling og fagligt indhold. Tilgangen i undervisningsvejledningen bygger på en religionsfaglig tilgang, som savner mere nøjagtig viden om børns refleksionsniveau, når det gælder de normative/moralske temaer, fagets formål koncentrerer sig om. Tilgangen i *Fælles Mål* er præget af en dansk filosofi- og undervisningstradition, som især er inspireret af dannelsesteoretikeren W. Klafki, og som yderligere afspejler en teologisk forankret opfattelse af den religionsfaglige begrebsverden. Det problematiske i denne tilgang består dermed i et skisma mellem dannelses- og kundskabsfag, men savner ligeledes en underbygget viden om, hvordan børn rent faktisk reflekterer over moralske/normative temaer. Resultatet er, at den omtalte begrebsverden ikke formår at kunne formidles i overensstemmelse med den overordnede målsætning.

Problemerne kan have forskellige årsager. På den ene side er der en række uddannelsesmæssige overvejelser, som eksempelvis seminarielektor Pia Rose Bøwadt har gjort opmærksom på, men der kan tillige være problemer med den faglighed, faget skal formidle. Der savnes derfor i *Fælles Mål* en nærmere begrundelse for det refleksionsniveau, faget tilsyneladende skal arbejde med hos børnene, ligesom den moralske begrebsverden, der arbejdes med i faget, ikke er hensigtsmæssigt underbygget.

Visuell og symbolsk fortolkningskompetanse i religions- og livssynsfaget: Læring i forhold til religionens materielle, kunstneriske og narrative dimensjoner

Af Åge J. Schanke, Høgskolelektor, Høgskolen i Oslo, Norge

Hvordan ta i bruk digitale media i arbeidet med å utvikle visuell og symbolsk fortolkningskompetanse i religions- og livssynsfaget i møte med religionens egne kunnskapsrepresentasjoner (fortellinger, symboler, bilder og statuer, hellig arkitektur)?

Sekulariseringen av religions- og livssynsfaget har ofte ført til en verbal og tekstorientert kunnskapsformidling i samsvar med opplysningstidens syn på religioner som tydelig avgrensede trossystemer og problematiseringen av religionenes egen kunnskapsformer. På den andre side forutsetter opplæringen i religion og livssyn i en vestlig kontekst en pluralistisk kultursituasjon som umuliggjør en normativ og oppdragende tilnærming til religion.

En dimensjon ved religionsundervisningen er å utvikle fortolkningskompetanse i bred forstand i møte med blant annet den narrative, materielle og kunstneriske dimensjonen ved religion (Ninian Smart:1989,1998). Å kunne fortolke en religion, innebærer å kunne lese og forstå dens kulturelle uttrykk, ikke bare det verbale språket, de religiøse begrepene, men like mye de visuelle uttrykkene og symbolene. Fortolkingsskompetansen kan man se som en del av en "større" literacy som også omfatter å kunne produsere mening ved hjelp av de kulturelle verktøy som religioner tilbyr. En utvikling av religiøs literacy som også omfatter produksjon av mening, forutsetter deltaking i et religiøs fellesskap og dermed overskrides grensene for religionsfaget.

En standardmodell for fortolking av religiøse bilder er Erwin Panofsky analysemodell der en skiller mellom et preikonografisk, et ikonografisk og et ikonologisk nivå. Modellen har også overføringsverdi til andre kunstformer, som arkitektur, litteratur og musikk.

I samsvar med en «Interpretative Approach» (Robert Jackson 1997) hvor religionsundervisning sees på som en hermeneutisk prosess og «Dimensions of the Sacred» (Ninian Smart 1998) hvor religionsundervisningen må forholde seg til allsidig til ulike dimensjoner, er det utviklet en komponent i læreutdanningens RLE1-kurs ved Høgskolen i Oslo, som blant annet fokuserer på å utvikle visuell og symbolsk fortolkningskompetanse

og på å integrere faglig, didaktisk og digital kompetanse med relevans for undervisningsarbeid i skolen. Bruk av digitale media og verktøy gjør at et stort spekter av representasjonsformer kan tas i bruk og for eksempel kan man koble bildemateriale og fortellinger slik at disse representasjonsformene gjensidig belyser hverandre.

Studentene har ved hjelp av presentasjonsverktøy som MovieMaker eller PhotoStory utforsket ulike visuelle og kunstneriske uttrykk i religioner som byr på fortolkningsutfordringer eller formidlet religiøse fortellinger belyst med relevant bildemateriale. I en spørreundersøkelse knyttet til dette læringsarbeidet blir studentenes egen oppfatning av læringsutbytte i kartlagt.

To teach and learn in RE – A research survey

By Christina Osbeck, senior lecturer, Karlstad University, Sweden

The *aim* of this paper is to give an overview of current international classroom research. The kind of questions and problems that this research has paid attention to and the result which have been shown are focused.

The studied *material* consists of about 200 journal articles. The sample has been chosen from searches in the database ERIC from the words "classroom" och "religious education". Especially empirical studies from compulsory school level have been studied. The articles were shown to be most frequently from the following journals: "British Journal of Religious Education", "Religious Education", "International Journal of Spiritual Education" and "Teaching Theology and Religion".

Conclusions and consequences of the presented picture is discussed both in relation to research practices and to school practices

Skitse til en almen religionsdidaktik – Religionsdidaktikkens begrundelse og genstandsfelt

Af Keld Skovmand, Danmarks Pædagogiske Universitetsskole, Aarhus Universitet, Danmark

I mit paper vil jeg foretage en afklaring af nogle centrale begreber og deres forhold til hinanden med henblik på at skitsere grundlaget for en almen religionsdidaktik. I Danmark er der – i modsætning til Norge og Tyskland – ikke nogen lang tradition for at tale om og forske i "religionsdidaktik". Det mest brugte begreb har været "religionspædagogik". Spørgsmå-

let er, hvad der ligger i begreberne – og hvilken forskel det gør, om vi vælger at bruge det ene frem for det andet.

For at komme det spørgsmål et svar nærmere må vi først se på betydningen af begreberne og forskningsområderne "didaktik" og "pædagogik" både i deres rene og almene form: Hvad er "didaktik" og "almen didaktik", "pædagogik" og "almen pædagogik" (Klafki, Kron, von Oet-tingen)? Dernæst må vi præcisere, hvad "fagdidaktik" er, og hvad forholdet er mellem hhv. den almene didaktik og pædagogik og fagdidaktikken (Peterssen, Ongstad) med henblik på at overveje, på hvilken måde "fagdidaktik" er noget særligt, når den har religionsundervisning som sin genstand (Bizer m.fl.). Denne afklaring er nødvendig af hensyn til analysen af religionsdidaktikkens relationer til og mulige begrundelse i hhv. den almene didaktik og den almene pædagogik: Hvad er den almene religionsundervisnings dannelsesfunktion og begrundelse – dens mål, indhold, metoder og medier (Heimann)?

I analysen trækker jeg linjer til tyske og engelske forskningstraditioner inden for både det pædagogiske og det fagligt-pædagogiske forskningsfelt. Afsættet vil hhv. være "Religion" og "Bildung" (Benner, Schluss) og "elementarisierung" (Schweitzer) i Tyskland og "Religious Education" (Grimmitt) og "edification" (Jackson) i England. Det er via Jacksons dannelsesbegreb her særligt interessant at se på, hvordan centrale forståelser transformeres via oversættelser og lån: Begrebet "edification" er hentet hos Rorty, hvor det ikke knyttes an til hverken religion eller undervisning. Begrebet er en oversættelse af Gadammers "Bildung", som i hans kontekst igen har en anden betydning. Spørgsmålet bliver derfor, hvad forholdet er mellem "edification" og "Bildung" – og hvad forskellen betyder for skolens religionsundervisning i forskellige kontekster.

Målet er at frembringe et teoretisk grundlag for udformningen af en almen religionsdidaktik (jf. Nielsen) – dvs. en religionsdidaktik, der både er begrundet i den almene pædagogik og didaktik, samtidig med at den ikke opgiver sine substantielle og systematiske koblinger til de to basisfag: teologi og religionsvidenskab. Det viser sig, at denne bestræbelse fordrer en elementær afklaring af det almene, som betyder noget forskelligt i forskellige sammenhænge: almen pædagogik, almen didaktik, almen fagdidaktik og almen religionsundervisning.

A Three-Dimensional Humanistic Approach to the Apocalypse 12

Af Johan Thorendahl, VIA University College, Danmark

Many obstacles arise, when a teacher attempts to present a Jesus character - from both strongly 'mythical' apocalyptic literature and more common known 'historical' telling in evangelic traditions. This is due to archaic apocalyptic worldviews, which often might create resistance among his audience. Therefore we need a didactic counterbalance to this

weighty problem, which relates to central concerns both in liturgical church-preaching as in non-confessional humanistic school-teaching, expressed in the following question:

How can a teacher merge historic-apocalyptic aspects in the Jesus character, exemplified by Apocalypse 12, and transfer these aspects to a modern humanistic audience without making these five faults: 1) losing his own *'humanistic'* accountability, 2) damaging the internal *'theological'* interpretation too much, 3) mixing different *'worldviews'* in a non-philosophical way, 4) forgetting facts concerning the *'historical'* genesis of religion and religious motifs, and 5) missing the possibility to support *'existential growth'* in his modern audience.

In my attempt to answer these questions the Apocalypse 12 will be used as an example. The didactic methods to unfold this complex topic concerning these aspects (historical, mythical and existential) follows Dietrich Benner's theories, and will be exemplified by attaining a three-dimensional methodology to our chapter as a hermeneutic valid method. These are: a) a historical *'literary critical'* approach with links to the Isis-myth in hellenistic Egyptian religion (J.H. Kalms), b) a *'narrative'* approach focusing on the progressive internal biblical reinterpretation of traditions (K. Nielsen), c) an *'existentialistic'* approach in respect of the humanizing potentials in the story (M. Grimmer).

Finally these reflections lead to another didactic theme, which is connected with the three-dimensional approach, namely its ability to act as *'classroom-management'*.

Religion og det æstetiske med henblik på didaktiske overvejelser

Af Johannes Adamsen, PhD, Department of Teacher's Education, Aarhus, Danmark

Ud fra en her udiskuteret præmis, nemlig at religiøs erkendelse har væsentlige træk til fælles med æstetisk erkendelse spørges: Hvordan forholder æstetisk erkendelse sig til udbredte ideer om viden og vidensformidling?

Æstetiske erkendelser som subjektive erfaringsformer skal undersøges og artikuleres med afsæt i skønlitteratur og religiøse tekster (med teksteksempler fra Ovid, Dante, Grundtvig og Wislawa Szymborska). Det er hensigten at fremhæve den æstetiske erfaring som en nødvendig menneskelig erfarings- og fortolkningsmulighed, der ikke tager udgangspunkt i *'objektive'* undersøgelser, men i subjektive ditto (jf. Løgstrups tanke om *'stemthed'*). Ikke mindst skal jeg se på hvordan den æstetiske erfaring tager sig ud i konfrontation med en udbredt idé om viden som noget særligt, der kun kan tænkes ud fra mere eller mindre velunderbyggede idealer om evidens.

Endelig skal der reflekteres over hvordan denne erfaringsform kan formidles. Til det formål inddrages en noget oversat tanke om pædagogik (didaktik) fra den britiske filosof, Richard Peters, pædagogik som indvielse: I stedet for at tænke lærerens opgave som forbun-

det med en særlig handlen (der antages at gøre noget "ved" de studerende/eleverne), bør man overveje om ikke opgaven handler om at åbne et rum, felt, område, som man inviterer ind i.

How to investigate RE-texts written by pupils to explore the potential of writing as part of the RE-teaching – Theoretical and methodological suggestions

By Camilla Stabel Jørgensen, PhD student at Programme for teacher education, NTNU, Norway/Faculty of Teacher and Interpreter Education, Sør-Trøndelag University College

The source material was collected by me. It consists of texts written by pupils as part of their RE education in three different contexts, and contextual information related to the different pupils, classes, teachers, schools and texts. One group of pupils was followed and texts collected from their 8th-10th year in school, the two other groups of pupils were only followed and texts collected during their 9th year in school.

Bakhtin's communicative perspective on the study of language constitutes a theoretical frame of the study. His understanding of the dialogic potential in communication, inspired by Buber's philosophy of dialogue, is suggested as a clue to find theoretical perspectives that may enrich our understanding of writing as part of the RE education. Important in this understanding of dialogue is that the process has the potential to change the views of the persons taking part in it. The change will be the person's response to new knowledge gained, not necessarily an adjustment to the dialogue partners' opinions.

To change one's views may be seen as passing a judgement on something. In Gustavsson's interpretation of Aristotle, passing good judgements is part of phronesis (practical wisdom). This notion of phronesis has similarities with the concept of competence developed by the OECD project group who worked on the Definition and Selection of (Key) Competencies; both recognising the necessity of awareness and responsiveness to the challenge and context in question, cognitive and non-cognitive prerequisites as well as mindfulness of the worthiness of the desired goal and actions taken to achieve it. My research question therefore is *what competence in passing judgement is shown in the pupils' texts?*

Methodologically – within the bakhtinian frame of this study, the pupils' judgements concerning content, form (expressivity) and purpose (addressee) are the first to be considered in the analysis. I have tentatively categorised the collected texts in different school genres (such as "fact sentences"). The genres are primarily based on the wording of the exercises that the pupils have responded to while writing the texts. Texts from all represented genres are analysed, but not all the collected texts. Criteria for the selection of texts within each

genre to be analysed, is to maximise the variety in grade, context and themes covered by the selected texts. The value of the individual text for exploring the affordances of the genre in question is also taken into consideration when selecting texts for analysis.

Theology and church as context and perspectives for Religious Education

Breaking Passivity: Towards a New Paradigm for the Catechetical Instruction in the Light of a Hermeneutical-Communicative Model in Myanmar

By Lucas Tha Ling Sum, PhD student, priest, Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium

In many parts of Asia, pedagogically speaking, memorization plays a pivotal role in teaching Christian faith or in the catechetical instruction. Asian Churches are relatively very young when we compare them with European Churches. Thus, the young churches need to be strongly rooted in the faith. The members of the young churches must learn to recite the basic prayers with faith. We agree that memorizing some basic and important Christian formulae is very much needed. Therefore, memorization often has to be the method for presenting catechesis. However, the faith should not be limited to the level of recitation of personal or community prayers. The faith should encourage people to be active in the communion with Christ, imitating Christ and building up the society with peace and love. Unfortunately, the present catechetical instruction is often limited to reciting prayers. It does not make the people engage actively in all the dimensions of the faith. For, often the people memorize the prayers or the Christian faith without the correct understanding and appropriate action.

In Myanmar, for example, memorization has been largely practiced in the teaching/learning process of the Christian faith formation. As a result the Christian faith is often ineffective in the life of the Catholics. For the catechetical instruction of the Myanmar Catholic Church doesn't always help the people to face or challenge the various obstacles which block the development and the Christian identity: religious, social, cultural, ethnic, and political. The method of catechetical instruction has been mostly passive rather than active in Myanmar. In this context, we are in need of a new paradigm in the catechetical instruction in forming our Christian faith. In this article, the following questions are analyzed. What is the context of Myanmar? How and why is memorization widely accepted in the catechetical instruction in the context of Myanmar? What elements are lacking in the memorization method for the catechesis to be effective in the life of Myanmar Catholics? Why do we need a new paradigm? What is our new paradigm? How does it lead the people to be active in Christian faith?

WHY AND WHAT FOR, GOD? – The Significance of the Loss of a Child for Parents' Spirituality

By Harri Koskela, University of Eastern Finland

The death of a child has many kinds of effects on parents' spirituality. In my study, I use the concept of spirituality in a very broad meaning. The dimensions of spirituality are existential questions, finding the purpose and the meaning of life, social relationships, and the emotions, values, and identity of a person, the relationship to God, the concept of God, the spiritual life of an individual, and belief. The last four comprise the essential elements of Christian spirituality.

The overall aim of my dissertation was to examine the significance of the loss of a child for parents' spirituality. The purpose of the study was also to explore parents' mental, spiritual and social recovery processes and their ways of managing the loss. An important task was to give voice to the bereaved parents. The study is qualitative and belongs to the discipline of practical theology and pastoral psychology. Because of the nature of the phenomenon, the approach was hermeneutic phenomenological. The analysis was carried out using the Grounded Theory and narrative analysis methods. The data was obtained by asking the bereaved persons to write about their experiences during autumn 2003. The final data comprised 64 texts from bereaved parents.

According to my analysis, the significance of the loss of a child for parents' spirituality is very holistic and long lasting. The effects of the loss often concern parents' spiritual, psychological, social, and physical domains at the same time. These effects accumulate and often simultaneously induce a change in parents' identities and relationships with other people and God. These three dimensions of the person are interacting with each other.

As an outcome of the analysis, the empirical data was divided into 16 subcategories, two main categories and the core category. The substantive theory of the significance of the loss of a child for parent's spirituality is developed. In addition, by using the narrative analysis, I construct six type narratives from the parents' stories.

My study indicates that matters relating to Christian spirituality have significance to bereaved parents. Therefore, when supporting parents who have lost their child, it is important to pay attention to spiritual matters.

Singing “the most beautiful Christmas carols” in Finland - an environment to learn liquidly modern religiosity?

*By Tapani Innanen, Professor of Religious Education, Department of Practical Theology
Faculty of Theology, University of Helsinki, Finland*

Almost every local parish in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland implements public singing events called “the most beautiful Christmas carols” (MBCC-events). These gatherings are organized in churches, but also for example in garrisons, prisons, workplaces and restaurants. The initiative for these events was made in 1973 by Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM). Today, they have both a national and an international mission-related nature: FELM publishes every year a special song booklet with some 25 carols, the booklets are free to participants, but a collection is made in the events for the international work of FELM. A local parish can arrange even tens of MBCC-events each year. They have become the most popular musical events in the Lutheran Church in Finland, and attract about one million people between Advent and Epiphany.

In this paper a case study about one MBCC-event is presented. I collected observations in a singing event held on Sunday, December 19th 2010, in a church of a parish at the city of Tampere. The event gathered about 500 people. The whole of the event lasted 63 minutes totally, 33 minutes of them community singing of 12 carols, including national and international, old and new song heritage.

Also a special questionnaire with both closed and open questions was given out to participants of the studied MBCC-event. Totally 220 questionnaires were taken, and 115 of them were fulfilled and returned. Most of the respondents participated in the event with their family members.

In my paper some quantitative data about the demographics and religious activity of the participants are analyzed. The main emphasis is to study, both with quantitative and qualitative analysis, the motivation and experiences of the participants. The open answers, some of them nearly narrative stories, give the possibility to study the meaning of the studied MBCC-event to the participants. It is obvious that singing Christmas carols together in a church has a major significance in linking the welcoming of Christmas atmosphere with memories along the life cycle. It can be asked, whether MBCC-events have a possibility to unite sequential generations, public and private, traditional and new, national and international with religion and spirituality.

The findings of analysis are discussed in the context of theories presented by Even Ruud (music and identity) and Erik H Eriksson (life cycle).

The use of ICT in Religion Education in Comprehensive School in Finland

By Risto Aikonen, Senior Lecturer, School of Applied Educational Science and Teacher Education Philosophical Faculty, University of Eastern Finland

Research on the use of ICT in Religion education (RE) in Finland has been scarce. The upcoming research deals with the pedagogical use of ICT and the Internet both in the Orthodox Religion education (ORE) and in the Lutheran Religion Education (LRE) in Finland. Nowadays, ICT and the Internet play a more and more significant role especially in ORE because Orthodox pupils are a minority in Finland and this situation causes some pedagogical problems in teaching. For example, for ORE, classes are often combined to include pupils from different grades (e.g. pupils from grades 1 to 6) and many times teachers have to include e.g. three different topics in the very same lesson. In LRE, the situation is the opposite due to fact the classes are homogenous in terms of the grades.

The upcoming research has two target groups, teachers and pupils. The core question is to find out how religion teachers use information and communication technology in primary education in ORE and LRE. Also, it will be interesting to learn how much they use it, in what ways they use it, what are the pedagogical purposes and what are the main media. Do the teachers combine, favor or avoid the use of ICT in certain teaching contents? The focus will be the use of media and devices of Web 2.0, which is dynamic and, in particular, social. The pupils will be asked what their attitudes and experiences of ICT are in RE.

The target groups will be teachers of ORE (ca 250 in total) and an equal number of teachers of LRE. Pupils will be from 5th and 9th grade of comprehensive school. This research frame includes both class teachers and subject teachers. Later the pupils from 5th grade will be studied after four years. In addition, it will be a challenge to determine what type of a teacher will use a certain media. Among the core theoretical questions is to consider whether RE demands any specific requirements for its pedagogy. If yes, do they support or prevent the use of ICT? Research literature will be used to study the level of ICT use in RE internationally. The data will be collected through questionnaires during the academic year 2011-2012.

Theory U and diaconia – religious and educational perspectives in recent organizational and leadership theory

Af Ullrich Zeitler, PhD, Diakonhøjskolen Aarhus, Danmark

C. Otto Scharmer's Theory U is based on empirical studies and analyses of major global companies. These studies revealed – among other things – that it is crucial for sustainable organizational development that organizations learn from the future as it emerges. Being present and being sensory aware of the opportunities which future reveals ("presencing") and take action is fundamental for successful spiritual leadership.

In this paper I'd like to show how Theory U can be a useful interpretative framework for religious education and diaconal practice. The paper will focus on three problematic: (1) Is defending Christian values consistent with a program which insists on bracketing history and transforming practice? (2) What is the source of religious education and can Theory U contribute to understand this source? (3) Is future totally open or may religious education provide guidance and is guidance compatible with innovation?

The paper concludes that Theory U philosophically still is in need of further conceptual development but that its contemporary influence and impact on organizational practice may be a useful lever to disseminate cosmo-phenomenological reasoning.

Interreligious Learning

“Hindu Children” and normality constructs in Religious Education (RE) in Norway

By Tove Nicolaisen, Associate Professor, Oslo University College, Norway

According to the Curriculum the Norwegian RE subject should be “objective, critical and pluralistic” (*Curriculum for Religion, Philosophies of Life and Ethics* 2008: 1) But we should critically examine how RE is practiced, and ask whether the main religious traditions are treated equally. Are they all considered “normal” and of the same quality? In classroom teaching, is the Hindu concept of God granted the same status as monotheism in Christianity, Judaism and Islam? And what about approaches to Hindu iconography and Hindu inclusiveness regarding other religions?

The paper discusses “Hindu Children’s” attitudes and opinions compared to the constructed normality found in the RE-subject “Religion, Philosophies of Life and Ethics”. The paper presents examples of how “Hindu children” are opposed to hegemonic discourse, how they use hegemonic discourse, and how they adapt to hegemonic discourse.

A crucial question is whether “Hindu children” eventually will have to adapt to “Western” constructions about religion to fit in and succeed in school. A pluralistic approach to RE should be based on diversity, avoiding normality constructs based on “Western hegemonic discourses”. Is it possible to create – in Bhabha’s (*The Location of Culture* 2008) terminology – a “third space” of RE normality, including both “Western” and “Eastern” approaches to religion? Taking pluralistic seriously should lead to more inclusive approaches, which could empower individuals to be agents of change.

Beyond Pluralism – Is Relativism in Values Education a Threat or a Potential?

By Karin Nordström, senior lecturer and researcher, School of Education and Communication, Jönköping university, Sweden

This paper focuses on educational implications of relativism as implicit aspects of a pluralistic approach to RE and values education. Pluralistic approaches are usually considered as fundamental to the understanding of RE and values education these days. But pluralism is often carefully separated from its more far-reaching versions, which understand plurality in relativistic terms. Moreover, the notion of relativism is often accompanied by strongly

negative emotional reactions, as relativism is associated with dystopian visions of arbitrariness, blurred knowledge, and crackling moral values.

The paper departs from a suggestion that, within a pedagogic perspective, these emotional reactions in face of relativism should be seen as a resource for learning processes in ethics and RE. From an ethical perspective, the paper explores some basic features of relativism as an aspect of pluralism. It draws on pragmatist perspectives (Putnam, *Ethics Without Ontology*) and suggests under the label relativised relativism a point of view which affirms relativism as a resource for learning in relation to religion and / or ethics. This is related to pedagogic arguments, focusing on learning as characterized by uncertainty and vagueness, and illustrated by the pedagogical function of utopia and dystopia, as essential to learning processes. Applying Papastephanou's elaborations on utopia and dystopia in education, I argue that they are important and stimulating elements of pedagogic situations and processes, as they encompass not only visions beyond status quo and thereby comprise a pedagogic potential of change (Papastephanou, 2008). The vague character of the uncertain - utopian or dystopian - vision forms thus a fruitful basis for learning in relation to ethics and / or religion. If relativism is seen as a dystopian vision, acting as a deterrent because it makes knowledge and values uncertain, its utopian equivalent would consist of the vision of universal certainty with regard to knowledge and values. Taken together, the tension between both visions is educationally of significance and constitutes an important challenge to the educational dimensions of normative claims associated with religions and/or ethics.

Concepts of Life in Swedish Contemporary, Multicultural School Context

By Kirsten Grønlien Zetterqvist, TD Associate Professor, Stockholm universitet

The new subject “*Knowledge of Life*” is often referred to when schools present their work with value related questions. The topics that are included in this subject can vary significantly, e.g. personal development, existential questions, mindfulness, sexual life, drug prevention, gender, health, ethics etc.

The subject „*Knowledge of Life*” can be understood as an umbrella term for many different fields that partly could be described as central in relation to the common value-system in the schools; but also partly described as marginal in relation to other school subjects. The subject seems to gather the necessities, which in a school's curriculum fall between the cracks.

„*Knowledge of life*” is flexible and developable conception, open and useful in an age of diversity and change. At the same time, the conception runs the risk of being indefinable and indifferent due to all the possible interconnections that can be made.

The aim of this paper is to develop some analytical starting points for a philosophical investigation especially about *notions of life* and what the specific meaning of *knowledge of life* could be in a school context.

The investigation is structured as an analytical meeting between two different contexts:

- 1) Some examples of recent conceptual tendencies in teaching media, manuals and study-kit
- 2) Phenomenological research in the field of philosophy of religion about the outlook on life, especially concerning what is characteristic for existential questions.
- 3) The analysis is concluded in a critical discussion about in what aspects this new subject could be or not be a learning context for existential and ethical questions. In this discussion I will relate to Pia Böwaldt studies of lebensphilosophie in Danish religious education and further the tradition of existential question as a central part of Swedish RE since Lgr80.

The Importance of Contextual Knowledge for an Inclusive Religious Education

By Øystein Lund Johannessen, PhD Student, Centre for Intercultural Communication and University of Stavanger, Norway

A major challenge for the teacher in classes with great cultural and religious diversity, is how to develop an inclusive learning environment for all the students. In religious education – among other things – this means to ask how the different religious backgrounds, philosophies of life, norms and values of the student can become a learning resource for the individual learner and the RE class as a learning community.

In the field of religious education, European researchers and teacher trainers have used the expression *a contextual approach to the study of religions* to single out and value certain professional awareness's and practices: They hold that learning about the world religions and philosophies of life should take as its point of departure religious and philosophical traditions the way they manifest themselves locally.

Following up on these lines of thought, the question I ask is the following: When the teacher chooses to expose the students to the religious diversity in their community, what knowledge does he or she need to have in order to do this in a professional way in terms of connectedness, a supportive, inclusive learning environment, participation and intellectual quality for all?

I approach these questions empirically by way of analyzing classroom interaction in RE lessons in two different 9th grade classes (15 year olds) in a state school in western Nor-

way. In the theoretical discussion, my point of departure is an understanding of context as the socio-cultural „surroundings“ of social situations and practices. To investigate further what professional knowledge of context or *contextual knowledge* could mean from this starting point, I introduce sociological and cultural theories that emphasize hermeneutic and interpretive perspectives.

RE teachers I have observed in their classrooms and interviewed, were not only preoccupied with how religions and local manifestations of them were represented in their teaching. They were equally preoccupied with the classroom itself as a learning environment or *a context for individual and collective learning processes*. I argue that this is another and equally important aspect of *contextualization* as professional practice.

When it comes to teacher's practical knowledge of how to lead learning processes in the RE class, preoccupation with the „external aspects“ of contextualization (representations of religions and philosophies of life) and the „internal aspects“ (a favorable learning environment), become inseparable aspects of the same praxis. Professionalism in this respect, I suggest, therefore has to do with increased reflexivity concerning premises and procedures for contextualization and the development of a professional language to communicate such insights among colleagues.

I conclude by suggesting, that if a greater focus on contextual knowledge in the training of RE teachers shall contribute to a more inclusive RE, it must emphasize increased knowledge and reflexivity concerning contextualization – both as an interpretive, ethnographic concern and as an inclusive pedagogical concern.

State and Religious Education

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN A DEMOCRATIC STATE: THE GHANAIAN EXPERIENCE

By Rev. Seth Asare-Danso, Lecturer in Religious Education, University of Cape Coast, Ghana

Since the introduction of formal education in Ghana in 1843, Religious Education has undergone enormous changes, as a result of educational policy initiatives by governments. This paper provides a historical analysis of the effects of Education Acts and Reforms on basic school Religious Education curriculum in Ghana. It examines the nature of Religious Education in the Gold Coast during the colonial period (1850 to 1950), the nationalist period (1951 to 1966), the era of military regimes (1966 to 1992), and the era of democratic regimes (1993 to 2010). A content analysis of educational policy documents and interviews were used for the collection of data. The findings of the research revealed that the teaching of Religious Education in Ghana has gone through an evolutionary process, through the introduction of the 1951 Accelerated Development Plan, the 1961 Education Act, the 1974 Dzobo Committee Report and its implementation in the 1987 Education Reform, the 1996 Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) Programme, and the 2007 Education Reform. These educational policy initiatives led to the introduction of different terminologies, which were used for the teaching of Religious Education in Ghana. These were Religious Instruction (RI), Religious Knowledge (RK), Scriptures, Bible Knowledge (BK), Cultural Studies (CS) and Religious and Moral Education (RME). Regrettably, Religious and Moral Education (RME) was removed from the basic school curriculum in Ghana in 2007 and integrated into other subjects. However, because of the democratic nature of the country, reactions from religious groups, civil society groups and public opinion called for its restoration in 2008. This revealed that majority of Ghanaians were in favour of a subject-centred Religious Education curriculum, as against the integrated model of curriculum, which has been associated with the current age of globalization. The study therefore recommends that Religious Education should continue to be a subject-centred curriculum in basic schools in Ghana, just as it has been before the attainment of Ghana's political independence in 1957. Besides, it should be a core curriculum for basic schools in Ghana. This will enable the educational system to develop not only the cognitive and the psychomotor domains, but more importantly the affective domain of basic school pupils.

Citizenship and Religious Education in Finland – a Historical Analysis of a Current Political Theme

By Saila Poulter, University of Tampere, Finland

The political significance of religion is no doubt a global issue of the 21st century. Simultaneously occurring, an absence of religion in the civic sphere and the new public role of religion create a confusing platform for education to take religious worldviews into account. In Finland, the debate on religious education (RE) at the doorstep of the parliamentary election has once again provoked arguments for and against the tradition-based subject taught in state public schools.

When defending the current nondenominational model of *RE according to a student's own religion*, the civic meaning of RE has not been explicitly used in Finnish discourses. Citizenship studies have traditionally been seen as a part of the teaching of history among other school subjects. Through the analysis of Finnish school history from the beginning of the 20th century until today this study claims that the civic argument has been very powerful in legitimizing the existence and purpose of RE in school.

Following the secularization and societal change it becomes evident that the connections to citizenship whether they apply to nationalism, Lutheranism or Christian morality, have lost their plausibility. However, although not publicly recognized, the elements touching on civic issues are still inherently linked to the worldview dimension according to the Curricula texts. RE is a tool for shaping the identities of future citizens who become a part of a multicultural global community.

Understanding citizenship as a not purely secular entity, this study attempts to find justification for RE as a means to achieve civic goals. To defend the importance of RE as a pedagogical asset of civic elements this study aims to offer one potential justification of the subject. Teaching stemming from different particular traditions does not close the doors for a shared humanity but can rather give elements to understand the value-laden way of looking at the world of every citizen. RE can help to identify the connections between the „private“ and „public“ identities and thus, facilitate the process of becoming a member of a society. Public recognition of a civic identity based on a religious worldview is vital in the times of terror between worldviews. Being careful not to use RE solely as an instrumental vehicle of civic education this study attempts to open up a perspective that would stay faithful to its own objective.

Dutch church state relations and how this impairs religious education

By Paul Vermeer, Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies, Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands

The Dutch educational system is often acclaimed for its plural character and for the space it offers to denominational schools. Indeed the Dutch educational landscape is very plural and apart from public schools also consists of a wide variety of Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, Muslim, Jewish and even Hindu schools. All fully funded by the state. But contrary to what one would expect, this situation is not that favourable for religious education. Due to the specific arrangements between church and state, which in the Netherlands are characterized by freedom of religion, separation between church and state and a strict religious and philosophical neutrality, religious education is the only subject in Dutch schools which is not supervised by the state. As a result, the actual practice of religious education in Dutch schools is very heterogeneous, with conflicting interests, conflicting pedagogical approaches, low status in school and generally poorly motivated students. The first part of this paper offers a description of the present state of affairs of religious education in Dutch schools. It will especially focus on the specific arrangements between church and state that exist in the Netherlands and on how these arrangements impair religious education. Whereas the first part of this paper is descriptive the second part is more reflective in nature. In this second part the question is addressed how to improve the situation of religious education in Dutch schools without violating the relationship between church and state. To this end, a mixed model of state supervised and confessional religious education will be proposed.

“Core Values Timeout” – A counter hegemonic discursive device in Police jargon

By Malin Sefton, PhD Candidate Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts and education, Karlstad University, Sweden

This paper describes Swedish Police students’ notions of the phenomenon “Core Values Timeout” (Sw. *värdegrunds-timeout*). “Core Values Timeout” is practiced as a timeout request (by signalling a V-sign with the fingers and a timeout sign with the hands) in order to utter inappropriate, often politically incorrect, statements in conflict with *Police Core Values*.

Police officers and students share knowledge and learn from each other both within and outside school context. The timeout originates at traineeship but is spread at school, illustrating how learning is mediated through participation in social practices (Säljö, 2005). Timeout is an ingredient in the socialization process of new police officers by articulating resistance against management and bending formal rules and policies. In line with neo-gramscian concepts of hegemony and counter hegemony (Hall, 1996; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) humour is seen as resistance practice and the timeout is described as a counter

hegemonic discursive tool to the *Police Core Values*. The analysis focus on how some discourses and representations are constructed as plausible and how these acts restrictive and enabling in different ways. Power and resistance have been used to conceptualize different aspects of interpretation processes that come forward in students' ideas.

Students pose distant positions against both timeout and the core values, but favour the joking jargon. The jargon is viewed as one cultural norm for acceptable behaviour within a demanding profession. It can be interpreted as specific rules of game in social interaction, hence working as a socio-pragmatic device. Irony works as a discursive double-edged tool creating parallel practices of inclusion through fellowship and exclusion through differentiation.

The timeout can be seen as a *result* of the core values and a reversed effect that arises along with the promotions of new structures and adoption of a policy strategy. Timeout is based on a resistance against what is viewed as natural within the organization – a “vulgar but heartily jargon” with the purpose to ventilate views, attitudes and experiences. The results show how the *Police Core Values* contain and create a space consequently bringing forward an effect counterworking its purpose. It shows how the establishing of strategy for good values reveals what not to count as the *Police Core Values* and what is not allowed within the police organization.

The analysis is based on empirical data from ethnographic fieldwork conducted at the Swedish National Police Academy.

Religious Education on the borders, - how religion is taught and education thought – in northeastern European border communities

By Jenny Berglund, PhD, Senior Lecturer, Study of Religions, Södertörn University, Sweden

Across Europe, national educational systems provide forceful links between states and citizens. The mandatory school is a primary locus for socialization of young people, aiming to make them socially and culturally competent within bounded state territories. In geographical areas bordering on those of other states, however, this primary function of educational systems is challenged by ambiguities and tensions connected to the border situation as well as inter-cultural experiences. In border areas, the unavoidable requirement of educational policy and syllabi to reproduce nations' official symbols, narratives, goals, beliefs, historical sensitivities, and territorial demarcations typically faces resistance by the border situation itself – increasing the complexity and contestedness of education. This paper aims to present the first findings from a project that is designed to study religious education in a set of schools physically located on either side of four national borders in the

Baltic-Barent area. Along this divide different combinations of religious and educational thought and organization meet. Official national Lutheran-Protestant, Russian Orthodox, and Catholic traditions interact in a multiplicity of ways with post-communist, secular, liberal democratic, statist and federal political systems. Whilst thus being a cultural-religious divide, the Baltic- Barent brim is also the political boundary between post-Soviet Russia and the European Union(+Norway); i.e. a former extension of the Berlin Wall. The purpose of the paper is to trace and analyze the role and impact of the border situation in religious teaching and educational policy implementation – i.e. how religion is taught and education thought – in northeastern European border communities.

Youth and Religious Education

RELIGIOUS FORMATION OF YOUTH IN NIGERIA: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL FROM Leuven HERMENEUTICAL-COMMUNICATIVE¹ MODEL

By Mary-Chizurum Ugbor, doctoral student, Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium

The „cure“ of human heart, mind, soul, and body remains the essential function of religious education that defines the holistic vision of the human persons in a pluralistic society with a multiplicity of cultures like, Nigeria. In this case, the dichotomy between the dream of the kingdom of God (faith praxis) and the reality of life has become challenging to this holistic approach to religious education (RE). For instance, in Nigeria context, this dichotomy reduces RE to morality; spirituality; evangelism; and conversion.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to make a contribution towards overcoming the polarity and tension between faith praxis and life experiences of pupils. To sustain this approach pastorally and theologically, I present a model of RE that is sensitive to Leuven's HCM. The investigation reveals that Leuven's HCM can contribute to the RE of pupils through demanding from educators-pupils a multidimensional sense of responsibility (to the self, the other, community, and future generations).

Consequently, this paper (divided into three major sections) argues that some educational contexts, like Nigeria, are in need of this HCM, especially with regard to youth issues and crises, in the (post)modern and multicultural society. The lack of HCM's RE in Nigeria for instance, is exacerbated due to lack of systematic and structured framework for engaging multidimensional and trans-disciplinary issues pupils bring to RE classes. In the absence of such framework, Nigeria RE uses two approaches that are simplistic and ineffective in the long, even if attractive.

The first section of this paper outlines these two approaches. The paper proposes Leuven HCM as an example of a religious formation of contemporary youth which can be helpful in the Nigerian context. The confidence in Leuven HCM's RE is demonstrated in the second. The major claim of this section is that Leuven's HCM is a valuable approach for helping the young grow out of a „delinquent trajectory“ and find meaning in their spiritual yearning. This is critical for religious formation of youths today. Nevertheless, the third and final section suggests that in socio-cultural milieus like Nigeria, Leuven HCM of RE has some contestations that need to be addressed so as to give youths the capacity to en-

¹ Henceforth, HCM.

gage courageously with their ongoing and dynamic process towards human flourishing, often prevented by acts of cultural forces, injustice or self-deception.

Young adults life interpretations

By Caroline Gustavsson, doktorand, Institutionen för pedagogik och didaktik, Stockholms universitet, Sweden

This paper will present some preliminary results from my PhD project. The aim of my study is to explore, what I call life questions, that young people, between 19-29, are carrying and expressions of their existential life interpretations. For my purpose I have made interviews with 21 young adults and I have interpreted my material with a hermeneutic approach.

My research questions are:

1. Which life questions are the young adults carrying?
2. Which life interpretation do they express?
3. How can we understand how the life questions and life interpretations are shaped by influence of other people, the social important milieus and language used to describe the questions and interpretations?
4. What role does identity seem to play in the presented life interpretation of an individual?
5. How can we understand the relation between individual's narrative and life interpretation on one hand and the cultural and social shared narrative on the other?

This presentation will focus on the first question above, against the background of how I explain and use the concept of "life question". I will present examples of life questions expressed in my study.

Young people's life view and values in multicultural societies

*By Gunnar J. Gunnarsson and Gunnar E. Finnbogason, University of Iceland**

The aim of the paper is discuss a research project on young people's (age 16-24) view of life and values in multicultural societies in Iceland in times of crisis. The project uses interdisciplinary approaches and the scholars working on it have different theoretical background (religious studies/religious education, multicultural studies/social science, history of ideas, pedagogy).

The study is a three year project based both on quantitative and qualitative research methods. It is in its initial stage, started autumn 2010. Questionnaires, focus groups and semi-structured interviews will be used for data collection, starting with questionnaires this semester in four high schools. Four focus groups will also be established, one in each school.

At this stage the discussion will focus on the methodology and the theoretical framework of the study. Modern societies are becoming increasingly diverse in regard to origins, cultures, languages and religions. Icelandic society is no exception, as it has in recent decades become increasingly diverse with regard to cultural backgrounds, nationalities, languages and religions of its members. The broad theoretical framework of critical multiculturalism is therefore an important basis for the project. The cultural and social settings in Iceland in times of financial crises is also in focus and how young people in Iceland experience and cope with the situation and how it influence their view of life and values. In the study, the voices of young people will be at the forefront. The aim is to study their life view and values and the influence of the social setting in Iceland on their views.

A number of related studies have been conducted in Iceland, but most of them have focused on various aspects of young people's views of life and life values. This project attempts to broaden the perspectives on young people's views of life and life values in modern multicultural societies with special attention on the situation in Iceland in the wake of the financial crisis. Knowledge in this area is useful for further discussions on young people's self understanding and social and moral competence, for example in school context and in connection with subjects like Life Skills, Citizenship Education, Intercultural Education and Religious Education.

The research project is planned as a comparative one within Nordic context with collaborators in three different countries.

*Other members in the research group are Hanna Ragnarsdóttir and Halla Jónsdóttir at the University of Iceland