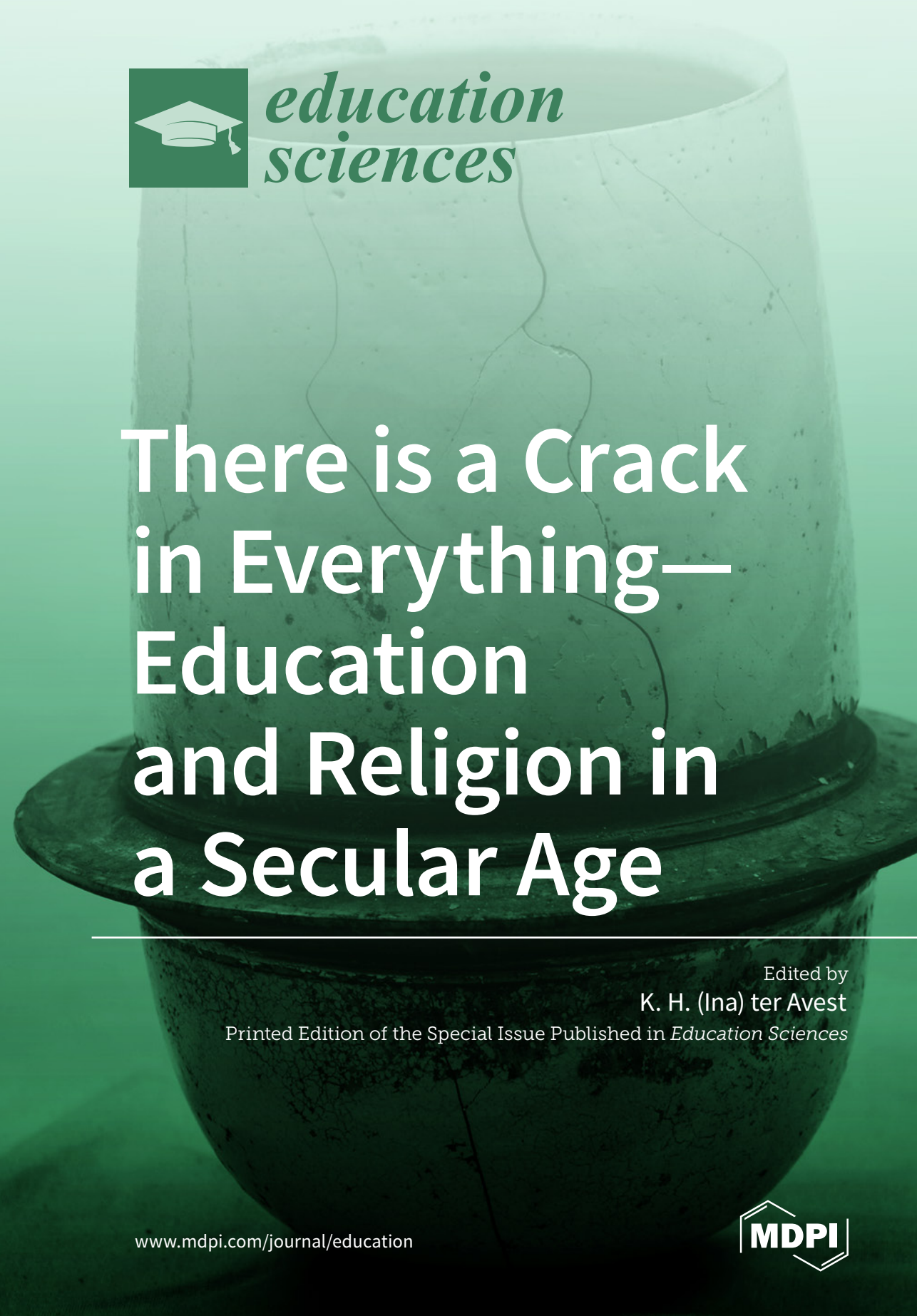


education sciences

There is a Crack in Everything—Education and Religion in a Secular Age

Edited by
K. H. (Ina) ter Avest

Printed Edition of the Special Issue Published in *Education Sciences*

www.mdpi.com/journal/education

MDPI

There is a Crack in Everything—Education and Religion in a Secular Age

There is a Crack in Everything—Education and Religion in a Secular Age

Special Issue Editor

K. H. (Ina) ter Avest

MDPI • Basel • Beijing • Wuhan • Barcelona • Belgrade

Special Issue Editor
K. H. (Ina) ter Avest
Inholland University of Applied Sciences/
VU University Amsterdam,
The Netherlands

Editorial Office
MDPI
St. Alban-Anlage 66
4052 Basel, Switzerland

This is a reprint of articles from the Special Issue published online in the open access journal *Education Sciences* (ISSN 2227-7102) from 2018 to 2019 (available at: https://www.mdpi.com/journal/education/special_issues/Education_and_Religion_in_a_Secular_Age)

For citation purposes, cite each article independently as indicated on the article page online and as indicated below:

LastName, A.A.; LastName, B.B.; LastName, C.C. Article Title. *Journal Name* **Year**, *Article Number*, Page Range.

ISBN 978-3-03921-277-4 (Pbk)
ISBN 978-3-03921-278-1 (PDF)

Cover image courtesy of K. H. (Ina) ter Avest.

Contents

About the Special Issue Editor . . . . . **vii**

Kathy Winings
Preface to "There is a Crack in Everything—Education and Religion in a Secular Age" . . . **ix**

K. H. (Ina) ter Avest
Introduction to the Special Issue "There is a Crack in Everything—Education and Religion in a Secular Age"
Reprinted from: *Educ. Sci.* **2019**, *9*, 239, doi:10.3390/educsci9030239 . . . . . **1**

Marianne Moyaert
Inter-Worldview Education and the Re-Production of Good Religion
Reprinted from: *Educ. Sci.* **2018**, *8*, 156, doi:10.3390/educsci8040156 . . . . . **9**

Ömer Faruk Gürlesin
Major Socio–Political Factors that Impact on the Changing Role, Perception and Image of Imams among Dutch–Turkish Muslims
Reprinted from: *Educ. Sci.* **2019**, *9*, 162, doi:10.3390/educsci9030162 . . . . . **24**

Muhammet Fatih Genç
Values Education or Religious Education? An Alternative View of Religious Education in the Secular Age, the Case of Turkey
Reprinted from: *Educ. Sci.* **2018**, *8*, 220, doi:10.3390/educsci8040220 . . . . . **38**

John Exalto and Gerdien Bertram-Troost
Strong Religion in a Secular Society: The Case of Orthodox Reformed Schools in The Netherlands
Reprinted from: *Educ. Sci.* **2019**, *9*, 28, doi:10.3390/educsci9010028 . . . . . **54**

Yaacov J. Katz
Religious and Heritage Education in Israel in an Era of Secularism
Reprinted from: *Educ. Sci.* **2018**, *8*, 176, doi:10.3390/educsci8040176 . . . . . **66**

Abdulkader Tayob
The Representation of Religion in Religion Education: Notes from the South African Periphery
Reprinted from: *Educ. Sci.* **2018**, *8*, 146, doi:10.3390/educsci8030146 . . . . . **76**

Robert A. Bowie and Lynn Revell
How Christian Universities Respond to Extremism
Reprinted from: *Educ. Sci.* **2018**, *8*, 140, doi:10.3390/educsci8030140 . . . . . **88**

Soo-Young Kwon, Nam Hoon Cho and Moon Son
Convergence Education of Medicine and Theology in a Secular Age †
Reprinted from: *Educ. Sci.* **2018**, *8*, 201, doi:10.3390/educsci8040201 . . . . . **102**

Gerdien Bertram-Troost, Inge Versteegt, Jacomijn van der Kooij, Inger van Nes and Siebren Miedema
Beyond the Split between Formal School Identity and Teachers' Personal Worldviews: Towards an Inclusive (Christian) School Identity
Reprinted from: *Educ. Sci.* **2018**, *8*, 208, doi:10.3390/educsci8040208 . . . . . **119**

Janieta Bartz and Thomas Bartz
Recognizing and Acknowledging Worldview Diversity in the Inclusive Classroom
Reprinted from: *Educ. Sci.* **2018**, *8*, 196, doi:10.3390/educsci8040196 . . . . . **137**

Karin Kittelmann Flensner
Secularized and Multi-Religious Classroom Practice-Discourses and Interactions
Reprinted from: *Educ. Sci.* **2018**, *8*, 116, doi:10.3390/educsci8030116 . . . . . **150**

Yusuf Ziya Öğretici
An Exploration of Subjective-Life of Spirituality and Its Impact
Reprinted from: *Educ. Sci.* **2018**, *8*, 212, doi:10.3390/educsci8040212 . . . . . **170**

Stéphanie Tremblay, Marie-Odile Magnan and Catherine Levasseur
Religion and Negotiation of the Boundary between Majority and Minority in Québec: Discourses of Young Muslims in Montréal CÉGEP
Reprinted from: *Educ. Sci.* **2018**, *8*, 183, doi:10.3390/educsci8040183 . . . . . **182**

Paul John Isaak
Education and Religion in a Secualar Age from an African Perspective
Reprinted from: *Educ. Sci.* **2018**, *8*, 155, doi:10.3390/educsci8040155 . . . . . **205**

Jean Agten
Bibliodrama: Introducing Stories from Narrative Traditions in the Development of Young People's Life Orientation
Reprinted from: *Educ. Sci.* **2019**, *9*, 107, doi:10.3390/educsci9020107 . . . . . **219**

Bas van den Berg and Cocky Fortuin-van der Spek
The Appropriation of Symbolic Language in Worldview Education through Bibliodrama
Reprinted from: *Educ. Sci.* **2019**, *9*, 88, doi:10.3390/educsci9020088 . . . . . **235**

K. H. (Ina) ter Avest
Epilogue—"There is a Crack in Everything ..."
Reprinted from: *Educ. Sci.* **2019**, *9*, 165, doi:10.3390/educsci9030165 . . . . . **249**

About the Special Issue Editor

K. H. (Ina) ter Avest is em. prof. Philosophy of Life of the Stenden University of Applied Sciences and of the Inholland University of Applied Sciences, and was lecturer 'Interreligious Teaching and Learning' at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. For more than fifteen years Ina ter Avest worked as a coach in the "Utrecht Advisory Board". Since 2018 she is senior lecturer, teaching Life Orientation, Pedagogy and Psychology (of religion), at the Islamic University of Applied Sciences in Amsterdam. She did her Masters at the Radboud University in Nijmegen and graduated as a psychologist of Culture and Religion. In her Ph.D. research she focussed on the religious development of pupils (primary school) in an intercultural and interreligious educational context. In her teaching as well as in her research and publications (religious) identity development is central: identity development of pupils/students, of teachers and of teams of teachers in schools. In her private practice she combines the theoretical frame of reference of the dialogical self theory (DST; she was trained as a consultant following the self confrontation method (based on the DST)) with her education as a psychodramatist. She coaches individuals as well as groups.

Preface to "There is a Crack in Everything—Education and Religion in a Secular Age"

If there are two constants in academic and theological discourse throughout history, they are the debate around secularization and the dialogue concerning the intersection of religion and education. Each age has had its debate about modernizing forces that drive concerns of impending secularization. At the same time, the ongoing dialogue and debate on the relationship and intersectionality of religion and education has also had a long and, at times, contentious history depending on the geographic region. When considering the interrelationship of all three concepts, the conversation becomes more animated. In particular, theologians and church leaders have often been more vocal in their concerns, fearing the results of modernization and any resulting secularizing trends.

Both the religious and educational disciplines have spent a great deal of time and energy discussing and strategizing as to how to either ameliorate the impact of secularization or how to work through it. The benefit of these discussions is the continued scholarship that has been generated. Some of the resulting key resources provide a strong backdrop for the outstanding chapters in this latest text. Sociologist David Martin's most recent collection of essays outline his view of the future of Christianity in a secularized global context as a sequel to his original study in the 1960s. While his text does not address the religion and education dynamic, it does provide a grounded discussion on secularization and religion in the 21st century. Niels Reeh's resource, however, does offer a good baseline look at religion, education and secularization in his case study of the teaching of religion in Danish schools. The value of his text is the rich historical perspective, tracing the history of the teaching of religion, the impact of religious changes in the Danish culture and how changes in state interest influenced religion and education in Danish schools from the early 1720s to the mid-2000s.

Two additional edited collections have also been instrumental in keeping this discussion moving forward and setting the stage for this new volume. One of the texts is Religion and Education: Comparative and International Perspectives. This volume brings a new dimension into the dialogue – the value of religion in education sustainable development. The wide range of geographic regions researched in this text brings to the forefront the increasing challenges due to terrorism, religious extremism, migration and religious pluralism. Through a comparative study, this resource asks the question of religious education's role in preparing people to effectively address such issues in order to combat discrimination, violence and prejudice.

The second resource that also sets the stage for this new resource is Public Theology Perspectives on Religion and Education. This text grew out of the Nuremberg Forum on Public Theology and the Forum's long history of discussing and dialoging around the issue of how diverse religions embrace the concept of a public theology as well as the intersectionality of religion and education in support of the common good. Though this resource and the texts noted earlier do not address the challenges of secularization and living in a secular age as far as religion and education are concerned, these resources do offer a perspective of religion and education within the wider social context of a society struggling to deal with violence, diversity, discrimination and poverty; all of which one might say stem from a more secularized global community.

With its focus squarely on the context of secularization together with the contributions from diverse and specific religion and education programs that seek to address our secularizing context, this latest text makes a decided contribution to the discussion. What makes this resource important?

For one, the impact of secularization needs religion and religious education to remain in dialogue with modernity. Not only are we witnessing declines globally in attendance at our houses of worship, but we are also seeing an increase of those who claim to be spiritual but not religious – in other words, the "nones" as they have been called. All of this points to the question of the relevancy of religion and religious identity. Without the ongoing dialogue between religion and secularization in educational contexts, people are left to their own devices to decide where the truth lies. Such a resulting range of options runs the gamut from viewing religion as irrelevant to religious extremism and radicalism. The submissions in the text highlight those programs that are not afraid to provide an educational context in which to engage the challenges of secularism.

The other reason why this new text is important is because of its inclusion of education and educational contexts in the dialogue. Lawrence Cremin, the former president of and professor at Teacher's College in New York City used the term prophecy in describing education's responsibility. For Cremin, education should remind us of our deepest and most important commitments (Cremin 1990). As educators, we know the power of education to shape people and to shape their future. Education sharpens our discernment and our awareness of the larger world around us and gives us a vocabulary that will guide us in interpreting the changes brought about by secularization and modernity. Add religious and theological content to the role of education to shape and form, and you have a powerful tool that offers balance and insight into secularization. As historian Michael Barnes noted in his early book Religion in Conversation (Barnes 1989), religion is at the very heart of culture and holds society together and gives society coherence and identity. Therefore, you will find this book to be a timely and insightful text to help us maintain a focused and clear dialogue around living in a secular age through the contributions that arise through the intersectionality of religion and education.

Barnes, Michael. *Religions in Conversation: Christian Identity and Religious Pluralism*; SPCK Press: London, UK, 1989.
Cremin, Lawrence. *Public Education*; Basic Books: New York, NY, USA, 1990.

Kathy Winings, Ed.D.
President of Religious Education Association (REA)

education sciences

MDPI

Editorial

Introduction to the Special Issue "There is a Crack in Everything—Education and Religion in a Secular Age"

K. H. (Ina) ter Avest [1,2,3]

[1] Em. professor in 'Education and Philosophy of Life', Inholland University of Applied Sciences, OZW Building, De Boelelaan 1109, 1081 HV Amsterdam, The Netherlands; khteravest@gmail.com
[2] Former senior lecturer Pedagogics of Religion, VU University Amsterdam, De Boelelaan 1105, 1081 HV Amsterdam, The Netherlands
[3] Independent researcher, www.inateravest.nl

Received: 6 September 2019; Accepted: 6 September 2019; Published: 16 September 2019

The Sacred Canopy

The seemingly paradoxical contrast between an expected decline of religion in the public domain and an increase of the importance of religiosity and spirituality in people's lives, led Peter Berger to revisit his prophecy about secularisation. In 1967, in his publication *The Sacred Canopy*, Berger initiated the exploration of religion in the present-day world from a sociological perspective.

The Sacred Canopy is a readable publication, well received by a wide range of scholars and interested lay persons. The book consists of two parts. The first part focuses on the role of religion in the formation of society as a community of people living together—in German, denoted as a *Gesellschaft*. According to Berger, three processes are pivotal in the formation of a society: externalisation, objectification and internalisation. Externalisation refers to collective actions that construct society; objectification refers to the reification of social structures; internalisation refers to socialisation and enculturation that results in the positioning of society and its role expectations in people's internal worlds. This latter process is accompanied by tensions that result from the confrontation between accepted and internalised roles, and assigned roles [1,2]. In Berger's view, institutionalised religion is, first of all, perceived as a collection of roles that ought to be internalised. If internalisation is not possible, and the social world and the socialised 'I' resist an authentic 'I', this is coined as alienation [3] (p. 100). A chapter on alienation bridges the first and second part of the book with its emphasis on secularisation as a seemingly universal, irreversible and irrevocable process, at least in the Western world, but which is expected to occur all over the world.

Once *The Sacred Canopy* was published, the concept of 'secularisation' became an evaluative concept. In circles of anti-clericalism and in circles of self-appointed 'progressives', secularisation became associated with the liberation of modern men and women from the patronalistic power of religion over people's positioning in the world. However, some Christian theologians embraced the concept in a different meaning entirely, namely, as the realisation of the core of the Christian tradition, referring to the practice of a faithful life. By doing so, they connected the concept of secularisation with interpretations taken from early Christianity, where 'secularisation' was understood as a term referring to the return into the world of an ordained priest who had dedicated his life to God. According to Berger's perspective, secularisation can be understood as the process of withdrawing spheres of society from the predominance of religious institutions and symbols [3] (p. 123). As a result of this process, it is to be expected that more and more people will reflect on worldly and personal affairs without the blessing of religious interpretations [3] (p. 123). In Berger's view, the power of secularisation lies in its global influence due to the westernisation and modernisation of all continents with its roots in the ever-expanding capitalist-industrial economy [3] (p. 125). However, Berger did not want to play the

'blame game'. In terms of historical origins, he points to the way in which the Protestant Christian tradition may have sown the seeds for secularisation, since this tradition minimalised the place and size of a sacred world within society by referring to stories about Jesus, and the notion of the incarnation of the Son of God in particular, which can be interpreted as a movement from radical transcendence to radical immanence. According to such an interpretation, the umbilical cord between heaven and earth has been tied off, thereby leaving mankind thrown upon its own resources [3] (p. 128). In Berger's theory, secularisation is related to all aspects of culture and can be noticed in the decline of religious content in the arts, in philosophy, in literature, and last but not least, in the rising influence of science as an autonomous secular perspective on the world. According to this line of thought, modernity will necessarily bring about a decline in the use of religious sources for the formation of society, and an increase in people's reliance on research-based knowledge [3] (p. 123). In 1967, Berger concluded his publication with the expectation that all over the globe, religion would be (re-)shaped according to processes of secularisation, polarisation and subjectification, and by the way in which religious institutions would respond to these processes [3] (p. 189).

In later years, and due to encounters with religiosity in other contexts—in the so-called 'third world', among others—and as a result of encounters with evangelical Protestantism in the United States, Berger qualified his previous conclusion that resulted from the line of thought in *The Sacred Canopy*. It turns out, Berger admitted, that modernity does not inevitably lead to a decline of religion. In the decades following the publication of *The Sacred Canopy*, instead of a decline in religion, secularisation produced a reflective process on people's religious positionality, resulting in subjectification and a pluralisation of religion(s). Nowadays, Berger states, people live in a plural context that brings with it the need to make a personal choice between competing beliefs, values, and lifestyles [4]. Following this analysis, two kinds of pluralism are identified by Berger [4] (p. 17 ff.). On the one hand, pluralisation can be understood as the situation in which different religious traditions coexist in the same public domain. In Europe, for example, as a sign of institutionalised religion, we see mosques next to churches, where Muslims gather to pray. On the other hand, the coexistence of religions in the West is situated within a dominantly secular discourse. Present-day society, according to Berger, cannot exist without the pluralism dialogue(s) [4] (p. 18). What follows from this, in line with Berger's vision, is the need to teach about—and learning to speak and understand—each other's languages, which enables people to enter into a dialogue about a religious and moral pluralism that might evolve from religious diversity [4] (p. 25). In Berger's view, we cannot do without dialogue because of the human need for recognition and (some) social cohesion (see also Van Meijl, 2010 [5]). If we interpret Berger's recent publication correctly, and in case Berger's most discussed publication would be revised, then the title might change into 'Religion(s), the Plurality of Sacred Canopies'.

Varieties of Religion Today

Forty years after Berger gave his sociological perspective on the development of the Christian religious tradition in Western countries, Charles Taylor recorded his view in 2007 in *A Secular Age*, a solid publication of more than eight hundred pages. Whereas Berger focused on the Christian religion, Taylor's focus is on the secular society. In *A Secular Age*, Taylor raises the question of what the position of religion is in a secularised/secularising world. This publication was preceded by a shorter publication in 2003 (a booklet of only one hundred pages), with the challenging Dutch title *'Wat betekent religie vandaag?'* ['What Is the Meaning of Religion Today?']. The English title of the 2003 booklet clearly indicates the starting point of Taylor's reflections: *Varieties of Religion Today. William James Revisited*. Here, Taylor does not focus on institutionalised religion and its decline—as Berger did in *The Sacred Canopy*—but on religious experiences in the lives of modern people. The question Taylor raises in his 2003 publication, which can be seen as a forerunner of his *A Secular Age* (2007) [6]—his major contribution to the discussion about religion, religiosity, spirituality and secularisation—is 'how can religion be experienced and professed' these days? Taylor's starting point is William James' foundational work on religion. According to James, religion is best described as 'the feelings, acts and

experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine' [7] (p. 42); [8] (p. 24). Taylor, for his part, acknowledges that the language used to express one's religious experience is a language embedded in a linguistic (religious) community [8] (p. 11), while at the same time, the individual's own way of thinking is the starting point for her/his religious experience [8] (p. 12). Following James' line of thought, the individual religious experience is pivotal; however, in institutionalised communal religiosity, 'the intense heat of the original experience cools down, and what started as an 'acute fever' results in a 'dull habit" [8] (p. 34). James even speaks of institutionalised religion as 'second hand' religion. According to Taylor, however, James pays no attention to the 'phenomenon of a collective religious life, which is not only the result of (individual) religious relations, but to a certain extent, is [also] constitutive for individual religious experience [8] (p. 37). In other words, Taylor holds that religion is not a matter of 'either'/'or', but that individual religious experiences and institutionalised religion can be seen as complementary. The same applies in his view to individual and institutionalised Islam. For some Muslims, living according to the rules of their religion as institutionalised in the *Sharia* law is crucial, while others focus on their individual understanding of tradition and an individual experience of longing for unification with God. Sufism is an example of the latter denomination in Islam; the poet and mystic Rumi (1207–1273) is an important representative of this movement [8] (p. 33).

In Taylor's perspective, individual religiosity and institutionalised religiosity cannot and should not be separated. The development of individual religiosity cannot take place without a dialogue with a minimum of verbally and non-verbally expressed, and societally endorsed, forms of religiosity [9,10]. After all, human beings have the desire to communicate about their inner experiences, especially about moving experiences. 'There is *something* people have faith in, there is *something* people pin their hopes on' [8] (p. 39). In addition to the stories people tell each other, different ways to verbally and non-verbally express intense and deep emotions are required. Religious communities offer narratives, symbols, rituals and ceremonies for the expression of these kinds of profound and moving experiences.

As Taylor perceives it, people today have a feeling that 'something' is missing in their lives, in spite of the ongoing processes of secularisation. A deep longing seems to be neglected; an access to a transcendent reality seems to be blocked. Delving into a variety of sources, people look for different ways to express their uneasiness, but none of these can satisfy the deep longing that lies underneath their discomfort—a deep longing to put their faith in 'something' and admit some kind of dependency on that 'something'. The need to dependent on 'something' and the need to be autonomous, in control and respected, are given priority in the lives of modern men in successive turns. According to Taylor, the end of this 'struggle' is by no means in sight [8] (pp. 59–60).

Since religion is not a given anymore in today's world, but a matter of personal choice, people have to find their own way amidst a plurality of views, instead of walking the beaten track as provided by a religious community or prescribed by a religious/political authority [8] (p. 77; see also [11] (p. 123)). The search for one's own way results in new forms of religiosity, which balances between solitude and solidarity, and between belief anchored in an institutionalised context and belief unrelated to religious practices. 'Bricolage' [12], 'believing without belonging' [13] and 'multiple religious belonging' [14] are just a few concepts to describe people's innovative ways to fulfil their need for belonging [8] (pp. 86, 90). In Taylor's view, 'new terms of religiosity can begin in a moment of dazzling insight, continuing in a demanding perseverance of spiritual discipline' [8] (p. 100). Prayer, and—in its adapted form—meditation and mindfulness, can be seen as new forms of spiritual discipline. In addition to these roads towards fulfilment of a need to belong, the longing for solidarity can also express itself in joint actions, also in joint actions outside the sphere of religion. The 'wave' in a football stadium, erupting into song, or striking up the national anthem can be seen as examples of expressions of the need to belong. This is exactly why sport is seen as the new religion nowadays.

Present underneath the variety of religious experiences is the demanding requirement of our contemporary world to be authentic and self-directed, i.e., to be the architect of your own life and to concretise your own humanity in an individual way, making your own moral choices regarding

the realisation of a good life. Self-fulfilment and self-realisation are high on the agenda in the West. However, this self-directedness and authenticity is often confused with being independent of any authority. 'Being and becoming yourself' is interpreted as developing yourself in disconnection from all kinds of rules and moralities, which are seen as given from the outside and as not corresponding with an inner voice. Here, Taylor points to the risk involved in the decline of institutionalised religion as an authority or dialogue partner in society's existential conversation. Institutionalised religions have huge supplies of imagination that stimulate narratives on 'the good life', called 'strong evaluations' by Taylor. In his opinion, the retreat of religion in its institutionalised form as a guaranteed order of the good in the public domain—Taylor even speaks of religion as the 'soul of society' [8] (p. 15; see also Vroom, 1996 [15])—entails the risk that the opposite pole in the dichotomy of 'good and evil' will disappear, which would open up a clear passage for evil. The rise of moralism, in Taylor's view, can be seen as a defence mechanism against the omnipresence of evil in modern times [8] (p. 49). The same holds for the rise of radicalism as a way of escaping what is perceived as an 'inconvenient' plurality of beliefs in a secularised world.

With this Special Issue, we wish to contribute to the ongoing debate on secularisation and pluralisation, focusing on the meaning thereof for the education of today's young people, who are the builders of the world of tomorrow. Before we begin our exploration of different aspects of the relationship between education and religion in the secularized context of the 21st century, we want to create clarity about the use of the concept 'secularisation'.

Secularization: A Variety of Interpretations

Secularisation is very often interpreted as an ongoing process in the history of religions, namely as a decrease in the active participation in religious communities and as a decline in church/mosque/temple attendance. Other scholars refer, in particular, to the diminishing influence of institutionalised religion in the public domain. Secularisation, however, does not merely refer to decreased church attendance, which is the focus of quantitative research in sociology of religion, nor is the meaning of the term limited to the societal fact that religious symbols, as an expression of the strong relation between institutionalised religion and the public domain, become prohibited. The French conception of *laïcité* is an example of this interpretation. In addition, secularisation is often understood as a process in which religious thought, religious practices and religious institutions lose their impact on people's lives and on society as a whole (Wilson, in Paul, 2017 [16] (p. 78)).

Secularisation as understood by the Dutch history scholar Herman Paul refers to the fact that believing in God does not go without saying anymore. Nowadays, it is not just religion anymore that people put their faith in. These days there are many alternatives to put one's faith in. There is no single 'sacred canopy' anymore, plurality is the sound conclusion. For religious communities, that makes it more difficult to keep their beliefs alive, a situation that may result either in an unwilling secularisation of beliefs, or in fossilised traditions. Going back to Taylor's perspective, religion(s) should adapt to modern times and distance themselves from violent passages in their holy scriptures, relegate hell to the realm of fiction, and recognise the legitimacy of the human pursuit for worldly happiness (Taylor in: Paul, 2017, [16] (p. 50)). The secular characteristic of modernity and the ready availability of religious and secular alternatives give rise to people's severe doubts about their own positionality vis-à-vis their own religion and other religions, including its 'strong evaluations'—those values that 'distinguish between good and evil, noble and base, virtuous and vicious' [6] (p. 544). Some of these 'strong evaluations' are 'incommensurably higher that others' [6] (p. 544). For many people, these 'strong evaluations' have been ingrained during their religious socialisation, in the context of a religious community and/or religious education. For them, 'morality without God may be no longer conceivable' [6] (p. 545). Encounters in a plural society between people adhering to different 'strong evaluations', or practicing similar 'strong evaluations' in a completely different way, can result in disruptive moments (Ter Avest, 2014) [17], putting the finger on the problem of the fragility of people's self-constructed worldview identities. This fragility is partly due to the fact that large numbers of

people nowadays are not firmly embedded in a religious community anymore, and remain 'puzzled, cross-pressured, or have constituted a sort of in-between position by bricolage' [6] (p. 556). This may possibly result in an intergenerational change, whereby children adopt a position that differs from that of their parents [6] (p. 833). Taylor points to different strategies that people pursue in responding to the new situation. Some no longer make room for 'the beyond'; they close off the passage to the vertical or transcendent. Others try to create an alternative—or: alternatives in plural—for the lost 'one and only' 'sacred canopy'; 'paradise lost'. Pop festivals, football matches and sports activities seem to be a satisfactory substitute for what religion used to be in earlier days.

Secularisation: A Contested Concept

While Taylor describes secularisation as an inevitable and ongoing process, a surprisingly different perspective is taken by the Dutch history scholar Herman Paul. Secularisation, Paul asserts, is an essentially contested concept. This scholar is of the opinion that secularisation is not an inescapable process, but an interpretive framework. In his publication, *Secularization. A Short History of a Grand Narrative* (2017) [16], he points to the fact that we should make a clear distinction between 'secularisation' and 'secularism'. 'Secularism' is defined by Paul as a closed, unconscious conviction in conflict with religious traditions. In this way, he provides, alongside Peter Berger's interpretation of secularisation, another interesting view on this societal phenomenon. While in Berger's interpretation—including in his revised interpretation—secularisation is understood as a process in itself, which involves people who are unable to resist the process in question, according to Paul, it is precisely the other way around. Things happen to take place in history and human beings—who are in need of a frame of reference—constructed the discourse of secularisation over time. According to Paul, people 'invented' the secularisation thesis for the purpose of their own relief, because they were in need 'of a script' [16] (p. 18). 'Secularisation is not a fact but a frame of interpretation', he states [16] (p. 23). Secularisation is not the fact that church attendance is in decline, it is the narrative people tell each other to make this fact understandable and acceptable. Paul is of the opinion that fact and narrative are closely related. In hindsight, (grand) narratives serve as justification; thinking ahead, they serve as inspiration and motivation.

In the texts that follow, we see that scholars—explicitly or implicitly—take a particular understanding of the concept of secularisation as their starting point, and approach the relation between education and religion accordingly.

The focus of six authors is on the **secular societal context** and the existing (im)possibilities for religious education—as a compulsory subject or as an elective subject.

The Dutch scholar, Marianne Moyaert, opens this part with a conceptual elaboration of inter-worldview education, as advocated by European politicians and education policy makers. The starting point for her article is key policy documents on the subject in question. Moyaert is critical of the pedagogical approach of 'learning to live in peace', an approach that also ignores socio-political problems. Critical examination of ideologies and societal structures is a must to keep a psychological burden off the shoulders of citizens.

Like Moyaert, Ömer Gürlesin pays attention to the socio-political context. In his article, which is based on his PhD research into the religiosity of Dutch–Turkish Muslims, Gürlesin describes the changing role, the self-image and the perception of imams within the Dutch–Turkish population in the Netherlands. He studies these changes from the perspective of the transition from a secular, mono-religious state in which religion is managed to the societal context of the Netherlands: a secular, plural state with freedom of religion. A lack of well-educated, culturally sensitive imams might increase young people's sensitivity to radical interpretations of Islam.

Fatih Genç gives an introduction to the history of religious education in Turkey. In addition to the new 3 × 4 curriculum with electives in religious education, the Imam Hatip schools are very popular. In order to avoid the constantly recurring dilemmas about the position of religious education in public

schools, Genç proposes 'value education' as an alternative to (and possibly preparatory study track for) the subject of religious education.

John Exalto and Gerdien Bertram-Troost discuss the position of religious schools in the Dutch society. Their discussion relates to the highly valued freedom of education in the Netherlands, which goes hand-in-hand with heated discussions about the significance of religious schools in a secular society. For orthodox Reformed schools, they recommend that these educational institutions express their pedagogical ideas about living together in a context of diverse life orientations, and clearly indicate how they as schools contribute to the development of their students as future citizens of the Dutch society.

Yaacov Katz describes the heterogeneous population of Israel, resulting in compulsory religious and heritage education for each population group separately. To bridge the differences and to create (more) social cohesion, Katz proposes citizenship education coupled with religious education and heritage education as a compulsory subject for all the students in all sectors of education.

Abdulkader Tayob informs the reader about religious education as envisioned in a policy document of the South African government. His plea is for a contextual understanding of secularisation, keeping an eye on the representation and putting in an appearance of religion in the public domain. Tayob advocates a delicate balance between the study of religion as an educational practice and the appearance of religion as a public and religious practice.

Ten authors focus on the positionality of **teachers and students** regarding religion(s) in a secular world, and their struggle for inclusive education in the secularised classroom. This part opens with a contribution from Robert Bowie and Lynn Revell. In their article, they discuss the way British Christian universities respond to extremism. According to Bowie and Revell, there is an urgent need for teacher expertise in responding to the complexity of the danger to the students, for independence of universities, for freedom of expression and shared values, as well as for public accountability.

Soo-Young Kwon et al. present a Korean case study on CRISPR/gene-driven technology in which theological and educational perspectives intermingle. Soo-Young Kwon and his colleagues believe that the related ethical issues require a Christian theological response, and offer new possibilities for Christian religious education in a secular society.

The Dutch scholars Bertram-Troost et al. discuss the tension that can arise because of an inconsistency between a school's religious identity and the positionality of teachers regarding the religious tradition of the school. On the basis of their research, they recommend an open attitude towards the variety of positions teachers can take with regard to the Christian identity of the school. The personal 'pilgrimage' of teachers requires serious attention as part of their developing expertise in teaching 'for', 'about' and 'from' the commitment to a (Christian) worldview.

The article written by Janieta Bartz and Thomas Bartz takes its starting point in the heterogeneous student population of the German schools—a heterogeneity in terms of religious and ethnic backgrounds, mother tongue and a variety of disabilities. The authors present 'inclusive education' as a way to respond adequately to this diversity. 'Reflective inclusion' in teacher training and 'learning in the presence of the other' are introduced as possible ways out of the embarrassment teachers experience when confronted with their multi-religious classroom population.

The multi-religious classroom population is also at the centre of Karin Kittelmann Flensner's contribution. She pays special attention to the polarisation that takes place within the debate between 'us' and 'them'. To overcome these excluding positions, a seemingly neutral 'secular' position is favoured by teachers to cope with diversity. However, this might (negatively?) influence the possibilities for a nuanced dialogue between students with different backgrounds who adhere to different belief systems.

Yusuf Öğretici explores what happens to the morality of students when religious belief disappears, changes, or evolves into a type of spirituality. He refers to the 'subjective turn' and discusses a traditional kind of religious education that cannot respond adequately to this challenge. As a result, students are 'lost in translation', without a solid foundation for their morality.

The interest of Stephanie Tremblay et al. goes to the majority–minority positions in Quebec (Canada) that influence the religious identity development of Muslim youth—fluctuating between an authentic subjective identity and a given, assigned identity as construed within the myth of the Quebecan majority, and as experienced by the Muslim minority itself. Border negotiations between 'us' and 'them' centre around cultural identity and arise, among other things, from the need for acceptance.

Paul John Isaac focuses on the changing role of Christianity in Namibian society, where it is feared that there will be a loss of morality if the subject of religious education would disappear from the curriculum. The author considers the recently introduced subject 'religious and moral education', in which religious diversity is linked to the political, social and economic issues of the country, as well as to moral values.

Jean Agten's starting point lies in narrative psychology. He describes in detail the theory and practice of bibliodrama as a way to include religious and secular narratives as 'partners in interreligious dialogue', by familiarising the students with their biographical narrative and a variety of cultural and religious narratives. In this way, the students' life orientation development can be explored and facilitated in a non-verbal way. A case study is presented to illustrate this theoretical approach.

Bas van den Berg and Cocky Fortuyn-van der Spek explore a form of bibliodrama adapted to religious education in the secular classroom context. They focus on increasing the pupils' knowledge of, and experience with, religious narratives. Their approach is illustrated with the biblical narrative of the Book of Esther.

We conclude this publication with an epilogue. We are proud of the richness of context-related approaches and reflections on the relationship between education and religion that have been brought together in this publication. We expect that the various contributions, with the presented examples and case studies, will stimulate the ongoing exploration and elaboration of the relationship between education and religion in the world of today and tomorrow—work-in-progress for coming generations.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

1. Essed, P. *Alledaags Racisme [Everyday's Racisme]*; Van Gennep: Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2017.
2. Wekker, G. *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race*; Duke University Press: Durham, Germany; London, UK, 2016.
3. Berger, P. *The Sacred Canopy*; Double Day & Company Inc.: New York, NY, USA, 1967.
4. Berger, P.; Steets, S.; Weisze, W. (Eds.) *Zwei Pluralisms. Positionen aus Socialwissenschaft und Theologie zu religiöser Vielfalt und Säkularität*; Waxmann: Münster, Germany; New York, NY, USA, 2017.
5. Van Meijl, A.H.M. Anthropological Perspectives on Identity: From Sameness to Difference. In *The Sage Handbook of Identities*; Wetherell, M., Mohanty, C.T., Eds.; Sage: London, UK, 2010; pp. 63–81.
6. Taylor, C. *A Secular Age*; The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, USA; London, UK, 2007.
7. James, W. *Varieties of Religious Experience*; Collier Macmillan: London, UK, 1961.
8. Taylor, C. *Wat Betekent Religie Vandaag? [What Is the Meaning of Religion Today?]*; Klement: Kampen, The Netherlands, 2003.
9. Hermans, H.J.M.; Gieser, T. (Eds.) *Handbook of Dialogical Self Theory*; Cambridge University Press: New York, NY, USA, 2012.
10. Buitelaar, M.; Zock, H. (Eds.) *Religious Voices in Self-Narratives; Making Sense of Life in Times of Transition*; De Gruyter: Berlin, Germany; Boston, MA, USA, 2013.
11. Oosterwegel. *Christelijk geloven in een Seculiere Wereld. Over de Relevantie van het Geloof voor de Hedendaagse Technologische Maatschappij [Christian Faith in a Secular World. On the Relevance of Faith for Today's Technological Society]*; Eburon: Delft, The Netherlands, 2015.

12. Levi-Strauss. *Het Wilde Denken. Over Ritueel, Totemisme, Taboe, Mythisch Denken, Logica, Dialectiek en de 'Getemde' Geest [The Wild Mind. On Ritual, Totemism, Taboo, Mythical Thought, Logic, Dialectic and the 'Tame' Mind]*; Meulenhoff: Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 1962/1990.
13. Davie, G. *Religion in Britain since 1945*; Wiley-Blackwell: Oxford, UK, 1994.
14. Kalsky, M.; Pruim, F. *Flexibel Geloven; Zingeving Voorbij de Grenzen van Religies [Flexible Faith; Sense Making beyond Boundaries of Religions]*; Skandalon: Vught, The Netherlands, 2014.
15. Vroom, H. *Religie als Ziel van Cultuur. Religieus Pluralisme als Uitdaging [Religion as the Soul of Culture. Religious Pluralism as Challenge]*; Meinema: Zoetermeer, The Netherlands, 1996.
16. Paul, H. *Secularisatie (Secularisation)*; Amsterdam University Press: Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2017.
17. Ter Avest, I. Exclusive Inclusion: Special Treatment for First Generation Students. Presented at the Conference on Diversity and the Politics of Engaged Scholarship, Bloemfontein, South Africa, 30–31 January 2014.

education sciences

MDPI

Article

Inter-Worldview Education and the Re-Production of Good Religion

Marianne Moyaert

Faculty of Religion and Theology, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 1081 HV Amsterdam, The Netherlands; m.moyaert@vu.nl

Received: 28 July 2018; Accepted: 17 September 2018; Published: 21 September 2018

Abstract: In this article, I focus on the increasing interest taken by European political and educational policy makers in inter-worldview education. My article has two parts. The first part consists of a document analysis of pivotal European publications on this and related issues. In the second and more critical part of this article, I make explicit my concerns about these European pleas for inter-worldview education. The main criticism that I present below is that the European policy on inter-worldview dialogue views the problem of intolerance too much as an individual problem that can and must be dealt with pedagogically, without recognizing that intolerance is just as much a structural socio-political problem. Important European policy documents, to be examined in the first part of this article, do not discuss how the way our societies are structured results in a sustenance of inequalities and in the marginalization of certain groups of people. At no point does these documents link inter-worldview education to the need "to examine the ideologies and structures of society critically," as a consequence the plea for dialogue loses some of its critical and transforming potential.

Keywords: inter-worldview education; Europe; tolerance; inequality; power

1. Introduction

Political and educational policy makers, on the European level, are increasingly taken an interest in inter-worldview education, the goal of which is to promote understanding between people who uphold different religious and non-religious worldviews. Inter-worldview education includes both religious and non-religious voices in the classroom and engages them in a dialogical learning process. Because it is not focused solely on people who belong to a particular faith tradition and based on the assumption that everyone has a 'worldview', i.e., a particular way of looking at the world, inter-worldview education aspires to be more inclusive than inter-religious or inter-faith education [1,2]. How this will play out concretely varies from country to country and depends on the relation between Church and State, national histories and sociological developments. My own reflections are influenced by the context in which I work, the Netherlands [3], but I assume my considerations may also give rise to thought for other European countries, that continue to be affected by Christian legacies while at the same time undergoing processes of secularization and pluralization. While a strong supporter of inter-worldview education myself—I work at a multireligious department of Religion and Theology, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, where I teach students with a variety of religious and non-religious backgrounds—I have my concerns about the way European policymakers frame their pleas for inter-worldview education.

My article has two parts. The first part consists of an analysis of a series of documents that have been published over the last two decades by the Council of Europe (Section 2.1) and by the Organization for Security and Co-operation (Section 2.2). My aim is to foreground the rationale these documents themselves give for the necessity of inter-world-view education. Whence this focus on education? Staying as close as possible to these documents themselves while also drawing on the

reflections and considerations developed by European educationalist experts, like Wolfram Weisse, Gerdien Bertram-Troost and Robert Jackson, I relate the current plea for inter-worldview to the so-called 'resurgence of religion' and the end of the classical secularization thesis. I will show how these documents assume a binary sociological analysis (Section 2.3), according to which our European societies are currently undergoing both processes of secularization and pluralization and (Section 2.4) I will explain why, again according to these documents, in the face of the complexity of our secularized and pluralized society the need has arisen to invest in strong, i.e., dialogical tolerance.

In the second more critical part of this article, I make explicit my concerns about these European pleas for inter-worldview education. I develop a politico-philosophical analysis to (Section 3.1) spell out my suspicion about the claim that the dialogical classroom is a safe space characterized by equality and neutrality. (Section 3.2) According to me, such claims do not sufficiently reckon with the fact that inter-worldview education happens in a particular socio-political context that is marked by structural inequalities and uneven power relations between people with different worldviews. I will continue my critical analysis by showing that (Section 3.3) the binary sociological analysis, which runs as a current thread through these European documents has an 'equalizing effect' and covers up the inequality between majorities and minorities. I will argue that this binary sociology, is faulty and that it needs to be amended. (Section 3.4) Next, drawing on genealogies of religion, I surface the ideological assumptions that undergird modern Western conceptualizations of what religion is (and ought to be) and I foreground how the current European plea for inter-worldview education seems to be aimed at re-producing *good religion*, understood as liberal, privatized and interiorized religion, which is distinguished from *bad religion*, understood as dogmatic, ritualistic and materialistic religion. I will also spell out how this normative distinction ends up with the marginalization of those religious voices that do not fit the mold of good religion. It will not come as a surprise that Muslims especially suffer under this situation. The 'reproduction' of good religion is usually legitimized based on the assumption that good religion is peaceful and bad religion conflictual, an assumption that has been deeply ingrained in the European socio-political imagination since the so-called religious wars. In the final part (Section 3.5) of this article, I argue that precisely this assumption does not stand ground in the face of historical evidence.

2. European Policy on Religious Education: A Document Analysis

2.1. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

The first organization that has, since the turn of the century, looked at the importance of religious education is the OSCE. This organization, which has 57 members—including most European countries, Russia, Canada, and the United States—wants to promote the cooperation between these countries in military, economic, and humanitarian areas, with the ultimate goal of increasing security in the world. Set up during the Cold War, the OSCE has recently, via its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), been looking at religion and the importance of religious education, particularly in connection with its role in conflict prevention. This led to the publication in 2006 of the *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools*. This document is meant to assist both legislators, teachers, educators and officials in educational ministries. They offer "practical guidance for preparing curricula for teaching about religions and beliefs, preferred procedures for assuring fairness in the development of curricula, and standards for how they could be implemented" [4]. The title of this document refers to the history of the Spanish city of Toledo, a history that teaches both that there is an alternative to the discourse of the clash of civilizations and that this alternative is fragile. Living with diversity presupposes that society invests in tolerance and dialogue, just as that happened during the Andalusian "golden age". If that does not occur, then exclusion mechanisms, oppression, and even violence gain the upper hand—we can easily see what happened in 1492, when the Reconquista and the exiling of Jews from Spain signaled an end to that golden age [4].

Against the background of the history of Toledo, the OSCE expresses its concerns about the contemporary situation, particularly about the fact that in Europe today "misunderstandings, negative stereotypes, and provocative images used to depict others are leading to heightened antagonism and sometimes even violence" [4] (p. 9). That problem can be tackled via an educational program that prepares young people for a pluralistic society, where they will in any case have to work and live together with those of other faiths and worldviews. Thus, in its advisory function, the OSCE appeals to the different European countries "to address the root causes of intolerance and discrimination by encouraging the development of comprehensive domestic education policies and strategies and awareness-raising measures that 'promote a greater understanding of and respect for different cultures, ethnicities, religions or beliefs' and that aim 'to prevent intolerance and discrimination, including against Christians, Jews, Muslims and members of other religions" [4] (p. 9). In addition, these guiding principles primarily emphasize that it is important to provide neutral religious education that does justice to the various worldview perspectives in all their complexity without threatening the right to the freedom of religion [4] (p. 9).

2.2. The Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is an intergovernmental organization whose purpose it is to combat discrimination and intolerance against minorities, to safeguard human rights, and to promote the diversity of Europe. The Council was formed in 1949, one year after the publication of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man [5] (p. 5). It began very concrete campaigns against hate speech, for example, and to chart the unequal treatment of men and women on the work floor, and to condemn prejudice against peoples like the Roma. The Council of Europe includes not only countries from Europe, but also countries such as Russia, Turkey (other countries, such as Vatican City, are not members but only observers). One focus of this Council is education, which offers opportunities to work on human rights and to promote the cultural diversity of Europe and the interaction between people with different cultural backgrounds. The Council of Europe is a consultative body that can make recommendations which countries can use to adjust their laws.

For a long time, this Council avoided looking at the topic of religion, certainly in combination with education, and preferred to speak of intercultural education or dialogue. In 2002, however, after having been shaken awake by '9/11', the Council launched a major project, *The Challenge of Intercultural Education Today: Religious Diversity and Dialogue in Europe* [6] (p. 7). That project was followed up by the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, the publication of a widely consulted reference book for schools, [7] and a *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue* [8]. Since then, religion—understood indeed as a cultural phenomenon—has become a core element of the European diversity policy, and dialogue is presented as a way of allowing young people to become acquainted with as many perspectives as possible so that they can appropriate the virtue of tolerance and respect.

In 2008, a *Recommendation on the Dimension of Religions and Non-Religious Convictions within Intercultural Education* (CM/Rec 2008-12) was published, according to which all member states were to include the study of religions in their curriculum. The intention of this recommendation is "to ensure taking into account the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education as a contribution to strengthen human rights, democratic citizenship and participation, and to the development of competences for intercultural dialogue" [9]. The recommendation also clearly states that intolerance cannot be remedied by knowledge alone; how people publicize their own worldview identity and relate to other traditions and their adherents must also be dealt with. This concerns, in particular:

- Developing a tolerant attitude and respect for the right to hold a particular belief, attitudes based on the recognition of the inherent dignity and fundamental freedoms of each human being;
- Nurturing a sensitivity to the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions as an element contributing to the richness of Europe;

- Ensuring that teaching about the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions is consistent with the aims of education for democratic citizenship, human rights and respect for equal dignity of all individuals;
- Promoting communication and dialogue between people from different cultural, religious and non-religious backgrounds;
- Promoting civic-mindedness and moderation in expressing one's identity [9].

A few years later, in 2011, the Council of Europe set up an expert team to reflect on the importance of inter-worldview education and in particular to help the various countries apply these ideas of inter-worldview education in their local context [5] (p. 9). Educationalist expert Robert Jackson, who will return later in this article, took a leading role in this process and in 2014 published the document *Signposts: Policy and Practice for Teaching about Religions and non-Religious Worldviews in Intercultural Education* [5]. In addition to many terminological explanations on what religious literacy, religion, worldviews, spirituality, etc. mean, *Signposts* emphasizes that more knowledge is needed about worldviews (both religious and non-religious) but that knowledge alone is not sufficient:

> Religion is not restricted to practices, artefacts and buildings. It is also necessary to attempt to understand the meaning of religious language as used by religious believers, including expressions of their beliefs, values and emotions. Such understanding requires knowledge, but it also requires certain attitudes and skills that raise-self-awareness and understanding of the beliefs and values of others, as well as values affirming human dignity. [5] (p. 21)

2.3. From Secularization to Pluralization

To get more of a grasp of this European attempt for inter-worldview dialogue, I want to probe deeper into why both the CoE as well as the OSCE, which until recently had little to no interest in religion let alone inter-worldview education, changed course. Why does a security organization become involved with religious education? What has changed? [5] (p. 3).

Until recently, many policy makers assumed that religion would gradually disappear from the public domain, a view that was entertained by numerous philosophers and sociologists. The assumption was that secularization, understood as the *social differentiation* of secular and religious affairs, would not only lead to the decreasing influence of the *church* on politics, science, and education but also to the marginalization of religion on the level of personal experience and practice. In brief, modernity would necessarily bring about a decline of religion. From this point of view, it is understandable that religion was not high on the political agenda. Religion was a kind of leftover from the past or, at best, something that concerned people in their private lives, and thus politics did not have to bother with it any more.

Today policymakers have come to realize that the secularization thesis does not quite capture what is happening in European societies. Due to various processes of globalization, "including the migration of peoples, and massively improved communication via the Internet," Europe is also undergoing processes of pluralization. In *Signposts* Robert Jackson says that:

> "In world affairs, religion has become a topic of public discussion, for both positive and negative reasons. Utterances from religious leaders such as the Pope or the Dalai Lama are reported internationally, while the consequences of negative events, such as those connected with 11 September 2001 in the United States of America, continue to be felt globally and are reported widely in the media. Cultural and religious diversity are experienced in every country. No state is homogeneous culturally. . . . Diversity within states is complex and connects with global as well as regional, national and local issues. All of these factors are associated with an increasing view that religion and belief are not purely private issues and should be part of discussion and dialogue within the public sphere". [5] (p. 16)

Continuing along these lines, Wolfram Weisse, for years the coordinator and chief researcher of an international project financed by Europe [10] affirms that the interest of political policy makers

in religion stems from a sociological paradigm shift: from a policy that was rooted in the paradigm of secularization to a policy that, in addition to secularization *also* took the pluralization of society seriously. Religion is not simply disappearing but transforming. Consider in this regard the following passage from the already mentioned Reference Book:

> "Few currently doubt that secularisation is an irreversible feature of our societies, but it has to be acknowledged that it has not removed all traces of the religious experience and references from our society. Such traces and references are found in diverse and new forms. Today the symbols and values associated with the great religious traditions are still part of collective memory. A broad majority of many people in many countries still claim to belong to a particular religion (even though more often than not this does not necessarily imply that they are practicising members). Secularisation undoubtedly led to a narrowing of the social scope of traditional faiths. However, many religious or spiritual groups have sprung up at the same time. The major migration flows, which have had their impact on most societies have highlighted more clearly than in the past the diversity of ways of seeing life and the world, as rooted in different systems of belief. Many sporadic or endemic conflicts around the world involve groups that identify themselves with specific religious labels". [11] (p. 19)

This quotation refers to the way processes of both secularization and pluralization transform religion, giving way to a diversity of worldview perspectives: ranging from adherents who belong to different world religions, to dual belongers, people who self-define as spiritual but not religions, atheists, and so on. This makes coexistence more complex [12] (pp. 32–40). This difficult coexistence is apparent from the fact that stereotypes, incorrect presentations, prejudices, misunderstandings, and lack of understanding are an indisputable reality in various European countries and are taking on more problematic forms. In view of this situation European policy makers ask how to give shape to a society that is characterized by worldview complexity. The question is: How can the European project of coexistence with its achievements be safeguarded against intolerance [4] (p. 11)?

2.4. Towards a Call for Strong Tolerance

In response to this question, both the OSCE and the CoE argue for an active diversity policy, with particular attention to inter-worldview dialogue. The CoE especially emphasizes that dialogue is the best way to educate a person in tolerance, but, conversely, it also holds that not investing in dialogue guarantees intolerance [8] (p. 9). To put it more strongly, without dialogue, according to the *White Paper*, it will be "difficult to safeguard the freedom and well-being of everyone living on this continent" [8] (p. 13).

This European call for dialogue is rooted in a liberal democratic tradition in which the government is neutral and impartial with respect to the various worldviews and at the same time defends the religious freedom of all citizens. Historically speaking this framework, which is cited in virtually all documents, was the political answer to the religious wars that ravaged Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries and still seems to be operative [13]. Even more, it functions as the condition for dialogue [14]. However, in spite of claims to neutrality, the liberal tradition is full of specific assumptions about what religion is and should be, about what the potential for violence religion contains, and about the place of religion in society. In European diversity policy, these assumptions are seldom critically questioned. In the second part of this article, I argue that these assumptions are much less self-evident than they are usually supposed to be and that they, if left unexamined, restrict the critical potential of dialogue in advance. I endeavor to surface ideological assumptions about religion that underly the liberal tradition of tolerance.To be able to undertake this critical analysis, it is important that we first look again at the narrative of religious violence, neutrality, tolerance, and freedom of religion. This story goes as follows.

2.4.1. The Religious Wars and the Liberal Tradition

The religious wars that ravaged Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries showed how destructive interreligious conflicts can be. It is certainly no exaggeration to state that these religious wars are deeply inscribed in the collective memory of Europe, and that the memory of them resonates with the contemporary expressions of so-called religious violence. Three beliefs stem from that period: (1) religious authority and political power must be separate; (2) religion has an enormous potential for conflict; and (3) when left to themselves, believers with different beliefs will not be able to find agreement and thus a policy is needed that regulates the place of religion in society. The message is: vigilance—a notion that also runs through the contemporary diversity policy like a common thread.

The modern answer to the inter-Christian religious wars is political liberalism, which is characterized by a "constitutionally warranted sense of respect for the life and liberty of each individual, a concentration on equal rights, and affirmation of the worth of democratic government and moral pluralism [15]." Political liberalism divides coexistence into two spheres, the public and private spheres, and emphasizes the importance of individual freedoms, including religious freedom on the one hand and tolerance on the other. The government and its institutions are expected to display an attitude of neutrality, which means that it makes no evaluation of this or any other religion and does make any comment on religious beliefs or practices.

In addition to neutrality by the government, societies demand that citizens be tolerant of the various worldviews that are present in society. In principle, tolerance cannot be equated with neutrality (which we expect from the government); it is even opposed to it. The tolerant person thus disapproves of the belief of the other but nevertheless endures it. Tolerance, viewed in that way, is a bothersome virtue that implies grinding one's teeth. Ricoeur even calls tolerance a form of asceticism that should make living with difference possible [16].

2.4.2. The Erosion of Tolerance and the Necessity of Strong Tolerance

One of the current problems, highlighted by policy makes, is that the virtue of tolerance is subject to erosion and more and more people understand tolerance nowadays in terms of conflict avoidance. We tolerate what is strange insofar as we are not affected by it and to avoid problems we avoid the other. This is called *weak* tolerance in the CoE's *White Paper* and other documents: "Tolerance [in this weak] sense, . . . equates quite simply to 'putting up with'—from a distance—the fact that others may love as they wish even though they may not share our values or belong to the same cultural or religious group" [7]. Weak tolerance, according to this document, means that "we" concern ourselves with others as little as possible and avoid them as much as possible. Understood in that way, tolerance no longer means enduring a problem—the problem that what we hold dear is confronted with a conflicting belief—but implies a distance to and lack of interest in whatever is different. The result is indifference: whatever the other is concerned with leaves us completely cold, and involvement with the other is suspended.

According to the CoE, this weak tolerance presents a serious problem. First, it leads from an indifference to a fundamental lack of knowledge about worldviews (religious and non-religious). Nowadays many people are religiously illiterate. Not only does this limit the ability to understand important historical and contemporary events and artefacts (art, literature, architecture, music, etc.) from European culture [4] (p. 19), this illiteracy is also fertile ground for negative prejudices and stereotypical concepts that can lead to tactlessness [17]. Many people simply lack the knowledge to understand what religious people believe, what they regard as sacred, why certain utterances or actions may be experienced as offensive. They lack the finesse to deal with religion in an appropriate way. They laugh at things that are not funny; they talk when they should be silent. The avoidance culture thus leads from weak tolerance to intolerance and conflict.

To prevent conflicts or to rise beyond them, weak tolerance needs to be transformed in Europe into strong tolerance, which goes much further than just accepting diversity; here tolerance takes the form of dialogue. To quote the CoE's *White Paper* one more time:

> Understood in a stronger sense, tolerance . . . implies that we all may consider that our own convictions are true, good and valid for ourselves but that those of others are equally true and valid in their eyes and that it is not for us to pass judgment on their conception of what constitutes a good life. This is a long and gradual learning process, particularly when it comes to religious convictions which are based on absolutes and not on any social consensus which is always liable to review and reappraisal. [11] (p. 20)

Instead of a cult of avoidance as found in weak tolerance, strong tolerance thus pursues interaction, for one learns about other worldviews by engaging in a reciprocal encounter with people who belong to and identify with these different traditions [8] (p. 13). It is hoped that the inter-worldview education, in which students are exposed to perspectives and ways of life that differ fundamentally from theirs, can remove mutual distrust and thus strengthen the ability for tolerance [7] (p. 16).

3. Critical Reflections on Europe's Call for Inter-worldview Dialogue

In the second part of this article I develop several critical reflections on this call for strong tolerance, not because I do not believe in the importance of inter-worldview dialogue but because I want to reinforce the critical potential on inter-worldview learning. I am concerned that the way inter-worldview education is framed will favor students who belong to the majority at the cost of some minority students. The main criticism that I present below is that the European policy on inter-worldview dialogue views the problem of intolerance too much as an individual problem that can and must be dealt with pedagogically, without recognizing that intolerance is just as much a structural social problem. In my reading, the above-mentioned European policy documents do not discuss how the way our liberal societies are structured results in sustaining inequalities and in the marginalization of certain groups of people. At no time does these documents link inter-worldview education to the need "to examine the ideologies and structures of society critically," and as a consequence, I think their plea for strong tolerance loses its critical and transforming potential [18] (p. 89).

To support my argument, we first have to go back to the beginning of this article, i.e., to our binary sociological analysis. That is where, in my view, it already goes wrong. I will show that the binary sociological analysis of secularization and pluralization ignores the reality of unequal power relationships between the majority and minorities and that this has to do with, among other things, the fact that this analysis takes only two factors into account, that is secularization and pluralization. In my view, however, there is also a third factor, namely, cultural Christianity that requires our attention. I then note that political liberalism, with its pillars of religious freedom on the one hand and the neutrality of the government on the other, is assumed to be the basic condition for inter-worldview dialogue. It takes on the role of an almost invisible backdrop *for* dialogue. It is supposed to create a kind of neutral and thus safe space in which dialogue is made possible. Those assumptions, however, are problematic. After all, liberalism is also a worldview or ideology, with a specific concept of the human being and a specific concept of religion. In fact, the "neutral" space in which dialogue should develop is already "filled" with specific values that will lead their own lives if they are not included as a dimension in the space of encounter. More emphatically, if the liberal values are not critically examined, the call for strong tolerance runs the risk of serving intolerant discourses and practices, which silence cultural and religious minorities that differ from the liberal norm. Tolerance then becomes intolerant.

3.1. The Rhetoric of Neutrality, Equality, and Mutuality

In the European discourse on strong tolerance, the *space for inter-worldview education* is understood as a neutral space in which students meet each other as equals. The purpose is to learn about different worldview perspectives, to grow in mutual understanding, to cultivate tolerance, and—more ideally—the advancement of appreciation. All of this should contribute to more solidarity, inclusion, and social cohesion. Mutual tolerance, it is said, should make a *modus vivendi* possible that does not cover up the differences but recognizes and respects them, and thus enables an inclusive society to develop. The basic idea is that everyone has his or her own cultural and worldview identity and in

that sense is an *other*. Thus, every student who is confronted with difference has the same task of learning more about other worldviews and to become proficient in dialogical skills.

This hymn to strong tolerance and in particular the equality and mutuality that it presupposes is not innocent, however. It obscures the reality that people who differ with respect to worldview often do not occupy an equal position in our society. In fact, not all students are *other* or *different* (or not, at least, equally so). Some students embody the norm of the dominant culture, whereas other students embody *difference* more. I think that the call for strong tolerance ignores or even covers up structural social inequalities. Let me foreground how this equalization works.

First, the *binary sociological analysis* that lies at the foundation of the European call for strong tolerance contributes to a kind of leveling of worldview differences. The reasoning goes as follows. The Church loses standing and importance wherever secularization increases. In the space that then arises, religion is transformed. A kind of tangle of worldview perspectives is made possible by *processes of secularization and pluralization*: there are Jews, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, liberals, Christians, post-Christians, atheists, adherents of a new spirituality, etc., a plurality of options that together color society. Everything that is conceivable is possible, but, in principle, not a single tradition, not a single perspective carries more weight than another.

Second, calls for strong tolerance are constantly framed in a political discourse that emphasizes the neutrality of the government as well as the individual right to religious freedom, which is a *universal right*. The educational task is to turn students into citizens who respect religious freedom, are tolerant when confronted with annoying differences, and become proficient in dialogical exchange. This presupposes a classroom in which no single religion is privileged and where each worldview perspective is treated equally. The teacher is supposed to embody that ideal of neutral impartiality and ensure that the safety of the classroom.

Third, inter-worldview education focuses primarily on the personal development and growth of students. The idea is that a lack of religious literacy and interaction leads to misunderstanding, intolerance, and conflicts. To promote coexistence, students need to learn to become proficient in tolerance, and that challenge awaits everyone. The problem of intolerance is basically seen as an individual problem that can be solved by a combination of knowledge and inter-worldview dialogue.

3.2. The Inequality of Dialogue

What this plea for strong tolerance obscures, in my view, is the fact that the school, the class, the teacher, and the students are already part of a sociopolitical constellation that is permeated with inequality, an equality that has to do with the dynamics or, better, the power imbalance between the majority and minorities. To the degree that the space for dialogue is a reflection of society, it is already characterized by its current values, norms, customs, and structures that are unique to the majority culture and in any case privilege it. In addition, the majority culture has the ability to make itself *invisible* and thus to not be recognized as a specific culture that is subject to discussion [19]. It represents the norm that is not questioned and the background against which other cultures, worldviews, and religions are presented as other. In reality, however, against this background, not everyone in the class is equally other and different, just as not everyone in society is. There are gradations of otherness and the degree of otherness is measured against the norm of the majority culture in particular. If this is not thematized as an essential part of the inter-worldview learning process, calls for strong tolerance—however nice they sound—can assume problematic, even subtly oppressive, forms.

To undergird this criticism, I propose a correction to the binary sociological analysis that constitutes the framework for the recent (European) political interest in religion and inter-worldview education. I argue that cultural Christianity should constitute a third factor, over against and in addition to secularization and pluralization. I thus do not assume a binary but a ternary or threefold sociological analysis of European societies [20]. While my subsequent reflections are influenced by the context where I work, the Netherlands, I assume they may also give rise to thought for other European

countries, that continue to be affected by Christian legacies while at the same time undergoing processes of secularization and pluralization.

3.3. From a Binary to a Ternary Analysis: Cultural Christianity

According to the classical view of secularization, the separation of church and state made all citizens equal in the public domain, an equality that is safeguarded by the neutrality of the government. Processes of secularization have, without a doubt, weakened the sociopolitical position of Christianity, nevertheless, I think it would be wrong to conclude that, now that Christianity has lost its position of prominence, that it finds itself on an equal footing with other religious, spiritual, and areligious phenomena [21]. I agree with Marjolein van den Brink that:

> "[t]he public sphere, although often understood as 'neutral' or 'secular' is not that neutral at all. . . . [N]ot so very long ago, most people in Western European countries adhered to some form of Christianity. Logically, custom, organizational structures and other practices were built upon and adapted to the demands of the most dominant of these convictions. Even though many people have since turned 'secular', that is are no longer actively living according to the demands of their faith and maybe non longer religious at all, the weekly days off are still organized so as to accommodate the biblical day of rest". [15] (p. 214)

That privileged position is not acknowledged by those who have born and raised in Europe and thus remains under the radar when the neutrality of the public space and the government is discussed [15] (p. 214). In the classroom too, students who belong to the majority have certain privileges that students who belong to a religious minority are not given [22]. Those privileges can take on different forms, but they are definitely connected with a kind of normalization of cultural Christianity as part of sociopolitical life.

What privileges am I talking about here? First of all, it may be expected that the teachers will overwhelmingly come from the majority group and have been formed by cultural Christianity; that the academic year will follow the Christian calendar; that the literature that will be studied will often have a Western-Christian perspective (this is certainly so in the area of inter-worldview learning where academic literature is produced primarily by Christian theologians and religious educators); that it is obvious that the campus is set up and decorated in line with (cultural) Christian feasts (Santa Claus, Father Christmas, a Christmas tree, Easter eggs, etc.); and that students who are perceived as belonging to the majority will seldom be questioned about the why of their worldview identity. Christian privileges are usually *not seen but simply assumed* by those who enjoy them. They are invisible. "As with any form of privilege, the very invisibility to those who enjoy it makes the environment seem natural—just as a fish has no idea anything else exists besides water because it has never had to think about any other possibilities" [23] (p. 46). Furthermore, it is quite likely that the student population itself will also be a reflection of the societal majority-minority ratio, with proportionally more (cultural) Christians than *non-Christians*, and the teacher also often embodies and represents the majority culture. This also means that minorities (Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and Jews) often do not recognize themselves in what are compulsory subjects, have to ask permission to be absent from classes when they, for instance, have to say their prayers (and perhaps have to explain why that is important), have few role models, and, have to daily experience the numerous manifestations of cultural Christianity. They are much more often asked about their particular worldview identity and they are often expected to *represent* their tradition. While learning about (cultural) Christianity is often a question of daily survival/living for them, that is not the case for (cultural) Christians learning about other worldviews [24].

Viewing tolerance as a virtue that every individual has to cultivate in an equal and reciprocal way ignores this sociopolitical constellation. Of course, the world would be a better place if everybody got to the point where they stopped to think before speaking and bore with clenched teeth certain worldview expressions that are considered untrue, nonsensical, or even foolish. If, however, (post)Christian

privileges are not acknowledged, thematized, and problematized, the inter-worldview dialogue itself can be subtly oppressive. Strong tolerance, in fact, plays too much to the advantage of the majority culture and thus to the disadvantage of religious and cultural minorities. As Riitaoja and Poulter state: "While minorities encounter the majority's viewpoint on a daily basis, the majority group is not always aware or appreciative of minority points of view. When trying to explain their experiences, minorities are subordinate and thus forced to use a language that is 'foreign' to their worldview. Inequality of different perspectives is therefore unavoidable" [19] (p. 91). To overcome or at least recognize this situation of inequality, the unmasking of privileges should therefore be part of inter-worldview education [15] (p. 214).

3.4. Political Liberalism and the Distinction between Good and Bad Religion

If we look at the dominant culture, yet another tradition needs to be taken into account, i.e., political liberalism itself, in particular the ideological presuppositions about religion it entails.

The heart of the modern liberal society is the individual, and not the government, Church, or the clan one belongs to. The individual is viewed as rational and autonomous, and, as rational and autonomous beings, people have the freedom and the right to map out their own lives. They can freely choose which faith they will follow and can live their lives as they please. Thus, they do not, like their (premodern) ancestors, have to follow paths that were preset for them, without their own choice and knowledge. As stated above, the government is not to say anything about how people give shape to their lives; it should remain neutral.

Liberalism is bound up inseparably with the Enlightenment tradition, which presents itself as liberation from the straitjacket that traditions can be. At bottom, it emits a distrust of tradition, heteronomy, and collectivity. Tradition contains the risk of restraint and limitation within itself, and that is precisely what liberalism wants to liberate the individual from. This also needs to be seen against the background of the religious wars that plagued Europe in the 16th–17th centuries, which made the potential for conflict in authoritative (religious) traditions painfully clear. These wars shook trust in religious convictions and authorities and anchored the idea that religion is dangerous deep in the collective European memory [13] (p. 727). The way to transcend this impasse was the emancipation from the religious powers and increasing independence of the various social domains. That is why secularization, viewed as a decrease in the social importance of religion, is often interpreted as a sign of emancipation, "that is, as a quasi-normative consequence of being a 'modern' and 'enlightened' European" [25] (p. 191). Although religion and religious commitments are, as such, not irreconcilable with liberal thinking, there does seem to be an (implicit) distinction between good religion and bad religion, a distinction that, by the way, has also found its way into academia [26] Good religion is rooted in autonomy, which means that the person in question is driven by considerations that come from within and by choices that he or she makes in complete freedom. A religious commitment must be self-chosen. Viewed in that way, religion is authentic. It agrees, of course, with the liberal value of equality and strives for as democratic an organizational structure as possible. Religious hierarchies, ritual demarcations, and certain exclusion mechanisms are problematic, certainly if they are related to gender, for example. Good religion is moreover is modest, as not too prominently present in the public space, and not too visible nor audible. Good religion keeps to the private sphere and is inwardly oriented. It has no need for frills or show and views all those externalities as historical-culturally determined and thus relative. It does not lose itself in this kind of detail but enables its adherents to focus on what is ultimately important; which cannot be captured in human images. It is striking that this good religion fits precisely into the profile of modern Protestant religion—the believer is turned inwards, focuses on his or her personal relation with the ultimate, emphasizes much more the individual search than the collective community, takes a critical reflective attitude toward authority and minimizes the external, i.e., the visible, tangible, edible, etc. aspects of religion.

Bad religion is associated with heteronomy instead of autonomy, with the collectivity of the community instead of with individuality, with prescribed traditional patterns instead of a path one

has marked out of oneself, etc. Bad religion is visible, audible, smellable—it is not shy but draws all attention to itself. It is anything but modest and focuses too much on outward show. To put it even more strongly, attachment to visible and tangible religious particularities are associated with immaturity, premodernity, irrationality—in short, with unenlightened religion. Most European societies are permeated by these liberal ideas and consciously—but often unconsciously as well—the message is that more traditional ways of life are not modern, potentially oppressive, not emancipated, and they also run the risk of fundamentalism and fanaticism and thus of inter-worldview conflicts. With a view to the social cohesion of society (and its security!), it is reasoned, this bad form of religion must be domesticated.

This liberal oriented concept of religion, and primarily the normative distinction between good and bad religion is deeply embedded in the majority culture. In the spring of 2018, the news media are talking of a right-wing wave moving across Europe. This shift to the right is not limited to specific populist parties that are said to be openly racist but is also found in centrist parties, and, strikingly, certain themes from right-wing discourse are also found in some traditionally left-wing traditions. The notion has arisen that 'our' values and norms are under pressure and need to be protected and defended, and action needs to be taken. Thus, as is also the case in Belgium and the Netherlands (the two countries where I live and work), more and more voices are claiming that everything associated with a view that is based on being less free (i.e., less tolerant) cannot and may not be tolerated. The liberal society that is based on the virtue of tolerance needs to be defended against intolerance. According to political philosopher De Wit:

> "During the last few decades we in Europe have indeed become accustomed to regard religion and religious identity as the inalienable private choice and self-creation of the individual; even institutional religion's traditional frameworks - such as churches and the passing down of doctrine—we now quickly tend to associate with the curtailment of freedom and intolerance". [27]

The concept of 'tolerant' clusters in this discourse with *liberal, free thought, open, autonomous, rational, progressive*, whereas 'intolerant' is associated with *illiberal, closed, heteronomous, irrational, conservative*. None of that can be tolerated if the liberal society is to be saved. Just as the political philosopher Wendy Brown states: "Defined against the unfree, intolerant peoples who menace us, a tolerant citizenry is a virtuous and free citizenry; and it is precisely this virtue and freedom that licences the violation of principles of tolerance and freedom in the name of security" [28] (p. 103).

If this normative distinction between good and bad religion is not problematized as being part of a particular liberal ideology, the danger arises that it can, without being explicitly examined, become an implicit educational ideal in whose light students are judged. As educators, we then risk contributing to the reproduction of the normative distinction between good and bad religion and the marginalization of those students who do not find themselves on what is implicitly or explicitly represented as the right side of the line. Atheists, Catholics, and Jews were also excluded from tolerance in the past because their beliefs and practices fell outside differences that could be tolerated, whereas today it is primarily Islam in Europe that is being targeted. The dividing line between tolerance and intolerance becomes very thin.

3.5. Strong Tolerance and Religiously Inspired Violence

The power of attraction and persuasion that the call for strong tolerance still retains needs, in my view, to be sought in the presupposed connection between religion and violence and the belief that education can heal religion (or, better, believers) of its/their potential for violence. Certainly, '9/11' and the more recent terrorist attacks in Europe and elsewhere in the world have once again reinforced the image of religion as the main cause of violence. In the documents published by the CoE and OSCE too, pleas for strong tolerance refer time and again to these devastating events.

As mentioned before the idea that religion is an ambiguous phenomenon stems from the so-called religious wars. '9/11' has basically reawakened this idea and the related political conviction that religion needs to be domesticated, now by means of active tolerance. Recent historical research points out, however, that this view is too simplistic and that the religious wars of that time cannot be reduced to a *religious* conflict between Protestants and Catholics. Religion certainly did play a role in this conflict, but the idea that Protestants and Catholics killed each other purely for doctrinal issues is a myth that legitimates certain political choices, such as the privatization of religion, and also leads to a continuing imputation of religion in general and a political-pedagogical case for the domestication of religion. This is a point that both William Cavanaugh [29] and Karen Armstrong [30] make. Armstrong points out that "while there is no doubt that the participants certainly experienced these wars as a life-and-death religious struggle, this was also a conflict between two sets of state-builders: the princes of Germany and the other kings of Europe were battling against the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, and his ambition to establish a trans-European hegemony modelled after the Ottoman empire" [30]. If these so-called "religious wars" only concerned intra-confessional differences, then Protestants and Catholics would have been in completely different camps. However, that was not the case. Alliances changed as certain territorial or economic or political interests changed, and "Catholic France ... fought the Catholic Habsburgs, who were regularly supported by some of the Protestant princes." During these wars, "combatants crossed confessional lines so often that it was impossible to talk about solidly "Catholic" or "Protestant" populations" [30]. In his book *The Myth of Religious Violence*, William Cavanaugh also criticized the obviousness with which it is stated that religion leads to violence. He argues that it not that obvious at all "to separate a category called religion with a peculiar tendency toward violence from a putatively secular reality that is less prone to violence" [29] (p. 54).

Furthermore, the idea that religion leads to violence implies an opposition between religious and secular ideologies, whereby the latter are led by rationality and only resort to violence when it is justified and calculated. This view focuses attention in a one-sided way on religion as the problem and shoves secularization (and the privatization of religion) to the foreground as the solution to the problem. If all religions conform to the model of the individualized, privatized, and depoliticized modern form of religion, then there would be no more violence. It is forgotten that people have committed the greatest atrocities—one could think here of Nazism, Communism, capitalism, as well as on the way in which the political model of modern secularism in some countries is imported with violence and imposed with subsequent explosions of reactionary violence.

In addition, when religion is used as a scapegoat, other factors that also contribute to violent conflicts are ignored. People do not become entangled in violence because of only one thing; there is usually a complex nexus of factors that lead to violence, and religious disagreements are only one of those factors. Even when people or certain groups give their violence a religious framework themselves, a wider context needs to be sought. Going beyond abstract discussions on religion and violence, one of the tasks of inter-worldview education is, in my view, to look at very concrete cases and, using a complex analysis, to investigate what factors play a role in the outbreak of violent conflicts. Here I am also thinking particularly of socioeconomic and political factors. In this analysis of concrete conflicts—local or global—the question also needs to be asked as to who benefits from a certain social conflict being *framed* in terms of religion instead of, for example, those of economic inequality, discrimination, geopolitical power relationships, etc., and asking what other strategies there are to extinguish these or any conflicts and what role religion and dialogue can play in this.

4. Conclusions

At first glance, the turn to religion on a European level seems to be a development that interreligious educators, like myself, can only celebrate. If religion received hardly any attention for years, and certainly not in combination with education, that seems now to have changed. Religion, or more broadly, worldview, is back on stage, and it is not only acknowledged to be an important cultural factor in European society but is also being given an important place in the education of

young people. The fact that strong tolerance or inter-worldview dialogue are now being seriously promoted should be like music to the ears of interreligious educators. Nevertheless, I think there are good reasons to exercise caution with respect to the European call for education in tolerance.

European policy bodies seem to see education primarily as a vehicle to counter the problem of misunderstanding, prejudice, and lack of appreciation, to teach students the value of tolerance, and thus also to safeguard the basic principles of liberal democracy. In that way, contributions can be made to the realization of an inclusive society where everyone is not only welcome but also recognized as an equal, regardless of his or her background, and exclusion on the basis of belief is not tolerated [31] (p. 269), [32] (p. 48).

European policy makers are right to focus on the function of education in passing on the shared norms, values, and structures on which liberal democratic society is based. My concern is that the socializing role of education will overshadow its critical potential. The final product of education in general and of inter-worldview education in particular is, in my view, not to socialize students but to teach them to engage in hermeneutical reflection and to ask critical questions of certain prevailing social presuppositions and power relationships. Only then can education realize its transforming potential and not simply reinforce the social status quo. However, until now I have not seen this critical function of inter-worldview learning treated in the European documents. That has to do with the fact that there is very little meta-reflection in these documents on the deeper ideological presuppositions that give direction to the call for strong tolerance. I have argued that calls for inter-worldview education cannot be seen apart from a broader sociopolitical context in which they function and gain traction. That wider context is not value-free or neutral but is already characterized by specific, often implicit age-old habits of mind concerning the nature of religion, the relation of religion to violence, and the place of religion in secular society as well as the distinction between good and bad religion. If these deeply rooted habits of mind remains unexamined, the risk arises that dialogical education will not make good on its liberating and transforming potential and that certain inequalities will remain.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

References and Notes

1. Bertram-Troost, G.D.; de Roos, S.A.; Miedema, S. Religious identity development of adolescents in religious affiliated schools. A theoretical foundation for empirical research. *J. Beliefs Values* **2006**, *27*, 303–314. [CrossRef]
2. Wielzen, D.; ter Avest, I. *Interfaith Education for All: Theoretical Perspectives and Best Practices for Transformative Action*; Sense Publishers: Boston, MA, USA, 2017.
3. How this inter-worldview learning can be given shape depends on the national and local context in which it can be implemented. This will be very different in France (the culture of *laïcité*) than in pillarized countries, like the Netherlands and Belgium, and again different in Spain, to mention only one other country. In particular, (religious) educators and interreligious scholars are being asked to work out the outline of an policy of active diversity, so that intolerance can give way to tolerance.
4. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Toledo Guiding Principles on Teachings on Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools. Available online: https://www.osce.org/odihr/29154?download=true (accessed on 7 July 2018).
5. Jackson, R. *Signposts: Policy and Practice for Teaching about Religions and Non-Religious Worldviews in Intercultural Education*; Council of Europe Publishing: Strasbourg, France, 2014.
6. Bîrzéa, C. The education policy perspective. In *Religious Diversity and Intercultural Education: A Reference Book for Schools*; Council of Europe Publishing: Strasbourg, France, 2007.
7. Council of Europe. *Religious Diversity and Intercultural Education: A Reference Book for Schools*; Council of Europe Publishing: Strasbourg, France, 2007.

8. Council of Europe. *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue: Living Together as Equals in Dignity*; Council of Europe Publishing: Strasbourg, France, 2008.
9. Council of Europe. Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)12 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the Dimension of Religions and Non-Religious Convictions within Intercultural Education. Available online: https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&id=1386911&Site=CM&direct=truen (accessed on 7 July 2018).
10. The REDCo project, Religion, Education, Dialogue and Conflict: A contribution to Dialogue or a factor of Conflict in transforming societies of European Countries, (Funded under FP6-CITIZENS). Religious educators from eight different countries worked on this project: Norway, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Estonia, Russia, England, and Spain. In empirical research they measure the willingness for dialogue, in particular that of students aged 15–18 years, and they developed theories of inter-worldview learning and practical applications for promoting tolerance and dialogue skills.
11. Milot, M. The religious dimension in intercultural education. In *Religious Diversity and Intercultural Education: A Reference Book for Schools*; Council of Europe Publishing: Strasbourg, France, 2007; pp. 19–30.
12. Weisse, W. Religious pluralization and secularization in Continental Europe, with a focus on France and Germany. *Society* **2016**, *53*, 32–40. [CrossRef]
13. Foody, K. Pedagogical projects: Teaching liberal religion after 9/11. *Muslim World* **2016**, *106*, 719–739. [CrossRef]
14. Leirvik, O. *Interreligious Studies: A Relational Approach to Religious Activism and the Study of Religion*; Bloomsbury Academic: London, UK, 2014; pp. 33–52.
15. Van den Brink, M. Equals in faith–faith in equality. In *Religious Pluralism and Human Rights in Europe: Where to Draw the Line? Loenen, M.L.P., Goldsmith, J.E., Eds.*; Intersentia: Antwerpen, Belgium, 2007; pp. 211–218.
16. Ricoeur, P. The erosion of tolerance. In *Tolerance between Intolerance and the Intolerable*; Berghahn Books: Oxford, UK, 1996; pp. 189–202.
17. Jackson, R.; Miedema, S.; Weisse, W.; Willaime, J.-P. (Eds.) *Religion and Education in Europe: Developments, Contexts and Debates*; Waxmann: Munster, Germany, 2007.
18. Riitaoja, A.-L.; Poulter, S.; Kuusisto, A. Worldviews and multicultural education in the Finnish context—A critical philosophical approach to theory and practices. *Finn. J. Ethn. Migr.* **2010**, *5*, 87–95.
19. Wekker, G. *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race*; Duke University Press: Durham, Germay; London, UK, 2016.
20. Weller, P. Balancing within Three Dimensions. Available online: http://derby.openrepository.com/derby/handle/10545/622605 (accessed on 18 September 2018).
21. Arthur, J. Intercultural versus interreligious dialogue in a pluralist Europe. *Policy Future Educ.* **2011**, *9*, 74–79. [CrossRef]
22. McIntosh, P. White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack. Available online: http://code.ucsd.edu/pcosman/Backpack.pdf (accessed on 7 July 2018).
23. Schlosser, L. Christian privilege: Breaking a sacred taboo. *J. Multicult. Couns. Dev.* **2003**, *31*, 44–51. [CrossRef]
24. Larson, M.H.; Shady, S.L. Confronting the complexities of Christian privilege through interfaith dialogue. *J. Coll. Character* **2012**, *13*, 2–8.
25. Asad, T. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*; Stanford University Press: Stanford, CA, USA, 2003.
26. Arweck, E.; Keenan, W. (Eds.) *Materializing Religion: Expression, Performance and Ritual*; Ashgate: Aldershot, UK, 2006.
27. De Wit, T. Between indifference and the regimes of truth. An essay on fundamentalism, tolerance and hypocrisy. *Philosophia* **2016**, *44*, 689–704. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
28. Brown, W. *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire*; Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, USA; Oxford, UK, 2006.
29. Kavanaugh, W. *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict*; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2009.
30. Armstrong, K. The Myth of Religious Violence. Available online: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/25/-sp-karen-armstrong-religious-violence-myth-secular (accessed on 7 July 2018).

31. Davison, J.; Franz, D. Religious pluralism and civil society. In *A Nation of Religions: The Politics of Pluralism in Multireligious America*; Prothero, S., Ed.; University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, NC, USA, 2006; pp. 256–273.
32. Byrne, C. Freirean critical pedagogy's challenge to interfaith education: What is interfaith? What is education? *Br. J. Relig. Educ.* **2011**, *33*, 47–60. [CrossRef]

education sciences

MDPI

Article

Major Socio–Political Factors that Impact on the Changing Role, Perception and Image of Imams among Dutch–Turkish Muslims

Ömer Faruk Gürlesin

Islam Kennis Centrum, Laan op Zuid 129, 3071 AA Rotterdam, The Netherlands; o.f.gurlesin@umail.leidenuniv.nl

Received: 23 April 2019; Accepted: 19 June 2019; Published: 26 June 2019

Abstract: Public debates in the Netherlands assume there is an inherent tension between the traditional task of the imam and his tasks in the secularized Dutch society. Studies of the effect of age and generation on religiosity report that intense religious changes are taking place among second-generation migrants. But the direction of this change is interpreted differently by scholars. A majority of scholars indicate that second-generation migrants consider themselves more 'Muslim' and are more concerned about the traditional sources of religious authority. Other studies report that there is an ongoing pattern of secularization among Muslims in Europe and that second-generation migrants consider themselves less concerned about the traditional and popular sources of religious leadership and authority. In relation to the findings of my PhD study, in this contribution, I elaborate on several factors to shed some light on the possible reasons behind these different findings. These factors are, in turn, the lack of language skills and knowledge of the local culture, the politization of Diyanet's institutional culture, and the secularization of young immigrant identity. While discussing these factors, I evaluated their role in the formation of the public image of imams. The results indicate that the image of the imam in Dutch–Turkish Muslim communities is not uniform. On the one hand, there are the educated interviewees and spiritually oriented respondents, who generally criticize the ignorance of most imams and the irrelevance of their sermons to young Muslims in Europe. On the other hand, there are the less educated respondents and the respondents who strongly experience popular religiosity, who do not question the authority of imams. The image of the imam in the minds of the majority of Dutch–Turkish Muslims is positive and retains its authority.

Keywords: image of imams; secularization; plurality; spiritual religiosity; popular religiosity; radicalization

1. Introduction

The variety of Muslims living in Europe in terms of regional origin and ethno-national identity plays an important role in the make-up of Islamic religiosity in Europe, because the Islamic orientation in the countries of origin is still influential on Muslim immigrants, especially when it comes to Turks [1,2]. This justifies examining the diversity of Islam within a single group, such as Pakistani, Moroccan or Turkish Muslims. The focus on a single religion, however, brings the risk of constructing Muslims as a coherent group while ignoring the inner-Islamic differences and the characteristics that some Muslims share with other individuals and groups [1]. There exist various sources of religious diversity within a single ethno–national Muslim community, and Turkish society today experiences various types of religiosity as well [3–5]. Therefore, the inner-Islamic differences to which I draw attention in my PhD study are of great importance in understanding and explaining the behaviors and everyday experiences of the Muslim communities in the Netherlands [1]. Taking these inner-Islamic

differences into account, this study is concerned with investigating how the image of imams is shaped in the minds of Dutch–Turkish Muslims in relation to spiritual (elite) religiosity and popular religiosity.

Public debates in the Netherlands assume there is an inherent tension between the traditional task of the imam and his tasks in the secularized Dutch society. According to some scholars, mosque imams in the 1980s and 1990s had a much larger influence in the diaspora than in their home countries, because of the multiple functions that the mosque fulfilled in the diaspora [6,7]. Imams were in close contact with the public when performing their duties, which positively affected the public image of the imam. Today, however, second- and third-generation migrants tend to understand the language of their country of residence better than the mother tongue of their parents or grandparents, which has implications for the success of these imams in the Netherlands [6].

Studies of the effect of age and generation on religiosity report that intense religious changes are taking place among second-generation migrants [8–15]. But the direction of this change is interpreted differently by scholars. A majority of scholars indicate that second-generation migrants from North African or Turkish migrant families consider themselves more 'Muslim' when compared to their elders. The second generation is more religious, in the sense that it is more strict in its observance of the rules of Islam and its search for an authentic or 'pure' Islam, i.e., an Islam based on its normative sources that is more concerned with traditional sources of authority [1,2,5–10]. However, a different analysis shows that there is an ongoing pattern of secularization among Muslims in Europe: the longer Muslim migrants stay in Europe, the higher their level of education, and the more they participate in the labor market, the less concerned they become about traditional and popular sources of religious leadership and authority [1,16–19].

This paper examines theoretical and practical questions about the evolving role of the Turkish imam in the Netherlands. I will evaluate possible factors that shed light on different findings related to the results of my PhD study.

2. Methodology

This article was written based on the results of my five-year (2013–2018) research project on Dutch–Turkish Muslims [1], in which I used both qualitative and quantitative research techniques.

The main objective of my PhD study was to contribute to the available knowledge about the characteristics of spiritual (elite) religiosity and popular religiosity as practiced by Dutch–Turkish Muslims who live in the Dutch plural society. The main objective of this article, however, is to contribute to the available knowledge about the most important socio-psychological factors that affect the formation of the image of the imam within the same community. The following research questions were asked in this article: 'how is the image of the imam shaped in the minds of Dutch–Turkish Muslims in relation to spiritual (elite) religiosity and popular religiosity' and 'what are the most important socio–psychological factors that affect the formation of this image'.

In order to answer this question, I used some of the qualitative and quantitative data from my PhD research that is directly related to the main theme of this paper. Quantitative data were collected in two ways: by means of a paper survey and through a modern web-based approach. The paper surveys were distributed in various Turkish Islamic centers, mosques, Islamic schools, Islamic organizations and secular societies such as coffeehouses, sport clubs, and a number of other cultural organizations. The larger part of the data (60%) was collected by using a modern web-based approach, Google Docs. This Google Docs-designed survey was embedded in an email and sent to addresses that were randomly collected through social network sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. Some websites that are often visited by Turkish citizens embedded the survey link in their forum page at our request [20]. We also sent thousands of messages to the collected Facebook addresses, on a random basis. 1165 Turkish Muslim participants took part in the survey. There were 649 male and 516 female participants, varying in age between 18–68 years. The data from the completed questionnaires were entered and analyzed in the SPSS 23.0 program (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

Qualitative data were collected in two ways: by means of participant observation and through informal interviews. Participant observation involves collecting social data in their natural social setting, through which researchers have access to the meaning of events and social interactions as understood by the group or organization under study. In the qualitative part of my PhD study, I usually took on the role of a 'complete participant' (in virtue of my background) and of a 'participant-as-observer', in order to gain access to a larger group of participants with their social connections. During my research project on Dutch–Turkish Muslims in the Netherlands, I set myself the goal of visiting Dutch–Turkish mosques that displayed different ideological patterns. I attended conferences, Friday prayers, and sometimes joined a kermis [21]. During the research phase, I took on several volunteer tasks in Turkish organizations and institutions. These volunteer tasks made it possible for me to collect data while I was working within the communities themselves. Briefly summarized, as a volunteer I was expected to teach the basic values of Turkish culture and the concepts of Islamic faith. I used informal conversational interviews to gather general information about cultural and religious issues and participants' expectations of these institutions, interviewing both educators and imams. These insider positions provided me with excellent opportunities for in-depth interaction with various sections of the Turkish community in the Netherlands, in order to understand the meaning that Dutch–Turkish citizens ascribe to culture and religion, and the processes that are at work in the formation of the imam image of these citizens in the context of a multicultural society. In addition, these informal conversational interviews were very useful for setting up the theoretical framework of my PhD study, and for developing hypotheses and survey items during the development of the research questionnaire. During my field research, I conducted 15 informal interviews with imams (9/15) and administrative staff (6/15) in five mosques in The Hague (2), Rotterdam, Utrecht and Leiden, and 66 informal interviews with parents and their children through paper-based survey (these interviewees attended Diyanet mosques in The Hague and Leiden, and a private Qur'ān course in The Hague).

3. Results

This section contains only the findings of my PhD study that closely relate to the subject of this article. Of the 1165 respondents, 272 (23.3%) were excluded, because due to their low religious commitment—they were unable to contribute to my PhD research on the forms of—and motivations behind—different aspects of high religiosity. My analysis was therefore focused on the remaining 893 respondents (76.7% of the initial sample (1165)) who display strong religious affiliation. Of the 893 (76.7%) respondents with a strong religious affiliation, 203 (22.7%) turned out to consistently experience spiritual (elite) religiosity, while 545 (61%) consistently experienced popular religiosity. This result shows that Turkish Muslims living in the Netherlands predominantly experienced popular religiosity.

Factor analyses and correlation analyses performed on my PhD study's spiritual and popular religiosity scale revealed that participants who experienced spiritual religiosity tended to stress doubt and dynamism. They tended to stress the intrinsic value of rituals (i.e., focus on quality). In addition, they underlined the importance of doubt about the validity of their current religious knowledge, and the dynamism of religious learning. Participants who experienced popular religiosity tended to stress the sureness and the stability of their current beliefs. They stressed the extrinsic value of rituals (i.e., focus on quantity) and expressed material expectations. In addition, they tended to be sure of their current religious knowledge, and placed intellectual stability at the center. I also found a negative correlation between spiritual religiosity and popular religiosity ($r = -0.72$). This result suggests that increase in one aspect of religiosity is correlated with decreases in other aspects of religiosity.

In my PhD study, the respondents were asked how much religious education (RE) that is provided in mosques influenced their religious development. I found that spiritual religiosity was not significantly correlated with RE provided in mosques, while popular religiosity was positively correlated with mosques ($r = 0.24$).

Six variables in the PhD study were chosen to measure the intellectual aspect of religiosity. One of the variables (v70) particularly addressed the confidence of interviewees in the intellectual capacities of their imams. This variable was formulated as follows: 'when I find answers to my religious questions through imams, I do not doubt their correctness'. The respondents were asked to answer on a five-point Likert scale (5 referred to 'fully agree' and 1 to 'fully disagree'). There was a significant difference in the scores for popular religiosity (M = 3.8, SD = 0.96) and spiritual religiosity (M = 2.0, SD = 0.97) conditions; t (746) = 22.28, p = 0.000. These results suggest that the type of religiosity that Dutch–Turkish Muslims experience does have an effect on their image of the intellectual capacities of imams. Specifically, our results suggest that when people experience spiritual religiosity, they trust imams less compared to those who experience popular religiosity.

A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the intellectual image of imams held by the interviewees, and three other variables. There turned out to be a positive correlation between popular religiosity and the intellectual image of imams, r = 0.365, n = 545, p = 0.000; and a negative correlation between spiritual religiosity and the intellectual image of imams, r = −0.211, n = 203, p = 0.003. In addition, there was a negative correlation between educational status and the intellectual image of imams, r = −0.173, n = 893, p = 0.000. Overall, increase in popular religiosity was correlated with a positive image of the intellectual capacities of imams. Furthermore, there was a strong negative correlation between the intellectual image of the imam and two other variables, i.e., increase in spiritual religiosity and educational status, both of which were correlated with decreases in a positive image of the intellectual capacities of imams.

In regard to the field work of my PhD study, it is worthwhile to inform the reader about the qualitative data I collected, and the characteristics I observed, of imams in relation to their language skills and knowledge of Dutch culture. The various Turkish–Islamic communities in the Netherlands—who all have their own mosques and own imams—specifically selected imams with an identical socio-religious background in Turkey. The majority of these imams were not competent in many regards even though they received higher education: they could recite the Qur'ān in phonetic Arabic, but did not understand the language; they knew little more about Islamic law than the basic elements, which they had not been taught to interpret.

Imams were expected to provide RE for pupils during weekend classes. One of my field observations in Qur'ān weekend schools took place in one of the four Diyanet mosques in The Hague. The ages of the pupils who took part in these Qur'ān classes ranged from 13 to 18. There was no school class system and children of different ages sat together in a single room. The instruction during the lessons consisted first and foremost in the memorization of the Arabic alphabet using elifbâ cüzü, followed by reading Qur'anic sections of Amme cüzü, i.e., from Surah 78 to the end of the Qur'ān. These were the popular Diyanet teaching tools. The main goal of these lessons was to teach the pupils to read the Qur'ān aloud in fluent Arabic, and to instruct them in the memorization of short sections of the Qur'ān, without pondering on the meaning of the passages (ayah) or sections (surah). In other words, the focus was on exoteric knowledge of Islam. The majority of the imams (5 out of 9) did not attend weekend RE classes themselves. When I interviewed them, the majority of them openly spoke of their lack of language skills and knowledge of the local culture, and asked me whether I (as a Muslim RE teacher) could help them with their weekend classes in view of their difficulties to communicate with the pupils.

In addition, the books these imams and educators read during weekend classes were books on ablution (i.e., books that instruct students on how to perform the requirements for prayer such as the *ghusl* (the full-body ritual purification) and the *wudu* (washing parts of the body)). This literature was therefore mainly focused on the legal (*fıqh*) aspects of praying. Many of these books are published by the Presidency of Religious Affairs (the Turkish branch of Diyanet) with a view to children that grow up in Turkey—books that are reproduced and distributed by the Dutch Islamic Foundation (ISN) without any additions or adjustments for the new context. It was almost impossible to find a Dutch

source that was more relevant to the pupils in class, and that would point them towards the spirit of Islam.

Diyanet's statements about the recruitment of imams are largely in line with these characteristics. Diyanet does not impose any conditions regarding familiarity with the national language and culture of the host country in which imams will be appointed. According to Diyanet's recruitment exam, imams need to be knowledgeable about *tajweed* (which refers to the rules for pronunciation during the recitation of the Qur'ān), exegetics, *fiqh* (Islamic law), *hadith* (records of Muhammad's words and actions), and Islamic history [22].

4. Discussion

My PhD study suggests a number of demographic and socio-economic factors to explain the formation of the image of the imam, and the changing authority of imams among Turkish Muslims who live in the Dutch plural society. I will present a few of these as figuring in the framework of information I obtained in the field during my research project. These factors are: (1) a lack of language skills and knowledge of the local culture; (2) the politisation of Diyanet's (Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs) institutional culture; and (3) the secularisation of young immigrant identity. While discussing these factors, I evaluate their role in the formation of the image of imams.

4.1. Lack of Language Skills and Knowledge of the Local Culture

An initial relevant category of research for the current and future status of imams in Europe—one that is connected to the issue how this status affects their image among Dutch–Turkish Muslims—concerns imams' lack of language skills and knowledge of the Dutch culture, as I outlined above. During the interviews, the majority of imams spoke openly of their lack of language skills and knowledge of the local culture, and the main problems caused by this knowledge deficit. As I addressed above, Turkish–Islamic communities do not impose any conditions regarding familiarity with the language and culture of the host country. Some scholars suggest that this problem stems from the desire of Turkish institutions to maintain their ideological structures in the host country [23,24]. It should be noted that when Islamic educational groups started to organize themselves in the Netherlands in the 1970s, this happened under the same impulse as in Turkey, where the Qur'ān schools undertook pioneering work in formal and informal RE for the Muslim community.

As Yükleyen reports, the relations between the various Turkish Islamic communities—such as Milli Görüş, the Nur Movement, Süleymancı, Diyanet, and others—are largely based on competition. This has led to confrontations when organizational interests—such as various ideologies and different interpretations of Islam-clash [25]. Differences in imam training and the failure to establish a representative body for Muslims are symptoms of this ongoing clash of interests.

The questions that arise in Dutch public debates revolve around two central issues: the transmission of Islam to young people living in European secular societies and, on a more abstract level, the criteria that 'appropriate' leaders of European Muslim communities must meet. Can they act as intermediaries between European and Islamic societies? Do they have sufficient knowledge of the host country to counsel young people? To what extent do the countries of origin exert political and ideological influence on Muslims in the host countries through these key figures? How can these imams function in the host society if they do not speak Dutch? How do they interpret the norms and values of their host societies? Should they not receive their training in the host country rather than in their country of origin [26,27]? These pressing questions and the changing political climate stimulate the development of an educational program for imam training in the Netherlands [28], which has gone through a very complex process of discussion and negotiation over the past three decades [23]. The issue remains highly relevant today [29].

The lack of Dutch language skills and knowledge of Dutch culture among imams was perceived as a major obstacle to the integration of Muslims. With regard to second-generation radicalization, Tillie [30], Kepel [31] and Roy [32] indicate that many young people reject a large part of their parents'

(and their imams') understanding of Islam as irrelevant local culture, and that their search for a 'pure' Islam without culture almost inevitably draws them towards Salafism (cf. [33]).

In response, the Dutch government set up pilot programs in Islamic theology in 2005 [34]. In 2007, the government funded imam training initiatives, arguing that training for imams in the Netherlands can make an important contribution to the integration of young migrants in particular, and help them to defend themselves against radicalization [26]. It was also suggested that imams trained in the Netherlands would be better acquainted with the Dutch situation [35]. They could act as a bridge between the Muslim communities and the rest of Dutch society and thus contribute to the integration of Muslim migrants [36]. In light of this, the Dutch government set itself the goal of developing a socio–cultural policy that included religion and 'life principles' [37].

Over the past decades, the Dutch Diyanet Foundation (Islamitische Stichting Nederland, ISN, this is the Dutch branch of Diyanet) succeeded in becoming the largest mosque organisation in the Netherlands, controlling 146 of the 220 Dutch–Turkish mosques [38,39]. However, the official representatives of Turkish Islam in Europe—Diyanet among them—refrained from participating as partners in the educational project set up by the Dutch government. Diyanet interviewees of my study report that this unwillingness is due to reservations about the adequacy of the Dutch state curriculum and the competence of the teachers who would give the lessons [23]. The training of imams in Europe and the recruitment of candidates among Muslims living in Europe have not been Diyanet's priorities in recent years. Instead, Diyanet draws from a vast pool of candidates trained in Turkish high schools for imams (*imam hatip lisesi*) and from preachers and students at their theological faculties. However, the increasing criticism of this policy by European politicians and European Muslims prompted Diyanet to take up this issue and to enter into negotiations on setting up imam training facilities in Europe [39]. Diyanet eventually chose to develop its own project, whereby Muslim students who graduated from the Imam Hatip School in the Netherlands [40] would move to Turkey to study at Turkish theology faculties under Turkish scholars. In this way, young Muslims who had been predominantly immersed in the Dutch language and culture, could learn the Islamic sciences directly from Muslim scholars and become the new generation of imams in Europe. Under this policy, the Imam Hatip School—supported by Diyanet—began to work in 2013 under the umbrella of Ibn Ghaldoun, an Islamic school for VMBO, HAVO and VWO [41] students in Rotterdam [42].

The project of the Dutch government ended due to high costs and low participation of Muslim students [29]. In addition, the Dutch Ministry of Education terminated Diyanet's project [43] because of a scandal (implying stolen final exams) that broke out at the time [44], resulting in the closure of the Ibn Ghaldoun school [45]. Because of these developments, the lack of language skills and knowledge of the local culture seems to remain a complex problem for imams in the Netherlands.

4.2. The Politisation of Diyanet's Institutional Culture

A second relevant avenue of research for the current and future status of imams in Europe concerns the status of transnational Turkish Muslim organizations. Here, I will focus on the role played by Diyanet because of this organization's immense influence in Europe. However, it is worth addressing first a report that was published in 2012 by the Dutch Social Cultural Planning Bureau (SCP, a scientific institute that conducts social scientific research and reports to the Dutch government). The SCP observed that Dutch–Turkish citizens score low on 'integration' compared to other groups; they have less contact with the Dutch majority society. According to the SCP, this low integration score could be linked to a number of factors. One of the possible factors is the strong attachment to religious organizations within the Turkish community [46]. The data coming from my field study confirms the findings of SCP. My findings show that Dutch–Turkish Muslims predominantly experience popular religiosity, and that participants who experience popular religiosity display more conservative in-group attitudes than participants who experience spiritual religiosity [1].

The real power in the mosque is not in the hands of the imam but of the organizing committee, the executive board of the association. The imam is supposed to have more specialized knowledge

than the board members, but it is they who call the shots—as becomes clear in the event of a conflict, when it is the imam who has to go [6] (p. 8). The religious guidance provided by Diyanet is a balancing act between people's religious traditions, the demands/challenges of living in a plural and secularized Western society, and the restrictions imposed by the Turkish state [41]. This balance sometimes swings in favor of the people and sometimes in favor of the Turkish state [47,48]. The latter seems to be more the case today because of the current political situation in Turkey [49].

Turkey is a laik [50] country. This suggests that the state and the country's religious institutions do not hinder each other's activities. However, investigations of religious groups and institutions in Turkish civil society suggest that religion does not function as an autonomous sphere outside the state's control. To give an example: the state has not been neutral in its relationship with minority religions, as shown by the case of the Alevis [51]. This is why Turkish secularism is often labelled as incomplete—i.e., as an explicit form of secularism where it is the state that controls religion [52] (p. 224) [53] (p. 15), or as a deviation from the original model of French laïcité. In the Turkish case, laïcité rather means 'the subordination of Islam to state objectives, and active management of religious institutions and affairs by the state' [54] (p. 234). A decisive step in controlling Islam was the foundation of the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Reisliği [now Başkanlığı]) in 1924 [55]. The Presidency coordinates religious learning and training inside Turkey and in 'the diaspora communities', prepares the Friday sermons, and enforces the state-sanctioned conduct of all its employees.

This being said, it must be acknowledged that the importance of religious topics in public discourse has changed time and again since the foundation of the Turkish Republic, and that state pressure on or state support for religion—or religious communities and religious currents—has gone through different phases. It is an unquestionable fact that the former balance between, and co-existence of, (1) scholastic ('orthodox') Islam; (2) popular Islamic beliefs and practices; and (3) mystical and spiritual Islam (Sufism) has been destroyed by the implementation of a model of Sunni Islam that envisions state-controlled institutions as the only legal framework for religious activities, while simultaneously banning and demonizing independent activities or communities, especially those inclined towards mysticism [56] (p. 3).

In recent years, Diyanet has increased its influence in Europe through its mosques, and has begun to play a more active and effective role in assisting state politics and developing activities that would make it more deeply embedded in everyday life [40] (p. 209). Gürlesin explores how Diyanet's religious discourse influences Turkish imams who work in the Netherlands. He asks, 'how is the content of the sermons affected by changes in Diyanet's policy?' [57] As pointed out above, the real power in the mosque is not in the hands of the imam but of the organizing committee. The Friday sermons are not written by the mosque imam, but published a few days in advance on the Diyanet site of the committee. Religious officials download this sermon from the internet and read it during the Friday prayer. If they deviate from this procedure, they face the risk of dismissal [58]. One manifestation of Diyanet's nationalized voice occurred during Operation Olive Branch [59]. The Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs instructed more than 90.000 mosques in Turkey to recite chapter 48 of the Qur'ān—a chapter on conquest (*Al-Fath*)—and invited mosque communities to pray for the troops during the Turkish military operation in Syria. The accompanying Friday sermon, calling for *jihad* and martyrdom, was preached in at least one Turkish mosque in the Netherlands [60]. With this dictated sermon, the Turkish government wanted to give religious support to its controversial attack on Kurds in Syrian Afrin. In the Netherlands this sermon was read in the mosque in Hoorn:

> Our soldiers show the whole world that we unquestioningly sacrifice everything to protect our faith, flag and country. (. . .) Every son of our country who, in the power of his life, drinks the sweet nectar of martyrdom, shouts this to us. (. . .) He who dies in the way of Allah, never call him dead, but call him alive. (. . .)

Dramatic changes after the failed coup attempt on 15 July 2016—directed against Turkish state institutions—seem to be profoundly affecting Diyanet's narrative both in Turkey and in Europe. Just one decade ago, concepts like cohesion and integration and positive interaction between adherents

of different religions and/or spiritual or humanistic beliefs were being used to describe the relationship between Turkey and Europe. But in 2016, circumstances changed completely and so-called 'Turkishness', anti-western resentment and a strong attachment to Turkey's sovereignty once again became strong motivations. These changes give way to the voice of *Turkish civil religion*, which refers to the sacralization of the state through Islamic symbols. The way basic Islamic concepts are being interpreted in Turkey nowadays is strongly influenced by these changing circumstances. In times when peace and reconciliation are pursued, the concept of *jihad* is interpreted as the struggle against the animalistic forces within oneself, while in politically tense times—when conflict is pursued—the same concept is interpreted as the struggle against 'infidels' (*kufr*), and being linked to concepts of sacrifice and martyrdom, as becomes clearly visible in the above example [57].

Consequently, in the short term it is pretty unlikely that Diyanet, or the imams appointed by Diyanet, will stimulate inclusive and holistic principles of religion that create space for spiritual insights (the search for meaning, inner emotional satisfaction). Currently, social and political activism prevails over spiritual considerations in Turkey and in Europe; in such cases, religion is no longer just religious. The meanings that are being produced are not just focused on the spiritual life or the life within the religious community anymore, but also include political, nationalistic and ethnic interests that serve the in-group, as tools for the in-group to reassure itself of its identity and to separate itself from out-groups [61]. From the perspective of a cultural psychology framework it is crucial to recognize that without differences and ambiguities, meaning-making processes are not possible. In some cases, symbolic boundaries transform (a) from differences into inequalities; and (b) from inequalities into intolerance [62,63]. In extreme cases, when the symbolic boundaries become more rigid, the 'others' ('they', 'those people') become socially perceived as (c) enemies that should be eliminated [57]. In this context, the voice of Yūnus Emre who eagerly expressed the unity of differences is being consistently ignored, while the voice of Molla Kasım, who emphasized the destruction of differences, is attributed greater value [64]. In such conditions, the struggle for power overshadows the quest for meaning.

This ethnoreligious voice of Diyanet also has an effect on its authority in general, and on the image of imams in particular. The politization of the language used by Diyanet might have different effects on Muslims in the short run. Under the influence of this voice, some young Muslims who strongly experience popular religiosity could place their trust in imams without questioning the correctness of their imams' interpretations and *fatwas* (legal opinions), prompting them to exhibit radical tendencies [65]. In an atmosphere where conflicts arise and existential security is threatened, popular religiosity can acquire a fundamentalist character, of which one element is a strong sense of belonging to a group. Another group of minorities, particularly those who experience spiritual religiosity, might widely lose their trust in imams and the institutionalized forms of religiosity. This creates a space for a new, de-institutionalized form of religiosity, and young Muslims might gradually turn to alternative religious sources separate from the mainstream, which might be new spiritual or Salafi religious movements.

4.3. The Secularisation of Young Immigrant Identity

In the above two sections, I discussed the status of imams in the Netherlands by focusing on the imams themselves and the institution they are dependent on. In this section, I will analyze the status of imams by focusing on the status of the young Muslim generation living in Europe.

Islam in the EU countries displays a range of differences which are linked to the countries of origin. The findings of my PhD research project, which largely revolve around a Dutch–Turkish sample, are to a certain extent in line with the findings referred to above, which report the secularization of the second generation (cf. [58]). However, in my PhD study, the phenomenon of secularization does not signify moving away from religion, but moving away from traditional and popular aspects of religious authority. Secularization among Dutch–Turkish Muslims largely relates to deinstitutionalization, and trends in personal piety and the new forms of 'spiritual' religiosity. Religious individualization is one of the important components of the secularization process. According to the individualization

thesis, young people go in search of their own meaning given to, and interpretation of, their faith—they do not unquestioningly follow what the imam or their parents instruct them. My own PhD study also shows that 203 (22.7%) respondents who experience spiritual religiosity are not influenced by RE provided by mosques, and prefer to develop their own religiosity and find their own answers, independent from the mosque [1] (p. 185). In such a context the following question arises: what is the image of imams among Dutch–Turkish Muslims who experience spiritual and popular religiosity?

It would be premature to look at these findings and say that the influence of imams will gradually disappear. If we consider other factors, it can be argued that this tendency towards secularization among young people might decrease with increased age and that popular religiosity could become stronger again. Specifically, my findings suggest that there is a positive correlation between age and religiosity [1] (p. 180). Sociologists have specified how religiosity changes depending on age or life-cycle events, such as leaving the parental home or marriage. These are referred to as 'age effects' on religiosity. This approach assumes that the effects of aging on religiosity are constant over time [66]. For example, young adults may currently show little institutional religious involvement, but when they are 40 and married, their involvement in a religious community will increase, and when they are 60 and face death, that involvement will increase even further. Present-day Muslim youth who do not highly experience popular religiosity, could exhibit increased popular religiosity as they get older. Young people are a less socialized population group and are therefore less likely to assume traditional roles, which may reduce their interest in popular aspects of religiosity. Older people, on the other hand, invest more in traditional role patterns, attitudes and beliefs, and are less motivated to re-examine them. These beliefs might make them more receptive to traditional and popular religiosity [67,68].

One of the challenges, therefore, lies in the task to find the appropriate measurement tools that will allow us to comprehend the different characteristics of religiosity among Dutch–Turkish Muslims. What distinguishes spiritual religiosity and popular religiosity in my PhD study, is not a commitment to certain beliefs and practices, but different motivations and cognitive styles. One of the possible reasons behind the different findings about religiosity could stem from the use of monolithic and one-dimensional approaches. Most of the studies which I outlined in the introduction do not measure the difference between various religious orientations, such as spiritual and popular religiosity, but between high and low religiosity. These measurements no longer seem to be sufficient to understand complex characteristics of the religiosity of individuals. There is a growing need to assess the variety of religious orientations.

Therefore, the diminishing authority of imams among young Dutch–Turkish Muslims cannot be understood by looking at just one factor. Focusing solely on the secularisation of young immigrant identity, and the tendency of young people to show little institutional religious involvement, can be an obstacle to evaluating the actual situation of imams in the Netherlands.

4.4. The Future Image of the Imam

After discussing the above-mentioned issues, I will now further evaluate the role of these factors in the shaping of the image of the imam. It appears that the image of the imam in the Dutch–Turkish Muslim communities is not uniform.

On the one hand, there are the educated interviewees and spiritually oriented respondents, who generally criticize the ignorance of most imams and the irrelevance of their *khutbas* (sermons) to young Muslims in Europe. These are Muslims who have, to a certain extent, become dissatisfied with imams whose experiences have no connection with their own—Dutch—lives. In my PhD study, I found that spiritual religiosity is not significantly correlated with RE provided by the mosques, and that individuals who experience spiritual religiosity have less confidence in imams compared to those who experience popular religiosity [1] (pp. 214–226). The demand for better imam education often comes from these circles. These Muslims have begun to nurture their own Islamic self-understanding and feel no need for religious guidance or authority. Above I mentioned that it has been observed that some of the young Muslims prefer to develop their own religiosity and find their own answers, independent of

mosques or religious specialists (cf. [68–72]). All these developments threaten the position of the imam as a religious authority. According to some interviewees, an imam with insufficient knowledge of Dutch is seriously handicapped in his communication with Muslims of the second and third generation [37].

During the field work, I observed that imams working in the Netherlands do not sufficiently address the crucial problems that young people face nowadays in a secular and multicultural society. The only source of information available to these imams for finding solutions to these problems are traditional jurisprudence (*fiqh)* books. Religious solutions (*fatwas*) produced in the socio-psychological contexts of Turkey seem to fail when they are applied in Western societies. One interviewee, Yunus (44), stated that:

> When I have a question on my mind, I prefer to just look for an answer on Google rather than talking to imams. My friends don't want to ask their imams any more questions either, because they already know that they won't have the right answer. Unfortunately, the imams come from Turkey and you can't apply their answers here.

Imams who are aware of this problem try to work on solutions. It is not unheard of that imams are afraid to work as instructors during the informal religion classes held in the mosques during the weekend. The majority of the imams (five out of nine) in my study, as pointed out above, did not attend the weekend RE classes themselves. Officials have been developing an attitude of indifference and 'laziness' towards their work, and have lost the ability to be socially responsive. Something similar took place in the context of state-supported religious monopolies in pre-modern and early modern Europe [73]. A considerable number of Turkish Muslim migrants, consequently, are faced with the challenge of reconciling their religious identity with the Dutch culture in which they grew up [74].

This being said, I found that the majority of Dutch–Turkish youth did not question the adequacy of their imams. Consistent with the qualitative results, the quantitative findings revealed that those who highly experience popular religiosity (61%) were much less likely to question the answers given by the imams, compared to those who highly experience spiritual religiosity (22.7%). The image of the imam in the minds of the majority of Dutch–Turkish Muslims is positive and retains its authority. According to this group of interviewees, the politization of Friday *khutbas* (sermons) is not problematic. According to some, such sermons are even essential for the upbringing of the youngest generation. One interviewee, Ahmet (47), stated that:

> I think it's important that religious officials emphasize both religious and national values in their sermons, and that they educate and raise young people as individuals who are strongly attached to their homeland and their nation.

To give another example: one of the young imams working in the Netherlands, who was trained in Turkey and taught very rigid rules about *ḥalal* and *ḥarām*—right and wrong Muslim behavior—did not make the slightest effort to adapt his teaching to the Dutch context. He still became popular in the mosque community and was successful in changing the behavior of young people. This imam was also popular with the mosque committee, and after his inspiring success with young people he was appointed to one of the central Diyanet mosques as a leading imam.

5. Conclusions

Many religious organizations 'import' imams and *ulamā* (scholars in religious sciences) from Turkey, Egypt, Pakistan and Bangladesh to provide guidance in matters of faith and practice, and to prevent the different generations of Muslim immigrants from ending up in an identity crisis. Based on my PhD research, some young and spiritually oriented Muslims find the RE provided by imams particularly dogmatic and narrow-minded, in terms of the view of Islam held by these officials. According to this group, questions and challenges in the mosque are not tolerated, and a part of the younger generation grows increasingly frustrated at being told, when they question certain aspects of Islam, that 'that is just the way it is'. However, it is too early to conclude that the entire generation

of European Muslim youth, and those who highly experience spiritual religiosity, have turned away from the traditional and popular sources of religious leadership and authority. We must bear in mind that in many European countries, particularly in the Netherlands, we are witnessing the revival of traditional and popular religious forms in addition to the appearance of new religious movements and new religious spiritualities, parallel to the continuation of the secularization process.

Some theories related to the age factor—listed above—must be taken into consideration to understand the future status of the imam among Dutch–Turkish Muslims. Some other factors were briefly presented in the previous sections. These factors are (1) a lack of language skills and knowledge of the local culture; (2) the politization of Diyanet's (Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs) institutional culture; and (3) the secularization of young immigrant identity. Moreover, based on my field research, there are various significant socio-psychological factors that affect the religious tendencies of Muslims. Examples are: educational status, household income, social and cultural capital, the experience of immigration, structural and contextual factors such as the current economic and political crisis, government policies, and experiences with discrimination because of religion. Without seriously considering these factors, it is difficult to understand what kind of religiosity Muslims will experience in the nearby future, and what sort of image of imams they will have and develop.

However, it seems that a considerable number of younger Muslims—who are highly educated and spiritually oriented—are looking for a more sophisticated form of Islam. The three factors listed above play an important role in this new search for meaning. It seems unlikely that the imams appointed by Diyanet, who have a temporary mandate and lack language and cultural skills, will be able to meet the spiritual and intellectual needs of Dutch Muslims. The emphasis that imams place on *Turkish civil religion* in the Dutch context does not provide any resources to tackle the issues and problems that these young Muslims face in their daily lives. What is needed, rather, is a renewal and a reinterpretation of Islam so that it speaks directly to the circumstances of being a Muslim in 21st century Europe. Research on spiritual education can help imams and educators to reconsider their educational orientations and goals, and to apply new approaches that can meet the challenges of today's society. Research on religious and spiritual education can offer valuable practice-oriented insights that improve the development of educational practice. Thus far, there is a lack of such research-based data. In terms of future theoretical development in formal and informal RE methods, I recommend the construction of conceptual bridges between traditional religiosity and spiritual religiosity using the Dialogical Self Theory [75]. If Turkish imams and the Turkish and Dutch authorities do not supply such conceptual bridges and intellectual foundations to Dutch–Turkish Muslims, I believe this would create fertile ground for the existence of pro-violence groups.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

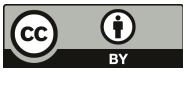
References and Notes

1. Gürlesin, Ö.F. Elite and popular religiosity among Dutch-Turkish Muslims in The Netherlands. Ph.D. Thesis, Leiden University, Leiden, The Netherlands, 28 November 2018.
2. Huijnk, W. *De Religieuze Beleving van Moslims in The Netherlands*; Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau: Den Haag, The Netherlands, 2018.
3. Akşit, B.; Şentürk, R.; Küçükural, Ö.; Cengiz, K. *Türkiye'de Dindarlık: Sosyal Gerilimler Ekseninde Inanç ve Yaşam Biçimleri [Religiosity in Turkey: Faith and Life Styles in the Axis of Social Tensions]*; İletişim Yayınları: İstanbul, Turkey, 2012.
4. Arslan, M. *Türk Popüler Dindarlığı [Turkish Popular Religiousity]*; Dem Yayınları: Istanbul, Turkey, 2004.
5. Kirman, M.A. *Din ve Sekülerleşme: Üniversite Gençlili Üzerine Sosyolojik bir Araştırma [Religion and Secularization: An Sociological Inquiry on University Students]*; Karahan Kitabevi: Aladağ/Adana, Turkey, 2005.
6. Bruinessen, M. Van Producing Islamic knowledge in Western Europe: Discipline, authority, and personal quest. In *Producing Islamic Knowledge/Transmissions and Dissemination in Western Europe*; Van Bruinessen, M., Allievi, S., Eds.; Routledge: Abingdon, UK, 2011; pp. 1–28.

7. Poston, L. *Islamic Dawah in the West Muslim Missionary Activity and the Dynamics of Conversion to Islam*; Oxford University Press: New York, NY, USA, 1992.
8. Roeland, J.; Aupers, S.; Houtman, D.; De Koning, M.; Noomen, I. The Quest for Religious Purity in New Age, Evangelicalism and Islam Religious renditions of Dutch youth and the Luckmann legacy. In *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion*; Brill: Leiden, The Netherlands; Boston, MA, USA, 2010; pp. 289–306.
9. Bartels, E. Dutch Islam: Young people, learning and integration. *Curr. Sociol.* **2000**, *48*, 59–73. [CrossRef]
10. Buijs, F.J.; Demant, F.; Hamdy, A. *Strijders van Eigen Bodem: Radicale en Democratische Moslims in The Netherlands*; Amsterdam University Press: Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2006.
11. Buitelaar, M. *Islam en Het Dagelijks Leven. Religie en Cultuur onder Marokkanen*; Atlas: Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2006.
12. Buijs, F.J. Muslims in The Netherlands: Social and Political Developments after 9/11. *J. Ethn. Migr. Stud.* **2009**, *35*, 421–438. [CrossRef]
13. Korf, D.J.; Bovenkerk, F. *Dubbel de Klos. Slachtofferschap van Criminaliteit onder Etnische Minderheden*; Boom Juridische Uitgeverij: The Hague, The Netherlands, 2007.
14. Azak, U. Islam and Turkish Iimmigrants in The Netherlands. *Turk. Stud. Int. Period. Lang. Lit. Hist. Turk. Turk.* **2008**, *3*, 136–162.
15. Berger, M.S. The Netherlands. In *The Oxford Handbook of European Islam*; Cesari, J., Ed.; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2015; pp. 158–221.
16. Şen, F. Euro-Islam: Some emprical evidences. In *Islam and Muslims in Germany*; Al-Hamarneh, A., Thielmann, J., Eds.; Brill: Leiden, The Netherlands; Boston, MA, USA, 2008.
17. Phalet, K.; Haker, F. *Moslim in The Netherlands. Diversiteit en Verandering in Religieuze Betrokkenheid: Turken en Marokkanen in The Netherlands 1998–2002*; Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau: Den Haag, The Netherlands, 2004.
18. Phalet, K.; van Praag, C. *Moslim in The Netherlands. Een Onderzoek naar de Religieuze Betrokkenheid van Turken en Marokkanen*; Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau: Den Haag, The Netherlands, 2004.
19. Lans, J.M.; Rooijackers, M. Types of religious belief and unbelief among second generation Turkish migrants. In *Islam in Dutch Society: Current Developments and Future Prospects*; Kok Pharos: Kampen, The Netherlands, 1992; pp. 56–66.
20. Een sociologisch Onderzoek naar Religiositeit. Available online: http://forums.hababam.nl/showthread.php?t=156462&s=76324f76fe0cf2ad97e3ce0afd84a0fd (accessed on 12 June 2018).
21. Kermis is a Dutch term derived from 'kerk' (church) and 'mis' (mass) that became a loan word in English. Muslim groups use this word in their activities around the mosque. This example shows that Christian concepts from everyday religiosity in Europe can become the origin term for activities in which Muslims gather for a religious purpose.
22. See Diyanet's Recent Announcement on Exam Requirements for Male/Female Religious Officials Working Abroad (i.e., Outside of TURKEY) for a Longer Time. Document in Turkish. Available online: http://disiliskiler.diyanet.gov.tr/Documents/2018%20Y%C4%B1l%C4%B1%20Yurtd%C4%B1%C5%9F%C4%B1%20Bay-Bayan%20Din%20G%C3%B6revlisi%20S%C4%B1nav%20Duyurusu (accessed on 11 December 2018).
23. Sözeri, S.; Altinyelken, H.; Volman, M. Training Imams in The Netherlands: The Failure of a Post-Secular endeavour. *Br. J. Relig. Educ.* **2018**, 1–11. [CrossRef]
24. Öztürk, A.E.; Sözeri, S. Diyanet as a Turkish Foreign Policy Tool: Evidence from The Netherlands and Bulgaria. *Polit. Relig.* **2018**, *11*, 624–648. [CrossRef]
25. Yükleyen, A.; White, J.B. *The European Market for Islam: Turkish Islamic Communities and Organizations in Germany and The Netherlands*; Syracuse University Press: Syracuse, NY, USA, 2007.
26. Boender, W. Embedding Islam in the 'moral covenants' of European states: The case of a state-funded imam training in The Netherlands. *J. Muslims Eur.* **2013**, *2*, 227–247. [CrossRef]
27. Boender, W.; Kanmaz, M. Imams in The Netherlands and Islam Teachers in Flanders. In *Intercultural Relations and Religious Authorities: Muslims in the European Union*; Van Koningsveld, P.S., Shadid, W.A.R., Eds.; Peeters Publishers: Paris, France, 2002; pp. 169–180.
28. Ghaly, M.M.I. The academic training of imams: Recent discussions and initiatives in The Netherlands. In *The Study of Religion and the Training of Muslim Clergy in Europe: Academic and Religious Freedom in the 21st Century*; Drees, W., Koningsveld, P.S., Eds.; Amsterdam University Press: Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2008; pp. 369–402.

29. Boender, W. Dossier imamopleiding: Het Nederlandse 'imamopleidingsdebat' in historisch perspectief. *Tijdschr. Relig. R. Beleid* **2014**, *5*, 26–48. [CrossRef]
30. Roex, I.; van Stiphout, S.; Tillie, J. *Salafisme in The Netherlands*; Instituut voor Migratie- en Etnische Studies: Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2010.
31. Kepel, G. *The War for Muslim Minds*; Harvard University Press: Boston, MA, USA, 2006.
32. Roy, O. *Globalized Islam: The Search for the New Ummah*; Hurst and Company: London, UK, 2004.
33. However, Olivier Roy [15] (p. 123) notes that compared to other Muslims, Turkish migrants tend to preserve their language and ethno-national identity.
34. De Koning, M. The Netherlands. In *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe 5*; Nielsen, J.S., Akgönül, S., Alibašić, A., Račius, E., Eds.; Brill: Boston, MA, USA, 2016; pp. 421–435.
35. Matthew Bowl; Benjamin van Impelen, The Imam Training Debate: The Future of Religion for Dutch Muslims. Available online: https://www.humanityinaction.org/knowledgebase/190-the-imam-training-debate-the-future-of-religion-for-dutch-muslims (accessed on 2 February 2019).
36. Rath, J.; Penninx, R.; Groenendijk, K.; Meyer, A. *Western Europe and Its Islam*; Brill: Leiden, The Netherlands, 2001.
37. Landman, N. Imams in The Netherlands: Home-Made Better than Import? *ISIM Newsl.* **1999**, *2*, 5.
38. Sunier, T.; Landman, N. *Diyanet: The Turkish Directorate for Religious Affairs in a Changing Environment*; VU/UU: Amsterdam/Utrecht, The Netherlands, 2011.
39. Sunier, T.; Landman, N. *Transnational Turkish Islam*; Springer: Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany, 2014.
40. As the Turkish name suggests, this school was originally founded to train government-employed imams after the abolition of madrasas in Turkey through the country's Unification of Education act.
41. These abbreviations refer to study tracks in Dutch secondary education: Preparatory middle-level vocational education (VMBO), higher general continued education (HAVO) and preparatory scholarly education (VWO).
42. AnadoluAjansı Hollanda Ile "Imam Hatip" Anlaşması. Available online: http://www.ntv.com.tr/egitim/hollanda-ile-imam-hatip-anlasmasi,FcnysMZIPUejLaZTWqhI7Q?_ref=infinite (accessed on 23 April 2017).
43. Kasteleijn, N. 'Ibn Ghaldoun failliet verklaard—school was eerder al gesloten na inspectie' [Ibn Ghaldoun Declared Bankrupt—School Had Been Previously Closed After Inspection]. Nrc.nl, 8 October 2013. Available online: https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2013/10/08/ibn-ghaldoun-failliet-verklaard-a1430902 (accessed on 5 November 2016).
44. De Koning, M. The Netherlands. In *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe 6*; Nielsen, J.S., Akgönül, S., Alibašić, A., Račius, E., Eds.; Brill: Leiden, The Netherlands; Boston, MA, USA, 2015; pp. 439–458.
45. In September 2014, the Ibn Ghaldoun school was succeeded by the Avicenna College, a new Islamic secondary school with a new board of management.
46. Huijnk, W.; Dagevos, J. *Dichter bij Elkaar? De Sociaal-Culturele Positie van Niet-Westerse Migranten in The Netherlands [Closer Together? The Socio-Cultural Position of Non-Western Migrants in The Netherlands]*; Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau: Den Haag, The Netherlands, 2012.
47. Kara, İ. *Cumhuriyet Türkiyesi'nde Bir Mesele Olarak İslam 1 [Islam as a Matter in Republican Turkey 1]*; Dergah Yayınları: İstanbul, Turkey, 2017.
48. Kara, İ. *Cumhuriyet Türkiyesi'nde Bir Mesele Olarak İslam 2 [Islam as a Matter in Republican Turkey 2]*; Dergah Yayınları: İstanbul, Turkey, 2017.
49. Lafleur, J. Why Do States Enfranchise Citizens Abroad? Comparative Insights from Mexico, Italy and Belgium. *Glob. Netw.* **2011**, *11*, 481–501. [CrossRef]
50. Laik is the Turkish translation of—And was inspired as a concept by—The French term laïcité.
51. Parla, T.; Davison, A. Secularism and laicism in Turkey. In *Secularisms*; Davison, A., Jacobsen, J.R., Pellegrini, A., Eds.; Duke University Press: Durham, UK, 2008.
52. Gözaydın, İ. Diyanet and politics. *Muslim World* **2008**, *8*, 216–227. [CrossRef]
53. Gözaydın, İ. *Diyanet: Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Dinin Tanzimi [Diyanet: Arranging Religion in the Turkish Republic]*; İletişim Yayınları: İstanbul, Turkey, 2009.
54. Saatçi, M. Religious Conflict in the Periphery. Islam and Politics in Turkey. In *Religious Innovation in a Global Age. Essays on the Construction of Spirituality*; Lundskow, G., Ed.; McFarland & Company: London, UK, 2005; pp. 228–246.
55. See the Interview with İsmail Kara for Similar Opinions (In Turkish): Diyanet Müslümanların Değil, Devletin Din İşlerine Bakar [Diyanet Is Not for Muslims But for the State]. Altınoluk. 1993, p. 93. Available online: https://dergi.altinoluk.com/index.php?sayfa=yillar&MakaleNo=d093s022m1 (accessed on 12 May 2014).

56. Hendric, B. Introduction—Beyond State Islam: Religiosity and Spirituality in Contemporary Turkey. *Eur. J. Turk. Stud.* **2011**, *13*, 1–16.
57. Gürlesin, Ö.F. Transformation of Friday sermons in an era of nationalism; functionalization of religion, now and in a challenged future. 2019, in press.
58. After the failed coup attempt on 15 July 2016—directed against state institutions—the Turkish government dismissed many imams with governmental decrees.
59. Operation Olive Branch (Turkish: Zeytin Dalı Harekâtı) is an ongoing cross-border operation, executed by the Turkish Armed Forces and allied Syrian Arab and Turkish militias in the majority-Kurdish Afrin district of northwest Syria.
60. Schoonhoven, S. Jihadpreek in Hoorn. De Telegraaf. 7 February 2018. Available online: https://www.telegraaf.nl/nieuws/1681468/jihadpreek-in-hoorn (accessed on 19 July 2018).
61. Ziebertz, H.-G. Dispute about the Public Significance of Religion: An Opening Reflection. In *The Public Significance of Religion: Empirical Studies in Theology*; Francis, L.J., Ziebertz, H.-G., Eds.; Brill: Leiden, The Netherlands; Boston, MA, USA, 2011; pp. 1–18.
62. Ferreira, T.; Salgado, J.; Cunha, C. Ambiguity and the dialogical self: In search for a dialogical self. *Estud. Psicol.* **2006**, *27*, 19–32. [CrossRef]
63. Valsiner, J. Looking across cultural boundaries. *Integr. Psychol. Behav. Sci.* **2007**, *41*, 219–224. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
64. Yūnus Emre is an immensely popular Anatolian Turkish mystic poet of the second half of the 13th and the first quarter of the 14th century. Legend has it that one day a stern teacher named Molla Kāsım found a collection of Yūnus Emre's poetry. When he sat down by the river and began to read the poems, he found them contrary to his dogmatic religious understanding. He threw a 1000 poems into the river and a 1000 poems into the air. When Molla Kāsım came to the 2001st poem, he noticed that the couplet said: 'O Yūnus! Do not tell your words in a crooked way, or Molla Kāsım will come and straighten you'.
65. Gürlesin, Ö.F.; Ter Avest, I.; Alasağ, A.; Akdağ, M. Playful Religious Education—Towards Inclusive Religious Education: A Light-Hearted Way for Young People to Develop a Religious Life Orientation. *Submitted article to "Religions"* **2018**, *9*, submitted for review.
66. Roof, W.C.; Wilson, B. Religion in sociological perspective. *Contemp. Sociol.* **1983**, *12*, 716. [CrossRef]
67. Güngör, Ö. Yaşlılık ve din [Aging and Religiosity]. In *Din Sosyolojisi [Sociology of Religion]*; Çapçıoğlu, İ., Akyüz, N., Eds.; Grafiker Yayınları: İstanbul, Turkey, 2012; pp. 253–267.
68. Karaşahin, H. Gençlik ve din [Youth and Religion]. In *Din Sosyolojisi [Sociology of Religion]*; Çapçıoğlu, İ., Akyüz, N., Eds.; Grafiker Yayınları: İstanbul, Turkey, 2012; pp. 237–252.
69. Hökelekli, H. Gençlik ve din [Youth and religion]. In *Gençlik, Din ve Değerler Psikolojisi [Youth, Religion and Psychology of Ethics]*; Hökelekli, H., Ed.; Dem Yayınları: İstanbul, Turkey, 2006; pp. 9–33.
70. Hökelekli, H. *Çocuk, Genç, Aile Psikolojisi ve Din [CHILD, Youth, Family Psychology and Religion]*; Dem Yayınları: İstanbul, Turkey, 2009.
71. Becker, J.; De Hart, J. *Godsdienstige Veranderingen in The Netherlands*; SCP: The Hague, The Netherlands, 2006.
72. Voor het Regeringsbeleid, W.R. *Dynamiek in Islamitisch Activ-Isme: Aanknopingspunten Voor Democratisering en Mensenrechten*; Amsterdam University Press: Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2006.
73. Stark, R.; McCann, J.C. Market forces and catholic commitment: Exploring the new paradigm. *J. Sci. Study Relig.* **1993**, *32*, 111–124. [CrossRef]
74. Shadid, W.A.R.; van Koningsveld, P.S. Religious Authorities of Muslims in the West: Their Views on Political Participation. In *Intercultural Relations and Religious Authorities: Muslims in the European Union*; Shadid, W.A.R., van Koningsveld, P.S., Eds.; Peeters: Leuven, Belgium, 2002; pp. 149–170.
75. Gürlesin, Ö.F.; Avest, I.; Alasağ, A.; Akdağ, M. Religious voices in diaspora: An exploration of religious identity development of Dutch-Turkish Muslims. In Proceedings of the 2018 SocRel Annual Conference: Religion and Education, Glasgow, Scotland, 10–12 July 2018.



education sciences

MDPI

Article

Values Education or Religious Education? An Alternative View of Religious Education in the Secular Age, the Case of Turkey

Muhammet Fatih Genç

Religious Education Department, Kocaeli University, Umuttepe Kampüsü, İzmit.Kocaeli 41380, Turkey; muhammetfatih@hotmail.com; Tel.: +90-262-303-4701

Received: 15 November 2018; Accepted: 12 December 2018; Published: 19 December 2018

Abstract: Debates about the teaching of religion date back to the formation of the modern education system, when religion was first compartmentalized as a distinct subject within a broader curriculum. In many places, they continue to rage today. In Turkey, they are inextricably tied to the creation of the country's system of secular public instruction in the 1920s and the transition to multi-party government in the 1940s. On 30 March 2012, Turkey passed a new law that revamped the country's public educational system, mandating twelve years of instruction divided into three four-year periods (roughly corresponding to elementary, middle, and high school). This law led to the opening of many new religious schools—known as Imam-Hatip schools (i.e., schools for the training of imams and hatips, or preachers)—across the country, especially at the middle-school level. The number of students studying in these schools rose from 70,000 in 2002 to 1,300,000 after the new law. New elective courses on religion were also added to the curriculum, and curricular and extra-curricular religious-education activities offered by government-sponsored Islamic civil society organizations became more prevalent. All of this has reignited old debates about religious instruction in the country. This article begins with an overview of the history of secularism in Turkey. It then focuses on the history of religious education and the model of religious education in Turkey. It concludes with a discussion of how religious education centering on values education operates within the secular framework of public education in confessional and non-confessional formats.

Keywords: secularism; religious education; values education

1. Introduction

Debates about the teaching of religion in Turkey date back to educational reforms in the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century. Prior to the opening of Western-style schools during the Tanzimat era (1839–1876), education in the country was offered in madrasas, where all education was more or less religious in nature. In the new Western-style schools, however, religion became only a part of a broader curriculum [1].

From the Tanzimat era to the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, religious education remained part of the general education offered in Western-style schools and continued to dominate the education offered in madrasas. During this period, in other words, institutions offering traditional religious-based education and those offering modern secular education coexisted.

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey brought about perhaps the most spectacular development in the history of Islamic education. The declaration of the new republic was more than a political event; it was also a social, cultural, and economic revolution, and one in which secularism emerged as a central concept. The boundary between religion and politics in Turkey was drawn in terms of secular principles: the separation of state and religion, and the separation of religion from educational, cultural, and legal affairs. This meant the independence of

thought and independence of institutions from the dominance of religious thinking and religious institutions. The major reforms of the era were closely connected with secularism. For a quarter century, the Turkish educational system worked on a strictly secular basis; all levels of religious education were officially banned in schools. In this era, Turkey turned its face to the West by adopting Western laws, including the Italian Penal Code and the Swiss Civil Code, and implementing Western policies while establishing its institutions and laws.

In 2002, when the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, hereafter AKP) came to power, there was at first a rapid secularization. But after 2012, the secular emphasis of the party started to decrease. In this process, important developments also took place in the field of religious education. Despite the state's official support for religious education, increasing numbers of young people in Turkey embrace atheistic and "deistic" stances toward religion [2,3].

2. The History of Secularism in Turkey

The state and society both experienced a number of dramatic changes during the final decades of the Ottoman Empire and the early decades of the Republic of Turkey. The state transitioned from a large and diverse empire in which religion played an important role into a much smaller, less diverse, and strictly secular republic. These drastic changes resulted in social polarization and conflicts between different ideologies and political views. The consequences of these changes are still being felt not only in Turkey but also in other Muslim countries that went through a similar transition in the last century [4].

The new Turkish state—following the teachings of its founding father, Atatürk—took a strict form of secularism, laicism, as its main ideology. It sought to use this ideology both to modernize the state and society and to purge them of religious dogma, superstition, and ignorance [5].

2.1. Strict Secularism (1923–1946)

Under Atatürk, Turkey implemented radical reforms that targeted both the state structure and social life. These included the abolition of the sultanate in 1922, followed shortly after by the declaration of the republic in 1923. In the following years, the caliphate was abolished, all religious-spiritual orders were banned and closed, and the article declaring Islam as the state religion was removed from the constitution, eventually replaced with an article declaring the state to be secular in character. In time, reciting the Qur'an in its original Arabic was banned, and Turkish was mandated as the sole language for all prayers and religious rituals [4].

2.2. Liberalization of Secularism (1946–2002)

After a long period of state pressure and strict limitations on religious practices, things started to change in the late 1940s. This did not mark a return to Ottoman-era practices or a re-Islamization of society but rather a liberalization of the country's secular regime. Though Islam continued to be practiced in Turkey, even during the early non-tolerant secularist era of the state, the religion became increasingly significant toward the end of the 1940s [6] (p. 11).

Turkey was run under the single-party rule of the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, hereafter CHP) until 1940 and had its first multi-party election in 1946, an election that was suspiciously won by the CHP, the single party in charge since the beginning of the republic. Although the party won the first multi-party elections, they realized the extent of the social discomfort that had accrued over the years and decided that they would have to take steps toward addressing some of the public's demands, such as offering elective religious education in schools and establishing a faculty of theology at the university level. Most of these steps were accepted as measures to maintain control of religious education and to avoid the potential radicalism and fanaticism of religious services provided by private parties. The following elections held in 1946 were won by the Democratic Party (Demokrat Parti, hereafter DP) at the end of a campaign that focused on discrimination and human rights abuses resulting from the constraints the secular state placed on religious practices in the government and the

society. On its first day in government, the DP rescinded many bans, allowing prayers and the call to prayer to once again be performed in the Arabic language. The DP also established more religious schools (Imam-Hatip schools) and several faculties of theology at different universities [7] (p. 33).

Turkey is a county where a majority of the population identifies as Muslim and has strong ties to Islamic culture. However, Turkey is by law also a secular state, which conflicts with its Islamic nature. Besides Islam and secularism, nationalism and democracy are two other major concepts that represent the character of the country [8] (pp. 3–14).

2.3. Decline of Secularism 2002–Present

Since the DP in the 1950s, and especially under the AKP today, religion has been abused for political ends. However, the state remains staunchly secular [9] (p. 27). This is because secularism was inscribed in the constitution and protected by the military as well. Therefore, secularism remained powerful at the state level until the end of the 1970s. The army has intervened via coups or other means several times since the 1970s, banning Islamist parties and individuals from being active in the parliament or in society. Nevertheless, the public perception increasingly leaned toward Islamists, or more conservative movements in general. The AKP, following this social tendency toward being both conservative and "Westernized and moderate", came to power in 2002 [10].

When the AKP came to power, it faced the challenge of how to rule a country in which multiple identities, ideologies, and understandings of secularism coexisted. One approach to secularism, still practiced by militant secularists, has evolved into something akin to a political religion for its followers. The Kemalist elites believe that secularism is the sole path to Turkish development. They also believe that Islam is primarily an ideology, a political religion, rather than a faith like Christianity, and that it thus needs to be kept separate and apart from all state institutions. Yet at the same time, the Kemalist state continued to provide religious services in order to maintain control over peoples' perception of Islam and to prevent it from being politicized. As a result of this approach, secularism has evolved into an ideology not of "freedom of religion" but rather "freedom from religion". The signs of this secularism include the ban on headscarves in government places, including schools, and abolishing Islamist political parties. A second approach to secularism is a more moderate one, one that considers Islam as a part of Turkish people's lives and believes that the state should provide services to fulfill people's demands on religious affairs. Adherents of this approach believe that the state Religious Affairs Office (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, hereafter DIB) should be more active. According to them, religion and politics should not be two sharply separated spheres. For them, religion promotes dialogue and tolerance and can be utilized as a core element to bring the society together. There is also a third approach, represented by a small group of libertarians who claim that politics should be completely free from religion and that the state should have no relation with religion. Among these three approaches, that of the AKP, though this has changed over time, is closest to the second one [6] (pp. 21–22).

The AKP, under its leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (who also graduated from an Imam Hatip School), has been successful in politics with its approach, which it identifies as "conservative democracy". The party increased its popularity in successive elections as it worked to modify institutions and the state legislative structure to better comply with European Union standards. Even though it has tended to embrace an Islamic-oriented agenda in its later terms (so called Neo-Ottomanism), it has managed to retain popular support and continues to Islamize the country.

In Turkey, political Islam has been represented by two major groups. The first of these was the National Outlook Movement (Milli Görüş, MG), led by Necmettin Erbakan, who was accused of attempting to convert the governmental system to sharia and whose political parties were therefore banned several times. The current political party of the MG is the Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi), which only represents a very small percentage of the electorate. It is known as anti-Western and blames Western countries for being the major cause of the problems in the Islamic world. The other group is the current AKP, and its leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, which came to power as a moderate party open

to the West and to developing better standards in human rights and democracy. The AKP proposes that Islamic civilization can be established while living a Western way of life. It also emphasizes that its understanding of secularism is quite different from that of the Kemalists [11].

Secularism in Turkey has been utilized both to create a national identity and to impose the state's authority over monarchists and the radical religious establishment, similar to "laicism" as practiced in France [12,13]. But its application in Turkey took the form of a top-down ideology dictated by the state [14]. According to Toprak (1981), "Turkey is a 'semi-secular' state because it embraced state supervision of religious organizations and religious activity, a stance which is not compatible with the traditional Western understanding of secularism. Religion and religious institutions were generally represented as obstacles to innovation and national progress. Thus, rationalism rather than religion has been embraced as the basis of law, education, and politics" [7] (p. 47). In recent years, however, the number of religious schools has increased tremendously across the country, and the DIB has gained extra privileges in many areas and is granted very high budgets. All of this indicates that secularism is losing its hegemony in the state and also in the public sphere. However, over the sixteen years that it has been in power, the AKP has been mostly pragmatic on the issue of religion and insists the country will remain secular.

3. Religious Education between 1923 and 1980

Under the republic, a number of changes were introduced that affected the education system. On 3 March 1924, a new law on the unification of education came into force. This law closed all of the madrasas and attached all educational institutions and the entire budget for education in Turkey to the Ministry of National Education [15]. This law also placed Qur'anic and religious education in the curriculum of all state schools, starting at the second grade of elementary school. To train religious scholars to teach such classes, a faculty of theology was established. In addition, to meet the demands of the public, religious vocational high schools (Imam-Hatip schools) were opened. Religious instruction in the early years of the republic aimed at supporting the state's modernization activities and correcting popular "misinterpretations" in the area of religion. The first manner of application unfortunately was not able to last, and later it caused the start of a problematic period (1924–1948) in terms of education of religion [16,17].

The first negative development in the education of religion started in 1926. At that time, the length of religious courses was one hour in the curriculum of the third, fourth, and fifth grades of elementary school. On November 30, 1929, the Board of Education and Discipline of the Ministry of National Education decided to limit religion classes to an elective class not subject to examination in urban elementary schools. In a decision a year later, religion classes were further reduced to a mere thirty minutes of elective instruction per week, and only for students in the fifth grade [18] (pp. 616–620).

Religious education was removed from rural schools in 1927 and from all schools in 1936. However, it continued on in extra-curricular form in rural elementary schools until 1938. In 1939, a new regulation removed religious education from the curriculum entirely. In the program-development activities started after 1927, religious education was removed from high schools, and between 1929 and 1931 it was gradually removed from teacher-training schools as well [18] (p. 616).

Following this process of eliminating religious education from the educational system, Imam-Hatip schools were closed in 1929, and the faculty of theology in what is today Istanbul University was closed in 1933. In the years that followed, there was no institution providing education in religion or any religious subject [19] (p. 107).

The removal of religious education and the institutions providing that education from the public education system had tragic results. Discussions in the seventh CHP congress in November 1947 are interesting in terms of reflecting the situation that resulted from the absence of religious education in the intervening years. This congress was a turning point for religious education in Turkey. At the congress, the CHP deputy from the city of Sinop, Vehbi Dayıbaş, stated the complaints of voters as follows: "Christians go to church and pray there but what will our children do and how are they going

to pray? They are lacking of vital religious knowledge! For that reason, I think that instruction in religion should be given". Abdulkadir Güney, representative from Çorum, offered a similar assessment: "According to analyses that we have done, it is clear that those nations who support their religion have always been pioneers in social development; those who do not care about their religion have remained undeveloped. While all the world's nations appreciate our religion and its holy book, the Qur'an, why do we ignore our religion's development?" By asking such questions, Güney expressed the results of depriving students of religious education [17] (p. 108). Sinan Tekelioğlu, a deputy from Seyhan, offered the following words in his speech at the congress: "Christian, Jewish, and Turkish sects have opened schools for themselves and raised their priests there! Let me tell you what I heard from the villagers! They don't have anyone to bury their dead. Today, gambling and drinking alcohol are at an unbelievably high level. There is no fear of God in this faithless country. There is no respect for father, mother, or elderly people. When they are asked, 'Who is God?', children cannot give any answer; they don't know their God!" Similar complaints were expressed in 1948 in the journal *Selamet Mecmuası* by the editor of the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper Nadir Nadi. He complained about the lack of imams and muezzins in villages and mosques [20] (p. 457).

After these quarrels in 1948, religious education was reintroduced to primary schools, but in the form of an extra-curricular lesson. One hour "elective" religious-education lessons were introduced at the fourth- and fifth-grade levels. Families who wanted their children to take these lessons were required to submit a special petition to school authorities. In addition, in 1949, the Ankara University Faculty of Theology was opened, and later, in 1951, Imam-Hatip schools were opened again [21] (pp. 218–219).

In 1950, a new government was elected in nationwide multi-party elections. This new government was more sympathetic to the religious sentiments of society and introduced a religion course at the high-school level. This time, students were automatically enrolled in the course. If the parents wanted to exempt their children from the course, they had to apply to the school with a written request. Religious education thus once again found its way into the state curriculum [22] (p. 128).

In 1967, a religion course was introduced in the first and second years of high school. Students, however, were only enrolled in the course at the written request of their parents. In 1975, the course was extended to the third and final year of high school. This optional religious education in schools continued up to 1982 [23] (pp. 75–77). Thus it was that during this period (1948–1982), religious education remained optional until the 1980s, while an ethics and character-education course was compulsory in schools. Before 1980, religion and ethics courses were two separate courses. Religion courses were based on the confessional religious-education model, while ethics courses were fully secularized and there was no reference to religion [22] (pp. 151–153).

4. Religious Education between 1980 and 2012

Until the military coup of September 12, 1980, religion courses were elective. The period immediately prior to the coup was a time of acrimonious public debate, social and ideological conflict, and violent clashes between left- and right-wing groups. In the wake of the coup, the military administration sought to restore order by arresting hundreds of thousands of people and executing dozens more [22] (p. 252). It also issued a new constitution which, among other things, made religious education mandatory in Turkey's schools—a move it viewed as a necessary step toward remedying the social unrest of the previous decade by re-unifying the nation's values [24] (p. 146).

This new mandatory religious education, in the form of a new class dubbed Religious Culture and Ethics (Din Kültürü ve Ahlak Bilgisi), was codified in the twenty-fourth article of the 1982 Constitution, which stated that "education and instruction about religion and ethics is provided under the supervision of public agencies. The related course is one of the mandatory courses delivered at the basic education level and secondary education level. The other related educational and instructional activities are provided only upon request of people, and for young people, of legal guardians" [25]

(p. 5). These new classes were to be taught for two hours a week, from fourth grade in elementary school through the end of middle school, and one hour a week through high school [26].

Unlike the elective Islamic courses of earlier periods, the post-1982 Religious Culture and Ethics lessons were designed as classes that would foster knowledge about, and unity in, a diverse society. An important voice behind this new class was the professor Beyza Bilgin, who argued that compulsory religious education was necessary to foster harmony among Turkey's various religious sects. The very title of the class, in the form of "religious culture and ethics", would be broad enough to encompass every sect in the country, and this inclusiveness would prevent conflict, support social unity and solidarity, and at the same time instruct pupils about the facts of society [23] (pp. 66–81). In line with this aim, the class needed to be taught based on a non-confessional model that could meet the demands of society.

The result was a class on religious culture and ethics that was not exclusively about Islam. Instead, it provided information about religion in a more general sense, though with an Islamic focus. Bilgin argues that "the reason for this course as a mandatory course . . . is to provide general information about Islamic religious and ethics culture" [23] (pp. 66–70). This model was the result of Turkey's historical experience of religious education. The course was designed based on an integrated model of religious education aiming at fostering social unity by exposing students to, and promoting respect for, the reality of difference in society.

The Turkish Ministry of National Education sums up its approach in designing the class as follows: "In determining the content of the course of religious culture and ethics, an approach centered on basic religious assumptions that are beyond any religious movements (neutral to all religious movements and without any discussion of them) has been adopted. The purpose of this program is to inform students about religion and ethics, to improve their related skills, and thereby to contribute to the achievement of the general aims of national education in Turkey" [27] (p. 13). The approach adopted for religion education is described as follows: "When developing the curriculum of . . . Religious Culture and Ethics, knowledge based on science and research about Islam and other religions is prioritized and knowledge that is not contained in real religious sources is avoided. In regard to knowledge about Islam, an approach that is centered on the Qur'an and the sayings of Prophet Muhammad . . . without any reference to a specific religious movement is adopted and root values that embrace basic religious assumptions on Islam are emphasized. These values about faith, worship, and ethics are selected because they all share common points related to the Qur'an and the sayings of Prophet Muhammad. The ultimate aim is to make the learners correctly informed about religious, cultural, and ethical values. All religious and ethical values consistent with this approach are included in the curriculum. However, special attention is paid to avoid having a doctrine-based instruction" [27] (p. 19).

The program defines itself as beyond any specific religious movement or singular religious orientation. Instead, it reflects all of them. This model can be understood in two ways: as a "uniting model" or as a "plural model". On the first model, it is the essence of religion that should be taught, not details about various religious trends. In other words, children with distinct religious orientations may take the course, but it should be emphasized that these orientations are merely different distinct understandings of the same religion. On the plural model, in contrast, the course should mirror the society. In other words, it should not only deal with various orientations within the same religion but also address different religions and their worldviews and ethical understandings [28] (pp. 32–40).

According to the interpretation adopted in Turkey, religious education should focus on common points taught based on the major sources of the religion. Such a course aims to inform about rather than popularize religion. While the course teaches students about different understandings and practices of religion, it largely ignores differences between religious movements within the same religion.

It is this approach that tends to be the focus of criticisms against education in religion in Turkey. The primary criticism against the approach is that it only deals with common points and excludes discussions of difference, which means that it ignores the plurality of interpretations of religion. Another related criticism is that this model fails to prepare learners for the religious differences they

will encounter in their daily lives. This situation does not encourage the values of mutual respect and tolerance and therefore, the course is not consistent with real life experiences [29] (pp. 580–581).

Bilgin agrees with these criticisms: "Is it not more appropriate for children to acquire the experience of being aware of the differences in their classroom, given that they live in a country with people of different religious orientations and cultures, instead of having them educated in separate classrooms where students with the same religious orientation and cultures attend the same class?" After asking this question, Bilgin proposes a solution: "The programs of elementary-school classes can be organized focusing on the common beliefs and behavioral rules of all religions without dealing with details of different religions and religious orientations. The programs of older students, on the other hand, again include those with different religious beliefs, but in this case [different] religions and religious movements [should be] introduced as topic of study and the differences resulting from these distinct religious orientations emphasized. Thus, it is further emphasized that believers attempt to achieve the same goal using different ways and that one needs to be respectful of such differences" [30].

The religious-education model implemented in Turkey has been criticized as ineffective for its failure to address different religious orientations. In Turkish culture, different religious orientations are not perceived as distinct religions but as different interpretations of the same religion. Therefore, there are no sharp borders among these religious orientations, and this is the primary rationale for ignoring them in the current program. However, although religious movements within the same religion may be merely different ways of interpreting the same religion, ignoring the differences between them may well be problematic. The program as it is currently implemented has another characteristic that is closely related to changing global conditions. This is that this program addresses other religions. This condition is a prerequisite for being tolerant of, informed about, and respectful toward different religions as a prerequisite for universal-mindedness [29] (pp. 581–582).

Specifically, the program states that "the objectives are to provide students with scientific knowledge about religion and ethics [and] to provide them with related knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, awareness, and concepts following student-centered techniques" [25] (pp. 6–8).

The other objective mentioned in the program is "to inform younger generations about and promote their consciousness of religion". In other words, the course aims at providing the students with a knowledge base and skills that they will employ throughout their lives. These objectives are attempted through a constructivist and student-centered approach. According to this approach, students should achieve these objectives themselves. Therefore, both the similarities and the differences between different religious movements are emphasized. In this regard, the program is consistent in terms of its religious and educational premises [29] (p. 582).

According to a classification recently developed by Grimmitt and Hull, religious education falls into one of three types [31] (pp. 24–52): learning religion, learning about religion, and learning from religion [32] (pp. 1–8). Religious education in Turkey today falls into the first of these categories, though historically all three approaches have at one time or another had a place in the educational system. Historically, Muslim societies have not had a sharp distinction between state and religion, and religion has therefore always had a prominent place in education. In the Ottoman Empire, for example, education had a completely religious character. Madrasas, the universities of the day, were responsible for education, and all of the disciplines they taught had a religious character. This began to change with the introduction of a series of new educational programs after the declaration of the Tanzimat reforms in 1839. New schools were established to carry out these new education programs. But even then, courses on religion were included in the curricula of these schools, and education in the empire and subsequently in Turkey has continued to have a religious character until recent times. Nevertheless, over time, the negative consequences of the "learning religion" approach have caused it to gradually lose ground, and today the "learning from religion" approach has largely replaced it [33].

Although there are indications that all three approaches have some degree of impact on the way religious education is carried out in Turkey, it seems that the learning from religion approach has

been adopted as the basic educational philosophy for religious education in the country. The primary indicators of this are as follows: Consistent with the major characteristics of the learning from religion approach, courses on religion are regarded as a part of other general education courses instead of having a separate position in the program.

Another characteristic of the learning from religion approach is that courses on religion contribute to the development of students. In line with this, courses on religion in Turkey have the objective of contributing to the students' personal, social, and cultural development.

The other major feature of the learning from religion approach is that students should establish their own ideas through interpreting and making sense of knowledge they acquire. Similarly, courses on religion in Turkey aim at educating students who are questioning, have a critical attitude, and produce information [29] (pp. 582–584).

Currently, religious-education courses begin in the fourth grade of elementary school and continue throughout middle and high schools. From the fourth to the eighth grades, classes consist of two hours per week. At the high school level, there are also two hours of class per week. We can say that this class is not considered an Islamic educational class. It is an informative class that addresses religious culture and general moral principles through a curriculum that includes information about different religions. However, Islam is the main emphasis of the curriculum because the majority of pupils are Muslim [34]. The curriculum addresses both multiculturalism and national issues [27]. The existing curriculum expresses the secular nature of the state and the inclination of the curriculum's authors [35].

A student who graduates from high school will have received eight continuous years of religious education. The textbooks for each level are prepared and approved by the Ministry of Education. In Turkey, the state controls and inspects the religious-education curriculum and textbooks. One of the main service units of the Ministry of Education is named the General Directorate of Religious Education (Din Öğretimi Genel Müdürlüğü), and it is this directorate that prepares the religious-education curriculum for elementary, middle, and high schools in Turkey [36]. All textbooks contain five main themes [37]: 1. The major world religions; 2. The history of Islam and the life of Prophet Muhammad; 3. The ways to perform Islamic rituals; 4. The role of religion in Turkish history; 5. Islamic ethics and good manners [15].

In 1995, Necmettin Erbakan, the first Islamist prime minister of Turkey, came to power. But he was removed from his position in what has become known as the "postmodern coup" of 28 February 1997. After the coup, the state proclaimed a fight against fundamentalism and declared that secularism was the basis of the state and the surest defense of peace and order. As part of this, the system of public education was once again restructured. Elementary school and middle school were folded together into eight years of primary school, thus dealing a blow to Imam-Hatip middle schools, which either closed or else remodeled themselves as high schools [15]. A new education-reform bill was introduced, as the result of which Imam-Hatip graduates lost their rights to enter employment in several state bodies, including the police force and the army. Furthermore, as graduates of nominally "vocational" schools, they were effectively barred from studying at the university level in any field except for that in which they had received training—that is, those who wished to pursue a higher degree could only do so in the field of theology. As a result of these changes, the number of students of the Imam-Hatip Schools dramatically dropped from 600,000 to 50,000 [38].

5. The Current Situation of Religious Education (Golden Age of Religious Education)

During the elections of 2002, things began to change. A new party, the AKP, won the elections on a platform of greater cooperation with the West, membership in the European Union, and coexistence between Islam and democracy. The party began to scale back the strict secularism that had been implemented after the 1997 coup and focused instead on taming inflation, deregulating the economy, and reducing the state sector. With its openness to foreign investors and its support for liberalism and democracy, the AKP presided over a period of rapid economic growth [15]. The party believed that the decisions of the past had damaged religious education in Turkey.

From 2002 to 2011, the AKP government pursued noteworthy reforms in line with its push for European Union membership. In this process, The AKP government has made significant progress in the field of human rights. It has provided a wide range of freedom to all sections of society and to both religious and non-religious groups. From 2012 and onward, however, the AKP began to be criticized seriously for its statements and policies on a broad spectrum of political, regional, human-rights, and religious matters. There have been increasing concerns that the party is now pursuing a politically exclusive system, one rooted in a Sunni Muslim religious national identity [39] (p. 5–6). However, no significant changes took place in religious education until 2012.

In March 2012, a new law once again restructured the Turkish education system. The new system, popularly known as "4 + 4 + 4", once again split compulsory public education into three periods, with four years of education at the elementary-, middle-, and high-school levels [40]. The rationale for this was to allow students and their families to choose whether they wanted to study at a general-education middle school or a technical or vocational school of some sort, including religious "vocational" Imam-Hatip middle schools. This new system thus ushered in something of a golden age for religious education. After being shut down as part of the strict regulations implemented after the 1997 coup, Imam-Hatip middle schools were once again reopened [29] (p. 39).

Under this new system, which took effect in the 2012–2013 school year, courses on the Qur'an and the life of Prophet Muhammad are offered as electives for middle- and high-school students. The Ministry of Education may also prepare elective courses on Christianity and Judaism [29] (p. 40). The Religious Culture and Ethics course is still compulsory and continues to be taught on a non-confessional model from fourth grade to the end of high school for two hours a week.

Since 2012, when Imam-Hatip middle schools were opened, the total number of pupils aged 10–14 studying in these schools has risen to seven hundred thousand students (out of a total of 5.5 million middle-school students). In Imam-Hatip high schools, there are six hundred and fifty thousand students (out of a total of 5.7 million high-school students). The government has also increased religious-education teaching at regular state schools, some of which have been converted into Imam-Hatip schools. Although the number of Imam-Hatip schools students make up only 11 percent of the total high-school population, they receive 23 percent of funding (roughly 1.5 billion dollars)—double the amount spent per pupil at mainstream schools. Despite this level of support, Imam-Hatip schools have lower success rates than other regular state schools [41].

This process also produced important developments in higher religious education. The number of faculties of theology has increased from twenty-five to eighty and the number of students has increased from three hundred to fifty thousand. The teacher-training programs for religious-education teachers that were formerly located within faculties of education have been transferred to faculties of theology, which are now the only faculties to provide teacher training in religious education [16] (pp. 27–30).

Ziya Meral summarizes the contents of the compulsory religious-education textbooks in Turkey for the US Commission on International Religious Freedom as follows: "Currently, the religious freedom and religious education picture in Turkey is complex. There is now more religious freedom for both Muslims and non-Muslims than in any other era of the republic. But political polarization, the government's policies and actions since 2012, and a deep-seated culture war in the country are creating new grievances. Non-religious Turks, and those not from classically understood Sunni Muslim traditions, feel that they are being pressured to adopt or adhere to a particular political ideology rooted in the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam. Within a context of fierce political competition, deep mistrust between different communities, and non-compromising attitudes of both the government and political opposition parties, the issues of religious freedom and religious education have become deeply politicized. With the political changes in Turkey over the last decade, this strong, state-enforced secularist vision has been weakened; however, challenges remain. Previously, pious Muslims complained that state-regulated religious education was imposing a secularist version of Islam. Now, with the AKP government's perceived push of Sunni Muslim beliefs and practices, less-religious Turks and non-Sunni Muslim minority communities, such as Alevis, argue the government's interference in

religious education is imposing a religious agenda. In addition, there have been reactions from within Sunni Muslim communities that the government should not use state channels to endorse Islam" [39] (p. 7).

The most common criticism in recent years is that the government is imposing its ideology on students through religious education. It is natural for the political power to address the expectations of its supporters. However, it is different when the situation comes to religious education. Religious education must not simply be a conduit for the ideology of political power; it must be based on scientific methods and it must be centered on values education.

6. Values Education or Religious Education?

Influenced by the philosophy of the Enlightenment, religion is considered as opposed to reason and rationality; it is seen as something that is separate from the political sphere and that takes place in people's private lives. This is the context from which secular theories emerged. For instance, Casanova distinguishes three different directions that the theory of secularization has taken: "the differentiation of the lay sphere from religion, secularization as a decline of religion (practices and beliefs), and secularization as the privatization of religion into its own sphere. This paradigm accepts the differentiation within Western society, but it shows that religious institutions keep playing an important role, above all within civil society. This role is not necessarily opposed to the process of secularization" [42]. However, the development of secularism in Turkey is different from that in the West. From the beginning, the modernization and secularization movements in Turkey were largely inspired by France, and thus French *laïcité* has provided a substantive model for Turkish secularism [14]. The French term "laicism" (Turkish: *laiklik*) is commonly used by Turks when referring to secularism in their country. In Turkey, secularism has no social or historical basis; it is carried out by the hand of the state, imposed in a top-down fashion, and it only emerged as a result of external dynamics [14]. For this reason, the secularization process was never fully successful, for the state completely excludes Islam, which has always been characteristic of Turkish society [43].

Walton addresses two types of secularism in Turkey: liberal secularism and illiberal or laicist (Jacobin) secularism. It is because of the socio–political history of this region that Turkey has embraced a more laicist secularism, as compared to a more passive secularism [14]. As mentioned in the introduction, anti-religious strict secular practices gave the impression that Islamists were against secularism. When Turkey's secular historical process is analyzed, it is seen that the Islamists are not anti-secularist. According to Büyükkara [44], it is not necessary to define conservatives or Islamists (the majority voters of AKP) as anti-secularist. Perhaps the AKP is not so much anti-secularist as it is anti-Kemalist. Kemalism "has tended to be an authoritarian state ideology to stamp out religious and ethnic differences in the name of Enlightenment values" [45] (p. 60). As a result of Kemalism's adherence to assertive secularism, Kemalists were forced to create a "modern Turkish identity" by excluding religion. However, conservatives or Islamists embraced Islam as a part of Turkish identity and culture, and hence did not reject religion (or religious culture) on Turkey's path to "modernity" [43].

The basis of secularism is the definite separation between the public sphere and private life. Religion is to be part of private life, while the public sphere should stay neutral on religious matters. The problem is that secularism is not neutral in Turkey. Especially in the early period of the republic of Turkey (1923–1950), the state completely rejected Islam and failed to meet the demands of different segments of society. The Turkish republic witnessed seventy of such secularity. In this process, there were different approaches to religious education. First, it was mandatory; then, it was elective (on a confessional model); and then it was mandatory again (again on a non-confessional model). This is where Turkey is today. The presence of religious education in state schools is the result of Turkey's historical experiences [46] (p. 108).

Professor Cemal Tosun, one of the leading scholars of religious education in Turkey, has argued that religion has social, cultural, philosophical, universal, and legal essentials that need to be taught in religion courses in a secular country [17,47].

> "One of the basic functions of education is to reveal and support the skills of all individuals and to meet basic demands consonantly. . . . Religion is necessary to meet the need of faith, which is one of the important needs of human beings. According to these assessments, a sense of religion is an instinctive and ongoing ability and need. It is an ability because every human being has tendency and ability to believe in a Supreme Being. It is a need in the sense that religion and faith are the features that make a human being a human being. This religious sense of the human being is infinite. But by hook or by crook he satisfies himself. What is expected from this education is to prevent people from this random or faulty satisfaction and to enhance the physical and spiritual ability of individuals. To separate the religious need and feeling from the other needs or to disregard them is against the aims of education. The other important subject that should not be disregarded is that the human being is a social essence. Another vital task expected from education is to socialize new generations. Socialization can be defined as 'to enable people to comply with the society that they live in'" [46].

Religious education can help people to socialize in two ways: first, by providing background experience to those who want to attend religious activities by teaching them necessary knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors; second, by providing positive appreciation and better comprehension to those who do not attend religious activities done by others [17].

Education is meant to convey to new generations those aspects of a society's cultural heritage that are not obstacles to its advance. In every society's cultural heritage, there are of course concepts that come from religious knowledge. Religion is also a decisive element in a nation's or society's identity. Religion is as important a part of culture as language and history. Moreover, it affects other cultural elements as well. Consequently, it is necessary to teach about religions, both because they are an element of culture and because they are an affective factor in human life. Otherwise, new generations will have identity problems and they will not be able to appreciate and comprehend the cultural values of their society, which will result in cultural degeneration [46,47].

As stated earlier, obligatory religion courses in Turkey were not put into the curriculum to insist on a specific sect or belief. The Religious Culture and Ethics course was designed within the frame of basic Islamic values and it encompasses all sects, leaving nothing for misinterpretation. This education program aims to provide students true knowledge about religion and morality and to enhance their basic skills, while contributing to the general aims of national education (service and citizenship education) [17,47]. When the Religious Culture and Ethics teaching program was being developed, research-oriented information about Islam and other religions was used and all inconsistent information was removed. The resulting approach was centered on the Islamic sources of the Qur'an and Sunna. The basic values of Islam and related issues were given high priority. Care was paid to present values related to faith, prayer, and morality on the common ground of the Qur'an and Sunna [27]. The main aims of the course are to provide useful and true information about religious, cultural, and moral values (a cognitive, information-oriented approach). The course teaches all religious and moral values that are appropriate for this approach but takes care not to insist on doctrine, especially doctrine based on a specific sect [28] (pp. 32–40).

As noted above, Turkey has opted for compulsory religious education as a result of historical experience. But non-confessional compulsory religious education does not meet the expectations of many religious people in Turkey. For this reason, religious people tend to prefer to send their children to Imam-Hatip schools, whose numbers have accordingly been on the rise in recent years.

Meral says, "The books used in the Religious Culture and Ethics class today are a clear improvement from those used in years past. They contain no derogatory statements about minority communities or non-Muslim world religions. The substantial new sections on Alevi traditions are welcomed improvements. The provisions on religious freedom and the importance of freedom of worship, thought, and conscience are commendable. Similarly, the sections on different interpretations of religions and the importance of respecting and understanding other Muslim denominations are

noteworthy [39] (p. 19). The basic criticism for the new books is that despite these positive changes, they teach Muslim culture and Islamic religious education in a way that is deeply shaped by the officially sanctioned and historically dominant reading of Islam in Turkey" [39] (p. 20).

Other criticisms about courses on religion in Turkey, as expressed in the decisions of the European Human Rights Court and State Council, center on the charge that these courses are based on only one religion and on a single religious orientation toward that religion. However, if these courses are closely analyzed, one sees that they are not based on only one religion. Although knowledge about Islam is regarded as an objective for the courses on religion, the reasons for it are explicitly explained. More specifically, it is stated that Islam is the religion that has had the deepest impact on the language, culture, arts, and traditions of the country. In learning about Islam, students are given knowledge about these effects. Thus, the religious education in Turkey includes some of the basic tenets of the "learning about religion" approach, mentioned above [29] (p. 584).

Another criticism is that the values education in religion courses is inefficient. There is values education in the religion-course curriculum, but this training is theoretical and didactic rather than practical in application. One teacher stated in their research that the program's content was insufficient and that they did not undergo any training on values education [47].

The relationship between religion and morality and values has been controversial throughout history. For example, according to Locke, who saw the basis of morality as non-religious, the basis of moral knowledge is the mind [48] (p. 71). According to Kant, we can reach real moral knowledge with a pure practical mind [49] (pp. 34–37). According to Moore, people can discover good or bad morality through intuition [48] (p. 54); and according to Rousseau, emotions apart from selfishness are the source of morality [50] (p. 152). According to those who argue that the basis of morality is religion, religion determines what should and should not be done, and also religion determines the moral good or bad [51] (p. 4). People cannot decide independently of God. God declares orders and prohibitions with his apostles and his holy books [52] (p. 304). God has revealed to people how to believe, how to behave, what is good, and what is not good. For example, Ghazali believes that the way of human morality is through religious rules and that this morality is based on the Qur'an and Sunna [53] (pp. 253–258). The assessment of moral behavior as good or bad is a form of value judgment. Value judgments also include statements that decide what is right and wrong. We use these value judgments in deciding whether a behavior is good, beautiful, right, or wrong. Generally speaking, "all moral provisions are a judgment of value" [54] (pp. 27–31). Moral value is a concept that is hard to define objectively. The question "What is moral value?" is the oldest, most fundamental, and most discussed problem of moral philosophy. In order to find an objective basis for moral values, it is necessary to find principles that will be accepted by everyone about what is "good" and "bad" [55] (p. 18). These debates are also reflected in the distinction between religious education and values education. In the West, the impact of religious institutions on society and the state has been lost due to the Enlightenment period and secularization [56]. In this period, values education was advocated in place of religious education in schools [57]. In this way, there has been an effort to separate religion and morality from each other in order to provide an autonomous moral structure rather than a passive commitment to authoritarian moral principles [58].

In Turkey, between the years 1974 and 1982, an ethics course which did not take religion as a reference was included in the national curriculum [59] (p. 263). In 1982, religious and moral education were combined into a single course. After this, ethics education began to take religion as a reference. As mentioned above, the effect of ethics education on students remained limited [60].

Despite the many developments that have taken place under the AKP, including modifications to the compulsory religious-education program and an increase in the number of Imam-Hatip schools, popular expectations for religious education have not been met. In Muslim societies, the most basic expectation of religious education is the development of individual and social morality. But even in the "golden age" of religious education, such things as prostitution and child abuse continue. The number of detainees and convicted people in prisons has increased, as has drug use, and the homicide rate

has risen fivefold [61]. In addition, the level of religiosity in Turkey has decreased and the number of atheists and "deists" has increased [3].

These trends show that religious education based only on knowledge without prioritizing values education is not enough. Both religious and moral education should be given equally.

In general, in Muslim countries, particularly Turkey, the fundamental problem in religious education is that the only priority is memorizing knowledge. This is problematic for values education, and it also means that religious education fails to meet people's expectations for religious education, as mentioned above. Before religious education, values education must be taught to students. Religious education cannot be successful without values education.

In Turkey, school books treat values education as a process in which the child is advised what he or she should or should not do and is taught what is right and what is wrong. It is often ignored that children's universal, cultural, and individual judgments will develop in the context of behavior, cognition, and emotion. Virtues that need to be focused on, like empathy, sympathy, and respect, are being neglected. However, when children's cognitive, social, and emotional development is taken into consideration, it is more likely that the children will acquire the elements of being good and righteous by questioning, empathizing, and respectfully developing their existing internal potentials [62].

For this reason, it is important for morality to come before religiosity. In this way, the prevalence of formal (superficial) religiousness, which is one of the fundamental problems of the Islamic world, can be reduced. Religious education that has political aims does not contribute to social peace. Religious education that does not prioritize values education cannot succeed. Religious education should be based on individual and social freedom and should emphasize correct religious knowledge, a culture of coexistence, and values education.

7. Conclusions

Turkey is a unique country in the modern world. It is steeped in Islamic history, yet it strives to be a modern secular culture. Turkey is also a good example, as it strives to be both secular and tolerant, not only of other faith traditions but also of Islam, which remains a powerful cultural force within a culture striving to become secular. Within this context, the historical process of secularism in Turkey may give researchers new inspirations [43].

Over the course of Turkey's history, the state's role in religious education has changed significantly. In the periods when the state did not take responsibility for offering religious education, Turkey suffered great hardships. As the result of these experiences, Turkey concluded that the state should take responsibility for religious education.

The Turkish state has shown more interest in religious education since 2012. Under the education system that came into force in March 2012, there are religious elective courses, such as the those on the Qur'an and the life of Prophet Muhammad, but the addition of these new courses does not mean that the Religious Culture and Ethics course has no place in the curriculum. This course remains important because its content addresses all people and it helps prevent students from becoming alienated from their society and world by offering them objective information about their own and other religions.

It is important for the state to take responsibility for religious education and to provide correct knowledge and ensure social solidarity. The state should educate its citizens about the religious and cultural life of their community. Otherwise, people will have to actively choose to study religion as an elective in schools; and of those who do not, some may choose to study religion privately from other sources, but many will likely never study religion at all. Such a state of affairs endangers social peace in a multicultural world. To prevent this, and to establish social peace, the state must take responsibility for religious education. However, this responsibility must be fulfilled by a religious education that prioritizes values education, for only religious education based on values rather than ideology can provide the desired social peace.

The results of a failure to do so are clear. Even in periods when the Turkish state fully encouraged religious education, social problems did not decline as expected [3]. This is because religious education

alone, without an emphasis on values education, can never succeed. The results of the research presented above show that such an educational model has no contribution to social peace.

In this context, regarding religious education and moral education in Turkey, I offer three final points by way of a conclusion. First, it should be ensured that the sections in textbooks on different faiths be written by experts from those religions and that material on those faiths be taught in the way those religions see themselves; different faith traditions should be explained from the perspective of those faith traditions rather than from a Muslim perspective. Second, religious education should not be a source of polarization in society. Religious education should not become an ideological tool in the hands of political power. Finally, values education must be done before religious education, and religious education must follow values education. Moral awareness is required to orient progress in science and technology toward the welfare of mankind; common values are required to unite human beings and to rediscover the traditional values that are currently in general decline. Teachers pass values to their students both consciously and unconsciously through their conduct in and out of the classroom. Therefore, the need for a consciously planned values-education program as part of the formal curriculum is clear. Students will face complex situations where they need to make decisions involving values. They should be helped to develop the ability to make proper choices in such situations through values education. The increase in juvenile delinquency in society today is a youth crisis, a crisis among young people who are engaged in the process of personal growth. In such a situation, values education assumes a special significance. Values education awakens curiosity, develops proper interests, attitudes, values, and the capacity to think and judge for oneself, and helps to promote social and natural integration [63].

Moreover, values education can teach students how to be part of their diverse world by emphasizing pluralism and inclusiveness, especially in terms of cultural values, as part of more universal values. A good and virtuous person, someone who is respectful and honest, is a good and virtuous person whether he or she practices a religion or not.

In multicultural and multi-religious societies, values education should be prioritized along with religious education. Theological differences between religions or negative expressions in religious texts about other religions have an alienating and parsing effect, but universal values have a unifying effect. Therefore, I want to conclude this work on the relation between religious education and values education in a secular age by quoting John Ruskin: "There are many religions, but there is only one morality".

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

References

1. Zengin, Z.S. *Tanzimat Dönemi Osmanlı Örgün Eğitim Kurumlarında Din Eğitimi ve Öğretimi (1839–1876)*; MEB Yayınları: İstanbul, Turkey, 2004.
2. Aytulu, G. Ateist Sayısı Artıyor Mu? *Hurriyet Gazetesi* **2015**. Available online: http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/kelebek/hayat/ateist-sayisi-artiyor-mu-29876400 (accessed on 22 October 2018).
3. Kulat, M.A. *Türkiye'de Toplumun Dine ve Dini Değerlere Bakışı*; MAK Danışmanlık: Ankara, Turkey, 2017.
4. Hiro, D. *Inside Central Asia: A Political and Cultural History of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Iran*; Overlook Duckworth: New York, NY, USA, 2011.
5. Daver, B. Secularism in Turkish Republic. Available online: http://dergiler.ankara.edu.tr/dergiler/42/451/5082.pdf (accessed on 8 August 2018).
6. Szymański, A. Secularism in Turkey—What Is It All About Today? In Proceedings of the ECPR Joint Sessions, Nottingham, UK, 25–30 April 2017.
7. Toprak, B. *Islam and Political Development in Turkey*; Brill: Leiden, The Netherlands, 1981.
8. Jones, E. The Conflicts of Secularization and Islam in Turkey. Master's Thesis, Salve Regına Unıversıty, Newport, RI, USA, 2010.

9. Kesgin, S.P. *The Evolution of Political Islam in Turkey: Comparing Party Programs of Islamicí Parties in Government*; Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas: Lawrence, KS, USA, 2009.
10. Malik, Y. The Rise and Fall of Secularism in Modern Turkey. 2017. Available online: https://www.globalvillagespace.com/rise-fall-secularism-modern-turkey/ (accessed on 15 October 2018).
11. Cizre, Ü. *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey: The Making of the Justice and Development Party*; Routledge: London, UK; New York, NY, USA, 2008.
12. Sheikh, M.; Wæver, O. Comparative Secularism across Europe and the Middle East. Presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association, Hilton Hawaiian Village, Honolulu, HI, USA, 1–5 March 2005.
13. Kramer, H. *A Changing Turkey: The Challenge to Europe and the United States*; Brookings Institution Press: Washington, DC, USA, 2000.
14. Kuru, A. Dynamics of secularism: State-Religion Relations in the United States, France, and Turkey. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA, 2006. Unpublished.
15. Alasania, G.; Gelovani, N. Islam and Religious Education in Turkey. *IBSU Sci. J.* **2011**, *5*, 35–50.
16. Genç, M.F. Avrupa ve Türkiye'de İlahiyat Fakülteleri Lisans Programları (İspanya, Bosna Hersek, Hollanda, Belçika ve Almanyadaki İlahiyat Fakülteleri İle Bir Karşılaştırma). *Din Bilimleri Akademik Dergi* **2013**, *13*, 27–45.
17. Genç, M.F. *What Should Be the Posıtıon of The State in Relıgıous Educatıon, An example from Turkey*; Oğuz Kutlu Educational Sciences, Ed.; Akademisyen Yayınevi: Ankara, Turkey, 2018; pp. 107–113.
18. Doğan, R. 1980'e Kadar Türkiye'de Din Öğretimi Program Anlayışları (1924–1980). In *Din Öğretiminde Yeni Yöntem Arayışları, Uluslar arası Sempozyum Bildiri ve Tartışmalar (İstanbul 28–30 Mart)*; Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları: Ankara, Turkey, 2003.
19. Yürük, T. *İlk ve Orta Öğretimde Din Öğretimi: Din Dersleri*; Din Eğitimi El Kitabı; Grafiker Yayınları: Ankara, Turkey, 2012; pp. 105–138.
20. Hamdullah, S. *CHP Yedinci Kurultay Tutanağı*; Ulus Basımevi: Ankara, Turkey, 1948.
21. Öcal, M. *İmam-Hatip Liselerinde Din Eğitimi*; Altaş, N., Köylü, M., Eds.; Din Eğitimi; Gündüz Yay: Ankara, Turkey, 2012.
22. Ayhan, H. *Türkiye'de Din Eğitimi*; M.Ü.İ.V. yay: İstanbul, Turkey, 1992.
23. Bilgin, B. *Eğitim Bilimi ve Din Eğitimi*; Gün Yay: Ankara, Turkey, 2007.
24. Altaş, N. Türkiye'de zorunlu din öğretimini yapilandiran süreç hedefler ve yeni yöntem arayişlari. *Dini Ara* **2002**, 145–168. [CrossRef]
25. T.C ANAYASASI 1982. Available online: https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/anayasa/anayasa_2016.pdf (accessed on 12 September 2018).
26. Altaş, N. Ortaöğretimde Din Eğitimi. In *Din Eğitimi*; Altaş, N., Köylü, M., Eds.; Gündüz Eğitim ve Yay: Ankara, Turkey, 2012.
27. T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı (MEB). *Din ğretimi Genel Müdürlüğü, Ortaöğretim Din Kültürü ve Ahlak Bilgisi Dersi Öğretim Programı (9, 10,11 ve 12. Sınıflar)*; Devlet Kitapları Müdürlüğü: İstanbul, Turkey, 2005.
28. Kizilabdullah, Y.; Tuğrul, Y. Din Eğitimi Modelleri Çerçevesinde Türkiye'deki Din Eğitimi Üzerine Genel Bir Değerlendirme. *Dini Araştırmalar Dergisi* **2008**, *11*, 32–40.
29. Genç, M.F. History and Current Situation of Religious Education in Turkey. *C.Ü. İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* **2012**, *6*, 539–585.
30. Bilgin, B. Mezheper ve Dinlerarası Eğitim ve İşbirliği. *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat FAkültesi Dergisi*. Available online: http://dergiler.ankara.edu.tr/dergiler/37/779/9962.pdf (accessed on 10 October 2018).
31. Grimmit, M. *Contemporary Pedagogies of Religious Education*; McCrimmons: Southend-on-Sea, UK, 2000.
32. Hull, J. *The Contribution of Religious Education to Religious Freedom: A Global Perspective*; Religious Education in Schools: Ideas and Experiences from around the World; IRARF: Oxford, UK, 2001.
33. Genç, M.F.; ter Avest, I.; Miedema, S.; Westerman, W. A conversational analysis of developments in religious education in Europe and Turkey. *Br. J. Relig. Educ.* **2012**, *34*, 1–17. [CrossRef]
34. Kaymakcan, R. Christianity in Turkish Religious Education. *Islam Christ–Muslim Relat.* **1999**, *10*, 279–293. [CrossRef]
35. Akbulut, O.; Usal, Z.O. Parental religious rights vs. Compulsory Religious Education in Turkey. *Int. J. Minor. Group Rights* **2008**, *15*, 433–455. [CrossRef]

36. Genç, M.F.; ter Avest, I.; Miedema, S. Religious education in two secular multicultural societies: The Turkish and Dutch case compared. *Procedia Soc. Behav. Sci.* **2011**, *15*, 801–805. [CrossRef]
37. T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı (MEB). *İlköğretim Din Kültüre ve Ahlak Bilgisi Öğretim Programı ve Kılavuzu (4, 5, 6, 7 ve 8. Sınıflar)*; Devlet Kitapları Müdürlüğü: Ankara, Turkey, 2010.
38. Genç, M.F. 2023 ve 2071 Türkiye'sinde İmam Hatip Liseleri. *Eğitime Bakış Dergisi* **2015**, *11/35*, 19–25.
39. Meral, Z. *Compulsory Religious Education in Turkey a Survey and Assessment of Text Books*; United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. Available online: https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/TurkeyTextbookReport.pdf (accessed on 10 October 2018).
40. Gün, F.; Baskan, G. New Education System in Turkey (4 + 4 + 4): A Critical Outlook. *Procedia Soc. Behav. Sci.* **2014**, *131*, 229–235. [CrossRef]
41. Butler, D. Special Report: With More İslamic Schooling, Erdogan Aims to Reshape Turkey. 2008. Available online: www.reuters.com (accessed on 15 September 2018).
42. Garcia, V.J.; Ivanescu, C. Religion as social curriculum: Education, values and Islam in Europe. *Educ. Pesqui.* **2013**, *39*, 1017–1028. [CrossRef]
43. Sevinc, K.; Hood, R.W.; Coleman, T.J., III. Secularism in Turkey. In *The Oxford Handbook of Secularism*; Zuckerman, P., Shook, J., Eds.; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2017.
44. Büyükkara, M.A. Ilımlı Islam tartışmaları zemininde günümüz Türkiyesi'nde laikliğin anlam ve sınırları. *Usul* **2008**, *9*, 173–200.
45. Yavuz, M.H. The Case of Turkey. *Daedalus* **2003**, *132*, 59–61.
46. Tosun, C. *Din Eğitimi Bilimine Giriş*; PegemA Yay, 3.Baskı: Ankara, Turkey, 2005.
47. Genç, M.F. Should State Take Responsibility for Religious Education? An Example from Turkey. Available online: https://religiouseducation.net/rea2013/files/2013/07/GENC.pdf (accessed on 8 October 2018).
48. Kiliç, R. *Ahlâkı Temellendirme Problemi*; Felsefe Dünyası: Ankara, Turkey, 1993.
49. Aydin, M. *Kant'ta ve Çağdaş İngiliz Felsefesinde Tanrı Ahlâk Ilişkisi*; TDV yay: Ankara, Turkey, 1991.
50. Topçu, N. *Ahlâk, Haz, Ezel Ezverdi, Haz*; İsmail, K., Ed.; Dergâh Yayınları: İstambul, Turkey, 1999.
51. Kiliç, R. *Ahlâkın Dini Temelleri*; TDV yay: Ankara, Turkey, 2005.
52. Türkgülü, M. Ahlâkın Kaynağı Tartışmaları ve Ortaya Çıkan Ahlak Telakkileri. *Fırat Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*. **1998**, *3*, 291–310.
53. Şeyh, M.; Sait, Ş. *İslam Düşünce Tarihi*; Şerif, M.M., Ed.; İnsan Yayınları: İstanbul, Turkey, 1996.
54. Güngör, E. *Değerler Psikolojisi Üzerine Araştırmalar*; Ötüken Yayınları: İstanbul, Turkey, 2010.
55. Güngör, E. *Ahlak Psikolojisi ve Sosyal Ahlak*; Ötüken Yayınları: İstanbul, Turkey, 2000.
56. Vessels, G.G. *Character and Community Development: A School Planning and Teacher Training Handbook*; Praeger Publishers: Westport, CT, USA, 1998.
57. Alexander, K.; Alexander, D. *American Public School Law*; Wadsworth: Belmont, CA, USA, 1998.
58. Zigler, R. The formation and transformation of moral impulse. *J. Moral Educ.* **1998**, *28*, 445–457. [CrossRef]
59. Öcal, M. Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türkiye'de Din Eğitimi ve Öğretimi. *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* **1998**, *7/7*, 241–268.
60. Genç, M.F. *Öğretmenler Gözüyle DKAB Derslerinde Değerler Eğitimi*; Etüt Yayınları: Samsun, Turkey, 2013.
61. Karabiyik, L. Türkiye'de Sosyal Bozulma Raporu. 2016. Available online: http://ahmetsaltik.net/2016/04/18/sosyal-bozulmalar-raporu/ (accessed on 10 October 2018).
62. Metindoğan, A. Değerler Eğitimi Nasıl Verilmeli. 2018. Available online: http://www.egitimreformugirisimi.org/degerler-egitimi-nasil-verilmeli/ (accessed on 10 October 2018).
63. Manichander, T. *Value Education*; Ashok Yakkaldevi: Maharashtra, India, 2016.

education sciences

MDPI

Article

Strong Religion in a Secular Society: The Case of Orthodox Reformed Schools in The Netherlands

John Exalto [1,*] and Gerdien Bertram-Troost [2]

[1] Department of Educational Studies, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Van der Boechorststraat 7, 1081 BT Amsterdam, The Netherlands
[2] Faculty of Religion and Theology & Department of Educational Studies, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, De Boelelaan 1105, 1081 HV Amsterdam, The Netherlands; g.d.bertram-troost@vu.nl
* Correspondence: j.exalto@vu.nl

Received: 14 November 2018; Accepted: 23 January 2019; Published: 28 January 2019

Abstract: In the Netherlands, state and religious schools are equally financed by the government. Parents are free to choose a school that optimally fits their moral values as well as their idea of a good education. As a result, there is a huge variety of schools, which include those orthodox Reformed schools that form part of the so-called Bible Belt culture. We elaborate on the complex relation between this religious culture and liberal, secular society by focusing on education. Occasionally, there is severe criticism of schools based on a strong religious identity (so-called strong religious schools), especially when it comes to their allegedly inadequate contribution to citizenship education. In order to add a historical perspective and a reflection on the arguments to the debate, our central research question is: 'How can the founding and existence of orthodox Reformed schools in the Dutch liberal and secular society be explained and justified?' Starting with a historical explanation of why the orthodox Reformed founded their own schools in the 1920s, we elaborate on philosophical arguments that can justify the existence of orthodox Reformed schools in a liberal, secular society.

Keywords: strong religious schools; Dutch Bible Belt; citizenship education; religious education; liberal society; secularization

1. Introduction

> It is now the best and worst of times for faith schools [...]. These schools are seen as infringing the individual freedom of the children educated in them, undermining social cohesion by promoting ethnic and religious segregation, infringing students' autonomy, and perpetuating religious indoctrination. They are also championed as defenders of liberty and religious freedom where those who do not wish to be coerced into conformity with the values of the secular mainstream can thrive and be free from state control [1] (p. 181).

The quotation above is taken from the opening sentences of an article by Pike, reporting on his research on strong religious education. On the basis of a comparison between a Dutch and an English strong Christian school, Pike challenged those assumptions mentioned in the quotation and responded to the claim that "the real challenge for liberals lies in dealing with the strong version of cultural identity schooling" ([2], p. 85, quoted in Reference [1], p. 182). The charges made against these faith-based schools are rather serious and have important implications for both education policy and the schools themselves. Especially in the British context, where the annual Ofsted Inspection Report of 2017 [3] triggered a forceful public response to faith schools (e.g., [4]), the debates surrounding strong religious schools and their contribution to society as a whole are particularly relevant today. Equally in other countries, both inside and outside Europe, there is an ongoing discussion and, from time to time, even huge political and societal debate, on the purpose of strong religious schools in liberal, secular

societies (e.g., [5,6]). Although the specific contexts differ, and there is great diversity among religious schools (e.g., [6]), the questions about how religious (minority) groups (can) relate to liberal society and what the role of (religious) education could or should be without upsetting wider social cohesion are similar. In this article, we contextualize the discussion by focusing on orthodox Reformed schools in the Netherlands.

Pike, in line with McDonough [7] (p. 464), defined a schooling environment based on a strong identity as one that seeks "to foster a separate education of extensive scope and duration that is meant to ensure that children adhere to a distinct ancestral identity throughout their lives". Such schools also aim "to restrict membership to individuals from a particular cultural, racial, ethnic, national or linguistic group" and "to advance a separate education affirming and reinforcing the identity of the group in question" [1] (p. 182). Pike made it clear that strong religious schools are under attack for, amongst other reasons, undermining social cohesion and infringing students' autonomy. From a liberal and secular perspective, these are core values that cannot simply be taken for granted. However, strong religious schools can also be of great importance in today's secular society, as they defend the religious freedom of minority groups. In this article, which focuses on orthodox Reformed schools in the Netherlands as an example of strong religious schools, we engage with both sides of the debate.

The Dutch school involved in Pike's study is the Jacobus Fruytier Scholengemeenschap. This is a strong religious school that only admits students (and staff) who belong to an orthodox group within Reformed Protestantism located in the Dutch 'Bible Belt'. Reformed orthodoxy must be distinguished from fundamentalism: To its adherents, religious tradition is of high authority but not changeless and static, as the interpretation of the Bible is fallible. Because of its view on society, Bible Belt culture thus has the power to change over time. Those who live in the Bible Belt participate fully in Dutch politics: They accept democracy, contribute to society, and do not attempt to impose their values on the whole of society, as some fundamentalist ideologies do. The ideal of a 'theocracy', honored by a small minority of the orthodox Reformed, is not only highly theoretical but in the last years has been abandoned by most adherents [8].

The Jacobus Fruytier Scholengemeenschap is fully financed by the Dutch government. Pike does not dwell on this fact, as he believes that "the history of the acceptance of such schooling within Dutch liberal democratic society is well known" [1] (p. 187). Yet we contend that the history of Dutch strong religious schools is not well known at all and that knowledge of this history is critical in order to understand the existence and survival of these kinds of schools in the 21st century. Thus, we begin by attending to the founding of these schools, before elaborating on the complex relationship between mainstream and Bible Belt culture by focusing on school education within this strong religious group. After detailing the historical and contextual framework, we further analyze those arguments that justify strong religious schools in general and the Reformed schools in the Netherlands in particular, as their founding and history can also be used as an argument for their existence. The arguments we discuss are mainly drawn from the field of philosophy of education. We refer to, amongst others, the work of Strike [9], who stresses the role of comprehensive life conceptions in a plural, liberal democracy, and of MacMullen [10], who maintains that, especially in the early years (primary school), a close fit between a student's home and school life is beneficial for autonomy development in the long term. MacMullen [6] also made it clear that a school's contribution to citizenship education is, although very important, not the only dimension that should be taken into account when evaluating the existence of religious schools. In our conclusion, we formulate an answer to our central research question: How can we explain and justify the founding and continued existence of strong religious schools in a liberal, secular society? Our aim is to add historical awareness and a reflection on the arguments to the debates on the existence of both orthodox Reformed schools in the Netherlands and strong religious schools more generally.

2. Dutch Bible Belt Culture

The strong religious schools in the Netherlands we focus on are known as 'Reformed schools' (*reformatorische scholen*) and are situated in the so-called Bible Belt. The label 'Bible Belt' has a double meaning: First, it denotes, as an appropriation of the American Bible Belt, the regional concentration of orthodox Reformed Christians, located in a strip that extends from the Northeast to the Southwest of the Netherlands; second, it refers to a culture of strong Christian people, living in contrast with modern society and in various ways resisting liberal politics and ethics. Some of their characteristic moral values include a belief in God's providence over human life (and for that reason, a resistance to abortion and euthanasia); an adherence to traditional Christian norms, such as marriage between one man and one woman; and a belief in creation instead of evolution. Christians in the Bible Belt often attract attention because of their divergent behavior, which includes church attendance twice each Sunday (as part of respecting Sunday rest), women and girls wearing skirts (as an expression of the difference between man and woman), and the absence of televisions in their homes (an act of resisting the sinful 'world') [11]. In 2015, the estimated total population in the Bible Belt was around 250,000 [12] (p. 141). This amounts to some 1.65 percent of the Dutch population, a small minority when compared to the 16 percent Protestants, 25 percent Catholics and 4.8 percent Muslims [13] (p. 6, all percentages for 2015).

The Dutch Bible Belt has conservative Protestant counterparts in other Western European liberal democracies. The rise of Muslim extremism after 2001 reinforced the stigmatization of these strong religious groups, as Christian fundamentalists and some liberal politicians even referred to the Dutch Bible Belt as the 'Taliban on clogs' [14]. Such language clearly demonstrates the (perceived) chasm between these orthodox religious cultures and modern society, a clash between an orthodox or strong religious culture and a secular idea of the public sphere dominated by liberal ideas of man and the world. As members of a conservative Christian culture, those in the Bible Belt preserve conservative moral values and detach themselves from contemporary culture, labelled by them as 'godless' and 'pagan'; but, although they adhere to traditional values, they are, in contrast to Muslim immigrants, rooted in Western society. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Calvinism is highly influential for their way of life [7]. Thus, however much they may be stigmatized as the 'Taliban on clogs', they have demonstrated how they belong to Western society and do not use violence, but rather only habits and practices, to resist modernity.

In the early decades of the 20th century, Dutch Bible Belt culture organized itself for the first time, founding its two main organizations before the Second World War: The political party *Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij* (SGP: Reformed Political Party, 1918) and the school organization *Vereeniging voor Gereformeerd Schoolonderwijs* (VGS: Association for Reformed Education, 1921). These institutions represented the strict Reformed communities on various levels in public life and for the first time made this segment of society more visible in the public sphere as a separate group of orthodox Christians. As a result of the comparatively low electoral threshold in the Netherlands, the SGP has been represented in the Dutch Parliament since 1921. The SGP initially presented itself as a protest party against three requirements of the state—female voting, assurance for laborers, and vaccination of schoolchildren—in a bid to resist the state's influence over the moral values of its citizens, while the party's views on gender (female voting) and the belief in God's providence above human intervention (as in the cases of assurance and vaccination) deviated from mainstream culture.

Building on this first wave of organization, after the Second World War, Bible Belt culture developed a further public profile. School founding played an important role in this, as discussion below will show. The Bible Belt in the Netherlands since the 1960s can be characterized as a reaction to the secularization of society, a resistance to the modern, liberal, and secular world. Since then, the Bible Belt has been a visible counterculture in the Dutch lowlands, notable for its divergent behavior and persistently conservative values and habits. However, the Bible Belt itself is not an unchangeable block of rigid convictions. While the religious ideology has remained the same over the years, some attitudes towards ethical issues have changed in the emancipation process that the Bible Belt culture

went through. The present-day use of modern (social) media is a clear example of changing values, especially given that in the 1960s, television was forbidden by the church leaders. The increasing numbers of divorces since the 1990s could also be interpreted as a sign of changing ethical norms, influenced by modern, secular society [15].

3. Establishing orthodox Reformed schools in the Netherlands

For the continuation of Bible Belt culture, the 'Bible Belt schools' are particularly important, since these schools inculcate the values in the new generation. In the Dutch context, these schools are labelled by the legislator, as well as by the department of education and the Bible Belt adherents themselves, as 'Reformed schools'. The principal organization of orthodox Reformed education, the VGS, represented as of 1 October 2016 a total of 70,179 pupils, 177 schools for primary education, 7 schools for secondary education, a few special education schools, and one technical and vocational training school. The contribution of this Reformed education to the total of the Dutch school system is about 2.5 percent (annual report VGS 2016, http://www.vgs.nl/wp-content/uploads/VGS_jaarverslag2016.pdf; pupil data by denomination from the department of education, https://www.duo.nl/open_onderwijsdata/databestanden/.) Although the values these schools promote do not fully correspond with that of present-day liberal democracy—for example, their views on marriage, (homo)sexual relationships, and the equality of different religions—they are fully funded by the state, in contrast to faith-based schools in most other West European countries [16].

The equal funding of public and faith-based schools has a long history of political and public debate, dating back to the so-called School Battle or school controversy in the first half of the 19th century, which was prompted by orthodox Catholics and Protestants dissatisfied with the existing public-school system and its moderate Protestant character. The new Constitution of 1848 was an important step in the right direction for the orthodox parties, as it guaranteed freedom of education and allowed for the founding of 'special' or faith-based schools besides the public schools. These schools had to be financed privately. As the political opposition between liberal and confessional bodies grew in the second half of the century, the School Battle also intensified. The first state contribution to faith-based schools was made by the first confessional cabinet in 1889. Since then, state payment gradually increased, due to the greater political power of the confessionals that resulted from the expansion of suffrage and of the mobilization of the masses [17]. The School Battle came to an end with the so-called Pacification of 1917, which included two major alterations by constitutional amendment: First, proportional representation and the further expansion of suffrage, and second, full equality of faith-based schools regarding state subsidy. Both measures strengthened the democratic character of the constitutional state, as money no longer hindered free school choice of the citizens, who were also able to vote [18,19].

When it came to the founding of schools, the Constitution of 1917 referred to 'freedom of direction' (*vrijheid van richting*) without further explanation. In practice, 'direction' was interpreted as a philosophy of life, a denominationally bound ideology or worldview that was visible in society and called for separate organization. In 1933, the schools of the *Gereformeerde Gemeenten* (Reformed Congregations), one of the main church denominations in the Bible Belt, were recognized as being an independent direction within the Dutch school system. The political organization of the Bible Belt in the SGP was influential in the *Raad van State* (Council of State) giving them this recognition by Royal Decree [20]. In 1939, the VGS counted 35 connected schools for primary education, and in 1944, the Bible Belt teacher training college *De Driestar* was launched. Until today, freedom of direction has always been a factor in school founding. In October 2018, however, the Minister for Education introduced a legislative proposal in the Dutch Parliament in which 'direction' is no longer a condition for the founding of a private school. Parliament has not yet made a decision.

After the reorganization of secondary education in 1968, in the 1970s, the Bible Belt community was able to found its own schools, which are currently attended by over 22,000 pupils between ages 12–18. When the education law allowed for it, a school for technical and vocational training for

16–18-year-olds was also founded (Hoornbeeck College in Amersfoort). This means that various pupils from the Bible Belt can attend exclusively orthodox Reformed schools throughout their entire school career, which has understandably led some people to doubt the ability of these pupils to dialogue with liberal society. However, the Reformed schools for secondary education were not immediately recognized as belonging to an independent direction, a clearly distinguishable sub-denomination within Protestantism (as had been the case with the schools for primary education since 1933). After some legal maneuvering, the Council of State delivered a verdict in a Royal Decree on 8 February 1979, in which these schools also received the label of independent, 'Reformed' direction. While in 1933, the separate organization and unique spiritual profile of one of the churches, the *Gereformeerde Gemeenten*, was mainly responsible for the Royal Decree, in 1979, it was not a church but the Bible Belt community as such that was the reason for recognition. In planned procedures for secondary schools, the Department henceforth took into consideration the votes of the Reformed Political Party in certain regions. The decision of 1979 refers to the "conscientious objections" of the Bible Belt community against secondary education at other than strong religious schools, citing the European Convention on Human Rights, "in which [it] is recorded that the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching [is] in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions" (ECHR article 2 first protocol) [21]. In current discussions on the strong religious schools, however, the ECHR hardly plays any role.

The Pacification of 1917, we can conclude, stimulated the founding and flourishing of various faith-based schools, which included the strong religious schools of the Bible Belt community. However, the space offered by the state also had its price. The limitations of the Dutch freedom of education have been clearly visible since the 1990s, especially since, in 1994, the General Act on Equal Treatment was accepted in the Dutch parliament, underlining the principle of nondiscrimination. The Act caused a rift between Bible Belt and liberal society and resulted in some court cases about the equal treatment of women and homosexuals in the semipublic sphere of the Reformed Political Party and the strong schools at the Bible Belt [22,23]. These court cases make clear that equal treatment leads to diminished freedoms for Christians: i.e., an orthodox Reformed interpretation of the admission of pupils and the recruitment of staff members, in which strong religious schools are asked for consistency in policy. This is, however, not a specific Dutch phenomenon, as all Western European faith-based schools to a greater or lesser extent have been confronted with similar problems when it comes to admission and recruitment ([16], p. 159; cf. [24,25]).

The figure of the homosexual teacher became exemplary of these debates, and due to the persistent discussion about the possible dismissal from a strong religious school, it is considered the locus classicus of equal treatment legislation [25] (p. 43). Choosing to attend a church outside the Bible Belt could also lead to a notification of dismissal for personnel at strong religious schools. And yet, however these schools outline their own policy today, the limits of nondiscrimination are strictly controlled by the court, parliament, and the media. The Bible Belt community experiences the equal treatment legislation as a direct attack on their moral values [22,23,26], and although there have been only a few legal cases about the admission of pupils or the recruitment of teachers in the context of equal treatment legislation, the public perception of strong religion and the experience of limited freedom of movement of Bible Belt schools make it clear that this community feels that they have become 'strangers' in its own country. Because this was caused by decreasing tolerance of the government for religious minorities in favor of the individual's right to equality and nondiscrimination, the plurality of the Dutch school system is under pressure [25,27]. Based on their reconstruction in hindsight, Maussen and Vermeulen [24] interpreted this development as a shift in the conceptualization of religious freedom in relation to liberal equality, which may destabilize substantial collective freedoms for conservative religious groups. In their opinion, this is a break with the Dutch tradition of tolerance towards all kinds of minorities (cf. [28], p. 873).

A good example of how strong religious schools are often treated with suspicion by both policy makers and politicians is a recent case about the funding of an Islamic school. In 2016, state secretary

of education Sander Dekker announced that he was unwilling to appropriate governmental funds for the founding of a new Islamic school for secondary education in Amsterdam because, in his opinion, it was not sufficiently clear if and how the school would be able to meet the national requirements on citizenship education. The discussions that followed finally ended in the judgment of the Council of State that there are no legal arguments not to support the school financially and that the government is therefore obliged to fund the school [29]. Other questions were also raised regarding strong Christian schools, amongst which the orthodox Reformed schools are included. We quote from a commentary of the editor-in-chief of *Trouw*, a Dutch national newspaper, responding to the decision of state secretary Dekker not to fund the Islamic school:

> What about citizenship education at orthodox Protestant schools that adhere to creationism and fight evolution theory? Homosexuals are not allowed to marry and they also cannot teach at those schools. Of course these opinions are not as state undermining opinions as those of the former Islamic board member, but if freedom of education is the constitutional starting point, then we accept that groups can appeal to that, however disagreeable their opinions might be. The greatest problem is that groups could [. . .] use democratic rights to strive for undemocratic ends. This possibility leads to tensions, to put it mildly [30].

In our opinion, the editor-in-chief gets to the heart of the matter. The real questions involve dealing with divergent views in a liberal democratic society [31]. This theme is also the background of the main question for this article on the existence of and justification for strong religious schools in secular societies. To contextualize this question and focus on orthodox Reformed schools in the Netherlands, we have taken a historical perspective in order to better understand why these schools are founded and how they are justified within Dutch society. In the remainder of this article, we add some philosophical insights. It is not our aim to summarize or evaluate all existing (academic) literature on faith schools and liberal societies. We highlight some important philosophical notions and relate them to orthodox Reformed schools in the Netherlands. We recommend the 2018 special issue of *Theory and Research in Education* on 'Faith Schools and Civic Virtue' to readers who want to learn more about current views of philosophers of education on faith schools in liberal societies. We begin with autonomy, as to many contemporary liberal philosophers, this is one of the key goals of education.

4. Autonomy

An important question for many liberal thinkers is whether orthodox Christian schools are willing and able to teach their pupils the fundamental rights and rules central to a liberal democratic society [32]. What if "the values of one's own convictions are at odds with liberal values and fundamental rights?" Tensions may arise, for example, over the value of 'equality'. What if, on the basis of one's convictions, it is taught that women are subordinate to men, even though equality of every individual is an important basic value in our society? From this description, it is clear that at least some of the values held by orthodox Reformed Christians are at odds with the values and fundamental rights of a liberal society.

Most liberal philosophers prize an autonomous lifestyle (i.e., to live life free of all constraints) because only then, in their opinion, can liberal values be instilled in children. Callan [33] (p. 118), for example, stated that "autonomy enables us to choose intrinsically good lives: autonomy confers that ability without creating bias against any particular ways of life that might have intrinsic value". Merry [5] (p. 165) agreed, and noted that "being or becoming autonomous means being capable of reflecting upon different points of view and arriving at a reasonable and considered opinion about those things one has reason to value and is able to pursue". However, with Merry, we also believe that there are a number of difficulties with the ideal of autonomy, which was also questioned by De Wolff [32] in her article on strong religious schools in the Netherlands (see, for instance, [5], pp. 174–175 for an enumeration of a few of these difficulties and references to authors who elaborate on them). According to De Wolff, autonomy has become overemphasized, to the point that children

are no longer taught any specific vision of life. She makes clear that "a lack of roots", meaning that one's identity is not based on family traditions (including religious aspects), can ultimately lead to fundamentalism: "Extreme-fundamentalistic young people no longer confine their identity to the tradition of their parents, but neither can they confine their identity to the offerings of the secularized society that surrounds them" [32] (pp. 163–164).

In this regard, it is interesting to note that fourteen-year-old students at Bradford Christian School expressed in a focus group "that it [Bradford, JE—GBT] offered them more freedom than schools where comprehensively liberal and secular values formed an orthodoxy that they did not feel able to challenge" [1] (p. 185). Students indicated that at their previous public schools, they "felt unable to challenge a secular orthodoxy and believed they were denied a voice because comprehensively liberal beliefs were presented as incontrovertible facts" [1] (pp. 185–186). Empirical findings such as these demonstrate the importance of looking beyond first impressions or prejudices in order to take into account what is really happening in schools [34]. In practice, young people could have more room to develop their own views at strong religious schools than at public schools, where less discussion about beliefs and values is possible.

MacMullen, amongst others, offered another interesting perspective on the role of autonomy development [10,35]. MacMullen argued that if the goal is the development of autonomy, it is better if a 'provisional identity' within a particular primary culture is nurtured in the early years of life. This primary culture, he claims, can serve as a basis for further autonomy development. In short, then, MacMullen believed that especially in the early years (primary school), a close connection between home and school life is beneficial. The provisional set of values and norms, which is shared by both home and school, serves as a starting point for the developing child's own life journey. In this sense, MacMullen's argument underlines the value of Reformed schools for children who grow up in the Bible Belt culture. If students are stigmatized by their secular compatriots exclusively for being part of the Bible Belt culture, it is difficult for these young people to develop a coherent 'provisional identity' within the context of secular education; this stigmatization could be a reason for as well as a result of separate schooling. Additionally, Merry [5] (p. 167) made it clear that to be stigmatized is to be harmed. "Stigmas devalue the stigmatized, and this devaluation is often internalized by the stigmatized themselves." Merry referred to Fricker (2007), who called the result of this stigmatization 'epistemic injustice': "Epistemic injustice occurs when persons *lose knowledge*, that is, when their ability to know things with confidence is weakened, given how their experiences—but also the manner in which they try to convey these experiences—are not taken seriously by others" [5] (p. 167). We do not have empirical research on the extent to which young people who grow up in the Bible Belt culture feel stigmatized, but there is evidence that points in that direction: Pupils of an orthodox Reformed school for secondary education in the Netherlands expressed that they, to a greater or lesser extent, 'feel different' and are sometimes treated as if they come from another planet [36]. Unfortunately, primary school pupils were not included in this study. For primary school children from a minority group, it is even more important to have their 'own' schools. MacMullen even went so far as to say that his argument (on the importance of a close fit between home and school contexts for autonomy development) only holds for primary education. Autonomous thinking requires the ability to assess different perspectives and reason outside one's own frame of mind. This ability (which is called 'formal deductive reasoning' by developmental psychologist Piaget [37]) is unlikely to be (initially) developed before the age of eleven or twelve. MacMullen, however, stressed that the foundations for children's future autonomy should be laid already in elementary school. He, thus, formulated a few "hallmarks of acceptable pedagogy in a religious elementary school":

> In particular, teachers should exercise rational authority by structuring most justifications as reasoned inferences from explicit principles and values, asking and encouraging questions that invite rational analysis and interpretation rather than recitation of dogma, and highlighting hard cases within the religious doctrine where reasonable disagreement exists even among the faithful [35] (p. 613).

All in all, MacMullen has a much more positive view on religious (primary) schools than many others in our liberal, secular society. Yet, he also does not hesitate to acknowledge possible risks that might impede the future autonomy development of children. The challenges for strong religious schools can be further illustrated with the help of the work of the American philosopher Kenneth Strike [9], who elaborated on the role of comprehensive life conceptions in a plural, liberal democracy. We go further into this in the next section.

5. Comprehensive Life Conceptions and Public Morality

An important difference between Strike and other liberal thinkers such as Rawls, Gutman, and Callan is his understanding of the role of comprehensive doctrines and conceptions of the good life. Just like De Wolff, Strike maintained that some authors attach too much value to autonomy at the cost of conceptions of the good life [38]. Strike believes that there should be a dialogical relation between comprehensive life conceptions (as 'primary moral languages') and more basic public morality ('public language') and emphasized that 'the public language' or 'public morality' is not separate from the diverse moral traditions in society. Both languages develop, according to Strike, in interaction with each other, in a process of reciprocal adjustment, and are therefore dynamic.

According to Strike, different interpretations of the public language can be developed in a liberal democratic society, each being congruent with one of the different primary moral languages. De Wolff agreed and concluded that when considering the dynamics of public morality, it is important to allow comprehensive life conceptions into the public debate on the arrangement of our society. In education, children need to learn dialogical competences. Strike distinguished three elements: Children need to achieve competencies in a primary moral language and in the public moral languag, and they need to learn how to have a hermeneutical or critical dialogue between different primary languages [32] (p. 66). In order to be a good citizen in the present liberal democracy, then, it is of foremost importance that children become cognizant of their own life conceptions. They must learn what these conceptions mean for their lives and how they can talk about them with others who share the same life conceptions. Secondly, children must also become acquainted with public morality (which, according to Strike, is inseparable from the primary moral languages) and learn to recognize its importance. Children should also learn how they perceive public morality and how it can reinforce their own perspectives. In other words, children should be able to practice a 'critical dialogue' between different life conceptions. This critical or hermeneutical dialogue serves three aims. In the first place, children learn to understand how others think about their way of life. Secondly, they learn 'reciprocity', the ability to put themselves in other people's shoes. And thirdly, practicing a critical dialogue teaches children how to deal with critics of their own primary moral language and to value their own primary moral language in the proper way. This includes the ability to listen to critics and to (learn to) be open to alternative perspectives. It is, thus, also about being brave enough to criticize one's own perspective [39].

Strong religious schools, by definition, seek to affirm and reinforce the identity of their community (McDonough), and their purpose also includes making pupils aware of their own life conception. Bearing in mind the importance of having a 'provisional identity', we argue that Strike's first mentioned competence is addressed principally at strong religious schools. The challenges for strong religious schools mainly relate to the second and third competences, those dealing with the dialogue about public morality and the dialogue between different life conceptions. As De Wolff noted: "For orthodox Christian schools it is a challenge to teach children that a religious outlook on life always presumes faith; values related to that faith therefore cannot be easily dictated to others. It is typical for a believer to stick to certain values deliberately, because he believes that he is asked or forced to do so out of respect for a higher authority. But that belief cannot be imposed directly on others" ([32] (p. 167) translation GBT). Here, we would like to explicitly stress the challenge of (learning to) have a critical dialogue. Learning to take a critical perspective on one's own tradition and to leave open the possibility of taking another perspective is not evident to orthodox believers. We argue, however, that this ability

is indeed necessary in order to have a genuine and fair dialogue with people who hold different life conceptions. In our view, this means that there should always be the possibility to change one's life conception. (Religious) traditions change over time in relation to changes in mainstream society. This is the only way to fully realize the dialogical relation between comprehensive life conceptions and basic public morality. The Bible Belt culture has shown potential in this area in its changing views on male–female relationships in public duties, for example [23].

6. Conclusions and Discussion

Our article aimed to answer the question: How can the founding and existence of orthodox Reformed schools in a liberal, secular society be explained and justified? We focused on the Dutch context and began by elaborating on the Bible Belt community and its Reformed schools as a particular kind of strong Christian schools. These schools were founded under favorable conditions, in comparison with most other Western European faith-based schools, which have had less space to flourish. The schools successfully justified their existence with a plea for religious freedom. However, we pointed out the transformation of plurality and toleration under the influence of the introduction of equal treatment legislation at the end of the twentieth century. For strong religious schools—Islamic as well as Reformed—this transformation resulted in a widening gap between liberal democracy and its values, because these schools wanted to follow their own policies. Such policies include educating pupils from its religious community alone, a ban on homosexual teachers, and allowing plenty of room for their religious views in the curriculum. These freedoms are under pressure today.

Drawing on the work of both MacMullen and Strike, we elaborated on the educational opportunities and challenges for orthodox Reformed schools in a liberal and secular society. Especially in the case of primary schools, they are justified by their ability to connect education with the home environment of children, thereby contributing to a strong 'provisional identity' that can serve as a firm basis for a child's later development. However, elementary education should also lay the foundation for a child's future autonomy. Thus, children should be encouraged, amongst other things, to ask questions and to learn dialogical competences that enable them to achieve skills in their primary moral (religious) language, in the public moral language, and in the fruitful dialogue between them. This last skill can be especially challenging for orthodox Reformed schools. Therefore, we recommend that teacher training institutes support (future) teachers in strong religious schools by, amongst other things, providing them with examples and stimulating reflection and dialogue amongst teachers themselves.

As adolescents from twelve years and older are expected to have developed the ability to see different perspectives and reason outside their own frame of mind, there are fewer reasons to support orthodox Reformed schools for secondary education. However, as few twelve-year-olds are able to reason in a formally deductive way at a consistently high level, as MacMullen admitted [10], one doubts whether it is useful to make such a sharp distinction between primary and secondary education here. The extent to which young people raised within the Dutch Bible Belt community experience stigmatization could also be a factor; autonomy development is not the only argument that could or should be used to justify the existence of a particular kind of (religious) education.

Given the current public and political debate on orthodox Reformed schools in our liberal society (in relation to the principle of nondiscrimination), we contend that orthodox Reformed schools for secondary education especially need to formulate clear responses to questions about how their continued existence contributes both to the development of their pupils and to society as a whole: What do they want to teach their pupils about living with orthodox beliefs and values in modern society, in which way can this teaching contribute to good citizenship, and, above all, what are their views on living together with various and contrasting (religious) worldviews in the 21st century? As these are important and even existential questions with implications for everyday school practice, we urge strong religious schools to help and stimulate each other in order to deal with them. We also recommend that board members of strong religious schools seek dialogue with nonstrong religious schools and/or

school advisors with expertise in nonstrong religious schools as well. By contrasting one's views with those from outside one's own (minority) culture, one is stimulated to practice the competences needed in a diverse society and to sharpen and clarify one's own views. Teachers should also be encouraged to practice these competences themselves in order to be good examples for their pupils.

Essentially, the discussed educational challenges and opportunities are valid for all kinds of (strong) religious schools in our liberal, secular society. However, the extent to which schools are willing and able to teach young people all three necessary competences depends on (amongst other things) the position of their (religious) group in society as a whole and their interpretation of their Holy Book(s) and/or tradition. Further (empirical) research could offer useful insights here. Returning to the words of Pike [1], we believe that it is now the best of times for orthodox Reformed schools not only to defend the freedom of those who do not wish to (fully) confirm with the values of the secular mainstream, but also to contribute to broader social cohesion by stimulating their pupils' dialogical competences.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, all authors; methodology, all authors; software, all authors; validation, all authors; formal analysis, all authors; investigation, all authors; resources, all authors; data curation, all authors; writing—original draft preparation, all authors; writing—review and editing, all authors; visualization, all authors; supervision, all authors; project administration, all authors.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

1. Pike, M. A Tale of Two Schools: Comparing and Contrasting Jacobus Fruytier Scholengemeenschap in the Netherlands and Bradford Christian School in England. *J. Beliefs Values* **2010**, *31*, 181–190. [CrossRef]
2. Burtonwood, N. *Cultural Diversity, Liberal Pluralism and Schools: Isaiah Berlin and Education*; Routledge: Abingdon, UK, 2006.
3. Ofsted. *The Annual Report of her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2016/2017*; Open Government Licence; Crown: London, UK, 2017.
4. Adams, R.; Mason, R. Private Faith Schools Are Resisting British Values, Says Ofsted Chief. *The Guardian*, 13 December 2017; 12.
5. Merry, M.S. Indoctrination, Islamic schools, and the broader scope of harm. *Theory Res. Educ.* **2018**, *16*, 162–178. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
6. MacMullen, I. Religious schools, civic education, and public policy: A framework for evaluation and decision. *Theory Res. Educ.* **2018**, *16*, 141–161. [CrossRef]
7. McDonough, K. Can the Liberal State Support Cultural Identity Schools? *Am. J. Educ. (Chic Ill)* **1998**, *106*, 463–499. [CrossRef]
8. van Lieburg, F.A. (Ed.) *Refogeschiedenis in Perspectief: Opstellen over de Bevindelijke Traditie*; Groen: Heerenveen, The Netherlands, 2007.
9. Strike, K.A. Liberalism, Communitarism and the Space Between: In Praise of Kindness. *J. Moral Educ.* **2000**, *29*, 133–147. [CrossRef]
10. MacMullen, I. *Faith in Schools? Autonomy, Citizenship and Religious Education in the Liberal State*; Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, USA, 2007.
11. Janse, C.S.L. *Bewaar het Pand: De Spanning Tussen Assimilatie en Persistentie bij de Emancipatie van de Bevindelijk Gereformeerden*; Den Hertog: Houten, The Netherlands, 1985.
12. Janse, C.S.L. *De Refozuil Onder Vuur*; De Banier: Apeldoorn, The Netherlands, 2015.
13. Schmeets, H. *Wie is Religieus, en Wie Niet?* Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek: Den Haag, The Netherlands, 2018.
14. Napel, H.M.T.D. ten. Een Nederlandse Taliban? In *De Multiculturele Samenleving en het Recht*; van Manen, N.F., Ed.; Paul Scholten Instituut/Ars Aequi Libri: Nijmegen, The Netherlands, 2002; pp. 151–157.
15. Exalto, J. Kerk, school en partij: De SGP als politieke representatie van de bevindelijk gereformeerden. In *Mannen van Gods Woord: De Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij 1918-2018*; Vollaard, H., Voerman, G., Eds.; Verloren: Hilversum, The Netherlands, 2018; pp. 47–68.

16. Glenn, C.L. Educational Freedom and Protestant Schools in Europe. In *International Handbook of Protestant Education*; Jeynes, W., Robinson, D.W., Eds.; Springer Science+Business Media: Dordrecht, The Netherlands, 2012; pp. 139–161.
17. Naylor, W. School Choice and Religious Liberty in the Netherlands: Reconsidering the Dutch School Struggle and the Influence of Abraham Kuyper in Its Resolution. In *International Handbook of Protestant Education*; Jeynes, W., Robinson, D.W., Eds.; Springer Science+Business Media: Dordrecht, The Netherlands, 2012; pp. 245–274.
18. de Muynck, A.; Miedema, S.; ter Avest, I. Education and Religion in the Netherlands. In *International comparative perspectives on religion and education*; Wolhuter, C., De Wet, C., Eds.; SunPress: Bloemfontein, South Africa, 2014; pp. 107–125.
19. Exalto, J. *Van Wie is het Kind? Twee Eeuwen Onderwijsvrijheid in Nederland*; Balans: Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2017.
20. Koninklijk Besluit 15 mei 1933, no. 22. In *Administratieve en Rechterlijke Beslissingen BETREFFENDE het Openbaar bestuur in Nederland*; Tjeenk Willink: Zwolle, The Netherlands, 1933; pp. 543–545. (In Dutch)
21. Exalto, J. Het reformatorisch onderwijs en de vrijheid van richting, 1920–1980. In *De multiculturele refoschool: Het Reformatorisch Onderwijs en de Uitdaging van het Pluralisme*; Exalto, J., Ed.; Labarum Academic: Apeldoorn, The Netherlands, 2017; pp. 79–117.
22. Oomen, B. Between Rights Talk and Bible Speak: The Implementation of Equal Treatment Legislation in Orthodox Reformed Communities in the Netherlands. *Hum. Rights Q.* **2011**, *3*, 175–200. [CrossRef]
23. Oomen, B.; Rijke, N. The Right to be Different: Homosexuality, Orthodoxy and the Politics of Global Legal Pluralism in Orthodox-Protestant Schools in the Netherlands. *J. Law Relig.* **2013**, *28*, 361–400. [CrossRef]
24. Maussen, M.; Vermeulen, F. Liberal Equality and Toleration for Conservative Religious Minorities: Decreasing Opportunities for Religious Schools in the Netherlands? *Comp. Educ.* **2015**, *51*, 87–104. [CrossRef]
25. Vermeulen, B.P. Regulating School Choice to Promote Civic Values: Constitutional and Political Issues in the Netherlands. In *Educating Citizens: International Perspectives on Civic Values and School Choice*; Wolf, P., Macedo, S., Eds.; Brookings Institution Press: Washington, DC, USA, 2004; pp. 31–66.
26. Rijke, N. Strijd om en binnen de refoschool: Over culturele verschillen, mensenrechten en het benoemingsbeleid. In *De Multiculturele Refoschool: Het Reformatorisch Onderwijs en de Uitdaging van het Pluralisme*; Exalto, J., Ed.; Labarum Academic: Apeldoorn, The Netherlands, 2017; pp. 119–146.
27. Ter Avest, K.H.; Rietveld-van Wingerden, M. Half a century of Islamic education in Dutch schools. *BJRE* **2017**, *39*, 293–302. [CrossRef]
28. Merry, M.S.; Driessen, G. On the Right Track? Islamic Schools in the Netherlands after an Era of Turmoil. *Race. Ethn. Educ.* **2016**, *19*, 856–879. [CrossRef]
29. Vissers, P. Dekker moet islamitisch onderwijs in Amsterdam financieren. *Trouw*, 27 July 2017; 17.
30. van der Laan, C. Commentaar: Dekker gaat onzekere weg op. *Trouw*, 1 June 2016; 21.
31. Miedema, S.; Bertram-Troost, G.D. Democratic Citizenship and Religious Education: Challenges and Perspectives for Schools in the Netherlands. *BJRE* **2008**, *30*, 123–132. [CrossRef]
32. de Wolff, A. Religie, fundamentalisme en burgerschap. In *Levensbeschouwelijk Leren Samenleven: Opvoeding, Identiteit & Ontmoeting*; Miedema, S., Bertram-Troost, G.D., Eds.; Meinema: Zoetermeer, The Netherlands, 2006; pp. 155–170. (In Dutch)
33. Callan, E. Autonomy, child-rearing and good lives. In *The Moral and Political Status of Children*; Archard, D., Maclead, C., Eds.; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2002; pp. 118–141.
34. Bertram-Troost, G.D. Investigating the Impact of Religious Diversity in Schools for Secondary Education: A Challenging but Necessary Exercise. *BJRE* **2011**, *33*, 271–283. [CrossRef]
35. MacMullen, I. Education for Autonomy: The Role of Religious Elementary Schools. *J. Philos. Educ.* **2004**, *38*, 601–615. [CrossRef]
36. Baars-Blom, J.M. *De Onschuld Voorbij: over Reformatorische Cultuur en Wereldbestormende Meisjes*; Kok: Kampen, The Netherlands, 2006.
37. Piaget, J. *Judgement and Reasoning in the Child*; Warden, M., Translator; Harcourt, Brace & Co.: New York, NY, USA, 1976.

38. van Leest-Borst, A. Fundamentalistische Opvoeding Vanuit Liberaal-Democratisch Perspectief: Grenzen van Onderwijsvrijheid. Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Psychology and Education, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2005.
39. Bertram-Troost, G.D. Refoscholen op de balk: Balanceren tussen eigenheid en openheid. In *De Multiculturele Refoschool: Het Reformatorisch Onderwijs en de Uitdaging van het Pluralisme*; Exalto, J., Ed.; Labarum Academic: Apeldoorn, The Netherlands, 2017; pp. 23–56.

education sciences

MDPI

Article

Religious and Heritage Education in Israel in an Era of Secularism

Yaacov J. Katz [1,2]

[1] School of Education, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan 529002, Israel; yaacov.katz@biu.ac.il; Tel.: +972-525-992-727

[2] Michlalah-Jerusalem Academic College, Jerusalem 9642845, Israel

Received: 4 September 2018; Accepted: 12 October 2018; Published: 19 October 2018

Abstract: Israel as a unique country composed of a religiously heterogeneous society of native-born Israelis whose parents arrived in the country before the declaration of Israel as an independent state in 1948 and immigrant Jews coming from countries spread throughout the world, mainly from the early 1960s until the present time, as well as Arab Moslem, Arab Christian, and Druze citizens born in the country. The Jewish population consists of secularized Jews who are almost totally estranged from the Jewish religion; traditional Jews who identify with the Jewish religion; religious modern orthodox observant Jews who share common societal goals with members of secular and religious Jewish society; and religious ultra-orthodox observant Jews who are rigid in their faith and oppose absorption and assimilation into general society. The Israeli Arab population comprises Moslems who are generally more religious than Israeli Jews, but are less religious and more flexible in their religious beliefs than Moslems living in many other countries in the Middle East. Christians who identify with their religion; and a moderately religious Druze community. Because of the heterogeneity of Israeli society, mandatory religious and heritage education presents each sector with a unique curriculum that serves the particular needs considered vital for each sector be they secular, traditional, or religious. In order to offset the differences in religious and heritage education and to enhance common social values and social cohesion in Israeli society, citizenship education, coupled with religious and heritage education, is compulsory for all population sectors.

Keywords: state Jewish religious education; state Jewish secular education; state Arab Moslem education; state Christian education; state Druze education; religious and heritage education; citizenship education

1. Background

According to the description presented by Katz [1], Israel as a unique country with a population that has increased by 1000% since independence in 1948 and is made up of a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and religiously heterogeneous society of native-born Israelis whose parents arrived in the country before the declaration of Israel as an independent state in 1948 and immigrant Jews hailing from countries throughout the world, as well as Arab Moslems, Arab Christians, and Druze largely born in the country [2]. The breakdown in the demographics of the Israeli population of approximately 8.5 million is presented in Table 1:

Table 1. Demographics of Israeli Population [2].

Sector	Percentage
Jewish Secular	40%
Jewish Traditional	23%
Jewish Orthodox	10%
Jewish Ultra-Orthodox	8%
Moslem	14%
Christian	2%
Druze	2%
No religion	1%
Total	100%

The influx of immigrants from Europe and North America brought about a rapid transition to modernity and secularism in some sectors of Israeli society on the one hand while the mass absorption of immigrants from North African and Asian countries contributed to the maintaining of tradition and religiosity in other sectors of Israeli society on the other. As such, the Israeli population may be described as being both traditionally religious as well as secular with traditionally religious citizens living amicably alongside citizens who have adopted a secular way of life [3]. Traditional societies differ from modern, and especially postmodern, societies most especially on the issue of coherence, cohesion and homogeneity which are perceived to be of major importance in traditional societies as opposed to the philosophy that emphasizes the importance of individualization, heterogeneity and social flexibility of modern and postmodern societies and communities.

The Israeli Jewish population [4] consists of a number of societal sectors broken down as follows: secularized Jews who are members of the Jewish faith by birth but totally estranged from the Jewish religion by conviction and ideology; traditional Jews who consider themselves as being members of the Jewish religion but usually do not fulfill Jewish religious demands, precepts, and commandments; orthodox Jews who strictly observe Jewish tradition, precepts, and commandments but believe that they share common societal goals with members of secularized, traditional as well as religious Jewish society and strive for integration and assimilation into Jewish society in their daily lives; and ultra-orthodox Jews who rigidly observe religious traditions, precepts, and commandments and oppose integration into general society in the belief that partnership with the other sectors in Israeli society will negatively compromise their beliefs and religious lifestyle.

The Israeli Arab population [5] includes a large sector of Moslems who are moderately religious and flexible in their level of religious observance despite a visible trend towards increased levels of religious fundamentalism; a much smaller but vibrant sector of members of the Christian faith who maintain a moderate and pragmatic attitude towards their religiosity and mainly view their faith as being an essential part of their social identity as well as their culture; and an even smaller Druze community which also maintains a strong affiliation with Druze history, Druze identity, and Druze culture as well as with the secret Druze religion with only the clergy actually having full knowledge about the intricacies of the religion. The Israel Ministry of Education is aware of the significant heterogeneity of Israeli society and while religious and heritage education is mandatory for all sectors in Israeli society, each individual sector is free to set a unique curriculum that serves its beliefs, ideology, identity, and culture.

This paper will address the complex issue of state religious and heritage education within Israeli society that prides itself as being secular, democratic, modern, humanistic, and universalistic. The paper will explain how the core concepts of religion, heritage, national identity, national history, and natural culture, vital to the existence of Israel as a Jewish state, entrench the values of democracy, equality, social harmony, humanism, and universalism that significantly contributes to coherence and cohesion for all members of Israeli society. Thus, the paper will examine the effect of religious and heritage education on students in schools in the Jewish (religious-orthodox and secular) sectors and Arab (Moslem, Christian, and Druze) sectors vis-à-vis religious influence and social cohesion that

reflects their respective religious denominations, identities, history, and culture. Note should be made that this paper analyzes religious and heritage education in state schools only and not in private or semi-private schools, such as those in the ultra-orthodox sector, that are autonomous and not totally bound by the mandatory curricular requirements set by the Ministry of Education.

2. The Importance of Social Cohesion in Israel

David Ben-Gurion, the first Israeli Prime Minister and the other leaders of the fledgling independent Israeli state, instituted national policy [6] whereby state institutions, such as the Israel Defense Force and the state education system, serve as social melting-pots and proponents of enhanced social integration of the different religious, cultural, ethnic, and national groupings into a predominantly homogeneous society. This policy was implemented in the early days of Israeli independence and, at the time, was best suited to the nature of traditional society of the 1950s and 1960s. However, since the 1960s, Israeli society began to develop as a typical western democracy and shied away from the tradition of socialism and gravitated towards the enhancement of individual civil rights alongside the rights of the collective. Concern for the individual and for the need to promote the rights the different sectors of a heterogeneous society became a major societal goal, and the enhancement of unique religious, cultural, ethnic, national, and different value-based agendas has become increasingly tolerated and acceptable in Israeli society. Since the late 1960s and the early 1970s, the different sectors in the Israeli population have become more aware of the need to actively realize their unique sectorial demands. As result the respective sectorial groups in Israel have actively campaigned for a radical change in society and have been successful in engineering a transformation of Israeli society from one where the more traditional homogeneous values of cohesion and integration to one where different sectoral and group values have become acceptable, normative and even desirable.

As a result of the abovementioned social changes that have transpired in Israeli society since the 1990s, namely the move from traditional social homogeneity to heterogeneous secularism, modernism, and postmodernism, different perceptions of religiosity, culture, values, and education are now those that significantly characterize contemporary Israeli society. The different sectors in Israeli society have chosen to accentuate these differences at the expense of social cohesion and social harmony that typified Israeli society from the early days of independence up till the 1990s. Thus, the modern and post-modern divides in Israeli society that have developed in recent years and the resulting tensions and acrimony between the different societal sectors have led to a concerted move by the Israeli leadership to initiate moves to renew social cohesion and social harmony in Israeli society mainly through proactive introduction of mandatory religious and heritage education throughout the Israeli state school system.

Education for Social Cohesion in Israel

A major goal of Israeli society is to expend major efforts to minimize and limit inter-religious, inter-ethnic, inter-national, and inter-cultural gaps between different sectors in the population, and to generate the acceptance of common social values and cohesion in a society that may be described as extremely heterogeneous and sectorial [7]. The education system in Israel has made gradual progress in an attempt to promote and enhance values designed to lead to social cohesion. There is a general consensus among political as well as educational leaders that religious and heritage education as well as citizenship education are the main vehicles and platforms for the enhancement of social cohesion in Israel. In addition, there is agreement that religious and heritage education together with citizenship education need to emphasize the notion that Israel is a Jewish and democratic state, and that education must substantially contribute to the narrowing of differences and schisms between the different societal groups in order to facilitate coherence in society as well as the development of intrinsic values that vitally permeate a normative Jewish and democratic state.

Education for social cohesion and values has become a major mandatory feature of Israeli education and is mandatorily provided within the domain of religious and heritage education

complemented by citizenship education [8,9]. All students in the state education system now study religious and heritage education as well as citizenship education as complementary mandatory core subjects. Both subjects include references to the promotion of religious tradition as well as social cohesion and call for the intensification of democratic, egalitarian humanistic and universal values among students [10].

3. State Education in Israel

The Israeli Ministry of Education is endowed with the largest budget allocated to a civilian ministry and is second only to that of the Ministry of Defense. The resources that are earmarked for education enable the school system to develop necessary educational facilities, school-based technology, teaching pedagogies and learning methods as well as a variety of extra-curricular programs for students at all levels in the school system [11]. The educational and professional qualifications of teachers in Israel is acceptable by international standards [10] with almost all teachers in the education system in possession of a college degree and a teaching diploma. School facilities, such as classrooms, libraries, laboratories, computer rooms, and sports facilities are well developed; the achievement of students in school-leaving matriculation and university-entrance examinations is, on the average, similar to the level of achievement characterizing matriculants and school-leavers the average Western country; the average drop-out rate of students is low and, in general, parents increasingly express an interest in their children's education.

The Israeli education system is similar in its structure to that typifying schools in most western countries and offers mandatory and free state education to all students. There are approximately 2 million students attending preschools, elementary schools, junior high schools and high schools that are divided into two major sectors, namely Jewish and Arab. The two sectors are administered by independent departments in the Israeli Ministry of Education and enjoy sectorial autonomy with inspectors, who belong to the different sectors, responsible for supervising the educational process in each sector. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the curriculum, examinations, and teacher certification of all sectors and coordinates the educational processes that are implemented in schools affiliated to the different sectors.

Religious and heritage education as well as citizenship education are mandatory subjects studied by all sectors in the Israeli population [12,13]. Students belonging to all major religious denominations in Israeli society (Jewish, Moslem, Christian, and Druze denominations) are required to study their own unique religious traditions and heritage as well as to study common values such as democracy, equality, social harmony, humanism, and universalism that are perceived to contribute to the enhancement of social cohesion. Because of the importance of religious and heritage education in the different sectors of the education system and the uniquely differential needs of the different sectors in these areas, the national education budget provides differential financial resources to cover the costs of the different religious and heritage education curricula provided by the different sectors in the education system.

In order to understand the aims of religious and heritage education in the Israeli education system, especially with regard to the expected contribution to social cohesion and commonly accepted social values, it is vital to understand the educational format and framework within which religious and heritage education complemented by citizenship education is delivered to both Jewish and Arab school-going populations. Following is a description of this framework [14].

4. State Jewish Education in Israel

The Jewish education system in Israel is granted budgetary resources by the central government augmented by additional finances provided by local municipal authorities that permit widespread development of school facilities, up-to-date technology, up-to-date teaching pedagogies, and learning methods, and a variety of extra-curricular programs for students at all levels in the school system [11]. The structure of the state Jewish education system in Israel includes state religious and state secular sub-sectors each catering respectively to parents and their children who are ideologically motivated

to send their children to religious or secular schools. Students in the sub-sectors are presented with identical learning content and curricula in most subjects except for those where ideology dictates necessary differences [6]. Thus, the curricula of subjects such as Hebrew, English, mathematics, science, geography, and physical education, are identical in both sectors. However, the curricula of subjects such as literature, history, art and especially religious and heritage education, that contain ideologically sensitive content are specifically designed according to the unique needs of each sector.

5. Jewish Religious and Heritage Education in Israel

In the mandatory core curriculum implemented in Israeli schools [15], religious and heritage education complemented by citizenship education are major core subjects studied by students in the two main Jewish educational sectors. Because of public dissatisfaction with the state of religious and heritage education in the Jewish school system, the then Minister of Education appointed the Shenhar Commission [12] to examine how best religious and heritage education could be implemented in Jewish schools. The report of the Shenhar Commission affirmed the vital necessity of introducing religious and heritage education as a compulsory subject in the core curriculum for the Jewish school population. At the same time serious public criticism concerning a lack of social cohesion in Israeli society as well dissatisfaction with the study of democratic, ethical, and social values in Israeli schools was voiced and the Minister of Education appointed the Kremnitzer Commission [13] to recommend how vital democratic, ethical, and moral values could and should be implemented Jewish schools within the mandatory core subject of citizenship education. The report of the Kremnitzer Commission affirmed the need to intensify the study of citizenship education in all Israeli schools, most especially, with regard to the emphasis on democracy, equality, social harmony, humanism, and universalism.

After the publication of the reports of the Shenhar and Kremnitzer Commissions, a department was established within the Ministry of Education to oversee the implementation of religious and heritage education on the one hand, and complementary citizenship education on the other in Jewish schools. The pedagogical strategy of implementation called for as much congruence and integration as possible between religious and heritage education and citizenship education so as to ensure that the subject matter taught in both domains would be coherent and complementary. Thus, the new department that dealt with the implementation of both subjects into the mandatory core curriculum closely worked as one team on the contents and pedagogics of both subjects.

5.1. Religious and Heritage Education in the State Religious Sector

The raison d'etre of state religious and heritage education is to enhance and deepen students' religious belief, deportment and knowledge of Jewish tradition as well to intensify students' responsibility towards the public and to the needs of others [16]. The study of religion in state religious schools is also expected to address problems that affect religious belief that in certain circumstances conflicts with moral and ethical domains [17]. Furthermore, religious and heritage education in the state religious school system is designed to intensify Jewish religious belief, tradition, and morality and prepare students for acceptance of the normative needs of society [18]. Thus, in the religious educational sector alongside the religious nuances that characterize the religious and heritage education curricula, common moral, ethical, and cultural values are mandatorily taught and student well-being is promoted and enhanced.

According to the National Education Act legislated in 1953, parents have the right to choose the educational sector in which their children will be educated. Thus, parents who choose the state religious sector for their children do so mainly because they feel that the focal feature of their children's education is the religious emphasis placed on all facets of cognitive and affective achievements in this sector [14]. In state religious and heritage education, emphasis is placed on faith and knowledge-based education where religious and heritage education consists of a range of religious subjects that are taught from a deterministic religious point of view and is designed to ensure religious observance of precepts and commandments as well to ensure scholastic achievement in the other core subjects (such

as Hebrew, English, mathematics, science, history, citizenship) in matriculation examinations taken by students at the end of their school careers. Citizenship values that contribute to societal cohesion and are congruent with religiosity, such as such as democracy, equality, social harmony, humanism, and universalism are part and parcel of students' vital education and teachers are fully aware of the focal importance of religion in the values presented to the students [19]. Thus, teachers are fully motivated to inculcate religious observance in their students' deportment and perceive Western-oriented citizenship values through the sectoral religious Jewish prism.

5.2. Religious and Heritage Education in the State Secular Sector

The ethos and vision of the state secular education system in Israel include the inculcation of values and morals as well as good citizenship that are an integral part of the development of a unique Israeli culture [20]. According to this perception, the aim of secular schools is to enhance a value system that encompasses aims, goals, culture, knowledge, skills, and feelings that contribute to the development of norms unique to a modern or post-modern society. Thus, values education is perceived as that segment of the educational process that is concerned with the development of culture, values, beliefs, attitudes, feelings, and emotional well-being of students. As such, the term 'culture' in the state secular school system displaces the term 'religious belief' in state religious schools.

There are three major concepts underlying religious and heritage education offered in state secular schools in Israel [21]. The concepts 'acquired truth', 'freedom of thought', and 'modern' indicate the basic foundations on which the philosophy of secular education in Israel is built. Truth is dependent on the acquiring of knowledge, which in turn is strengthened and intensified through the freedom and originality of thought. The study of the modern versus the traditional influences motivates students to adopt a values system congruent with humanistic perceptions of the world. Religious belief, is regarded by the state secular school system to be superfluous and out of touch with modern or post-modern reality. The needs and the spirit of free inquiry, based on Jewish cultural and historical sources as well as on universal culture, rather than convergent thinking based on traditional and religious sources, is that which leads to the development and adoption of normative secular values and morals. In the state secular school system, religious and heritage education is totally knowledge-based and addresses Jewish history, culture, and identity without any reference to religious deportment or behavior [1]. In addition, citizenship values based on Jewish tradition as well as on Western-oriented morals and ethics are emphasized in religious and heritage education in this sector.

Parents choose this sector mainly because they are secular in their personal outlooks and perceptions and have no religious commitment. They wish to ensure that their children experience a well-rounded and balanced secular education that emphasizes scholastic achievement as well as citizenship based on democracy, equality, social harmony, humanism, and universalism without any reference at all to religious observance or religious lifestyle. Students are encouraged to study in order to attain high levels of scholastic achievement that will enable them to obtain quality matriculation and school-leaving grades. Thus, religious and heritage education in this sector emphasizes the study of Jewish history, Jewish culture, and Jewish identity without referring to the practical observance of religious precepts. In this sector there is a clear distinction made between the importance of acquiring objective knowledge about the Jewish religion and heritage on the one hand, and total resistance to religious and heritage education being a springboard to an increase Jewish religious observance on the other. In addition, values that enhance social cohesion and pervade the citizenship values of democracy, equality, social harmony, humanism, and universalism are the major topics that characterize religious and heritage education in this sector.

6. State Arab Education in Israel

The structure of the state Arab education system in Israel is rather like an umbrella authority for a number of Arab population sub-sectors (Moslem, Christian, and Druze) [22]. The governmental budgetary resources complemented by financial resources provided by local Arab municipal authorities

to schools in this sector are officially identical to the budgets provided to schools in the Jewish sector. Students in the sub-sectors are presented with similar learning content and curricula in secular subjects (Arabic, English, mathematics, history, and geography) as offered to students in the Jewish state secular schools. However, religious and heritage education is designed to enhance knowledge about the unique basic beliefs and foundations of Islam, Christianity, and the Druze religion, and is offered to the students according to their particular religious affiliation.

Note should be made of the shortcomings that typify the Arab education system. Although Arab education is financed by the Ministry of Education and the local Arab municipal authorities in line with the same criteria that dictate the budget allotted to Jewish education, benign neglect by successive Israeli governments has produced inequality in allocation of resources between Jewish and Arab schools [23]. As a result, parents are critical of the Arab education system and are assertive in their demands that the Ministry of Education must provide additional resources to Arab schools in order to close the quality gap between the Jewish and Arab educational sectors. The Ministry has embarked upon a policy of improving the allocation of resources to the state Arab educational system and recently earmarked a special state budget in order to effect measures designed to close the existing gap in the level of education provided in Jewish and Arab schools.

7. Arab Religious and Heritage Education in Israel

Unlike the Jewish educational sector, the Arab educational sector includes students who are both religious and secular. They usually study in the same schools although there are schools available for Arab students who belong to the different national and religious denominations (Moslem, Christian, and Druze) and particularly wish to study in a religiously denominational school. Within Arab schools religious and heritage education is provided to the different denominationally oriented sub-sectors of the Arab student population (Moslem, Christian, and Druze) with emphasis on the unique aspects of the different religious denominations as well as the common aspects of culture, tradition, morals, and values that pervade Israeli society. It should be noted that the different sub-groups in Arab society are rather indifferent to the issue of religious and heritage education in the state educational system and prefer private religious frameworks such as complementary mosque or church-based educational centers that are clearly to be more efficient providers of religious and heritage education to all children whose parents are positively in favor of religious education [1]. Despite these shortcomings, religious, and heritage education is mandatory in all state Arab schools just as it is in all state Jewish schools.

7.1. Religious and Heritage Education in the State Moslem Sector

In the state Moslem educational sector, students study a similar range of subjects studied in Jewish schools. This provides them with the necessary knowledge and standards required to successfully cope with the demands of the matriculation examinations at the end of their school careers [24]. Religious and heritage education in this sector is focused on the Moslem tradition and provides students with a sound basic knowledge of the history, culture and observances of Islam. No confessional demands are made regarding observance of religious tradition, precepts, and commandments and students are not required to actively adopt religious practices and deportment. However, it is customary within the Moslem population Moslem to consider themselves to be positive towards Islam in their general lifestyles and are willing to accept Moslem religious tradition as one to be prized and nurtured. Religious and heritage education as studied by students in school is perceived by many in the Arab Moslem population somewhat as a catalyst that may well lead to intensified religious observance, but there is a large segment in the Moslem population that perceives religious and heritage education to be part of broad Arab culture and history rather than a subject that is designed to narrowly focus on religious observance. In addition, religious and heritage education in this sector is considered to be related to citizenship education and to contribute to the enhancement of important normative values such as democracy, equality, social harmony, humanism and universalism that will hopefully lead to social cohesion and enhanced integration of the Moslem population in broad Israeli society.

7.2. Religious and Heritage Education in the State Christian Sector

In Christian Arab education in Israel parents and students are generally positive towards religion, but their life perceptions and attitudes are more secular than those characterizing the Moslem sector of the population [25]. As a result, major emphasis is placed by both parents and students on the study of secular subjects that will enhance the chances of students to successfully negotiate school leaving matriculation examinations and provide them with the opportunity of being awarded quality matriculation certificates at the end of their school careers. Religious and heritage education is perceived by Christian parents and students to be inherently related to the study of Christian culture, history and identity, and as such, is an additional and complementary facet of the citizenship education curriculum. Thus, religious and heritage education is designed to educate students towards the acceptance of traditional Christian values on the one hand and the citizenship values of democracy, equality, social harmony, humanism, and universalism as a springboard for integration in the multi-faceted Israeli society without emphasizing acceptance of religious belief or ideology.

7.3. Religious and Heritage Education in the State Druze Sector

The Druze educational sector maintains close reciprocal relations with the Arab sector because of the fact that Arabic is the language of instruction in both Arab and Druze systems; and the curriculum of the Druze educational subsystem is almost identical to that of the Arab education system [26] but deviates from it in the field of religious and heritage education where the unique Druze religious heritage is emphasized. This emphasis is quite limited as the Druze religion is secret and only religious leaders are fully aware of the theology, principles, and tenets of the religion. The lay Druze population is made aware of the public precepts and commandments of the religion but are totally unaware of the theology of the religion. Thus, religious and heritage education in the Druze sector is mainly concerned with unique Druze culture and traditions and is less focused on the Druze religion per se. Additionally, this leads to a much more central focus on citizenship education where the study of the societal values of democracy, equality, social harmony, humanism, and universalism is emphasized so as to contribute to the enhancement of the integration of the Druze population in heterogeneous Israeli society.

8. Conclusions

There is general agreement that religious and heritage education offered in schools serving all religious, national and social sectors in the Israeli school system is the relevant platform for the enhancement of unique sectoral reference to the different religious traditions present in Israeli society. Each sector and denomination studies its own particular religion with an emphasis on sectoral needs. Bearing in mind the fact that Israeli society is heterogeneous and includes both religious and secular Jewish and Arab population sectors, each sector autonomously and flexibly addresses religious and heritage education.

Thus, in the Jewish state religious sector religious belief and observance are of paramount importance; in the Jewish state secular sector knowledge about Jewish tradition, history, and culture is the focus of religious and heritage education; in the Arab state Moslem sector the tenets of Islam are taught without stressing that students become observant Moslems; in the Arab state Christian sector Christian tradition and history is taught without the issue of faith being emphasized; and in the Arab state Druze sector the basics of what is a secret religion is imparted to students without divulging the specifics of the religion. However, issues that are central to social cohesion in Israel are addressed in citizenship education which is strongly complementary to the religious and heritage education of all sectors in Israeli state education. Despite the different and unique perceptions of religious and heritage education in the state Jewish and state Arab sectors, there is agreement that the study of citizenship education is necessary to complement religious and heritage education and emphasize consensual values such as democracy, equality, social harmony, humanism, and universalism that are the basis and foundation for social cohesion and integration in heterogeneous Israeli society.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

1. Katz, Y.J. Religious encounters in Israeli state education. *Relig. Educ.* **2017**, *112*, 329–333. [CrossRef]
2. Sahgal, N.; Cooperman, A. *Israel's Religiously Divided Society*; Pew Research Center: Washington, DC, USA, 2016.
3. Eisenstadt, S.N. Comments on the post-modern society. In *Israel towards the Year 2000*; Lissack, M., Knei-Paz, B., Eds.; Magnes Press: Jerusalem, Israel, 1996; pp. 19–27.
4. Guttman, E. The religious divide. In *Israel towards the Year 2000*; Lissack, M., Knei-Paz, B., Eds.; Magnes Press: Jerusalem, Israel, 1996; pp. 61–73.
5. Abu Asba, K. *Arab Education in Israel: Dilemma of a National Minority*; Florsheimer Institute for Policy Research: Jerusalem, Israel, 2007.
6. Katz, Y.J. The state approach to Jewish and non-Jewish education in Israel. *Comp. Educ.* **2010**, *46*, 325–338. [CrossRef]
7. Katz, Y.J.; Yablon, Y.B. Can internet technology promote inter-group attitudes towards equality, understanding, tolerance and coexistence. In *Education of Minorities and Peace Education in Pluralistic Societies*; Iram, Y., Wahrman, H., Eds.; Praeger: Westport, CT, USA, 2003; pp. 169–179.
8. Katz, Y.J. A values-based core curriculum: The Israeli perspective. *Panor. Int. J. Comp. Relig. Educ.* **2002**, *14*, 117–124.
9. Ministry of Education. *100 Concepts on Judaism, Zionism and Democracy*; Ministry of Education Publications Office: Jerusalem, Israel, 2003.
10. Katz, Y.J. The Israeli school core curriculum and matriculation examinations: An attempt to set standards for a national educational system. *Educ. Pract. Theory* **2005**, *27*, 67–82. [CrossRef]
11. Gaziel, H. Educational policy in Israel: Structures and processes. In *Fifty Years of Israeli Education*; Peled, E., Ed.; Ministry of Defense Press: Tel-Aviv, Israel, 1999; pp. 67–84.
12. Ministry of Education. *People and World: Jewish Values in a Global Society*; Ministry of Education Publications Office: Jerusalem, Israel, 1994.
13. Ministry of Education. *To Be Citizens*; Ministry of Education Publications Office: Jerusalem, Israel, 1996.
14. Katz, Y.J. State religious education in Israel: Developmental trends in the Zionist era. In *Education as a Social Challenge*; Gross, Z., Dror, Y., Eds.; Ramot Publishing House: Tel-Aviv, Israel, 2004; pp. 73–83.
15. Katz, Y.J. The core curriculum in Israel: an educational common denominator for all population sectors. In *Towards an Educational Revolution*; Inbar, D., Ed.; Van Leer Institute and Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House: Jerusalem, Israel, 2006; pp. 186–194.
16. Volbe, S. The modern theological academy (yeshiva). In *Religious Education in Israeli Society*; Bar-Lev, M., Ed.; Hebrew University Press: Jerusalem, Israel, 1986; pp. 123–128.
17. Urbach, E.E. The religious high school: an educational trend. In *Religious Education in Israeli Society*; Bar-Lev, M., Ed.; Hebrew University Press: Jerusalem, Israel, 1986; pp. 131–146.
18. Bar-Lev, M. The cultural conflict of youth in yeshiva high schools. *Niv Hamidrashia* **1985**, 242–248.
19. Katz, Y.J. Values education in the Israeli educational system. In *Learning beyond Cognition*; Kryger, N., Ravn, B., Eds.; Danish University of Education Press: Copenhagen, Denmark, 2007; pp. 291–302.
20. Aloni, N. Cultural education in a multi-cultural society. *Matzav Ha'Inyanim* **1997**, *7*, 3–6.
21. Eisenberg, Y. On three tensions in religious education. *Dapim* **1989**, *8*, 38–40.
22. Arar, K. Israeli education policy since 1948 and the state of Arab education in Israel. *Ital. J. Sociol. Educ.* **2012**, *1*, 113–145.
23. Glaubman, R.; Katz, Y.J. *The Bedouin Community in the Negev: Educational and Community Characteristics*; Research Report Number 11; Institute for Community Education and Research, School of Education, Bar-Ilan University: Ramat-Gan, Israel, 1998.
24. Sa'ar, A. Carefully on the margins: Christian Palestinians in Haifa between nation and state. *Am. Ethnol.* **1998**, *25*, 215–239. [CrossRef]

25. Al Haj, M. *Education, Empowerment, and Control: The Case of the Arabs in Israel*; State University of New York Press: New York, NY, USA, 1995.
26. Court, D.; Abbas, R. Role of Druze high schools in Israel in shaping students' identity and citizenship. *Educ. Citizensh. Soc. Justice* **2010**, *5*, 145–162. [CrossRef]

education sciences

MDPI

Article

The Representation of Religion in Religion Education: Notes from the South African Periphery

Abdulkader Tayob

Department of Religious Studies, University of Cape Town, Cape Town 7701, South Africa; Abdulkader.Tayob@uct.ac.za; Tel.: +27-650-3399

Received: 24 July 2018; Accepted: 6 September 2018; Published: 11 September 2018

Abstract: Scholars of Religion Education (RE) have promoted a non-confessional approach to the teaching of religions that explores and examines the religious history of humankind, with due attention paid to its complexity and plurality. In this promotion, the public representation of religion and its impact on RE has not received sufficient attention. An often hegemonic representation of religion constitutes an important part of religion in public life. Moreover, this article argues that this representation is a phenomenon shared by secular, secularizing, and deeply religious societies. It shows that a Western understanding of secularization has guided dominant RE visions and practices, informed by a particular mode of representation. As an illustration of how education in and representation of religion merges in RE, the article analyses the South African policy document for religion education. While the policy promotes RE as an educational practice, it also makes room for a representation of religion. This article urges that various forms of the representation of religion should be more carefully examined in other contexts, particularly by those who want to promote a non-confessional and pluralistic approach to RE.

Keywords: religion education; secularity; secularism; religion in public life; representation of religion

Although we might not be able to achieve unity in any other public sphere, the religion education classroom can be a public place in its own right, in which we can work towards creating an 'us' with no 'them' [1].

1. Introduction

Religion Education (RE) as an educational and not a religious or confessional practice is increasingly accepted as the only legitimate and reasonable pedagogy for plural societies. In this view, religion should be studied in its plural manifestation in local contexts and for an increasingly globalizing world. This vision is promoted by scholars but also accepted among policy makers in diverse countries (Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada, Australia, and South Africa). It is believed that RE focussed on the study of multiple religions in one classroom meets the needs of changing societies. Another argument brought forth in support of RE is the phenomenon of secularization that has swept the globe. While an earlier prediction that religion would eventually disappear has been abandoned, the secularization of social life has not decreased in many parts of the world. Particularly in the Western world, where RE is promoted more than elsewhere, secularization of individual consciousness, and the dwindling number of citizens who identify themselves as religious, cannot be denied. RE as both non-confessional and pluralistic is promoted for undeniable educational and social reasons.

This vision for RE is persuasive, but it is founded on theories of secularism and secularization that have been challenged by global events since the last quarter of the 20th century, and by post-colonial criticisms of secularism and the modern state. Both the original and the revised theories of secularization and secularity are based on Western political and social experiences. Quite unexpectedly, they point to a presence and representation of religion in the public sphere. Religion occupies a place as

a remnant of a religious past, a persistence of belief, a vision for the future, or a contemporary political context. These dominant, sometimes hegemonic, representations of religion have been recognized by some scholars of RE, as will be shown below. However, the focus of most scholarship is on the problems posed by theology and confessionalism, and not on how the public representation of religion plays an equally significant role in RE.

This contribution argues that the public representation of religion is an unavoidable feature of RE policies and syllabi. It begins with a literature review that shows that perceptive scholars have recognized the public representation of religion in RE. The article then offers an analysis of how to develop this recognition through a close reading of secularization theories. In a counter-intuitive way, these theories point to divergent representations of religion in the public sphere. With this framework, the article proceeds to show the representation of religion in South African RE. It offers a careful analysis of the policy of RE promulgated by the Department of Education in 2003. The policy is the key document used in the country to guide syllabi, textbooks, and practices for teaching religion in schools. An analysis of the policy reveals that its explicit goal is to promote RE in a non-confessional and pluralist manner. The policy reflects the dominant model of RE. However, a closer analysis reveals that the policy also makes room for a representation of religion for schools and classrooms. The article concludes that RE policies, visions, and practices must consider the public representation of religion and its impact on the deliberation and study of religions in a pluralistic and non-confessional manner.

2. Religion Education and the Representation of Religion

Scholars and research projects in various parts of the globe have been promoting RE as a non-confessional study of religions, their history, and their contemporary roles and meanings [1–3]. Many scholars have become aware of the complexity of a non-confessional and objective representation of religions in the classroom. Some have brought up the difficulty of maintaining a neutral stance towards religions [4], while others have pointed to the secularist framing of religions in the classroom [5,6]. The impact of public debates on religious education has also been noted [7,8]. I would like to show that these studies point to a politics of representation that is very much a part of RE.

From the second half of the 20th century, scholars have documented the emergence of RE in different parts of the globe. It is not possible within the limits of this article to document this emergence everywhere, but some prominent examples may be mentioned. In some European countries, particularly Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and the United Kingdom, a non-confessional and multi-religious approach to RE slowly took shape from the 1950s. The subject was mooted as part of a larger societal process of democratization, as well as the increasing pluralization of society and the classroom from the 1970s. In the United States, a court decision in 1963 paved the way for teaching religions in schools and universities in a non-confessional way [9]. South Africa introduced a new RE policy in 2003, one that replaced confessional Biblical Studies of apartheid, while Zambia apparently introduced such a policy much earlier in 1977 [10]. Some studies have pointed to the urgency of introducing RE with a focus on more than one religion after the events of '9/11' [11–14]. Some other countries, like Nigeria and Kenya, for example, have addressed religious diversity in the classroom by introducing separate programmes for Christians and Muslims [15]. However, these arrangements are not considered properly speaking RE models.

Diane Moore's important book (2007) on engaging religious illiteracy in the United States presents a justification and model for multi-religious RE [9]. She points to the contextual conditions in the United States that have made the study of diverse religions necessary and essential. According to Moore, no good education can afford to ignore the role of religion in society and history, and the diversity of religions in a globalizing world. RE should be part of democratic education that aims to promote engaged citizens and moral agents. Like most other protagonists, Moore also values the role of critical thinking for the study of religions. Education in religion does not merely focus on gathering information but engages in critical enquiry, comparison, and evaluation [9]. Moore's book eschews any kind of theological justification and apologetics in the RE curriculum.

Achieving the goal of RE as defined by Moore has not been easy. By following some selected scholarly studies that have addressed this challenge in a number of countries, I will show the prominent role played by the public representation of religion in policies and classrooms. I begin with Jensen (2009), who critically followed the process of introducing RE in Denmark. Jensen believes that many valuable opportunities were missed. Reflecting on a 2005 State Executive Order that aimed to promote RE, Jensen notes with dismay that some public concerns and challenges were expected to be included in a proposed syllabus [16]. These public concerns and challenges included a focus on Christianity and the teaching of Islam. They pointed, respectively, to the history of Denmark and the particular challenge of Islam since '9/11', and increasing Muslim migration to Europe. RE, according to Jensen, had to avoid these "challenges" and maintain its commitment to emancipation and its contribution to "culture with a (capital) C." RE should be regarded as part of *Bildung*, which was centred on "knowledge and competences essential to the furthering of an enlightened society and world, and to the furthering of an autonomous and knowledgeable ('*mündig*') individual and citizen. Emancipatory knowledge, if you like" [16]. The teaching of religion was part of the human commitment to freedom of religion, no more and no less [16]. Jensen's discomfort with the public concerns that were included in a proposed RE programme is revealing. It points to the presence (representation) of religion in the public sphere that, when brought into the classroom, would obstruct the broader objectives of the subject in schools. Any neutral "representation" of Christianity and Islam in this case, compared with the representation of Hinduism, say, would have to take account of these public pressures and debates. Such challenges and concerns would distort, according to Jensen, a classroom that was committed to an objective study of religions.

In his extensive oeuvre on RE in the United Kingdom, Robert Jackson was more critically aware of the presence of religious traditions in public and in classrooms. However, he was not approaching RE from the perspective of a neutral and secular Religious Studies discipline like Jensen but from the perspective of cultural studies and the history of religious education in the United Kingdom. With respect to the former, Jackson proposed that RE curricula take into consideration religions as dynamic traditions. The latter are constantly changing through processes of contact and exchange, and should not be taught as wholistic traditions with clear and defined boundaries [17]. Secondly, he pointed to the history of RE in the United Kingdom over the course of the 20th century and showed how it followed closely the history of Christianity in the country. Its framework of religion changed from piety, to an intellectual tradition, to an inward feeling, and then to its essence [18]. For the 21st century of global exchange and multiculturalism, Jackson proposes that RE should follow an interpretive framework in which learners could explore and find values and identities for themselves [13]. Jackson's reflections and proposal point to the public presence (or notable absence) of religion and its location in the new multicultural context of the United Kingdom. His work reveals the unavoidable representation of religion in the public, as well as in RE curricula.

Writing on Norway and Sweden, respectively, Skeie and Berglund have pointed to the public representation of Lutheranism that pervades RE curricula in these countries. Skeie points to the extensive debates on religions that mark the public sphere, and their unavoidable effect in schools. He points to debates between secularists, Christian religious conservatives, and minority religious communities, each arguing for a different approach to RE in the Norwegian classroom called KRL (*Kristendomskunnska med religions-og livssynsoirentering*, Christianity, Religion, Life Stances). Moreover, the Lutheran Church holds an overseer role in society and education. In contrast with Jensen, Skeie does not see a problem in allowing the RE classroom to facilitate these and other discussions. He prefers a typically Norwegian "corporatist" approach to RE [7,19]. In her study of the RE curriculum of 2009/2010 for Swedish schools, Berglund shows that Christianity is also singled out for special consideration. She says RE in Sweden is marinated in Lutheranism [20]. In another continent and country, these Scandinavian examples are echoed in van Arragon's study in Ontario (Canada). In a new secular approach to RE introduced there, van Arragon detects a hegemonic role of the state and Christianity [4]. These case studies are among many that may be cited, illustrating that the

public representation of religion cannot be filtered out of RE, even in those committed to secularity and secularization.

There is another body of work on RE that may be described as postliberal or postsecular in orientation. These works represent studies that take a critical perspective on the non-confessional approach advocated by earlier scholars [21]. Here, the public presence of religion is embraced as a desirable or unavoidable feature of the classroom. One example would be sufficient to show this new direction. After a thorough review of the models advocated by various scholars in England, Philip Barnes uses a postmodernist linguistic argument to highlight the deep differences among and within religions. He comes close to rejecting the idea that the concept and term "religion" was suitable to signify (represent) the diverse manifestations of traditions. "Religions" are so diverse that the term 'religion' may not be applicable without ambiguity to African religions, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, and Islam. There are too many differences within these traditions for one term to represent them. Barnes believes that a liberal approach to RE has downplayed these differences, in favour of a cosmopolitan representation of religion that neither reflects actual religions nor their role in the public sphere [22]. Barnes does not want to go back to an old-fashioned confessional approach but argues that some fundamental questions on truth and morality should be reintroduced in the curriculum [22]. Whilst Barnes' postmodernist argument unsettles the prevailing model of RE, his proposal re-inserts public religious debates into the classroom. His suggestion seems like a recipe for putting the dominant religion, Christianity in this particular case, back in the centre of the classroom. The history of Christianity in the United Kingdom will inevitably impact on how other religions are studied, as Skeie, Berglund, and van Arragon have shown in their respective studies.

These studies show that the presence or representation of religion in the public sphere cannot be completely kept out of the RE classroom. Whether one is dealing with a critical and secularist perspective or a new post-secular one, the representation of religion cannot be avoided. These studies have directly and indirectly shown that the public presence of religion makes its way into policies, pedagogies, and classrooms. As a way of developing this feature of RE, I turn to secularization theories that surprisingly point to some divergent forms of the public representation of religion.

3. A Theoretical Perspective on the Representation of Religion in Public Life

Secularization theories offer some insight on how to think about the politics and problematics of the representation of religion. The different and nuanced perspectives of Charles Taylor, Jürgen Habermas, Jose Casanova, and Talal Asad are useful for thinking about the representation of religions in modern societies. I will begin with Charles Taylor, whose definition of secularity in Western societies matches the representation of religion in dominant models of RE. I then follow up with some more critical reflections on secularization and how religion may be seen to be a necessary or unavoidable part of the modern state and the public sphere. This paves the way for thinking about the representation of religion in RE.

Taylor identifies three features of modern secularity that bring out its uniqueness in the political and intellectual history of the West. The first refers to the removal or reduction of religious influence and power from the political sphere, the second to the emptying of the churches, and the third to a change in individual consciousness [23]. It is the third feature that makes secularity a defining feature of Western history and societies. Being secular in this way is a realization that belief in a supreme being, or a supernatural plane of existence, is an "option": "(we) are able to see ourselves as occupying one standpoint among a range of possible ones, with which we have in various ways to coexist" [23]. Following Immanuel Kant, he calls this an escape from naivety [23]. Taylor calls this a "condition" of secularity that pervades the public sphere. Options for choosing a lifeworld are never far from one's being in the world. Even if secularity may be an "embattled option in the Christian (or "post-Christian") society, (it was) not (or not yet) in the Muslim ones" [23]. This hesitation about the Muslim world is soon lost in Taylor's prose, but there is a hint that Muslim (and other non-Western) societies occupy a different stage of secularization. However, Taylor also thinks that the

public presence of religion shines through dimly in some countries in the West: " . . . the countries of western Europe have mainly become secular—even those who retain the vestigial public reference to God in the public space" [23]. One gets two impressions from Taylor's thesis. The main one is that in a secular age, religions present themselves as options to be chosen. The second impression is that in some societies, religions may be seen as remnants from the past.

Jürgen Habermas also focusses on the Western experience of secularization, but in his earlier work puts the "vestigial public reference" in historical context. In a book first published in 1962, Habermas wrote of the Church's "representative publicness" (*repräsentativen Öffentlichkeit*) in medieval Europe, which he compared and likened to the "representative publicness" of the feudal lord in his estate or manor. Both occupied a place of power, representing authority and values that were tangible and absolute. There was no place for debate and deliberation in relation to either the landed nobility or the Church. Like the nobility, the "representative publicness" of the Church demanded acceptance. According to Habermas, the Church's representative publicness was not eliminated when a rational public sphere of early modern Europe replaced the representative publicness of the feudal lord: "in church ritual, liturgy, mass and processions, the publicity that characterized representation has survived in our time" [24]. According to Habermas, then, religion was at most a relic of the past. According to the secularization thesis dominant in the 1960s, it was going to be swept away. Habermas has changed his position since then, but his thesis of "survival" is retained in Taylor's more recent book.

With his book on *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Casanova attempted to refine the secularization thesis with ideas of how these "vestigials" and "survivals" may play a significant role [24]. Casanova offered a model that assigned a particular role to religion in the public sphere (but not in the political sphere). Also using mainly material from the history of the West, he argues that religion lost its "role of systemic normative integration" [25]. Casanova pays particular attention to the philosophical critique of religion, the wars of religion, and the development of inwardness promoted by Protestant Christianity. All these destroyed or considerably weakened the integrative role played by religion in social and political spheres. With the revival of religion in the public sphere, he shows with the example of Catholicism that religions can accept these conditions of secularity and play an important role in the public sphere. Religion, for example, can and should act as a voice of conscience with regard to the excess of state power: "religion could stand up against all posthumanity and posthistory theses" [25]. Casanova is confident that this role may be played by religions elsewhere, with a particular hope that it will happen within Islam [26]. His model for religious engagement in the public sphere is shared in the recent writings of Habermas [27,28].

Against Taylor, Habermas and Casanova, Talal Asad (2003) offers a critical post-colonial perspective on secularism that shows a greater role played by religion and the religious in the formation of the modern, secular state [29]. In his analysis, religion was neither a vestigial remain nor a useful participant in a post-secular public sphere. Religion was always implicated in the formation of the secular. It was a necessary part of secular culture, a binary opposite without which the latter could neither be defined nor imagined. Secondly, turning an anthropological gaze to the secular state in the West, Asad argued that the secular was not a neutral space within which projects were founded and executed. It included a set of cultural practices and performances, backed by power, to carry out nation-building projects, wage wars of occupation, and domesticate populations. In these projects, the secular inhabited by as much spirit and magic as any religious or cultural tradition. Inspired by Asad, scholars of religion Dressler (Islamic Studies) and Mandair (Sikh Studies) show this thesis in a number of countries. The essays in their edited collection point to the "religion-making" that modern states and elites engage in to inscribe a national, secular state [30].

These different perspectives on secularization point to the continuing presence of religion in the public sphere. This presence or survival of religion is framed by the theses in unique ways. Taylor and the early Habermas partly share a vision of a declining public presence of religion, while Casanova wants to guide religion to a constructive role in the public sphere. Taylor offers secularity as an

individual consciousness that faces a market place of religions. Current RE models reflect these theses, as is evident in the following description in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*:

> It seems likely that, over the first quarter of the twenty-first century, practice in religious education in public schools in different Western pluralist liberal democratic societies will gradually converge. However, this may result in individuals increasingly constructing their own personal religious faith, selecting bits from a smörgåsbord of different religions—a phenomenon already being observed among some students exposed to a world faiths approach to religious education [31].

This description of RE matches the model promoted by Robert Jackson, and adopted extensively in European programmes of RE research and pedagogy [17,32]. These models could easily accommodate Casanova's model in which religions may make a positive contribution in the public sphere. We may conclude, then, that RE assume a particular representation of religion in the public sphere. Seeing religions as vestigial remains or options to be chosen, they do not reflect Asad's post-colonial critical thesis of the deep roots of religion and the religious in the secular. However, they clearly do not suggest that the public representation of religion has disappeared.

While religions may be options to be chosen, they may also be already implicated in the formation of the secular. While they may be seen as merely vestigial, they may be re-ignited in times of crises. They may not play a role in social integration, but they can come alive in public debates in which secular reason has failed to provide answers. In any of these possibilities, religion in public life cannot be ignored. In any case, its public representation in subtle and explicit forms should be expected in RE classrooms and policies. I want to now turn to a detailed examination of RE in South Africa to show how the study of religion in a non-confessional and pluralistic manner stands side by side with a particular representation.

4. The Representation of Religion in South African Policy

Post-apartheid South Africa has been celebrated for its progressive constitution that promotes human rights in all its dimensions. The freedom of religious conviction and association are prominent, and religion flourishes in political and public spheres. In a recent book, a South African student of religion Annie Leatt Dhammamegha has shown the close relation between organized religious groups and the development of the 1996 constitution. That relationship, often identified as a cooperative model to be distinguished from theocratic or separatist models, was nurtured in the period leading up the first democratic government in 1994 [33]. Dhammegha believes that a "political secularism" informs state policies and practices in relation to cultures and religious traditions [34]. Her analysis follows Asad in showing how religions and cultures are carefully corralled into a new nation. However, this is not the only form of religious presence or representation in the country. Places of worship, both local and global, have made South Africa a market-place of religions. Religion occupies a major role in state and independent radio and television stations. Additionally, religion is also present in the speeches and public displays of the state. Presidents and various government officials regularly invoke religion in state performances [35–37]. I would suggest that a political secularism sits by side with a proliferation of religious representations in South Africa.

In this context, the South African government initiated an extensive process for deliberating on how religion would be taught in schools. Some religious representatives favoured a policy that allowed confessional education in schools, but this was rejected by academics and several other religious groups [38]. Eventually, human rights norms were adopted in formulating a policy, and in 2003 the *National Policy on Religion and Education* was published [39]. Consisting of 28 pages and 71 paragraphs, the policy has been used to guide new syllabi for the teaching of religion in schools, and and used by supporters and opponents of RE as a point of debate. I want to offer a close analysis of the policy and show that it emphasizes RE with educational goals but also makes provision for religious observances in schools. It maintains a fine balancing act between the study of religion as an

educational practice and the representation of religion as a public and religious performance. This close analysis will include a review of its reception in the country by academics and religious commentators.

The policy opens with a commitment to foster cooperation between the state and religions (Paragraph 3). It rejects theocratic and secularist models for South Africa and instead "combines constitutional separation and mutual recognition" (Paragraph 4). No one religion is privileged, but a "creative interaction" is pursued between the state and religions in a spirit of freedom, non-coercion, and non-discrimination (Paragraph 3).

The policy makes a distinction between RE and religious instruction. The former belongs to the school, while the latter is more properly located in religious communities and homes (Paragraph 8). RE pursues explicitly educational goals (Paragraph 17). It recognizes religion as an important human venture that is reflected in the histories of religions and their contemporary roles (Paragraph 23). RE brings out the common humanity shared by all religions (Paragraph 26). It is not concerned about the truth of any one religion (Paragraph 28), and, more emphatically, "the policy is not a project in social or religious engineering designed to establish a uniformity of religious beliefs and practices" (Paragraph 68). In keeping with its educational goals, professional teachers would be trained for this subject (Paragraphs 35,41).

The policy projects a positive disposition towards religions. Religions are expected to add value to the social and individual life of learners (Paragraph 18). South African religions are expected to contribute to the moral regeneration of the country (Paragraph 31). The policy also envisages RE to form an important part of individual development. RE ought to enable pupils to engage with a variety of religious traditions in a way that encourages them to grow in their inner spiritual and moral dimensions. It must affirm their own identities, while leading them to an informed understanding of the religious identities of others (Paragraphs 19,40).

While the policy stresses the values of freedom and non-discrimination, it avoids any reference to the negative effects of religion on either social or individual life.

One may conclude that the policy is geared to promote a general study of religions in the classroom, for the benefit of public life. RE in the policy matches that promoted in various other countries mentioned in this article. However, a closer reading reveals that education and deliberation are not its only concerns. The policy also makes provision for a representation of religions in schools in two different ways. On a general national level, RE articulates a vision of religious diversity in and for the nation. In addition, the policy makes provision for the representation of religious traditions.

Diversity is a fundamental vision of RE (Paragraphs. 10,14,30,44,69). The word is mentioned 41 times and refers to the diversity to be celebrated in the South African nation, the classroom, and the school. Religious diversity is a national asset (Paragraph 10). South Africans from various religious backgrounds share a civil society (Paragraph 14). The policy does not reflect on real or potential conflicts between religious groups. It echoes a prominent image of South Africa in the 1990s as a rainbow nation, first proposed by Archbishop Tutu in 1991 [40]. This image is also found in the national coat of arms introduced in 2000: "diverse people unite" (*!ke e: |xarra ǁke* in the Khoisan language of the |Xam people). For the nation, the policy's celebration of religious diversity promotes an image of what religions are and can be.

Another type of representation is evident in the place given to religious practices in schools. While the policy insists that religious instruction is ideally placed in the home, religious observances are not excluded from school premises. The latter may be used for religious instruction outside school hours "provided that opportunities [are] afforded in an equitable manner to all religious bodies represented in a school" (Paragraphs 55,57). The policy dictates that learners should be allowed time off to attend to religious observances on holy days or special times of the week (Paragraph 56). Schools may allow religious groups to observe some practices (Paragraph 58), and this may include prayers in school assemblies. In all such observances, there should be no coercion or unfair discrimination. In Paragraph 62, the policy proposes a "rotation of opportunities for observance, in proportion to the

representation of different religions in the school." Religious observances are thus given a prominent place in the school, standing side by side with a celebration of religious diversity in the nation.

The policy engages in a balancing act between the study and representation of religions in schools. RE is designed to expose learners to the diversity of religions that constitute the nation. Through education, learners are expected to study religions throughout the world and the nation. At the same time, the policy makes space for the representation of religion. This is firstly reflected in privileging a national image of diversity that signifies the classroom, the school, and the nation. The policy also affirms and promotes religious observances and practices on school grounds during and outside school hours. It creates a vision of a multi-cultural performance of religions, with the freedom and celebration of religious observances. It underplays the tension between its educational and representational visions. Using the values of equity, fairness, and freedom, it suggests that education and representation are easily reconcilable.

Studies on the policy have exposed the tension and contradiction between studying and representing religions. Scholar of comparative religions David Chidester was chair of a ministerial committee on RE and lead author of the 2003 policy. He supported the development of a new approach to RE from the early 1990s. He worked with researchers and teachers to provide innovative materials to teach the subject. However, Chidester was hesitant about the positive reception of the policy in schools. Writing reflectively on the process in 2002, he expressed grave concerns about how a new policy might be received. On the one hand, he commented on a decision by the then provincial minister of education in the Western Cape that religion will not be taught in schools: "Although he thought he was responding to legitimate religious interests, Provincial Minister of Education André Gaum was actually condemning his pupils to ignorance about their world" [38]. On the other hand, commenting on the little time allocated for the subject in the curriculum, Chidester said that "in a country that takes religion very seriously, with strong bonds of religious solidarity, but also with the potential for religious misunderstandings, divisions, and conflict, the relatively small space given for religion in schools might be just right" [38]. Chidester seems to be saying that the educational goals of the policy will be challenged by strong religious convictions in the country, and in schools. He was revealing some concern about how the representation of religions would obstruct the policy's educational goals. This reminds us of Taylor's "secularity", which is not reflected in the religious consciousness of how South Africans relate to religions. Rather than choices to be exercised, South Africans take religions "very seriously".

Leading a body of educators in research projects, Cornelia Roux has been more hopeful about the prospects of the policy. A close examination of her work shows that it is focussed on the representation of religion through individual learners. She sees the potential for teachers and learners to find each other in the diversity of the classroom. RE, she argues, should not lead to religious development; it should cause learners to "(f)eel ... safe with their own religion while gaining knowledge about other religions in order to develop respect for the diversity in their school environment" [41]. The RE classroom facilitates the discovery of the self and other through the religious tradition of self and other. Roux seems to have embraced the policy's representation of religious diversity through personal encounters. The educational part of the policy takes a back seat in this articulation.

Recent studies on the policy and its effects in schools reveal that the representation of Christianity maintains a hegemonic presence in schools. Some schools are indeed making adjustments for minority religious observances for the representation of these religious groups previously marginalized or unrepresented [42]. Since the promulgation of the policy, however, learners from minority religions continue to face great hurdles in representing their religions in school [43]. Some of the controversies have been taken to the judiciary, which has led to the following comment by religious studies scholar Ricco Settler: "the onus is put on the learner to seek relief from the court in cases of overt discrimination or limitation of their rights" [43]. Ntho-Ntho's research on Christian school principals concludes that they do not know what to do with the demands of such learners [44]. I see these debates and conflicts as evidence that the representation of minority religions has been repeatedly monitored or curtailed

in schools [45]. The representation of Christianity has not been replaced by a representation of religious diversity.

In other comments on the policy, some Christians have consistently rejected the educational goals of the policy, as well as its vision for a new representation of religion. In spite of the extensive place given to religious observances in the policy, Mestry says that it "is vague and [gives] no specific direction ... to where and when religious observances will fit into the *school's programme* (my emphasis)" [46]. Professor of Law Serfontein says that the government aims to "impose a set of multi-religious convictions on individual learners" with the policy [46]. She fears that "South Africa will develop into a secular state ungrounded in any religion, conforming to a dull uniformity" [47]. Abdool et al prefer religious instruction in schools that does not ignore the idea of the Holy, which would then be followed by dialogue [48]. These commentators reject or ignore RE as a study and deliberation of the religious history of humankind in its plurality. They demand the continuing representation of Christianity in schools. Chidester takes some comfort in the fact that their demands are expressed in the language of the Constitution [49]. I see them rather as a demand to maintain the representation of Christianity in schools and societies in the past.

The 2003 South African policy on religion and education reveals the tension between education and representation in exemplary fashion. While the policy is clearly committed to the teaching of religion in its diversity in a non-confessional manner, it also makes space for the representation of religion in the classroom and school. In terms of the analysis pursued in this article, these responses seem to be focused on the representation of religions. Chidester fears that strong religious commitments will undermine the educational project. Coming from one Christian background, Roux supports the opportunity for self-representation for all religions. However, there are many other Christians who fear that the representation of Christianity is undermined by the policy.

5. Conclusions

In this essay, I have argued that the public representation of religion in the RE classroom has not received the full attention it deserves. RE should not only be seen as a transition from confessionalism to non-confessionalism in the study religions; it should also recognize the particular representation of religions in the public sphere that finds its way into the classroom. This representation is evident in secularization theses, both old and revised. Habermas, and to a lesser extent Taylor, regard the public representation of religions as remnants or vestiges of a by-bone era. Taylor presents religions as so many possible options in Western public life. Casanova offers a revised secularization thesis, in which religion may play a greater role in the public sphere. Prevailing models of RE seem to match these theories of secularization. However, Asad's work has pointed to a deeper collusion between the secular and the religious in the history of the West and elsewhere. "Religion-making" plays a bigger role in the formation of the secular than imagined in theses that seek to represent the secular as a departure from the religious. In any case, secularization theses show diverse forms of the public representation of religion in Western and non-Western societies, and it is these representations that cannot be ignored in the RE classroom.

In a brief review of recent literature on RE, this essay has shown how the representation of religion has been felt. From the secular emancipatory project of RE advocated by Jensen to Barnes' revised post-secular model, the public representation of religion can hardly be avoided. No model for RE committed to the study of religions in its complexity and plurality can avoid this feature. This article illustrated this entanglement in the South African context. The post-apartheid policy on RE revealed an attempt to support the educational goal of studying religions while promoting a representation of religions. The policy promoted a model of RE that matched global models while simultaneously pursuing a distinctive representation of religion. The responses in schools and among academics show that the representation of religion has dominated the field.

In conclusion, RE cannot be completely excised from public life. It is not as Chidester states in the opening epigraph, a place where "us" and "them" are obliterated. Like religion in public life, RE is

a struggle between the deliberation on and representation of religions. Deliberation focusses on a dispassionate study of religions, while representation comes into the school through the practices of states and religions (Asad), through the remnants of the past (Taylor, Habermas), through renewed public interests (Casanova), through choices to be made among many (Taylor), or through religious practices (South African policy). An RE that seeks to transform religious education from a confessional to non-confessional model cannot avoid the representation of religion.

Acknowledgments: This work is based on the research supported in part by the National Research Foundation of South Africa (Reference number (UID) 85397). The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed are that of the author, and the NRF accepts no liability.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

1. Chidester, D. *Global Citizenship, Cultural Citizenship and World Religions in Religion Education*; HSRC Publishers: Cape Town, South Africa, 2002.
2. Jackson, R. *Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality: Issues in Diversity and Pedagogy*; Routledge: London, UK, 2004; ISBN 0415302714.
3. Berglund, J.; Shanneik, Y.; Bocking, B. (Eds.) *Religious Education in a Global-Local World*; Springer: Basel, Switzerland, 2016.
4. Van Arragon, L. Religion and education in Ontario public education: Contested borders and uneasy truces. In *Issues in Religion and Education. Whose Religion?* Beaman, L.G., van Arragon, L., Eds.; Brill: Leiden, The Netherlands, 2015; pp. 34–58.
5. Liam, G. *On Holy Ground: The Theory and Practice of Religious Education*; Routledge: London, UK, 2013; ISBN 9781136304446.
6. Wright, A. *Religion, Education and Post-Modernity*; Routledge: London, UK, 2004; ISBN 9780203463499.
7. Skeie, G. Diversity and the political function of religious education. *Br. J. Relig. Educ.* **2006**, *28*, 19–32. [CrossRef]
8. Jackson, R. Religious diversity and education for democratic citizenship: The contribution of the council of Europe. In *International Handbook of Inter-Religious Education*; Engebretson, K., Souza, M., Durka, G., Gearon, L., Eds.; Springer: Dordrecht, The Netherlands, 2010; pp. 1121–1151; ISBN 1874-0049.
9. Moore, D. *Overcoming Religious Illiteracy: A Cultural Studies Approach to the Study of Religion in Secondary Education*; Palgrave Macmillan: New York, NY, USA, 2007; ISBN 9780230607002.
10. Mwale, N.; Chita, J. Trailing a missionary teacher's position and contributions in zambian religious education. *Relig. Educ.* **2017**, *44*, 22–38. [CrossRef]
11. Sjöborg, A. Aiming for the stars? State intentions for religious education in Sweden and pupils' attitudes. In *Religious Education Politics, the State, and Society*; Ergon Verlag: Würzburg, Germany, 2013; pp. 69–84; ISBN 978-3-89913-954-9.
12. Jensen, T. A battlefield in the culture wars: Religious education in Danish elementary school 1989–2011. In *Religious Education Politics, the State, and Society*; Jödicke, A., Ed.; Ergon Verlag: Würzburg, Germany, 2013; pp. 25–48; ISBN 978-3-89913-954-9.
13. Jackson, R.; O'Grady, K. Religions and education in England: Social plurality, civil religion and religious education pedagogy. In *Religion and Education in Europe Developments, Contexts and Debates*; Jackson, R., Miedema, S., Weisse, W., Willaime, J.-P., Eds.; Waxmann: Münster, Germany, 2007; pp. 181–202.
14. Grelle, B. Neutrality in public school religion education: Theory and politics. In *Issues in Religion and Education. Whose Religion?* Beaman, L.G., van Arragon, L., Eds.; Brill: Leiden, The Netherlands, 2015; pp. 231–256.
15. Hackett, R.I.J. Conflict in the Classroom: Educational Institutions as Sites of Religious Tolerance/Intolerance in Nigeria. Available online: https://digitalcommons.law.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1966&context=lawreview (accessed on 5 September 2018).
16. Jensen, T. RS based RE in public schools: A must for a secular state. *Numen* **2008**, *55*, 123–150. [CrossRef]
17. Jackson, R. *Religious Education: An Interpretive Approach*; Hodder & Stoughton: London, UK, 1997; ISBN 034068870X.

18. Jackson, R. Religious education's representation of 'religions' and 'cultures'. *Br. J. Educ. Stud.* **1995**, *43*, 272–289. [CrossRef]
19. Skeie, G. What does conceptualisation of religion have to do with religion in education? In *Issues in Religion and Education. Whose Religion?* Beaman, L.G., Van Arragon, L., Eds.; Brill: Leiden, The Netherlands, 2015; pp. 126–155.
20. Berglund, J. Swedish religion education: Objective but marinated in Lutheran Protestantism. *Temenos* **2014**, *49*, 165–184.
21. Dinham, A.; Francis, M. Religious literacy: Contesting an idea and practice. In *Religious Literacy in Policy and Practice*; Dinham, A., Francis, M., Eds.; Policy Press: Bristol, UK, 2016; pp. 3–26.
22. Barnes, P. *Education, Religion and Diversity: Developing a New Model of Religious Education*; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2014; ISBN 9781315815220.
23. Taylor, C. *A Secular Age*; Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, USA, 2007; ISBN 9780674026766.
24. Habermas, J. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*; The MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, USA, 1991.
25. Casanova, J. *Public Religions in the Modern World*; The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL, USA, 1994.
26. Casanova, J. Civil society and religion: Retrospective reflections on catholicism and prospective reflections on Islam. *Soc. Res.* **2001**, *68*, 1041–1080.
27. Habermas, J. An awareness of what is missing. In *An Awareness of What Is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age*; Polity Press: Cambridge, MA, USA, 2010; p. 15.
28. Habermas, J. Religion in the public sphere. *Philos. Afr.* **2005**, *8*, 99–109. [CrossRef]
29. Asad, T. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*; Stanford University Press: Stanford, CA, USA, 2003.
30. Dressler, M.; Mandair, A.-P.S. (Eds.) *Secularism and Religion-Making*; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2011.
31. Duchense-Guillemin, J. Knowledge and ignorance. In *Encyclopedia of Religion*; Macmillan: New York, NY, USA, 2005; pp. 5199–5211.
32. Jackson, R. The interpretive approach as a research tool: Inside the REDCo project. *Br. J. Relig. Educ.* **2011**, *33*, 189–208. [CrossRef]
33. Sachs, A. *Protecting Human Rights in A New South Africa*; Oxford University Press: Cape Town, South Africa, 1990.
34. Dhammamegha, A.L. *The State of Secularism: Religion, Tradition and Democracy in South Africa*; Wits University Press: Johannesburg, South Africa, 2017; ISBN 9781776140572.
35. Tayob, A. The one and the many: Religious coexistence and belonging in post-apartheid society. In *The African Renaissance and the Afro-Arab Spring*; Villa-Vicencio, C., Dostader, E., Moosa, E., Eds.; Georgetown University Press: Washington, DC, USA, 2015; pp. 121–137.
36. West, G. Jesus, Jacob Zuma, and the new Jerusalem: Religion in the public realm between Polokwane and the Presidency. *J. Stud. Relig.* **2010**, *23*, 43–70. [CrossRef]
37. Chidester, D. Credo Mutwa, Zulu Shaman: The invention and appropriation of indigenous authenticity in African folk religion. *J. Stud. Relig.* **2002**, *15*, 65–85. [CrossRef]
38. Chidester, C. Religion Education in South Africa: Teaching and Learning about Religion, Religions, and Religious Diversity. Available online: http://folk.uio.no/leirvik/OsloCoalition/DavidChidester.htm (accessed on 21 August 2013).
39. National Policy on Religion and Education (NPRE). Available online: www.info.gov.za/view/DownloadFileAction?id=70211 (accessed on 13 September 2014).
40. Tutu, D. *Rainbow People of God*; Doubleday: New York, NY, USA, 1994.
41. Roux, C. Playing games with religion in education. *S. Afr. J. Educ.* **2003**, *23*, 130–134.
42. Driesen, D.; Tayob, A. Negotiating religious literacy between national policy and Catholic school ethos in Cape Town, South Africa. In *Religious Education in a Global-Local World*; Berglund, J., Shanneik, Y., Bocking, B., Eds.; Springer: Basel, Switzerland, 2016; pp. 71–83.
43. Settler, F. Legal and civic contestations over tolerance in South Africa's national policy on religion and education. *Altern. Interdiscip. J. Stud. Arts Hum. S. Afr.* **2013**, *10*, 10–31.
44. Ntho-Ntho, A.M. School Principals Mediating Change: The Case of Religion in Education. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa, 2013.

45. Tayob, A.I. The national policy on religion and education and religious dress observances in South African schools. In *Religious Pluralism, Heritage and Social Development*; Green, M.C., Hackett, R.I.J., Hansen, L., Venter, F., Eds.; SUN MeDIA: Stellenbosch, South Africa, 2017; pp. 171–186.
46. Mestry, R. The constitutional rights to freedom of religion in South African primary schools. *Aust. N. Z. J. Law Educ.* **2006**, *12*, 57–68.
47. Serfontein, E.M. Education and religion in South Africa: Policy analysis and assessment against international law. *J. Law Crim. Just.* **2014**, *2*, 117–136.
48. Abdool, A.; Potgieter, F.; van der Walt, J.L.; Wolhuter, C. Inter-religious dialogue in schools: A pedagogical and civic unavoidability. *HTS: Theol. Stud.* **2007**, *63*, 543–560. [CrossRef]
49. Chidester, D. Religion education and the transformational state in South Africa. *Soc. Anal. Int. J. Cult. Soc. Pr.* **2006**, *50*, 61–83. [CrossRef]

education sciences

MDPI

Article

How Christian Universities Respond to Extremism

Robert A. Bowie * and Lynn Revell

Faculty of Education, Canterbury Christ Church University, Canterbury CT1 1QU, UK; lynn.revell@canterbury.ac.uk

* Correspondence: bob.bowie@canterbury.ac.uk; Tel.: +44-1227-76-7700

Received: 25 July 2018; Accepted: 5 September 2018; Published: 9 September 2018

Abstract: This research article explores how two English universities with Anglican foundations responded to UK government requirements to counter radicalization on campus. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with student union representatives, senior staff in the universities responsible for implementing the legal requirements and also those with special responsibility for religion. Christian foundation education institutions are required to implement government policy in response to visible radical and religious extremism. The UK higher education context is post-Christian (with lower levels of religious adherence) and post-secular (with greater plurality and greater prominence of controversial religious-related issues). It presents challenges for Christian university identity when meeting the complex concerns about dangers to students, university independence and free speech, and common values and public accountability. The research found that key to universities being able to respond effectively to the challenge of legal compliance and student welfare, was staff expertise in religion, but they have doubts about their capacity to respond effectively, and both staff and student have fears about this policy.

Keywords: Christian; university; radicalization; post-secular; secular

1. Introduction

Scholars have written about the place of religion in higher education which is variously seen as a story of declining influence or diversification of expression [1] or one of re-emergent visibility [2]. Campus engagements with students who self-identify as religious, are typically framed by evolving socio-cultural and political contexts, with political cultures, migration patterns, and economic stability being key factors of variance impacting on developments. These local circumstances also impact on the professional work of staff in Christian universities and the relationship between government and university in particular ways.

In the UK, an increasingly secular society in terms of social attitudes towards religious identification [3], Christian universities have a complex issue of self-identity, when faced with largely plural and diverse student populations. Universities are required to implement controversial government policy aimed at mitigating violent extremism and radicalization, commonly associated with religion. Concepts of secularity are complicated by more visible religious related issues of public policy concern, presenting themselves in a society that is becoming less religious. Consequently, scholars have begun to debate the concept of a post-secular environment for education [4]. In trying to make sense of the complexity and diversity of the manifestation of a secular age, Lieven Boeve has written about education in societies that he frames as post-Christian and post-secular, in articles on school curricula [5] and Christian university identity [6].

This underscores Casanova's caveat that debates surrounding the secular or post-secular can become marooned due to conflicting conceptions [7]. Secular can refer to a political process that removes religion from public view; the numerical decline of religious populations and growth of alternative (non-religious) identifying belief-groups; the move from society which preferences a single

religious expression to one in which there is a multitude of religious and belief expressions with no advantage given to any; movement between degrees of acceptability and tolerance of public and private religious expression. These trends appear to different extents and different degrees. As some countries see religious participation on the decline (e.g., UK), others see a stronger and more explicit association of religion and Government (e.g., Turkey). The research reported in this article relates to government control over religion and how Christian universities negotiate identity and independence in their secular plural contexts.

In this area, increased secularization is, paradoxically, accompanied by increased visibility of religion. Part of that visibility is due to the political association of certain forms of religion with actions and activities deemed radical and extreme. This manifests itself in a legal and public policy context that impinges directly on university life.

This article seeks in part to exemplify these features as (traditionally conceived) Christian foundation universities engage with government policy on radicalization and religion in a context of religion and belief plurality, with increased religious visibility. Though both of the universities in this study have Christian foundations, they are both diverse and plural in their student and staff composition. Their student bodies have majorities that signify no religious association so should not be construed as 'faith member institutions'. In England, Anglican foundation universities typically identify their historic links to Christianity and express a concern to present or extend values linked to faith [8].

This article reports the findings of a project that sought to find out how universities with Anglican foundations negotiated their values in a time of public anxiety about intolerance, extremism and minorities, through an examination of their approach to implementing the PREVENT policy. It introduces the policy context of counter-terrorism in UK universities, summarises the research approach, and provides a thematic analysis of the data before drawing some conclusions.

2. The Hostile Context of Counter-Terrorism Policy on Universities

The UK Government passed legislation in 2011 and then in 2015 in the *Counter-Terrorism and Security Act*. Section 26 of the Act refers to legal requirements of UK universities. This policy enshrined into law the PREVENT agenda as part of the wider counter-terrorism strategy—a strategy that can be denoted as part of a process of securitization of religion, a characteristic of the positioning of education in a secularizing age [9]. PREVENT is one strand of the Counter-Terrorism strategy called CONTEST which is comprised of 4 'Ps': PURSUE, PREVENT, PROTECT, and PREPARE. PREVENT is most closely linked to everyday life in Britain as it integrates education, healthcare, immigration systems, and other systems into a culture of training of public sector workers to spot those who may be vulnerable to radical extremism.

The UK government's PREVENT duty guidance webpage [10] contains specific guidance for higher education institutions and their duties under the current anti-terrorism law. This guidance identifies higher education institutions as bodies bound by this law with a requirement to identify an officer with responsibility for implementing the PREVENT duty. It lists key areas of interventions that higher education institutions must account for. These include external speakers and events, risk assessment of students, staff training, welfare and pastoral matters including chaplaincy, IT policies, student union societies, and monitoring and performance.

PREVENT has required changes for many working in university roles including student support and wellbeing, the work of interfaith councils, diversity and equality committees, governance groups, and chaplaincy. These bodies have had to respond to the new context and take on specific new duties as a result of the legal obligations under PREVENT.

PREVENT significantly increased the expectation placed on universities to extend safeguarding and monitoring of particular groups, especially, but not exclusively, Muslim students and staff. How universities seek to extend an ethic of hospitality, or 'tolerance', towards a broad range of students and

staff from plural and diverse backgrounds, has become challenged by the security concerns that are actually or are perceived to be focused on one segment of the university population, namely Muslims.

There has been considerable controversy around these initiatives among higher education staff and students. The National Union of Students has coordinated a 'Preventing PREVENT' project [11] which encourages students across British universities to oppose PREVENT. The material produced to support this campaign specifically identified as criticisms of PREVENT strategy:

- A tokenistic inclusion of non-Muslim extremism whilst it is overwhelming and disproportionately focused on Muslims;
- The secretive nature of PREVENT;
- Conflating safeguarding with community cohesion;
- The Islamaphobic context in Britain;
- The creation of a surveillance state;
- The blurring of the lines of welfare provision and national security;
- Changing the fundamental nature of the relationship between staff and students (students not suspects);
- The lack of empirical support for the effectiveness of the strategy;
- The promotion of particular theological strands of Islam over others.

A similar project has been coordinated by the University and College Union (UCU) [12] which also opposes PREVENT and encourages dissent among staff members. At its 2015 Congress, UCU passed policy 11 which set out numerous objections to the PREVENT duty. These included the concern that it threatened academic freedom and freedom of speech, would stifle campus activism, would require university tutors to label students in what was essentially a racist way. A particular concern is the change and disruption of the tutor–student relationship with one that has a surveillance agenda that is discriminatory towards Muslims and legitimises Islamophobia and xenophobia. The requirement to monitor Muslim students will destroy the trust needed for an appropriate learning environment and encourage discrimination and could help racist parties flourish.

The PREVENT policy places a significant anti-terrorism legal duty on universities at a time of considerable public anxiety. It brings into a single focus the following factors:

- issues around student wellbeing and chaplaincy;
- issues around student religious affiliation and practice;
- issues around free speech and freedom in university culture, society and politics;
- issues around equality, inclusion and respect for different religions and beliefs;
- issues around staff-student relationships.

These responses in the professional working of universities are accompanied by a burgeoning body of academic literature surrounding the factors linked to PREVENT and higher education. For example, the 2017 edited collection by Panjwani, Revell, and Gholami [13] contains a number of differently authored studies that critically engage the politics of this connection. Gambetta and Hertog's study [14] explores in detail cases of educated people becoming involved in radical extremism in their 2016 book and the contexts surrounding those cases. There is not space here to provide a comprehensive review of critical discussion surrounding PREVENT, but it is more important in identifying the policy positions of the students' union and the main university academics' union, both of which are deeply hostile to the policy.

Given this hostility, and the extent to which policy around radicalisation has become a critical issue in political discourse, this project seeks to explore how academics, students, and professional officers in universities with Anglican foundations understand and interpret PREVENT and their Anglican university identity in context. From the interviews at two universities, we learn that academics, students, and university officers have conflicted concerns about the implementation of government

PREVENT policy for ethical, intellectual, and practical reasons as well as a strong concern that campus life is a welcoming one marked by freedom of speech. The relationship with an Anglican university identity is full of tension as religion is related both to the institutional culture they seek to cultivate, to greater or lesser extents and yet is also an identified feature associated with the foci that policy seeks to address and limit.

3. Methods

This was a qualitative research project which wanted to find out how Christian universities (universities with an Anglican foundation) were responding to radicalization, in particular the government expectations placed on universities. Two universities in the south of England were chosen, one with a comparatively low number of students (a small university) and one with a large number of students. Both are situated in provincial cathedral towns. 'Foundation' refers to a relationship with a Church. It is defined in the instruments or articles of the institutions indicating a historic connection, as well as some degree of ongoing connection which might manifest in particular provision requirements. These might relate to the curriculum focus (such as the education of teaching and health professionals) features of the pastoral care of students (such the employment of a chaplain and maintenance of a chaplaincy) and influence in leadership and governance (such as Church position on the university governing body and religious requirements of the Vice Chancellor). These are not consistently applied in both universities in the research. 'Foundation' does not refer to the religion and belief status of the staff or students. The institutions chosen were different in terms of the extent to which they foregrounded their self-identification of their Anglican foundation identity. University P tended to foreground its Anglican identity more directly and publicly than University Q.

Interviews were conducted with key individuals responsible for the process of responding to the proposal in university management and representatives of students' unions form the time the universities implemented their practical responses. Eight participants were identified and approached through contacts within each institution. It was important to find particular officers, academics, and students who had worked with the development and implementation of the PREVENT policy response. Semi-structured in-depth interviews [15] took place between April and July 2017 with participants from two universities with Anglican foundations in England, five from one and three from the other. The participants included men and women and people who self-identified as Christians, Muslims, and of no religious background. The students were in their 20s and the staff were in their 40s and 50s.

Participants from the institutions included:

- Two current students with senior experience of Student Union work (at union officer level), and one former student union officer who is now an intern at the university;
- Six members of staff. These held multiple roles including operating responsibilities, including those with responsibility for work on PREVENT, a member of staff from within the Chaplaincy, a member of staff responsible for diversity and equality. Two hold senior university management team positions (one from each university) The sample included Christians (of differing denominations), Muslims, and those of no expressed faith or belief. The key priority was identifying and interviewing staff involved in the PREVENT policy and members of students' unions at the time of the implementation.

The majority of people interviewed self-identified as religious during the interviews (most were Christians and one was Muslim). Those interviewed included people from a range of different genders and sexual orientations. Their names are not revealed in this report. Four were interviewed individually and there were two interviews each with two participants. Interviews lasted 1–1.5 h. All interviews took place on their respective campuses. The six interviews used a semi-structured format, were conducted in private, with the consent of participants and the associated institutions. A specific question was asked about their involvement in the development of the PREVENT/Fundamental British Values university policy and any debates. They were asked about what happened, what the issues were

that were discussed, what the key debates were and how things were resolved. Questions were also asked about the values and Christian foundation of the university, the feelings about the government's motivations for the policy and any programmes of training used by the university in relation to PREVENT. Interviews were recorded and transcribed and analysed to draw out thematic patterns. Participants were made aware of a right to withdraw from the process. Recordings and transcriptions were held in secure environments and in accordance to UK legislation which the participants were informed about.

This article offers an interpretation of the interviews in the context of the present heightened concerns about extremism, and the increasing expectations for accountability.

4. Interpreting the Interview Data

Five key themes categories emerged during the interview process as it followed the participants' narrative. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed and those themes were confirmed. The aim of the research was to illuminate the understanding and thinking of professionals and students engaged in the experience of the implementation of a controversial policy and therefore the context and narrative of the participants' responses. The categories group data which have similar characteristics.

4.1. Confidence and Competence in Managing Religious Dimensions of University Life

In both of the Anglican foundation universities, Senior Management Team (SMT) members identified a need to be able to speak and make decisions in a religiously informed way when it comes to judgements around PREVENT. The controversy of the policy and the risk of poor implementation was acutely realized and spoken about by everyone interviewed.

One of the repercussions of the PREVENT expectations has been to elevate to a high level, in terms of senior management engagement, discussions about religion. Because of the specifications within the policy, these discussions demanded SMT engaged with differences within religion, especifically Islam, and an awareness of the question of a concern that student piety might be wrongly interpreted as problematic. Those with ultimate responsibility for the PREVENT duty, are expected by the policy to have a working understanding of religion and their student body's religiosity, to be able to make decisions around its implementation. When describing events related to the PREVENT policy, it was clear from the remarks made by SMT members, that PREVENT required managers to deal intelligently with religion as a topic. They are required to discuss the activity of chaplains, the presence or absence of certain a student-led societies (in particular Muslim Society and Christian Unions) and the use of university resources for religious association. The policy requires discussion around the provision and monitoring of places of worship, the monitoring of outside speakers invited by religious societies, the relationship between those societies and outside organisations, and the personal tutor role when it came to making judgements about students who were making changes in their life, such as becoming more pious in their religious practice.

All of the participants commented in some way, that good religious knowledge and understanding, including levels of understanding that include confidence around the diversity of forms of religious expression and also a confidence in engagement with students on matters of a religious nature, has become a critical factor that students, staff members, and senior leaders spoke about. Confidence and expertise in these areas might help students feel more confident that decisions being made by staff are informed, but student perception about this capacity is an issue of concern. The national campaign is known in the student bodies and there are anxieties around how universities are implementing PREVENT. One student union officer expressed a concern that university staff might misinterpret religiosity with the potential risk of long-term negative outcomes for them.

> "and the biggest problem that I have with PREVENT and this is something that not a lot of people think about, is because these things, it's something that organisations like 'Teachers, not Informers' actually talk about, is that the people who actually put on their shoulders to

> spy on students—this is teachers. Teachers and lecturers who are actually not professionally trained to do so". [Student 1 at University P]

This concerned was echoed by senior managers and staff members more generally and led to a heightened focus of attention around decision making about whether recommendations for CHANNEL be made or not (CHANNEL is the next step after an initially identified concern regarding a student has been made).

This highlights the importance not only of university managers and staff have competence in religious understanding, particular in terms of their student and staff body, but also of this expertise being understood and visible to the student body. The consequence of students not having that confidence is a heightened sense of fear about potential misapplication or crude application of PREVENT requirements. Students have such fears and these became manifest in phrases such as '*PREVENT list*', '*I wonder am I on the list*', '*Should I be careful about my dissertation topic*'.

The university managers who were interviewed felt it was essential to communicate their own doubts about the policy, making clear the university is 'reluctantly compliant' to counter fears in the student and staff bodies that the university was simply accepting the assumptions surrounding the policy. The Chaplain expressed this in terms of being consistent with higher education's intellectual independent status as a critical examiner of all things. For Anglican universities seeking to advance their Anglican identity more strongly, there is scope to link this intellectual independence with the 'alternative perspective' that an Anglican institution might be said to have about education and the Christian tradition of critical reflection. This was referred to by staff members and students in both institutions.

4.2. Right-Wing Extremism, Christianity, and Student Societies

Although much of the attention around PREVENT in terms of student societies has been focused on Muslim societies, staff, and students at Anglican universities identified issues with Christian and also some non-religious societies and groups. Whatever the true intention of the government in applying the PREVENT policy, in the implementation in Anglican universities, the policy is being applied in ways that concern groups other than Muslim.

In one case a key chaplaincy intervention in University Q challenged a particular narrative within a Christian society related to the status of women and questions around attitudes towards members of the LGBTQ+ community. Although this was not treated as a PREVENT matter, the narrative being challenged was one that extremist organizations similarly draw on. According to SMT staff member 2, the role of the chaplain (who was acting autonomously, not under instruction from senior management or PREVENT officer) was vital in helping to mentor that situation to a more open, tolerant ethos, reflective of a broader Christian perspective than the previous ethos.

By way of comparison, similar initiatives, sometimes involving directly institution-sanctioned challenges to society ethos, had taken place with other kinds of societies, including sports societies. One mentioned included an intervention to remove certain sexualized practices for new society members that magnified sexist attitudes.

University staff were dealing with a wider set of religiously sensitive matters related to values, ethos and wellbeing. These that could link to PREVENT, in so far as extremists attitudes to issues of gender equality and sexual orientation equality can be associated with socially conservative attitudes in religious or cultural groups that are not violent.

Staff interviewed also identified concerns about far-right extremism that their PREVENT activity included. At the universities involved this was more prominent than examples involving Muslim students and staff officers commented this was perceived to be a more serious threat. There were more specific examples of issues in this category though this may be a result of the universities having smaller populations of Muslim students than other universities. Far-right extremism is a genuine issue of concern by university staff with the responsibility for PREVENT oversight.

One senior staff member expressed a general concern about the under-reporting of far-right activity. Arguably this is tangentially bolstered by the National Union of Students (NUS) account that PREVENT is mainly an Islamophobia and racist tool. By labelling the references to far-right extremism as tokenistic, the opponents of PREVENT downplay concerns about far-right extremism. University Q explicitly puts a strong emphasis on the far right in training as was a particular local issue of concern raised in security reports provided by the Police to the university.

There is a tentative association between Christianity and far-right groups. Far-right organizations in England make references to Christian heritage to bolster their own narratives, and sometimes promote socially conservative attitudes to women, as well as socially excluding attitudes towards other religions, in particular, Islam, identifying its foreignness to England's Christian character. They also exhibit prejudiced and discriminatory attitudes towards LGBTQ+ communities. Some Christian organisations hold similar views and in the public debate Christianity is commonly linked to socially conservative attitudes and opposing views on LGBTQ+ issues. Though the Church of England holds a broader position on these issues, its public and unresolved debate about LGBTQ+ issues and women Bishops is a potential risk area for Anglican universities seeking to both extend a welcoming, hospitable, confident Christian identity and punish university staff or student members who are discriminatory in these areas.

4.3. Narrative Complexity: Free Speech, Motivations Suspicion, Tokenism, and Welcome

One of the factors identified by staff in the universities interviewed was around what can best be described as narrative complexity. The critical narrative around PREVENT, found in union literature and critical academic literature, is that it is a policy that is irredeemably Islamaphobic and racist because the true targets of the policy are Muslims. Some students expressed concerns that the inclusion of far-right concerns in PREVENT policy documentation and training was tokenistic. In one of the universities involved, University P, this was a major concern within the student body with a political debate taking place in the previous year attracting over a hundred students, and the creation of a 'preventing PREVENT' strategy.

Students interviewed expressed concerns about the degree of surveillance and active profiling at the university and the potential for poor judgement to lead to difficult consequences:

> "Here is where I had the worry because I am not sure what the university have access to. Like this is what I am like 'do they know what I am googling?' Like if I start googling stuff towards my degree do they have the access to see what I am googling? I don't know if I was under PREVENT, I might be. Now, this is the biggest danger, they don't tell you, they don't tell you until it is too late. If you are not on the level where they are 100% sure that something is going on, or they think they're 100% sure but 99% of the times they are wrong, and the police officers come to your door drag you and start like questioning this stuff, you don't know if you are under PREVENT. Like I'm not going to be surprised with the degree that I am doing with being an international student, with being with darker skin and all this stuff and having the beard, it's not going to be a surprise for me if I am on the list of the PREVENT officers". (Student 1 at University P. Student 1 is an international Muslim student)

This is clearly a fear for this student, although both students at University P commented that they felt free to debate PREVENT in their classes.

> "[Student 1] Like actually we are really encouraged to actually speak up your mind and say what you want to, especially like in religious studies classes sometimes we even discuss things like PREVENT. In politics classes, we discuss things like PREVENT with our lecturers. Like it's a really open debate. But I think it's because of the nature of my degree like I don't think that if you study mathematics you're going to have such a conversation, or if you study animal science you're not going to have this type of conversation.

> [Interviewer] What about Education, because obviously, you've got kind of the Education side, that sounds quite similar to what you said?
>
> [Student 2] Yes I had some very similar experiences in the fact that lecturers were very open to allow you to challenge views as much as possible. And there were some, let's say not controversial modules but modules that would bring out views that probably could be controversial for certain people. But I don't think anyone has ever felt they had to keep those views to themselves or never felt they could speak up about their views".

A different example which reflected this kind of complexity about the relationship between the narrative and the actual risks was recalled by Staff member 1 at University P where an ethnically white recent convert to Islam had been expelled for threatening behaviour. There was a sense of trying to counter tendencies within the policy that seemed to focus on one particular group. "We were taking something that had particular targets in sight and deliberately trying to make it more generic." (Staff Member 2, University P).

There was a kind of policy pacification and also recontextualization to the particular needs of particular institutions with regional issues that might differ. One staff member interviewee at University P described this as trying to add a concern about possible radicalization to a list of concerns that the university might have about student welfare in general, rather than adopting a wholly different approach. A staff member at university Q said that PREVENT had been incorporated into the broader wellbeing strategy of the university. It included a strong emphasis on freedom of speech and was relatively 'soft touch' around speakers. This was because risk assessments had been undertaken that identified that key areas of concern were to be found elsewhere.

Within both universities, there was a concern to ensure the policy was outworked in the context of the universities values.

> "[We] make sure that those legal requirements are satisfied but find any of making should those requirements being outworked in this specific context in a way that reflects [university Q's] values and approaches". (SMT Staff member 1 University Q)

Different views were expressed about the relationship between the Anglican tradition, the university and the PREVENT policy and they were nuanced. Staff members from university Q supported a low profile reference to the Anglican foundation and a high profile expression of institutional concern about the government policy. Members from university expressed a more public and explicit association with the Anglican foundation and felt the university took a cooperative stance to the policy, though they themselves had grave reservations about it.

One interviewee saw a possible intellectual compatibility between the policy, the university, and the Anglican tradition, but offered caveats about how the policy might be interpreted in problematic ways, and might come into conflict with some Christian ideas especially given the Anglican tradition of giving a maximum degree of latitude and accommodation of ideas on the one hand and for worship the Book of Common Prayers on the other:

> " . . . it is the tradition that supports a common life, common practice, common understanding but gives great freedom for challenge, questioning. so hopefully it is an environment that naturally works against a radical idea which is unsustainable or unjustifiable. Part of the difficulty is the language itself. Is what is radical wrong is what is extreme necessarily wrong because these are relative terms measured against what are particularly or judged to be norms by a society at a certain place and a certain time so in a sense I am nervous about that kind of language because some positions of the Reformation could be described as radical or extreme, there was ways of interpretation Jesus that sees him as radical or extremes, so what matters more is not the idea itself but the fact that the ideas are tested, that the spirits are tested, if you will. So there's not a prejudice about 'if you say x then that must be wrong' but if you say x it must be testable". (Chaplain Staff Member 2, University P)

A key issue is the capacity, clarity, and confidence for universities at a senior level to be confident in their self-understanding as a university with a Christian foundation that welcomes students of all backgrounds. Students from both universities thought that the welcome offered to students of different religions was an important priority for development related to these issues.

> "And I understand that we can have our church background and our links to the church and I don't mind that at all but I think as part of that as . . . said then we need to be welcoming of all religions and show that's what Christianity is about and it's about welcoming everyone from all different backgrounds". (Student 2, University P)

Another student from University Q made a similar point and commented that the university needed to be better at celebrating the different kinds of people who are at the university.

> "we are being extremely welcoming of different cultures but we need to be better at celebrating the different kinds of people who are at the university and to make leaders of the people who are here". (Former Student 1, University Q)

From a meta perspective, clear threads of policy reinterpretation are present in the policy discussion and implementation in Anglican universities. A constructivist and opportunistic hermeneutic is evidently at play by staff members and students each seeking to interpret the university's Christian identity through this issue.

4.4. Compliance, Subversion, Intellectual Criticality, and Training

Staff Member 1 at University P commented that the concerns expressed by staff members fell into two kinds: a worry that the university might not be doing enough to protect students and others from terrorism, and a worry that the university was being unethical in engaging with the PREVENT strategy.

This feature came up consistently across all the staff members and students interviewed. There is a tension in seeking to be a values-led institution, and the requirement to be compliant to the law. In particular, very serious reservations were expressed about exposing the student–staff relationship to safeguarding processes.

> "My background is in the close reading of texts, so any text must be read closely and critically, which is not to say negatively, that's not what I understand by critically, but I, you know, we continue to have those critical close reading based conversations of PREVENT. I'm not, I'm not a . . . an advocate of PREVENT at a personal level but I recognise that it is something we are required to comply with. I tend to use the language of subversion rather than revolution". (SMT Staff Member 2, University Q)

The linking of safeguarding responses to judgments about religiosity causes considerable worry for everyone. The concerns about the true motivations of government and the desire for intellectual independence play a key role in constructing a need for universities to adopt a reluctantly compliant but intellectually critical approach to the policy. The question of subversion and revolution reveals an essential problematic around this policy. This language suggests legal obligations may be met in such a way that undermines some aspects of the purpose of the policy.

This was more than merely an ideological disagreement with government policy but went more deeply into the practical possibility of supporting staff to make judgments that could have life-changing impacts in areas where there is considerable uncertainty—such as deciding whether a student is at risk. SMT Staff member 2 at University Q was direct about the basic problem of expecting staff to be able to make secure judgements about these kinds of risk, given the degree of uncertainty in the field of judging risk and future direction of change in future student development.

The need to take a public position of unsatisfied or reluctant compliance was identified by students. It was important for students to know that their universities were critical of policy and enacted it out of

legal duty. It was important that the staff also heard from their SMT members a critical understanding of the weaknesses of the policy, even if they were compelled to undertake certain processes. There was a strong sense of a wish for dissent among students and some academic members of staff, and a reluctant compliance from the senior managers and operating officers.

The difficulty of agreeing to the line in the balance between critical independence and legal compliance was a key challenge for universities. In the case of training for staff, University P created a task group to agree on a bespoke training package that was specifically orientated to take the least discriminatory approach to PREVENT. This came about after training packages available were scrutinized, but all found wanting. Some voices within the task group wanted a more oppositional and critical element to be expressed within the training but this was not agreed. The attempt to provide a modified approach which included all opinions about PREVENT was particularly difficult and did not result in something that was supported by all. The proposed solution of a more moral way of implementing PREVENT did not gain unanimous support.

University Q identified training for those it considered needed the training but also made public its general critical view of the policy and training, whilst still complying with the law.

An analysis of university positioning reveals ethical risks. University P could be accused of muddying its ethical standpoints by trying to create a veneer of respectability with an essentially immoral policy whilst University Q might be accused of not truly taking seriously its commitment to student safeguarding. Both universities would reject these criticisms and both would have a strong basis for such as rejection as each was genuinely committed to reaching the right balance in executing responsibilities, as far as could be judged from the interviews.

4.5. University Chaplaincy and Staff Who Engage with Religious Students and Local Religious Institutions

One factor that clearly matters is having staff who understand religious development in young people, and who understood that university life was a key time of change for learners, where they tried on different approaches to life and broke out of the traditions of their upbringing. Staff who are pastorally attuned and able to engage and intervene in a capacity that is outside the usual academic–student relationship is clearly a matter of importance. In the interviews it was clear that there were examples when staff members in important student engagement roles had good knowledge and engagement with religious students, and that this mattered significantly:

> "I was drawing on a past of also working with students. I had worked with Muslims students, you know some years previously looking at, consulting with them about their experience at University P, what they wanted, what their relationship was with the Mosque . . . . and you know, so I'd had quite a lot of engagement with Muslim students". (Equality and Diversity Staff member 1 at University P)

Staff members commented that this made a material difference to the approach taken at University P describing a critical moment in the meetings developing policy when that insight was drawn on to directly challenge assumptions about religiosity that would classify devotion as suspicious.

Chaplains have a new dimension to their role in that they are specifically identified in government policy as having a role in the PREVENT agenda. Chaplains are common features of English universities though may be salaried, unsalaried, lay or ordained, denominationally and religiously particular (representing a Church or religion) or with a specific multifaith/worldview mandate. Chaplains in universities with Anglican foundation tend to be members of the Church of England, and usually ordained ministers of the Church. Because they provide spiritual pastoral services and operate in a liminal space between the academic staff and student body, often supporting groups of students as well as engaging with them in personal and pastoral capacity, they are likely to encounter student groups in quite a different way from usual teaching staff, as illuminated by Peter McGrail and John Sullivan [16]. They are more likely to be involved in university committees and structures concerned with students' religious identity and may have responsibility for oversight and maintenance of places

of worship, and therefore be familiar with activities taking place in those spaces and in the student groups that they come into contact with. They are likely to have detailed academic and practical knowledge of religious life and expression in the student body and are more likely to hear about concerns of a religious nature from students and staff.

University P has opportunities for links between the student experience, staff members, and representations of the different religions on campus through a facility established by the chaplaincy. University Q participants mentioned the perceived benefit of having a chaplain strongly linked to student life and societies. The presence of a strong chaplaincy was important in the universities where interviews took place. That included pastoral intervention in student societies and also in terms of critical advisors on policy development.

Chaplains at university P formed a multi-religious advisory group with members of any religion and belief positions and links to local religious communities, which formed a structure to discuss matters of concern about the implementation of the PREVENT policy, among many other things, and also provided a source of expertise about local religious conditions. This enabled the university to seek advice about questions related to the range of religious behaviour being expressed by its student body.

The inclusion of the Chaplain on a working party established to oversee the implementation of the requirements of PREVENT led to a change in strategy by the university management. There had been a suggestion that attendance at prayer in Muslim prayer rooms would be monitored through a register system without sufficient cognisance of the degree of insensitivity the monitoring of worship patterns in this way might generate. This led to a change in strategy by the university management where there had been a suggestion that attendance at prayer in Muslim prayer rooms would be monitored through a register system. As a result, this proposal was dropped.

In one case a chaplain facilitated change in a student religious group that had developed a particularly narrow approach to student leadership that excluded women, to one that was inclusive and in accordance with the university's expressed values. This was facilitated without a formal process of sanction from university management but through a soft influence strategy (i.e., without a formal sanction of the official process being required).

In the particular Anglican institutions involved, having effective chaplaincy provided a key resource to SMT and the student body. Whilst chaplaincies are common in many kinds of campuses, that Anglican foundation institutional association with the chaplaincy provided an additional resource. In some cases, the Anglican chaplaincy had undertaken extensive work to make links with religious leaders of many religions to provide an extended network of support. The Chaplain interviewed commented that because of their explicit mention in the PREVENT policy, the role of chaplains and chaplaincy, as well as other officers with a specialist understanding of religion and belief, has been brought to the attention of university leaders and managers and their pastoral duties are now linked to the question of student safeguarding due to the PREVENT policy.

5. Concluding Discussions

Many UK universities face a campus context which is visibly religiously diverse and also laden with political policy objectives and pastoral responsibilities and duties. Universities with particular religious foundations are additionally challenged by those identities and any ethical requirements that such identities demand, and how they might frame or condition any response to the issues given their identities. The staff interviewed said that their universities try to be a welcoming and inclusive environment for students of all beliefs and none. University management is left to lead their staff and managers to articulate and negotiate such identities as they seek to welcome and safeguard all students and engage in a policy context which is clearly felt by staff and students as hostile. In the UK, specialist understanding of religion has become more important in the implementation of government policies that are viewed with suspicion. University management is challenged to ensure staff members feel in a position to make judgements expected by the PREVENT policy, in particular in terms of judging when a student may be vulnerable to radicalization, when many may feel making

such judgements undermines their relationship with students. A poor knowledge of religiosity in university communities is likely to impair such judgements whether or not they are morally justifiable.

The findings of this small-scale qualitative study sustain the view that knowledge should include some specific elements. As well as an understanding of the diversity of Islam there should be an understanding of the distinction between religious piety and extremism. In addition, there should be an understanding of the links made between far-right organizations and Christianity and the possible relationship between socially conservative religious attitudes to certain issues (especially around sexuality and also views of other religious truth claims) and the positions taken on those issues and language used by organizations that advocate intolerance, violence and terror to secure their objectives. There are complex links between faith, religious and political radicalization, and the promotion of equality and LGBTQ+ issues. There is also a narrow path to be taken in balancing between the right to free speech and free belief on campus, with intolerant attitudes and ideas that are expressed in some groups.

Given that university time is a period when students experiment and make important decisions and changes in their view of life and world, including religious changes, there is an inevitable difficulty in applying this policy, given the uncertainty around these judgment areas. Religious identity is being associated with radicalization, extremism and terrorism, and that association, necessitated by the required implementing of the PREVENT policy on university campuses, establishes an intersectional link between securitization and secularization.

The religiously founded institution negotiates the intersection of state attempts at surveillance and detoxification of religion, in its attempt to curtail religious radicalization. The secular (or post-secular) interconnects with key questions around the responsibility of public institutions and the freedoms and limitations on religious expression and identity. How a university might be Christian or secular, or indeed independent, is affected by the political context in terms of security and public threat, as well as attitudes towards accountability. There is clearly a perception that the (secular) government authorities expect all universities, (including Christian ones), to police Muslim activity in some ways and therefore, arguably, become involved in the limitation of the freedom of expression and belief because of fear and danger. Radicalisation and terrorism provoke increased secularization with accompanying limitations on liberty. This comes in the name of responsibility and accountability in higher education.

Whether we are living in what may be described as an 'age' (or locality) that is secular, one that is marked by multiple secularities or one that is marked by post secularity, one recommendation from this research is that a sophisticated understanding of the forms of religious expression appears to be an essential organizational requirement in education institutions. From the interviews, a poor understanding of the various elements listed becomes an obstacle or threat to either effective decision making around the implementation of the PREVENT policy or indeed its critique. It increases the likelihood of bad judgements that could significantly harm staff-student relationships and individual student opportunities and wellbeing. The SMT Staff member from University Q simply did not think accurate and appropriate judgements could be made by staff in general about the risk of radicalization.

A strong and coherent self-understanding appears to be an asset in intervening and contribution to the discussions around the development of the local policy of PREVENT and how it could be implemented. This was true irrespective of the extent to which a university sought to foreground its Anglican identity (which university P might be characterized as doing) or wore such an identity 'lightly' (which staff at university Q self-identified their institution). In any context, what seemed to matter in the decision making and implementation approach, was a confidence and coherence about identity, aims and the culture of the institutions.

Regardless of whether the PREVENT policy itself is intrinsically flawed (a matter beyond the scope of this research), a second recommendation is for a clarification of how Christian universities communicate their stance on the policy with all stakeholders, and whether that communication contains tones of reluctant compliance, contextualization, subversion, and intellectual criticality.

A third recommendation is that some involvement of chaplaincy, or other religiously literate officers, in guidance, development, and implementation of PREVENT policy is clearly necessary but this may also bring a risk for chaplains if they are so closely associated with institutional management on such a controversial matter.

One question which is asked through this context is whether an open secular environment that is inclusive to diversity, fractures in the face of a less tolerant, possibly even consciously (or unconsciously) anti-religious government policy. In becoming increasingly 'independent' from religious control, in what was ostensibly viewed as a more open and progressive liberal society, Christian foundation universities risk a loss of independence as government policy becomes less tolerant of religious freedom, and more focused on securitization and surveillance. A final recommendation from this research is for Christian universities to establish and communicate a clarity about their self-understanding as religious institutions. Whereas they might have once (rightly or wrongly) been viewed as guardians of Christian cultural normativity and opponents of progress, Christian universities could take on a new mantle in creating the open, plural, and tolerant societies they were previously cast as opposing. In an, arguably, post-Christian and post-secular society, Christian universities might find a voice and purpose in support of hospitable, faith-inclusive and dialogic campus communities.

Author Contributions: R.A.B. and L.R. conceived and designed the questions; R.A.B. conducted the interviews; R.A.B. and L.R. analyzed the data; R.A.B. wrote the paper with advice, consultation, comment, and contribution from L.R.

Funding: This research was funded by the Church Universities Fund.

Acknowledgments: The research for this article was made possible by a grant fund by Church Universities Fund (UK).

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest. The founding sponsors had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript, and in the decision to publish the results.

References

1. Carpenter, J.; Glanzer, P.L.; Lantinga, N.S. *Christian Higher Education: A Global Reconnaissance*, 3rd ed.; Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI, USA, 2014.
2. Jacobsen, D.; Jacobson, R.H. *No Longer Invisible: Religion in University Education*; OUP: Oxford, UK, 2012.
3. British Social Attitudes: Record Number of Brits with No Religion. Available online: http://www.natcen.ac.uk/news-media/press-releases/2017/september/british-social-attitudes-record-number-of-brits-with-no-religion/ (accessed on 10 July 2018).
4. Bowie, B.; Peterson, A.; Revell, L. Post-secular trends: Issues in education and faith. *J. Beliefs Values* **2012**, *33*, 139–143. [CrossRef]
5. Boeve, L. Religious education in a post-secular and post-Christian context. *J. Beliefs Values* **2012**, *33*, 143–156. [CrossRef]
6. Boeve, L. The identity of a Catholic university in post-Christian European societies: Four models. *Louvain Stud.* **2006**, *31*, 238–258. [CrossRef]
7. Casanova, J. Rethinking secularization: A global comparative perspective. *Hedgehog Rev.* **2006**, *8*, 7–22.
8. Welcome to The Cathedrals. Available online: http://www.cathedralsgroup.ac.uk/ (accessed on 15 June 2018).
9. Saeed, T. *Islamophobia and Securitization: Religion, Ethnicity and the Female Voice*; Palgrave: London, UK, 2016.
10. Prevent Duty Guidance. Available online: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance (accessed on 15 June 2018).
11. Bouattia, M. Preventing PREVENT: A Student Handbook on Countering the Prevent Agenda on Campus. Available online: http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/preventing-prevent-handbook (accessed on 25 July 2017).

12. UCU. The Prevent Duty: A Guide for Branches and Members. Available online: https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/7370/The-prevent-duty-guidance-for-branches-Dec-15/pdf/ucu_preventdutyguidance_dec15.pdf (accessed on 25 July 2017).
13. Panjwani, F.; Revell, L.; Gholami, R. (Eds.) *Education and Extremisms: Rethinking Liberal Pedagogies in the Contemporary World Hardcover*; Routledge: London, UK, 2017.
14. Gambetta, D.; Hertog, S. *Engineers of Jihad: The Curious Connection between Violent Extremism and Education*; Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, USA; Oxford, UK, 2016.
15. Mears, C. In-depth Interviews. In *Research Methods and Methodologies in Education*; James, A., Michael, W., Robert, C., Larry, H., Eds.; Sage: London, UK, 2012; pp. 170–176.
16. McGrail, P.; Sullivan, J. *Dancing on the Edge: Chaplaincy, Church and Higher Education*; Matthew James Publishing: Chelmsford, UK, 2007.

education sciences

MDPI

Article

Convergence Education of Medicine and Theology in a Secular Age †

Soo-Young Kwon [1], Nam Hoon Cho [2] and Moon Son [1,*]

[1] College of Theology, Yonsei University, 50 Yonsei-ro, Seodaemun-gu, Seoul 03722, Korea; sykwon@yonsei.ac.kr

[2] College of Medicine, Yonsei University, 50 Yonsei-ro, Seodaemun-gu, Seoul 03722, Korea; cho1988@yuhs.ac

* Correspondence: sm0925@yonsei.ac.kr; Tel.: +82-10-7355-6732

† This work was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF-2017S1A5A8022660).

Received: 27 September 2018; Accepted: 6 November 2018; Published: 15 November 2018

Abstract: Convergence education of medicine and theology (CEMT) is an effective religious education learning model in a secular age. The highly elaborate rationality of the secular environment encourage es dialogical discourse between science and religion. There is a mutually reinforcing relationship between medicine and theology even given each discipline's differences from the other. In this paper, the dialogical discourse between medicine and theology about the human-genome project serves as an example of the symbiotic relevance of both disciplines. The Ebola virus shows how theological discourse can be included in what is apparently a medical concern to ultimately benefit medical efforts. An example of CEMT in the classroom shows the possibilities for enlarging the conventional horizons of religious education to overlap medicine.

Keywords: secularization; rationality; medicine; theology; symbiotic relevance

1. Introduction

This study focused on a new position for religious education in public educational life, such as in universities or higher education institutions through the convergence education of medicine and theology (CEMT) in a secular age when religious belief and practice are a declining part of public life, their specific tenets become generalized, and their values substituted for secular values [1]. CEMT can be understood at the level at which secularized religious beliefs obtain their moral legitimacy by becoming generalized [2]. This type of convergence project helps make innovative medical research more responsible by allowing diverse stakeholders to engage in inclusive decision-making regarding social and ethical conflicts about challenging issues, such as genetic modification [3]. For example, CRISPER is a recent new type of RNA-directed gene drive system that effectively allows for genetic synthesis [4]. Recently, however, a U.S. National Academy of Science working group identified this type of technology and warned of social and ethical problems that arise from experiments, even on germ lines through RNA-directed gene drives like CRISPR. Even Jennifer Doudna, a leading researcher who contributed the development of CRISPR, called for a "moratorium on gene editing in human embryos, including for research purposes" [5]. Even genetic researchers who support the promise of curing genetic diseases argue that genome-engineering technology should be encouraged and supported by the public trust through "ongoing transparency and open discussion" in scientific communities [6]. CEMT encourages learners to develop their ethical and moral awareness through the mutual interaction between their own worldviews, such as their religious beliefs, feelings, and attitudes and their lived human experience in terms of the high technology required for genetic engineering for human enhancement [7]. CEMT considers their academic difference and methodological distinctions from an interfaith perspective to respect and appreciate the other as transformative and as a form

of provocative pedagogy [8]. This study explored the interdisciplinary co-operation of convergence curriculum between medicine and theology in the United Graduate School of Theology at Yonsei University in Seoul, South Korea during the spring semester of 2017, and examined graduate students' pedagogical paths that brought them to enroll in CEMT courses and whether they did so with the perspective of hoping to receive a new perspective on religious education in a secular age. CEMT will be a new teaching and learning model to encourage the rationality of religious education for the public in a secularized society.

2. Dialogue between Science and Religion

CEMT can provide the resources required to interpret dialogue between science and religion, because the probability of religious narrative in a secularized society may be enhanced with the help of scientific discourse. Alister E. McGrath is a Professor of Theology, Ministry, and Education and Head of the Center for Theology, Religion, and Culture at King's College, London. He holds doctorates from Oxford University in both natural sciences and Christian theology. He focuses on the fine-tuning of the universe from a natural-theology perspective. The fine-tuning of the universe refers to the delicately adjusted patterns of the universe. Natural theology is the concept that connects science and religion. He takes Christian theology as an interpretive framework. Christian theology may be a schema to connect nature with transcendental beings in Christian faith, such as God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. In his book, McGrath tries to connect "anthropic phenomena in the natural sciences" with the "apparent fine-tuning of the cosmos" [9]. He stated that the "life-bearing properties of the universe are highly sensitive to the values of the fundamental forces and constants of nature", and will provide the possibility to see a series of processes from the "initial conditions of the universe" until the creation of complex life from a single perspective [9]. For example, the existence of stars rests on several delicate balances between the different forces in nature, and so serves as evidence of the fine-tuning of the universe. His contribution is in his framework for understanding the universe, which provides a meaningful link between science and religion.

He uses the term "anthropic principle" to describe fine-tuned cosmological systems. This principle can be applied to biological situations to explain the existence of a "life-bearing universe" [9]. He nevertheless does not only depend on the fine-tuning of the universe as a proof of the Christian belief in God. He focuses on "the discussion and analysis of fine-tuning" itself in nature, which is related to the exacting nature of natural science [9]. A Trinitarian natural theology represents his concerns about contemporary dialogue between the natural sciences and Christian theology and the Christian academic community. A Trinitarian natural theology as the Christian vision of reality supports the existence of anthropic phenomena described through the cosmological constants for the emergence of life and articulates how the anthropic principle is realized in chemistry, biochemistry, and evolutionary biology. This theory represents his intention to focus on the harmonious relationship between the natural world as reality and the Christian faith which is reflected in the light of the natural world. In other words, through the anthropic principle, the natural sciences can be transformed into a hermeneutical narrative.

In *A Fine-Tuned Universe*, McGrath proposes that "human beings long to make sense of things", meaning that they want to understand the structure of nature, to find the causes of what happens around them, and "to reflect on the meaning of their lives" [9]. This desire reflects the human character and its desire to try to discern purpose and meaning around us. Here, human activities exploring nature may be understood as the human quest for meaning. He said that the quest for meaning is important for three main reasons. First, it stabilizes existence. Second, it works as a defense mechanism to the challenge of meaninglessness. Third, it is the subjective response to an objective reality. These three reasons correspond to the individual's attempts to realign their internal world. Human concerns about nature go beyond "questions of mere utility" and include witnessing "a deeper moral and intellectual order of things" [9]. His understanding of natural theology can also be interpreted as an attempt to find common ground for dialogue between the Christian faith and human nature. Natural theology

also serves as a way to relate the Christian faith and the natural sciences. He treats the notion of nature as a social construction rather than an objective reality, so it must be reinterpreted in a new way. Moreover, he believes that science and religion are social constructs, as they depend on "the prevailing assumption of cultural and academic power groups" and are shaped by their historical, cultural, and political contexts [9].

Similar to McGrath's understanding, Freeman Dyson, a physical scientist, is also interested in how hermeneutical narratives can integrate science and religion. Dyson's book, Infinite in All Directions, is based on the Gifford Lectures given at Aberdeen in 1985 in which Dyson provided his opinions about the diversity of the natural world and the diversity of human reactions to it. Dyson regards "diversity" as "the chief source of beauty and value" [10]. He categorizes the scope of diversity as "the natural universe", "the governance of human societies", and "individual souls" [10]. Given all of the diversity in existence, Dyson argues that "God loves diversity" [10]. This statement is the positive foundation on which the value of diversity can be revitalized. Dyson's book includes his philosophical views about science and religion. He recognizes the difference between science and religion in the way that they explore. However, Dyson argues that these two ways of exploring show us the same universe, both theoretically and practically. Even though science and religion are not in conflict, they are limited and do not see each other at the same time. In the case of religion, he proposes William James' Varieties of Religious Experience as an example of diversity. He also says that "the total human consciousness of the divine" explains human nature's diversity as well [10]. In other words, diversity is the main way of exploring science and religion.

His concerns about religion and science are reflected in the term natural theology. He classified "natural theology" as being made up of "the Bible" and "the Book of Nature" [10]. For Dyson, God's works may appear in the Bible as well as the Book of Nature. This also reflects Sir Adam Gifford's will in "establishing the Gifford Lectures" [10]. He believed that we can read "God's mind" in "the works of Nature" [10]. This expression imbues great meaning into the works of nature. Dyson's understanding makes possible a theological approach to the natural sciences. Dyson states that "God did not only create mountains, he also created jungles" as a metaphor [10]. He equates "the great mountain peaks" with "Maxwell's equations of the electromagnetic field, Einstein's theory of general relativity", indicating that the mountains represent great academic works [10]. The jungles were "only obstacles to be overcome" in the past [10]. Today, Dyson stresses on the importance of the jungles in passages such as the following:

> But God did not only create mountains, he also created jungles. And today we are beginning to understand that the jungles are the richest and most vibrant part of his creation. The mountain explorer in South America or in Africa is not looking for mountains. She is looking into the depths of the jungles to observe and understand the creatures who live there in all their intricate variety. We ourselves came out of the jungles a few million years ago, and we are now becoming aware that we need to understand and preserve the jungle if we are to remain alive and healthy on this plant. [10]

Here, we can find that the great scientific findings are portrayed as both the mountains as well as the jungles. In the past the jungles were regarded as the obstacles to be overcome. But now, the jungles can be understood as a great treasure that helps life to survive and thrive on Earth. There is a great paradox in the shift of our perspectives from valuing mountains to jungles. Dyson continues to explain this transformation with the great changes in physics:

> After we began seriously to explore the valleys in the 1950s, we found in them flora and fauna as strange and unexpected as anything to be seen in the valleys of the Amazon. Instead of the three species of elementary particle (proton, neutron, and electron), which were known in the 1920s, we now have sixty-one. Instead of a few succinct equations to summarize the universe of physics, we have a luxuriant growth of mathematical structures, as diverse

> as the phenomena that they attempt to describe. So we have come back to the rain forest, intellectually as well as geographically. [10]

Dyson attempts to transform the philosophical lessons in the recent discoveries in physics regarding the understanding of matter. In Dyson's metaphor, the period during which the mountaintops were the focus was organized around a worldview in which there was "an objective world of space and time" and "matter independent of human thought and observation" [10]. However, Dyson's scientific conclusion is that such a worldview is impossible today. Dyson points out that Einstein's hope about an "objective reality" being understood through "a finite set of equations" is a relic of the past [10]. Likewise, the new consensus about matter allows for a transformation of the relationship between religion and science, such as allowing for the possibility of interpretive narrative for understanding matter, such as quantum horizons. Dyson says, "when we examine matter in the finest detail in the experiments of particle physics, we see it behaving as an active agent rather than as an inert substance" in quantum mechanisms, which provides a new perspective on religion as well as science [10].

McGrath and Dyson emphasize the harmonious elements of the dialogues between religion and science. However, it is difficult to capture "the inter-relationship between beliefs and the wider philosophy of nature" only in a perspective [11]. Even though religious scientists, "like Boyle, Newton, or Maxwell", stressed the harmonious dialogues between "a Christian view of the world" and "the real world", the differences between each should be recognized [11]. When these differences and the importance of creative analogies in the relationship between religion and science are recognized, the productive meanings that bridge the gap between "the influence of observers" and "the outcomes" of physical reality as the creative and organic relationship between the nature and human beings as it is observed can be understood [12]. Likewise, CEMT creates a holistic combination of religion and science through narrative rather than through the distinctive factors of each discipline. The integrative narrative of CEMT encourages a new method of religious education for reinterpreting the rooted bases of religious traditions through interconnected and mutual dialogues with medicine, which is recognized as the fruits of the rationality of a secular society.

3. The Human-Genome Project and Religious Education

This section explores the integration of the human-genome project, regarded as the foundation of molecular medicine, with its theological implications at a narrative level. Powerful new genome-editing technologies, such as "CRISPER-Cas9, zinc fingers, and TALENs", have made it possible for molecular biologists to "insert, remove, and edit genes in cells-including sperm, eggs, and embryos" to cure "genetic disease" and develop "desirable traits" [13]. CRISPER in particular is the newest type of RNA-directed gene-drive system to synthesize genes [4]. However, a U.S. National Academy of Sciences working group recently pointed out the potential risks of that gene-drive technology and warned of the serious problems associated with using it to experiment on germ lines through. Even Jennifer Doudna, a leading researcher who contributed to the development of CRISPR, has called for a "moratorium on gene editing in human embryos, including for research purposes" [5]. The medical use of gene-drive editing technologies like CRISPR is related to organ transplant, which could be facilitated by inserting human genes into pigs or other animals. With regard to this procedure, researchers have raised the ethical issue of whether human genes would bestow some level of personhood on the animals. This type of ethical issue requires a Christian theological response and provides a new possibility for Christian religious education in a secular society. Here Christianity serves as one example for developing a new pattern of religious education. If this integrative narrative about genome technology and the Christian tradition can be understood by the public, it may be expanded to include other religious traditions. Many leading molecular biologists and physicians have recognized that recent gene-drive technologies are insufficient for modifying germline cells like sperm, eggs, and embryos. For example, in an experiment in which CRISPR was used to edit the genes of monkey embryos, the miscarriage rate was over 50%, and even the products of successful pregnancies

carried disease genes [13]. Gene-drive technologies like CRISPR shows that the technology exists, but that the ability to control its associated problems and risks does not. In this respect, the ethical issues raised by gene drive technologies provide a context for theological discourse for present and future generations. Moreover, Christian education can be reformed to originate in the cross-thinking interdisciplinary foundation between recent biological research and Christian insight.

Christians perceive human beings as having a "divine image and likeness" (Gen. 1:26). In Orthodox Christian theology, the true nature of the human mind and body are experienced in depth of the "deification" transformation that occurs through God's "will" and "energy" in participatory unity with God [14]. In other words, the concept of deification is defined as educational perfection or achievement of the wholeness of the human character. Therefore, the educational process for achieving and growing human spiritual character is strongly related to deification as the "ultimate aim" of "human existence" [15]. Traditionally, the Christian perspective has been focused on the "linear development" of the human beings' autonomous egos (Johnson, 1989, p. 109). For example, in the context of educational assessment, some evaluators used to focus on each person's capacity or achievement rather than recognize the comprehensive resources of their character. However, the Christian educational process naturally focuses on the comprehensive resources that come to bear during the process of Christian spiritual formation of the human being. The relationship between Christian education and the recent scientific achievement of developing genetic engineering technologies, such as CRISPR, is considered from this perspective. It is not easy to directly link many genetic-engineering issues with traditional Christian sources. However, religious educators have the ethical and normative duty to help their students reflect on their own worldviews, such as Christian "beliefs, feelings, and attitudes", during their "lived human experience" [7]. In other words, the basic framework for Christian education in the postgenome era could be formed through the process of responding to some ethical issues raised by the high technology of genetic engineering in relation to human enhancement. The hermeneutical integration between Christian theology and genome technology provides a plentitude of meaning which can extend the horizon of human enhancement. Such progress includes purposeful and existential orientations in human growth.

The main factor of Christian education is the search for the transforming moment of human character, which is when a believer has a "convictional experience," unique in their entire existence [16]. From the Christian perspective, the transforming growth or development of human beings can be conceived in terms of communion with God in the world, such that the Eucharistic theology of Orthodox Christianity emphasizes the spiritual dependence on God as "a sacrament of communion with God" [17]. Schmemann places the theological meaning of the Eucharist on the bilateral relationship between natural and supernatural frameworks, sacred and profane meanings, and the spiritual and material [17]. Here, the core of Eucharistic life is the moment of transformation from a life grounded in the material world to a spiritual and meaningful "life in God" [17]. The Eucharistic life can be concretely understood through "the Chalcedonian definition on the two natures of Christ" [14]. The divinity of Christ and His humanity are each different parts of his nature, but each part can be hypostatically united as "being in 'communion' with each other" [14]. This hypostatical unity of the two natures of Christ is symbolized by the complementary existence of the body and soul in humans. The nature of death in particular can be understood as the "separation between body and soul" [14]. The church's liturgical activity in the Eucharist naturally emphasizes the harmonious balance between the spiritual and the material, but does so against foundational orientations to "make the world material" [17]. The other transforming element of the Eucharist is the activity of the Holy Spirit to realize the eschatological character of the world. Thus, Schmemann argues that the Eucharist as communion in the Holy Spirit is an initiative to transform "the Church into the body of Christ" [17]. In sum, the Eucharistic self of human beings can be symbolized by the hypostatically ordered relationship between divinity and humanity, natural and supernatural frameworks, sacred and profaned meanings, and the spiritual and the material. Sometimes, the historical division of the one true Church can therefore be understood as grievous impoverishment on the human level [18].

Recently, those working with the high technology of genetic engineering have needed to consider the ethical involvement of "human germline genome editing" and how it can cause a "disease-causing genetic mutation" in its DNA sequencing [6]. The genetic researchers who support promising efforts to cure genetic disease argue that it is "the recombinant DNA era", and that genome-engineering technologies for human and nonhuman models should be encouraged and supported by the "public trust" through "ongoing transparency and open discussion" in scientific communities [6]. Sara Reardon [19] presented various cases in which editing technologies were used as medical treatments, including a one-year-old girl with leukemia, 12 people with HIV, and people with a rare retinal disorder. Human applications of gene-editing technologies outside of the human germline are now used to treat many different conditions. Usually, the results of natural scientific experiments are strongly applicable to human beings as well as the nonhuman subjects on which they are conducted. For example, a technique for editing monkey genes to cause them to produce blood-clotting proteins may be able to be used directly in human gene-editing medical treatments [19]. However, Christians understand human beings as "hypostatic beings" who are "created in the divine image" [20]. The difference between human beings and nonhuman creatures can be found in the hypostatic orders of each, which can be understood as fundamental and a framework for responding to the scientific community's persistent efforts to discover applications for human germline genetic engineering. The Christian ethical framework is morally meaningful in that it provides a theological foundation for recognizing the hypostatical difference between human being and nonhuman creatures for the issue of human germline genetic engineering [21]. Thus, the Christian church, with the addition of some rational frameworks, possesses the spiritual and ethical resources to discern which outcomes are ethically appropriate in the ambiguous ethical challenges of medical issues. In other words, theological clarity and boundaries of ethical activity can be determined.

The Christian perspective has the "moral and spiritual legitimacy" to respond to genetic editing technology challenges, including those associated with human germline genetic engineering [21]. The Christian framework consists of "ecclesial, communal, and relational" resources [22]. The Eucharist as the ontological sacrament of salvation in Christian theology entails the "otherness of the whole church" [22]. For example, such otherness includes the social and moral impact that "the technique on human reduction" naturally provides [23]. Human genetic modification requires a theological response to define human nature in the context of the ethical challenges that such otherness delivers. Influential human-genome project researchers have also emphasized "responsible innovation" to enable diverse stakeholders with their own social and ethical frameworks to engage in "inclusive decision-making" about challenging genetic-modification issues [3]. In this context, the Eucharistic self symbolizes the inner system of the consciousness of the faithful to construct the otherness which genetic modification provides in an orderly fashion. The Eucharistic self may be the theological narrative for connecting genetic engineering and "transcendental values and concerns" [24]. If the tradition of public theology is considered as interpreting "religious truth" in the framework of the "common good" [25], the parallels between Christian thought and responsible genetic-engineering innovation might encourage living transformation "from love of self and the world and to God and neighbor" [26]. The link that Christian education provides between Christian theology and medical science can be seen in the way that the Eucharistic self is taught to arrive at the path of salvation toward deification through the deep challenges presented by genetic modification. If the focus of CEMT is the theological interpretation of the human-genome project with an emphasis on the balance between medical and theological narratives, the next section focuses on how medical narratives such as those regarding the Ebola epidemic can be interpreted to have theological implications.

4. Ebola Virus

In late September 2014, the statistics about the West African Ebola were terrible. According to the data of the World Health Organization (WHO) released on September, 2014, 648 people had died among 1074 Ebola-infected people in Guinea, 1830 people had died among 3458 Ebola-infected people

in Liberia, 605 people had died among 2021 Ebola-infected people in Sierra Leone, eight people had died among 20 Ebola-infected cases in Nigeria, and 23,375 healthcare workers across four West African countries (Guinea, Liberia, Serra Leone, and Nigeria) and 211 people among them had died [27]. Historical data about Ebola outbreaks from 1976 to the present show just how terrible the 2014 West African Ebola was. Figure 1 compares the 2014 West African Ebola outbreak and other sub-Saharan outbreaks from 1976 to 2012. A total of 814 Ebola infections occurred in the five months between March 2014 to July 23, 2014. As of September 2014, the 2800 cases of the Ebola outbreak were greater than the 1550 Ebola infections that occurred between 1976 and 2012. The 2014 outbreak was the most serious outbreak in history and "shows no sign of abating" [28].

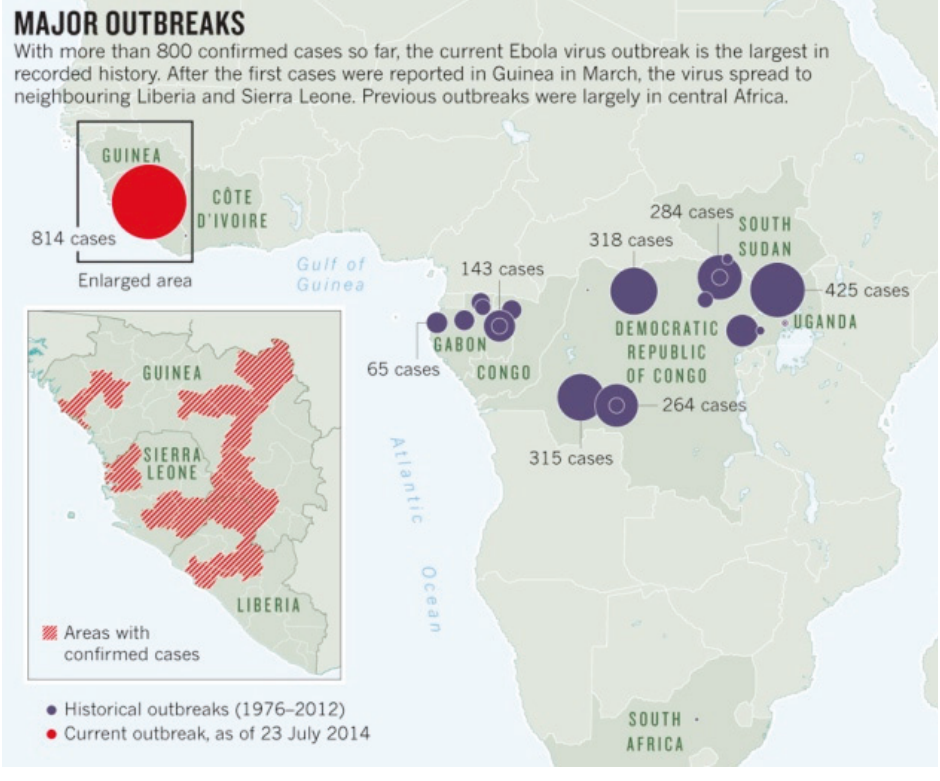


Figure 1. Ebola virus outbreaks by Sarah Reardon [28].

Medical workers in West Africa had to battle a rapidly growing Ebola outbreak, insufficient medical resources, and rumors that they were harvesting patients' organs and conducting medical experiments on them [28]. In response, medical workers had to isolate infected people, separate them from their families, and educate "the public on how to avoid spreading the disease" [28]. The Ebola outbreak was so serious because there were no drugs or vaccines that had been approved by regulators to treat the disease. The 2014 Ebola outbreak could fairly be characterized as "out of control" (Figure 2). On 25 March 2014, the WHO reported an outbreak of Ebola in Guinea in West Africa. On 20 June 2014, Medicins Sans Frontieres said that the outbreak was "totally out of control" [29]. On 4 August 2014, the World Bank pledged up to US$200 million to contain the outbreak. On 8 August 2014, the WHO declared that the outbreak was a public health emergency that should attract international concern. However, as Hayden's graph shows "the death toll from Ebola virus in West Africa continued to rise" [29]. With insufficient medical facilities in West Africa, medical workers'

strikes, isolated patients, uprisings by the uninfected, and the insensitivity of government officials to the importance of conducting comprehensive follow-ups for disease-control and -prevention efforts provided more serious problems. For example, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia sent 60 people to West Africa. They were not healthcare workers and experts, as their main tasks was to carefully watch track the development of Ebola and educate the public about the situation [29]. Last Mile Health, a nonprofit organization that operates out of Boston, Massachusetts, also sent "150 community health workers to educate rural Liberians about Ebola" [29].

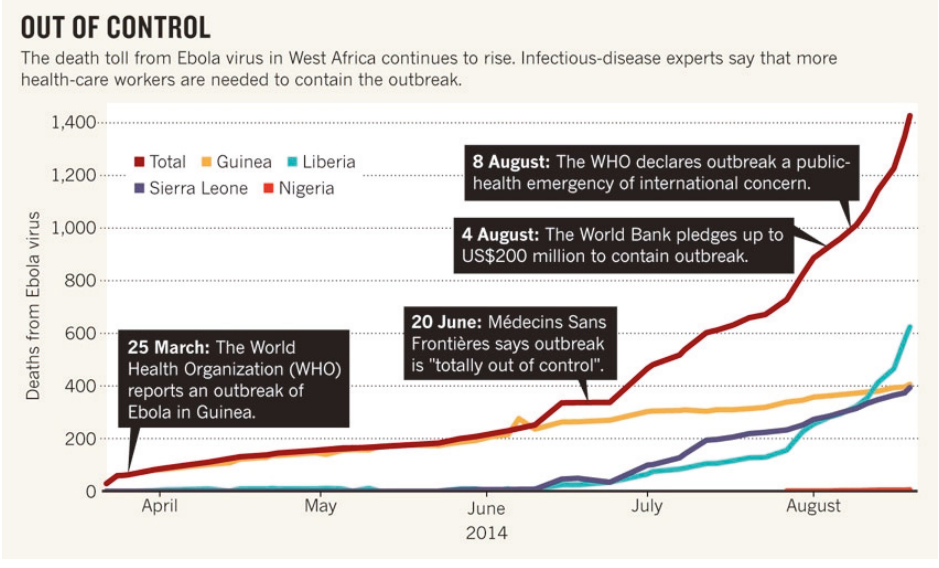


Figure 2. Death toll from the Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa by Erika Chek Hayden [29].

The terrible Ebola outbreak gave rise to the new term "compassionate use", which describe the "use of unapproved drugs and vaccines" to help Ebola patients. For example, although "no drugs or vaccines for Ebola have been approved by regulators", Mapp Biopharmaceutical of San Diego, California, prescribed doses of ZMapp to at least seven people [30]. In August 2014, "an expert panel convened by the WHO concluded unanimously that it is ethical to use unapproved drugs and vaccines" to help control this Ebola outbreak [30]. The WHO itself recognized that the urgency of the Ebola outbreak meant that there was not to have enough time for clinical trials for "testing drugs and vaccines" in humans "outside of an epidemic setting" [30]. Even though there were several Ebola vaccines and treatments, due to "a lack of funding and of international demand," they had not been subject to clinical trials to test these in humans outside of an epidemic setting [28]. Of the Ebola vaccines and treatments, the WHO recognized the use of ZMapp for treating Ebola. ZMapp inactivates the Ebola virus through a cocktail of antibodies. However, ZMapp has not received regulatory approval and has not been subject to clinical trials to test it in humans outside of an epidemic setting. ZMapp has shown surprising effectiveness in test on nonhuman primates. All of the "rhesus macaques" which were infected with the Ebola virus were still alive five days after having received ZMapp, as shown in Figure 3 [31]. Medical ZMapp trials have demonstrated "substantial benefits" in nonhuman primates.

Ebola virus infections cause severe illness in humans and nonhuman primates. Its initial symptoms are similar to those of the common flu. However, "after an incubation period of three to 21 days", the disease progresses rapidly and generates internal hemorrhaging, "multiple organ failure," "a shocklike syndrome", and then death [31]. Scientists found a new Ebola variant in the West Africa country of Guinea in spring 2014. Since March 2014, the Ebola outbreak spread dramatically

throughout Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Nigeria, and the death toll showed no signs of leveling off. Medical workers managing the Ebola outbreak provided patients with the latest medical care and used "barrier methods to prevent transmission" without proper vaccines or drugs except ZMapp, as it was approved for "compassionate use" [30,31].

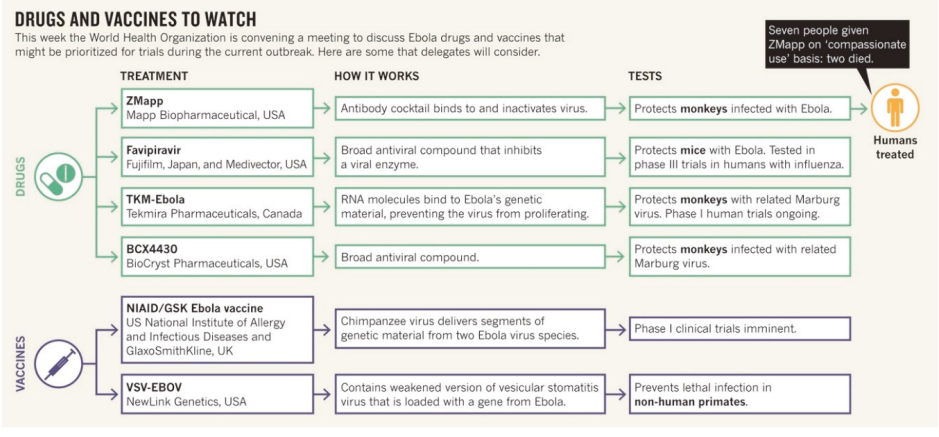


Figure 3. Ebola drugs and vaccines by Declan Butler [30].

According to the description of Ebola virus in the *McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of Science and Technology*, 10th edition, the Ebola virus contains "a single species of ribonucleic acid (RNA) molecule" in a single, linear, nonsegmented strand and a shepherd's crook. The Ebola virus's RNA–protein complex on the surface of its cell membrane is, in turn, synthesized by "the outer membrane of infected cells". The Ebola virus then penetrates the cell and freely spreads "the genetic information contained in the RNA molecule" within the cell's cytoplasm. Through cellular machinery, the Ebola virus synthesizes "new viral proteins and RNA". "Ebola virus RNA polymerase (L)" may facilitate this cellular machinery in synthesizing new viral proteins and Ebola virus RNA (Ebola virus disease—Wikipedia). In this context, the polymerase refers to any enzyme that facilitates the synthesis of DNA or RNA. Thus, the development of Ebola drugs and vaccines focuses on delivering "an optimized antibody combination" to inactivate any enzyme, such as the "Ebola virus RNA polymerase (L)" to promote the synthesis of new viral proteins and Ebola virus RNA [31].

RNA is a chemical that is similar to DNA in structure. It contains the same nucleotides as DNA. However, RNA uses the pyrimidine uracil in the place of thymine of DNA. Therefore, RNA can "contain information" and also forms a "double helix" just like DNA [32]. However, unlike DNA, RNA is made up of only a single strand. Usually, genetic information flows from DNA through RNA to proteins. The flow from DNA to RNA is called "transcription" and the flow from RNA to proteins is called by "translation" [32]. Each strand of the DNA double helix has different genetic functions. The right-hand side of DNA is called "sense" and is "used to make proteins", and the left-hand strand of DNA plays a critical role in conveying genetic information out of the nucleus [32]. In terms of "a single-stranded messenger RNA molecule" like "a half ladder", DNA information moves from "the nucleus of the cell (the information storehouse) to the cytoplasm (a highly complex gel mixture of proteins, lipids, and carbohydrates) [33]." This pattern of RNA shows well its role in transmitting DNA's genetic information. In other words, such a procedure is the foundation of genetics. The virus infection process operates in reverse. Scientists have discovered an enzyme that promotes the transformation of RNA into DNA. This reverse process is known as "reverse transcriptase", which "plays a key role in the way that certain viruses infect cells" [32]. RNA viruses such as HIV, which causes AIDS, called "retroviruses", use "reverse transcriptase" to insert their genetic information into the cell's own DNA [32]. The Ebola RNA polymerase with reverse transcriptase infects normal cells like

retroviruses. However, the "DNA copies of RNA-based viruses" are critical to the incorporation of the "primate germline" as a device for sending DNA messages [32]. That information is important to those battling Ebola outbreaks. Perhaps the truly serious terror may be humans' horror rather than the Ebola outbreak itself. The significance of human horror provides the possibility of theological suggestion in these types of medical narratives. The 2014 Ebola outbreak shows how numerous medical cases can be transformed into CEMT subject matter through the theological construction narrative process.

5. Co-Operation and Human Disease

This section explores the concept of co-operation between medicine and theology. This conceptual framework of co-operation encourages the creation of CEMT inventory. Coakley and Nowak define co-operation as "a form of working together" [34]. They also include the condition of fitness, which they define as a situation in which "one individual pays a cost" and "another gains a benefit as a result" [34]. This fitness is brought about in proper genetic or cultural conditions. Shared goals among members determine the orientation of co-operation. The relationship between co-operation and altruism is important in Coakley's research. She regards altruism as "a subset of co-operation" [35]. Coakley and Nowak say that "altruism is a form of (costly) co-operation in which an individual is motivated by goodwill or love for another (or others)" [34]. Coakley likely recognizes that evolutionary co-operation and altruism have some similarities.

Coakley says that co-operation is during "'construction': in the genome, in cells, in multicellular organisms, and in animal and human societies" [35]. She says animals and humans cooperate for some benefit. Thus, particular circumstances may serve as the origin for co-operation about a crucial matter. Whether co-operation is rational is determined by whether it produces a benefit. Thus, co-operation depends on self-interest and so is different from pure altruism. Likewise, self-interest and altruism create a dilemma about the conditions of co-operation. Nowak's five conditions for co-operation provide a meaningful solution to this dilemma: kin selection, direct reciprocity, indirect reciprocity, spatial selection, and group selection. Coakley says that "'co-operation' can attain an evolutionary stable state" under these five conditions [35]. The main purpose of this study was to explore co-operation under these conditions.

In order to better understand the five co-operative mechanisms, a distinction must be made between co-operation and defection. Given the "human trait of intentionality in co-operative acts" from "the hierarchy of evolution" perspective, co-operative behavior can be described in terms of costs and benefits. In addition, the definition of altruism includes "goodwill or love for another" [35]. These descriptions include the general definitions of co-operation and altruism. It can be assumed that Coakley treated co-operation and altruism interchangeably in her lecture. Co-operation is a mechanism for construction. Co-operation naturally appears when any structure is constructed. Darwin provides persuasive descriptions about mutation and selection in the process of evolution, but he did not provide any descriptions of how co-operation might have evolved. Martin Nowak filled this gap. The Prisoner's Dilemma is another classical platform about rational choice in relation to co-operation. It is a hypothetical situation about two prisoners, A and B, who are separate from one another in different cells. The prisoners are aware that the police do not have enough evidence to convict them for a greater crime, but would have enough if one of them confessed, though they do have enough to convict each for a lesser crime. The police present the following three possibilities to each prisoner (Table 1):

1. If A and B both confess to having committed the crime, each of them will serve two years in prison.
2. If A confesses but B denies the crime, A will be set free, whereas B will serve three years in prison, and vice versa.
3. If both A and B do not confess, both of them will only serve one year in prison.

Table 1. The Prisoner's Dilemma (Wikipedia).

	Prisoner B Stays Silent (Cooperates)	**Prisoner B Confesses (Defects)**
Prisoner A stays silent (cooperates)	A serves one year B serves one year	A serves three years B goes free
Prisoner A confesses (defects)	A goes free B serves three years	A serves two years B serves two years

The rational choice is that both A and B defect and confess. Each prisoner knows that the other may confess and so are obliged to confess rather than stay silent to minimize the amount of time they spend in prison. The Prisoner's Dilemma shows that defection can be the more rational choice than co-operation. This dilemma is emblematic of human selfishness. Nowak's study about the mechanisms of co-operation demonstrate how organisms can overcome their selfishness to behave altruistically. Coakley assumes that the mechanisms of co-operation are sufficient to help organisms reach "an evolutionarily stable state" [35]. These mechanisms operate in five particular conditions: kin selection, direct reciprocity, indirect reciprocity, spatial selection, and group selection.

Kin selection is the first situation in which co-operation occurs. It refers to the co-operation that occurs between genetic relatives which tend to engage in mutual protection. In other words, kin selection is evolutionary evidence of co-operation. If kin selection exhibits co-operation between genetic relatives, then direct reciprocity is co-operation between unrelated individuals. Repeated interactions between unrelated individuals in the long term provides for a stable evolution. Nowak describes this mechanism as "generosity" and "evolution of forgiveness" [35]. Conditions for these interactions are those "certain circumstances in which the overall benefit (of co-operation) is greater than the cost (of co-operation)" [35]. Direct reciprocity shows that co-operation is a stable condition in the process of evolution. Indirect reciprocity is co-operation that occurs between people who may never meet again. The best-known example of indirect reciprocity may be the story of the Good Samaritan. Jesus tells this story when an expert in the Law of Moses asks him who his neighbors are.

> Jesus replied: As a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, robbers attacked him and grabbed everything he had. They beat him up and ran off, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road. But when he saw the man, he walked by on the other side. Later a temple helper came to the same place. But when he saw the man who had be beaten up, he also went by on the other side. A man from Samaria then came traveling along the road. When he saw the man, he felt sorry for him and went over to him. He treated his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put him on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next morning he gave the innkeeper two silver coins and said, 'Please take care of the man. If you spend more than this on him, I will pay you when I return' Then Jesus asked, 'Which one of these three people was a real neighbor to the man who was beaten up by robbers?' The teacher answered, 'The one who showed pity.' Jesus said, 'Go and do the same!' (Luke 10: 30–37)

The impactful element of this story is how it makes those who hear it feel. The story illustrates the normative principle that people should help anyone in terrible or difficult circumstances. It also puts those who hear it in the position of a priest, the temple helper, or the man from Samaria. That is the power of the story. If they helped, they would be praised. If they did not help, they would be blamed. Likewise, reputation is the most important requirement for indirect reciprocity. Reputation is a byproduct of language as it allows one's behavior to be observed by others removed from the situation. Human societies have evolved to give rewards for good behavior. In this situation, reputation is the main principle for initiating co-operation between humans. In other words, indirect reciprocity is a product of human language. This situation reflects the fact that co-operation is the remarkable product of natural selection.

Spatial selection and network reciprocity are interchangeable concepts. Coakley points out that co-operation is more natural and effective than defection in well-mixed populations, "because

co-operators here form clusters which protect and enhance the success of their co-operation" [35]. The main point of "group selection" is to compare "groups of co-operators" with "groups of defectors" [35]. Group selection grants a higher probability of survival to co-operator groups than to defector groups. In other words, group selection focuses on the competition between the co-operator and defector groups. Natural selection selects for co-operator over defector groups. The difference between "spatial selection" and "group selection," the remaining conditions, is decided by the pattern of competition. Spatial selection refers to competition between individuals, while group selection refers to competition between groups. The Prisoner's Dilemma demonstrates that "'defection' always gives higher 'payoffs' as an initial 'strategy'" [35]. Here, the value of the payoff is different between the benefit and cost of a given action. In this situation, Nowak and Coakley's project provides a logical foundation for why evolution would nonetheless favor co-operation. The descriptions of the five conditions under which co-operation occurs provide evolutionary explanations for how natural selection can produce co-operation. For example, Coakley's idea that cancers are "examples of uncontrolled cellular 'defection' causing the breakdown of an organism" proves that Nowak's mathematical approach of co-operation can be applied to a wide variety of circumstances.

The final task is to understand the concept of "inclusive fitness" [35]. The concept of "inclusive fitness" transcends the definition of the limitation of co-operation to depend on the sensitive relationship between "cost" and "benefit" [35]. For example, the issue of "inclusive fitness" is clear in the "evolution of eusociality" [35]. Eusociality is the highest level of organization of animal society and is characterized by co-operative brood care. The most familiar examples of eusocial insects are ants and bees. Individual worker bees sacrifice themselves for the sake of the queen bee. This behavior is an example of bees co-operating. However, it may be impossible to account for such co-operation by analyzing the situation according to just "cost" and "benefit." Coakley argues that "a bee population should be regarded as an organic whole" with different parts of "a body, an arm, or a leg" [35]. Coakley's description calls to mind Paul's reflection on the "mystical" body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12:

> A body isn't really a body, unless there is more than one part. It takes many parts to make a single body. That's why the eyes cannot say they don't need the hands. That's also why the head cannot say it doesn't need the feet. In fact, we cannot get along without the parts of the body that seem to be the weakest. We take special care to dress up some parts of our bodies. We are modest about our personal parts, but we don't have to be modest about other parts. God put our bodies together in such a way that even the parts that seem the least important are valuable. He did this to make all parts of the body work together smoothly, with each part caring about the others. If one part of our body hurts, we hurt all over. If one part of our body is honored, the whole body will be happy. Together you are the body of Christ. Each one of you is part of his body. (1 Corinthians 12: 19–27)

6. CEMT at Yonsei University

The final section discusses CEMT at Yonsei University in Seoul, South Korea. This case study shows the distinctive differences between medical science and theological understanding and has significant meaning as an example of CEMT in use. Yonsei University was the first Christian educational institution in South Korea and started with the establishment of Gwanghewon, the first modern hospital in Korea and the parent of Severance Hospital, in 1885. Severance Union Medical College and Yonhi College merged in 1957 to create Yonsei University. The creation of Yonsei University itself was a product of the convergence between medicine and other academic disciplines. College of Theology Professor Soo-Young Kwon and College of Medicine Professor Nam Hoon Cho opened the CEMT in the United Graduate School of Theology at Yonsei University in Seoul, South Korea during the spring 2017 semester in which 22 graduate students enrolled. In that course, Kwon enumerated Browning's five practical theological perspectives for convergent insights between medicine and theology: responsible borrowing, dialogue, areas of overlap, hybrid, and interstices [36].

These perspectives recognize the differences between medical science and theological understanding and encourage a hermeneutical dialogue between and the possibility of convergence of both academic disciplines. That course consisted of three board topics: life and birth, disease and suffering, and death and resurrection.

With regard to life and birth, Professor Nam Hoon Cho pointed out that medical knowledge can explain phenomena such as male sex determination, maternal inheritance, carrier and genetic disorders, genomes and phenotypes, crossing-over during meiosis, egg fertilization from ovulation to implantation (Figure 4), genetic differences between males and females, sexual determinants (i.e., chromosomal sex, gonad sex, duct sex, genitalia sex), intersex people, trans-sexuality, homosexuality, female pseudohermaphroditism, male pseudohermaphroditism, true hermaphroditism, testes and ovaries.

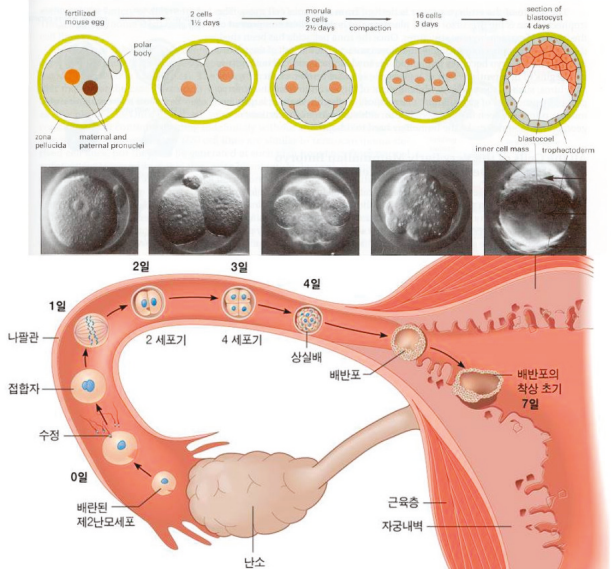


Figure 4. From ovulation to implantation (Prof. Ham Hoon Cho's class' slide).

With regard to life and birth, Cho emphasized the biological difficulty of cytodifferentiation and the mystery of the movement of fertilized eggs from ovulation to implantation on the wall of uterus over seven days. Likewise, the mysteries and secrets of birth are explained through medical knowledge. Kwon suggested that, from Kaufman's theological perspective, life and birth serve as new symbols for God as the whole grand cosmic evolutionary movement [37]. These new symbols overcome the limitations of anthropomorphic and anthropocentric conceptions of God, and emphasize the diversity of human life and theological discourse.

With regard to disease, suffering, death, and resurrection, Cho discussed medical issues, including the etymology of pathology, the International Classification of Disease, cardiovascular disorders, comparisons between normal livers and those with alcoholic cirrhosis, HeLa cell-immortal, cancer cells, TNM (Tumor, node and metastasis classification) staging and life expectancy (Figure 5), breast cancer, breast Ca TNM, the AJCC staging system, and the five-year survival rate for breast cancer, stages of breast cancer, the Kaplan–Myer Survival Analysis, determination of brain death, organ transplantation, euthanasia, mortality, myocardial infarction, organ necrosis, pink hypostasis, the similarities and differences between postmortem hypostasis and SQ hemorrhages, rigor mortis, postmortem cooling, temperature at the time of death, the equation for estimating the time of death, death-related forensic

medical issues, fatal pressure on the neck, mtDNA and maternal inheritance, and the heterogeneity index STR as a factor of the number of tandem repeats of the Y-chromosome.

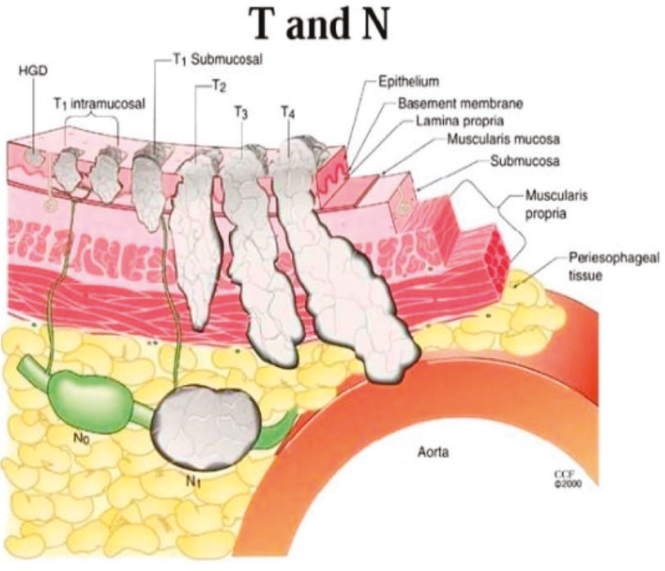


Figure 5. TNM staging and life expectancy (Prof. Ham Hoon Cho's class slide).

Medically, the relationship between TNM staging and life expectancy shows that the developmental process of disease corresponds to the progress of death and the mortality factors of normal cells. Theologically, disease and death are understood as an essential condition for experiencing union with God. In addition, the meaning of death was ascribed to God's creativity and as the main descriptive element of true humanity. Kwon emphasized reconstructing theological knowledge and re-imaging God to connect theological insights to other academic fields, such as medicine. Kwon's reimaging project for such theological construction can be found in his massive open online course entitled "Reimaging God in the Korean Context," supported by coursera.com (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Professor Soo-Young Kwon's massive open online course, "Reimaging God in the Korean Context." (https://www.coursera.org/learn/god-korean-context/lecture/sA1eO/theology-as-a-work-of-the-imagination).

Professors Kwon's and Cho's lectures were supplemented by their students presentations on the following CEMT topics: surrogate mother sociopsychological suffering and its theological meaning, artificial insemination and its theological productive creativity, medical and theological reflections on infertile couples, medical and theological discourses on abortion, the donation of cadavers for medical research in the South Korean context, suffering and healing for elderly family caregivers, spiritual nurturing programs for cancer patients, dying well and providing spiritual care for the aged in society, Christian care for the parents of brain-dead babies, euthanasia for the chronically ill and aged and end-of-life care decisions, and pediatric hospice care for child cancer patients. The students' presentations showed how well a CMET perspective can supplement the respective shortcomings of medicine and theology.

7. Conclusions

The CEMT creators fully recognize that medicine and theology have distinct knowledge bases. However, they also consider the imaginative capacity of CEMT. It may be inevitable that religious education must field arguments regarding the rationality or probability of religious traditions in a secular society. The integrative narrative between medical science and theological understanding created by the CEMT can be a source of encouragement to both the faithful community and medical institutions in a secularized environment.

Author Contributions: S.-Y.K. and N.H.C. designed and in real class contexts practiced the CEMT and M.S. wrote the paper.

Funding: This work was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF-2017S1A5A8022660).

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

References

1. Taylor, C. *A Secular Age*; The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, USA, 2007; p. 423.
2. Habermas, J. *The Theory of Communicative Action: Lifeworld and System*; (T. McCarthy Trans.); Beacon Press: Boston, MA, USA, 1987; Volume 2, p. 289.
3. Boeke, J.D.; Church, G.; Hessel, A.; Kelley, N.J.; Arkin, A.; Cai, Y.; Carlson, R.; Chakravarti, A.; Cornish, V.W.; Holt, L.; et al. The genome project-write. *Science* **2016**, *353*, 126–127. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
4. DeFrancesco, L. Gene drive overdrive. *Nat. Biotechnol.* **2015**, *33*, 1019–1021.
5. Suresh, A. *CRISPR Crisis: Is UK Researcher's Human Embryo Gene Editing Research Cause for Worry?* Genetic Literary Project: North Wales, PA, USA, 2015. Available online: https://geneticliteracyproject.org/2015/10/27/crispr-crisis-is-uk-researchers-human-embryo-gene-editing-research-cause-for-worry/ (accessed on 10 November 2018).
6. Baltimore, D.; Berg, P.; Botchan, M.; Carroll, D.; Charo, R.A.; Church, G.; Corn, J.E.; Daley, G.Q.; Doudna, J.A.; Fenner, M.; et al. A prudent path forward for genome engineering and germline gene modification: A framework for open discourse on the use of CRISPR-Cas9 technology to manipulate the human genome is urgently needed. *Science* **2015**, *348*, 36–38. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
7. Jackson, R. The interpretive approach as a research tool: Inside the REDCo project. In *Religion, Education, Dialogue and Conflict: Perspectives on Religious Education Research*; Jackson, R., Ed.; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2012; pp. 86–87.
8. Wielzen, D.R.; Avest, I.T. Introduction: Looking ahead at contested concepts and practices. In *Interfaith Education for All: Theoretical Perspectives and Best Practices for Transformative Action*; Wielzen, D., Avest, I.T., Eds.; Sense Publishers: Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 2017; pp. 2–3.
9. McGrath, A.E. *A Fine-Tuned Universe: The Quest for God in Science and Theology*; The 2009 Gifford Lectures; Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, KY, USA, 2009; pp. 1–7, 11–12.
10. Dyson, F.J. *Infinite in All Directions*; Gifford lectures given at Aberdeen, Scotland, April–November 1985; HarperCollins Publishers: New York, NY, USA, 2004.

11. Barrow, J.D. *New Theories of Everything: The Quest for Ultimate Explanation*; Oxford University Press: New York, NY, USA, 2007; p. 16.
12. Polkinghorne, J. *The Faith of a Physicist: Reflections of a Bottom-Up Thinker*; The Gifford Lectures for 1993–1994; Fortress Press: Minneapolis, MN, USA, 1996; p. 76.
13. Vogel, G. Embryo engineering alarm: Researchers call for restraint in genome editing. *Science* **2015**, *347*, 1301. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
14. Meyendorff, J. *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*; Fordham University Press: New York, NY, USA, 1983; pp. 67–77, 130, 141.
15. Hamalis, P. The meaning and place of death in an Orthodox ethical framework. In *Thinking through Faith: New Perspectives from Orthodox Christian Scholars*; Papanikolaou, A., Prodromou, E.H., Eds.; St. Vladimir's Seminary Press: New York, NY, USA, 2008; pp. 183–217.
16. Johnson, S. *Christian Spiritual Formation in the Church and Classroom*; Abingdon Press: Nashville, TN, USA, 1989; p. 117.
17. Schmemann, A. *For the Life of the World: Sacrament and Orthodox*, 2nd ed.; St. Vladimir's Seminary Press: New York, NY, USA, 1973; pp. 18, 44.
18. Ware, T. *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to Eastern Christianity*; Penguin Books: London, UK, 2015; p. 58.
19. Reardon, S. Gene-editing wave hits clinic: Companies prepare to test range of therapies in people. *Nature* **2015**, *527*, 146–147. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
20. Hamalis, P. The theological-ethical contributions of Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov) to environmental issues. In *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation*; Chryssavgis, J., Foltz, B.V., Eds.; Fordham University: New York, NY, USA, 2013; p. 126.
21. Delkeskamp-Hayes, C. Rethinking the Christian bioethics of human germ line genetic engineering: A postscript against the grain of contemporary distortions. *Christ. Bioeth.* **2012**, *18*, 219–230. [CrossRef]
22. Hamalis, P. Ethics. In *The Orthodox Christian World*; Casiday, A., Ed.; Routledge: London, UK; New York, NY, USA, 2012; p. 429.
23. Koios, N. Theological anthropology and human germ-line intervention. *Christ. Bioeth.* **2012**, *18*, 187–200. [CrossRef]
24. Harakas, S.S. Bioethics in Eastern Orthodox Christianity. In *Encyclopedia of Bioethics*; Post, S.G., Ed.; Macmillan Library Reference: New York, NY, USA, 2003; pp. 691–697.
25. Hamalis, P. Public theology. In *The Encyclopedia of American Religion and Politics*; Djupe, P.A., Olson, L.R., Eds.; Facts on File, Inc.: New York, NY, USA, 2003; p. 344.
26. Engelhardt, H.T., Jr. Genetic enhancement and theosis: Two models of therapy. *Christ. Bioeth.* **1999**, *5*, 197–199. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
27. The Korea Herald. Ebola Death Toll Passes 3000. 28 September 2014. Available online: http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20140928000053&ACE_SEARCH=1 (accessed on 10 November 2018).
28. Reardon, S. Ebola treatments caught in limbo. *Nature* **2014**, *511*, 520. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
29. Hayden, E.C. World struggles to stop Ebola. *Nature* **2014**, *512*, 355–356. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
30. Butler, D. Ebola drug trials set to begin amid crisis. *Nature* **2014**, *513*, 13–14. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
31. Qiu, X.; Wong, G.; Audet, J.; Bello, A.; Fernando, L.; Alimonti, J.B.; Fausther-Bovendo, H.; Wei, H.; Aviles, J.; Hiatt, E.; et al. Reversion of advanced Ebola virus disease in nonhuman primates with ZMapp. *Nature* **2014**, *512*, 47–53. Available online: http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/vnfv/ncurrent/full/nature13777.html (accessed on 29 August 2014). [CrossRef] [PubMed]
32. Alexander, D.R. *The Language of Genetics: An Introduction*; Templeton Science and Religion Series; Templeton Press: West Conshohocken, PA, USA, 2011; pp. 24–28.
33. Collins, F.S. *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*; Free Press: New York, NY, USA, 2006; p. 104.
34. Nowak, M.A.; Coakley, S. Introduction: Why cooperation makes a difference. In *Evolution, Games, and God: The Principle of Cooperation*; Nowak, M.A., Coakley, S., Eds.; Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, USA, 2013; pp. 1–34.
35. Coakley, S. *Cooperative, Alias Altruism: Game Theory and Evolution Reconsidered. Sacrificed Regained: Evolution, Cooperation and God*; The Gifford Lectures; University of Aberdeen: Aberdeen, UK, 2012. Available online: http://www.abdn.ac.uk/gifford/documents/Gifford_Lecture_2_-_lecture_text.pdf (accessed on 12 September 2013).

36. Browning, D.S. *Equality and the Family: A Fundamental, Practical Theology of Children, Mothers, and Fathers in Modern Societies*; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, MI, USA, 2007.
37. Kaufman, G.D. *Jesus and Creativity*; Fortress Press: Minneapolis, MN, USA, 2006.

education sciences

MDPI

Article

Beyond the Split between Formal School Identity and Teachers' Personal Worldviews: Towards an Inclusive (Christian) School Identity

Gerdien Bertram-Troost [1,2,*], Inge Versteegt [2], Jacomijn van der Kooij [3], Inger van Nes [2] and Siebren Miedema [1,2]

1 Faculty of Religion and Theology, Department Beliefs and Practices, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 1081 HV Amsterdam, The Netherlands; s.miedema@vu.nl
2 Faculty of Behavioural and Movement Sciences, Department Research and Theory in Education, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 1081 HV Amsterdam, The Netherlands; inge.versteegt@gmail.com (I.V.); ingervannes@gmail.com (I.N.)
3 Association for Catholic and Christian schools in the Netherlands, 3447 Woerden, The Netherlands; jvanderkooij@verus.nl
* Correspondence: g.d.bertram-troost@vu.nl; Tel.: +31-20-598-6611

Received: 13 November 2018; Accepted: 27 November 2018; Published: 30 November 2018

Abstract: Religious diversity within Dutch schools has greatly increased. We carried out an empirical study to offer insights into how secondary school teachers (try to) relate to the formal Protestant Christian identity of their school, the challenges they experience in relation to their own personal worldview, and the recommendations they have to overcome these challenges. In our qualitative study, we interviewed thirty-two teachers from eight different schools. In selecting the schools, we took into account the diversity of Protestant Christian secondary education in the Netherlands. The teachers teach different subjects in a variety of disciplines (languages, creative arts, sciences, et cetera). For many teachers, their personal worldview does not align neatly with the formal religious identity of the school. As a result, teachers experience challenges in relation to, for example, the act of daily worship and (Christian) celebrations. Teachers also experience tensions regarding the extent to which schools could or should be open towards (religious) others. Teachers' advice, among other recommendations, is to create room for an open exchange of views, opinions, and experiences between teachers and principals. Some teachers recommend that their principal reconsider the formal Christian identity of the school and search for another, more inclusive school identity with which everyone involved can better identify.

Keywords: school identity; secularization; secondary education; teachers; worldviews

1. Introduction

The role of religion/worldview in Christian education has changed in the last decades in the Netherlands. Religious diversity in the school context has greatly increased amongst pupils, teachers, and school leaders [1]. This not only counts for state schools (31.8% of Dutch schools [2]), but also for denominational schools. Denominational schools either adhere to a religious denomination (e.g., Protestant, Catholic, or Islamic) or to a pedagogic 'denomination' (e.g., following the pedagogical conception of Maria Montessori, Rudolf Steiner, or of Dalton education). In the Netherlands, both state schools and denominational schools are fully financed by the government. This growing religious diversity within schools is due to processes of secularization, amongst others. In some parts of the Netherlands (mainly the Northern provinces), many pupils are socialized in 'whateverism' families [3] with roots in a secularized Christianity. In (mainly) the Western provinces, influences of secularization

are supplemented with an increase of children raised in immigrant Christian communities or in Islamic families as a result of labor immigration and processes of family reunion.

Charles Taylor [4] has pointed to the secular age in a very particular sense, that is, with a focus on the conditions of belief. This connotation of the term makes it better understandable what is at stake now in the field of religion and worldview. According to Taylor, this form of secularity focuses on "a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace . . . . Secularity in this sense is a matter of the whole context of understanding (i.e., matters explicitly formulated by almost everyone, such as the plurality of options, and some which form the implicit, largely unfocussed background of this experience and this search) in which our moral, spiritual or religious experience and search takes place" (p. 3).

In our contribution, we focus on the impact of secularization on secondary education in Protestant Christian schools in the Netherlands. In 2016–2017, these schools were attended by 21.4% of Dutch pupils (aged 12–18 years) [5]. From earlier research, we know that Christian schools give shape to their religious identity in different ways [6]. What Christian schools see as aims for religious education also differs from school to school [7]. On a theoretical basis, a distinction is made between 'teaching about religion', 'teaching into religion', 'teaching from religion', and 'teaching of encounter' (see also [8,9]). In everyday practice in classrooms, these approaches are, however, very often combined [10].

As teachers are very important agents in giving shape to everyday school practices, it is worthwhile investigating what teachers in Protestant Christian schools for secondary education generally want to achieve with the education of pupils. There is hardly any insight into the way teachers express their personal convictions in relation to the Christian tradition of the school in everyday secondary school practice. Regarding primary education, the studies of Van Hardeveld [11] and Bakker and Rigg [12] give important insights. To what degree do these teachers show themselves to be rooted in the Christian tradition? What does the formal religious identity of a school mean to them? In order to answer these questions, we carried out an empirical study [13].

The primary question of the research was: What do teachers in Protestant Christian schools for secondary education generally want to achieve with the education of pupils and what is the impact and influence of, on the one hand, their own worldview, and on the other hand, school policy on what they want to achieve? Several sub questions were formulated as well. In this article, we focus on three of them:

How do teachers (try to) relate to the formal Protestant Christian identity of their school?

What challenges do they experience in doing so?

What recommendations do teachers have for better dealing with these challenges?

Closer insight into how teachers in Christian secondary schools relate to Christianity nowadays, what challenges they meet, and how these challenges can, in their perspective, be dealt with can contribute to views on what teachers in our times need to carry out their profession and how they can be supported in doing so.

In order to answer the three questions, we will first give more information about our empirical study, which consists of eight qualitative case studies including semi-structured interviews with teachers. We will provide descriptions of the participating schools and teachers, with a particular attention to the role of religion/worldview in the schools and in the teachers' lives. Then, we will focus on challenges teachers experience in relating their own (religious) identity to the (religious) identity of their school. Two challenges are discussed in more detail in order to provide in-depth insights into the dynamics at play as seen through the eyes of teachers. The Results section will contain a description of the recommendations teachers mention. In the conclusion, the research questions will be answered.

2. Materials and Methods

To find answers to our research questions, we carried out an empirical, qualitative study. In total, eight schools for secondary education were involved. All these schools were connected

to Verus, the Dutch association of Catholic and Christian education. We interviewed four teachers per school. The 32 teachers teach different subjects in different disciplines. In addition, at all schools, we interviewed a school principal to get a better view of the school as a whole and to get insights into what the school leaders expect from the teachers regarding the education of pupils in relation to the Christian identity of the school. However, in our research, the teachers are central.

2.1. Selection of schools

In selecting the schools, we took into account the diversity of Christian secondary education as we found it in earlier research amongst primary schools connected to Verus. Previous research (see [14,15]) on Protestant–Christian primary education in a secular age resulted in a categorization of three types of Christian schools [16]. In the current research, these types are used as a heuristic instrument to select the schools [17].

In short, the descriptions of the three school types run as follows [14] (pp. 211–212):

Type 1: Tradition schools

Personal development is very important at our school. A very important aspect of this development is religious education. We find it important to bring our pupils in touch with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our school also thinks that it is important that pupils get knowledge of the Bible and of Christianity.

Practically every day, there is attention for religious education. When we deal with themes related to religious diversity, we will pay attention to the unique position of Christianity. We do not think it is the task of our school to make pupils critical towards their own worldview and background.

During the lessons on religious education, we make use of the methods "Kind op maandag" [Child on Monday] and "Startpunt" [Starting Point] or of our own material. We pay a lot of attention to the choice of these methods; sometimes not only teachers are involved, but also members of the school board and parents. Religious activities have a biblical character and Christian values are central. Our school is mainly attended by Protestant pupils, but there are also unreligious pupils and pupils with other religious backgrounds. Our teachers are mainly Protestant Christian and our principal is actively involved in a religious community. The school finds it very important to maintain a good relationship with the religious communities in the neighborhood or village.

Type 2: Diversity schools

At our school, the transmission of skills is very important, just like the contribution to equal chances for pupils in our society. We want to prepare pupils for a life in a multicultural society. Religious education as such is not one of the main educational goals of our school. We do think, however, that it is important that our pupils get in touch with Christianity, mainly because the values which are important in our society are based on Christianity.

The composition of the neighborhood in which the school is situated has quite some influence on how we give shape to our identity. The fact that our school had officially a Christian background does only play a small role in how we deal with this and other themes we are confronted with. Our school pays attention to religious education mainly in separated lessons, which are given at least a few times a week. In the lessons, we pay a lot of attention to world religions and societal questions. As our method, we mainly use "Trefwoord" [Catchword] and "Kind op Maandag" [Child on Monday].

Religious diversity is appreciated positively. At our school, there is the possibility to meet worldviews on the basis of equality and to learn from each other. We see the diversity of worldviews as an opportunity for learning. At our school, there are pupils with diverse religious and secular backgrounds.

There is also diversity in relation to ethnic background. Our team can also be religiously diverse. Also, teachers with a secular, Muslim, or Hindu background can work at our school.

Type 3: Meaning-oriented schools

Our school attaches great value to balanced attention to the education ("Bildung" [edification]) of pupils in all domains. We think it is important to stimulate development and cooperation, to help children learn to think for themselves, and to be open towards others. Meaning-making is an important topic that gets a lot of attention in religious education. We teach our pupils to relate to different worldviews from their own (Christian) background. At our school, teachers pay attention to religious education, in a separate subject, nearly every day. Sometimes, there is also attention paid to aspects of religious education in other subject areas. In the religious activities, mainly Christian values are central. However, the character of the activities can also be more biblical. As our method, we mainly use "Kind op Maandag" [Child on Monday] and "Trefwoord" [Catchword]. Our school has pupils with a Protestant background, but there are also unreligious pupils and pupils with other religious backgrounds. With regard to ethnicity, the pupil population is practically homogeneous. Teachers at our school mainly have a Christian background, but it is also possible for teachers with nonreligious or other religious backgrounds to work at our school.

We do not have any empirical evidence on the precise distribution of these three types in secondary education. On the basis of our current research, it is neither possible to say something about that. Experiences with the broad educational field, however, show that the three types are not present in practice to the same extent. The amount of tradition schools appears to be very small, especially in secondary education. Therefore, the eight selected schools should not be seen as representative of Dutch Christian secondary education. However, given that our aim is to depict teachers in the full range of current Christian secondary education in the Netherlands and the great diversity we find there, the choice for these participating schools is legitimate (Reflecting on research sampling, Béraud [18] states that "It is in fact often an illusion to try and respect" the principle of representativeness; researchers do not systematically have exhaustive, precise lists (which makes it difficult to generate a random selection of those to be surveyed) and the characteristics of the reference population are not always known (. . .).) and helpful in our qualitative explorative study.

2.2. Selection of Teachers

After the school leaders gave their permission to participate in the study, an interview appointment was made. After this interview, we asked the school leader for the names of teachers who we could ask to participate in the research. In doing so, we explicitly asked for teachers who together represent a wide variety of worldviews and opinions. In addition to that, we made it clear that our aim was to include teachers from different disciplines. Our aim was to have one teacher per school from each of the following clusters (so in total, four teachers per school):

- Religion/Worldview/Philosophy;
- Physical Education, Health Care, Dance, Music, Drama, Arts;
- Biology, Geography, Science, Chemistry;
- Dutch, English, German, French, History, Sociology.

Besides asking the school leaders for names of teachers, we also actively recruited teachers ourselves. In the staff rooms of the participating schools, we distributed cards to encourage interest in our study. In addition, we approached teachers present in the staff room. If a teacher was willing to participate, an interview appointment was made as soon as possible.

In general, the recruitment of teachers was a smooth process. Teachers appeared to very much appreciate the sincere attention of the researchers to the way they practice their profession and what is important to them. They also seemed to enjoy the opportunity to speak with a relative outsider on their position within the school.

2.3. Interviews

For the interviews, we used a semi structured questionnaire (see, e.g., [19]) consisting of three categories of questions. The first category deals with questions about the teacher as a person

(with questions on one's worldview, motivation to work at the particular school, and the connection between them). The second category of questions deals with the teacher's views on education and professionality. The third category deals with questions on how one perceives the school and how the teacher gives shape to his/her own professionality within the context of the particular school. This last category includes questions on whether teachers are of the opinion that there is enough room within the school context to speak about and act from one's own life conviction, and what teachers perceive as challenging with regard to this. We also asked teachers what could be done to deal with these challenges.

Interviews took place at the school in a separate meeting room or in an empty classroom. Interviews took around 50 minutes per participant. After consent was given by the interviewees, integral audio recordings were made of the interviews [20]. Afterwards, the interviews were completely been transcribed verbatim. The verbatim texts were imported into Atlas-Ti, a computer program for qualitative analysis [21]. Codes were, in an iterative process, assigned to the different text parts. Theses codes summarize the content of the concerned text passage and/or indicate the subject of the text parts. By connecting these codes to the research questions, and by combining different text parts to which the same codes were assigned, we obtained insights into recurring answering patterns and themes which were important to the teachers. In the team of researchers, the preliminary findings and interpretations were discussed and reflected upon in order to come to a joint answer to the research questions [20].

3. Results

On the basis of the interviews with both school principals and several teachers, we present short descriptions or vignettes of the eight schools which participated in our research (see also [22] (p. 161–166)). In these descriptions, information from websites and/or school guides are also included. The descriptions mainly focus on the religious dimension of the school identity, as this dimension is most relevant to our research questions.

We chose to use fictitious names for the schools [23]. Also, the real names of the school principals and teachers involved were not used. The locations of the schools are described in a very broad sense in order to make sure that the schools are not directly traceable.

3.1. Short Descriptions of the Schools

3.1.1. Alting College

Alting College is located in a middle-sized city outside the urban agglomeration of the Netherlands. There are about 1600 pupils [24]. The school offers education at different levels, running from lower vocational education to gymnasium.

This Christian school has an open admission policy of pupils. However, it is expected that they respect and participate in religious activities. There are a few pupils with a migrant background, most of whom are Muslims. Only some girls wear a veil.

This school advocates a view on education in which pupils and teachers as human beings are central. Compassion and care for one another are characteristic. These characteristics are explicitly linked to the Christian identity of the school. The Gospel is an important source of inspiration at the school. Teachers are expected to represent this Christian identity. Preferably, teachers are involved with a church, but this is no obligation. In practice, by no means do all teachers attend church services regularly or even call themselves Christians.

In Religious Education, different worldviews are addressed. An important aim of the lessons is, according to the RE teacher, to let pupils discover what is important or 'sacred' to them and what their own sources of inspiration are.

3.1.2. Bonhoeffer College

Bonhoeffer College is situated in the urban agglomeration. This gymnasium is attended by about 800 pupils. Pupils are mainly born in wealthy Dutch families. Most of the pupils do not have a Christian background.

The school has Protestant Christian roots, with a very broad character. There are many non-Christian teachers. No more than 25% are in some way connected to a church. Also, teachers from different religions or worldviews can work at the school. An Islamic teacher with a head scarf would, according to the school principal, not be a problem 'as long as the Sharia will not be preached'. The school board expects teachers to conform to the way the school relates to Christianity. Teachers are asked to read from the Bible daily.

Teachers get a lot of freedom to give shape to their lessons. The expertise of teachers is highly valued.

The RE lessons focus on knowledge about religions and life issues from different perspectives. Christianity is seen as an important source for norms and values. In other lessons, such as history, languages, culture, and music, Christianity is addressed in order to help pupils to understand the Western culture.

3.1.3. Calvijn College

This school is situated in a small town in the so-called Dutch 'bible-belt', the regions with a lot of orthodox Christians. About 2000 pupils attend this school. School levels which are offered run from lower general secondary education to gymnasium.

There are mainly pupils with a Dutch, Christian background. About two-thirds of the parents of the pupils are members of the Dutch Protestant Church. The other third are members of other Protestant (more orthodox/strict) churches. It is obliged that parents are church members.

The school has Dutch Reformed foundations. The aim is to guide pupils, from a perspective of uniqueness, on their way to the broader society.

Teachers who want to work at Calvijn College are obliged to agree with the 'three forms of unity' (religious documents which historically form the theological and confessional basis of the reformed churches in the Netherlands). It is, amongst other things, not accepted by the school board that teachers cohabit unmarried or become a member of an evangelical church. It is not allowed to practice homosexuality and women teachers are obliged to wear skirts.

The aim of Religious Education is not to evangelize, to proselytize, or to convert the pupils. However, it is important that pupils learn to know 'the lord Jesus Christ'. The RE teacher emphasizes that school is not a church. He wants to enlarge the focus of the pupils by stimulating them to discuss relevant societal issues.

Christianity plays a role in all aspects of the school. All teachers discuss Christianity in relation to their school subjects. It is important that the Christian identity of the school is not only expressed in the morning prayers and celebrations, but also in different school subjects. Christianity is also expressed in social relations, because pupils and teachers are seen as creatures of God.

3.1.4. Da Costa College

Da Costa College is situated in a wealthy, middle-sized village in the middle of the Netherlands. There are about 1500 pupils at the school. Education is offered from lower general secondary education to athenaeum (higher secondary education). Many pupils come from socioeconomic middle-class families. At the lower school level, about 20% of the pupils have a migrant background. Church attendance of teachers, parents, and pupils alike is low. Parents are asked to respect the Christian identity of the school. All pupils are obliged to take part in religious activities such as the Christmas celebration. Muslim pupils are not given permission to have a prayer room. There will, however, be a public silence room.

In the formal expressions of the religious identity of the school, it is stated that the school has an 'inclusive worldview' and that every human being is part of God's world. In this view, room for personal development is very important.

To work at the school, teachers need to subscribe to and represent the Christian identity. Those who do not relate to Christianity in any sense, can—in principal—not work at the school, unless the need for hiring certified teachers is very high. It would be accepted that teachers share their religious quest with pupils. It would, however, not be accepted if teachers would say things like: 'You don't believe these stories from the Bible, do you?'. According to the school board, it would not be possible for Muslim teachers to work at this school. Some teachers regret this, because it is important in their view that the staff mirrors the diversity in society and the pupil population in the school.

Aims of Religious Education as a subject are to gain knowledge of Christianity and other religions and worldviews, personal identity development, and meeting with each other. The RE teacher wants to accompany pupils in their search for religious identity in the current post secular context.

3.1.5. Erasmus College

This ecumenical school is located in one of the large Dutch cities and has about 600 pupils. The educational level is lower vocational education. In a short period of time, the number of pupils has decreased dramatically. Approximately one-third of the pupils have a Dutch background. Another third have a Surinam background (of whom 80% are Catholic). The other pupils have a Moroccan or Turkish background. Many of these pupils are Muslim. The school population represents the population of the city where the school is situated.

Space for religion and identity is important at this school because these topics are important to the pupils. The school tries to distinguish itself from other schools with this point. Most of the teachers are not involved with a church. However, religion plays, in one way or another, a role in the lives of most of the teachers.

Religious education at this school is about showing pupils what is of value, where their own values come from, and what 'living together' means. In the religious celebrations (Christmas, Easter), the original meaning is connected to actual topics.

Recently, a prayer room for Muslim pupils has been opened. The school principal explains that he could not refuse this request of Muslim pupils, simply because of the fact that he is of the opinion that belief is a crucial aspect of humanity and therefore cannot be denied.

3.1.6. Farel College

This school is situated in a middle-sized city in the middle of the country. There are about 1300 pupils who receive education at a lower vocational educational level. Most pupils have a lower socioeconomical family background, and these families have to face multiple problems. Ten percent of the pupils have a Moroccan–Islamic background. About 50% of the other pupils have some knowledge about Christianity. All pupils are, however, expected to participate in morning prayers, celebrations, and RE classes. Personal development is very important at this school. The school is rooted in the Christian tradition. This is made visible via the social, emotional, and religious education pupils are given. It is not a prerequisite that teachers themselves believe. However, they should be able and willing to 'reflect on life'. There is no teacher with a headscarf as of yet. The school principal is of the opinion that this should be possible, although he expects that this will lead to discussions with the group of teachers.

In the first two years of RE classes, the focus is on Christianity. In the years that follow, other religions and worldviews are also addressed. It is important that pupils have knowledge about religions. This knowledge could lead to respect for others.

According to the RE teacher, the RE lessons are the only legitimation for the Christian identity of the school. Also, the mere fact that this subject is taught at school stimulates, in the eyes of the RE teacher, the confidence parents have in the school, as they associate RE lessons with attention paid to

norms and values. The teacher's own view is that it is very important that pupils learn to ask for help (be it from God or other humans) and to take care for others as well.

3.1.7. Groen van Prinsterer College

Groen van Prinsterer College is situated in a middle-sized city in the middle of the Netherlands. There are about 1700 pupils at the school. Education is offered at the levels of lower vocational education to gymnasium. About 5% of the pupils have a migrant background. This percentage mirrors the overall population in this region quite well. About 10% of the pupils attend church services on a more or less regular basis. Teachers have to relate to Christianity in one way or another. It is not necessary to be a church member or to actively practice one's faith. Muslims are not appointed as teachers, although the opinions on this issue are mixed within the staff of the school. The school principal himself would not see it as a problem, especially because Muslim teachers could probably connect more easily to the Muslim pupils.

Religious Education lessons are part of thematic projects. Several school subjects are integrated around several topics, and each subject provides a particular view on the theme. For instance, with the theme 'power', the RE lessons are about Bible stories related to power. The Bible stories are offered as a starting point for reflection. The RE teacher thinks it is very important to let pupils experience how wonderful it is if you can fall back on these stories during your life. It is important also to be open-minded and to have an open attitude to other people. Broadening the mind of pupils, in many ways, is an important aim at this school. Therefore, many extracurricular activities such as journeys (abroad) are also offered.

3.1.8. Heiland College

Heiland College is situated in one of the cities in the Dutch urban agglomeration. The school offers education from the level of lower vocational education to gymnasium. There are over 1000 pupils. Almost all students are native Dutch. All pupils have a Christian background. In the past, all pupils came from one specific Dutch Protestant church. Nowadays, admission rules are broader. Parents have to be actively involved church members. Before a pupil starts at this school, there is an interview regarding admission between the parents and the school board to find out whether the parents' ideas on Christian upbringing fit adequately with the identity of the school.

The Bible is the foundation of the school. Education at school is seen as an extension of a Bible-validated upbringing at home. To become appointed at this school, it is very important to be an active church member. Teachers have to be religious role models for the pupils. Although all teachers are Christians, the diversity between them has grown enormously over the last few years. There are, for instance, different opinions on baptism, creational theology, and homosexuality.

The RE teacher wants pupils to explore their own opinions regarding religion. She notices that some pupils are afraid of God and hell. As a teacher, she wants to teach them that God is endless love. However, she realizes that religious beliefs cannot be forced. In addition to that, she wants to teach her pupils social awareness and respect for other cultures and people who have different opinions, as she is sometimes shocked by the way her pupils think about Muslims and homosexuals.

All teachers make clear connections between their subject and their Christian beliefs. Pupils are also challenged to do so, for instance, when writing papers.

3.2. Teachers' Relations to the Formal Christian Identity of their Schools

In our study, we indicated the school leaders and teachers with a fictitious name. This name starts with the same letter as the fictive name of the school. Respondents with a fictitious name starting with an 'A' work at Altena College, respondents with a fictive name starting with a 'B' at Bonhoeffer College, et cetera. This enables readers to make connections between a quote of a respondent and the context of the particular school (s)he works at. (In this study, two board members of Heiland College were

involved. Henk is mainly occupied with identity and quality issues, but is not involved in guiding education. Hans, as the school leader, is.)

Table 1 shows that not all school leaders describe themselves as Christians. Those who do so count themselves as belonging to different streams within Protestantism.

Table 1. Religion/worldview of school leaders (self-indication).

Protestant Christian, not further specified	Anco, Dirk
Protestant Christian: orthodox	Cor, Henk
Protestant Christian: liberal	Bea, Gerard, Hans
Agnostic	Ed
Atheist	Frits

All interviewed teachers indicate that they had a Christian upbringing. Table 2 shows that most of the teachers still relate themselves, although in different ways, to Christianity. We see that at Heiland College and Calvijn College, most teachers describe themselves as orthodox (strict) Christians. At the other schools, we find more liberal Christians, but we find there some orthodox Christians as well.

Table 2. Religion/worldview of teachers (self-indication).

Protestant Christian, not further specified	Dagmar, Daphne, Helen, Giel, Gea
Protestant Christian: orthodox	Bram, Babette, Chris, Colin, Carlijn, Daan, Femke, Harry, Harm, Herman
Protestant Christian: evangelical	Albert, Coos, Claas, Evert
Protestant Christian: liberal	Arjan, Annet, Anton, Boris, Dolf, Ellen, Frank, Fleur, Gusta
Agnostic	Barbara
Roman Catholic	Eva
Atheist	Erik, Friso
Other: 'multiple believer'	Geertje

Although we should treat these outcomes with caution, as our sample is not representative, comparison of the two tables brings several insights. From the comparison between Tables 1 and 2, we learn that it is not self-evident that the (self-indicated) religious identity of teachers matches the religious identity of the school leader. At Calvijn College and Heiland College, the convergence, also amongst teachers, is the highest. It seems that at Bonhoeffer College, the religious backgrounds of the school leader and teachers are the most diverse (from agnostic to orthodox). Also, at Erasmus College and Farel College, there is reasonable variety. At Farel College, for instance, the school leader sees himself as atheist, one of the teachers as orthodox, and another as liberal.

Table 3 shows that many of the teachers who participated in our study are active church members. With the exceptions of Calvijn College and Heiland College, teachers who are not involved in church also participated in the research.

Table 3. Church involvement of teachers.

Active	Albert, Anton, Bram, Babette, Chris, Coos, Colin, Carlijn, Claas, Eva, Evert, Frank, Femke, Giel, Helen, Harry, Harm, Herman
To some extent	Annet, Boris, Daan, Dagmar, Dolf, Ellen, Fleur, Gea, Gusta
Not	Arjan, Barbara, Daphne, Erik, Friso, Geertje

3.3. Challenges Experienced

Section 3.2 shows that there can be a discrepancy between the worldview of a teacher and the formal (religious) identity of the school and/or school leader and/or colleagues. The relation between one's personal worldview and the formal identity of the school is characterized by some teachers in terms of 'challenges'. From the interviews, we learn that these challenges are present at all schools. Some of these challenges, however, play a greater role at particular schools. Also, the way a certain

challenge manifests itself differs from school to school. Often, connections can be made with the religious background of school leaders and teachers and/or the used admission policy. What a specific teacher experiences as a dilemma depends on, amongst other things, how his/her worldview relates to those of his/her colleagues and school leader. A teacher who describes himself as orthodox and works at a meaning-oriented school experiences different challenges than his liberal colleague. Such a teacher experiences also different challenges than another teacher who also describes herself as orthodox, but who is working at a tradition school (see the type descriptions in Section 2.1).

In this section, we will further elaborate on the challenges teachers experience as a result of varying worldviews. It is not our aim to give a complete overview of (possible) challenges teachers can experience in relation to religious diversity at school; however, by describing how several teachers deal with particular challenges, we aim to offer insights into processes at work when there are diverse worldviews amongst the school board, school leaders, teachers, parents, and pupils. As the focus of this research is on the views and opinions of teachers working in Christian secondary education in all its variety, we do not systematically relate their views to the particular schools they are working at. On the basis of the (fictive) names of the teachers it is, however, possible to make this connection. In this contribution, we focus on morning prayers, religious celebrations, and challenges related to (religious) uniqueness and openness. We chose to focus on these issues as from the interviews it became clear that, in one way or the other, these issues are relevant at all participating schools. (The quotations are translated into English by the first (corresponding) author. The original (Dutch) transcripts can be seen upon request.)

3.3.1. Morning Prayers and Religious Celebrations

It is striking that many teachers mention that in relation to morning prayers (in Dutch, 'dagopeningen', a kind of meditative thought for the day that could be explicitly religious or address a more general theme) and religious celebrations, there can be frictions between what teachers find important themselves to bring in during these moments and what others expect from them. Not all participating teachers personally experience challenges in relation to morning prayers and celebrations (as their own views and practices are more or less in line with the expectations within their particular school context), but they do observe these challenges among their colleagues.

Also, many school leaders mention 'morning prayers and religious celebrations' during the interview. Often, they connect this with what has (not) been discussed on this topic during the recruitment procedure:

School leader Dirk of Da Costa College explains that during the recruitment procedure, teachers are told that morning prayers are to be held. So, in principle, teachers know what is expected. Although pupils tell him that some teachers skip the morning prayers, he has no clear strategy to make sure that teachers do indeed keep the morning prayers:

> Dirk: (. . .) I am not going to teachers to say 'I heard from the pupils [that] you are not keeping the morning prayers.' So I try to do that via a detour. But that is complicated.

This school leader actually feels powerless here, and teachers recognize this. Dolf, the RE teacher, states:

> Dolf: Okay, now we have 'selection at the gate'. You are asked to agree with the Christian identity, cooperate in celebrations and morning prayers and so on. Most people nicely agree. When you say 'no', you are not hired. But once you are in . . . If you have acted the play well, then you are in. Then you do not need to support the Christian identity of the school any longer. There is no control. Once we were asked if we do morning prayers, but there are teachers who never do that. You are not fired for not keeping morning prayers. (. . .) There is also no alternative. In that sense, the school is embarrassed. What to do with that . . . .?

This teacher really puts his finger on the salient spot. In the context of selection and recruitment, when there is a job at stake, teachers not always remain close to themselves and their own opinions.

They make promises which they cannot or do not want to realize later on. Not keeping morning prayers is the strongest expression of this, with the result that school leaders have the feeling that they lose control over their teachers. School leader Bea (liberal Protestant Christian) states:

> Bea: (...) You work at a Christian school . . . so you are reading the Bible, but if you don't do that . . . I don't always figure that out. But recently I got some information... That some colleagues don't keep the morning prayers: I visited a lesson of a new, young, teacher. To my surprise, he didn't start with reading from the Bible, but he read a story. That could be fine and I thought 'Well, how will he connect this to the Bible?'. But he didn't. And then I said: 'Listen, why do you not read from the Bible?'. He answered that he had understood that that was not always necessary. I said: "You did not understand that right. You should have read from the Bible (. . .). You should keep to the appointments. If you say at the job interview that it is no problem for you, you should do so. And if you do not want to read from the Bible, you should come and tell. But not, 'not reading from the Bible without informing us.' (. . .) And recently (. . .) a few pupils in the exam class asked: "Is there still a Bible reading schedule?" I said 'Yes'. And then I informed the colleagues via email that the Bible reading schedule is indeed there and I asked them to use it. Well, no one responded . . .

Apart from job interviews, teachers sometimes experience only a few opportunities to influence the way the formal religious identity of the school is expressed. Teachers have the idea that, amongst other things, morning prayers and religious celebrations are prescribed in a top-down manner and that there is no room to reflect together on how these activities can be given shape in a way that fits the teachers who actually (should) do the work. Following the quotation from Evert (evangelical), an RE teacher at Erasmus College, also makes this clear:

> Evert: The choice to keep morning prayers is prescribed by [the] board and management. That was five years ago. We should use *Zoutkorrel* [25]. My impression is that most colleagues found it just as unsalted as . . . Anyhow, they did not use it and were also not intending to use it in the future. At a certain moment, it was decided to use another method, which should be used from then on. But that didn't work out either. So, finally, they concluded that five out of fifty people use it. Well, apparently we just shouldn't do it. Well, to me that did not seem to be the right conclusion, but thereafter, the school board and management have just let it go.
>
> I think one should never sanction these kind of things, especially not as it is related to one's own identity. I believe that every colleague would have been willing to do morning prayers, but not based on such a Christian method.

This quotation makes it clear that in the end, the school board gave up expecting teachers to keep morning prayers. The teacher Evert deeply deplores that. He holds the opinion that if room had been given to teachers to give shape to the morning prayers in their own way, there would have been enough schoolwide support to continue morning prayers.

With a method which has been imposed top-down and which was considered by many people involved as 'far too Christian', it has come to nothing at this school.

Also at Groen van Prinsterer College, from time to time, there is discussion on celebrating Christian holidays. Diversity at school is so substantial that it is not clear to everyone why Christian celebrations are organized at school. Teacher Giel (Protestant, active church member) says:

> Giel: Yes, [the] biggest challenge is the huge diversity. Probably that is not only so in our schools. (. . .) At a reformed school you have colleagues who all faithfully go to church once or twice a week, and who all think likeminded. It is a kind of 'uniform thinking'. We don't have that here. And sometimes that wrenches of course. Because one is a believer, another a little less. And some don't believe at all. Sometimes colleagues say: "What is the importance of those Christian celebrations? They could abolish a few of them . . . .". Then I ask myself, why one should do that as a Christian school?

For teacher Friso (atheist), Christian celebrations are one of the few instances when it is noticeable to him that he works at a Christian school. He is very critical on the way celebrations are organized at his school:

> Friso: (. . .) Last Christmas we went to a church. That was not a success . . . (. . .).
>
> I: What happened there?
>
> Friso: Well, those pupils never go to church . . . so it is already weird that we really want them to be there. And yes, they also can't sit still. And [my] colleagues just expected the pupils to be quiet for a whole hour. That really strikes me, but . . . yes, so those colleagues felt the effects of this disgrace. (. . .) In my mentor group of fifteen pupils no one ever visits a church. So one can ask: Are you really a Christian school?

Later on in the interview, this teacher makes it clear that he would prefer to organize an activity with his pupils which really appeals to them, rather than sitting in a church with the whole school just because that is simply something one would expect a Christian school to do. He admits, however, that he does recognize a field of tension here. as some of the teachers do find these celebrations in church important:

> Friso: Well, there are colleagues who think it is important and also nice to go to a church. They say "it is a Christian school". Well, I think that you can remain calling this till some never-never day, but you can wonder to what extent that is still important in practice?

School leader Frits also reflects on the Christmas celebrations. In teams, teachers were free to give shape to this celebration. It struck him that a celebration was organized in church, even though the school board did not promote that:

> Frits (atheist): (...) It is always a search how to give shape to celebrations; that counts for every school. Most children are of course not used to [being] silent for a while or to listen to choir music or whatever. These old church services, these old expressions, they actually don't know them very well any longer, so yes, how do you organize a celebration in a church? We purposefully organize the celebrations on a smaller scale, by working with departments and teams. Every teacher team celebrates Christmas with their own pupils. Interestingly, last Christmas, the celebration was organized again on a larger scale and the church was included again. We did not work towards that as school board, they organized it themselves. (. . .) It was a diverse program and everything [ran] very well.

It is remarkable that the school leader holds very positive memories on this Christmas celebration in church, while teacher Friso expressed himself negatively about this particular celebration. These diverse perceptions on the same event exactly show the tensions which can exist at schools when it comes to religious celebrations.

Also, from the following quotation, it becomes clear that not all teachers can identify very well with the way celebrations are given shape at school. Teacher Eric (atheist) has the feeling that he has to adjust to a great extent during the celebrations:

> Erik: (. . .) Well, the celebrations and . . . the prayers and the holding of hands during the celebration and so on . . . . That's when I really notice it. (. . .).
>
> Erik: (...) I really have to adjust myself to a great extent. If it is only for a short period of time, I don't really bother, but if I should do it more often, I wouldn't like it I suppose. But it is not so that I am not used to it. I also know a colleague who also really isn't into these kinds of things. And for that colleague it really is a bad experience. It completely doesn't fit into her life view and also not into mine. Only the interesting thing is that I got a Christian upbringing so I am well aware of it.

3.3.2. Uniqueness and Openness

In several schools, we learnt from both teachers and school leaders that they are searching to find a balance between holding to the (Christian) identity at the one hand and being open to others at the other hand. Questions related to uniqueness and openness are expressed in the schools in different ways and to different extents. Teacher Gea (Protestant, not further specified) sometimes wonders whether the uniqueness of her school is still present enough and what this uniqueness consists of:

> Gea: Concerning our Christian identity, I sometimes question what we really stand for. In the Netherlands, we are very tolerant and 'anything goes', and that is fine, because otherwise I could not have been really myself as well, so it is all very mixed . . .
>
> Interviewer: Yes, so you see for yourself the benefits of tolerance, but you also see what one can lose because of tolerance?
>
> Gea: Yes, if you allow everything and anything is possible . . . In the end, you just don't keep your own identity, your own . . . what you really stand for.
>
> Interviewer: Does this apply to this school as well?
>
> Gea: Well, of course we simply have morning prayers and things like that, although I doubt how all colleagues are giving shape to that. I myself hardly teach [during] the first hour of the day so I hardly do morning prayers. We have week assemblies, celebrations, so these are the regular elements . . . (. . .). But, what I mean to say is that sometimes it goes very far. For instance, we take enough pupils and teachers with Moroccan and other backgrounds. That is fine and in a sense I think that school should reflect society. But on the other hand, to what extent do you participate, with ever again all those other celebrations, all those other things? At a certain point I think that one chooses a Christian school, and then (. . .) at a certain point demands can be made. That is simply part of the game.

On one hand, Gea finds it important that the school is a reflection of society and that pupils and teachers of different cultural and religious backgrounds are welcome. On the other hand, she is of the opinion that there should also be enough room to set limits on what is possible at a Christian school and what is not.

At Calvijn College, the tension between uniqueness and openness also plays a role, but in a different manner. At this school, some teachers would like to have more opportunities to introduce their pupils to diversity. Claas (evangelical) explains:

> Claas: I rather hate it that my audience is 90% church-going. (. . .).
>
> Claas: They are biased, have already taken their positions (...).
>
> Interviewer: So you would like to have more diversity within the group?
>
> Claas: Yes, I really do.
>
> Interviewer: More different perspectives.
>
> Claas: Cultures . . . Yes. This morning we had a discussion on Geert Wilders *(A famous Dutch politician, leader of the PVV (Party for Freedom), who holds rather outspoken views on, amongst other issues, Islam in general and the Quran in particular. GB-T et al.).* Then I say: "That is all very well, but there is just no single Moroccan in our class.". I say: "You would speak completely different if Mohammed would be in our class . . . " (. . .). So therefore I really want to cause friction (...). If we would move this school for a moment, together to Rotterdam, then you have such a different discussion . . . And I hope that they would understand that a little bit (...).

Interviewer: And are you trying to stimulate those contacts . . .

Claas: Yes, yes, I try to simply invite Muslims in our classes, for discussion, or to organize a forum (. . .). I try to challenge them to contact such people, for instance at the sports club. Like 'just talk to them'. Ask him what he stands for. Why he is fasting. Just ask.

Different from the earlier cited teachers, who appear to be more or less concerned whether their schools will keep enough uniqueness, this teacher expresses that in his view there could be more openness at school. So, also in relation to this topic, we see the great variety between (and within) Christian schools.

3.4. Recommendations of the Teachers

We have discussed (some of the) tensions which are experienced by teachers in relation to the perceived variety in religious views within the school. As there is diversity within and between the schools, the recommendations we discuss here are also diverse.

Not all teachers have clear ideas about recommendations. Teachers who do have ideas are rather critical towards their school leaders. Almost all ideas have to do with making more room for diversity and the worldviews of individual teachers.

3.4.1. Let the Formal Religious Identity Correspond with the Lived Identity

Dolf, who expressed his views on the job interview, which he compares to a play, at least as far as it concerns religious elements (see Section 3.3.1), is very critical on the recruitment procedures. His proposal is to create an identity everyone can agree with:

Dolf: (. . .) So I would rather say: Skip that question *(on whether you are willing to represent the Christian identity of the school, GB-T et al.)* at the beginning. And create an identity everyone can agree with. And investigate to make sure that everyone can agree indeed.

In fact, Dolf requests the school leaders, who also hold the job interviews with new personnel, to take the lead in creating an identity which will be broadly supported by the teachers.

3.4.2. Express Respect for Privacy

Another teacher, again from Da Costa College, comes with a completely different recommendation. Daphne experiences the unfamiliarity at her school with the worldviews of colleagues as being positive. She appreciates this privacy, because it is not expected that staff members share their personal convictions. She would consider it an infringement of privacy if staff members were to openly discuss each other's worldviews in order to come to a (school) identity with which everyone can agree:

I: (...) Do you have insight into, for instance, how many colleagues are, for example, atheist, or . . . ?

Daphne: No, not at all, we don't know that from each other and that is just fine, isn't it?

I: You like that?

Daphne: Yes, I really like that. Not knowing too much of each other. I like that.

The recommendation to come to a common lived and experienced identity can be contrary to the expressed wish to respect the privacy of colleagues. This need could, however, also be part of this common identity. Nevertheless, this would soon become difficult, as for some people involved, identity consists of bringing in one's own world view, whereas to others, 'adjudging privacy to each other' is an important element of identity.

3.4.3. Recommendations Considering Recruitment Policy

In almost every interview, the recruitment policy of the school is addressed. While Calvijn College and Heiland College have a stricter admission policy, at the other schools, for every vacancy, it could again be a dilemma to what extent the qualities of a candidate should count in relation to his or her worldview (Christian or not).

Fleur, who expressed that in her opinion, the Christian identity of the school could be reflected more clearly, tends to think that Christian schools should only hire Christian school leaders and Christian teachers. On the other hand, she sees disadvantages, especially when it comes to hiring good teachers. Because we recognize Fleur's considerations in many of the interviews with teachers, we quote her at length:

> I: Would it be a prerequisite for you that a Christian school has a Christian school board or . . . ?
>
> Fleur: (. . .) I think it is hardly . . . Well you can hire only people with a Christian background, especially as board members. (. . .) You could also hire only Christian teachers, but at this school that would mean . . . At a certain point you will have a situation like: "Okay, we have mister Janssen and mister Pietersen. Mister Janssen is a better teacher, but unfortunately he doesn't have a Christian background.". Who do you choose?
>
> I: Well?
>
> Fleur: (. . .) I would also choose mister Janssen . . . Because you can also learn Dutch without belief, so to say (. . .). But I do expect that he will subscribe [to] the rules of the school and that he would also commit himself to organize Christmas celebrations and so on. Although it would be an inconvenience if I, as non-Christian, was to organize a Christmas celebration, anyhow.

The question which this teacher raises while talking is whether one could expect non-Christian teachers to organize Christian celebrations or to teach religious education. Fleur would not particularly refuse non-Christians at school, but she would not give them certain key positions:

> Fleur: Certain key positions, like [in] the subject Religious Education . . . That is central to me. As are board members and school leaders . . . . Look, I don't expect them to go to church, but there should be a certain commitment.

In situations in which colleagues do not feel capable or do not want to participate because of their own worldview, she is willing to take over their task, although she actually thinks that these people are not in the right place at the school:

> Fleur: Fleur: Imagine she (*a colleague who is Jehovah's witness and who finds it difficult to organize Christian celebrations, GBT et al.*) would be a mentor. I would tell her, although she knows that I find it strange: "Bring your class to me, I will do it . . . ". To show her that I am there for her, despite my mixed feelings with this situation. (. . .) This is how it should be in my eyes.

In fact, Fleur gives several recommendations here: First of all, that for key positions, only people who completely support the Christian identity of the school should be hired. Secondly, that one cannot expect non-Christian colleagues to cooperate in, for instance, Christian celebrations. Thirdly, that such tasks should be given to teachers who can be wholeheartedly committed because of their own worldview.

3.4.4. Create More Openness to Christianity

Amongst several teachers in different schools, there is embarrassment to share their own worldview with colleagues and/or pupils. Dolf has the impression that there are unspoken expectations which make people embarrassed to speak freely about their motivations. It is his contention that a change in culture is needed:

> Dolf: (. . .) Actually it should be like: "Yeah, you have got something with mindfulness and I have something with Jesus Christ.". That teachers would just share that and discuss amongst each other what they think about it. Now you don't get to know each other because it remains unspoken.

From the interview with Dolf, it becomes clear what he further means by a change in culture: it implies more room to openly talk about the Christian belief, without condemnation. Dolf now strongly beliefs that there is a 'boarding house smell' around Christianity. People see it as outdated and don't want to have anything to do with it, whereas things like "yoga and mindfulness are very much appreciated by everyone". The needed cultural change will take and will need some time, according to Dolf:

> Dolf: The Dutch do want to be religious, and spiritual, but no longer Christian. So they are open to everything except for . . . First of all we need a generation which is fully separated from that. A generation which will explore and will see Christianity again as an option. (. . .) And then there will be new chances.

4. Discussion

In the introduction, three questions were presented as central in the present article: 'How do teachers (try to) relate to the formal Protestant Christian identity of their school?', 'What challenges do they experience in doing so?', and 'What recommendations do teachers have for better dealing with these challenges?' On the basis of the described empirical study, these questions can be answered as follows:

For many teachers, their personal worldview is fully coherent with the formal religious identity of the school. This leads to tensions in several domains. At several schools, teachers have different ideas on how to give shape to morning prayers and Christian holidays. Some teachers are of the opinion that the Bible should play an important role in the religious formation of the pupils. Others think that the Bible should just be used as an important cultural source. Furthermore, teachers experience a tension between the extent to which schools can and should be open to diversity and the extent to which the own (Christian) identity should remain visible. Some are of the opinion that openness is a threat to a clear Christian school identity, while others think the two can be combined.

Teachers give several recommendations on how to deal with these tensions. Not all recommendations go in the same direction. On one hand, there are teachers who are of the opinion that it would be fruitful to have more exchange on the (formal) religious identity of the school and what this means to teachers and school leaders. On the other hand, there are teachers who do not think it is a good idea to share worldviews and opinions. They cherish their privacy and emphasize that colleagues have that right as well, also in relation to school leaders and pupils.

Next to that, it seems that teachers appreciate the possibility to discuss the tensions they experience in all openness and honesty with the school leader(s). However, this openness is, by far, not always experienced.

Often, it seems that in the job interview, there is already a kind of taboo to be open on what one really thinks about, for instance, the morning prayers and the extent to which the Christian worldview really plays a role in someone's daily life practice. Another recommendation by teachers is that school leaders should face the reality that there is diversity among teachers in respect to religion and worldview, both at a personal as well as an institutional level. Schools should,

for instance, not desperately cling to (a particular shape of) morning prayers or particular views on 'Christian education' and views on what should happen (or not) at Christian schools. Some teachers recommend their principal to reconsider the formal Christian identity of the school and to search for another, more inclusive and embracing school identity with which everyone involved can identify themselves adequately.

Using Charles Taylor's [4] definition of secularization we referred to in the Introduction section, it is clear that teachers are looking and longing for meaning in life. This is characteristic of our secular age, Taylor says. It is also clear from our results that the school context and the school's formal identity is quite often not in accord with the personal religion or worldview of the teachers. School leaders should take their 'pilgrimage' seriously, because it is important to encourage the teachers in pursuing their search to the end and to facilitate their journey, while also taking into account the plurality of spiritual choices people make [26].

On the basis of our findings, it is our contention that a crucial issue for Christian secondary schools in the year 2018 is the formulation of their aims regarding education, broadly speaking, but also related to religion and worldview, as clarity on educational aims can contribute to educational and pedagogical quality of schools. Is the aim the transmission of the presented and represented subject matter, or the transformation of the subject matter by the pupils in the processes of their meaning-making and meaning-taking and the development of their personal identity or personhood? The tension between these two approaches can adequately be conceptualized in terms of 'teaching for commitment' (the teachers stimulate the pupils to become Christians), 'teaching about commitment' (the teachers inform and confront the pupils with different religions and worldviews), and 'teaching from commitment' (the teachers try to foster the development of the pupils' self-responsible self-determination regarding religion and/or worldview). We notice that these tensions are now truly part and parcel of Christian secondary school in the Netherlands. It is the responsibility of all the stakeholders to deal with these tensions and develop in theory and practice a *modus procedendi*, a way to collectively reflect on and to act from.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, all authors; Methodology, all authors; Software, G.B.-T. and I.V.; Validation, G.B.-T.; Formal Analysis, G.B.-T. and I.V.; Investigation, I.V., I.v.N. and J.v.d.K.; Resources, I.V., I.v.N. and J.v.d.K.; Data Curation, G.B.-T. and I.V.; Writing—Original Draft Preparation, G.B.-T.; Writing—Review Editing, G.B.-T. and S.M.; Visualization, G.B.-T.; Supervision, G.B.-T.; Project Administration, G.B.-T. and I.V.; Funding Acquisition, G.B.-T. and S.M.

Funding: This research was funded by Verus, the Association for Catholic and Christian schools in the Netherlands, Woerden, Netherlands.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

References and Notes

1. Avest, K.H.; Bertram-Troost, G.D.; Miedema, S. Religious education in a pillarized and postsecular age in the Netherlands. In *Religious Education in a Plural Secularized Society. A Paradigm Shift*; Francken, L., Loobuyk, P., Eds.; Waxmann: Muenster, Germany, 2011; pp. 85–98. ISBN 978-3-8309-2543-9.
2. Onderwijs in Cijfers. Available online: https://www.onderwijsincijfers.nl/kengetallen (accessed on 31 October 2018).
3. 'Whateverism' is a new spirituality that in 1997 (in a column by Ronald Plasterk in *Intermediair*) was coined as *'ietsisme'*, which expresses that people do not adhere to an institutionalized religion, but do feel committed to 'something'.
4. Taylor, C. *A Secular Age*; The Belknap Press of Harvard: Cambridge, MA, USA; London, UK, 2007.
5. Website Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek. Available online: https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2017/38/ruim-70-procent-leerlingen-naar-bijzonder-onderwijs. (accessed on 31 October 2018).
6. De Wolff, A.C.J. *Typisch christelijk? Een onderzoek naar de identiteit van een christelijke school en haar vormgeving*; Kok: Kampen, The Netherlands, 2000.

7. Bertram-Troost, G.D.; Miedema, S. Christian education in the Netherlands. In *Reaching for the Sky. Religious Education from Christian and Islamic Perspectives*; El Bouayadi-Van de Wetering, S., Miedema, S., Eds.; Rodopi: Amsterdam, The Netherlands; New York, NY, USA, 2012; pp. 147–162.
8. Wardekker, W.L.; Miedema, S. Identity, cultural change, and religious education. *Br. J. Relig. Educ.* **2001**, *23*, 76–87. [CrossRef]
9. Bakker, C.; ter Avest, K.H. Encountering 'Good Practice'. Teacher's construction of school's identity. In *Religious Education as Encounter. A Tribute to John M Hull*; Miedema, S., Ed.; Waxmann: Münster, Germany; New York, NY, USA; pp. 129–147.
10. Bertram-Troost, G.D. *Geloven in bijzonder onderwijs. Levensbeschouwelijke identiteitsontwikkeling van adolescenten in het voortgezet onderwijs*; Boekencentrum: Zoetermeer, The Netherlands, 2006.
11. Hardeveld, G. *Bijzonder bekwaam [Specially skilled professionals]*; CPS: Amersfoort, The Netherlands, 2003.
12. Bakker, C.; Rigg, E. *De persoon van de leerkracht. Tussen christelijke schoolidentiteit en leerlingdiversiteit. (The person of the teacher. Between Christian school identity and diversity among pupils)*; Meinema: Zoetermeer, The Netherlands, 2004.
13. Bertram-Troost, G.D.; Versteegt, I.; Van der Kooij, J.C.; Van Nes, I.; Miedema, S. *Om eigenheid en openheid. Inspiratie, motivatie en levensbeschouwing van docenten in het christelijk voortgezet onderwijs*; Verus: Woerden, The Netherlands, 2015.
14. Bertram-Troost, G.D.; Miedema, S.; Kom, C.; Avest, I. A Catalogue of Dutch Protestant Primary Schools in the Secular Age: Empirical Results. *Relig. Educ.* **2015**, *42*, 202–217. [CrossRef]
15. Bertram-Troost, G.D.; Kom, C.; Ter Avest, I.; Miedema, S. *Typen van protestants-christelijk basisonderwijs in een seculiere tijd. Schoolleiders aan het woord over de eigenheid van hun school*; Besturenraad: Woerden, The Netherlands, 2012.
16. The types are based on (Cluster) analysis of quantitative questionnaires which have been filled in by principals of Christian primary schools. The type descriptions can be seen as summaries of the images that appear for the three types when all distinguishing variables as they appear from the analysis of the questionnaire are related to each other.
17. An important reason for using the three types as a heuristic instrument in our study on secondary education is that we noticed that many school leaders in secondary education recognize the distinction between the three types in the context of secondary education.
18. Béraud, C. Who to survey? Considerations on Sampling. In *Teenagers' Perspectives on the Role of Religion in their Lives, Schools and Societies. A European Quantitative Study*; Valk, P., Bertram-Troost, G.D., Friederici, M., Beraud, C., Eds.; Waxman: Muenster, Germany, 2009.
19. Evers, J.; De Boer, F. *The Qualitative Interview. Art and skill*; Eleven International Publishing: Den Haag, The Netherlands, 2012.
20. Evers, J. *Kwalitatieve analyse: kunst én kunde*; Boom/Lemma: Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2015.
21. Friesse, S. *Qualitative Data Analysis with ATLAS-Ti*; Sage Publications: London, UK, 2012.
22. Bertram-Troost, G.D.; Van der Kooij, J.C.; Miedema, S.; Versteegt, I.; Van Nes, I. Personal Inspiration, Motivation and Worldview Teachers in Dutch Christian Secondary Schools. In *Taking Position. Empirical Studies and Theoretical Reflections on Religious Education and Worldview*; Heimbrock, H.-G., Ed.; Waxman: Muenster, Germany, 2017; pp. 157–180. ISBN 978-3-8309-3576-6.
23. Nationaal Ethiek Overleg Sociale en Gedragswetenschappen. Available online: http://www.nethics.nl/Gedragscode-Ethical-Code/ (accessed on 31 October 2018).
24. Numbers/percentages mentioned in the descriptions are mentioned by the respective school principal and/or teachers in the interviews. They are rough calculations meant to give an impression.
25. *Zoutkorrel* (grain of salt) is a Dutch method for morning prayers. This method was used by many Christian schools for secondary education. A few years ago, the name was changed into *Oase*.
26. Wereldburgers. *Grote denkers over de toekomst (Global Citizens. Visionary thinkers about the future)*; Jacobs, W., Overdijk, I., Eds.; Lemniscaat: Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 2015; pp. 311–312.

education sciences

MDPI

Article

Recognizing and Acknowledging Worldview Diversity in the Inclusive Classroom

Janieta Bartz [1,*] and Thomas Bartz [2]

[1] Department of Social and Emotional Development in Rehabilitation and Education, TU Dortmund University, 44221 Dortmund, Germany
[2] Department of German Language and Literature, TU Dortmund University, 44221 Dortmund, Germany; thomas.bartz@tu-dortmund.de
* Correspondence: janieta.bartz@tu-dortmund.de

Received: 12 October 2018; Accepted: 2 November 2018; Published: 7 November 2018

Abstract: In the context of the increasing migration into Germany that has taken place in recent years and German efforts to establish an inclusive school system, which enables learners from different religious, ethnic, language and social backgrounds with and without disabilities to participate, religious education has become a key topic for interdisciplinary discourse between theology, philosophy, and pedagogy in German schools. The following questions are of special interest: How can we manage diversity in inclusive classroom settings in general, and specifically: how can we do so with regard to worldview diversity? Does worldview diversity in schools exist, and if so, how can we recognize it in its plurality and complexity? How can we acknowledge different worldviews in the context of a changing inclusive school system? In this article, we would like to present the theoretical foundation, the research setting and the first findings of our ongoing pilot studies of worldview education at an inclusive German school. The experiments are part of a larger project context that is also described. The case study presented in this article, in which innovative language and machine learning technology was used for data analysis, illustrates the potential of inclusive methods and didactic concepts such as Universal Design for Learning, Learning in the Presence of the Other, and Reflexive Inclusion for inclusive worldview education in the context of a religiously pluralized and secularized society.

Keywords: inclusion; worldview education; universal design for learning; learning in the presence of the other; reflexive inclusion

1. Introduction

These days, religious education in German schools is a key topic for interdisciplinary discourse between theology, philosophy, and pedagogy. A greater religious and non-religious diversity can be observed in German classrooms today than in the middle of the 20th century when many Germans belonged to the Catholic or Protestant Church. In the context of secularism and syncretism, however, young people's religious and moral identities have become much more diverse [1]. There are various reasons for this. Apart from the increasing global pluralization in moral issues and the rapid secularization beginning in the 1960s [2,3], other important factors are the increasing migration of refugees to Germany that has taken place in recent years and German efforts to establish an inclusive school system. These developments result in a high degree of complexity including various levels of diversity, which have a huge impact on encounters between teachers, learners, and parents at school [4]. It may lead to conflicts and disagreements as well as to fruitful learning processes. Therefore, it is important for teachers to be able to recognize, analyze and acknowledge this diversity and its impact on teaching processes. However, especially in the context of inclusive schools, this is a challenge for everyone involved: How to manage diversity in inclusive schools and classrooms?

How to acknowledge differences in the context of inclusive education? What methods are helpful for establishing successful inclusive learning processes? These are important questions both in the field of inclusive education as well as in the field of religious education in Germany.

At TU Dortmund University, these questions are being addressed within the scope of "DoProfil" (Dortmunder Profil für inklusionsorientierte Lehrer/-innenbildung—*Dortmund profile for inclusion-oriented teacher education*), an interdisciplinary project funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. In a subproject, we focus specifically on the level of religious, cultural and moral diversity, to which we will refer in the following as worldview diversity. In this article we present the theoretical foundation, the research setting and first findings of the project. Starting with an overview of the ongoing discussion on inclusion in Germany (Section 1.1), we then outline how we are tackling the resulting challenges (Section 1.3). In doing so, we draw on the principles of Universal Design for Learning [5] and Reflexive Inclusion [6] as well as on the didactics of Learning in the Presence of the Other [2,3], which we introduce as important sources in the preceding section (Section 1.2). In the main part, the article focuses on the methodology (Section 2) and the results (Section 3) of the case study, which we present and discuss (Section 4).

1.1. Towards Inclusive Education in Germany

The discussion about inclusive education in German schools revolves around several aspects. Many supporters of inclusive education focus on a moral perspective. For them, inclusive education is an element of participation and educational justice [7,8]. All learners in Germany should have the possibility to learn without having to bear disadvantages because of their social or personal backgrounds. In the past, learners with special needs in terms of their learning and personal abilities were sent to separate schools called Sonderschulen, i.e., schools providing special education. In these schools, teachers with special knowledge about learning differences were responsible for teaching learners in a particular way in order to meet their specific educational needs and help them to attend a regular school one day. Ultimately, however, many of these learners were not integrated into regular schools, with the result that they suffered from many disadvantages: longer journeys to school, living with stigmatism, lower job perspectives etc. Therefore, advocates of inclusive education ask for structures in schools in which every learner is welcome.

Inclusive education is a possibility to change your teaching perspective: it means that every single learner has a need for support; there are no 'special' children or young people with 'special' needs. One can say that every learner has a special need. The planning and conduct of inclusive lessons is characterized by diversity-sensitive diagnostics and support for all learners. This means, goal-differentiated teaching is not to be regarded as an exception, but as a general rule of inclusive education. The idea of collaborative classroom learning based on mutual recognition is enormously important from a social point of view, too. The idea of inclusion pursues the goal that one day it will no longer be necessary to speak of inclusion, since dealing with diversity has become a matter of course.

Over the past years, regular German schools started to integrate learners with special needs into their schools. As a consequence, teachers in German schools are now confronted with very different learners. Some have learning or other disabilities; others have just arrived in Germany a few months or years ago. Many German teachers have not been taught how to manage diverse levels of learning, cultural and personal abilities. For that reason, German schools and universities need good didactic concepts that help to manage diversity.

1.2. Managing and Teaching (Worldview) Diversity: Theoretical Sources

1.2.1. Universal Design for Learning

One of the most promising methods for managing diversity in the classroom is the Universal Design for Learning. This concept from the U.S. can provide orientation in the planning and implementation of inclusive teaching [5]. Based on the design concept of the same name [9], it highlights key points

of a learning environment with as few barriers as possible, an environment which considers a variety of learning strategies and levels. The consideration of three basic principles ensures that learners can acquire knowledge and skills according to their individual requirements:

1. Offering various options for task processing (representation),
2. Design of active learning and expression possibilities (action and expression),
3. Enabling motivated learning (commitment).

From a religious and worldview didactic perspective, these principles can be concretized as follows: The principle of multiple forms of representation (1) corresponds to the complexity of many theological topics—including every day, children's and youth theology—or to the polyphony of biblical texts, which allows different emphases to be set. In addition, it makes sense to provide different editions of the Bible (e.g., in plain language, the German Elberfeld Bible or the German standard translation, etc.) or specialist information represented in various forms (text, video and/or audio versions), so that learners can choose an easier or more difficult access, depending on what suits them.

The principle of diverse forms of learning and expression (2) encourages the full exploitation of the spectrum of didactic approaches in religious education that is spread between the poles of cognition, performance and denomination. This principle allows learners to try themselves out and find adequate learning paths and forms of expression: Bibliodrama, bibliology, photo stories, role play, station or project work, creative writing etc.

Finally, the focus on commitment (3) recalls the serving-diaconal-function of religious education. learners should find themselves in confrontation with the transcendent, i.e., develop a (religious) identity. Without the willingness to really engage in the religious learning process, this cannot succeed. This willingness is promoted by guided work and the conscious integration of the individual personality of each learner in the teacher's counselling and reflection on learning outcomes.

1.2.2. Reflective Inclusion

The idea of intervention in the context of worldview diversity is important for teacher education at universities, too. Inclusive education succeeds above all through reflection by all those who are involved in teaching processes. Starting from the concept of reflective inclusion, the project described in this article addresses reflective and difference-sensitive teacher education. The professional orientation of teachers is of special importance for the pedagogical implementation of inclusion. In particular, this is underpinned by the approach of Reflective Inclusion [6], which understands difference as a product of social interactions in which (dis)advantages are inscribed. Such an understanding requires a specific mode of reflection that "comprises a permanent reflection on the individual consequences and structural conditions of one's own actions" [10]. Being already generally discussed as an important dimension of professionalism for teacher education, (self-)reflection is thus of significant importance for inclusive teacher education as well. Such an approach involves the challenge of reflecting on school practice with regard to the (re)production and processing of differences concerning worldview diversity as well as illuminating processes of stereotyping and maturation.

1.2.3. Worldview Education: Learning in the Presence of the Other

Worldview education should help learners to become aware of their similarities and strengthen their common values. At the same time, it is important that learners also recognize that there are many special features that need to be understood with regard to the multitude of personal and organized worldviews. This requires a special culture of encounter and learning [11]. Based on theological and anthropological optimism [12,13] (on "Religious Pedagogy of Hope"), the concept of Learning in the Presence of the Religious Other is based on the idea that a safe space can be created in learning environments that are sensitive to worldview diversity, where learners meet in their so-being, perceive their differences and use this perception to sharpen their own personal worldview concepts.

Personal worldviews [14] are generally not systematically or consistently coherent but allow the individual more or less certain answers to existential questions or a meaningful narration for his or her own life. They are derived from various sources: from the broad traditional and organized socio-political, religious, and cultural institutional systems of norms and values as well as from the (personal) worldviews of other individuals. Wherever superordinate action-guiding ideals, values or principles (so-called "broad moralities") are conveyed in organized or spontaneous learning situations, they can influence or expand the personal worldviews of the participants—not only in religious settings, but also in political or cultural teaching/learning contexts. Depending on the nature of the religious or world-oriented teaching processes in relation to the mode (didactic dimension) and possibility (pedagogical dimension) of personal engagement with the available worldviews as well as the type of theological or ideological discourse initiated and the underlying relationship (discursive dimension), different forms of interreligious or transcultural learning arise.

If worldviews emerge from the teaching discourse, e.g., as worldviews of the majority society or a certain group, or if they are reported by an authority on the basis of their power of interpretation, this encounter leads to a "learning about" [3], i.e., learning about a religion or a worldview concept. Differences are imparted objectively and initially without starting points for a constructive transformation. The communication of different worldviews level with the face allows a "learning from" [3], i.e., learning from a religion or ideological concept. The learners become partners, who reflect on their personal worldviews against the background of the differences that have come to light and who are able to relate aspects of personal and foreign worldviews to one another. This contributes to an internal differentiation of individual ideological concepts of norms and values. Finally, if teachers and learners dispose of their personal worldviews within the framework of an existential theological or ideological discourse conducted in an atmosphere of mutual trust, this permits a mutual immersion in the worlds of faith and narratives of the respective other, a "learning in/through" [3]. Such a discourse, which is comparable to a trusting conversation among friends, has an effect that is going beyond the differentiation and consolidation of fragmentary or inconsistent theological or ideological concepts. The hypothesis is that anyone who entrusts himself/herself entirely to a friend in his/her vulnerability also adopts the friend's personal concept of norms and values without, however, giving up his/her own. In a sincere encounter with the other, (post-)identitarian worldviews can thus emerge which appear to be sustainable sources for norms and values that guide action (broad moralities) with a view to a transcultural society.

What revision processes personal worldviews undergo in the presence of the other, how they are composed in detail and how their composition changes during the revision processes is a largely unanswered research question. It is to be expected, however, that the personal concepts will gain coherence and consistency and, in particular, will be adjusted with regard to those aspects that have been adopted unquestioningly as settings or commonplaces of a primary reference group or society, as prejudices, as superstition, etc. and do not stand up to critical reasoning. In this manner, the existential discourse in the presence of the other is an essential resource for synchronizing clashing worldviews. Above all, everyone participating in this discourse can convincingly contribute those aspects of his or her personal worldview that he or she has understood. In contrast, the influence of religious, cultural, or political authorities and the organized worldviews transported by them will be reduced.

1.3. What We Do: Recognizing and Acknowledging Worldview Diversity in the Inclusive Classroom

In our project, we closely cooperate with the inclusive Münsterlandschule in Tilbeck (near Münster, NRW, Germany), in order to establish and evaluate religious or worldview education (see Section 1.2.3) in a learning environment with a universal design (see Section 1.2.1). We accompany a heterogeneous class of 26 learners, aged between 17 and 19 years with different ethnic and religious backgrounds, who deal with different perspectives on the future within the framework of a class project entitled "Our School of the Future". The project was conducted over a period of 15 weeks and lessons took place in several blocks on two to three afternoons each week. These were interdisciplinary lessons in history, German, religion and art. At the beginning, the learners prepared an interesting research

question on a future topic, which they developed further on an empirical and interdisciplinary basis. During their learning process they were advised and accompanied by their teachers and a research assistant of TU Dortmund University. The learning opportunities were intended to encourage learners to pursue their learning activities in a guided, yet self-controlled and active manner. At the end of the class project and research-based learning period, the learners prepared a project report on their research findings and a reflection of their results.

In order to create reflection events in the sense of Reflective Inclusion (see Section 1.2.2), the data collected at the inclusive Münsterlandschule were evaluated and discussed in seminars at TU Dortmund University. The results of these data-based discussions were then recommunicated to the teachers and learners creating a meta-level of reflection about worldview diversity.

In the case study presented below, we followed up on the question how personal worldviews and their development can be identified and analyzed within the inclusive learning environment described above in an efficient way. Which methodology is suitable for analyzing the complex textual and conversational data of learners and students at a reasonable expenditure of time? These were the questions that led us to the case study described below, which we conducted using an innovative technology-based approach, focusing on the following subordinate research questions that correspond to the overarching project goals:

1. What are the subjective narratives that learners use in order to understand and present themselves and their individual personalized worldviews?
2. What are the socio-cultural and religious narratives of our societies (organized worldviews) that they thereby refer to?
3. How can these narratives be analyzed and described efficiently?

2. Materials and Methods

The project reports of three 11th grade learners of the above-mentioned Münsterlandschule—a total of approx. 5000 words—provided the basis for the case study described in the following. Moreover, we also analyzed a much larger database of reference texts as possible sources of organized worldviews (see below). For the data analysis we have used an innovative approach based on language technology and machine learning. We have automated the manual steps of topic analysis that are normally required for a content analysis [15], which allows us to be more objective on the one hand and, on the other, to analyze larger amounts of data. This, in turn, should enhance the reliability and accuracy of the research results. However, the initial aim of the case study presented in this article was to provide a proof-of-concept for the proposed approach of analyzing.

In order to uncover not only the learners' individual personalized worldviews but also the superordinate organized worldviews to which these refer (see Section 1.2.3), we chose a two-stage procedure. The automatic identification of topic expressions in the available data plays a central role here. In the first step, we analyzed the personalized worldviews, which can be understood as identity-forming narratives, using an automatic linguistic method for co-reference analysis [16]. This method allows for the identification of narrative strands (thematic chains, so-called co-references) established by thematic expressions, which help to linguistically create a scenic imaginary space and an action taking place within it. In a second step, we selected potential reference texts on the dominant topics identified in the previous analysis, which convey possible superordinate organized worldviews that are connected with the learners' narratives. This selection of texts reflects our hypothesis according to which organized worldviews can be found in the learners' narratives. In a last step, we applied the Latent Dirichlet Allocation method [17] to the selected digital full texts and the learners' project reports. This method identifies and sorts the topics present in a text corpus and clusters the texts according to thematic similarity. If the reference texts and project reports were assigned to different thematic clusters, our hypothesis would be falsified. If common underlying topics and thematic clusters emerged for reference texts and project reports, our hypothesis would be verified. In the

following, we will elaborate in more detail on the fundamentals of this procedure, i.e., the concept of linguistic topics and narratives (Section 2.1) as well as the automatic procedures mentioned above (Sections 2.2 and 2.3).

2.1. Linguistic Topic and Narrative Concept

From a linguistic point of view, topics are the subjects (facts, processes, things, etc.) about which something is said in a text or conversation [18]. To this end, they are repeatedly mentioned in the text or conversation by nouns, pronouns and other reference expressions and thus remembered by readers or listeners. Topics can be explicitly introduced, changed or further developed through certain formulation patterns or constructions. The way in which topics are linked and further developed in a text or conversation is specific to different text patterns. The text pattern of narration is characterized, among other things, by the fact that new information is continuously delivered on a chronological axis to constantly continued topics, whereby actions and developments as well as surprising twists can be staged [19]. Example (1) shows the constant continuation of the topics "Education" (T1, partly continued via the subtopics T1.1 and T1.2: "Knowledge", T1.3: "Experience" and T1.4: "Political and Ethical Ideas"), "School" (T2, partly continued via the subtopics T2.1: "Primary School" and T2.2: "Grammar School") and "Children" (T3).

(1) Bildung^{T1} gab es schon in der Steinzeit, als die ersten Menschen das Wissen$^{T1.1}$ an die nachfolgenden Generationen weitergegeben haben. Es gibt sie^{T1} also eigentlich schon seit ca. zweihunderttausend Jahren. Schulen^{T2}, an denen^{T2} Lehrer Kentnisse$^{T1.2}$ und Erfahrungen$^{T1.3}$ weitergegeben haben, sind aber viel später entstanden. Die ältesten Schulen^{T2} gab es vor viertausend Jahren in Ägypten. Kinder^{T3} lernten dort^{T2} einen Bestand an Wissen$^{T1.1}$ und politische und ethische Vorstellungen$^{T1.4}$ kennen. Nach einer Grundschule$^{T2.1}$ konnten die Kinder^{T3} auf die ersten Gymnasien$^{T2.2}$ gehen.

Education^{T1} already existed in the Stone Age, when the first people passed on the knowledge$^{T1.1}$ to the following generations. It^{T1} has actually existed for about two hundred thousand years. However, schools^{T2} where^{T2} teachers have passed on their knowledge$^{T1.2}$ and experience$^{T1.3}$ came into being much later. The oldest schools^{T2} existed in Egypt four thousand years ago. There^{T2}, children^{T3} got to know a stock of knowledge$^{T1.1}$ and political and ethical ideas$^{T1.4}$. After primary school$^{T2.1}$, the children^{T3} could go to the first grammar schools$^{T2.2}$.

2.2. Automatic co-Reference Analysis

Automatic co-reference analysis is a computational linguistic method that facilitates the automatic detection of topics and their continuation in the course of a text as described in Section 2.1. This is considered to be a major challenge, especially with regard to the resolution of pronoun references. These references are often underspecified and can only be resolved by the semantics of the context. The analysis method we have chosen takes these into account via word occurrences in the context of pronouns that are typical for the respective reference expressions. The procedure is state-of-the-art. It currently offers the highest possible accuracy [16].

2.3. Latent Dirichlet Allocation

Latent Dirichlet Allocation is a machine learning method used to classify texts by topics. The procedure is based on the idea that the topics of a text result from the distribution of words in the text. Accordingly, each word of a text can be assigned to a (latent) topic, which in turn is represented by certain very frequent text words (e.g., "Development", "Pedagogy", "Education" vs. "School", "Education system" vs. "Skills", "Maturity" etc.; see Section 3.2). The purpose of the procedure is to automatically optimize the allocation (Dirichlet distribution) of the text words to the topics in such a manner that the topics explain the text content in the best possible way [17].

3. Results

In this chapter, we present the results of our case study. First, we will take a look at the results of the analysis of personalized worldviews in the learner data (Section 3.1). Then we explain the identified interrelations to overarching organized worldviews (Section 3.2). Thirdly, we review the quality of the automatic procedures (Section 3.3).

3.1. Personalized Worldviews

The following table (Table 1) shows the results of the co-reference analysis conducted on the learners' project reports. The topics listed are those that were mentioned in the reports with an above-average frequency. The value specified in column 1 ("Token no.") identifies the text passage where the topic was first introduced ("t361" means the 361st text word). Low token numbers indicate an early mention in the text, high token numbers indicate a late one. The value in column 3 ("Salience") indicates the relative frequency with which a topic is re-introduced in the text. High values in this column indicate central topics, which are usually repeated over the entire course of the text.

Table 1. Results of the co-reference analysis on the learners' project reports: main topics.

Token No.	Topic	Salience
t361	Schule *School*	0.129
t380	Bildung *Education*	0.111
t394	Mensch *Human*	0.124
t415	Mittelalter *Middle Ages*	0.027
t422	Lehrer *Teacher*	0.124
t484	Kind *Child*	0.124
t615	Kirche *Church*	0.022
t1070	Jugendliche *Adolescents*	0.124
t1077	Gesellschaft *Society*	0.027
t1126	Meinung *Point of view*	0.022
t1135	Arbeit *Work*	0.120
t2022	Zusammenleben *Life together*	0.040
t2038	Zukunft *Future*	0.058
t2077	Welt *World*	0.098
t2510	Grünflächen *Green areas*	0.098
t2576	Technik *Technology*	0.062
t2657	Umwelt *Environment*	0.098
t4323	iPad	0.062

The main topics identified make it easy to summarize the narratives contained in the learners' project reports: Not surprisingly, the main topics are "School", "Education", "Teacher" and "Children"/"Adolescents", which are directly derived from the project theme ("Our School of the Future"). What is interesting, however, is the early thematization of the humanistic ideal of education ("Human") and the role of the church for the schools of the Middle Ages ("Middle Ages"), to which the learners first refer. Only then a reference is made to the socializing function of schools ("Society", "Point of view", "Life together"), but also to the purpose of education for the working world (in the present). From the learners' point of view, the school of the future is characterized not only by a balanced relationship between humanistic education and training for a later employment, but also by a balanced relationship between innovative technology ("Technology", "iPad") and ecology ("Ecology", "Green areas") and by an increasing internationalization ("World").

In the following, some excerpts from the learners' project reports are presented as examples. These excerpts illustrate the narratives outlined above. Among other topics, first two excerpts (2), (3) deal with the influence of the Christian churches on the development of the education system:

(2) Viel von der Bildung wurde auch von der Kirche übernommen. In Klöstern oder Pfarrschulen wurden auch Lehrer ausgebildet. Die Reformatoren wollten dann nach einigen Jahren durchsetzten,

das es Bildung für alle gibt, für Jugend und Mädchen, Reiche und Arme. Dies wurde durch die Gründung von Städten und durch den Buchdruck begünstigt.

Much of the education was also taken over by the church. Teachers were also trained in monasteries or parish schools. After a few years, the Reformers wanted education for all, for boys and girls, rich and poor. This was fostered by the founding of cities and by book printing.

(3) Noch heute sagt z.B. die evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, das die schulische Bildung und Erziehung von Kindern und Jugendlichen eine der wichtigsten Aufgaben in unserer Gesellschaft ist. Schulen müssen bereit sein, die Schüler auf eine Vielfalt von Lebenslagen vorzubereiten und den Schülern bei der Persönlichkeitsentwicklung und dem Prozess des Aufwachsens zu helfen. Sie muss sich auch auf Migration, Multikulturalität und mehrere Religionen einlassen. Schule soll nicht nur ein Ort des Lernens, sondern auch ein Ort des gemeinsamen Lebens sein. Man verbringt ja einen sehr großen Teil seines Lebens in der Schule, etwa zwei Drittel des Tages. Da sollte man sich auch wohlfühlen.

Even today, for example, the Protestant Church in Germany says that the education of children and young people at school is one of the most important tasks in our society. Schools must be ready to prepare students for a variety of situations and help them develop their personalities and grow up. They also have to engage with migration, multiculturalism and several religions. School should not only be a place of learning, but also a place of living together. You spend a very large part of your life at school, about two thirds of the day. You should feel comfortable there, too.

This feeling of well-being should be achieved in schools through innovative communication technology on the one hand, and through a pleasant ecological learning environment on the other (4), (5):

(4) Lernen ist in Zukunft stärker durch digitale Medien geprägt. Du hast keine Schultasche mehr, sondern dein Ipad und da sind alle Lernsachen drauf. Mann muss aber aufpassen, dass die Technik nur als Hilfsmittel genutzt wird und die Lehrkraft nicht vollständig ersetzt. Es gibt schon Kitas, in denen Ipads zur Dokumentation benutzt werden. Kinder können zwischendurch Fotos machen und sich diese später zusammen mit ihren Eltern anschauen oder besprechen.

In the future, learning will be more strongly influenced by digital media. You don't have a schoolbag anymore, you have your iPad and all your learning things are on it. But you have to be careful that the technique is only used as a tool and does not completely replace the teacher. There are already daycare centers in which iPads are used for documentation. Children can take photos in between and look at them later together with their parents or discuss them.

(5) Es kann interessant sein, in und von der Natur zu lernen. Wir sollten vielmehr im Grün und mit dem Grün lernen. In meiner Traumvorstellung wären Grünflächen um die Schule herum mit Bächen und Bäumen. Die Schule wird zum Lebensraum auch durch eine einladende Architektur. Beispielsweise könnte man den Boden mit Teppich auslegen und die Wände farbenfroh gestalten.

It can be interesting to learn in and from nature. We should rather learn in the green and with the green. My dream would be green spaces around the school with streams and trees. The school also becomes a living space through its inviting architecture. For example, you could cover the floor with carpet and make the walls colorful.

The following excerpts (6), (7) illustrate the relationship between the professional angle and the personal orientation of education:

(6) Beim Thema Arbeit ist auch die Frage wichtig: Warum arbeitet man überhaupt? Man kann arbeiten, um Geld zu verdienen, oder Arbeiten, weil damit ein bestimmter Sinn verbunden ist. Zum Beispiel backt der Bäcker einerseits, um sein Geld zu verdienen, andererseits aber auch, um andere Menschen satt zu machen. Wenn jeder nur arbeitet, um Geld zu verdienen,

entwickelt sich daraus eine egoistische Gesellschaft. Dann gibt es keine Liebe oder Wärme in der Gesellschaft mehr.

When it comes to work, the question is also important: Why work at all? You can work to earn money, or work because it has a certain meaning. For example, the baker bakes to earn money on the one hand, but also to feed other people. If everyone works just to make money, society becomes a selfish one. Then there will be no more love or warmth in society.

(7) Ich bin zu dem Entschluss gekommen, dass in der Schule die Persönlichkeitsentwicklung in Zukunft deutlich in den Vordergrund rücken wird. Kinder sind durch den medialen Umschwung vielfach in einer seperaten Welt unterwegs. In Schulen muss deshalb das Kommunikative untereinander gefördert werden. Ich habe selbst kleine Kinder im Fußball trainiert. Früher saßen wir in der Halle und haben uns zwischen den Spielen unterhalten. Heute sitzen die Kinder da und machen mit Snapchatfiltern Fotos. Der Kontakt mit den Lehrpersonen ist vor allem deshalb wichtig für die Persönlichkeitsentwicklung, weil man sich andauernd in dieser separaten digitalen Welt bewegt.

I have come to the conclusion that personality development will become much more important at school in the future. Due to the changes in the media, children often live in a separate world. In schools, therefore, the communication with each other must be promoted. I trained small children in football myself. We used to sit in the hall and talk between games. Today the children sit there and take photos with Snapchat filters. Contact with teachers is particularly important for personal development because one is constantly living in this separate digital world.

3.2. Organized Worldviews

We also investigated the potential sources of the personalized worldviews described above in an automated manner. The procedure used for this essentially resulted in two clusters of thematically uniform reference texts, each of which also contains the learners' project reports. The following two tables (Tables 2 and 3) show the topics that are common to all texts in one cluster. The value in the second table column ("Probability") indicates the prognostic relevance of a text topic for its assignment to the corresponding cluster.

Table 2. Results of the Latent Dirichlet Allocation clustering on the learners' project reports and a choice of potential reference texts: cluster 1 [1].

Common Topics	Probability
Entwicklung *Development*	0.023
Pädagogik *Pedagogy*	0.018
Erziehung *Education*	0.017
Schule *School*	0.041
Bildungssystem *Education system*	0.002
Kinder *Children*	0.039
Individualität *Individuality*	0.014
Fähigkeiten *Skills*	0.019
Allgemeinbildung *General education*	0.006
Mündigkeit *Maturity*	0.005

[1] Reference texts: Wilhelm von Humboldt (1793): Theorie der Bildung des Menschen *Theory of Human Education*; Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1820): Wie Gertrud ihre Kinder lehrt *How Gertrud Teaches her Children*; Maria Montessori (1923): Die Selbsterziehung des Kindes *the Self-Education of the Child*.

Table 3. Results of the Latent Dirichlet Allocation clustering on the learners' project reports and a choice of potential reference texts: cluster 2 [1].

Common Topics	Probability
Mensch *Human*	0.002
Mann *Man*	0.001
Frau *Woman*	0.001
Grün *Green*	0.010
Pflanzen *Plants*	0.008
Erkenntnis *Cognition*	0.002
Lernen *Learning*	0.001
Garten *Garden*	0.009
Fläche *Area*	0.004
Boden *Ground*	0.003

[1] Reference texts: The Bible (standard translation): Gen 2,4b-25 (The Paradise). The Quran (Bubenheim & Elyas 1980 translation): Suras 2; 7; 9; 13; 18; 23; 47; 52; 54; 56; 75.

The topics of the first cluster (reference texts by Humboldt, Pestalozzi and Montessori; Table 2) all relate to the field of education theories ("Development", "Pedagogy", "Education") or the school and education system. The focus on children and their individuality ("Children", "Individuality") as well as on their skills and important educational goals ("General education", "Maturity") also fits in. Those reference texts (the Bible, the Quran; Table 3) that we regard as sources of religious ideas of paradise are significantly different. It is interesting that the paradise concepts conveyed in the Bible and the Quran, which also occur in the learners' project reports, do not differ thematically to an extent that would justify an assignment to different clusters.

In other words, we can now assume that the learners in our experimental group derive their individual personalized worldviews from organized worldviews that differ little in content, even though the origin and sources of these worldviews differ. We see these results as a positive confirmation of our approach of recognizing and acknowledging worldview diversity in the inclusive classroom, where it is important to emphasize and strengthen the similarities in all apparent differences.

3.3. Quality of the Automatic Procedures

Our choice of automatic linguistic and machine learning methods has enabled us to obtain meaningful results regarding our research questions formulated above. According to their own studies, the developers of these methods assume an accuracy of 80–85% for the co-reference analysis method [16] and 85–95% for the Latent Dirichlet Allocation method [17], respectively. Although the tools represent the current state of the art with these values, this is not sufficient for many linguistic applications. However, with regard to cases such as ours, we consider the procedures to be adequate. The automatic procedures have enabled us to evaluate a larger amount of text material in a structured manner with justifiable time expenditure, even within the framework of a qualitative research design. Once an automatic analysis procedure has been set up, it only takes a few minutes to complete. In addition, the quantity of material to be evaluated can be scaled considerably without significant additional effort. Another major advantage of automatic analysis is its reproducibility. Further studies involving the same tools and data can be expected to produce the same results.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The results of the case study are instructive in four different ways with regard to the research background outlined in the first section and the questions raised in this broader context:

1. with regard to Universal Design for Learning as a framework that allows learners with different learning requirements to work intensively on a common topic (see Section 1.2.1).
2. in view of the emerging worldview diversity on a seemingly neutral topic (see Section 3.1).

3. with regard to the possibility of exchanging worldview concepts in the presence of the other in a safe space while learning about, from and with each other (see Section 1.2.3).
4. in view of the importance of a Reflective Inclusion approach in teacher education (see Section 1.2.2).

In the following, we finally will summarize and discuss these questions against the backdrop of the study conducted.

4.1. The Universal Design for Learning as an Activating Methodological Framework in Inclusive (Worldview) Education

In view of the relatively broad theme of the project described above, "Our School of the Future", the level of profundity with which the learners have worked on this theme is remarkable. The learners not only developed a well thought-out plan for a good future school, including its architecture, equipment, pedagogical approach and function in society, they also took into account the history of the school system and the positions of important influential persons and institutions (see Section 3.1). Even though the effectiveness of the Universal Design for Learning framework in interaction with the heterogeneous learning group under investigation was not examined in an experimental manner, it can be ruled out that the learning success was spoiled by the inclusive learning environment. On the contrary, the learners succeeded in bundling the diversity of perspectives into a dense working result.

4.2. Worldview Diversity as a Standard in (Inculsive) Education

At first glance, the topic "Our School of the Future" is not necessarily dependent on religious, political or other worldviews. In this sense, it seems to leave room for—e.g., with regard to design and equipment—seemingly neutral concepts that may be discussed controversially in questions of taste, but not in questions of worldview. The results of the learning project show that learners can hardly avoid worldview questions when topics are discussed genuinely. Be it the question of general-, labor market-, or personality-oriented education, the question of the roles of the state and the church in education, the question of the purpose of work in life, the question of benefits and burdens of new technologies or even the question of how the ideal school building and its surroundings are to be designed—none of these questions can be seen as naive (see Section 3.1). The (automatic) intertextual analysis showed that the learners' school design concepts obviously incorporate ideas that refer to religious paradise visions of Christianity and Islam (see Section 3.2). These observations prove van der Kooij's thesis that education considering rules, values, morals, or politics in the broadest sense cannot be viewed in an ideologically neutral way [14]. In the context of a secularized society these values can either lead to conflicts and exclusion or to peaceful and enriching encounters empowered by inclusive worldview education.

The results indicate that worldview diversity certainly has an influence on teaching in inclusive classrooms. A heterogeneous learning group brings heterogeneous personal worldviews with it, referring to parts of larger overarching organized worldviews. Social, religious and cultural backgrounds of both teachers and learners unconsciously influence the subterranean learning process and must be taken into consideration when planning and conducting lessons.

4.3. Inclusive Worldview Education as a Safe Space for Learning in the Presence of the Other

If we, like van der Kooij [14], assume worldview diversity as the standard case, the question arises what a discourse about worldview questions should look like in inclusive education and how it can be ensured to be objective and to let each position come into its own. There is no doubt that worldview diversity has an influence on teaching togetherness and that teachers should be aware of this.

This is where the concept of Learning in the Presence of the Other (see Section 1.2.3) comes into play. If a safe space can be created in learning environments that are sensitive to worldview diversity, inclusive worldview education can help to resolve conflicts between students, parents or teachers. In doing so, the three perspectives or intensities of worldview learning must be taken into account, which we would like to address again at this point [3]: If there are no starting points for a constructive

transformation, differences can at least be imparted objectively in the mode of "learning about". The communication of the different worldviews at eye level allows a "learning from" process in the course of which personal and foreign world views can be related to one another. Finally, in an atmosphere of mutual trust, learners can dare to mutually immerse themselves in the worlds of faith and identity of the respective other, a "learning in/through". In a sincere encounter of this kind, harmonized post-identitarian worldviews can emerge that facilitate togetherness as well as common action-guiding beliefs and values [11].

As we have seen in the case study, learners were able to harmonize their worldviews in the investigated environment, focusing on common values without giving up their own points of view. In their common vision of the future they achieved a sustainable common position with regard to seeming opposites such as technology vs. nature, labor market vs. personality orientation of education, paradise concepts of the Bible vs. the Quran (see Section 3.2). This can be a basis for good encounters between different cultures and religions both in school and everyday life.

4.4. Reflective Inclusion as a Desideratum for Teacher Education

Finally, the above perspectives (see Sections 4.1–4.3) make it apparent that dealing with worldview diversity leads to complex teaching/learning situations for which teachers must be adequately prepared. In particular, they should be trained to distinguish between personal and organized worldviews. As we have seen, apparently incompatible worldviews such as those of Islam and Christianity do not necessarily have to contradict each other at the level of the derived personalized worldviews. For example, the ideas of paradise introduced by the different learners were not controversial (see Section 3.2).

In order to gain further insights in the field of Reflective Inclusion, the data collected at Münsterlandschule (see Section 2) were discussed as part of a university course on worldview diversity for students of the teaching profession in the winter semester 2016/2017. Our aim was to immediately implement the empirical findings of the abovementioned study (see Section 3) in teacher education at university. The students sifted through the material and discussed their expectations and observations. On the basis of an initial evaluation of this group discussion, the following key points for dealing with worldview diversity in the context of teacher education can be formulated.

Teachers should be able to understand which worldviews expressed by learners are actually part of organized worldviews and which are individual readings of the learners. For example, disruptions coming from a learner who observes fasting rules for religious reasons cannot be generalized and attributed to all learners with the same religion. It is quite conceivable that different learners interpret orthopraxy in varying degrees of rigor. In the sense of the concept of Reflective Inclusion (see Section 1.2.2) a positive knowledge of organized worldviews protects teachers from forming prejudices against certain political or religious groups. In this sense, (self-)reflection is a crucial dimension of the professional work of teachers, especially in the context of inclusive diversity-sensitive education. To this end, embedding reflective inclusion in teacher education is an important requirement, if we want the aforementioned methods and didactics to work.

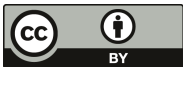
Author Contributions: J.B. and T.B. conceived and designed the experiments; T.B. performed the experiments; J.B. and T.B. analyzed the data; J.B. contributed reagents and materials, T.B. the analysis tools; J.B. and T.B. wrote the paper.

Funding: This study was conducted as part of the project "Dortmunder Profil für inklusionorientierte Lehrer/-innenbildung DoProfiL" (Dortmund Profile for Inclusion-Oriented Teacher Education). The Ministry of Education and Research of the Federal Republic of Germany is supporting this project as part of the "Qualitätsoffensive Lehrerbildung" (Quality Offensive for Teacher Education).

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

1. Bartz, J. *Jugendpastoral auf neuen Wegen: Der XXVIII. Weltjugendtag in Rio de Janeiro und sein Beitrag für die Kirche vor Ort*; LIT Verlag: Münster, Germany, 2017.
2. Roebben, B. Einander in der Fremdheit begegnen. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer Spiritual Learning Community. In *Anerkennung in religiösen Bildungsprozessen. Interdisziplinäre Perspektiven. Diskursschrift für Martin Jäggle*; Krobath, T., Lehner-Hartmann, A., Polak, R., Eds.; V&R Unipress: Wien, Austria, 2013; pp. 149–164.
3. Roebben, B. Living and Learning in the Presence of the Other. Defining Religious Education Inclusively. *Int. J. Inclusive Educ.* **2012**, *16*, 1175–1187. [CrossRef]
4. Bakker, C.; Montessori, N.M. *Complexity in Education. From Horror to Passion*; Sense Publishers: Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 2016.
5. Rose, D.H.; Meyer, A. *Teaching Every Student in the Digital Age: Universal Design for Learning*; Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development: Alexandria, Virginia, 2002.
6. Budde, J.; Hummrich, M. Reflexive Inklusion. Zeitschrift Für Inklusion. 2014. Available online: https://www.inklusion-online.net/index.php/inklusion-online/article/view/193 (accessed on 15 July 2018).
7. Hinz, A. Von der Integration zur Inklusion—terminologisches Spiel oder konzeptionelle Weiterent-wicklung? *Zeitschrift für Heilpädagogik* **2002**, *53*, 354–361.
8. Grosche, M. Was ist Inklusion? Ein Diskussions- und Positionsartikel zur Definition von Inklusion aus Sicht der empirischen Bildungsforschung. In *Inklusion von Schülerinnen und Schülern mit sonderpädagogischem Förderbedarf in Schulleistungserhebungen*; Kuhl, P., Stanat, P., Lütje-Klose, B., Gresch, C., Pant, H., Prenzel, M., Eds.; Springer VS: Wiesbaden, Germany, 2015; pp. 17–39.
9. Mace, G.; Hardie, J.; Place, J.P. *Accessible Environments: Toward Universal Design*; The Center for Universal Design: Raleigh, NC, USA, 1996.
10. Dannenbeck, C.; Dorrance, C. Inklusion als Perspektive (Sozial)pädagogischen Handelns—Eine Kritik der Entpolitisierung des Inklusionsgedankens. Zeitschrift für Inklusion. 2009. Available online: http://bidok.uibk.ac.at/library/inkl-02-09-dannenbeck-inklusion.html (accessed on 15 July 2018).
11. Bartz, J.; Delucchi Danhier, R.; Mertins, B.; Schüppel, K.; Welzel, B.; Zimenkova, T. Auf dem Weg zur Neuverortung: Sprache, Objektkultur und Religion im transkulturellen Deutschland. In *Dortmunder Profil für inklusionsorientierte Lehrerinnen- und Lehrerbildung*; Hußmann, S., Welzel, B., Eds.; Waxmann: Münster, Germany, 2018; pp. 179–194.
12. Roebben, B. *Schulen für das Leben. Eine kleine Didaktik der Hoffnung*; Calwer Verlag: Stuttgart, Germany, 2016.
13. Roebben, B. *Religionspädagogik der Hoffnung: Grundlinien Religiöser Bildung in der Spätmoderne*; LIT Verlag: Münster, Germany, 2011.
14. Van der Kooij, J.C. Worldview and Moral Education: On Conceptual Clarity and Consistency in Use. Ph.D. Thesis, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 14 November 2016.
15. Meyring, P. *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse: Grundlagen und Techniken*; Beltz: Weinheim, Germany, 2010.
16. Tuggener, D. Incremental Coreference Resolution for German. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland, 13 July 2016.
17. Blei, D.M.; Ng, A.Y.; Jordan, M.I. Latent Dirichlet Allocation. *J. Mach. Learn. Res.* **2003**, *3*, 993–1022.
18. Hoffmann, L. *Deutsche Grammatik. Grundlagen für Lehrerausbildung, Schule, Deutsch als Zweitsprache und Deutsch als Fremdsprache*; Erich Schmidt Verlag: Berlin, Germany, 2016.
19. Bubenhofer, N.; Müller, N.; Scharloth, J. Narrative Muster und Diskursanalyse: Ein datengeleiteter Ansatz. *Zeitschrift für Semiotik* **2013**, *35*, 419–444.



education sciences

MDPI

Article

Secularized and Multi-Religious Classroom Practice-Discourses and Interactions

Karin Kittelmann Flensner

Department of Social and Behavioural Studies, University West, S-461 86 Trollhättan, Sweden; karin.kittelmann-flensner@hv.se

Received: 28 June 2018; Accepted: 19 July 2018; Published: 7 August 2018

Abstract: Secularization and diversity are two social features that characterize the contemporary world. The rhetoric of the public debate in a number of countries has become increasingly polarized and characterized by a "we" and "them" thinking that relates a national "we" to a specific religion. This occurs in part as a reaction to the changes in national monocultural paradigms as most communities today are characterized by pluralism regarding lifestyles, religion, language and geographical background. Thus, secularization processes are ongoing while many countries, not least Sweden, are becoming increasingly pluralistic and multi-religious. The school and classrooms are a mirror of the communities they are a part of. The aim of the article is to explore how secularization and increasing pluralism finds expression and interact in the classroom practice of Religious Education. The analysis is based on ethnographic data from classroom observations of Religious Education in four different Swedish upper secondary schools. The results indicate that secularism and non-religious positions are considered a neutral and objective position and that secularism is used as a way to maneuver diversity in the classroom which affects the possibilities of dialogue and understanding.

Keywords: religious education; secularization; pluralism; non-confessional; classroom observation; ethnography

1. Introduction

Today, public debates about religion, nation, belonging and multiculturalism are characterized by highly polarized tones. In recent years, right-wing and nationalist parties have, in many countries, grown in influence and the rhetoric in the public debate is in many ways characterized by a "we" and "them" thinking that relates a national "we" to a specific religion. This situation occurs given mono-cultural paradigm change and pluralism in opinions, lifestyles, worldviews and linguistic, geographic and cultural backgrounds that persists in most countries. Factors that used to function as unifying on a national level and advocating shared narratives—such as religion, view of national history, educational practices and cultural institutions—have today been replaced by a variety of belongings and narratives. Commercial actors and social media have substituted national radio and television that use to be institutions spreading shared accounts. Narratives now dominating many western countries have an individualistic approach and often relate to individuals' physical health and wellbeing. This situation applies to many countries, also Sweden. Sweden can be described as one of the most secularized countries in the world [1–3]. The public conversation in Sweden is often characterized by a strong religion-critical discourse and there is simultaneously an increase in ethnic, religious and cultural diversity there. As a result, Sweden is a country that can be described as both secular and multi-religious [4].

Schools are part of society and what happens in society also affects classrooms. Therefore, both secularization and increased diversity characterize Swedish classroom practices. Nilsson [5] used the term "un-generalizable classroom" to draw attention to the multitude of experiences and

backgrounds that today are taken as facts in Swedish schools. Teaching guidelines also state that "Teachers should: take as the starting point for each individual student's needs, circumstances, experiences and thinking" [6]. This statement means that teachers need to relate to students' perceptions and experiences in the classroom both to do justice to person's uniqueness but also to adjust the teaching to learning capabilities/inabilities of the learner. In Sweden, Religious Education is a compulsory subject both in elementary school and in upper secondary school. On average, the pupils have 45 min of Religious Education a week in elementary school and 60 min during one year at upper secondary school. The subject is non-confessional and non-denominational and all students are taught together in the same classroom regardless of their religious affiliation or lack thereof. Religious Education (henceforward RE) addresses world religions, major non-religious worldviews and ethics. The overall aim of the subject is shown by this quotation:

Teaching in the subject of religion should aim at helping students broaden, deepen and develop knowledge of religions, outlooks on life and ethical standpoints and where applicable different interpretations of these. [...] Teaching should take as its starting point a view of society characterized by openness regarding lifestyle, outlooks on life, differences between people and also give students the opportunity to develop a preparedness for understanding and living in a society characterized by diversity [7].

A challenge in this context is that there can be students with widely different experiences of religion and religious practices in the same classroom. Some identify with various religious traditions and others completely lack the kind of experiences and language for what it possibly could mean to be part of a religious tradition. Some classrooms are characterized by a wide variety of religious as well as non-religious worldviews. However, because Swedish society is highly segregated there are also classrooms characterized by a lack of diversity. Regardless of the experiences, opinions and beliefs of the students in a specific classroom, the teaching needs to prepare them to live in a society characterized by diversity. In classroom observations, it appears that a secularist, highly critical discourse dominates articulations about religion and religions in RE [8]. Studies have also shown that students with religious positions often find that RE contributes to the "othering" of religious believers [9,10]. At the same time, there are other Swedish classrooms in which "everyone" is a believer and see themselves as belonging to various religious traditions. In those contexts, a significant proportion of the students have a migration background and in the classroom practice, the conversation simultaneously relates to a secular majority community [11].

This article aims to analyze how secularization and different aspects of pluralism are articulated and interrelated in the classroom practice of RE.

1.1. Religious Education in Sweden

A challenge when speaking about the subject of RE in international contexts is that it refers to a school subject with a wide variety of goals and objectives. Different countries have found different ways of dealing with socially religious diversity in schools [12]. The empirical examples in this article are taken from a Swedish context. Therefore, a brief description of the subject's background and design in Sweden are provided. The Swedish subject of RE has its roots in confessional Christian RE. Since the 16th century, Sweden had a Lutheran state church. In school, students were taught the "pure evangelical Lutheran doctrine". In the 1800s, major social transformations occurred due to industrialization, urbanization and increasing religious diversity. In 1858, it became permissible to leave the Swedish church and several new free churches arose. Society in this sense became more diverse. The emerging labor movement and the free-church movement were both, for various reasons, critical to the fact that teaching about religion offered at publicly funded schools was strongly linked to baptismal teaching and confirmation in the Church of Sweden. The labor movement and the free-churches threatened to start their own schools and in 1919 the Swedish parliament chose to prioritize school as a unifying factor and reduce RE's emphasis on preparation for catechism. The subject of RE was revised to a more general Christian orientation with a strong emphasis on

ethics and personality development. In the 40's and 50's, an intense debate was held about beliefs and knowledge. In the 1960s, an "objectivity requirement" was introduced in RE.

Christian Religious Education must be conducted in a way that does not violate the individual's right to freedom of thought and belief. Therefore, instruction should be objective in the sense that it renders factual knowledge about the meaning and content of different creeds, without authoritatively seeking to influence pupils to include some opinion [13].

It stated that the subject would not try to influence students to adopt one or another life view. During this period, the subject changed its name to Knowledge about Religions [religionskunskap] [14]. The development of RE in Sweden can be described as initially teaching and learning in religion to teaching and learning from religion to now mainly be teaching and learning about religion [15]. Willaime [16] argued that the development of Swedish RE could be viewed as an example of secularization. He noted that the construction and development of the subject also might have contributed to the secularization of society.

1.2. Secularization

Sweden is often referred to as "the world's most secularized country", and this description is one that Swedes themselves often appreciate [1,2,17]. This narrative includes stories of the nation's development from being a Lutheran country with one king and one people united in one faith to a democratic society, free from religious oppression and characterized by strong individualism. This statement gives, of course, a simplified and partially incorrect picture but it works as a narrative about modern secularized Sweden that everybody has to relate to.

The concept of secularization attempts to describe a process in which religion is becoming less important for cultures, societies, institutions and individuals. One way of defining secularization is to view it as a differentiation process. Dobbelaire [18] divided secularization into three levels: social, organizational/institutional and individual. Secularization at the social level means that areas previously controlled by the church are instead controlled by a secular state. The organizational/institutional level concerns areas such as education, healthcare and social services and these became the state's responsibility. In other words, the emergence of the welfare state where the state stands as a guarantor for citizens' security is viewed as a contributing factor to secularization. This could be seen as an explanation why secularization is so apparent in Scandinavia in general and Sweden in particular—these countries have a strong secular state and a well-developed welfare system. At the individual level religion becomes less important for meaning-making and life-orientation. Cassanova [19] takes the same line and describes secularization as a process where secular institutions increasingly take over previously religiously dominated areas and norms, a reduction of religious beliefs and religiously motivated actions and a shift of religion from the public sphere to the private. Secularization decreases the influence of religious thinking, religious practices and religious institutions in society at large. Religion and politics are separated and scientific knowledge takes over as the valid knowledge [20]. Others, such as Taylor [21] emphasize the importance of pluralism for secularization. Pluralism in this context refers to differences in backgrounds, experiences and opinions in various contexts. The concept is sometimes used normatively and therefore associated with positive values attributed to religious diversity [22,23]. Thalén [24] maintained that plurality based on enlightenment ideas could enhance the dichotomization of religious-non-religious as identity markers where the inner variation is rendered invisible. These kinds of absolute differences are problematic in classrooms in the contemporary pluralistic world. In this article, pluralism is used descriptively to refer to different experiences, views and worldviews, religious as well as non-religious, coexisting within society and the classrooms.

Berger [25] coined the expression "the sacred canopy". This phrase refers to the meaning system that protects individuals regarding providing context and meaning; it is especially activated in life crises when the questions about the meaning and purpose of life are put to the forefront. How is this kind of opinion system preserved? Berger [25] and Taylor [21] emphasized that modern society

is characterized by competing meaning systems. If different actors claim to be true, some must be wrong. Or is everybody wrong? One idea that might occur in this situation is that there might be no ultimate truth. This process is dialectical; pluralism undermines the reasonableness of the monopolistic religious movement's claim to possess the only truth because more than one way of thinking suddenly exists. Taylor stated: "The shift to secularity in this sense consists, among other things, of a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others and frequently not the easiest to embrace" [21] (p. 3). These options then compete with the old institutions and further reduce their credibility. Secularization becomes a consequence of the plurality of possible worldviews. Because people in modern society have access to so much information and the ability to travel and meet people with different backgrounds, pluralism is an inevitable consequence. It becomes a key concept for understanding secularization and also what is perceived as religion. Another aspect of pluralism related to secularization is how new generations relate to traditions, practices and narratives used by previous generations to create meaning. A consequence of modernity is that traditions (religious and other) are not perceived as authoritative either in terms of patterns of action or beliefs or as a source of knowledge for their own existence. Hervieu-Léger [26] described traditions as a reference to a "chain of belief" and that a tradition consists of identification with these shared narratives, interpretations and practices that have both an individual a collective and a historical dimension. She believes that fragmentation, individualization and subjectivation mean that individuals and groups, to a much lesser extent, have access to a common language for this kind of phenomenon. Ultimately, the individual is deprived of access to the collective memories related to religion and tradition that previous generations were part of and also maintained. In this context, religion is defined as a "chain of memory", and secularization means that this chain is fragmented [26].

1.3. Research on Secularization, Pluralism and Youth

Research that focuses on how young people in Sweden relate to religiosity and secularization is consistent with the picture of Sweden as a secular country noted above. In quantitative studies, Western youth generally does not participate in religious practices to a large extent [27–29]. Although there are major variations within the group of young people both within and between different national contexts, it is clear that for a significant proportion of young people religion is neither particularly cool nor important [30,31]. What matters to many young people is instead family, friends and close relationships. However, the reality is always complex and many times contradictory, especially when it comes to religion. Knauth, Jozsa, Bertram-Troost and Ipgrave [32] found that while religion appeared to be less socially important, participation of young people in certain groups such as Pentecostal movements in England and other parts of the world was increasing. It also appears that religion is becoming more and more privatized; one can embrace perceptions usually attributed to a religious worldview without being part of traditionally organized communities. "Believing without belonging" [33] still seems to be characteristic of younger generations. However, many people say that they want to learn more about religion [34]. In Sweden, both quantitative and qualitative studies have put forth a view of religion and religiosity strongly characterized by individualism and privatization [35–39].

Parallel with the fact that religion as a phenomenon and cohesive factor changes and decreases in significance, pluralism in society increases regarding religious and other traditions, worldviews and lifestyles. In international research reviews, much of the RE research, both in confessional and non-confessional RE, focuses on various aspects of a pluralistic society [8,40,41]. There have also been a large number of studies highlighting different degrees of "othering of the religious" in school contexts [9,14,42–47]. Social processes such as globalization, increased migration and mobility, also means that the idea of nation and nationality is challenged and renegotiated. Sometimes notions of religion are a component of the national identity in terms of myths, metaphors and symbols. The relationship between nation, nationalism and religion is complex and can be seen in the light of the public debate on notions of nationality, homogeneity and monoculturalism [48]. Research draws

attention to the complex relationships between minority and majority groups, how these relationships are negotiated by young people and how they shape their identity in relation to their ethnic and religious family background and a secular majority society [49–52]. The changing religious landscape creates the need for a new language to describe what is normally termed "religious", "non-religious", and "secular" [17,53,54].

1.4. Secularization and Pluralism in the Swedish Context

As noted above, secularization is widespread in Sweden in several respects. In the sense of separation between public state-governed and religious institutions, Swedish law states that the state should be religiously neutral but also a guarantor of freedom of religion. An individual's right to freely encompass and practice religious or non-religious worldviews individually and together with others is part of the Swedish constitution. Furthermore, individuals possess the right not to be subjected to religious influence. Discrimination because of religious belonging is prohibited. Sweden no longer has a state church and the state should according to the law remain neutral in religious matters. Institutions such as health care and education are regulated by law and must be non-confessional and non-discriminatory. Faith schools in which there may be voluntary confessional elements outside the classroom are allowed but only 1% of children in Sweden attend a faith school and their teaching follows the same curriculum as other schools run by the municipality. This separation between a secular state and individuals' private life has strong support in society and religion is perceived as a private matter. On occasions when religion becomes visible in the public sphere (e.g., Muslim prayer calls, ending the school year in the church or when people for religious reasons do not wish to be greeted by hand), heated discussions arise about the boundaries of freedom of religion.

Even regarding the importance of religion to people's identities and perceptions of life, Sweden can be described as a country in which secularization is widespread. According to international surveys, there are relatively few people in Sweden who state that they embrace a religious worldview. In the aftermath of the Second World War, it became prohibited to register citizens' religious affiliation. However, different studies have attempted to chart how Swedes look at religion and religious identity. The proportion of atheists or non-believers is over 55% in Sweden; Europeans, on average, are characterized by a religious identity in 77% of cases [55]. Other studies have shown that 45% of people in Sweden believe in God, 22% pray to God at least once every three months and 12% participate in a service or religious meeting at least once a quarter [56]. Many people in Sweden are safe in their non-religious identity and perceive this identity to be part of a modern, liberal and tolerant attitude. Nevertheless, at the same time, 59% of the population are registered members of the Church of Sweden and nearly 800,000 people (as of 2015) were registered members of other religious communities receiving state support. Of these, nearly 320,000 people were members in various free churches, 55,000 in different Lutheran churches, more than 110,000 in the Catholic church, 140,000 in different Eastern Orthodox Churches and 140,000 were members of different Muslim groups [57]. These numbers are based on registered membership, which means that there are far more individuals visiting mosques and churches who are not included in these statistics. The communities that are growing fall mainly in Eastern Orthodox Churches, the Catholic Church and various Muslim groups. If these statistics are the basis for measuring the degree of secularization in Sweden, the image of "the world's most secularized country" becomes more complex. Moreover, if one considers studies that investigated interest in spirituality in more comprehensive terms or people who were engaged in movements that can be referred to as New Age, the image is further complicated.

There is a notion that Sweden historically has been ethnically, linguistically and religiously a homogeneous society. This myth is easy to deconstruct because Sweden, like most countries, always has had a diverse population. Today, five national minorities are recognized: Samis, Tornedalers, Swedish Finns, Roma and Jews, all of which have a long history in Sweden [58]. However, population heterogeneity increased in recent decades as a consequence of globalization and increased migration [59]. Increased immigration has also led to increased religious diversity in

Swedish society [57]. In population statistics, "foreign background" is defined as a person born in another country or having two parents born in another country. Using this definition, 24.1% of the Swedish population in 2017 has a foreign background [59] but people with foreign backgrounds are not evenly distributed throughout the country. In some municipalities, more than 50% of people foreign backgrounds; most municipalities have about 10–20% inhabitants with this background of such people [60]. In many municipalities, segregation in housing is high and socially and economically disadvantaged groups dominate in some areas where unemployment and long-term unemployment are higher and average income levels and education levels are lower, which further deepens the segregation. The schools' compensatory mandate to equalize these kinds of differences is accordingly more critical but evaluations show that the equivalence in quality between schools is declining and that this se has been widening in recent decades [61].

These are some ways to describe and highlight the increased diversity that characterizes Swedish society. These social processes mean that it is difficult to talk about what a "Swedish classroom" looks like because the variation is abundant. In some classrooms, it is the norm to have a religious identity while simultaneously relating to the secular majority outside the classroom. In other classrooms, the majority relate to what they perceive to be the majority perception in Sweden, namely a secular, at many times an atheist position. In these classrooms, religion is a private matter that is not shared with classmates. And in most classrooms, there is an ongoing conversation between individuals with a multitude of opinions and experiences. Nilsson [5] described these various conditions for teaching about religion and religions in terms of "the un-generalizable classroom" and "the unpredictable classroom", which is a relatable description of reality for many RE-teachers.

2. Materials and Methods

This work is based on classroom observations from two different research projects. The first research project consists of empirical material of participatory observations of RE classes at three Swedish upper secondary schools gathered in 2011–2012. A re-analysis [62] based on the purposes of this article have been conducted. To nuance and problematize the image that emerged in this empirical material, an analysis of data from an ongoing research project was also included. This research project focuses on how global religious conflicts are handled in teaching; the empirical material used in this article consists of participatory observations and interviews conducted in 2017 with teachers and students from a school with a high proportion of students with a migrant background based on the definition provided above. The age of the students in both research projects are 16–19 years old.

The participant classrooms observations in the research projects take an ethnographic approach [63]. In the first study, the teaching of 13 educated RE teachers of 24 different classes was followed for 125 lessons at both vocational programs and programs preparatory for higher education. The four schools were larger municipal schools with 1100–1700 students, one of which was near a larger city (School 1), one was in the countryside (School 2) and one was in a medium-sized Swedish city (School 3). School 4 was also situated near a large city but in an area that can be described as socially vulnerable. There are no statistics available pertaining to the pupils' ethnic or religious backgrounds at the individual schools. However, because this article focuses on various aspects of diversity, the schools will be described based on the available information about the background of the students. The school adjacent to the larger city (School 1) was a fairly popular school and had relatively high grades. Available statistics reveal that 14% of the students had foreign backgrounds (i.e., born in another country or having two parents born in another country) and that 66% of pupils had parents who were counted as being highly educated with post-secondary education. In the rural school (School 2), 11% of pupils had foreign backgrounds and 47% had a secondary education. At the school in the medium-sized Swedish city (School 3), 28% students had a foreign background and 42% had highly educated parents this academic year. In the current research project, the school (School 4) had 91% foreign-background students; only 21% of students had parents with a post-secondary education.

Another measure that could be an indicator of diversity is how many students were entitled to native language education. An interesting difference between schools 1 and 3 was how the staff talked about their school as being "ethnically homogeneous" or "multicultural". On the first day of observations at School 1, one of the native language teachers came in and spoke with the students who studied Persian. I noted that five students in that class were eligible for native language education (i.e., 20% of the students). However, these students were high performing and had parents with high educational backgrounds; they were not perceived as immigrants when the teacher spoke about the student group. At School 3, the situation was the opposite. The school was described as a multicultural school by the staff but the proportion of students entitled to native language was only slightly higher, 20–30%. However, the proportion of students with parents with a post-secondary education at this school was significantly lower, which I interpreted as the pupils' class background playing a role in how the teachers perceived the students' ethnicity. At School 4, the school was noted as being a multicultural school; it was assumed that "everyone" had an immigrant background. It is apparent from the statistics that students at School 4 also came from families with low educational backgrounds. However, this fact was not discussed.

2.1. Analysis

During the lessons, full-class discussions were recorded along with discussions in smaller groups. These recordings were transcribed verbatim. In the analyses, the classroom practice and what was said in the classroom were the focus rather than who said what or how the interaction between students or between students and teachers appeared. The classroom practice and articulations of students and teachers are considered to be a discursive practice [64]. The transcribed observations have been analyzed using a discourse analytical approach [65,66] focusing on articulations concerning secularity and pluralism. Secularity and non-religious positions emerged as a hegemonic discourse when talking about religion. However, the reality is complex and contradictory and in the analyses of the empirical material discourses that challenged the hegemonic secular discourse also was found. For example, one of the noticeable discourses of religion were articulations of spirituality and to believe in "something". This way of speaking partly defied the secular discourse but partly enhanced it, as this individualistic approach to religion was compatible with a secularist view of religion as a private matter. Discourses of spirituality will however not be elaborated on in this article as the aim is to explore how secularization and different aspects of pluralism are articulated and interrelated in the classroom practice of RE. Nationalistic discourses including articulations of Sweden as a Christian country will be touched upon in relation to pluralism.

2.2. Ethical Consideration

Participant observation has been conducted in line with the ethical guidelines outlined by The Swedish Research Council [67]. The informants have received information about the study's design and purpose, that their participation is voluntarily and that they had the right to withdraw their participation at any time, that their integrity will be treated with confidentiality and how study will be used, that is utilization requirement. All research balances between respect for individuals' privacy, individual protection requirement and the benefits society may have of the research [67].

3. Results

The classroom observations were analyzed regarding how secularization and different aspects of pluralism were articulated and interrelated in the classroom practice of RE.

3.1. Discourses of Secularism

Discourses of secularism included articulations of what "we" in Sweden believe, religion as something belonging to history, the nonreligious as neutral and notions of individualism.

3.1.1. "We" in Sweden Are Secular

During the classroom observations, it was clear that a non-religious and at many times a secularist attitude dominated the articulations about religion and religions. The following quote is a typical description of how religiosity related to secularity:

> Teacher: We're so ENORMOUSLY secularized in Sweden. Religion has no place in most people's lives in any way. We may go to church once a year because there's some kid getting baptized or someone dies or something like that. And then we don't go there. That's pretty much the religiosity we have (School 2).

It was stated that "we" in Sweden are secular and that religion is of very little importance to Swedish people. Specific linguistic expressions such as "we" were used to create a common image of religiosity in Sweden. This pattern also contributes to constructing secularity as normal and constructing Sweden as a secular country in which most people have no relation to religious worldviews or practices. Through these kinds of articulations, the diversity of views is made invisible.

In all of the classrooms at all of the schools, there were students who identified with various religious traditions. In private conversations, the students noted that they were active in the Church of Sweden, the Uniting Church in Sweden, the Pentecostal Church, the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church; they described themselves as following Jehovah Witness, Hindu, Buddhist, Shia and Sunni traditions. Students with a religious position were in most cases silent during whole-class discussions concerning religion, maybe partly due to the minority-majority position. At Schools 1 and 2, only once did a student in a whole-class discussion describe herself as Christian and provide commentary based on this personal perspective. Several students in the vocational programs who identified as Muslims expressed their position to the whole class. In that case, about one third of the students in the specific class articulated a Muslim position. At school 4, on the other hand, it was a given that the majority had a religious positioning. One of the students asked straight out in the class: "But isn't everyone here Muslim?" In the whole-class discussion, it was articulated that 22 of the students posed themselves as Muslims, one as Coptic Christian and one as Syrian Orthodox. It appears clear that the backgrounds of the students and the majority relation held in the classroom affected articulations and positions. Even in the classroom at school 4, the concept of secularization was raised and discussed:

> Teacher: In some families, there are patriarchal structures. Then there are also is also a structure where you are much more gender-equal, depending on how liberal you are. Right? And how secular you are. Secular. Do you recognize these words again?
>
> Student 1: Yes.
>
> Student 2: Secular...
>
> Teacher: What does this word mean then, secularized, or secular? Does anyone know what that means? If I am secularized, I am are very fundamentalist and I follow everything that is said and I live very much according to my book? Or are you more modern, do you think?
>
> Student 1: You are modern indeed.
>
> Teacher: Yes. Right? And Sweden is usually a secular country. Right? You can interpret a bit as you wish. You can choose how much practicing you should be. Not everyone lives secularly in Sweden. But overall, Sweden is a very secular country compared with other countries. And the view on gender equality that exists in Sweden is that you should earn your own money, you should share the domestic work at home, it is very unique. Many other countries, religions, cultures, have a traditional division, with clear gender roles, clear rules for women and men (School 4).

Secularization was constructed as opposed to (religious) fundamentalism but foremost secularization was linked to modernity and this linking was very common in all classrooms. In this specific case, the discussion arose when the students were talking about different views of

gender-equality related to religions. One interesting feature in this classroom (at School 4) compared with the other classrooms was that the majority articulated a religious position. It might be that there were students with non-religious worldviews who did not express this nonreligious position in the classroom. But it was simultaneously stressed that "Sweden" is a secular country and the discussions often included a minority perspective on various topics. Sweden was articulated as being a geographical area or a nation among others. The expression "we in Sweden" never occurred in this classroom.

3.1.2. A "Chronocentric" Worldview

Articulations that can be referred to as secularistic occurred in all classrooms but in various ways. This way of speaking was strongly influenced by a "chronocentric" view of history, which meant that we now live in the best and most enlightened of all ages. Religion was attributed to a historical remnant that possibly filled a function in the past. However, as modern enlightened people we now manage without religion, the reasoning went. The following quote is a typical example of this kind of reasoning:

> Student: In the past, in the eighteenth century or so, or I think ... religion seeks power. One guesses about what has happened and that way they got power over people who didn't know very much. That's how it is in Islam ... so we think that it's so today as well. It's still like that. But now we're secularized and so we don't need religion in that way. Religion told us what to do, how we should live but there's no need for that anymore (School 1).

This student associated religion with the power and manipulation of people with less knowledge. It is interesting and quite typical that this student, who positioned himself as ethnically Swedish with "no religion", explicitly mentions Islam as an example of this kind of outdated view of life. In the past, people engaged in all sorts of strange things like different types of cruel bodily punishments, corporal punishment of children and medical treatments based on unscientific beliefs. Religion was often associated with these kinds of superstitions and delusions that modern enlightened people have seen through. Believers could, therefore, be perceived as "cheated", and students often mentioned ignorance or oppression as explanations for the existence of religion in different contexts.

3.1.3. The Non-Religious as Neutral

When speaking about religion, a non-religious, often explicit atheist position was articulated as a neutral and objective stance. Posing oneself as non-religious or atheist in classroom discussions was far more common both among teachers and students than positioning oneself as religious:

> Student 1: Is there anybody here that is a believer?
>
> Student 2: I think that . . .
>
> Student 3: I'm not like, I'm not a believer. I don't know. I haven't, like, had the energy yet to think about that
>
> Student 4: I'm an atheist!
>
> Student 1: My parents are, like, super-non-Christian, like, totally extreme. So, for me, it's like this: it's not very nice to say this but I feel this way—the Christians, it's unintelligent. I really think so! (School 1)

In this quote, religiosity was associated with unintelligence; the student who spoke here described herself an ethnically Swedish and positioned herself as an atheist. Taking an atheist position was not something that was questioned or queried. Unlike the (few) who posed as believers, students and teachers who described themselves as atheists were never asked questions about how they looked at life or what made them choose this way of life. At School 1, 2 and 3, students with a religious position expressed in private conversations that they many times felt questioned when religious issues were

discussed and that they in these discussions were given opinions that they did not themselves embrace. It could be someone who asked how they could believe in "an old man on a cloud", that God created the earth in 6 days, or if they defended crusades, the IS or the Taliban. Questions about homosexuality and abortion were other areas where non-religious classmates expected believers to take a conservative position, which was not always the case. This type of onsets, sometimes concerning matters where students with a religious identity themselves were not sure about their opinion, contributed to that these students often held a low profile concerning their religious identity in the classrooms.

When talking about religion, speakers often made negations by denoting what religion was not associated with. For example: making individual choices, individualism and neutrality in binary opposites. Therefore, the speech of religion also contributed to defining a secular life view and worldview. Many students articulated a non-religious position as being neutral and objective; a religious position that was perceived to be biased.

> Student 1: Secular? It's non-religious.
>
> Student 2: Non-religious?
>
> Student 1: Yes.
>
> Student 2: But must it have to do with religion? Could it not be that it's optional, not optional but...
>
> Student 3: I wrote objective too . . .
>
> Student 1: Like, secular, I think that's a strange word, but, like, multi-dimensional, that it should not be just one focus on something. And when it comes to religion, one should be allowed to have different religions in school.
>
> Student 3: I have no idea what secular is. I thought it said secondary.
>
> Teacher: They sometimes say that Sweden is secular.
>
> Student 1: Well, yes, I understand vaguely what it means but I can't define the word.
>
> Student 3: Non-religious, objective, I've written. That works, right?
>
> Teacher: Yes, or, a little like this—that religion doesn't matter so much in society, so differentiating between religion and . . .
>
> Student 1: Yes, objective is a good word. (School 1)

The students were given a task of defining different concepts and it was clear that the students did not truly understand what the term "secular" meant. They associated the notion of words such as "freedom of choice", "objective", and "non-religious". When the teacher attempted to introduce explanations—including the role of religion in society—the students did not understand the meaning but concluded that secularization was equal to objectivity. Secularization, neutrality and objectivity were believed to be very similar in many classrooms.

> Student 2: But, as for me, I don't follow any religion but I go by what I think!
>
> Student 4: Yes.
>
> Student 2: Religions are more like people who just blurt out a load of things that you yourself don't believe in.
>
> Student 1: I'm neutral!
>
> Student 4: Exactly! (School 3)

Again, we see how neutrality is associated with a non-religious position. We also see that religious positions are constructed in opposition to individualism and making one's own individual choices. Individualism appeared in classroom conversations as an overall value.

3.1.4. Individualism

Making one's own individual choices and not being ruled or influenced by others was crucial to being perceived as a modern rational, independent individual. Individualism was also portrayed as being difficult when one was part of a collective, such as a religious group. Religion was strongly associated with blind obedience and submitting to irrational and often incomprehensible rules. Believing students were careful to emphasize that they also made conscious choices:

> Student 2: Yeah but things that religions say that you should follow. Because you belong to this
>
> Student 1: Just because it is so.
>
> Student 2: Yes, because you belong to this religion. But I don't feel like that. Sure, I'm a Muslim but I don't do ... [what] people say, what THEY want me to believe in
>
> Student 1: You decide!
>
> Student 2: Yeah! Right! (School 3)

Many students perceived that religious individuals gave up their independence and individualism and simply followed a doctrine. In teaching, it was common to list what was referred to as "religious rules", which described how believers of specific religions were expected to eat, dress, celebrate their festivals, pray and follow the instructions of religious leaders. The fact that there are an infinite variety of approaches to these kinds of rules rarely came to the forefront in conversations among religious or non-religious individuals. To do anything at all with reference to religion or God (which was often described as "made up" or "an imaginary friend") was, in principle, impossible if one wanted to appear to be an independent, individualistic Swede.

3.2. Discourses of Pluralism and/or Monoculturalism

Another premise in the classroom was that society is multicultural. Pluralism was not something that was explicitly discussed or defined. The analysis of the transcribed classroom observations revealed that pluralism was articulated in terms of a diversity of opinions. However, this situation might also create uncertainty, which could lead to an identity crisis. Thus, pluralism was stressed as a fundamental Swedish value but at the same time, notions of pluralism were sometimes constructed as opposing or challenging notions of "Swedishness".

3.2.1. Diversity of Views

An educational strategy used by many teachers was to ask the students to compare religious views within various religious traditions and compare those with their own views. In the example below, the teacher asked the students to elaborate on the thesis of Martin Luther and to think about how Martin Luther would address them he was to nail them to the door in Wittenberg today:

> Teacher: Those questions you got, are there some that you definitely can't find the answer to?
>
> Student 1: "If Luther were active today, what would his theses be about, do you think?" That nobody believes in God anymore?
>
> Teacher: What were the theses about? [Name of a student]?
>
> Student 2: But what would his theses be about if he were alive today?
>
> Teacher: Yes, that's right. But I can't help you with this. You have to figure it out yourselves.
>
> Student 2: But I don't believe in God. There's evidence that Jesus didn't create the Earth or anything. Just as an example. There's evidence of that, right?
>
> Teacher: So you're saying that his theories were about concrete things that have already been solved today now so there's nothing?
>
> Student 2: I don't know what they're all about!

> Student 3: Wasn't he like a theologian or something like that? Isn't it those who believe in the message and the ... well, religion? He based it on things like that but we don't believe that's the truth, you could say. And now we know much more about all the other religions and so. Now we know more.
>
> Teacher: Would he have had as much success today if he'd gone on to re-formulate or to reinterpret the scriptures?
>
> Student 3: No.
>
> Student 1: No.
>
> Teacher: Why not?
>
> Student 1: Much easier to believe in different things now.
>
> Teacher: Mm, there's an openness now that makes it very difficult to become an authority or be a leader today, right? And as you so rightly said, there are of course MANY different religions. And especially from here [in Sweden], we have an overview of many religions (School 2).

The students had difficulty answering, partly because they had vague presuppositions about the background to the Reformation but also because they rejected a religious worldview and stated that "There is evidence that Jesus did not create the Earth". The discussion also deals with the diversity of perceptions—one of the students states that it is "Much easier to believe in different things now". This statement can be seen as pluralism being an obvious part of existence—the teacher emphasizes Sweden as a place in which the religious diversity is significant, a situation that complicates trust in authorities.

Living in a society characterized by a diversity of perceptions, worldviews and lifestyles were articulated as a self-evident and non-questionable premise. In the following quote, questions about truth are also highlighted:

> Student: So, in the olden days, one used to be more confident, that [religion] was the only thing available. Now nobody knows what is true, that is, you can't know that it's the truth, instead, one can only speculate as to what to believe, if you believe that it's true or not (School 1).

These classroom discussions illustrate one of the primary features of secularization according to Taylor [21], namely that a diversity of views in itself contributes to the secularization process.

3.2.2. Encounter with "The Other"

The student who spoke in the section above states that diversity leads to uncertainty—what should you believe in and what is true? Another student emphasized migration as a factor contributing to a religious identity crisis:

> Student 1: We in Western Europe have lost more and more of our religion. And then some people come along [through migration] who might have a stronger faith than we do in many cases. Not everyone has to have that but quite a few do anyway. Not everybody is an extremist. However, what happens is that we in Western Europe, we feel this "where did our identity go, should we not keep our religion". You feel threatened by a threat that may not even actually exist (School 1).

It is in encounters with others who are perceived to have "stronger faiths" that questions about one's own identity appear. This student identifies with Western Europe and it was also common to refer to "we in Sweden", "we Swedish". Perceptions of the nation might have a bonding role. But references to the nation might also have a differential function. In the articulations of "we", "the other" is also constructed. The othering of the religious is constructed through articulations about people with

"stronger faith", of which some are "extremists" are. Related to discourses of pluralism are discourses of mono-culturalism.

At School 4, where the hegemonic classroom discourse included articulations that all students positioned themselves as believers, no fear of other people's worldviews, religious or non-religious was articulated. On the contrary, these students articulated a diversity of views as something positive and something they perceived as being enriching. They also stressed the importance of the teacher's approach in creating a positive attitude about diversity:

> Student 1: I think the teachers' work means quite a bit, it has been quite good, because they have learned now that even they, the new arrivals [need to be taught], that you should think openly. Now I do not know how they teach those newly arrived but I'm sure they [the teachers] are very careful with human rights and openness and so, to accept everyone's rights and so forth. And in that way now type ... we now know that your religion is yours. We cannot influence it, you believe what you want. Because we also have some Christians. I know two. Two who are Christian in our class. And they may say what they want but we can talk to them. You know, especially in RE.
>
> Student 2: You are open.
>
> Student 1: Yes, we say like "yes, we think like this", and then they say "no but it's like this". Still, there are only discussions but it's not like humiliating someone or going against someone. They may say "yes, I'm going to church ... I'm going to read the Bible today"
>
> Interviewer: It turns out to be interesting conversations?
>
> Student 1: Yes, then, so, we say, "What does the Bible say about this? What does the Quran say about this? "And then we are discussing. It's just ... yes. Then see, just that ... then there's also another person in our class from Thailand. Yes, that's Buddhism and so on. And then that's like, "What does your religion say about this?" So, it's more like curiosity (School 4).

During the observations at this school, it was noted that a clear majority of students stated that they regarded themselves as Muslim; there were also many who described themselves as Christian. On the other hand, I did not meet anyone who articulated an atheist position. At the same time, there was an awareness that an atheistic worldview was a common position in Sweden. The proportions and compositions of the student group concerning experiences and worldview influenced what was articulated in the classroom and therefore could the subject of discussion. Based on these observations, it is clear that a student group's own experiences and perceptions strongly influenced the ways in which a discussion took place. At the same time, how teachers raised different issues and stated decisively what is possible to learn in the classroom also colored the discussions.

3.2.3. Pluralism and Processes of Change of Religious Traditions

Pluralism is taken to be a hallmark of Swedish society but pluralism and secularization also affect religions, which change in this process.

> Teacher: You think of Sweden as such a pluralistic country, that we believe in many different religions. We can choose whether we want to be atheists or how we want to live. We choose very much by ourselves, right? And Islam is also influenced by this. And Christianity too. But this is still one of the most important points. Then it is the case that many Muslims sort of do as they wish. There are also Muslims who are secular. Who are a bit more modern, who eat pork and so on, yet who are still Muslims. So you can't say that "you're not a Muslim because..." like that. "You're not wearing a veil so you're not Muslim". On the contrary, in Sweden there is still a choice (School 3).

During the observations, there was generally a tendency to talk about world religions in relatively static and generalizing terms and there was a strong focus on beliefs. The inner variation in the

religious traditions was rarely visualized and exemplified in teaching if the students themselves did not specifically bring attention to this topic. In the class in the above quote, there were visual signs that made the teacher was aware of the diversity in the classroom—some of the Muslim girls wore hijabs, some did not. Diversity is not always visible in this way but nevertheless exists in most classrooms. In the case above, there were problems in the class with students accusing one another of not being a "real Muslim", and the teacher emphasized the inner variation of the religious traditions and connected it to individual freedom in Sweden. This situation highlights the complexity but also the importance of visualizing and exemplifying different positions and views within worldviews. To note the various interpretations is not enough. Rather, to make the students understand teachers need to show and give examples about how different individuals and groups relate to various matters.

3.2.4. Pluralism and Tolerance in Principle but Secularity as the Norm

In the relationship between secularization and pluralism, secularity is the norm. The following quote is a typical example of how two guys who describe themselves as "uninterested by religion" relate to their friends' religious identity:

> Student 1: Our friends, many of our friends are Muslims. On our football team, there are many Muslims.
>
> Teacher: Well, maybe you grew up with a certain knowledge that it might not be so incredibly strange, really.
>
> Student 2: Our friends, the Muslims I know, they do it to make things easier. They do not care at all about their religion, really. They do it just because of their parents and hanging out with family during Ramadan and that kind of stuff, they just go with the flow.
>
> [. . .]
>
> Student 1: They're out partying and whatnot, they don't care at all about that. I don't know if they've been influenced by us or something. Because the Muslims have Swedish buddies and Swedes have Muslim friends and there will be the lessons learned from each other as well (School 1)

Pluralism was perceived as evident and unproblematic. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that secularity is represented as a norm—it is acceptable to be Muslim as long as you behave "like everyone else" and religion does not affect you "too much". Another interesting aspect of the quote above is that the students use the epithets "Swedes" and "Muslims" as two categories; it is implied that Swedes are not Muslims. Therefore, the prerequisite for acceptance appears to be as to behave according to a secular norm and maintaining one's religion as a privatized part of one's life.

Being tolerant of different types of inequality was emphasized in many contexts as being very important. In many cases, tolerance was articulated as a central value in a multicultural society. At the same time, there were also limits to this tolerance. When it came to concrete expression, tolerance was significantly lower for religious expressions and practices that were perceived as "foreign". It was also clear that there was an intense striving for consensus in many classrooms and that it was difficult to deal with diverging opinions. It is interesting to note that tolerance was associated with a neutral, non-existent position while religiosity was associated with intolerance.

4. Discussion

The purpose of this article was to illustrate and analyze how issues of secularization and pluralism appeared in the classroom practice and how these two social phenomena were related in the classroom. Both secularity and pluralism emerged in many ways as premises to conversations about religion. During the classroom observations, articulations of attitudes about believers as being irrational and an outdated remnant of history was noted. Anyone is entitled to have this entirely legitimate opinion. However, if this approach dominates in the classroom it will be difficult to achieve goals that involve

understanding what it may mean to have faith. Furthermore, the students will not be prepared to live in a society characterized by diversity, which is one of the purposes of RE [7]. The results reflect a common way to relate to religion in Swedish society, a place where many people have an ambivalent relationship towards religion. On the one hand, it seems extremely important for many students and teachers to distance themselves from religion in order to appear to be rational and independent individuals. In these contexts, religion has been made into something those others who do not know better or are oppressed in different ways engage in. In this context, Sweden is referred to as "the world's most secularized country", and this self-image has a positive connotation and includes perceptions of anti-racism, tolerance and a positive attitude toward diversity. Here, one can ask the question how tolerant "we" are in Sweden; how much "difference" do "we" really like? Students in the classrooms often said that everybody was allowed to believe in whatever they wished. However, when it came down to concrete opinions and practices, tolerance was not as unlimited and many students expressed that "they" (which usually referred to Muslims) should adapt to "us" who were secularized or possibly privately religious when it came to issues such as clothes, food and behavior. As in other parts of society, there was a strong pursuit of consensus after constructing a solid "we". In classroom discussions about religion the use of the pronoun "we" always had to national mono-cultural connotations, "we in Sweden". In many cases, Sweden as a secular country and nonreligious identity was stressed but in relation to Islam, the Christian history and heritage was emphasized. In School 4 where 91% of the student had a 'foreign background,' the expression "we in Sweden" never occurred. One of the challenges of the school system and society is to create a sense of belonging because all of these teens are part of the same society.

On the one hand, both teachers and students articulated positive words about diversity and pluralism. On the other hand, it appeared difficult to deal with different views in the classroom practice and a secular discourse dominated the classroom conversations in many cases. One can also think about what makes a discourse hegemonic in a certain context. When a discourse becomes hegemonic, speaking in a certain way about a phenomenon emerges as self-evident. This way of speaking is perceived as neutral and objective [66]. If a discourse becomes hegemonic, it affects both what and how something is articulated and also what is not possible to articulate. If a secularist discourse is hegemonic, religion becomes a private matter, which makes it difficult to express religious positions or opinions related to this position. In this article, the classroom is understood to be a discursive practice. Whether it is possible or impossible to articulate sometime is influenced and framed by a variety of factors (e.g., the school subject, the content of the curriculum and the syllabus, the teacher's knowledge and understanding of the subject and choice of teaching strategies). However, articulations in the classrooms are also influenced by how the surrounding community addresses the same issues and the students' personal experiences with these issues [5]. The students' personal knowledge, experiences and perceptions, have a major impact on conversations. Sometimes the students' perceptions are characterized by a lack of religious literacy and this will affect the classroom conversations. As outlined above it was at all schools more common for students to state a Muslim identity in the classroom than for students to state a Christian identity and this is also noted in other studies [31]. The reasons for this might be related to Islam, ethnicity, a minority position or social class or the interplay between these factors. Eriksen ([50], p. 272) notice the same phenomena and asks "Is 'being Christian' about belief, whereas 'being Muslim' just something you are"? Due to these various approaches to religion, the identity might be affected in various ways by the secularist discourse of religion. Furthermore, the majority relationships in the specific classroom as well as the group- and identity-processes at play seems to be of crucial importance. Over the past few years, I have carried out hundreds of classroom observations. During these classroom observations, I have been struck by how few students participated in full-class discussions. There are rarely more than 4–6 students who are active and interacting with the teacher. The vast majority of students are mostly silent or do not actively participate in the collective conversation. This situation implies that just a few students' views have a significant influence on the entire conversation. Being silent cannot

be equated with not actively involved and being silent also influences the classroom discussion. However, the teachers act on and move the teaching according to what he/she comprehends to be the understanding of the students. If a large group is silent, it is hard to recognize what they think or how they understand the subject matter and thus the possibilities to adjust the teaching in order to reach these students and enhance their learning.

There are many competing views and beliefs, a situation that Taylor [21] emphasizes as one of the main characteristics of secularization. This fact is evident in the analysis of the classroom discussions. Hervieu-Léger [26] argued that secularization has meant a changed approach to religious traditions. Narratives and practices that worked for previous generations as a starting point for a common understanding of both their own identity and their understanding of the outside world are now fragmented. Several of the quotes in this article can be seen as an example of this fragmentation and several of the students expressed a sense of bewilderment and loss of what they could relate to concerning existential issues and worldviews. At the same time, other individuals and groups are socialized into specific religious traditions and are confident in their identity. So, while pluralism is viewed as one of the primary characteristics of secularization, much of the public discourse about the multicultural society concerns pluralism in the form of people with religious beliefs challenging secular society. This takes place in the wake of "the war on terrorism" and an increasingly polarized context where populistic and right-wing activists try to gain influence through constricting Islam as a threat and claiming that there is an ongoing Islamization of the West. When students with different experiences and relations to religion and opinions about pluralism and secularity meet, uncertainties sometimes arise partly because there is no shared understanding of the religious dimension of life. Pupils who position themselves as non-believers do not always have a language to formulate in life-viewing issues. Research on how secularization affects identity and life interpreting has identified the need for new linguistic tools in secular and multicultural environments [53]. Human beings are meaning-creating by nature and will always try to understand and make sense, even if doing so requires new expressions in new contexts. Secularization and pluralism can, on the one hand, be seen as fragmentation but this form of change can also be understood as a transformation or a hybridization in which religions and worldviews take on new expressions and characters and possibly new 'religions' emerging. However, it can be difficult to identify new natures of meaning-making take during the process of change.

Internationally, there are several different models of RE in public school systems. In some countries, RE is not offered as a subject; in some countries, students are divided on the basis of religious belonging. In other countries, it is only possible to have RE in the majority religion. Given the choice between these options, the model in which students with different backgrounds meet in classrooms and gain knowledge about different traditions, differences and similarities in approach within and between different religious traditions is a good alternative. In this context, groups have the opportunity to discuss various aspects of worldviews. Although Swedish society and schools are segregated in many ways, the segregation is not total and there are still opportunities for students from different socio-economic, cultural and religious backgrounds to meet at school. Classrooms in a pluralistic society can be described in terms of un-generalizable classrooms. If students are not divided along religious affiliation lines there is a greater chance that they will meet students with a different worldview than themselves and thus learn more. Nevertheless, the premise is that the classroom is characterized by curiosity and respect and that was, as shown in the empirical examples in this article, not always the case. These kinds of places, where people from a diverse tapestry of beliefs and backgrounds meet, are becoming rarer in a time strongly influenced by forums that we choose based on common interests and backgrounds. In Facebook feeds, for example, pages that people have previously liked pop up again; we become Facebook friends with our friends' friends. This situation means that we rarely find ourselves in a context in which people have different views than ourselves. School plays an essential role in training children and young people to discuss various issues to reveal how complex, contradictory and multifaceted they truly are. The reality is complicated

and it is possible to approach different problems from a variety of perspectives. To practice and to learn to relate to social issues from different perspectives is a crucial competence in a democratic society and RE can contribute to achieving this competence.

Teaching must navigate social controversies and students who maintain different political, ethnic and religious positions. On the one hand, schools should convey specific democratic values such as equality, tolerance and respect for all human beings. On the other hand, teaching needs to facilitate conversations and discussions where the answers are not given in advance. At the same time, society is becoming more individualistic and pluralistic and the classrooms increasingly un-generalizable which ever more makes it a challenge to find the commonality in diversity while still maintaining individuals' identities. All education must relate to questions about how individuals and groups with different interests and belongings can communicate with one another and be part of the same society [68]. By problematizing different social positions and positions in the classroom, students learn how to handle equality, inequality, conflicts and controversial issues, which creates the conditions that facilitate a better understanding of themselves and society. In terms of the Swedish curriculum, which states that that each student should be given the opportunity to develop his or her own character while preparing to be able to share and contribute to society "in responsible freedom" [6], there are prerequisites for constructing an education that recognizes and respects a unique "me" and simultaneously makes opportunities for creating a multifaceted "we".

Funding: The research in this article was partly funded by the Swedish Research Council.

Acknowledgments: I am very grateful to all the teachers and students who shared their classroom practices and experiences.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest. The founding sponsors had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript and in the decision to publish the results.

References

1. Zuckerman, P. Why are Danes and Swedes so Irreligious? *Nord. J. Relig. Soc.* **2009**, *22*, 55–69.
2. Thurfjell, D. *Det Gudlösa Folket: De postkristna Svenskarna och Religionen [The Godless People: The Post-Christian Swedes and Religion]*; Molin and Sorgenfrei: Stockholm, Sweden, 2015.
3. Tomasson, R.F. How Sweden became so secular. *Scand. Stud.* **2002**, *74*, 61–88.
4. Andersson, D.; Sander, Å. *Det Mångreligiösa Sverige: Ett Landskap i Förändring [The Multi-Religious Sweden: A Changing Landscape]*; Studentlitteratur: Lund, Sweden, 2015.
5. Nilsson, S. Det oförutsägbara klassrummet-utmaningar och möjligheter [The Unpredictable Classroom-Challenges and Opportunities]. In *Interkulturell Religionsdidaktik-utmaningar och Möjligheter [Intercultural Pedagogic of Religious Education-Challenges and Oppurtunities]*; Franck, O., Thalén, P., Eds.; Studentlitteratur: Lund, Sweden, 2018; pp. 109–129.
6. Skolverket. *Läroplan, Examensmål och Gymnasiegemensamma ämnen för Gymnasieskola 2011, Lgy 11 [Curriculum for the Upper Secondary School]*; Utbildningsdepartementet, The Swedish National Agency for Education: Stockholm, Sweden, 2011.
7. Skolverket. *Ämnesplan Religionskunskap [Syllabus of Religion]*; Utbildningsdepartementet, The Swedish National Agency for Education: Stockholm, Sweden, 2011.
8. Kittelmann Flensner, K. *Discourses of Religion and Secularism in Religious Education Classrooms*; Springer: Cham, Switzerland, 2017.
9. Holmqvist Lidh, C. *Representera och bli Representerad. Elever med RELIGIÖS Positionering Talar om Skolans Religionskunskapsundervisning [Represent and Be Represented. Pupils with Religious Positioning Talk about Teaching in Religious Education*; Karlstads universitet: Karlstad, Sweden, 2016.
10. Moulin, D. Giving Voice to 'the Silent Minority': The Experience of Religious Students in Secondary School Religious Education Lessons. *Br. J. Relig. Educ.* **2011**, *33*, 313–326. [CrossRef]

11. Jannert, H.; Persson, C. Interkultulturell religionsundervisning i praktiken [Intercultural Religious Education Teaching in Practice]. In *Interkulturell Religionsdidaktik-Utmaningar och Möjligheter [Intercultural Pedagogic of Religious Education-Challenges and Oppurtunities]*; Franck, O., Thalén, P., Eds.; Studentlitteratur: Lund, Sweden, 2018; pp. 131–177.
12. Franken, L. Coping with Diversity in Religious Education: An Overview. *J. Beliefs Values* **2017**, *38*, 105–120. [CrossRef]
13. Skolöverstyrelsen. *Läroplan för Grundskolan (Lgr 62) [Curricula for the Compulsory School]*; Skolöverstyrelsens Skriftserie: Stockholm, Sweden, 1962.
14. Flensner, K.K.; Larsson, G. Swedish Religious Education at the End of the 1960s: Classroom Observations, Early Video Ethnography and the National Curriculum of 1962. *Br. J. Relig. Educ.* **2013**, *36*, 202–217. [CrossRef]
15. Grimmitt, M. *Religious Education and Human Development*; McCrimmons: Great Wakering, UK, 1987.
16. Willaime, J.-P. Different models for Religion and Education in Europe. In *Religion and Education in Europe: Developments, Contexts and Debates*; Jackson, R., Miedema, S., Weiße, W., Willaime, J.-P., Eds.; Münster: Waxmann, Germany, 2007.
17. Af Burén, A. *Living Simultaneity: On Religion among Semi-Secular Swedes*; Södertörns Högskola: Huddinge, Sweden, 2015.
18. Dobbelaire, K. The Meaning and Scope of Secularization. In *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*; Clarke, P.B., Ed.; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2009.
19. Cassanova, J. *Beyond European and American Exceptionalism: Towards a Global Perspective, in Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular and Alternative Futures*; Davie, G., Heelas, P., Woodhead, L., Eds.; Ashgate: Aldershot, UK, 2003.
20. Johnstone, R.L. *Religion in Society: A Sociology of Religion*; Pearson/Prentice Hall: Upper Saddle River, NJ, USA, 2007.
21. Taylor, C. *A Secular Age*; Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, USA, 2007.
22. Beckford, J.A. *Re-Thinking Religious Pluralism, in Religious Pluralism: Framing Religious Diversity in the Contemporary World*; Giordan, G., Pace, E., Eds.; Springer: Cham, Switzerland, 2014.
23. Skeie, G. The Concept of Plurality and its Meaning for Religious Education. *Br. J. Relig. Educ.* **2002**, *25*, 47–59. [CrossRef]
24. Thalén, P. Att vara religionslärare i en tid av radikal mångfald [To be a Teacher of Religious Education in Times of Radical Plurality]. In *Interkulturell Religionsdidaktik-Utmaningar och Möjligheter [Intercultural Pedagogic of Religious Education-Challenges and Oppurtunities]*; Franck, O., Thalén, P., Eds.; Studentlitteratur: Lund, Sweden, 2018; pp. 179–194.
25. Berger, P.L. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*; Doubleday: Garden City, NY, USA, 1969.
26. Hervieu-Léger, D. *Religion as a Chain of Memory*; Polity Press: Cambridge, UK, 2000.
27. Madge, N.; Hemming, P.J.; Stensonet, K. *Youth on Religion: The Development, Negotiation and Impact of Faith and Non-Faith Identity*; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2013.
28. Valk, P.; Bertram-Troost, G.; Friederici, M.; Béraud, C. (Eds.) *Teenagers' Perspectives on the Role of Relgion in Their Lives, Schools and Societies. A European Quantitative Study*; Waxmann: Münster, Germany, 2009.
29. Ziebertz, H.-G.; Kay, W.K.; Riegel, U. *Youth in Europe III: An International Empirical Study about the Impact of Religion for Life Orientation*; Lit Verlag: Berlin, Germany, 2009.
30. Day, A. *Believing in Belonging: Belief and Social Identity in the Modern World*; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2011.
31. Knauth, T. "Better Toghther Than Apart" Religion in School and Lifeworld of Students in Hamurg. In *Religious Diversity and Education in Europe*; Bakker, C., Berglund, J., Bertram-Troost, G., Ipgrave, J., Heimbrock, H.-G., Jackson, R., Skeie, G., Weisse, W., Eds.; Waxmann: Münster, Germany, 2008; pp. 207–245.
32. Knauth, T.; Jozsa, D.-P.; Bertram-Troost, G.; Ipgrave, J. *Encountering Religious Pluralism in School and Society. A Qualitative Study of Teenage Perspectives in Europe*; Waxmann: Münster, Germany, 2008.
33. Davie, G. *The Sociology of Religion. BSA New Horizons in Sociology*; SAGE: London, UK, 2007.
34. Ter Avest, I.; Jozsa, D.-P.; Knauth, T.; Rosón, J.; Skeie, G. *Dialogue and Conflict on Religion. Studies of Classroom Interaction in European Countries*; Waxmann: Münster, Germany, 2009.

35. Bromander, J.; Lövheim, M. *Religion som Resurs? Exitentiella FRÅGOR och värderingar i unga Svenskars liv [Religion as a Resource? Exitential Questions and Values in the Lives of Young Swedes]*; Artos & Norma bokförlag: Skellefteå, Sweden, 2012.
36. Risenfors, S. *Gymnasieungdomars Livstolkande [Upper Seccondary Youth's Life Interpretations]*; Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis: Göteborg, Sweden, 2011.
37. Sjöborg, A. Religious Education and Intercultural Understanding: Examining the Role of Religiosity for Upper Secondary Students' Attitudes Towards RE. *Br. J. Relig. Educ.* **2013**, *35*, 36–54. [CrossRef]
38. Von Brömssen, K. Time and 'the Other/s,' Scientism and Gender-Statements: Discourses on Religion in a Swedish 'Multi-Cultural' School. In *Your Heritage and Mine. Teaching in a Multi-Religious Classroom*; Roos, L., Jenny, B., Eds.; Religionshistoriska Avdelningen, Uppsala Universitet: Uppsala, Sweden, 2009; pp. 94–106.
39. Von Brömssen, K. Some ethnic Swedish Students' Discourses on Religion: Secularism Par Excellence. *J. Relig. Educ.* **2016**, *2*, 113–125. [CrossRef]
40. Davis, D.; Miroshnikova, E.M. *The Routledge International Handbook of Religious Education*; Routledge: Abingdon, Oxon, UK, 2013.
41. Rothgangel, M.; Skeie, G.; Jäggle, M. *Religious Education at Schools in Europe. Part 3, Northern Europe*; Vienna University Press: Göttingen, Germany, 2014.
42. Anker, T. *Respect and Disrespect: Social Practices in a Norwegian Multicultural School*; MF Norwegian School of Theology: Oslo, Norway, 2011.
43. Buchardt, M. When 'Muslim-ness' is pedagogised. 'Religion' and 'Culture' as Knowledge and Social Classification in the Classroom. *Br. J. Relig. Educ.* **2010**, *32*, 259–273. [CrossRef]
44. Merchant, N.H. Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Shia Ismaili Muslim Girls Negotiate Islam in the Classroom. *Diasp. Indigen. Minor. Educ.* **2016**, *10*, 98–111. [CrossRef]
45. Merchant, N.H. Responses to Islam in the Classroom: A Case of Muslim Girls from Minority Communities of Interpretation. *Int. J. Multicult. Educ.* **2016**, *18*, 183–199. [CrossRef]
46. Osbeck, C.; Lied, S. Hegemonic Speech Genres of Classrooms and Their Importance for RE Learning. *Br. J. Relig. Educ.* **2011**, *34*, 155–168. [CrossRef]
47. Von der Lippe, M. Young People's Talk About Religion and Diversity: A Qualitative Study of Norwegian Students Aged 13–15. *Br. J. Relig. Educ.* **2011**, *33*, 127–142. [CrossRef]
48. Brubaker, R. Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches. *Nations Natl.* **2012**, *18*, 2–20. [CrossRef]
49. Bayat, A.; Herrera, L. *Being Young and Muslim: New Cultural Politics in the Global South and North*; Oxford University Press: New York, NY, USA, 2010.
50. Eriksen, L.L. Learning to Be Norwegian. A Case Study of Identity Management in Religious Education in Norway. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Warwick, Warwick, October 2010.
51. Ostberg, S. Norwegian-Pakistani Adolescents: Negotiating Religion, Gender, Ethnicity and Social Boundaries. *Young* **2003**, *2*, 161–181. [CrossRef]
52. Ryan, L. 'Islam does not Change': Young People Narrating Negotiations of Religion and Identity. *J. Youth Stud.* **2014**, *17*, 446–460. [CrossRef]
53. Gustavsson, C. *Existentiella Konfigurationer: Om hur Förståelsen av Livet tar Gestalt i ett Socialt Sammanhang [Existential Configurations: How the Understanding of Life Takes Shape in a Social Context]*; Stockholms Universitet: Stockholm, Sweden, 2013.
54. Gustavsson, C. Språkliga redskap för en gränsöverskridande interkulturell religionsundervisning [Linguistic Tools for Cross-border Inter-cultural Religious Education]. In *Interkulturell Religionsdidaktik-Utmaningar och Möjligheter [Intercultural Pedagogic of Religious Education-Challenges and Oppurtunities]*; Franck, O., Thalén, P., Eds.; Studentlitteratur: Lund, Sweden, 2018; pp. 235–252.
55. Sieben, I.; Zundert, M.V.; Halman, L. *Atlas of European Values. Trends and Traditions at the Turn of the Century*; Brill: Leiden, The Netherlands, 2012.
56. Bromander, J. Religiositet i Sverige [Religiosity in Sweden]. In *Vägskäl*; Weibul, L., Oscarsson, H., Bergström, A., Eds.; SOM-Institutet: Göteborgs, Sweden, 2013; pp. 291–301.
57. Stockman, M.; Carnbo, I. *Trossamfund i Sverige: Statsbidragsberättigade Trossamfund 2017: Presentationer och Aktuell Statistik [Religious Communities in Sweden: State Grants to Religious Communities 2017: Presentations and Current Statistics]*; Nämnden för Statligt stöd till Trossamfund: Bromma, Sweden, 2017.
58. Von Bromssen, K.; Olgac, C.R. Intercultural Education in Sweden through the Lenses of the National Minorities and of Religious Education. *Int. Educ.* **2010**, *21*, 121–135. [CrossRef]

59. Swedens Population 2017-Population Changes: New Swedish Citizens from 160 Countries. Available online: http://www.scb.se/en/finding-statistics/statistics-by-subject-area/population/population-composition/population-statistics/pong/statistical-news/swedens-population-2017--population-changes2/ (accessed on 21 March 2018).
60. Statistics Sweden. Population Statistics. Available online: http://www.scb.se/en/finding-statistics/statistics-by-subject-area/population/population-composition/population-statistics (accessed on 25 May 2018).
61. Utbildningsdepartementet. *Samling för Skolan. Nationell Strategi för Kunskap och Likvärdighet: Slutbetänkande från 2015-års Skolkommision [Together for School: National Strategy for Knowledge and Equivalence: Final Report]*; Wolters Kluwer: Stockholm, Sweden, 2017.
62. Heaton, J. Secondary Analysis of Qualitative Data: An Overview. *Hist. Soc. Res.* **2008**, *33*, 33–45.
63. Gordon, T.; Holland, J.; Lahelma, E. Ethnographic Research in Educational Settings. In *Handbook of Etnography*; Atkinson, P., Coffey, A., Delamont, S., Lofland, J., Lofland, L.H., Eds.; SAGE: London, UK, 2007; pp. 188–203.
64. Corsaro, W.A. *The Sociology of Childhood. Sociology for a New Century*; Pine Forge Press: Thousand Oaks, CA, USA, 2005.
65. Howarth, D. *Discourse*; Open University Press: Buckingham, UK, 2000.
66. Laclau, E.; Mouffe, C. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*; Verso: London, UK, 2001.
67. Hermerén, G. *Good Research Practice*; The Swedish Research Council: Stockholm, Sweden, 2011.
68. Touraine, A. *Can We Live Together: Equality and Difference*; Polity: Oxford, UK, 2000.

education sciences

MDPI

Article

An Exploration of Subjective-Life of Spirituality and Its Impact

Yusuf Ziya Öğretici

School of Education, University of Glasgow, St Andrew's Building, R574 Level 5, Glasgow G3 6NH, UK; yusufzziya@gmail.com; Tel.: +44-756-109-7256

Received: 3 October 2018; Accepted: 24 November 2018; Published: 5 December 2018

Abstract: This paper contributes to the discussion on how morality may be uncertain when life orientation changes, for instance, from religious belief to spirituality. Accepting the 'subjectivation' thesis as a key concept in understanding the contemporary world, the spiritual realm is treated as a site on which the subjective turn has made a tremendous impact. That turn is investigated particularly in a comparison between "subjective-life" spirituality and "life-as" religion. Then, this paper asks what happens to morality when people's religious belief disappears, changes, or evolves into spiritual experience. Educational practices are also viewed as a resonant field where the subjective turn has impacted on morality. The context of this paper refers to the subjective turn, as explained by *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality*. Then, the comparison of "life-as" and "subjective-life" is expressed according to their diverse values. Finally, the conclusion deals with the crucial points of morality in subjective life. In this regard, it is stressed that 'subjectivation' is a feature of our time, and presenting a remarkable challenge in the realm of values. Since their orientations are different, 'subjective-lives' have a different disposition in morality than the mode of "life-as". Although it is impossible to generalize concerning whether or not spirituality is moral, nevertheless, it is expected that there will be challenges for religious education when dealing with spirituality.

Keywords: morality; spirituality; religion; religious education; life-as; subjective-life

1. Introduction

The *subjectivation* thesis is one of the key concepts to understand the contemporary world [1]. Subjectivation means that discovering and articulating their own identity has now become a matter for subjects that is clearly self-referential rather than being settled by external realities such as traditional law or nature [1] (pp. 81–82). Drawing on that work, Heelas et al. [2] explained the rise in holistic practices in western societies. Their study states that "western societies' increasing focus on the importance of individual subjective experience and on the quality of that experience means that spiritualities focused on 'the truth within' are more likely to thrive than those premised on moral codes emanating from a higher being" [3] (p. 559). Heelas develops the idea with the concept of 'subjective well-being culture', expressing the encouragement of western people to discover their 'true selves' and their unique qualities: "The assumptions and values of subjective well-being culture—the importance of subjective life; the positive, 'can-do' way it is envisaged; the theme of exercising autonomy to develop, express and celebrate who you really are—are writ large in the holistic milieu" [4] (p. 64). In this context, "subjectivation is considered as a reflexively experienced state of recognition, giving meaning and 'totality' to the subject, the subjective space occupied by the subject need not be prepared by the subject himself" [5] (p. 168).

The spiritual realm where holistic practices are experienced is also a pregnant one in regard to how the subjective turn has made a tremendous impact. This impact might be investigated particularly

in comparison between "subjective-life" spirituality and "life-as" religion, namely self-directed spirituality and externally validated religion. Religion is used in Heelas et al. to express commitment to a higher truth that is 'out there'... and exclusively related to specific externals. Whereas, spirituality is used to express commitment to a deep truth that is to be found within what belongs to this world [2] (pp. 5–6). However, in their context, "subjective-life" spirituality and "life-as" religion are not always identical as the culture uses the terms spirituality and religion. There might be, for example, a religious spirituality, that is subjective in the sense that it involves intense experiences. But, that is, at the same time, objective in the sense that it is focused on something which is external to and higher than the self [2] (p. 5). Heelas et al. in *The Spiritual Revolution* describe the subjective turn as "a turn away from life lived in terms of external or 'objective' roles, duties and obligations, and a turn towards life lived by reference to one's own subjective experiences" [2] (p. 2).

In their study, to understand why spirituality takes part instead of religion in culture, Heelas et al. framed a theory based on an empirical research conducted in Kendal (a town with 28,000 inhabitants in the Lake District of England). In Kendal, two kinds of sources for data gathering were exploited, on the one hand the Christian congregational domain of Anglicans, Evangelicals, and Methodists etc. as of representing the religious (The list of the "congregational domain" included in the research of Heelas et al. [2] is available online: http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/fss/projects/ieppp/kendal/), and on the other hand the self-oriented holistic milieu that includes yoga, Buddhism, Alexander technique groups, homeopathy, reiki, massage, etc. as of representing the spiritual [2] (p. 13) (How religion and spirituality are defined, bordered, and treated in Heelas et al. [2] has been criticized on the grounds that, for example, why are Yoga and Buddhism included in the authors' holistic milieu while they are living religious traditions [6]). In their conceptualisation, religion is something that tells you what to believe and how to behave, so it is then related to obligations [2] (p. 3). According to the findings, 7.9% of the Kendal inhabitants were found to be involved in the congregational activities, while 1.6% participated in holistic activities, in an average week. The numbers suggest that the percentage of people in congregational activities still has superiority over those who are in the holistic realm. However, the congregational domain is declining, whereas the holistic one is growing [2] (p. 40). These authors then extended their findings for the UK and USA with consistent results, but also admitting that the available evidence only indicates a possibility [7]. Even though it is not argued that there has been a complete subjective turn towards spirituality, it might be the start of a revolution [2] (p. 149).

Though the research of Heelas et al. is conducted on/for the Western world for which the main religious identity is Christian, their theory may not be compatible with other parts of the world where different kinds of religious beliefs and 'none' are dominant [6]. As other religious traditions outside of Christianity may reflect different values or the same values in a different way, it is quite possible to observe a situation where there will be varied reactions between spirituality and that tradition. Howsoever, the question of the present paper is not to examine the relationship between Christianity and spirituality, but to show what kind of uncertainty, in terms of morality, people may be in when their values changed in accord with a changing life orientation. Within that context, this study is basically conducted on the literature and the discussion is not limited to a specific country bound.

Section 2 explains the context regarding "subjective-life" spirituality and "life-as" religion by referring to *The Spiritual Revolution* [2] to understand what subjective turn is. In Section 3, the comparison of "life-as" and "subjective-life" is highlighted to show how their diverse values are presented in the literature. In the conceptualisation of Heelas et al., these are different in the sense that "life-as" is lived according to external or 'objective' roles, duties, and obligations (living as a dutiful wife, father, husband, strong leader etc.) while "subjective-life" is lived by reference to one's subjective values and experiences (relational as much as individualistic: living in deep connection with the unique experiences of self-in-relation) [2] (pp. 2–3). After that, in Section 4, while the effect of that change might be observable in a different field of culture such as business or education, there is a discussion regarding the crucial points of morality in relation to the turn from "life-as"

to "subjective-life". Finally, Section 5 discusses how this change creates a challenge for education (especially for religious education). This challenge may stem from the distinction about religious education between the old-style authoritative teaching of the facts and the focus on the abilities of child in educational provisions.

2. Subjective Turn of Modern Culture

Spirituality may be defined, as is accepted in this paper, as a personal or individual sense with no reference to God or higher authority rather than to organized religion or church doctrine [2] (p. 74). Many surveys have indicated that increasing numbers of people prefer to call themselves spiritual instead of religious [8]. The situation is labelled as "the massive subjective turn of modern culture" by Taylor [1] (p. 26). Heelas et al. explained it by saying that the subjective turn is a turn away from "life-as" to "subjective-life" [2] (p. 3).

The language of "life-as" and "subjective-life" is used in this paper to distinguish "life-as" religion and "subjective-life" spirituality. The former is bounded up with the modes of "life-as" which still exist in the 'congregational domain'. Conversely, the latter sacralises "subjective-life" within what is referred to as the 'holistic milieu' [2] (pp. 5–8). The holistic milieu is basically to do with holistic spirituality in a way that the 'true' way of life is sought by seeking out, experiencing and expressing a source of significance with and through the particularities of subjective-lives. It must be stressed that the holistic milieu is highly participant-centred. Contrarily, congregational domain is commonly to do with theistic authority structures. It emphasizes "life-as" and normativization of subjectivities [2] (pp. 31–32).

As holistic milieu is highly 'participant-centred'; when participants discover that a particular activity is not working, then it is typical for them to look elsewhere. The role of the holistic milieu is to enable participants to 'become themselves' by trusting their own life experience rather than to impose pre-packaged "life-as" values against participants. Instead of being guided to the certain goal, in the holistic milieu people are just shown the way. The spiritual practices of the milieu provide the opportunity for participants to move beyond traditional boundaries or habits [2].

It can be argued that being religious traditionally means of acceptance of higher authority [8] which determines what is the best for people better than they know themselves. People in a congregation can be seen as those who need to be guided by higher authority to find fulfillment. God's purpose is made known by external authorities, tradition, and community [2] (pp. 13–17). In other words, the question of 'what is good?' has been already answered without any individual participation. The expectation of the good Christian/person is that he/she must obey the rule of God. This may also refer to strong ethical and metaphysical dualism [2] (p. 17) which may be characterized by the difference between creator and created, supernatural and natural, and the overreaching moral order of things versus the everyday order of things.

Many people who are neither religious nor theistic continue to speak of the sacredness-of life, seek out sacred places, and call for reverence and respect [9]. This form of spirituality has become a consistent feature of modern Western culture [10–12]. If "subjective-life" spirituality continues to flourish, it is expected we will see a corresponding decline in the "life-as" mode of belief [2] (p. 6). Even if "subjective-life" spirituality does not eliminate "life-as" religion, the congregational domain is decreasing and the holistic milieu is growing. A spiritual revolution is taking place in key sectors of culture such as business and education [2] (p. 75).

Since the subjective turn has impacted upon Western culture, its values are replacing the "life-as" values. Prioritising the transcendental obligations regarding sin, guilt, and moral rules or duty appears to be becoming redundant. In contrast, increasing numbers of people are engaging in personal journeys for the purpose of discovering the sacred within themselves [7]. This shift can be observed not only in the spiritual realm, but also, for example, within the traditional values and bonds of family life. Similarly, changes in educational thinking about 'bringing out' the abilities of child are another impact of the subjective turn. Holistic milieu practitioners are highly 'participant-centred', with such a widely

used experience such as 'child-centred education' [2] (pp. 28, 80). "Subjective-life" culture has a strong relation with 'individualization' [13]. Significant numbers of the youth and young adults have rejected "life-as" values and their supporting institutions have waned. Churches, for example, as a center of "life-as" teachings, have suffered because many people are simply no longer willing to submit to their presentation of religious roles, duties, and expectations [2] (p. 112) and [14] . Even in secular institutions, those operating in "life-as" mode increasingly find themselves out of step with the times, whereas those that care for their unique subjective-lives are evolving [2] (pp. 2–6).

Briefly, "life-as" forms of the sacred, the focus of which is on a transcendent source of authority, are most likely to be in decline, whilst "subjective-life" forms of sacred which underline an inner source of authority are most likely to be growing [2]. This is the subjectivation in which self-articulated and discovered identity is praised over externally settled realities.

3. Differences between "Life-As" and "Subjective-Life"

The previous sections have presented how "subjective-life" is promoted in subjectivation. The purpose of the current section is to compare the different approaches that "life-as" and "subjective-life" have, due to their diversified values. Because the struggle in morality between "subjective-life" spirituality and "life-as" religion can be observed according to their comprehension of values. For spirituality, it is not a necessity to have a religious background in order to be ethical, because a certain spiritual sense may be ascribed to moral qualities of character and virtues [15]. In an experimental study, people who identified themselves as spiritual had respectively more considerable levels of moral emotions than less-spiritual individuals [16]. Furthermore, spirituality has regarded as forming the identity of a person and as a highest moral centre [17]. Indeed, that kind of understanding is coherent with the idea that spirituality is often considered as a natural form of human awareness [18] or a universal characteristic of human beings [19]. Besides, morality may also be examined in terms of a multi-construct perspective concerning spiritual involvement, beliefs, and emotions [20]. Therefore, it cannot be argued that spirituality has no moral insight [21], since the moral claim is not dependent on religious faith, but it is a demand of our humanity or rationality [9]. Inasmuch as spirituality has a different ethical base to religion, its moral also will be different.

The key value for the mode of "life-as" is conformity to external authority, while, for the mode of "subjective-life", it is an authentic connection with the inner depths of one's unique life-in-relation. Each mode has its own attractions for adherents [2]. In "subjective-life", on the contrary, each individual must find his/her unique source of significance, meaning, and authority. Rather than the prepared belief system, here 'the good life' consists in living one's life. The goal is not simply to become free from the higher authority, but to have the courage to find one's own authority by searching for one's own inner-directed life [2] (pp. 3–4). However, in the congregational domain, theistic authority structures direct how life is to be lived in accordance with higher values, and "life-as" values are sought by heeding and conforming to a source of authority [2] (pp. 30–31). Traditional religion continues to appeal to those who resist the subjective turn. It speaks their language, meets their expectations, and reinforces their values by way of externally laid-down roles and duties [2] (pp. 111–113). The point is whether traditional religious believers will continue to accept the values presented by their religions, and then manage their behaviour according to them.

As an important aspect of the moral judgement presented in the language of 'should' and 'ought' of the congregational domain; moral guidance is clearly offered in "life-as" morality, in order to help the people to move from evil to good/God, from chaos to orderly living, or from fearfulness to security. This requires a deferential relationship to higher authority as many congregational members describe the good life with terms such as faithfulness, following, fitting in, being respectful, and remaining obedient to God, scripture, and Church [2] (pp. 32, 113). Thus, it can be seen how the higher authority of a common good is characteristically committed to by the congregation. With the general acceptance of that the authorities of church are there to instruct people how to live their lives, these standards, norms, ideals, and expectations are there to be conformed to. Moreover, judging people with congregational

standards may cause them to leave that congregation by contributing to their feeling 'ill-being' rather than well-being, especially for those who are situated within the individualistic thrust of the new 'standards', the more flexible moral orientations, and the rise of a self-conscious youth culture [22]. Such moralism in the congregational domain is deeply assured institutionally in the way that individuals are told what to do by higher authority in the preaching office of the minister of religion, rather than being encouraged to look to their own research to decide for themselves [2] (pp. 15–17). This is, of course, not a simple and solid attitude over all religion/religious groups regarding the various religious understandings and individuals. This is indicated in Heelas et al. [2] for different kinds of Christian congregations like congregations of difference, of experiential difference, of humanity, and of experiential humanity (pp. 61–67). Nonetheless, by way of preaching, teaching, and rituals, the roles are more effectively and completely offered on becoming, for example, a better mother, a more Godly father, a Christian more closely conformed to Christ [2] (p. 111).

Conversely, in the holistic milieu, "subjective-life" and sacralisation of unique subjectivities are the cornerstones on which self-understanding, change, and the true life are built to form a sacred space for searching out and experiencing. With the freedom offered by the inner sacred, people are encouraged to find their path rather than being given rules about which path is better.That is different from following but requires testing what works better for the individuals' life (Just as indicated above for congregations, there is no reason to think the spirituality in a single piece.). The point I would like to emphasize is, therefore, that this space is built for personal exploration. Thus, the practice of experience, the cultivation of uniqueness, and the freedom to explore and express oneself make what is subjective in subjective-life. Namely, this is the holistic relationship with the spirit-of-life [2] (pp. 30–31, 83). Studies from the UK, suggest that the youth and young adults of today are more likely to find meaning and values in their experiences than in "life-as" orientated institutions. That is, the youth and young adults find spiritual insight in forms of popular culture which are personally meaningful and which they use in different ways [23] (pp. 88–100). In this context, clubbers' personal experience, for example, might be in deep connection with the self or a way of expressing an essential, if non-verbal, articulation of who they are. That may be seen as a meditative or mystical quality of an experience which is rarely interpreted as having 'religious' significance [23] (pp. 88–89).

"Subjective-life" and "life-as" orientations have their own satisfactions and suppose others to be 'dangerous' sites, due to the deep incompatibility between them [2] (p. 3). In such a comparison, various sides of cultural life have been affected by that turn. On the unstable place of the turn, the struggle is observed as, for instance, the expressive school of emotions has been overwhelming the disciplined family of traditional values, individual worker centred business systems are about to defeat the hierarchical structure of the old-style business, or the focus on the abilities of the child in educational provisions is accepted as more important than authoritative teaching of the facts [2] (pp. 79–80). "Subjectivities threaten the life-as mode emotions, while life-as demands attack the integrity of subjective life" [2] (p. 3). The incompatibility between these two orientations is understandable, since their values are at opposite sides against other. The struggle might be seen not only between these two mentalities, but also for one passing from one group to another. While there are many aspects of the effects of that change to examine, the next section discusses further the implications of the turn for moral thinking.

4. The Morality in Subjective Life

Values take a cardinal position in determining people's daily life practices whether such practices are based on traditional morals or not. Simply put, the value of something (x) on an agent is the power of x to reinforce the agent's preference for it [24]. So values are determined as guides for decision-making and to lead in conflict about 'good' and 'bad' action [25]. One of the prime challenges of morality, however, is to identify what is the 'good' by which people can ameliorate their behaviour. The next problem should be how the understanding of goodness can be obtained. Because "life-as"

forms of the sacred are most likely to be in decline whilst "subjective-life" forms of the sacred are most likely to be growing [2], the next point is the impact of such change on morality.

As people in 'subjectivation' turn inside themselves for answers and taking more control over all aspects of their life, rather than letting other sources tell them what to do or believe, naturally their moral decisions change in accordance. This is not because of the direction of the change, but because of the change itself. To characterise the change of the social presence of religion in Britain, Davie has coined a famous phrase; 'believing without belonging' [26], which is, however, followed by a shift from an 'ethic of obligation' towards 'an ethic of consumption' [27]. Through this change, different types of morality have been noted, in terms of how personal differences must be considered in favour of effective communication with 'subjects' by church services [28].

In the words of Allport [29] (pp. vii–viii), what matters is "the right of every individual to work out his own philosophy of life to find his personal niche in creation." As Giddens indicates, the cognitive self is a crucial source of moral information [30] (p. 33) and in this analysis, reflexivity means that the self is structured through an internally referential system. The self is a 'reflexive project' for which the individual is continuously responsible. The moral thread of self-actualization is one of authenticity based on 'being true to oneself': "his first loyalty is to himself" [30] (pp. 74–80). Such explanations imply that authoritative moral resources have eroded due to the loss of the importance of tradition. As the reflexive project of the self becomes more widespread, there occurs a corresponding tension of moral questions at the centre of personal and social life [31]. Taylor argues that the sources of moral strength can no longer be seen outside of the self [11]. In the same direction, but in a different discipline, this is similar to ceasing to evaluate 'immigrant minorities' in regard to the normative standards of the 'central culture' [32]. It may not be appropriate to judge whether the immigrants feel the right emotions as a key social competence in achieving belongingness, fitness, and well-being [32]. This is to highlight the uniqueness of the person in spirituality because of his/her personal disposition through the unique experiences of self-in-relation including consciousness, mind, memories, emotions, passions, sensations, bodily experiences, dreams, feelings, inner conscience, and sentiments [2] (p. 3). Therefore, if the unique person in spirituality does not fit with "life-as" understandings, the wrong element may be the judgement itself.

The question of identity has the priority in morality; the moral appropriateness of actions and accountability is in relation to the sense of self [33]. The prominence of identity as a central concern is significant for ethics and spirituality, both of which assume that action is determined by the specific identity of the person [34]. In Fisher et al. [35], for example, it is argued that agents relate themselves to meanings, purpose, and values within the personal domain of spirituality. This intra-relatedness refers to the relationship between one and one's own self, the integration between one's body, mind, and spirit, which gives meaning and personal identity to one's life. This is different from the inter-relatedness which is about the relationship between one's self and the outside world [36]. This is not to deny social identity: 'the ethic of subjectivity' has a role which is evident in the value attached to self-expression and fulfillment; to doing 'what feels right', 'following your heart', and cultivating 'emotional intelligence'. In such contexts value is attributed to 'feeling' [2] (p. 80). In spirituality, one of the recurrent themes is a quest for personal integration [37] (p. 125 in [34]), in which the highest value in the individual's spiritual belief system creates an ethical orientation though not necessarily to God [34].

By focusing on values and thinking in the concepts of Heelas et al. [2], for those who live in "life-as" mode, to judge one's actions as moral or not might be easier than for those who live in "subjective-life" (The question of 'which one is right, better, or more valuable?' is out of the concern.). For the "life-as" mode, the externally presented general forms of duties and responsibilities may function as 'answer keys' when the agent is about to decide what should be done. However, for "subjective-life" practitioners, since there is no externally defined and generally accessible set of 'rights and wrongs' but only subjectively experienced 'realities', each agent's decision might be understood only in his or her own reality. It seems that "subjective-life" practitioners are closer to moral relativism, if it is defined as 'the truth or falsity of moral beliefs are products of our traditions and cultural histories,

rather than objective statements based on logic, or facts about the state of the world independent of our own opinions or perspectives' [38]. That kind of mentality will be valid not only for different kinds of spiritualities but also for each practitioner. That is why the turn may be called an unstable place for morality and why morality has a stable ground in "life-as" modes.

It should be also recognized that there exists a strong relation between the increasing popularity of "subjective-life" values and non-theistic beliefs [2]. Most forms of spirituality have embedded moral perception, motivation, and identity into their system. Some are religious; some are primarily moral but presume an non-dogmatic religious background [34]. Iris Murdoch has explored the importance of moral consideration of non-theistic spirituality. When morality is found without religion in a difficult situation, why should there not be many different kinds of independent moral values [39] (pp. 55–72)?

Certain forms of spirituality can enable ethical considerations achieved intellectually to be lived morally. In addition, practical considerations may open up ethical debates, whereas some forms of spirituality might be against ethical, religious, or theological considerations because of their normative reflections. Personal dispositions and pragmatic results may assure the acceptability of their own spirituality [34]. As "subjective-life" focuses on the value of uniqueness, in accordance with the authority of personal experience, the ethic of unique subjectivity pervades the whole culture. The values of "subjective-life" spirituality work for those who draw on the sacred to seek sources of significance within their "subjective-life" [2].

While much contemporary spirituality moves away from explicit moral norms and principles, Murdoch [39] believes that, with the decline of traditional understandings of religion, new forms of spiritual practice must discover ways to connect the self to morality. Certain spiritual practices rely on a set of dispositions that are expected to characterize the practitioner, but it is not clear that any set of dispositions can do all the work of ethics. Although dispositions create scenarios of action, it is not clear that they can provide the explicit normative criteria to justify the action [34]. It cannot be said that contemporary spirituality has no ethical values because it lacks a religious leaning but though certain types of spirituality have assumed forms of moral decision making, some of them do not. Even though the subjective turn is taking place in modern culture, it is not about to be completed [2]. In addition, there is no reason to take spirituality as a single tradition. As a result, it might be concluded that a generalization concerning the moral trajectory of contemporary spirituality may not be possible on account of the fact that the subjective turn is not completed and the turn might be read through different spiritualities within unique individuals.

5. Questions and Challenges for Education in the Subjective Turn

Even if the subjective turn is not completed in society as a whole or globally (and it is still a question whether it will be completed), it is the case that a 'spiritual revolution' is taking part in the key sectors of the culture [2] (p. 75). At least, as reported in the Kendal project, a small portion of the inhabitants in that town is practicing holistic activities and the membership and participation in the holistic milieu seems set to expand in Kendal as well as in the world [2]. This paper highlights above that this turn will have an effect on morality because of changing values from "life-as" to "subjective-life". Next, I will present my reflections (rather than answers) on how that change may be represented in education, especially in religious education.

Firstly, religious education has a formal, respectably rich, history, while interest in spirituality in education is a new phenomenon [18]). Although, there are experimental and theoretic studies on understanding spirituality as an intrinsic part of the curriculum [40,41]; it is more common to find spirituality in relation to religious education [19,42,43]. Indeed, it is argued that education as an institutionalized system of schooling is unfortunately not concerned with spirituality to the extent that it may be able to serve spiritual aims [44]. Therefore, as it is for the spiritual revolution, I prefer not to say that the shift to spirituality in education is taking place in the broad sense, but that it starts. Furthermore, the concept of spirituality does not fit with the current constructs of education and religious education, especially when religious education is assured by theology, religious studies,

and the place of religion in society [44]. Grimmitt's classification as 'teaching in', 'about' and 'from religion' [45] might be helpful to exemplify this kind of unsuitability. Faith schools, for instance, that utilize religious narrative forms as a source of authoritative wisdom, may be challenged in religious education by the existence of these characteristics of children's spirituality [42]. If the religious education curriculum in a Catholic school still gives the impression that all of the students are, or should be, regular churchgoers (As an example, see the situation in Scotland with Coll [46] and Franchi [47]), it is not relevant to argue that school offers a form of spirituality in education that is relevant to the lives of pupils [43]. Even in faith schools, understanding contemporary spirituality (while it may be secular) is worthwhile in the sense that it is relevant for the pupils' needs and it informs both content and pedagogy [42,43]. Just as it is not relevant to teach religion as 'teaching in' for a plural society [48], it is not relevant to ignore contemporary spirituality as if it were not. It must be regarded that students are not (may not be) in a single faith or spirituality. Therefore, there is a need to understand and acknowledge the changed spiritual situation and to move to the more suitable form in Grimmitt's distinction.

Even though Erricker [44] supposes a radical change for the subject, including losing the exclusivity of the term 'religious' in its title; ter Avest and McDougall's extension on Grimmitt's distinction by introducing the concept of 'teaching for religiosity' [49] seems more reasonable. Their conception of religiosity should be considered closely related to spirituality [50] in [49]. Because, it is particularly articulated in relation to the child's 'ontological calling' [51]. Even though studies dealing with spirituality, not related to religious education, in educational context are respectively rare [42]; there is no reason to think that religious education is the only way for spirituality or improving morals with spirituality [52]. Spiritual development might be manifest in/through beliefs, a sense of awe, wonder and mystery, experiencing feelings of transcendence, search for meaning and purpose, self-knowledge, relationships, creativity, and feelings and emotions [53]. Spirituality, for example, is evaluated in the context of Belgium, Finland, and Malta as a means of transforming religious education for the 21st century, whereas the educational policy in the UK and Ireland considers spirituality as a whole school issue [54] (p. 296).

In practice, there are touchstones on how spirituality will be treated in religious education. It should be recognized that no form of education can be considered value-free [55] (p. 173) and that youth and young adults' spirituality tends to be individualistic, eclectic, subjective, secular, and personally constructed [43]. Then, spiritual development is the child's right, as stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. But, rather than only seeing children's spirituality from its broadest perspective, there are many other ways to embed spirituality in education, such as school ethos, the role of the teacher, attitude towards values nurture and facility for assessment [40]. It is reported, for example, because of the lack of definite academic outcomes within a target driven curriculum, that teachers are often unwilling to implement the moral and spiritual area within their teaching [56]. Moreover, 'Western' conceptualisation of spirituality and education may not be appropriate for 'Eastern' (or other) thoughts [36]. Due to marketization and commodification (popularly labelled as McDonaldizing), for example, spiritual practices in education may be divorced from their spiritual and ethical origins [57]. Similarly, since outcome-based approaches to the curriculum may deskill teachers in their ability to discern a student's worldview and the various frameworks of meaning, it is crucial for teachers to discern pupils' worldviews in order to focus on teaching for the meaning-making of students rather than the attainment of results [42].

There is a need to recognize where to start for spirituality in education, namely giving freedom to students to reflect their ontological predisposition [42], on the grounds that religious education can lead spiritual development by serving as a way to transmit values rather than merely clarify them [58]. It does not mean that a teacher will accept all statements students make about spirituality without question, but a teacher needs to be in a situation to challenge students [40], by which children will be encouraged to think for themselves and to take personal responsibility for their thoughts and actions [59]. That is the prominent part of contemporary religious education that helps students how to

identify, interpret and evaluate contemporary spiritual and moral issues by focusing on resourcing and enhancing the basic human spirituality [41,43] . However, this approach does not fit the schools that operate with traditional religious education which may not be sensitive to the subjective turn [18,43,52]; because traditional religious education in 'teaching in' style may be seen as a teaching form of 'life-as' modes.

6. Conclusions

That subjectivation is a feature of our time presents a remarkable challenge in the realm of values. Heelas et al., define that experience as a fundamental clash of values [2] (p. 128). Under the shadow of the pendulum between those associated with the cultivation of unique subjectivities and those associated with having to live a targeted-life, the clash may be either acute or more managed. Morality might be seen as a comfortable and vivid place for that clash. Since their orientations are different, 'subjective-lives' have a different disposition in the moral realm than the mode of "life-as". In the former, the legitimization of the act works through subjectively experienced realities. In the latter, it is done by external authorities on behalf of and for the agent. In such a comparison, the reasoning for/against the act in "life-as" mode will be much easier, because externally validated rules, roles, or duties, are generally accessible. However, it is almost impossible to approach a generalisation of whether an act is moral or not in "subjective-life" spirituality as well as whether spirituality has morality or not. This is because of the fact that not only does each agent have a unique subjectively experienced reality in his/her "subjective-life", but also that forms of spirituality are not a branch of a single tree. Nevertheless, it is expected that morality should be underpinned for its practitioner by spirituality [39]; even if this does not have a religious background. In the same way, there will be a tension in the educational realm, especially between those schools located on different edges, just as there is between "life-as" and "subjective-life". As long as students are considered in a traditional 'teaching in' style of religious education, the challenge may not be overcome. Contrarily, 'teaching about religion' and 'teaching from religion' [45] might be more plausible to reduce the tension, as well as 'teaching for religiosity' [49]. Because, 'teaching about religion' is better placed to cater pluralism and to prevent intolerance. In addition, for 'teaching from religion', the question is to what extent, and in what ways, children and young people can gain educational benefit from the study of religion, that makes the discipline an educational study [48]. The time has come to accept the students' disposition to evaluate their subjectivities by which educational practices will not suffer from over-simple generalizations.

Funding: The present study has been written while the author is supported by the scholarship of YLSY-2013 MONE-TURKEY.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest. The founding sponsor had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analysis, or interpretation of the data; in the writing of the manuscript, and in the decision to publish the results.

References and Notes

1. Taylor, C. *The Ethics of Authenticity*; Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 1991.
2. Heelas, P.; Woodhead, L.; Seel, B.; Tusting, K.; Szerszynski, B. *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion Is Giving Way to Spirituality*; Blackwell: Oxford, UK, 2005.
3. Thomas, L. Changing old habits? 'New Age' Catholicism, subjectivity and gender in BBC2's The Monastery and its reception. *Eur. J. Cult. Stud.* **2011**, *14*, 558–572. [CrossRef]
4. Heelas, P. *Spiritualities of Life: New Age Romanticism and Consumptive Capitalism*; Blackwell: Oxford, UK, 2008.
5. Shon, P.C.H. "Hey You C'me Here!": Subjectivization, resistance, and the interpellative violence of self-generated police-citizen encounters. *Int. J. Semiotic. Law.* **2000**, *13*, 159–179. [CrossRef]

6. Gandhi, S. Book review of "Heelas, P., and Woodhead, L., (with Seel, B., Szerszynksi, B. and Tusting, K.) The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality. Blackwell Publishing, 2005". *Sociol. Relig.* **2008**, *69*, 117–118. Copyright-Copyright Association for the Sociology of Religion Spring 2008; Last updated-2017-10-27; CODEN-SRELE2. [CrossRef]
7. Shterin, M. Book review of "Heelas, P., and Woodhead, L., (with Seel, B., Szerszynksi, B. and Tusting, K.) The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality. Blackwell Publishing, 2005". *Br. J. Sociol.* **2007**, *58*, 723–724. [CrossRef]
8. Berghuijs, J.; Pieper, J.; Bakker, C. Being 'spiritual' and being 'religious' in Europe: Diverging life orientations. *J. Contemp. Relig.* **2013**, *28*, 15–32. [CrossRef]
9. Hannon, P. More than meets the eye: Morality and spirituality. *Furrow J. Contemp. Church* **2004**, *55*, 666–673.
10. Giddens, A. Living in a post-traditional society. In *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*; Beck, U., Giddens, A., Lash, S., Eds.; Blackwell: Oxford, UK, 1994.
11. Taylor, C. *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*; Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 1989.
12. Inglehart, R. *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, And Political Change in 43 Societies*; Princeton University Press: Princeton, NY, USA, 1997.
13. Houtman, D.; Mascini, P. Why do churches become empty, while New Age grows? Secularization and religious change in the Netherlands. *J. Sci. Stud. Relig.* **2002**, *41*, 455–473. [CrossRef]
14. Hoge, D.R.; Roozen, D.A. *Understanding Church Growth and Decline, 1950–1978*; Pilgrim Press: New York, NY, USA, 1979.
15. Carr, D. Spirituality, spiritual sensibility and human growth. *Int. J. Philos. Relig.* **2018**, *83*, 245–260. [CrossRef]
16. Albertsen, E.J.; O'connor, L.E.; Berry, J.W. Religion and interpersonal guilt: Variations across ethnicity and spirituality. *Ment. Health Relig. Cult.* **2006**, *9*, 67–84. [CrossRef]
17. Yachina, N. The Problem of spiritual and moral formation of personality. *Proc. Soc. Behv.* **2015**, *197*, 1575–1579. [CrossRef]
18. Hay, D.; Nye, R. Investigating children's spirituality: the need for a fruitful hypothesis. *Int. J. Child. Spiritua.* **1996**, *1*, 6–16. [CrossRef]
19. Berryman, J.W. Spirituality, religious education, and the dormouse. *Int. J. Child. Spirit.* **1997**, *2*, 9–22. [CrossRef]
20. McDaniel, B.L.; Grice, J.W.; Eason, E.A. Seeking a multi-construct model of morality. *J. Moral. Educ.* **2010**, *39*, 37–48. [CrossRef]
21. Willmulsen, K. Morality, ethics, relationship to spirituality. In *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*; Downey, M., Ed.; Liturgical Press: Collegeville, PA, USA, 1993.
22. Hoge, D.R.; Luna, C.L.; Miller, D.K. Trends in college students' values between 1952 and 1979: A return of the fifties? *Sociol. Educ.* **1981**, *54*, 263–274. [CrossRef]
23. Lynch, G. *After Religion 'Generation X' and the Search for Meaning*; Darton Longman & Todd: London, UK, 2002.
24. Hocutt, M. A behavioral analysis of morality and value. *Behav. Anal.* **2013**, *36*, 239–249. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
25. Ruiz, M.R. Values and morality: Science, faith, and feminist pragmatism. *Behav. Anal.* **2013**, *36*, 251–254. [CrossRef]
26. Davie, G. *Religion in Britain Since 1945: Believing without Belonging*; Wiley-Blackwell: Oxford, UK, 1994.
27. Davie, G. *Europe—The Exceptional Case: Parameters of Faith in the Modern World*; Darton, Longman & Todd: London, UK, 2002.
28. Kettle, D. Believing without belonging? Cultural change seen in theological context. *Int. Rev. Miss.* **2005**, *94*, 507–523. [CrossRef]
29. Allport, G.W. *The Individual and His Religion: A Psychological Interpretation*; Constable: London, UK, 1951.
30. Giddens, A. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*; Polity Press: Cambridge, UK, 1991.
31. Torevell, D. Acting out of affections: Embodiment, morality and (post) modernity. *Int. J. Child. Spirit.* **2000**, *5*, 27–36. [CrossRef]
32. Mesquita, B. Emotional acculturation: Emotions as gateways to minority inclusion. In Proceedings of the 7th CERE Conference, Scotland, UK, 4–5 April 2018.

33. Shoemaker, D. Personal identity and ethics. In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*; Zalta, E.N., Ed.; Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University: Stanford, CA, USA, 2016.
34. Spohn, W.C. Spirituality and ethics: Exploring the connections. *Theol. Stud.* **1997**, *58*, 109–123. [CrossRef]
35. Fisher, J.W.; Francis, L.J.; Johnson, P. Assessing spiritual health via four domains of spiritual wellbeing: The SH4DI. *Pastor. Psychol.* **2000**, *49*, 133–145. [CrossRef]
36. Ng, P.T.M.; Lu, L. Spirituality and morality: A study of communal aspects from eastern and western perspectives. *J. Relig. Educ.* **2015**, *63*, 13–24. [CrossRef]
37. Downey, M. *Understanding Christian Spirituality*; Paulist Press: New York, NY, USA, 1997.
38. Rai, T.; Holyoak, K. Exposure to moral relativism compromises moral behavior. *J. Exp. Soc. Psychol.* **2013**, *49*, 995–1001. [CrossRef]
39. Murdoch, I. *The Sovereignty of Good*; Routledge: London, UK, 2001.
40. Thanissaro, P.N. Finding a moral homeground: appropriately critical religious education and transmission of spiritual values. *Int. J. Child. Spirit.* **2010**, *15*, 175–187. [CrossRef]
41. Clifford, P. Moral and spiritual education as an intrinsic part of the curriculum. *Int. J. Child. Spirit.* **2013**, *18*, 268–280. [CrossRef]
42. Hyde, B. Weaving the threads of meaning: a characteristic of children's spirituality and its implications for religious education. *Br. J. Relig. Educ.* **2008**, *30*, 235–245. [CrossRef]
43. Rossiter, G. Perspective on contemporary spirituality: Implications for religious education in Catholic schools. *Int. Stud. Cath. Educ.* **2010**, *2*, 129–147. [CrossRef]
44. Erricker, C. Shall we dance? Authority, representation, and voice: The place of spirituality in religious education. *Relig. Educ.* **2001**, *96*, 20–35. [CrossRef]
45. Grimmitt, M. *Religious Education and Human Development: The Relationship Between Studying Religions and Personal, Social and Moral Education*; McCrimmons: Great Wakering, UK, 1987.
46. Coll, R. Examination of the consultation and development process for the Scottish Catholic religious education guidelines. *J. Cath. Educ.* **2013**, *6*, 233–250. [CrossRef]
47. Franchi, L. Catechesis and religious education: A case study from Scotland. *Relig. Educ.* **2013**, *108*, 467–481. [CrossRef]
48. Hull, J. The Contribution of Religious Education to Religious Freedom: A Global Perspective. In *Religious Education in Schools: School Education in Relation with Freedom of Religion and Belief, Tolerance, and Non-Discrimination*; 2002. Available online: https://iarf.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Religious-Education-in-Schools.pdf (accessed on 17 September 2018).
49. ter Avest, I.; McDougall, R. The Little Prince—An introduction to spirituality: A moving experience in religious education for primary school children in a secularised world. *J. Beliefs Values* **2014**, *35*, 214–217. [CrossRef]
50. Alii, E.; Vermeer, P.; van der Zee, T. *Godsdienstpedagogiek. Dimensies en Spanningsvelden*; Zoetermeer: Meinema, The Netherlands, 2009.
51. Fowler, J.W. *Stages of Faith. The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*; Harper: San Francisco, CA, USA, 1981.
52. Harris, K.I. Children's spirituality and inclusion: strengthening a child's spirit with community, resilience and joy. *Int. J. Child. Spirit.* **2015**, *20*, 161–177. [CrossRef]
53. SCAA. *Spiritual and Moral Development- School Curriculum and Assessment Authority Discussion Paper: No. 3*; National Curriculum Council: York, UK, 1993.
54. Watson, J.; Trousdale, D.S.M. Global perspectives and contexts for spiritual education. In *Global Perspectives and Contexts for Spiritual Education*; Watson, J., De Souza, M., Trousdale, A., Eds.; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2014.
55. Haldane, J. Religious education in a pluralist society: A philosophical examination. *Br. J. Educ. Stud.* **1986**, *34*, 161–181. [CrossRef]
56. De Souza, M.; Hyde, B. Spirituality of children and young people: A consideration of some perspectives and implications from research contextualized by Australia. *Int. J. Child. Spirit.* **2007**, *12*, 97–104. [CrossRef]
57. Hyland, T. McDonaldizing spirituality: Mindfulness, education, and consumerism. *J. Transform. Educ.* **2017**, *15*, 334–356. [CrossRef]

58. Wright, A. Dancing in the fire: A deconstruction of Clive Erricker's postmodern spiritual pedagogy. *Relig. Educ.* **2001**, *96*, 120–135. [CrossRef]
59. Wright, A. *Spirituality and Education*; Routledge: London, UK, 2000.

education sciences

MDPI

Article

Religion and Negotiation of the Boundary between Majority and Minority in Québec: Discourses of Young Muslims in Montréal CÉGEP

Stéphanie Tremblay [1,*], Marie-Odile Magnan [2] and Catherine Levasseur [2]

[1] Département de Sciences des Religions, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), Montréal, QC H2L 4Y2, Canada
[2] Département D'administration et Fondements de L'éducation, Université de Montréal, Montréal, QC H3C 3J7, Canada; marie-odile.magnan@umontreal.ca (M.-O.M.); catherine.levasseur.2@umontreal.ca (C.L.)
* Correspondence: tremblay.stephanie.2@uqam.ca; Tel.: +1-514-987-3000 (ext. 4348)

Received: 4 September 2018; Accepted: 21 October 2018; Published: 24 October 2018

Abstract: In Québec, tensions between youth immigrants' identification and the perceived identity of the "majority group" is evident in greater Montréal-area schools, where a plurality of ethno-cultural or religious affiliations often converge and where racism and Islamophobia are becoming major social issues (Benhadjoudja 2014; Baubérot 2014; Bilge 2013). This paper aims to explore the discourses of "minoritized" Muslim youth pertaining to their perceived boundaries with respect to the majority group, considering the power relations at play. Ten qualitative interviews with Muslim youth born to immigrant parents and studying in colleges (CEGEPs) of the Montréal region will be analyzed. A typological analysis will reveal their main positions with regard to the majority group, which encompass ways of negotiating the border between the "Us" and "Them," influenced by the process of secularism, arising from acceptance, contestation, or even a sort of exacerbation of racializing categorization. In conclusion, the social and political implications of these findings will be discussed.

Keywords: religious minorities; secularism; Muslim; youth; immigration; social boundaries; identification; college; Québec

1. Introduction

Several studies conducted since the 1990s have highlighted the fluidity and complexity of self-identification, notably in relation to religious markers, among young people with an immigrant background in Québec and elsewhere, often at odds with the identity, real or imagined, of the "majority" group [1]. In the case of Québec, this estrangement is particularly evident in schools in the greater Montréal area, where there is often a concentration of a plurality of ethnocultural or religious affiliations, such as Roman Catholicism and other Christian churches, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Judaism [2]. In a recent context of tension, even polarization between Québec majorities and minorities fixed mainly around religious identity, the question of racism and Islamophobia has become a major social issue, visible in the debates on secularism at schools and in research [3–5]. It is necessary to explore in a more specific way the discourses and representations of "minoritized" Muslim youth regarding perceived or created boundaries in relation to the majority, as it impacts their schooling experiences, the conditions of learning, and their overall chances of educational success. In this perspective, we propose to explore the experiences of young people attending several colleges in the Montréal area. In Québec, the term "college" is synonymous with CÉGEP, the French acronym for College of General and Professional Education. The college level is the first level of higher education in Québec. College education has a prescribed duration of two years for a general diploma, which gives access to university, and three

years for a technical degree, which can lead to the labour market as well as allow access to university. Recent literature shows that the difficulties experienced by young people during this pivotal stage can create "zones of fragility," as defined by Dejean et al. (2016) [6], or as a risk factor potentially linked to identity tensions or even to various forms of "radicalization," religious or ideological [6,7]. As Crettiez (2016) [8] points out, radicalization has become a new buzzword in both the academic and scientific world, while the term is often confused and subject to various epistemological and ethical criticisms. In deference to the latter, in the context of this article, we will consider radicalization as: "the progressive and evolving adoption of a rigid thought, absolute and non-negotiable truth, whose logic structures the worldview of the actors, who use it to give voice to a violent repertoire of action, most often within clandestine structures, whether formalized or virtual, in which they isolate themselves from ordinary social referents and adopt a grandiose view of themselves" (p. 712). It is through a critical analysis of ethnic relations that we discern the perception of this boundary between young Muslim college students and the majority group, considering the power relations at play between minority and majority groups [9,10]. We thus analyze 10 qualitative interviews conducted with young Muslim college students born to immigrant parents in Montréal or who came to Québec during early childhood. A typological analysis will make it possible to identify the main positioning regarding the majority group, which expresses the many ways of negotiating the boundaries between Us and Them.

2. Context

2.1. Secularism and "Majority" Identity in Québec

Secularism, both as an issue of sociopolitical debate and as an object of scientific reflection, is part of a relatively new niche in Québec. Indeed, the emergence of a lexical field of secularism dates to the end of the 1990s and initially concerned only the school sector. It was in 1999, following a major government commission on education aimed at targeting priority projects for the renewal of the education system [11], that the challenge of the "de-confessionalization" of public schools emerged as a priority. For the first time since the creation of a public education system in the 1960s, a political will was expressed to open the education system to a new diversity of beliefs, under the pressure of massive immigration and of a process of religious disaffection of the majority Catholic population. Since its creation, the public school system in Québec had been denominational, Catholic or Protestant, with corresponding school boards, and the church was organically linked to each of its components. Following a parliamentary debate on the issue, in which more than 250 briefs from various individuals and organizations were tabled, the government proposed re-establishing the school system based on "open secularism" [12], culminating a few years later in the implementation of a new cultural education program on religions [13]. This orientation, defined around individual rights and the principle of equality, became the first real reference available to social actors to think about secularism in Québec. Although valued by the large majority of social groups, it triggered dissatisfaction from some groups, mainly Catholics. The latter, adhering to a more "communitarian" concept of rights, believed the state should protect Québec's majority Christian heritage [14]. Over the next few years, so-called "open" secularism, i.e., receptive to religious manifestations in public life, came under criticism by stakeholders who had previously supported the secular shift in schools, including the Mouvement laïque québécois, which called for a tightening of rules regarding the public expression of religious diversity ("closed" secularism). Under this new positioning, social and political stakeholders increasingly grouped themselves around the "open" and "closed" polarities of secularism, which was broadened to include all social institutions and not just schools, sometimes giving rise to major tensions, especially concerning the wearing of religious symbols, requests for religious holidays, or the practice of prayer at school or at work. Some of these conflicts, which were widely publicized, even extended into the judicial process [15], which invoked the concept of reasonable accommodation to assess the acceptability of such requests. As Woehrling [16] (p. 44) 2008, states: "In all cases, for there to be an obligation of legal accommodation of reasonable accommodation, (whether

imposed by a court, accepted voluntarily by friendly agreement, or recommended by a human rights commission), there must first be infringement of freedom of religion or discrimination based on religion" under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (for more details, see: Woehrling (2008) [16]). Between 2006 and 2008, these focal points of controversy multiplied to such an extent that several authors wrote of a "crisis" of "reasonable accommodation," even if, in fact, not all the cases raised were subject to the very specific legal meaning of this term [17]. This crisis led to the creation by the government of the Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences. The mandate given by the government to this commission was primarily to demystify the public's dissatisfaction with what has been called "reasonable accommodation." After illustrating from solid evidence that it was mostly a crisis of perception, the "Bouchard-Taylor" report (from the names of the two commissioners, Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor) interpreted this debate as a symptom of a deeper malaise about the model of cultural integration within Québec society. More specifically, it stressed that:

> Among some Quebecers, this counter-reaction targets immigrants, who have become, to some extent, scapegoats. What has just happened in Québec gives the impression of a face-off between two minority groups [Québec francophones in Canada and immigrant-background minorities in Québec], each of which is asking the other to accommodate it. The members of the ethnocultural majority are afraid of being swamped by fragile minorities that are worried about their future. [18] (p. 18)

Despite the nuanced analysis from Bouchard and Taylor, the social controversy blending immigration, reasonable accommodations, and secularism continues to grow. In response to these grievances, in 2010, the Liberal government introduced Bill 94, An Act to establish guidelines governing accommodation requests within the Administration and certain institutions, which was ultimately abandoned in 2011. After the *Parti Québécois* took power in 2012, it returned to the charge with a more polarizing version of the same bill, commonly called the *Charter of Values for secularism* or the "*Charter*". The Charter aimed at affirming the values of State secularism and religious neutrality and of equality between women and men and providing a framework for accommodation requests. In the information documents accompanying the political initiative, for the first time, we move from the legal notion of secularism (separation of church and state, neutrality of the state, fundamental rights, etc.) to the notion of "values" (equality between men and women, religious neutrality) to which one attributes a "sacred" character. In addition, acceptable and unacceptable religious symbols for persons in state employment are visually identified, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Examples of unacceptable (**left**) and acceptable religious symbols (**right**) for state employees according to the *Charter of Values*. Credit: Radio-Canada [19].

This brought secularism to the unprecedented terrain of its "narrative" dimension [20]. In this way, secularism is seen as a value and performative, often conflated with a specific way to express beliefs [3]. In the view of several analysts, even though the *Charter* was not adopted because of new provincial elections, it represented a real sea change that left marks. From that point, we observe that specific

"incidents" were no longer necessary to put the issue of secularism on the political agenda [21]. Since then, a new and similar law, Bill 62, was adopted by the Liberal government to accentuate the religious neutrality of the state and to strengthen the power of the narrative dimension of secularism. Bill 62, "An Act to foster adherence to State religious' neutrality and, in particular, to provide a framework for requests for accommodations on religious grounds in certain bodies," was intended, in particular, to regulate requests for religious accommodation in certain organizations. Nevertheless, this law has been widely criticized since it came into force due to the vagueness and complexity of its practical application [22]. Thus, secularism is still not the subject of a precise legal formalization, but that has not prevented it from acquiring a concrete existence in common usage as well as in the political arena. Indeed, secularism is becoming more and more the organizational pivot in political debates concerning Québec identity, nationalism, and the integration of newcomers. At the same time, the classifications of secularism have branched out over the past 10 years and have crystallized new schools of thought, whether civic republican or communitarian, seeing secularism as the glue of social, civic, or moral bonds, or even liberal thinking, reaffirming the operative link between secularism and individual rights (equality/freedom) [23] (p. 120). From a conceptual viewpoint, these ideological families thus arise from an asymmetrical conceptual framework of secularism, the former preferring institutional principles of separation of the church and state and state neutrality, the latter relying more on the protection of individuals that ensues [24].

The evolution of the meanings attached to the concept of secularism is thus inspired by the political agenda of "living together" and the prominent markers are the relations between the majority and minority groups. Before the end of the 1990s, the integration of minorities into Québec society was mainly thought of in terms of cultural exchanges in the crucible of a francophone public identity, framed by the model of "interculturalism" [25]. During the same decade, more and more immigrants started coming from the North African Maghreb because of linguistic affinities with Québec built on French as the official language, as per the the Charter of the French Language (commonly known as Bill 101), adopted in 1977, and, above all, Québec immigration policies that prioritized knowledge of French. The increased visibility of this new religious difference, combined with the globalized impacts of the events of 11 September 2001, in the political imaginary, probably contributed to a hardening of the dominant conceptions of secularism, more and more defined in relation to Muslim "otherness." As Eid (2016, pp. 86–87) [26], also points out, Islam and "Muslims" thus went from being an external enemy in the Western imaginary, associated with Islamism in the Gulf countries or with inherited images of the Iranian Revolution, to an internal enemy following the attacks on the United States. In this new context, the border between Them, Muslims, and Us, the majority, was built around two markers: The overdetermination of the first by religion, understood as "an omnipotent and timeless force that, like a 'second nature,' overdetermines all social relationships" [26] (p. 86) and Islam's alleged opposition to equality between women and men. These arguments, largely inspired by the French model of secularism [27], became a major force in the debate on reasonable accommodation, and even more so at the time of the announcement of the *Charter of Values* [5]. As we will see throughout the analysis, the young people interviewed refer often at this time to a significant break in their relationship to the majority group.

There was also a hardening of the media discourse regarding Islam and Muslims, a rise of far-right groups (e.g., "La Meute," a far-right group founded in 2015 in Québec by two former members of the Canadian Armed Forces. The organization had 16,000 members on its Facebook page in 2018), and a shift to the political right within society as a whole [28]. Among the common discursive categories used to defend more restrictive conceptions of secularism, we also note the recurrence of the arguments of "security," particularly in the context of "radicalization" and the threat to identity or to "acquired rights" [29]. Muslim communities in Québec have also been the target of several types of assaults, including a deadly attack at a Québec City mosque in 2017, the delivery of hate messages to the same mosque, and a false television report that a mosque had reportedly requested exclusion

of women on a construction site. Despite this accumulation of worrying facts, the various levels of government are still reluctant or hesitant to speak of "Islamophobia".

2.2. Immigrant-Background Youth, Boundary Negotiation, and Islam

Several studies on the self-identification of second-generation youth have been conducted in European countries, including France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, and in the United States [30–33]. These studies generally show that youth use a variety of categories to self-define, including multiple, hyphenated, shifting, and context-specific identifications [30–33]. Research on boundary negotiation in schools also shows a tendency for these young people to focus on relationships with other youths with an immigrant background rather than those of the majority group [34]. In Québec, research has led to similar findings: Young people from immigrant backgrounds identify themselves less with so-called "old stock" (de souche) Quebecers than with those who belong to a racialized group [1,35], as is often the case for young Muslims. Studies also show that many young people from an immigrant background have experienced exclusion [36] and discrimination, sometimes leading to the perception of an insurmountable barrier, especially in disadvantaged districts [37]. Mc Andrew (2002) [38] observes in the same sense that religious and racial boundaries are crucial in whether intergroup relations are established, especially in the Montréal area. The study by Magnan and Larochelle-Audet (2018) [39] illustrates more recently that in the post-9/11 context of Bill 60 (the *Charter*), membership in the Muslim religion (real or presumed) has become a significant marker in the construction of the "border" in the school milieu [40]. Finally, Magnan et al. (2016) [40] observe that young people from an immigrant background in Québec have little interaction with members of the majority group, with whom they sense a certain estrangement, as observed elsewhere [33].

In this tense context, new studies are looking at the perception of recent political events by young people from immigrant backgrounds. Some have shown that the conflict dynamics of intergroup relations in Québec society have significant consequences for young people. First, the feeling of exclusion and stigmatization associated with the *Charter* debate have directly affected the psychological well-being of some young people, particularly those who identify with a religious or cultural minority. A study by Hassan et al. (2016) [41] illustrates that the negative attributions assigned to the collective identities associated with these young people (e.g., Arabs, Muslims, etc.) can be internalized and compromise their sense of belonging to society. Another study by El Hage (2013) [42] conducted in a Montréal college reveals that a majority of students from an immigrant background (17/24) reported having experienced stressful incidents in social interactions from the beginning of the 2013 *Charter* debate, such as inappropriate remarks or bullying, both inside and outside school. The *Charter*, and the discussions that followed, may also have contributed to making students more aware of such behaviours, and possibly gave them the means to name and make sense of such experiences.

These results also correspond to those of other Québec studies conducted on college students' perceptions of religious radicalization. Dejean et al. (2016) [6] note that the feeling of exclusion or stigmatization experienced by young people of Muslim faith may in many ways represent a "zone of fragility" linked to religious radicalization (leading or not to violence). Several youths said they felt there was a climate of suspicion around all Muslim students in the school, particularly related to the media uproar over Islam and radicalization. This study also highlighted that the "marginalization of identity" felt by some young people, who feel torn between their culture of origin and the host society, could represent a raw nerve that could be skillfully exploited by recruiters of radical groups of all kinds. On the other hand, this study illustrates, as have others [43], that for many young people, religion plays a positive role in their identification, especially in a context of intergroup tensions where it can reassert a strong social identity.

In a context marked by strong identity polarization involving, in particular, distorted perceptions of Islam and Muslims, it is necessary to examine the discourses of young Muslims in order to better understand their identity positioning and their perception of the boundary.

3. The Analytical Framework: Rapport with the Majority Group, the Boundary, and Identification

Our conceptual basis is inspired by the Weberian approach of ethnic communalization and ethnicity [10,44] in that it considers ethnicity as a social construct largely shaped by the subjectivity of individuals and the relations between groups. Our analysis focuses on how individuals describe their relationship to the majority group and therefore how they negotiate the boundary. It is thus a question of studying the meanings attributed by individuals to certain markers that form the Us/Them categories: "What comes under the domain of ethnicity is not the empirically observable cultural differences, but the conditions in which cultural differences are used as symbols of differentiation between in-group and out-group" [45] (p. 141). Thus, our analysis does not focus on the cultural or religious content itself, but on the construction of the boundary and the categorizations that result from it.

Following Juteau (2015) [10], we situate the Us/Them categories in the power and domination relations between majority and minority groups. Special attention will be given in this article to what Juteau [10] calls the "external face" of the boundary, which is created within social relations themselves. It is therefore constituted in the relationship to otherness, between Us/Them. For Juteau [10], markers used to delimit boundaries can vary greatly depending on contexts; they can refer sometimes to language, religion, skin colour, or country of origin. In the same way, in this conception, minorities are not designated in an essentialist manner, but rather refer to a sociological status. The dynamics of the external face of ethnicity can also be reflected in the "internal face" of the boundary, that is, on the construction of identity as perceived and lived by an individual relating to a group in the name of historical, cultural, or religious continuity. Danielle Hervieu-Léger speaks of a "believer lineage" to designate "the reference to the legitimacy of an authorized memory (of a 'tradition') [...] without prejudging the content of the beliefs that are at issue" [46] (p. 19. The "[. . .]" indicates elisions in original quotes or verbatim, here and below). We will see that the young people interviewed often draw the outlines of such an internal face or believer lineage in response to or in parallel with their negotiation of the boundary with the majority group.

To examine young people's view of their own sense of belonging in this context, like Brubacker and Junqua (2001) [47], we prefer the concept of "identification" to that of "identity." Brubaker and Junqua [47] propose this term since it implies "a process and an activity" in addition to being "devoid of the reifying connotations of the term identity" [47] (p. 75). They point to a dynamic process moving away from the essentialist tendencies of the term, identity. The terms, "identification" and "categorization", imply an intrinsic relationship to social life, without which it is impossible to study the phenomenon, since this is the study of the relation of self-identification as well as external identification of oneself by others (categorization). Being inseparable from social life, Brubaker and Junqua (2001) [47] see identification as a situational phenomenon, which can vary according to context. Our analysis considers the fact that "identity" is not given, and is rather a process we call "identification." Identification is a process marked by multiple social and individual factors, but for the aim of this paper, we will focus our analysis on the religious aspect of our participants' identification. Other identification factors have been addressed in a previous publication. See Magnan et al. (2017) [48].

This analytical framework will allow us to examine the interrelationship between the internal and external faces of ethnicity from the perspective of young people's perception of their relationship to the majority group (boundary) and their identification categories.

4. The Methodological Approach

The secondary data presented in this article come from a qualitative study of youth born to second-generation immigrant parents attending a Montréal college (n = 60). They are taken from a study of the scholastic experience and orientation logic of young college students from an immigrant background. Once the analysis of the orientation process of young people with an immigrant background was completed, we chose to carry out a secondary analysis of the retrospective school

narratives of young Muslims in the corpus. Indeed, the analyses have inductively highlighted the importance of the religious marker in negotiating boundaries with the majority group. Participants include nine female and one male student, born in Québec (seven out of 10) or arrived during early childhood (three out of 10, generation 1.5). Participants had in common that both parents are immigrants, they belong to the Muslim religion, they studied in French in the Montréal area, and they were 18 to 20 years old at the time of the interview. This study being qualitative, our objective was not to obtain a representative sample of a population in the statistical sense of the term. We sought to diversify the corpus to document individual experiences and to bring forth different voices and perspectives on the issues being addressed while highlighting those aspects that are shared by the participants. A limit to the diversification of our sample lies in the inclusion of only one male subject. The results, however, do not appear to have been affected, since the issues raised by that participant were consistent with those raised by the female subjects. Thus, the youths interviewed identify with different countries, including Algeria (3), Afghanistan (1), Guyana (1), Ghana (1), Iran (2), Morocco (1), and Pakistan (1). They are members of "visible minorities" or not. *The Employment Equity Act* defines visible minorities as people, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour. Participants attended French-language (3) or English-language (5) public colleges, or private French-language (1) or private English-language colleges (1). It should also be noted that the interviews were conducted in 2013–2014, when the *Parti Québécois* government announced the *Charter of Values*, which is echoed in many declarations. The public debate around the *Charter of Values* became a turning point in the negotiation of the border between the majority and the minority groups in Québec, as will be discussed further in the analysis. For reasons of ethics and confidentiality, the names used in the analysis are pseudonyms. All testimonial excerpts have been translated from French to English. The transcriptions are faithful to the participants' speech. We respected orthographical norms except to showcase individual expression.

In the project underpinning this study, the semi-directed interviews were conducted in depth [49]. They lasted between 90 and 150 min each. This data collection technique was designed to highlight the sensitivity and experience of young people in their storytelling. They were invited to tell their story, describing in particular the migration path of their parents, their school experiences, their categories of identification, and their relationship to Québec society. The interview guide used for this study is available in Appendix A. The interviews were recorded and transcribed in full. To carry out the analysis, we first conducted a "horizontal" codification of the data around the themes structuring our conceptual framework (break with the majority group, boundary formation stages, pivotal moments). The detailed categories of the content analysis are available in Appendix B. This first step made it possible to identify pivotal moments in the set of individual trajectories in terms of formation and solidification of the boundary. Next, we created a synoptic table for each participant in the study to identify the specificities of the individual profiles with respect to the boundary. This "vertical" analysis then led to the construction of a typology of rapport to the majority group and negotiation of the boundary. The results of this double perspective are revisited in the next section.

5. Rupture with the Majority Group

5.1. Boundary Infancy, Elementary School

While several studies on the integration of young people with an immigrant background [50–53] identify the period of adolescence as the first pivotal moment in the construction of the intergroup boundary, our analysis highlights that, from childhood, many young people experience situations that lead them to become aware of their "difference" to varying degrees. This is what we call the infancy of the boundary. For some (Taika (Female, Algeria), Leyla (Female, Guyana), Daline (Female, Pakistan), and Amilda (Female, Ghana)), the transition to elementary school takes place without incident, and no difficult episodes are reported. This is the case of Taika (Female, Algeria):

> I really liked the teachers, I found that they seemed passionate about their work and everything, especially one that I had in Grade 3 and 4, since this one in particular made us do like a lot of enriching activities and he really helped to enrich our French, you could really see that it was close to his heart.

5.1.1. Awareness of Stigma

For others (Neda (Female, Iran), Bahar (Female, Afghanistan), and Rihab (Female, Algeria)), the same period was marked by certain "critical incidents" [54], involving teachers or peers, that created a first outline of the boundary. These incidents involved, for example, mores (e.g., modesty issues in a course on anatomy) or the wearing of religious symbols. This is the case of Bahar (Female, Afghanistan), who reports that when she started wearing the hijab (headscarf) in Grade 4 (age 9), she received several unpleasant comments at school:

> They didn't really understand it, but they said, for example, what are you wearing? And so I told them I was wearing the hijab and that's part of my identity. People thought it was strange because they were not really used to it. For sure, when you're little, it's like a little difficult because we don't have, we lose self-confidence more easily.

Finally, three young people had difficult, even traumatic, experiences in elementary school or kindergarten. These situations involved a teacher, inherently someone in a position of power. This is the case of Fahim (Male, Iran), who recalls that he was physically assaulted by a teacher:

> Yes, really from students, I do not remember too much, but I remember from the teachers, my preschool teacher, there was an episode where once she hit me on the head with a big book, I do not know, for sure she was a bit racist, it showed, my brother and sister already knew, I think my mother already knew.

In the same vein, another participant (Bouchra (Female, Algeria)) confided that some of her elementary school teachers acted in discriminatory ways, especially toward young Muslims:

> When I spoke in class and stuff, her reactions were a little disproportionate. She sent me to the principal's office for having, I don't know, for not having put away my book at the right time, when the reading period was over, or because she thought my answers were inappropriate.

Bouchra (Female, Algeria), like others, indicated she experienced the events of September 11th as a real tipping point during elementary school. She felt a perceptible change in people's attitudes towards her:

> It's crazy for me that an event that happened in the United States could have affected my life like that, but on 11 September 2001, from that moment on... When the attacks there happened, the effect wasn't felt right away, but in the years that followed, it was at that moment that the attitude of the people changed.

At the mention of her Algerian origin, Bouchra tells us that the reaction of others could become downright negative, provoking in return a defensive attitude on her part. This shame attached by the other to her identification, then transformed into a stigma, often pushed her, she told us, to reflect the identification by which she felt excluded back at the other, notably by resorting to dark humour:

> I did not have to be ashamed to be Muslim, I reacted in a way that was pretty [...]. I tended to make pretty inappropriate jokes about the subject, from the age of 8, I started making jokes about terrorists when someone reacted like that, to make comments like, "What? Are you afraid I'll blow up your house?"

In his sociological analysis of stigma, Goffman (as cited in [55]) writes "the stigmatized individual defines himself as no different from any other human being, while at the same time he and those

around him define him as someone set apart." (p. 26). While the difference is constructed in the social relation, it nevertheless acquires a structuring force in reciprocal relations and perceptions, since it refers to a perceived difference on both sides with respect to a "normality" in terms of identity. Goffman [55] explains that stigmatized individuals are thus confronted by two strategies: Become "masters in the art of pretending" by masking their difference, or using a "blanket" to minimize their impact in social interaction [56]. The defensive use of dark humour by the girl of Algerian origin seems to be part of such a stigma blanket strategy, which, by caricaturing the label, reveals its absurdity.

5.1.2. Silencing the Experience of Racism?

Among young people who experienced discriminatory incidents with elementary school teachers, there is a tendency to doubt themselves to explain away or to minimize the difficulties experienced, attributing part of the responsibility to their own embarrassment or personal temperament. For example, Fahim (Male, Iran) said this when talking about his elementary school experience:

> There were some with whom I got along really well, there were some with whom I did not get along so well, but I don't think it was racism, I think more that it's I was new, and I was a little different, a little quiet, but after I came out of my shell, it went well.

Another (Neda (Female, Iran)) adds:

> In kindergarten, they adored me, I was really adorable to them. But in elementary school, they didn't like me much, I was a little bit the difficult child, I was in my corner, my own world, yes.

These internal attributions used by young people who have experienced incidents where they were alienated by teachers seem to show a strategy of concealing stigma, which, by removing the hypothesis of racism or discrimination from these situations, is perhaps aimed, more broadly, at erasing it from the lived experience. However, more research is needed to validate this hypothesis.

5.2. Boundary Solidification, High School

While boundary construction not only occurs in adolescence, but is often built gradually from early childhood, the high school stage is a pivotal moment for most of the youths interviewed. Indeed, it is in high school that many of the turning points in the individual biography occur, in terms of relationship with parents or religious affiliation, but also in relation to a heightened awareness of racialization at school by peers or teachers. This solidification of the boundary operates both on the symbolic level, through the projection of a Québec identity from which many feel excluded, as well as in concrete attitudes and behaviors, attesting in different ways to a difference between Us/Them.

5.2.1. The Narrative of the Québec Identity at School

On the symbolic level, history classes and debates on secularism are often depicted as the main markers of a collective identity promoted by the majority group to assert the "internal face" [10] of its national boundary while distancing itself from immigrants (external), especially Muslims. This demarcation operates both inside and outside the walls of the school.

At school, history classes are firstly described by eight out of 10 participants as a monotonous and repetitive subject, from elementary to high school, in which they do not really recognize themselves:

> Me, I think it was mostly repetitive because, since elementary school, you learn about Amerindians, after that you learn a little of the history of Québec, we learned that in elementary school it's the same thing in high school. (Amilda (Female, Ghana))

Some go even farther, denouncing the ethnocentric nature of the history taught in French-language schools, particularly in the marginalization of Indigenous peoples. One student explained, for example, her irritation with the story of "colonized" Quebecers because of the position of "colonizer" that they themselves had in relation to the First Nations:

> There are many of us whose peoples were colonized by the French, by the English, so our first reaction was not "poor little francophones," but it was more "weren't there already people here when the French arrived? So why should we be so sad that the French were conquered when they themselves had conquered the Amerindians?". (Bouchra (Female, Algeria))

5.2.2. The *Charter of Values*, a Flashpoint

Outside school, a political event in Québec has had a major resonance in the discourses of all the young interviewees who see it, after September 11, as a second sea change in the evolution of their relationship to the majority group and in Québec in general: The *Charter of Values*. While for some, the word, "racism", would not have been uttered before this event, it entered the language and representations of several of the young people who felt betrayed by this political gesture that, in their view, directly targeted Islam and Muslims.

Some support their challenge to this bill based on the same legal principles that serve to define secularism in Québec (equality, freedom of conscience and religion, separation of church and state, neutrality) [24] but also by criticizing the erroneous or paradoxical interpretation proposed in the *Charter*. For Amilda (Female, Ghana), Fahim (Male, Iran) Bouchra (Female, Algeria), and Bahar (Female, Afghanistan), this is the case:

> I like secular [. . .] secularism, it's not... I don't know, but in my view, it's not against all religion [...] so it would be stupid to say, right, you allow the cross, but you do not allow the hijab and you call yourself secular. Secularism is not an attachment to being against religion, it is detachment from religion. (Fahim (Male, Iran))

Others saw it as direct discrimination against Muslims, largely related to the "national question" and Québec's quest for independence: Neda (Female, Iran), Taika (Female, Algeria), and Malika (Female, Morocco).

> I think it's aimed too much at Muslims, it's really about Muslims, because a Christian is never going to wear a cross so huge it sticks out, and the majority is already secular anyways. (Neda (Female, Iran))

Yet another explicitly referred to the *Parti Québécois* initiative as a "racial posture" that involves more than just religion, and that frightened her:

> That's the next step and that's what's happening with the *Charter*, we can see it. You can say it's a question of religion, but there are many, many racial stereotypes that are starting to emerge. And we start to see the real face of people, the real opinion that they have of the people around them, and it's scary. (Malika (Female, Morocco))

This last declaration suggests that the *Charter* lifted a taboo in public discourse or opinion by liberating racist speech that had previously been more censored or hidden. This reading of the situation was also put forward by several analysts of secularism in Québec, who showed both a rise in far-right rhetoric in the wake of the *Charter* episode [5], and demonstrated that, unlike the previous bills, the *Charter* was placed on the political agenda without being triggered by any specific incident in the public space [21], as if beliefs preceded facts.

5.2.3. Representation by Deeds: Lived Racism

Although all participants reacted negatively to the *Charter*, those who seem to be most personally affected by the repercussions of the proposed bill were no doubt young women who wear the hijab and whose stigma is therefore visible. Two of them spoke to us of an increase, in the context of the *Charter*, in racist incidents and hate crimes experienced daily, not only in school, but also in the street and in the labour market. The first, Rihab (Female, Algeria), said:

> Especially since the *Charter* business. [...] Then yeah, the worst thing is that people look at you like you're an idiot because you follow that. As if I were a submissive woman and all.

It even created new barriers for her to enter the job market. In the street and in various public places, she was also insulted by strangers:

> I remember, I was out and there was one woman who said: Hey! Do you have a bomb in your bag? [...] At one point, I went into a small shop and the woman shouted Lord! She looked at me and she shouted. (Rihab (Female, Algeria))

A second interviewee, Daline (Female, Pakistan), was the target of the same kind of gratuitous aggression because of her religious affiliation:

> I was with my friend, she was parking her car [...] there was another car [...] and a man came with his wife and he told us: go back to your country, you do not belong here, f--- you.

Another young woman who does not wear the headscarf explained that, regardless of the imperative to adopt the "Québec identity," they frequently feel an often-insurmountable barrier in relations with other Quebecers. In these cases, the most salient marker of difference does not seem to be religion, but ethnic origin. However, in both situations, the result is the same. Bouchra (Female, Algeria):

> They wanted us to speak French, to have their values, their ideals, to have the same vision of what it meant to be in a democracy, to be liberals, to be independent and autonomous [...], but when the time came to interact with us, most of the time we felt clearly that we were not Quebecers, that they themselves always saw us as immigrants and as people from our country of origin.

The same young woman added that, in her view, the moment they discover her stigma, many of her interlocutors change their attitude, as if their conception of a "true" Quebecer was collapsing and the facade of the social interaction shattered:

> I look white, so people when they meet me assume that I was from one of these countries, either from France or something because I look like a Quebecer, I don't look Algerian, and when I tell them, I immediately see a change in their personality, in how they treated me.

In college, most students still observe this separation, but in a less marked way than in high school:

> Now, here everyone... You go to the cafeteria, everyone is with everyone, here it's much more mixed. (Amilda (Female, Ghana))

> People mix more I would say because we don't know each other. You have a class with 30 people [...] so you're never with the same people. (Amilda (Female, Ghana))

5.2.4. A Negative Representation of "Québec Culture"

Certainly, the boundaries that solidify in high school are mostly experienced by young people who feel excluded from a Québec identity defined by history or the issue of secularism. The results suggest, however, that a backlash effect seems to lead most of these young people to develop a negative representation of "old stock" Quebecers and their "culture," as one of them points out:

> I believe that by forcing children, especially children of immigrants, to shun their own culture for the benefit of Québec culture, they disgust them. [...] We were above all tired of being taken for idiots, to be told that our culture was less important, that our culture was not part of the Québec community as such. (Bouchra (Female, Algeria))

The first categorical attribution mentioned by our participants related to the Québec view as being ignorant and closed-minded:

> They wonder afterward why people treat them as ignorant, they don't budge, they do not want to see. And that's something I noticed in Québec culture, these are not people who like to look beyond the tip of their nose. 'This is what happens here, nothing else; what happens elsewhere we don't care and it's not important, it's not here'. (Malika (Female, Morocco))

This representation is accompanied by the depreciation of certain symbols associated with Québec culture, such as poutine, hockey, and the *Québécois* accent. The same goes for Québec history, considered in many discourses as less rich or interesting than that of other nations or countries:

> Then, with my parents, we joke, we ask 'what's their culture, poutine, beer, hockey,' what is their culture, really? (Neda (Female, Iran))

One of the participants articulates this devaluing image by using the expression "white-washed" to describe the state of a person who is too immersed in Québec culture:

> I call it the white-washed world, becoming *Québécois* in your head. (Neda (Female, Iran))

These categorical attributions show that the boundary is built both by the majority group and by the minority group formed by the young people interviewed. This negative representation could be correlated with the exclusionary attitude felt by young people vis-à-vis the majority group, particularly in the context of the tenser discourse on secularism in the political and media world since the *Charter* episode.

Although Québec culture seems daunting for most of the young people interviewed, many admit having been influenced by "Québec values", which moderate their way of being and acting and even their relationships with their parents.

5.3. Respecting "Québec Values": From Criticism to Support

Among the young people we met, most of whom were born in Québec, some offered a rather critical point of view regarding the so-called Québec liberal values, such as individualism or freedom, which they considered excessive:

> More freedom at home, that's a big deal. At my house, you come home, you didn't have a good grade on the exam, you do not go out for a week; while at their house, it's neoliberal, I would say, in the sense that the parents let them do what they want. (Leyla (Female, Guyana))

At the same time, many of them feel they have internalized some of these values, such as open-mindedness. This is the case of Taika (Female, Algeria):

> Québec values, it's above all open-mindedness, always freedom, but above all I find that, in Québec especially, it's openness of mind they teach us.

This mix of values causes some young people to conflict with their parents in terms of morals, as one of them put it:

> My father, he's very religious, very conservative on that. For him, people's roles are very rigid, there is a way for women to act, to dress, to interact with others. [...] For me, it's something that makes no sense, quite honestly; gender roles, it's ridiculous. (Bouchra (Female, Algeria))

In cases of disagreements with their parents, these young people seem to draw a clear line between what comes from "true" religion, the one they interpret independently, and the culture of their country of origin, which is marked by injustice:

> Since I grew up in a more Western culture, and I know more about my religion, I know the difference between culture and religion. Over there [in Algeria], they mix them up and then it annoys me because they act unjustly, things that are not right [...] and religion condemns that. But they, because it's cultural, they say it's okay. (Rihab (Female, Algeria))

This distancing from family culture, coupled with the individualization of the relationship with Islam, seems to show in this young woman a pronounced reflexivity in relation to her own values, her choices [57]. However, interestingly, this proximity to "Québec values" is not necessarily accompanied by cultural affinities. In the case cited above, for example, despite the liberal attitude of the interviewee in terms of a diversity of morals, a clear boundary is drawn on the cultural level in relation to other Quebecers.

5.4. A Typology of Boundary Negotiation

The analysis led to the identification of an ideal view typical of three types of rapport with the majority group, as seen in Table 1: A harmonious rapport, a tense rapport, and an indifferent rapport. With each type, boundary bargaining modes were identified. It should be noted that these young people often used more than one boundary negotiation strategy over time, as individual positioning is often manifold depending on the situation, the interlocutors, and the context. We find, however, that this typology represents the main strategies described by participants.

Table 1. Typology of boundary negotiation.

Rapport with Majority Group	Boundary Negotiation
Harmonious rapport	Cross the boundary Straddle the boundary
Tense rapport	Be assigned the boundary Escalate the boundary
Indifferent rapport	Break the boundary

5.4.1. A Harmonious Rapport

The young people who mainly match this type (six cases) developed a fairly harmonious relationship with the majority group. They do not seem to experience, as exhibited in their own discourses, a conflicting relationship, nor do they feel excluded or in a relationship of domination vis-à-vis the majority group. These subjects negotiate the boundary by "crossing" it, i.e., by designating themselves as members of the majority group, or by "straddling" it, to identify themselves at times as Quebecers, and, at other times, by their own country of origin. This is not imposed positioning: They choose it, showing flexibility in their positioning process.

Only one subject within the corpus, Fahim (Iran), self-identifies as a Quebecer, reflecting what we call a crossing of the boundary. This young Iranian, who was born in Québec, describes himself as atheist. Although he feels attached to his country of origin and wants to travel there one day, he feels closer to the Québec identity, including a Canadian allegiance:

> When I say Quebecer, it's not that I don't call myself Canadian, but it's more that I associate myself with Québec. I also like the Canadian identity.

Fahim (Male, Iran) is also one of the few young people in our corpus to have become friends with "old stock" Quebecers. Although he says he has never observed any separation or difference between immigrants and Quebecers at school, he tells us he experienced discrimination in elementary school by a teacher. He asserts, however, that it was not racism.

The other five subjects who are part of this harmonious rapport group straddle the boundary, often opting for multiple and situational identifications with their home country, Canada or Québec. This is the case of Taika (Female, Algeria), for example, who is a good illustration of this relatively comfortable straddling of the Algerian and Québec identity:

> The reality of being a second-generation immigrant is to have some cultural baggage that others do not have, it's more things to share, it's like having two cultural suitcases, we have the Québec baggage, we have the one from our own country.

For the others, this overlap implies a positioning as a Canadian immigrant and a distancing from Québec, without this relationship being perceived as conflictual. This is the case of Amilda (Female, Ghana) who describes her identity this way:

> So far, I consider myself African-Canadian, not a Quebecer; yes, I live in Québec, it's been a long time, but the country is Canada.

These young people also tend to be less likely to hang out with "Quebecers" at school, where they are instead often found among "immigrants".

5.4.2. A Tense Rapport

Three young people in this category, including two who wear the hijab, developed a tense relationship with the majority group. According to their testimonies, they experienced in different forms of conflict experiences, situations of exclusion, or discrimination with the majority group.

The example of Bouchra (Female, Algeria) demonstrates well a boundary assignment by the majority group:

> When it came time to interact with us, most of the time, we felt very clearly that we were not Quebecers, that even they saw us as immigrants.

Here, the perceived boundary does not seem to be articulated around the religious marker as such, but rather around the status of immigrant. This feeling of exclusion does not prevent Bouchra (Female, Algeria) at other times from avoiding other forms of assignment by describing herself mainly as a Montrealer or "from everywhere in the world":

> When we say we are Montrealers, it can mean that we come from all over the world, but we identify with the values and dreams that are born in this city.

Another participant, Rihab [Female, Algeria], seems instead to fight against the perceived assignment by escalating the boundary with the majority group via the marker from which she feels excluded: Religion. This is particularly apparent in her way of talking about her choice to wear the veiled niqab rather than an "ordinary" headscarf:

> You know why I don't wear a normal little headscarf like girls with jeans and everything? Because I told myself that I'd wear it like that. Whether I wear the niqab or a little scarf, there will always be... They will know that I am different. So while I'm at it, I'll go with what I like [...] they will never accept us.

This young woman, who calls herself Muslim first and foremost, has had experiences of racism not only at school, but also at work and on the streets. She added that she began to wear her veil the moment the *Charter* played a major role in her perception of the "line" that separates her from others:

> It's since I put on the veil that I felt [...] it draws a line; it makes you not one of us. [...] I have been disgusted since the *Charter* affair.

For her, it was religion that saved her:

> I'm going to be honest, it's the only thing that pulled me back from suicide [...] it's the only thing that makes me want to live every morning [...], it's the only thing that consoles me, that keeps me together.
>
> (Rihab (Female, Algeria))

This testimony is in line with the results of the study [6] (p. 53) that illustrated that religious practice among young college students often provides "a framework in which to develop and negotiate one's place in society" and that, in that sense, it plays a key role in individual identification.

5.4.3. An Indifferent Rapport

Finally, one young person in the corpus is in a relationship that we describe as indifferent to the majority group insofar as she does not refer to it directly, either positively or negatively. Neither does she seem to sense the boundary or even try to break from it or free herself from it by identifying most closely with the city of Montréal, as we saw earlier with Bouchra (Female, Algeria):

> My sense of belonging is not with Québec, it is with Montréal, I love Montréal, I love the diversity of Montréal.

Among the 10 young people interviewed, an observation emerges from most discourses (except that of Fahim (Male, Iran)): There is a certain discomfort, even a distancing, from the Québec identity or identification with Québec culture. We have seen previously that several factors could come into play in this reluctance to consider oneself a Quebecer, including discomfort with a nationalist vision of history, with French, or a with the conception of secularism held by the majority group, which excludes several forms of religious expression, predominantly Muslim, from the understanding of what is publicly acceptable. Others have experienced racism or exclusion that may have fueled this estrangement. In addition, several are more inclined to identify themselves, often concurrently, with their country of origin, the Canadian identity, and with the anglophone culture, which is considered more open to diversity. This is what Bouchra [Female, Algeria] says when talking about her English-language college:

> They [anglophones] were more interested in knowing our cultures [...] they wanted to learn. Which is what I think was lacking with francophones because they had preconceived ideas about our religions, our cultures, our values.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

The analysis of the results highlights the salient role of the religious marker in the discourses of the young people interviewed. These young college students have in common growing up in a Muslim family from an immigrant background and, despite the variability of their religious practices, they refer in one way or another to this heritage, often amalgamated with the culture of their country of origin. As a result of their social and academic experiences from elementary school to college, the youths adopt different positioning in relation to the majority group. Labile over time and according to particular situations and contexts, these positioning often transit their religious affiliation, inherited or re-appropriated, if only because this marker permeates the perceptions of other Quebecers toward them. While most of the young people have a harmonious relationship with the majority group, they are no less estranged in terms of identification and their discourses refers, with the exception of one, to an Us/Them boundary. This delineation of the difference in relation to the majority group centres mainly around a cultural identity—defined through the French language, history, or secularism—from which these young people feel excluded.

Our results show that, as early as elementary school, some of these young people report having experienced school-based situations that contribute to shaping the first experiences of the boundary with the majority group. At the high school level, this boundary is then often consolidated, even crystallized, through negative experiences or a perception of rejection, a fortiori by the *Charter of Values*. For many young people, as suggested by the testimony of our participants, the *Charter* debate has indeed emerged as a tipping point in their journey and the negotiation of their place in society that is characterized by its normative interpretation of secularism. As we saw earlier, this concept of secularism has created a majority representation of Islam and Muslims as excluded from the "imagined community" because of a perception they are as dominated by their religion and reluctant to support gender equality. Despite their positioning in a harmonious relationship with the majority group, some felt targeted as Muslims and excluded for this reason, whereas this marker was not necessarily significant in their own vision of themselves. Others report that, from that moment, they began to be afraid and think about leaving Québec. Some have since experienced verbal aggression on the street or

in public places. These young people seem to then opt for identification with Canada, often coupled with identification with their country of origin.

We formulated the hypothesis that negative representations, as described by these young people, are part of a kind of political myth that characterizes in their eyes the collective psyche of "Quebecers." This myth, projected in history or French courses through the affirmation of certain liberal values and especially of secularism, would thus play a key role in the normative expectations of identity as perceived by the majority and therefore imposed on "others." The stigma felt, borne, or contested by several of these young people is therefore closely linked to the action of this myth. The latter, which is increasingly embodied in a secular "narrative" [28], would become for the members of the majority group, a symbolic and cognitive field of vision, "which also exerts an explanatory function, providing a certain number of keys to the understanding of the present, constituting a grid through which the disconcerting chaos of facts and events may appear to be ordered" [58] (p. 40). The vision of secularism proclaimed in the *Charter* was revealing for several young people interviewed in the eruption of this national myth of Quebecers who aim to exclude difference. For many, regardless of their degree of adherence to Québec values or ideals, they will always remain immigrants and will always be treated as such by the majority group. It is this latent closure of the national community that the *Charter* would have made explicit by creating a problem that did not exist—a threat to the majority identity—as several young people pointed out. In this sense, whether it was adopted by the state does not prevent the repercussions it may have had on mutual perceptions.

However, as we have seen in several interviews, the perceived exclusion may have a high individual and social cost. The example of Rihab [Female, Algeria], who tells us that religion saved her from suicide, is eloquent in this respect. This young woman mentioned, as did others, not being recognized by the majority group. As Jenkins (2008) [59] notes, in some cases, categorization by the majority group may invalidate the self-identification of an individual. Not surprisingly, she does not describe herself as a Quebecer. Rather than identifying with the country of birth of her parents, as many do, this young woman reappropriated her religious identity after "a period of doubt, introspection, and questioning about [her] beliefs, a period accompanied by a personal search, a return to God, and a strengthening of the faith" [57] (p. 208). If in the case of Rihab [Female, Algeria], religion seems to play a positive role, the depreciated image of the Muslim religion could represent a "zone of fragility" for identity for her as well as others. As noted [6] (p. 56), "Islamist recruiters capitalize on the rhetoric of the clash of civilizations and the war between Islam and the West to attract potential recruits." It would be interesting to continue this study by exploring the representations of the religious and of Islam in particular among young people of the majority group to observe another facet of the boundary and to cross-reference the perspectives and viewpoints on identification.

This estrangement from the Québec identity does not prevent young people, as in the case of many of our respondents, from adopting moral or ethical values that they regard as *Québécois*, such as openness, freedom, and equality (especially between the sexes). When attachment to these principles causes conflicts of values with their more conservative parents, some young people will develop their own interpretation of the religion, distinguishing it from that of the parents or the culture of origin and by expressing the need to understand it for themselves. Unlike the identity boundary, the "in-between" identifications in terms of values, which we find traces of in many discourses, is essentially manifested positively as a form of individualization of faith and autonomy in relation to both their family and other Quebecers. It also seems to contribute, as evidenced by the testimonies, to an intersecting attitude of openness to diversity.

It must be borne in mind, however, that the social and academic experience reported by the young people interviewed reveals lived and perceived discourses. One cannot thereby assume the objective nature of racism and discrimination experienced. Be that as it may, the testimonies of these young people invite us to reflect on the mandate of the school in Québec, a school that advocates learning "living together" and socialization from an intercultural approach. There remains much work to be done, especially since it is the public space where the tensions pop up. In terms of academic discourses,

there is a need to better address inter-group power relations and domination in a context marked by new tensions between the discourse and concepts of secularism. In practical terms, there is a need to think about ways to ensure a better formal and informal socialization process among groups of students, with a particular focus on religious markers.

Author Contributions: M.-O.M. conceived, designed, and performed the experiments, in collaboration with her research team; S.T., M.-O.M. and C.L. analyzed the data and designed the conceptual framework; S.T. wrote the paper, in collaboration with M.-O.M. and C.L.

Funding: This research was funded by SSHRC, Insight Development Grant [Expérience scolaire et logiques d'orientation dans le marché scolaire linguistique montréalais: une étude sur les cégépiens issus de l'immigration s], grant number [430-2013-000825], 2013–2015, and by FRQSC, Research support for new academics [L'imaginaire religieux des populations majoritaires au Québec dans un contexte global marqué par la «radicalisation»], grant number [2018-NP-204548)], 2017–2020.

Acknowledgments: The article was translated from French to English by Peter Wheeland. The authors would like to thank him for his valuable contribution to this paper.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A. Interview Guide

Individual interview—English version.
Interview questions—CEGEP students from immigrant backgrounds who have attended a French primary school and a French high school in Montréal.

Themes guiding the interview:

1. Family experience during childhood and adolescence.
2. Primary and High school experiences in Montréal (in French schools).
3. CEGEP experience in Montréal.
4. Linguistic, cultural and territorial identification.
5. Future plans.

To read to the respondent before beginning the interview:

During this interview, you will be asked to tell your personal life story, pertaining to your family and school experiences, your vocational choices, and your sense of belonging.

You will not be asked to answer a list of survey questions, but to answer general questions about specific themes pertaining to your individual life course.

Thus, while doing the interview, I will ask you to tell me about your personal experience concerning these general questions. You will be free to answer it as you wish. Do not hesitate to tell me what you think might be interesting and pertinent and this, without feeling embarrassed.

Finally, I re-ensure that obviously all the testimony and personal information you will share with me, as well as my personal notes, will never appear on research publications. Nevertheless, if you are not comfortable to share some information, please feel free not to answer.

We are now ready to start the interview!

I—Family experience during childhood and adolescence.

1. To start with, I would like you to tell me about your family:

    - Family members;
    - Language(s) spoken at home;
    - Schooling and work of your parents in their country of origin;
    - Work of your parents in the province of Québec;
    - Migration pathway (parent's country of origin, reasons for migrating, acculturation, and integration process, etc.);

- Travels in your parents' country of origin?
- Why those travels? Attachment to the country of origin?
- Family social networks in Montréal;
- Parents' and sibling's ways of relating to languages (namely French and English); and
- Parents' and sibling's ways of relating to Bill 101, education and French public school

II—Experiences in French primary schools and French high schools in Montréal.

2. What are your memories of your experience at a French primary school?

- School(s) attended and parents' rationale for explaining their school choice;
- Ways of relating to school, teaching, pedagogy, curriculum (course contents);
- Academic record (success, difficulties, etc.);
- Teachers' attitude toward diversity (especially linguistic diversity);
- Have you witnessed or been victim of linguistic, cultural or religious conflicts? Unfavorable treatments directly related to linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity?
- Ways of relating to different school employees (teachers, principals, etc.);
- Ways of relating to peers (languages spoken with peers, interactions, intergroup categorizations, experiences of discrimination, etc.);
- Ways of relating to the French language and to Bill 101; and
- Senses of belonging (to language, culture, territory, etc.).

3. What are your memories of your experience at a French High School?

- Schools(s) attended and rationale behind the choice of the school;
- Ways of relating to school, teaching, pedagogy, curriculum (history, language courses, ECR—éthique et culture religieuse—courses, etc.);
    - First question: Are there any course that had an influence on you during high school? Why?
    - What do you think of the history courses that you had in high school?
    - What place do you feel you have in this history and toward the groups portrayed (mention the three groups if respondents do not know what to answer: Francophones, Anglophones, Aboriginals).
- Academic record (success, difficulties, etc.);
- Teachers' attitude toward diversity;
- Ways of relating to different school employees (teachers, principals, guidance counsellors, etc.);
- Ways of relating to peers (languages spoken with peers, interactions, intergroup categorizations, experience of discrimination, conversations about CEGEP vocational choices, etc.);
- Ways of relating to the French language and to Bill 101; and
- Sense of belonging (to language, culture, territory, etc.).

III—Postsecondary experience in Montréal.

4. Tell me about your school pathway at the CEGEP level:

- First registration (date, year); and
- Different programs attended?

5. What led you to choose your current program?

- For the curriculum content?
- For career opportunities?
- Importance of social network?
- Influence from parents, guidance counsellors, friends, teachers, school principals, etc.? and
- Linguistic reasons explaining your choice?

6. Could you describe me how you came to choose your CEGEP?

- Influence from parents, guidance counsellors, friends, teachers, school principals, etc.?

7. What are your memories of your CEGEP experience?

- Day-to-day experience;
- Ways of relating to CEGEP, teaching, pedagogy, curriculum (courses content);
- Ways of relating to different CEGEP employees (teachers, principals, guidance counsellors, etc.);
- Teachers' attitude toward linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity;
- Ways of relating with peers (languages spoken with peers, interactions, intergroup categorizations, etc.);
- School integration, social integration, linguistic integration (French, English, or Allophone friends, Friends' ethnic origins, process of integration over time);
- Ways of relating to the CEGEP official language: In the courses, with friends, with the administration, etc. (Does your way of relating to the CEGEP official language has changed over time?);
- Sense of belonging (to language, culture, territory, etc.); and
- Ways of relating to languages.

IV—Linguistic, cultural and territorial identification.

8. If I simply ask you 'Who you are?', what would you answer spontaneously?

- Importance or not of language(s)?
- Importance or not of culture(s)?
- Attachment to Canada, to the province (or territory), to a town, to a specific place, etc.? and
- Importance of several characteristics such as age, sex, social class, etc.?

V—Future plans.

9. What do you plan to do once you have graduated from CEGEP?

- To start university? Which program? In which language? In which city, province, country?
- To start working? In which languages? In which city, province, city? and
- Geographic mobility

Appendix B. Categories of Content Analysis

Axe 1: Tensions between the religious minorities and the majority group.

(A) Schooling experiences:

- Schooling choices and trajectories;
- Welcoming and inclusion;
- Value strife in schooling context;

- Cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity at school; and
- Relationships with teachers and principals

(B) Religious practices at school:

- Curiosity and exploration of religions and religious practices;
- Religious practices in Québec;
- Experiences of religions in school; and
- The teaching of religions in school (ECR).

(C) Experiences of racism:

- Experiences of discrimination;
- Experiences of exclusion;
- Feeling of unfairness;
- Prejudices, stereotypes; and
- Experiences of colonialism, assimilation.

(D) Rapport to country of origin:

- Experiences of migration;
- Family network with country of origin;
- Representations of country of origin; and
- Experiences in the country of origin.

(E) Rapport to Québec and its population:

- Québec values representations;
- Immigrant values representations; and
- Experiences and relationships with Québec populations.

(F) Identification:

- Identity categories adopted and positioning; and
- Identity categories assigned or contested.

(G) Social networks and friends:

- Groups fluidity or separation;
- Choice of friends and social networks;
- Peer pressure;
- Isolation, exclusion, invisibility;and
- Relationships with the opposite sex.

Axe 2: The negotiation of the boundaries:

- Creation of the boundary;
- Straddle the boundary;
- Cross the boundary;
- Maintain or escalate the boundary;
- Question, refuse or contest the boundary;
- Be assigned the boundary;
- In between boundaries; and
- Being free of boundaries.

Axe 3: The pivotal moments:

(A) In relation to family life:

- Teenage years and forbidden activities (going out, drinking, smoking, dating); and
- Experiences of Ramadan (emergence of a religious conscience).

(B) In relation to the majority group:

- 9-11 attacks in the USA;
- Charter of Values for secularism;
- Schooling experiences at elementary level (racism, discrimination);
- ECR course during secondary level studies—(prejudice, racism, feeling of unfairness);
- Imposition of French as the schooling language (feeling of unfairness, discrimination);
- Schooling experiences at secondary level (ethnic and migrant identities resurgence, groups separation, distance from the Quebecer identification); and
- The adoption of the veil.

References

1. Chastenay, M.H.; Pagé, M. Le rapport à la citoyenneté et à la diversité chez les jeunes collégiens québécois: Comment se distinguent les deuxièmes générations d'origine immigrée? In *Les Deuxième Génération en France et au Québec*; Venel, N., Eid, P., Potvin, M., Eds.; Athéna: Montréal, QC, Canada, 2007; pp. 239–256.
2. Statistique Canada. *Immigration et Diversité Ethnoculturelle au Canada*; Enquête Nationale Auprès des Ménages, 2011; Produit No. 99-010-X2011001 au Catalogue de Statistique Canada; Statistique Canada: Ottawa, ON, Canada, 2013; p. 24.
3. Benhadjoudja, L. Les controverses autour du hijab des femmes musulmanes: Un débat laïque? In *Penser la Laïcité Québécoise. Fondements et Défense d'une Laïcité Ouverte au Québec*; Lévesque, S., Ed.; Presses de l'Université Laval: Québec, QC, Canada, 2014; pp. 109–127.
4. Baubérot, J. *La Laïcité Falsifiée*; La Découverte: Paris, France, 2014; p. 224.
5. Bilge, S. Reading the Racial Subtext of the Québécois Accommodation Controversy: An Analytics of Racialized Governmentality. *Polit. S. Afr. J. Polit. Stud.* **2013**, *40*, 157–181. [CrossRef]
6. Dejean, F.; Mainich, S.; Manaï, B.; Touré Kapo, L. *Les Étudiants Face à la Radicalisation Religieuse Conduisant à la Violence. Mieux les Connaître pour Mieux Prévenir*; Research Report; IRIPI: Montréal, QC, Canada, 2016; p. 83. Available online: http://iripi.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/iripi-rapport-radicalisation.pdf (accessed on 11 May 2018).
7. Hafez, M.; Mullins, C. The Radicalization Puzzle: A Theoretical Synthesis of Empirical Approaches to Homegrown Extremism. *Stud. Conf. Terror.* **2015**, *38*, 958–975. [CrossRef]
8. Crettiez, X. Penser la radicalisation. Une sociologie processuelle des variables de l'engagement violent. *Revue Française de Science Politique* **2016**, *66*, 709–727. [CrossRef]
9. Brubaker, R. Linguistic and Religious Pluralism: Between Difference and Inequality. *J. Ethn. Migr. Stud.* **2015**, *41*, 3–32. [CrossRef]
10. Juteau, D. *L'ethnicité et Ses Frontières*, 2nd ed.; Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal: Montréal, QC, Canada, 2015; p. 306.
11. Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec. *Les États généraux sur l'Éducation 1995–1996, Rénover Notre Système D'éducation: Dix Chantiers Prioritaires*; Commission des États Généraux, Rapport Final; Gouvernement du Québec: Québec, QC, Canada, 1996.
12. Groupe de Travail sur la Place de la Religion à L'école. Laïcité et Religions. In *Perspective Nouvelle Pour L'école Québécoise [Version Abrégée]*; Gouvernement du Québec: Québec, QC, Canada, 1999; p. 110. Available online: http://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/bs40898 (accessed on 29 August 2018).
13. Ministère de L'éducation, du Loisir et du Sport. *La mise en Place d'un Programme ECR. Une Orientation D'avenir Pour Tous les Jeunes du Québec*; Gouvernement du Québec: Québec, QC, Canada, 2005.
14. Tremblay, S. *École et Religions. Genèse du Nouveau Paris Québécois*; Fides: Montréal, QC, Canada, 2010; p. 264.
15. Cours Suprême du Canada. *Jugement Multani c. Commission Scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys*; Dossier 30322; Cours Suprême du Canada: Ottawa, ON, Canada, 2006; pp. 256–325.

16. Woehrling, J. Les fondements et les limites de l'accommodement raisonnable en milieu scolaire. In *L'accommodement Raisonnable et la Diversité Religieuse à L'école Publique*; Mc Andrew, M., Milot, M., Imbeault, J.-S., Eid, P., Eds.; Fides: Montréal, QC, Canada; pp. 43–56.
17. Potvin, M. *Crise des Accommodements Raisonnables. Une Fiction Médiatique*; Athéna: Montréal, QC, Canada, 2008; p. 280.
18. Bouchard, G.; Taylor, C. *Building the Future. A Time for Reconciliation*; Report, Commission de Consultation sur les Pratiques D'accommodement Reliées aux Différences Culturelles; Gouvernement du Québec: Québec, QC, Canada, 2008; p. 307. Available online: https://www.mce.gouv.qc.ca/publications/CCPARDC/rapport-final-integral-en.pdf (accessed on 11 May 2018).
19. Jobin, M. La Charte des Valeurs Proposée Par Le Gouvernement Québécois Est-Elle un Outil de Communautarisme? Radio-Canada International, 2013. Available online: http://www.rcinet.ca/fr/2013/09/10/la-charte-des-valeurs-proposee-par-le-gouvernement-quebecois-est-elle-un-outil-de-communautarisme/ (accessed on 27 April 2018).
20. Ferrari, A. De la politique à la Technique: Laïcité Narrative et Laïcité du Droit. Pour une Comparaison France/Italie. In *Le Droit Ecclésiastique en Europe et à ses Marges (XVIIIe-XXe Siècles)*; Basdevant-Gaudernet, B., Jankowiak, F., Delannoy, J.-P., Eds.; Peeters: Leuven, Belgium, 2009; pp. 333–345.
21. Dalpé, S.; Koussens, D. Les discours sur la laïcité pendant le débat sur la «Charte des valeurs de la laïcité». Une analyse lexicométrique de la presse francophone québécoise. *Rech. Sociograph.* **2016**, *57*, 455–474. [CrossRef]
22. Bélair-Cirino, M. Loi sur la Neutralité Relig Uvert ou pas? Le Devoir, 2017. Available online: https://www.ledevoir.com/politique/Québec/511149/loi-aur-la-neutralite-religieuse (accessed on 29 August 2018).
23. Lamy, G. Cartographie de la Controverse Entourant le Rapport de la Commission Bouchard-Taylor. Master's Thesis, Université du Québec à Montréal, Montréal, QC, Canada, 2014.
24. Maclure, J.; Taylor, C. *Laïcité et Liberté de Conscience*; Boréal: Montréal, QC, Canada, 2010; p. 168.
25. Bouchard, G. *L'interculturalisme. Un Point de vue Québécois*; Boréal: Montréal, QC, Canada, 2012; p. 286.
26. Eid, P. Les nouveaux habits du racisme au Québec: L'altérisation des arabo-musulmans et la (re)négociation du Nous national. In *Au Nom de la Sécurité*; Lamoureux, D., Dupuis-Déri, F., Eds.; Prologie: Montréal, QC, Canada, 2016; pp. 86–87.
27. Milot, M. École et religion au Québec. *Spirale* **2007**, *39*, 165–177. [CrossRef]
28. Nadeau, F.; Helly, D. Une extrême droite en émergence? Les pages Facebook pour la charte des valeurs québécoises. *Rech. Sociograph.* **2016**, *57*, 505–521. [CrossRef]
29. Potvin, M.; Nadeau, F. L'extrême-droite au Québec: Une menace réelle? *Relations* **2017**, *791*, 12–13.
30. Chikkatur, A. Difference Matters: Embodiment of and Discourse on Difference at an Urban Public High School. *Anthropol. Educ. Q.* **2012**, *43*, 82–100. [CrossRef]
31. de Villers, J. Entre injonctions contradictoires et bricolages identitaires: Quelles identifications pour les descendants d'immigrés marocains en Belgique? *Lien Social et Politiques* **2005**, *53*, 15–27. [CrossRef]
32. Sabatier, C. Figures identitaires d'élèves issus de la migration maghrébine à l'école élémentaire en France. *Éducation et Francophonie* **2006**, *34*, 111–132.
33. Verhoeven, M. Stratégies identitaires de jeunes issus de l'immigration et contextes scolaires: Vers un renouvellement des figures de la reproduction culturelle. *Éducation et Francophonie* **2006**, *34*, 95–110.
34. Quintana, S.M.; Segura Herrera, T.A.; Nelson, M.L. Mexican American High School Students' Ethnic Self-Concepts and Identity. *J. Soc. Issues* **2010**, *66*, 11–28. [CrossRef]
35. Meintel, D.; Kahn, E. De génération en génération: Identités et projets identitaires de Montréalais de la «deuxième génération». *Ethnologies* **2005**, *27*, 131–163. [CrossRef]
36. Lafortune, G.; Kanouté, F. Vécu identitaire d'élèves de première et de deuxième génération d'origine haïtienne. *Revue de l'Université de Moncton* **2007**, *38*, 33–71. [CrossRef]
37. Steinbach, M. "Eux autres versus nous autres": Adolescent Students'views on the Integration of Newcomers. *Int. Educ.* **2010**, *21*, 535–547. [CrossRef]
38. Mc Andrew, M. Le remplacement du marqueur linguistique par le marqueur religieux en milieu scolaire. In *Les Relations Ethniques en Question. Ce qui a Changé Depuis le 11 Septembre 2001*; Renaud, J., Pietrantonio, L., Bourgeault, G., Eds.; Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal: Montréal, QC, Canada, 2002; pp. 31–148.

39. Magnan, M.-O.; Larochelle-Audet, J. Immigrant-Background Youth in Québec: Portrait, Issues, and Debates. In *Immigrant Youth in Canada. Theoretical Approaches, Practical Issues, and Professional Perspectives*; Wilson-Forsberg, S., Robinson, A.M., Eds.; Oxford University Press: Don Mills, ON, Canada, 2018; pp. 251–269.
40. Magnan, M.-O.; Darchinian, F.; Larouche, É. École québécoise, frontières ethnoculturelles et identités en milieu pluriethnique. *Minorités Linguistiques et Société* **2016**, *7*, 97–121. [CrossRef]
41. Hassan, G.; Mekki-Berrada, A.; Rousseau, C.; Lyonnais-Lafond, G.; Jamil, U.; Cleveland, J. Impact of the Charter of Québec Values on psychological well-being of francophone university students. *Transcult. Psychiatry* **2016**. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
42. El Hage, H. *Pilot Study on the Charter of Values Impact on a Multiethnic Group of College Students Enrolled in a Montréal College*; Unpublished Report; Collège Rosemont: Montréal, QC, Canada, 2013.
43. Rousseau, C.; Hassan, G.; Lecompte, V.; Oulhote, Y.; El Hage, H.; Mekki-Berrada, A.; Rousseau-Rizzi, A. *Le défi du vivre Ensemble: Les Déterminants Individuels et Sociaux du Soutien à la Radicalisation Violente des Collégiens et Collégiennes au Québec*; Research Report; SHERPA: Montréal, QC, Canada, 2016; p. 61.
44. Barth, F. Les groupes ethniques et leurs frontières. In *Théories de L'ethnicité*; Poutignat, P., Streiff-Fenart, J., Eds.; Presses Universitaires de France: Paris, France, 2008; pp. 203–249.
45. Poutignat, P.; Streiff-Fenart, J. (Eds.) *Théories de L'ethnicité*; Presses Universitaires de France: Paris, France, 2008; p. 304.
46. Hervieu-Léger, D. La lignée croyante en question. *Espaces Temps* **2000**, *74–75*, 17–30. [CrossRef]
47. Brubaker, R.; Junqua, F. Au-Delà de l'«identité». *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* **2001**, *139*, 66–85.
48. Magnan, M.O.; Darchinian, F.; Larouche, É. Identifications et rapports entre majoritaires et minoritaires. Discours de jeunes issus de l'immigration. *Diversité Urbaine* **2017**, *17*, 29–47. [CrossRef]
49. Bertaux, D. *Le Récit de vie*, 3rd ed.; Armand Colin: Paris, France, 2010; p. 126.
50. Berry, J.W. Globalisation and acculturation. *Int. J. Intercult. Relat.* **2008**, *32*, 328–336. [CrossRef]
51. Bouchamma, Y. *Francisation, Scolarisation et Socialisation des Élèves Immigrants en Milieu Minoritaire Francophone du Nouveau-Brunswick: Quels Défis et Quelles Perspectives*; Centre Métropolis Atlantique: Halifax, NS, Canada, 2009; Volume 21, pp. 1–50.
52. Bouchamma, Y. *L'intervention Interculturelle en Milieu Scolaire*; Les Éditions de la Francophonie: Caraquet, NB, Canada, 2009; p. 194.
53. Kanouté, F.; Vatz Laaroussi, M.; Rachédi, L.; Tchimou Doffouchi, M. Familles et réussite scolaire d'élèves immigrants du secondaire. *Revue des Sciences de L'éducation* **2008**, *34*, 265–289. [CrossRef]
54. Cohen-Emerique, M. Choc culturel et relations interculturelles dans la pratique des travailleurs sociaux. Formation par la méthode des incidents critiques. *Cahiers de Sociologie Économique et Culturelle* **1984**, *2*, 183–218.
55. Nizet, J.; Rigaux, N. *La Sociologie de Erving Goffman*, 1st ed.; La Découverte: Paris, France, 2005; p. 128.
56. Winance, M. Handicap et normalisation. Analyse des transformations du rapport à la norme dans les institutions et les interactions. *Politix* **2004**, *17*, 201–227. [CrossRef]
57. Lefebvre, S.; Triki-Yamani, A. Jeunes adultes immigrants de deuxième génération. Dynamiques ethnoreligieuses et identitaires. *Can. Ethn. Stud.* **2011**, *43–44*, 183–211. [CrossRef]
58. Giry, J. Le conspirationnisme. Archéologie et morphologie d'un mythe politique. *Diogène* **2015**, *249–250*, 40–50. [CrossRef]
59. Jenkins, R. *Rethinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Exploration*, 2nd ed.; SAGE: Los Angeles, CA, USA, 2008; p. 224.

education sciences

MDPI

Article

Education and Religion in a Secualar Age from an African Perspective

Paul John Isaak

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Namibia, 9000 Windhoek, Namibia; profisaak@yahoo.com

Received: 6 July 2018; Accepted: 17 September 2018; Published: 21 September 2018

Abstract: In this article the author shall argue that before Namibian independence in 1990, Christianity was used by some as a weapon of breaking down, or as a tool of, colonialism, racism, and apartheid. In the name of a religious god unashamed acts of violence and wars were committed and resulted in genocide of 1904 to 1908. However, such brutalities did not conquer the African spirit of what is identified in this article as the *Ubuntu* (humaneness). Inspired by their sense of *Ubuntu* the Africans, in the face of German colonialism and the South African imposed Apartheid system, finally emerged victorious and accepted the model of religious pluralism, diversity, and the principle of African *Ubuntu*. We shall, furthermore, argue that the Namibian educational system and the Namibian Constitution, Articles 1 and 21, the Republic of Namibia is established as a secular state wherein all persons shall have the right to freedom to practise any religion and to manifest such practice. It means religious diversity and pluralism is a value, a cultural or religious or political ideology, which positively welcomes the encounter of religions. It is often characterized as an attitude of openness in a secular state towards different religions and interreligious dialogue and interfaith programs. As an example we shall focus on the subject of Religious and Moral Education where such religious diversity and pluralism are directly linked to political, social, and economic issues, as well as moral values.

Keywords: Bible; Qur'an; Ubuntu; orthodoxy; orthokardia; orthopraxis; Weltanschauung

1. Introduction

Over the past one hundred years, Christianity has experienced a profound southern shift in its geographical centre of gravity. In 1893, 80% of those who professed the Christian faith lived in Europe and North America, while by the end of the twentieth century almost 60% lived in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific [1].

In the twentieth century Christianity began as a Western religion, and indeed "the Western religion; it ended the century as a non-Western religion, on track to become progressively more so" [1]. Today, the churches of the global South are more typical representatives of Christianity.

Furthermore, this growth could mean that within thirty to forty years, most Roman Catholics will be Hispanics; the highest percentage of Protestants will be Africans, and "if we wish to visualize a 'typical' contemporary Christian, we should think of a woman living in a village in Nigeria or in a Brazilian favela" [2].

Such demographic shifts in Christianity mean that the "centre" of European/North American Christendom has passed. As Andrew Walls points out, "today some of what in 1910 appeared to be 'fully missionised lands' are the most obviously the prime mission fields of the world" [3]. Furthermore, the time has passed when Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific sat at the feet of Europe and North America in order to listen and learn about religious and secular issues. Today, all continents must equally contribute towards such debates.

Therefore, let me state that the whole of Africa, especially in light of such drastic demographic shifts from a religious perspectives, may be characterised as a continent with a very strong sense of religiosity and morality. Take as a cue the following African parable on the spiritual, moral, and politico-economic awakening of the continent:

> A visitor interrupted me. "Excuse me," he said. "Could you tell me the way to Africa?" "Easy," I said. "You'll recognise Africa from the people. They'll all be crying." "That's funny," said the man. "When I was a little boy and a refugee there, Africans were smiling. They were full of hope. They had leaders who promised them that if they worked hard and loved one another they would prosper." As we were coming to Africa, I asked him a question. "By the way," I remarked, "What is your name?"
>
> "My name is Jesus," he said. Soon Jesus and I came to a lake in Africa. We sat down, took off our shoes and washed our feet. Jesus' feet were soon sparkling clean but I couldn't wash the dirt off mine. The more I washed, the dirtier they got. The dirt ran into the lake and soon the lake was completely covered in green scum and everything started to die. Fish gasped for air, water snakes writhed in agony, and rats lay on the surface, feet up, breathing their last.
>
> Jesus stood up, waved his arms, looked to the sky and shouted, "Long live Africa!" And at that the waters cleared, the fish recovered, and elephants, lions, rhino, springboks, goats, sheep, cattle, dogs, and cats came to the lake to drink. Then Jesus said, "Look, the giant is awakening! It is now your turn to make sure the giant is walking [4]."

Such stories are not merely stories or merely some kind of a wish for a miracle but contain the saying: ora et labora (pray and struggle for justice) [5]. In other words, to pray and struggle for justice means to fully grasps that "prayer holds the word of faith the way the earth holds the seed until it sprouts" [5].

As people from African religions, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, as well as citizens of this world, we are called upon to pray and to work for socio-politico-economic justice simultaneously by linking orthodoxy (correct teachings or doctrines of our individual religions), orthokardia (right heartedness or spirituality towards the Divine and neighbours), and orthopraxis (transformative social actions). Such direct and intimate linking insists that spirituality or religion must express itself in social actions. In other words, God must not be de-emphasised, faith not be neglected, and praxis not be avoided. In short, religion is social ethics.

Today, to say Namibia is a "secular state" or a "secular society" does not mean that we are not committed to religion. It means that secularism is not the opposite of faith. In contrast, being secular means asking the God-Question and the Human-Question or asking questions about faith and socio-politico-economic affairs of this world. Better expressed, it is a question of what the Bible or Qur'an has to do with daily newspapers. It is about connecting the Holy Scriptures with our daily lives.

In Namibia the essence of African religions, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam has to do with the very essence of God and humanity. It is a comprehensive way of life leading to a balanced way of living out one's religious beliefs, one's intellectual abilities, one's bodily existence, and one's social ethical behaviours. In other words, among the blessings of secular state are, maybe first and foremost, the freedom of religions and freedom to gather for religious meetings or to allow religious teachings in various contexts as practiced by different faiths in a secular state and most importantly, to promote such principles freely, democratically, as well as being based on the rule of law and justice for all [6].

In this article I focus on three key parts: part one deals on a profile of historical background to Namibia that is situated in the Southern region of Africa. Here I am reflecting on how Africa is the 'awakening giant' according to the parable above. This awakening is in itself not new. It is as old as Africa itself. Ever since the era of slave trade followed by colonization, Africa has tried at various levels to reinvent itself with varying degrees of success. There is ample evidence of the resistance put

up by our forebears throughout the slavery and the colonial era which bear testimony that Africans have always tried to assert themselves and break loose from bondage by means of their religious convictions and socio-politico-ethical and economic commitments and praxis.

An example in the history of Namibia is the case of one of Namibia's legendary leaders, Hendrik Witbooi, also known by his African name, !Nanseb/Gâbemab. For him, no matter how brutal colonialism, cultural dominance, racism, and mental slavery was, the colonisers could not touch the soul of him, his African spirituality, and *Ubuntu*. !Nanseb wrote several letters to the German Governor, Theodor Leitwein. !Nanseb asked Leitwein not to call him a rebel because "God from Heaven has now broken the Treaty" and the time has come for liberation [7]. In short, he regarded himself as a freedom fighter rather than a rebel. Furthermore, he instructed the Keetmanshoop District Commissioner, Karl Schmidt, to stop lecturing him on peace "like a schoolchild" because the peace of which Schmidt was talking serves only the destruction of black Namibians [7] (p. 160).

The prophetic stance of !Nanseb is best expressed in his letter to Pastor Johannes Ollp from the Rhenist Mission Society (RMS) from Germany on 3 January 1890. According to !Nanseb he has been given by God a "mighty task" or a task that is "most difficult, burdensome and grave", namely to liberate Namibia from German colonialism. The voice of God said to him: "The time is fulfilled. The way is opened. I lay a heavy task on you." [7] (p. 33).

Both missionaries and settlers were surprised by such utterances. Some of the missionaries considered the theology and politics of !Nanseb as "regression into Jewishness, superstition, delusion, fanaticism and reverie [8]." However, this was not true. What !Nanseb found was that the theological basis of the RMS was wrong. They were associated with German colonialism and rule.

This association was so strong that many mission stations were fitted out as German military bases [9]. In the face of the might of German colonialism and militarism !Nanseb aptly stated that he "received inspiration" for his struggle for freedom from God because "The time is fulfilled." Such a theology is based on God's commitment to liberation and transformation, namely that God acts in history. On 21 March 1990, Namibia gained her independence. On that historical moment or kairos, the words of !Nanseb was realised, namely "The time is fulfilled".

In part two various aspects of the concept of *Ubuntu* (humaneness) will be addressed. I shall start the discourse from the perspective of the colonised by reflecting on African spirituality and *Ubuntu*. A major factor today in Africa is the acknowledgement that African spirituality, anthropology, politics, and culture is rich in values which can enhance people's understanding, application, and contextualisation of their faiths and betterment to their living conditions/praxis.

John Pobee highlighted this centrality of the community in Africa with reference to Descartes' well-known dictum, Cogito, ergo sum (I think, therefore I am). An African, Pobee maintains, will rather say Cognatus, ergo sum (I belong through blood relations, therefore I am). Such a communal dimension of all human existence in Africa can hardly be over-emphasised [10]. In short, a person with *Ubuntu* is open and available to others or is affirming of others and does not see the other as an enemy but as an integral part of co-humanity. Harmony, comradeship, friendliness, and community are seen as the great good of all humanity—the summum bonum [11].

In part three the focus is on a model for Religious and Moral Education in the secular state of Namibia. Two case studies will be presented. The first case deals with the issue of rape. Today, violence, murder, and rape deface the humanity of perpetrators and the lives of its victims and survivors. In this connection it is important to talk about our faces. Being in an encounter means to see the human face of the other. This happens when one looks another in the eye, for to see the other thus means directly to let oneself be seen by other people.

The second case will deal with reconciliation. Reconciliation is a religious, human rights, and socio-politico-economic issue which demands a transformation of the entire human situation in all its aspects. Reconciliation is a situation in which the hungry are fed, the sick are healed, and justice is given to all, especially the marginalised and the poor.

2. Part One

A Profile of Historical Background of The Republic of Namibia

Predominantly Christian, Namibia is a large, sparsely populated country on the Atlantic Ocean in Southwestern Africa. It is bordered by Angola and Zambia to the north, Botswana and Zimbabwe to the east, and South Africa to the south and southeast. In one of the Namibian indigenous languages, Khoekhoengowab, the word, ≠nâmib (enclosure), describes the country's encompassment by two deserts: the Kalahari in the east, the Namib in the west and the Atlantic Ocean. Namibia's total land area is 823,290 square kilometres (317,874 square miles) [12].

With one of the world's biggest gemstone diamond deposits, large quantities of copper, zinc, uranium, and salt; vast tracts of land ideal for cattle farming; and fish-laden coastal waters, Namibia attracted European settlers beginning in the 1840s. In 1884 the Germans made the territory a colony known as South West Africa and began a sustained drive to subdue the indigenous communities through "protection treaties", which granted German companies the right to "develop" the area economically. The settlers grew rich, but the indigenous people became impoverished.

Missionaries who arrived with the German colonial regime attempted to Christianize Namibia based upon the strategy of the four Cs: commerce, christianity, civilization, and conquest [13]. One of the German missionaries named Peter Heinrich Brincker, argued in a letter dated 13 March 1889 that such a strategy of the four Cs be applied as follows:

> "A matter of applying the language of force in defence of what is right. The country [Namibia] seems to be rich in gold deposits ... added to which the land in a moral sense belongs to our native country [Germany], since the Rhenish Mission already has invested thousands of Marks in it; here, you will also find the graves which have been dug for your own fallen missionaries. If any gain is to be made out of this colony, a European power must be based in this country with a military force ... to ensure immediate retribution for any likely form of arrogance and insolence." [14]

Consequently, a military presence was dispatched to Namibia on the 24 June 1889 under the command of a Lieutenant Curt von François [14] (pp. 92–93). The climax of such a history of the four Cs was when in 1904 Kaiser Wilhelm II sent a German commander, General Lothar von Trotha, to crush the liberation struggle in Namibia by "fair means or foul." [15]

On 2 October 1904, Von Trotha issued the following Vernichtungsbefehl (extermination proclamation) for which he received from Kaiser Wilhelm II, upon his return to Germany in 1905, the Order of Merit for his devotion to the Fatherland. The extermination proclamation read as follows:

> I, the great General of the German soldiers, send this letter to the Herero nation. The Hereros are no longer German subjects. They have murdered and robbed, they have cut off the ears and the noses and private parts of the wounded soldiers and they are now too cowardly to fight ... The Herero nation must now leave the country. If the people do it not I will compel them with the big tube [artillery]. Within the German frontiers, with or without rifle, with or without cattle [all the Hereros] will be shot. I will not take over any more women or children; I will either drive them back to your people or have them fired on. These are my words to the nation of the Hereros. The great General of the Mighty Kaiser. Von Trotha [14] (pp. 113–114).

The General was true to his word by committing acts of mass destruction. The Otjiherero- and Khoekhoen-speaking Namibians were machine-gunned and their boreholes poisoned, or driven into the desert to die or the few who survived were merely "skin and bone" and on the verge of starvation. Those who survived were taken to the concentration camp known as Shark Island [16].

The German colonial government and its military counterpart referred to this group of people as Kriegsgefangene (prisoners of war). Such prisoners must, therefore, have been regarded as combatants posing a military threat, or were captured in a war situation. However, the so-called Kriegsgefangenen

were largely women and children, who were clearly not combatants—and whose confinement in concentration camps was hardly an indispensable safety measure [16].

Instead, the German colonial regime turned these prisoners of war into "a broomstick" because they were so thin that "one could see through their bones" [17]. One of the survivors, Samuel Kariko, vividly described his experience as follows:

> "I was sent down with others to an island far in the south, Lüderitzbucht. There on the island were thousands of Herero and Hottentot prisoners. We had to live there. Men, women and children were all huddled together. We had no proper clothing, no blankets, and the night air on the sea was bitterly cold. The wet sea fogs drenched us and made our teeth chatter. The people died there like flies that had been poisoned . . . The little children died first, and then women and the weaker men . . . We begged and prayed and appealed for leave to go back to our own homes, which is warmer, but the Germans refused [17]."

Furthermore, when German military power imposed its will on Namibia at gunpoint, the Rhenish Mission Society (RMS) from Germany issued a pastoral letter that justified German colonial militarism and genocide. The Namibian Christians, they claimed, had "raised the sword" against the German colonial rule "which God [had] placed over" them and, therefore, "whoever [took] the sword [would] also perish by the sword". Thus, the vicious cycle of the four Cs continued to be implemented in Namibia [14] (p. 118).

Put differently, the Europeans introduced Christianity and colonialism to promote the doctrine of having "a place in the sun" [18]. The main tenet of this line of doctrine is based on a Western Weltanschauung that was a combination of Darwinism and pan-Europeanism, namely the uncritical acceptance of the notion of nation (Volk) belonging to the "strongest", the "most highly developed", and suggesting that the "underdeveloped" people needed colonial protection and, therefore, could be subjected to mental slavery and cultural dominance [14] (p. 80).

According to George Steinmetz, the western driven religious discourse of the 19th century unfortunately had no positive appreciation of African religion and culture because "there were no footholds for carving out opposing ethnographic stances" or religious-moral discourses [8]. For example, the discourse of the colonisers is expressed by Jean and John Comaroff as follows: "This culture, the culture of European capitalism . . . had, and continues to have, enormous historical force, a force at once ideological and economic, semantic and social [19]."

To put it differently, western Christianity was responsible not merely for the glorification of European civilisation but also for various attempts to conquer the African mind. However, such a culture constructed according to the four Cs has proven to be unsuccessful because Africans were conscious about the four Cs and refused to be domesticated and colonized. Let me explicate.

3. Part Two

African Spirituality and Ubuntu

At the outset let me start with the words from the Redemption Song by Bob Marley:

> "Old pirates, yes, they rob I;
> Sold I to the merchant ships,
> Minutes after they took I
> From the bottomless pit.
> But my hand was made strong
> By the hand of the Almighty . . .
> Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery;
> None but ourselves can free our minds."

When the missionaries and colonialists came the discourse of those who were colonialized started. It started when the colonial powers gave the Bible to Africans while taking the land. Based upon the strategy of the four Cs, they thought that the story would end there.

However, Africans were conscious of the colonisation strategy and started to employ their own discourse based on African spirituality and the principles of *Ubuntu*. They sang loudly, praised God, closed their eyes in prayer, and listened diligently to the Word of God. At the same time their ears and eyes were wide open to contextualising the gospel and their hands and feet were ready for liberative action [20]. Differently expressed, in contrast to some Christian views which separate spirituality from earthly concerns, African spirituality fully embraces the phenomenal world and enters passionately into its affairs [11].

Such contextualising of the Bible, for example in Southern Africa, resulted in major paradigm shifts. The defining moments were reached when in 1990 and 1994 Namibia became independent and South Africa became democratic after the abolishment of apartheid, respectively.

Let me briefly highlight one of the impacts of such consciousness of the four Cs and the contextualisation of the Bible. On that historic day, on 21 June 1971, the news reached the United Evangelical Lutheran Seminary in Namibia, also known as Paulinum, via short-wave radio, broadcast by the British Broadcasting Corporation, that the International Court of Justice, declared that South Africa's continued occupation of Namibia was in fact illegal. The announcement surprised some and electrified others, such as the students and lecturers at Paulinum. They were "in heaven" because of the good news and it had an immediate impact on them.

Some of the students and lecturers gathered after a thanksgiving service to discuss further courses of action. After acts of protests and defiance, singing and prayers, without delay, nine students, namely Paul John Isaak, Henog Kamho, Jakobus Ngapurue, Engelhard !Noabeb, Hiskia Uanivi, Hellao Hellao, Set Son Shivute, Jesaja Wahengo, and Paulus Musheko met with two of their lecturers, Dr Johannes Lukas de Vries and Pastor Rudolf Wessler, and drafted the Open Letter of 1971.

They decided that the draft Open Letter be sent to the two black Lutheran Churches, namely the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN) with the plea for further action upon it. The Church Boards of the two Lutheran Churches chose to adopt the students' letter as their own and issued it with the signatures of Moderator Paulus //Gowaseb of the ELCRN and Bishop Leonard Auala of the ELCIN.

The Open Letter was a document issued at an appropriate time to tell the truth that the birth of the independence of Namibia was at hand. It addressed the basic theological and ethical truths on the struggle for liberation, justice, peace, forgiveness and to build a reconciled and healed nation [21]. The Open Letter of 1971 started the process of conscientization of the Namibian people and offered a window of opportunity to the religious and political bodies to play a major role in the liberation of Namibia, as well as making a decisive contribution which, in the end, culminated in the UN supervised elections in Namibia in 1989. To put it slightly differently, the country gained its independence on 21 March 1990 [6].

Finally, the significance of the Open Letter of 1971 is that in the secular state of Namibia religious and political organisations publicly promoted and reconnected orthodoxy and orthopraxis. Such linkages or reconnections of religion, morality, politics, and human rights are always worthy. To put it boldly: religion is social ethics. We shall now specifically focus on this aspect.

4. Part Three

4.1. Namibian Model for Religious and Moral Education

The subject, Religious and Moral Education (RME), that is taught at all Namibian public primary and secondary schools, appears for the first time after the Namibian independence in 1990. Before Namibian independence, the subject was known as Biblical Instruction or Bible Studies.

Unfortunately, there are still today some minority voices from some Christian leaders who prefer Biblical Instruction in government (public) schools instead of Religious and Moral Education. For example, according to a Namibian newspaper one of the Islamic leaders in Namibia, Armas Malik Shikongo, reported that in April 2018 a group of Christian leaders visiting the State House requested President Hage Geingob to help reintroduce Bible studies in schools as a means to combat immorality.

Shikongo himself, however, is of the view that the current government policy must be maintained since Namibia is a constitutionally secular state and is legally expected to be religiously impartial. Furthermore, public schools are funded by all taxpayers of all religious affiliations and it would, thus, not be fair to introduce in schools teachings of one faith only [22]. In my opinion the view of Shikongo is accepted by the majority of Namibians since the Religious and Moral Education syllabus contributes to the welfare of all Namibians, religiously and politically. Let me explicate.

With the new syllabus of RME in Namibia the learner is given the opportunity to listen to various perspectives of religion and their values on certain moral issues. The main function of this new approach is to give the individual learner the chance to get in touch with his/her own values, to bring them up to the surface and to reflect on them. The learner thereby becomes more sensitive to other people's needs as well as his/her own, and can anticipate the consequences of actions and develop a greater overall social awareness [23].

A case in point is the contemporary Namibian situation in the schools. It seems that such schools are experiencing moral decay. For example, in one of the Namibian influential newspapers, *The New Era*, dated 17 March 2017, reported the following:

> "Learners' failure to behave and work in a controlled way by obeying school rules remains a major concern for many schools. Teachers, instead of focusing on teaching, spend most of their time dealing with disciplinary issues, as learners deliberately disrupt classes, often making the class environment less conducive for learning and teaching to take place. Teachers spend more time disciplining learners than teaching." [24]

Instead, morals ought to guide schools and society in doing what is right and good for both their own benefit and that of the entire nation. It is the morals which have produced the virtues that a society or nation appreciates and endeavours to preserve, such as patriotism, friendship, compassion, love, honesty, justice, freedom, courage, self-control and bravery.

On the other hand, morals sharpen people's dislike and avoidance of vices like stealing, cheating, treachery, selfishness, dishonesty, and greed. Morals keep society from disintegration. Even if all the ideals embedded in morals are not always achieved, they nevertheless challenge people to aspire to them. They give a sense of harmony, peace, and justice. Such morality is obviously superior to the tyranny of the strong over the weak and stands in direct confrontation with any form of oppression.

Therefore, it is clear that RME is an important subject at school and that the teacher needs to make sure that his/her learners learn and benefit from this subject to make life acceptable and understandable to them.

To promote such a religious and moral basis in the educational levels of the secular state of Namibia the aims of the RME are:

- To train learners in a holistic and comprehensive way in order to equip them to present imaginative courses in Religious and Moral Education within a multi-cultural or multi-faith setting and in a life-related and stimulating way.
- To help the learners to understand and appreciate the presence of the Divine, as revealed in personal experience, in African religious and cultural heritages, and in the religious teachings and practices as well as in the moral traditions and their applications to all aspects of daily living.
- To help the learners to discover for themselves, as individuals in society, each in his/her own way and relating to his/her own moral tradition, the importance of spirituality and morality as vital sources of living and decision-making.

- ➢ To present to the learners relevant "texts" or stories, and issues or examples from Christian and other religious and secular worldviews and moral traditions, to stimulate their moral consciousness and conscience.
- ➢ To confront the learners with moral issues and decision-making relevant to their stage of development and living-world; to exercise the self-application of their moral principles within their own life-setting; and to help them integrate these principles as an inherent part of personal and inter-personal development of character, and
- ➢ To illustrate and strengthen the cohesive power, which shared values, could foster within a society, which seeks unity and understanding among people from different traditions and communities. In short, the approach to teaching Religious and Moral Education has to be child-centred, experiential, contextual, and concentrate on moral values [23].

Furthermore, the following rationale for teaching RME in Namibia was developed:

- ❖ It gives the learner the opportunity to critically and constructively reflect on the functions of religion and morality in his/her personal life as well as in society.
- ❖ RME should not replace religious and moral instruction learned at home or in the church, but it should stimulate the learner's awareness of the various sources of spiritual and moral life.
- ❖ It also facilitates the individual growth of the learner towards responsible behaviour, tolerance, acceptance of the highest common values of humanity and the discovery of cohesive power of shared values.
- ❖ Another reason why RME should be offered in schools is that religion functions universally as an important and powerful factor. Responsible ethical conduct is based on religion, secular ideologies, and various value systems. People behave according to their value horizons, which are shaped by their religions and their ideological beliefs.
- ❖ The purpose of RME is not conversion but it should be religious and life-related. RME is also not the study of doctrinal truths, but it teaches about what people believe about the purpose of their lives and how they should decide what to do.
- ❖ In order to facilitate an integration of RME to different faculties it should also be linked to other disciplines in the curriculum or such an approach may be viewed as values across the curriculum. This approach is one most teachers readily accept and support. In addition to religious education, which has a moral dimension through the study of other world religions and the examination of current moral and social issues, like war, racism, and animal rights, subjects like history, geography, social studies, and science also have a moral dimension. History offers the opportunity to examine human motives and intentions, whereas geography and social science offer the opportunity to illustrate differences in culture and life styles. Also scientific discoveries and technological development can and do raise serious moral problems. Atomic physics or genetic engineering cannot be taught without the moral issues concerning them. This underlines the fact that most teachers in most subjects are actually involved in moral education based on values that are set by religion [23].

In practice the following methodologies are employed [23]:

4.2. Situation 1: The Lecture Discussion

The principle of interaction underlying the lecture discussion is illustrated in this example. Although only five learners are represented in the diagram, the figure may vary, with perhaps 30 learners being a more representative number in this type of situation.

The interaction pattern here is not wholly dominated by the teacher. The arrowheads in the diagram indicate more or less continuous verbal interaction between teacher and leaners. Although as a leader, the teacher asks questions and receives and gives answers, the initiative need not always be

his/hers; and competition may develop amongst the learners. The broken horizontal line indicates that there is no sharp distinction between the teacher and learners (see Figure 1).

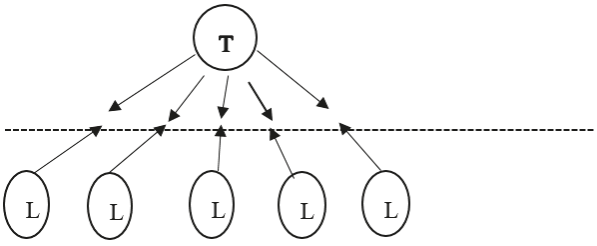


Figure 1. Lecture-oriented teaching and discussions.

4.3. Situation 2: Active Learning

This example depicts a social situation in which the teacher allows discussion and mutual help between learners. Practical work would be an occasion for implementing this type of situation. The letters "TF" in the diagram indicate that the teacher now begins to assume the additional role of facilitator. The situation may be described as task- and learner-centred, and as one beginning to show a cooperative structure (see Figure 2).

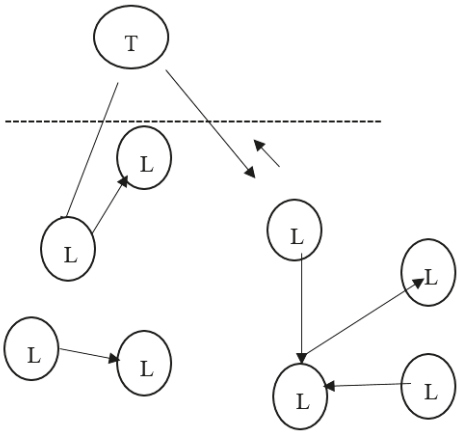


Figure 2. Task-and Learner-Centred Teaching.

4.4. Situation 3: Active Learning; Independent Planning

Scrutiny of example 3 shows how this third situation evolves logically from the preceding one. The learners are now active in small groups, and the teacher acts more or less exclusively as a facilitator (indicated in the diagram by means of a wavy line) (see Figure 3).

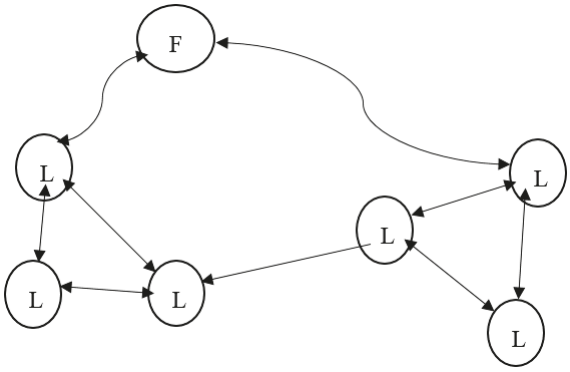


Figure 3. Active Participatory Teaching Method.

Groups map out their work, adapt to each other's pace, discuss their difficulties, and agree on solutions. There is independent exploration, active learning, and a maximal development of task-directed leadership in each group. The social climate is cooperative, and the situation may be described as learner- and task-centred.

In summary, there is a progressive change from teacher-centred through task-centred to learner-centred activities, from passive to active learning, and from minimal to maximal participation, thus including learners' different life orientations. The three situations outlined above will help the teacher and learners not only to understand classroom-based social and learning situations, but also patterns of interaction occurring outside the classroom.

Now I am in the position to present the following two case studies from the perspective of Religious and Moral Education and how such complex topics may be addressed.

4.5. Case Study One: Violation of the Human Body

A mother and her two-year old daughter are sleeping in their house at Khorixas, Namibia. Two men, Samuel Uiseb (33-years) and Johannes Rico Goseb (22-years) enter the house. They are intent on violence or, more specifically, to come and invade that very territory of the victims with their penises. The two apparently non-resistant prospective victims are sleeping. They ignored the sleeping mother and abduct the baby, who is later found raped and murdered about 100 metres away. Why such brutality? Note: This story was reported in *The Namibian*, 17 March 2004.

The above event took place in Namibia in 2004. Immediately two reactions followed this tragic event. First, the female parliamentarians expressed disgust and dismay and demanded that the two men accused of raping and killing a two-year-old girl at Khorixas be sent to jail for life, if found guilty. On the other hand, many women insisted that such cases should not be feminised or made a "woman" thing; instead all parliamentarians, women and men, should go out into their constituencies and do some educating and mobilising around violence against women and children, including rape.

They argued that one should not try to salve our consciences by putting away such people for life in jails. That will be merely an act of treating the symptoms rather than the causes of the scourge of rape. Once again, how should the Namibian society act in the face of violating individual, family, and communal bodies?

At the outset let me state that the views expressed above do not contradict each other. Rather, these views are two sides of the same coin. The starting point in the restoration of moral values in the Namibian society is to campaign or preach the message that recognised the humanity of the other; the message of restoration of moral values by advocating to be a compassionate and caring society, especially towards women and children, while advocating that criminals, if found guilty after a fair trial, be sent to jail for a very long, if not life imprisonment. Let me explicate.

Once a woman was asked by a journalist to define words such as violence and rape. She answered that the term 'definition' contains the Latin term 'finis', i.e., 'borderline', 'demarcation', or 'end'. The very character of violence or rape lies in ignoring the borderlines of an individual, a family or a communal body. Furthermore, she said, when it comes to violence or rape, there is no borderline, and there is no end; violence or rape by its nature respects no border. You may think that your body is the outer borderline of who you are, but a would-be rapist will come and invade that very territory of yours with his penis. When such things happen in any society, she said, such a society needs re-viewing of their humanity and restoration of their moral values [25].

Today, the prevalence of violence, rape, and murder means that such acts negate and refuse to see the Imago Dei (the face of God) in other people. Any society that has problems with a vision of a peaceful living together has lost its conviction that every human being must be treated humanely. According to the Swiss Roman Catholic theologian Hans Küng "every human being without distinction of age, sex, race, skin colour, physical or mental ability, language, religion, political view, or national or social origin possesses an inalienable and untouchable dignity" [26]. In other words, as most African scholars agree, humanity is to be conceived as being in relation.

Today, violence, murder, and rape deface the humanity of perpetrators and the lives of its victims and survivors. In this connection it is important to talk about the faces of us. Being in an encounter means to see the human face of the other. This happens when one looks another in the eye, for "to see the other thus means directly to let oneself be seen by him/her". It is only when "we move out of ourselves, not refusing to know others or being afraid to be known by them, that our existence is human" according to the Swiss Protestant theologian Karl Barth [27].

4.6. Case Study Two: Reconciliation

At the outset let me start with an imaginative Namibian parable on reconciliation:

> There was a man who owned a large farm. He maltreated his farm workers.
> They worked for months without getting salaries.
> If one of his sheep went missing, the shepherd was faced with two alternatives:
> To sleep in the bush or to face a beating.
> Without telling the workers, the owner sold the farm.
> The government, which had bought the farm, gave it to the same workers and put one of them in charge of it.
> After some years, the former owner of the farm returned.
> Having wasted all his money. He asked for a place to stay, and for a job . . .
> Jesus asked: What do you think the leader did to his former oppressor?
> Before his hearers could answer, Jesus said:
> He treated his former boss just as one of the other people on the farm.
> He gave him a place and put him to work [28].

It is important that in this Namibian narrative the former boss and the former farm worker reconciled. However, what does reconciliation really entail?

Perhaps we should ask assistance from various Namibian languages. There are three words in Oshiwambo that deal with the concept of reconciliation *ediminafanepo* (you forgive someone and he/she in turn forgives you), *ehanganifo* (someone takes the hand of one person, and then takes the hand of another person, thus bringing them together); and *etambulafano* (two people accept one another following a quarrel; acceptance takes place on an equal footing).

In Khoekhoengowab there are many words for the concept of reconciliation. The focus falls on the prefix *re-*, which means "again". These words convey the sense that something which has been destroyed should be rebuilt. Peace which has been destroyed should be re-established, or a relationship should be renewed. The words are *//kawa-/haos* or *//kawa-/hû*. The underlying notion is that of beginning anew, unconditionally.

In Otjiherero the word *okuhangana* means "peace", or "being together again, being one". *Okuisirisana* means "to forgive one another". Again, reconciliation points to peace, unity, and the re-establishment of a relationship. The Tswana word for reconciliation is *kagisano*. This means "to live together in peace after a quarrel or a dispute". The verb *agisanang* means "to reconcile". After an issue has been settled, the parties should see to it that peace is maintained. Therefore, *reconciliation* has the sense of living or staying together, maintaining peace, or giving someone a chance.

In Afrikaans, the word for *reconciliation* is *versoening*. The verb is *versoen*, from which one draws both the verb and the noun *soen* ("to kiss"). Those who have a relationship close enough for them to be kissing (embracing) are assumed to have been reconciled.

Thus, in most of the indigenous languages of the secular state of Namibia there is the idea of living together in peace, of coming together, of joining hands and having peace, whatever the case may be. The final concept conveyed is that something new should have been established, so as to live together in peace and harmony. However, what is reconciliation and is it really possible to both forgive and forget? Should we always be tempted in the heat of discussions about past historical events and to bring up the past sins of colonialism and apartheid?

Like many other countries emerging from periods of violence, genocide, oppression, colonialism, apartheid and liberation struggle, we inherited two legacies: On one hand the visible effects of the past: the killed, the tortured at Shark Island, Robben Island, and Lubango, the landless, and the poor. On the other side there are the invisible effects: during the era of colonialism, apartheid, and liberation struggle many people "disappeared" without any trace. Today their mothers and fathers and family members are mourning and wishing to bury their dead or disappeared sons and daughters. Yet this basic right of a human being to have a proper funeral and to see the face of the deceased before the burial was denied [28].

As an illustration take the following story told by a mother:

> "I was told that my son was killed a few kilometres from Oshakati [by the racist South African regime soldiers]. He was brought home wrapped in a thick, sealed plastic bag. The instruction was that the plastic bag should not be opened . . . I accepted this as military law. You are not allowed to have the glimpse of your own child—even as he lay there, lifeless. On the day of Wallace's funeral, his coffin was not opened. It is ten years since I last laid my eyes on my child—nine years since he was laid to rest. But in these nine years, I have been struggling to complete the process of mourning for Wallace." [29]

When hearing and seeing the visible and invisible effects of violence, war, genocide, colonialism, and apartheid what should we do today? In a similar situation a leading Dutch Reformed Church theologian, Willie Jonker, made an eloquent plea for forgiveness to his black fellow South African Christians on behalf of Afrikaners. Archbishop Desmond Tutu accepted the plea for forgiveness because "enemies are potential allies, friends, colleagues, and collaborators" [29].

Finally, in relation to the furtherance of human rights and their implementation, and in adherence to the policy of national reconciliation, in the secular state of Namibia religious communities are not being given a heavy burden to bear. Instead, religious communities are being issued with an invitation to enter into dialogue with society and the government so that we can all co-operate in the process to ensure all persons enjoy basic human rights, freedom, justice, and reconciliation. Thus, the irreconcilable can be reconciled and the unhealable can be healed.

5. Conclusions

At the beginning of the 21st century, from religious and secular perspectives, we are facing a challenge: as people from African religions, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, as well as citizens of this world, we are called upon to pray and to work for socio-politico-economic justice simultaneously by linking *orthodoxy* (correct teachings or doctrines of our individual religions), *orthokardia* (right

heartedness or spirituality towards the Divine and our neighbours), and *orthopraxis* (transformative social actions).

Differently expressed it means that a "secular state" or a "secular society" from a Namibian perspective does not mean that we are not committed to religion. It means that secularism is not the opposite of faith. In contrast, being secular means asking the God-Question and the Human-Question or asking questions about faith and socio-politico-economic affairs of this world. Better expressed, it is a question of what the Bible or Qur'an has to do with daily newspapers. It is about connecting the Holy Scriptures with our daily lives.

As an example I discussed the case of one of the Namibian's legendary leaders, Hendrik Witbooi. For him, no matter how brutal colonialism, cultural dominance, racism, and mental slavery was, the colonisers could not touch the soul of him, his African spirituality, and *Ubuntu*. Such spirit of *Ubuntu* and African spirituality is self-evident today in Namibian society. Today, religious communities are being issued with an invitation to enter into dialogue with society and the government so that we can all co-operate in the process to ensure all persons enjoy basic human rights, freedom, justice, and reconciliation. Thus, the irreconcilable can be reconciled and the unhealable can be healed.

Therefore, we need to teach the basics of love and care for one another: we need to insist on honesty and compassion, upon sharing and taking responsibility for our own lives in order to again find the sweetness of human kindness in our communities and nation. The task is extremely urgent and we have to make our small steps forward in order to achieve great results.

In short, we are in the process to plant the smallest of all seeds as it relates to our sacred and secular world. Such a task has been well expressed by Steve Biko, during the time of Apartheid and the struggle for racial harmony and democracy. He said that the greatest gift that Africans shall bestow on the rest of our secular and religious world is the greatest possible gift: a more human face.

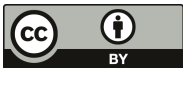
Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

1. Stephen Bevans & Roger Schroeder. *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*; Orbis Books: Maryknoll, NY, USA, 2004; p. 242.
2. Ana, J.D. (Ed.) *Religions Today: Their Challenges to the Ecumenical Movement*; World Council of Churches: Geneva, Switzerland, 2005; pp. IX–X.
3. Ross, K.R. Edinburgh 1910—Its Place in History. Available online: http://www.towards2010.org.uk (accessed on 5 April 2018).
4. Isaak, P.J. The Story of the Rich Christians and Poor Lazarus: Christianity, Poverty and Wealth in the 21st Century. *J. Relig. Theol. Namibia* **2000**, *2*, 72–94.
5. Boff, C. Feet on the Ground Theology. In *A Brazilian Journey*; Orbis Books: Maryknoll, NY, USA, 1987; p. 97.
6. *Namibian Constitution*; Article 1; Ministry of Urban and Rural Development: Windhoek, Namibia, 2002.
7. Heywood, A.; Maasdorp, E., Translators; *The Hendrik Witbooi Papers*; John Meinert Press: Windhoek, Namibia, 1990; pp. 33, 157–160.
8. Steinmetz, G. The Devil's Handwriting: Precolonial Discourse, Ethnographic Acuity and Cross-Identification in German Colonialism. *Soc. Comp. Study Soc. Hist.* **2003**, *45*, 120. [CrossRef]
9. De Vries, L. *Mission and Colonialism in Namibia*; Rivon Press: Johannesburg, South Africa, 1978; p. 155.
10. Pobee, J. *Theology by the People: Reflections of Doing Theology in Community*; World Council of Churches: Geneva, Switzerland, 1986; p. 30.
11. Isaak, P.J. *The Influences of Missionary Work in Namibia*; Macmillan Publishers: Windhoek, Namibia, 2007; p. 27.
12. Isaak, P.J. Governments of the World. Available online: http://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/namibia (accessed on 5 April 2018).

13. Isaak, P.J. Cultural Dominance and Mental Slavery: The Role of German and African missionaries in Colonial Namibia. In *The German Protestant Church in Colonial Southern Africa: The Impact of Overseas Work from the Beginnings until the 1920s*; Lessing, H., Bester, J., Eds.; Cluster Publications: Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, 2012; pp. 578–579.
14. Hellberg, C. *Mission, Colonialism, and Liberation: The Lutheran Church in Namibia 1840–1966*; New Namibian Books: Windhoek, Namibia, 1997; pp. 80, 92–93, 113–114, 118.
15. Pakenham, T. *The Scramble for Africa 1876–1912*; Random House: London, UK, 1990; p. 609.
16. Drechsler, H. *Let Us Die Fighting*; Zed Press: London, UK, 1980; p. 207.
17. Silvester, J.; Gewald, J. *Words Cannot Be Found: German Colonial Rule in Namibia: An Annotated Reprint of the 1918 Blue Book*; Brill: Leiden, The Netherlands, 2003; p. 179.
18. Bosch, D. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*; Orbis Books: Maryknoll, NY, USA, 1991; pp. 181–189, 262–345.
19. Jean; Comaroff, J. Of Revelation and Revolution. In *Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*; University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL, USA, 1991; Volume 1, p. 4.
20. Isaak, P.J. Towards Black African Theology. Master's Thesis, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA, USA, 1978.
21. Isaak, P.J. The Lutheran Churches' Open Letter of 1971: The Prophetic Voice of Church. In *The Story of the Paulinum Seminary in Namibia*; Namibia Publishing House: Windhoek, Namibia, 2013; pp. 69–77.
22. Islamic Leader Hits Out at Bible Studies Proponents. Available online: https://neweralive.na/posts/islamic-leader-hits-out-at-bible-studies-proponents (accessed on 11 May 2018).
23. Isaak, P.J. *Religious and Moral Education: Grades 8–10*; Out of Africa Printers: Windhoek, Namibia, 1997; pp. 1–9.
24. Ill-Discipline Rife at //Kharas Schools. Available online: https://www.newera.com.na/2017/03/17/ill-discipline-rife-at-kharas-schools/ (accessed on 5 April 2018).
25. Fröchtling, D. Violating individual, family and communal bodies: On blindness and relationships reviewed. In *Echoes: Justice, Peace and Creation News*; World Council of Churches: Geneva, Switzerland, 2004; Volume 22, pp. 10–12.
26. Küng, H. *A Global Ethic: The Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions*; The Continuum Publishing Company: New York, NY, USA, 1993; p. 23.
27. Barth, K. *Church Dogmatics*; T&T Clark: Edinburgh, UK, 1957; Volume 3/2, p. 251.
28. Isaak, P.J. *Religion and Society*; Out of Africa Printers: Windhoek, Namibia, 1997; pp. 52–56.
29. Tutu, D. *No Future without Forgiveness*; Double Day: New York, NY, USA, 2000; pp. 187–188.



education sciences

MDPI

Article

Bibliodrama: Introducing Stories from Narrative Traditions in the Development of Young People's Life Orientation

Jean Agten †

Religious and Secular Worldview Education, Odisee University of Applied Sciences, Warmoesberg 26, 1000 Brussels, Belgium; jeanagten@telenet.be
† Retired Lecturer.

Received: 9 March 2019; Accepted: 11 May 2019; Published: 17 May 2019

Abstract: Young people, in the age of puberty and early adolescence, are in need of images and narratives as role models to mirror their actual thoughts and feelings, and to stimulate the development of their (tradition(s)-related) life orientation. The development of a life orientation we see as a religiously or secularly founded process of identity construction—a work-in-progress; a process of 'learning by doing'. This is described in Part I of this contribution. As Jacob Moreno, the founder of psychodrama stated: 'Thinking is in the action'. 'Doing'—being actively involved in a situation—is the defining characteristic of key persons and key objects in narratives. This is in line with John Dewey's view that the activity new perspectives are created; learning by doing. In bibliodrama, making use of psychodrama techniques, connections are established between narratives from traditional (religious or secular) worldviews—but also from myths and fairy tales—and young people's individual life experiences. Seemingly without effort and as child's play, bibliodrama creates an encounter between the here-and-now and the once-and-then of narratives of long ago. The theoretical framework of this practice and the methods of bibliodrama are described in Part II. In Part III we present an example of bibliodrama performed with 18–20-year-old students of the Odisee Hogeschool (Odisee University of Applied Sciences) of Brussels (Belgium). We conclude our contribution with a few preliminary conclusions, a discussion and recommendations for the practice of bibliodrama in education to familiarise students with (religious and secular) life orientations traditions, in order to facilitate the construction of their own authentic life orientation.

Keywords: identity construction; life orientation; bibliodrama; narratives; interreligious encounters; education

1. Life Orientation as Part of Identity Construction

1.1. Communicating with the Multivoiced Self

The development of a life orientation is 'an existential positioning process pertaining to the meaning of the human being, the world and the meta-empirical, directed towards the horizon of the good life' [1] (p. 45). Life orientation as an identity construction can be approached in different ways. In this contribution we will go deeper into the concept of 'identity' as a dynamic process. In our approach, identity is seen as dialogically constructed in a multivoiced self [2,3]. Listening to the variety of voices in the multivoiced self requires awareness of, and attentiveness to, these inner voices—voices that represent warnings, invitations or evoke feelings of wonder. Children and adolescents gain insight in their many inner voices as pieces in a colourful mosaic of (religious and secular) worldviews or life orientations—as these are represented in the multivoiced self [3]. By telling about memories that are stored in their minds, children structure these memories and make preliminary connections between

the various fragmentary images, feelings and thoughts: a dynamic process of identity construction. On the one hand, the telling and retelling of experiences changes the narration itself; on the other hand, it also transforms the related feelings, thus contributing to the process of (religious) identity construction. Identity-under-construction is like a never-ending story. Through the process of retelling, the narrator constantly finds him/herself in a new position in the restructured narration: a flexible temporary balance. The narrator is not only the 'protagonist' or the main character of the story, she/he can also more or less be seen as the author of her/his own story. However, as we will see below, each person's narrative is also constructed by the way she/he is assigned a role/position in the narrative of 'the other', as is each story contextually and historically situated.

In addition to the 'inner' conversation, by Hannah Arendt [4] coined as 'thinking', as an important aspect of identity construction, this construction process includes—according to Vygotsky [5]—important 'outer' (social) characteristics. From that point of view, children and adolescents are co-constructors of their own identity. The construction of a young person's 'puzzle' becomes clearly visible in an activated (un)conscious comparison with others. This comparison process consists of listening, exploring, questioning, accepting and respecting, copying, recognising, rephrasing, distinguishing, conflicting and hyphenating—aspects elaborated upon by Marcia [6] in his description of the stages of exploration and commitment in identity development. The expressions, actions and attitudes of others offer many opportunities for recognition and/or acceptance/endorsement as valuable input for the individual process of identity construction. Exploring the input of others and changing perspectives stimulates the individual processes of identity construction (as work-in-progress). At the same time, young people redesign and adapt the input of others to meet their own developmental needs. As we will show below, the process of identity construction is facilitated by narratives, which create the possibility to catch one's breath in the safe space of bibliodrama. At successive moments in time in a session, the bibliodrama process contributes to the construction of a uniquely biographically shaped identity, which remains continuously susceptible to new experiences and the stories of others. Narrativity structures life events and gives meaning to a person's identity-under-construction (see also Verhofstadt-Denève [7]).

1.2. Communicating with Religious Narratives and Practices

The interactive process of co-constructing (that is, in the presence of the other) a (religious or secular) worldview or life orientation should not be a mere topping of one image and perspectives of individuals with another image or perspective. This process needs to be enriched by the way worldviews and life orientations are practiced by relatives and friends in accordance with how they are represented in a person's wider context. Religious narratives from existing and living traditions may evoke memories of, and reveal connections with, a person's own life experiences. These narratives can provide elements for the ongoing process of identity construction, i.e., elements that are incorporated in an individual's personal narrative—in a reworked form or not. In addition, such elements can further be integrated in the ongoing narrative of the respective tradition as well. The activity of remembering contributes to the rewriting of one's own biography, but also contributes to new insights in the tradition. A person's own story, which includes words, images and fragments of a particular tradition, becomes part of that tradition, while the story simultaneously reconstructs the worldview/life orientation of that person. Within the framework of a rich variety of (religious and secular) worldviews, not only traditional narratives should be included, but also—and especially— examples of actual practices (experiences, actions and attitudes). In addition, symbols of the beginning of a religious awareness and partial manifestations of current (re)new(ed) life orientation(s) play an important role in a person's religious identity construction.

1.3. Tradition—An Ongoing Narrative

The word 'tradition' refers to the Latin tradere, which means 'handing over', 'passing on' and 'supplying with information'. Children and (young) adults do not adopt entire (religious or secular) worldviews that are passed on to them in their process of identity construction. Making use of religious

traditions, they selectively make use of passages and construct their own images based on their own interpretation of these (passages from) traditions, and use them as building blocks for their identity. Young people are touched by, and create their own interpretations of, the variety of worldview passages they encounter in the plural context(s) in which they live. These images become meaningful due to the feelings they evoke and the ways they are verbalised in conversation with others [8]. In dialogical encounters, the religious literacy of young people is increased and their life orientation is articulated, while at the same time they improve their social positioning in their peer group, which is important for the (further) development of their own positionality amidst the plurality of life orientations. Just like young people, traditions (religious and secular) are constantly challenged to reformulate their being-in-the-world, responding to the multivoicedness of constantly renewing personal narratives.

2. Bibliodrama—Theory and Method

2.1. Definition of Bibliodrama

The Concept of Bibliodrama

The word 'bibliodrama' refers to the Greek biblio, which means 'book', in our case, more specifically, books in which religious and secular traditions are recorded, such as the holy scriptures of Christianity and Islam, and myths and fairy tales. Drama literally means 'action' or 'what happens'. This brings to mind theatre and other forms of expression. In bibliodrama, it is (part of) a biblical, Qur'anic or mythical narrative that is put into action as a theatre play. However, the vision and methods used in bibliodrama are not limited in their application to religious narratives. Narratives from different cultures, or even stories lifted from the real-life experiences of the participants, can form the starting point for a bibliodrama. As such, a bibliodrama session can contribute in a comprehensive manner to intercultural and interreligious communication. The type of bibliodrama that is presented in this contribution aims at open communication and the sharing of any kind of stories that are deemed important and valuable, and which are part of the makeup of the participants' biographies. Bibliodrama as a method for the exploration of narratives will be illustrated in this article with a religious narrative taken from the Sufi tradition. (In the original use of the word 'bibliodrama' (by Zacharias), the word 'biblio' refers to the 'Bible'. I use the word here in a broader sense. In the European context, the word bibliodrama is usually employed only in connection with Bible stories. In my view we should not limit the word bibliodrama to the Bible, but apply it in a broad way as referring to 'books'.)

Many scholars used the metaphor of drama when writing about life, Shakespeare being one of them:

> All the world's a stage
> And all the men and women merely players;
> They have their exits
> and their entrances
> And one man in his time
> plays many parts
> His act being seven ages
> (Quote from: Shakespeare, *As You Like It* (II.vii).)

The definitions of bibliodrama range from 'man who plays many parts', the role-playing of main characters of stories—as mentioned in the quote of Shakespeare—to the re-reading of selected scenes where each participant reads the lines of a character out loud. In this contribution we follow the description that the psychotherapist Peter Felix Kellermann has given of psychodrama, which we adapt for bibliodrama [9] (p. 20). In the context of this article, bibliodrama is seen as

> a method in which participants are invited to continue and complete their actions through dramatisation, role-playing and dramatic self-presentation. Both verbal and nonverbal communication are used. A number of scenes are performed, depicting for example specific interpretations of traditional (religious or secular) narratives. The scenes may approximate real-life situations or can be externalisations of inner processes. Usually, three phases can be identified in a bibliodrama session: warming-up, action and sharing.

The Dialogical Self Theory (DST) [3] provides a consistent framework for bibliodrama. DST does justice to the multivoiced character of each person's identity, and the mixture of feelings that can accompany a person's positionality vis-à-vis real-life situations, persons and objects. In DST, a person is seen as an unsurpassable story teller, who by her/his narrating capacity constructs her/his biography and identity [2].

2.2. The Method of Bibliodrama

Bibliodrama is performed in a restricted space, a 'stage' set up in the middle of the room where the participants gather. Before the drama can start, in a prephase, the participants are introduced into the concept of bibliodrama, the possible interaction of a character's qualities and interpretations with one's own (in)competencies and experiences, the right not to play a part in staged scenes and the restrictions regarding sharing the experiences outside the safe space of this particular group of participants. The first phase of the enacted drama is the so-called 'warming up'. A 'warm up' may include some physical exercises, a round of 'how are you today' or—if the bibliodrama session is part of a series of sessions—a review of the previous meeting. In the example given below, the bibliodrama session starts with offering a story to the participants, followed by an invitation to open up to the narrative and letting themselves be touched by it, and to reflect on why it has that effect and what the possible relation is with their own life story.

The second phase of the role-playing and performance of the narrative starts at the moment when one of the participants identifies with one of the 'roles' in the story, and positions her/himself on stage (see also Sundèn [10]). The role-playing ends at the moment when the participants distance themselves from the character they have played.

The final phase of bibliodrama is the sharing phase, during which the participants exchange experiences and tell each other about the personal meanings they assign to the performed (fragment of the) narrative.

At the end of the day, a bibliodrama continues after the actual bibliodrama session took place, by establishing relationships between and gaining (better) insight in the staged story and situations in the participants' daily lives.

In the phase of role-playing and acting, participants on stage relate to narratives and characters in a structured and playful way. The rules of the game, in this case the structures of bibliodrama, guarantee the intimacy/confidentiality of a safe, constructed space, and, accordingly, provide each participant with the possibilities of 'doing as if . . . '. The leader of the play, the so-called 'director', monitors compliance with the rules, and, by extension, watches over the safety of the created space; a safe space that offers the possibilities for exploration and creativity. Within this safe space elements of the real lives of the participants come to the fore, tensions can be experienced, laughter can be part of the play, frustration may arise, or feelings of relief may be experienced. 'Safe spaces are 'contentious' and 'risky', yet 'playful' and 'pleasurable' and ripe with educational possibilities . . . ' (Stengel & Weems, in [11] (p. 58)).

Once the playing stage is over, the participants put aside the role of the character they played and reflect upon the play from a personal perspective in the sharing phase. The (re)presentation of the experiences during the play are not discussed, nor the lessons learned for a participant's daily life. The impressions that are shared during the third phase are never addressed again during informal conversations 'outside'. Literally: neither outside the safe space of the bibliodrama nor outside of the room where the play was performed are these impressions ever revisited. Nevertheless,

there is of course an effect on the daily activities of the participants. A lot can be learned from an executed bibliodrama, which is precisely why people are eager to be included in a bibliodrama: to literally practice another perspective, to reflect—from the historical perspective of a biblical/Qur'anic character's point of view—on existential dilemma's that are age-old, and that emerge just as well in the contemporary lives of the participants. In this sense, bibliodrama can be regarded as a laboratory for imagination, experimentation and exploration that creates awareness of concerted actions and resistance, narratives and counter-narratives.

Bibliodrama is not about the literal role-playing of a narrative from the Bible or the Qur'an for example. Nor is it about performing a well-designed script, like in a theatre play. Bibliodrama is a form of natural improvisation, a spontaneous exchange between the narrative and the participants. The participants give shape to their character or the situation by including elements from the selected parts of the narrative, while simultaneously—unconsciously and intuitively—including their own biographically related interpretation. It is precisely in this way that the encounter between the individual life stories of the participants and the narrative is facilitated. In bibliodrama, both body and mind are activated on stage, but also real-life experiences and memories, dreams and longings, doubts and strict convictions.

Bibliodrama is a creative method for participants who are looking for spiritual experiences and meaning in life. The focus is on shared meaning construction within the encounter between personal experiences and narratives (for example from the Bible, the Qur'an or national and international literature). The method aims at exploring existential issues in a creative and playful way by incorporating contextual information from the participants' own lives and the societal context in which they exist [12]. Through use of imagination and by having a lived, theatrical experience of situations, bibliodrama brings narratives into existence and turns inspiration into a bodily experience. Imagination, drama, role-playing, puppet play and a variety of bodily arts are all 'research instruments' in bibliodrama. The participants role-play a character from a selected narrative and 'stage' this character according to the way this character's position has become/is becoming a 'voice' in their 'society of mind' [3,7].

Bibliodrama connects today's real-world experiences with age-old stories. This is why sharing the experiences—at the end of the play, during the sharing session—is given full attention. The participants are assisted in recognising the—until now probably unnoticed—connections between the narrative, their role-play and own daily experiences. Recognising own experiences in the shared remarks can lead to a feeling of relief, or even result in a confirmation of the 'rightness' of their emotions for the participants. New lines of thought may develop out of the sharing stage, new relations that were previously invisible to the participants they may now notice. Mutual support may emerge from the recognition of not being the only one to have these kinds of tense experiences. The sharing phase is the moment to link the play experiences with experiences in daily life, and the societal reality in which the participants live. Every bibliodrama session needs to wind up in a sharing session.

2.3. Bibliodrama: A Safe Space—Freedom within Boundaries

Although in bibliodrama improvisation is the core element of role-playing, the structure is clear and a professional 'director' is needed. Bibliodrama is characterised by an open and inductive approach to narratives, and by a group-oriented approach that facilitates interaction and the collaborative expansion of a repertoire of thoughts, feelings and actions. Preconditional is an open attitude towards intergroup and inter-worldview conversations. Each participant is given the space to play/perform a character or situation, and has the right to interpret a character in her/his own unique way.

The playing space has clear boundaries—literally and metaphorically—safeguarded by the 'director', the facilitator. The participants play/represent a character, an object or specific scene from the narrative, which is demarcated from their actual 'I', while at the same time interpreted on the basis of their real 'I' and actual biography. The facilitator's task is to support the 'actors' in their emotionally charged experience of the play, to guarantee that they are able to withstand the fullness of the

performance. If necessary, the facilitator must be able to protect the 'actor' against her/himself, making sure that they can—at any time—remain the master of their own expressions, emotions and actions.

Not only the 'actors', but also the text of the narrative itself are safeguarded during the role-play. The 'director' preferably is an expert in hermeneutics, that is, she/he is familiar with different 'schools' of interpretation of texts—be their origin in religious, philosophical or other narrative traditions. The 'director' monitors the bibliodrama session and at the same time offers possible interpretations and favourable action patterns that are implicitly included in the story. The facilitator presents these patterns as mirrors, as mere possibilities for playing/acting. There is never any persuasion or coercion. In all circumstances, the players/actors are given the freedom not to follow the comments, remarks, instructions or whatever else the facilitator provides. The 'director' never disqualifies the comments of the participants but follows the interactions and counteractions with an open mind.

In bibliodrama, each participant has her/his own pace. While for some people a breakthrough occurs on the spot—during the performance, for others clarifying insights emerge in the days following the bibliodrama session. In the next section, we will look more closely at this aspect of 'lifelong learning', which is induced by bibliodrama.

2.4. Stories in Bibliodrama

In this section we elaborate on the function of 'stories'. In bibliodrama an encounter is arranged between the story located in an historical space, as imagined in virtue of the narration, and the person as 'actor', located in an actual space and reality. These spaces come together and unite, bringing imagination and reality, the past and the present together. For the interaction of re-imagining and remembering and reality, the actual situation, the child psychiatrist and therapist Winnicott coined the concept of 'intermediary space' [13]. While playing with a doll, the child reproduces and relives a particular situation, making this event re-occur in line with its imagination, through which the child (re-)finds its positionality in the respective situation. Playing with the doll enables the child—consciously or unconsciously—to get (more) grip on the situation in question and become the storyteller of its own story. This is the core of what happens in bibliodrama.

Below we focus on human beings as motivated storytellers [2] (p. 1), and the role of stories of others in the construction of people's own narratives, autobiographies and identities.

2.5. Characteristics of Bibliodrama

2.5.1. Living and Learning through Emotions

Bibliodrama offers a language for experienced feelings. While playing and sharing experiences, emotions, memories and images emerge. The language that is about and takes place through emotions—emotionally charged language [14]—needs to be taught, just like reading and writing and arithmetic. Emotional intelligence, as researched by Goleman [15], is the personality dynamic or the potential that needs to be nurtured and developed in a person; "emotional literacy is the constellation of understandings, skills and strategies that a person can develop and nurture from infancy throughout his or her entire lifetime" [16] (p. 11). In our view, illiteracy with regard to articulated expressions of emotions can be seen as a problem of our time [16] (p. 9). Facilitators in bibliodrama have an important task in offering verbal formulations and concepts for identifying emotional experiences during play. A vocabulary is needed to answer questions like 'How do you feel right now, in this scene of the play?', or 'What kind of emotion do you feel right now?' and 'Tell me, where in your body do you notice the physical reaction to the situation, and how would you qualify it?' In an emphatic way, the facilitator can offer words to enable a participant to express verbally what is at stake for her/him at a given moment, words which are just as applicable to moments in real-life that may coincide with the situation enacted during the bibliodrama session.

Physical changes in a person's appearance, pointed out by the facilitator, increase the awareness of the meaning of the situation—of the situation during play, as well as similar situations occurring

in real-life. For example, observations like 'You're looking away', 'You're fiddling with your skirt' or 'I see your hands are shaking' increase the awareness of the meaning of emotions at stake in the situation for that person. By making explicit what would otherwise remain implicit, the possibility of exploration arises, which results in an increased level of awareness during day-to-day concerns.

In our view, becoming emotional literate regarding careful and nuanced expressions of emotions is an important aspect of education for children and young people in their development—in particular the development of life orientation—during puberty and early adolescence. Bibliodrama contributes to the development of emotional literacy, and subsequently to the articulation of a life orientation.

2.5.2. Living and Learning through Action

Performing, playing and acting out (different fragments of) a narrative breathes life into the story's characters. They are given a voice by the participants—now 'actors' on the stage. The 'actors' behave as if they are the characters themselves. 'As if'—the childlike competence to play and pretend—is crucial in bibliodrama. 'As if' denotes the participant's personal truth about the character from the narrative. While moving their bodies, the 'actors' are—in a figurative sense—moved to explore the words and actions of the character, and of their co-actors. The 'actors' learn to listen, to see other people's needs, to feel free to touch each other, to ask for help and to offer assistance. In bibliodrama they experiment with looking after others and taking care of them—a kind of behaviour that can be practiced in the daily lives of all the participants.

2.5.3. Living and Learning through Topical Matters

Bibliodrama can be seen as a method to explore the meaning of texts from religious and secular narrative traditions for individuals living in a secularising/secularised age. The meaning of a story emerges in a person's (listener's) encounter with a narration (respectively read or told out loud). The re-told narrative is performed by the 'actors' in their own unique way, colouring the narrative with their own language, attitudes and actions. The tradition comes to life, acquires a flavour of actuality and becomes real for every 'actor' involved. The past becomes a present for the player(s), indicating ways to deal with future situations.

2.5.4. Living and Learning in Life Orientation

By playing their role in ancient stories from various religious and secular traditions, the 'actors' experience and gain insight ('action insight') into what is really at stake in these narratives. Simultaneously, they may also become aware of the similarities and differences with their own life. Role-playing means recognising, exploring, purifying and practicing, creating new images and possibly expanding one's repertoire of interactions, which can serve as an orientation in daily life, a life orientation.

The narratives, being told and retold in bibliodrama, reveal tracks for giving ultimate meaning to life, and salvific paths as these are experienced from generation to generation. The 'actors' follow these tracks, position themselves in the narrative tradition, and discover new orientations and new horizons for themselves.

2.6. Types of Bibliodrama

Many methods, many styles of performing, and many aims can be thematised in a bibliodrama session. Some bibliodramas are person-oriented, while others are group-oriented. Bibliodrama can revolve around religious narratives or personal life stories. The focus can be on personal religious development, or the development of a religious community aimed at open and interreligious relationships with the neighbourhood, for example. Some bibliodramas come close to psychodrama and are therapeutic in their methods. Bibliodrama can be staged in a theatre like in 'Playback theatre' [17]. It can also be used to facilitate individuals' exploration of religious scriptures, and is drawn upon in many forms of pastoral care, catechesis, religious education, Bildung, art and meditation—not only for

children, but for adolescents, adults and senior citizens as well. Bibliodrama as a theoretical concept covers many practical methods.

2.7. Encounter(s) in Bibliodrama

By way of its inductive and open communicative character, bibliodrama (in its broadest sense) creates a space of encounter for individuals with all kinds of religious and secular backgrounds and their personal search for meaning. The way in which this is done is described in the following sections.

2.7.1. Linking Up with the Participant's Life World

The starting point for the bibliodrama session is the person's initial reaction to the story, even if this is a negative reaction, such as 'what a dull story' or 'this story does not appeal to me at all'. During the first encounter with the story—after a collective reading—attention is paid to these initial reactions: questions asked, feelings of anger, sadness or happiness that arise, remarks that are made or emerging doubts. These first responses indicate how each participant can participate in a common theme, and how this theme might contribute to the development of the personal life orientations of the participants. For the facilitator, the initial reactions of the participants are also an indication of the level of support and coaching that will be needed for this specific group. The facilitator's own biography in turn plays a role in this process of signalling/diagnosis, coaching and offering support.

2.7.2. Exploring the Richness of the Narrative

A story is constructed out of a variety of perspectives and actions of characters, vividly coming to mind with the help of objects, images and experiences—any of these might touch upon the memories of the participants. Bibliodrama makes room for a diversity of possible meaning constructions, and offers possibilities to identify with a variety of aspects included in the narrative. Of course, not all possibilities can be explored in one bibliodrama session. During each session, however, priority is given to the elements of the narrative that the participants are willing to explore in collaboration.

2.7.3. Exploring the Interpretation(s) of the Participants

In bibliodrama the 'actor' is allowed, and even stimulated, to shape the characters and situations from the narrative according to her/his own unique interpretation of the character. In this way a connection is established between the 'actor's' self-understanding and the character. In this process, she/he is assisted by the other participants. The confrontation between the participants' interpretation of a character and an 'actor's' staging of this character stimulates a deeper understanding and strengthening of the participant's own positionality in life. It opens up the possibility of rewriting the script of one's life. In this way the participants develop their self-understanding and positionality in the group, in their network, and ultimately in the larger society.

2.7.4. From Chronos to Kairos

In bibliodrama, time changes from clock time to experienced time, from chronos to kairos. The 'director' of the bibliodrama slows down the actions of the participants, for example, by repeating out loud what they say, by asking them to physically adopt the posture they think fits their line or by asking another participant to do so. In the latter case, an 'actor' is invited to ascribe words to what she/he sees and what kind of emotions she/he feels by watching the 'scene'. Decelerating the performance in this way facilitates the awareness of the 'actor' and stimulates interaction and communication with the other participants. By proceeding in this manner, more than just one interpretation and meaning of the story comes to the fore, enlarging in this way the repertoire of points of view and the flexibility of all the participants.

2.7.5. Acting out a Story—Stories in Action

In bibliodrama, a story is retold and relived in the 'staging' and the interactions between the participants. Participants' memories of earlier experiences with people or objects shape the staging in a playful way, and conversely, the staging enriches their perspective on earlier experiences and their memories. Each participant has to make 'acting' choices, has to position her/himself vis-à-vis the particular articulation of the theme that is the subject of the session. These moments exert influence on their life orientation and inspire and motivate their positionality in real-life—sometimes in an impressively radical and far-reaching way.

2.7.6. The Communicative Frame of Reference

A (religious or secular) life orientation perspective sheds its light on everything that moves the 'actor' in bibliodrama to choose a 'role' and to identify with that 'role'. The personal experience becomes part of a larger whole, which includes the other 'actors' and their counterpositions in guise of the opponents in the play. The way in which the other participants give meaning to their counter-role further shapes the 'actor's' own role interpretation and stimulates further self-understanding. The personal worldview identity is communicated—within the framework of the staged narrative—alongside others point(s) of view, giving way to the reorientation and reconstruction of their personal positionality in terms of life orientation.

2.7.7. Giving Way to Existing Frames of Reference

It is obviously possible in bibliodrama that the interpretations of a narrative by scholars and by participants do not align, in the same way as the interpretations of scholars who conduct exegesis do not run parallel and even change over time, possible even in the course of a lifetime. By creating a space for young people/students to freely represent a narrative, the possibility is created to explore traces of interpretations and to go off the beaten track. New ways of interpreting may arise immediately as the 'show' is being put on stage. It is also possible that at a later point in life the intensity of the staging experience suddenly emerges in a surprising way, at an unexpected place and time.

2.7.8. Interreligious Communication

In bibliodrama narratives from a variety of worldviews/life orientations pertaining to the participants' cultural or religious backgrounds become recognisable and understandable, leading to more respect for each other's background. Similar stories from different life orientation traditions can be explored—not for the mere activity of exploration but to contribute to the mutual enrichment of the thinking and acting repertoire. The different perspectives that emerge—due to the diversity of the participants and their life orientations—likewise offer many new angles, both for the participants and for the ongoing narrative tradition(s).

The method of bibliodrama, in particular, creates space to deepen one's positionality in a familiar religious or secular worldview tradition—be it Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism or Islam—through interreligious encounters. In that sense, by mirroring, the development of one's own worldview related identity is articulated and the commitment thereof strengthened.

3. Bibliodrama in Action—Interreligious Identity Construction

This part of our article focuses on a concrete example of a bibliodrama, performed with 18–20-year-old students of the Odisee Hogeschool (Odisee University of Applied Sciences) of Brussels (Belgium). Special attention is paid to aspects of the inter-religious communicative skills of young people that are stimulated by narration, improvisation and 'staging'. We conclude this part with recommendations for the further development of bibliodrama practices in education.

In the session described below, the narrative of 'River and Sand' (This specific story is part of the literary treasure of the Sufi tradition, a spiritual 'school' within North African Islam.) takes centre-stage,

with its thematic content related to aspects that come to the fore in the identity development processes of young people. In this narrative, through a changing context, different positions are presented, which can be seen as a metaphor for identity exploration in a plural society [6]. It is in particular the exploration of modes of communication that is set on stage, envisioned as a stimulus for rewriting the script of personal life orientation.

3.1. River and Sand

Once upon a time there was River. She had her source high up in the mountains. Playful and lean she swung herself through the valleys. On her way down she became increasingly stronger and wider. Then she reached Desert. Upon arriving at Desert she wanted to flow right through Sand. However, River noticed that all her water disappeared, no matter how quickly she tried to flow through Sand. She was convinced that it was her destiny to cross Desert, but she didn't perceive a way to reach her goal.

Now the hidden voice of Desert whispered to her: 'Wind can cross the Desert, and so can you!' River however had never before heard Desert's voice. 'I'm afraid I'll get mixed with Sand and be absorbed by Sand,' River replied. 'Wind can fly but I cannot.' 'As you are now, you won't be able to cross it,' whispered Desert. 'You would disappear or turn into a swamp. You must allow Wind to carry you across Desert, to your destination.'

'Wind can't do that,' River scoffed. 'Oh, yes,' said Desert, 'You must allow Wind to pick you up and carry you.' River could not accept such a crazy idea. A river high up in the air! She would lose her personality, and who could guarantee that she would ever become herself again?

Desert said, 'I promise you will be you again. Wind will pick you up and carry you across Desert, and then she'll let you go. You'll fall down like raindrops, and then your water will turn into a river again.'

'How can I be sure you're not lying?', River asked. 'It's the truth!', said Desert. 'And if you refuse to believe me, bad things await you.' 'Why can't I stay as I am now?', River protested. 'It can't be done!', said Desert, 'but who you really are will not be lost. On the other side of Desert you'll receive the same name, because what you are, remains!'

Then River surrendered to the welcoming arms of Wind. Tender and swiftly he carried her up. When they reached the peaks of the mountains on the other side of Desert, Wind gently dropped River. And all her drops flowed together, looked for each other, and became a stream again … then a small river …

Then River asked Desert: 'How did you know it would be like that?' And the Sand of the Desert whispered: 'We knew it, because we see it happen day after day, and because we, Sand, stretch all the way from Desert to the mountains. That's why people say that the way in which the flow of life continues its journey, is written in sand' (From Shah [18]).

3.2. The Encounter of River and Sand

As an example of bibliodrama in actu, we selected one fragment of the story of River and Sand to be turned into a performance for young people.

3.2.1. 'Staging the Narrative'

'Staging the narrative' is based on the scene from the narrative 'River and Sand' in which two 'characters' (River and Sand) meet each other. The participants, now becoming 'actors', give shape to this scene in verbal and nonverbal ways that fit their imagination and their own interpretation of the characters in the narrated situation. In the encounter that is put on stage, tension is visualised by the 'actors' as they physically move towards each other—a tension resulting from a mixture of emotions, such as curiosity about each other, longing for each other, fear of the otherness of the other, doubt as to whether one is welcomed by the other or turning away from the other. Such an encounter bears within it the possibility of conflict, serenity, disarming smiles, liberation, etc. First and foremost, the encounter may be the beginning of something new, a recovery, a renewed admission or the sowing of seeds of deepening emotions related to the theme that emerges in the play.

Two participants, taking on the role of 'actors', take up their part in the play. They are interviewed by the 'director' of the play. Questions like 'Who are you in this narrative?', 'Where do you come from?' or 'What do you feel at this moment, as the narrative starts?' Then the 'actors' enter the stage—the encounter begins. The way this encounter is shaped, flows from the personal interpretation and inspiration of the 'actors' and their mutual interaction—verbal and nonverbal. Both shape their character and play their 'role' on stage according to the way they are touched by the narrative, and in line with the image of the character they have created in their minds and hearts while listening to the story.

The encounter is then 'staged' a few times with different 'actors'. This allows for the emergence of different perspectives on this particular encounter, and, accordingly, for the emergence of different perspectives on encounters in everyday life—and encounters in general. The variation in the performances makes the participants aware of their unique way of taking on a role and giving shape to it, and also of the reactions of the other 'actor' to their role, i.e., of the attitude and behaviour of the opposite 'actor' on stage. In addition to stimulating awareness, the plays also serve as an instrument for exploring and experimenting with new insights and the behaviours that result from these. The plays do not take up much time, they are brief and to the point. They are kept short, especially for groups with new participants, to familiarise them with this particular way of 'staging a narrative'.

3.2.2. Playing with Motives

By 'acting', the participants experience what inspires and motivates them in their actions, what they really long for and what hinders them in realising their dreams. The 'director' of the play invites the participants to listen attentively—and with their heart—to the part of the narrative that will be put on stage, and to take the time to reflect on that aspect.

3.2.3. Identification

All of the participants—whether they are directly on stage or not—are invited to take on the role of the character that touches them the most, the character they feel most committed to and would prefer to play—in this example, the role of River or the role of Sand/Desert.

3.2.4. Re-Reading the Narrative

As a 'warming up', the part of the narrative that is central to the play is re-read, and the participants are invited to listen attentively—to let their hearts speak—and to activate their imagination to create the character once they are on stage.

Once upon a time there was River. She had her source high up in the mountains. Playful and lean she swung herself through the valleys. On her way down she became increasingly stronger and wider. Then she reached Desert. Upon arriving at Desert she wanted to flow right through Sand. However, River noticed that all her water disappeared, no matter how quickly she tried to flow through Sand. She was convinced that it was her destiny to cross Desert, but she did not perceive a way to reach her goal.

3.2.5. On the Stage

The first duo of actors prepares for the encounter between River and Sand. The others take up their position as 'audience'.

Sand positions himself in the middle of the stage, usually marked by a carpet. River positions herself in one corner of the stage, and slowly walks in the direction of Sand. The participants who take on the role of audience have an overview of the stage. Their task is to engage in introspection, i.e., to pay attention to their inner world and to explore what touches them in the encounter between River and Sand. In what way does this encounter touch upon their personal experiences and what kind of memories does this scene evoke about (inter)relationships in their daily lives?

The action should be brief and concise. If there is any conversation besides the nonverbal aspects of the communication, it may be reduced to just a few short sentences or statements, perhaps two or three expressions from both 'actors'.

3.2.6. Imagination at Work

With help of the 'director', both 'actors' are stimulated to familiarise themselves with their role. Taking turns, and prompted by the questions and comments of the 'director', they tell who they are, how they feel, where they come from and what their goal is.

When people participate in a bibliodrama for the first time, the 'director' will handle in-depth questions carefully and tactfully during the 'interview'. Little by little, during a series of bibliodrama sessions, the director may receive permission from the participants to ask more intrusive questions. The participants will get used to opening themselves up in a space of trust, and accordingly their competence in 'acting out their insight' will increase. Below, we present a number of questions that can facilitate participation in the staging of a character:

* Please, tell me, where do you come from? (aimed at presenting oneself and one's origins; Are you a native? Are you alone? Who are your comrades?);

* What kind of River are you—a tiny stream, a swirling River, ... ? (aimed at presenting one's identity);

* What is your position in the context? What does your 'natural' context look like? (aimed at clarifying one's positionality in the natural world and the societal context);

* What is your goal? (aimed at the verbalisation of one's life orientation; What or who would you like to be?).

3.2.7. The Beginning

The participant who represents River starts the play, and then moves to the middle of the stage, facing Sand. River expresses the feelings she goes through while moving. Next, Sand responds to the approaching of River's water, i.e., River's attitude and the verbal expressions of her feelings. Both 'actors' do their utmost best to stage an encounter and to accompany their action(s) with verbal expressions. They give way to feelings of joy, anger or whatever comes from the heart. After a few minutes, the 'director' signals the end of this staging of the encounter. Each play is concluded with a sharing session, during which experiences are exchanged.

3.2.8. Sharing Experiences

The 'actors' shake off their role (sometimes by literally shaking their heads, arms, hands and legs) and reposition themselves in the circle of participants/the audience. During this sharing stage, all participants—with the two 'actors' coming in last—reveal what they have experienced, what kind of emotions were evoked and what kind of memories from their personal lives were triggered by the play.

After the first 'staging' and 'sharing' phase, the cycle repeats itself: a re-reading of the narrative, followed by imagining, identifying, performing and sharing.

3.2.9. Examples of Playful Encounters

In this section we give examples of how the theory of bibliodrama can be translated into practice, and illustrate its method as set out above. After providing a brief introduction to the participants (students of the Odisee Hogeschool/Odisee University of Applied Sciences, Brussels, Belgium), a bibliodrama was set up with them based on the narrative of 'River and Sand'. Below we give some examples of the actors' verbal comments during the scene when River and Sand run into each other:

* River says: 'Why are you holding me back, Sand?' Sand answers: 'I'm not holding you back at all, you're running into me. You can start with saying 'hello!"

* River walks towards Sand and says: 'Hello Sand, you know your way around here, I'd like to stream through but I don't know if that's a good thing?' Sand says: 'The rivers I meet dry out or become swamps, I don't know what I trigger in them, but apparently my very nature doesn't bode well for rivers.'

* River: runs very fast and bumps into (the player in the role of) Sand. Sand says, 'Didn't you see me? I've been around here for quite a while, you know.'

Below we provide some examples of the encounter between River and Sand where crossing the boundaries of identity is at stake.

* River says: 'Wow so much sand, what is all this sand doing here, that doesn't belong here, this is my terrain'. Sand asks: 'And why don't I belong here?' River says: 'You make me sink, you have to respect me'. Sand answers: 'You make me wet with your water, so that I become mud or a swamp, I can't be expected to become a river, can I?'

* River: 'Damn, I can't move forward anymore, it feels like I'm drying up'. Sand says: 'You're losing yourself, you're not following your own riverbed anymore, are you?' River says: 'I'm constantly making new beds'. Sand says: 'But you're trying to flood me, you can't just do that, you have to watch out where you flow.'

* Sand calls out to River as she approaches: 'River, River, look out! Stop, you're going to sink, disappear'. River says, 'What do you mean, I'm going to disappear? I'll see that happen first, you don't know me yet!'. Sand says: 'That's right River, I don't know you, but I know me. The way you come pouring from the mountains, that's something worth seeing, I don't want you to disappear. We must deliberate.' 'Deliberate, deliberate! Move away you mean. You're the one that needs to move Sand, so that I can pass through. Ask Wind for help to blow you away.'

3.2.10. The Sharing Session—Exchange of Experiences and Feelings

In this concluding part of the bibliodrama, the question is: What kind of memories, associations, feelings emerged while playing your role and while you were an observing member of the audience? What struck you in particular? What touched you? What surprised you? What was recognisable? During this round of questions, no comments are allowed on the way the 'actors' performed the scene.

The focus in the sharing phase is exclusively on expressing one's own associations and feelings and sharing them with the other participants. First, a participant verbalises her/his feelings while she/he played the role of River or Sand. Then, the same participant expresses her/his personal feelings. For example: 'The moment Sand said . . . , for me, as River, a feeling of . . . . emerged.' Such a statement may then be followed by a personal comment: 'This feeling was very strange to me. In daily life I usually don't allow myself to have those kinds of feelings'. It is in no way allowed to say something like: 'When you (pointing to one of the participants) said to me . . . But that's not true.' Or: 'The way you were River and made such a blunt statement, that's exactly as I know you when you are among friends.' Judgmental expressions are not permitted—positive ones or negative ones.

The same applies to the members of the audience. They should also be very attentive and express only what they have experienced themselves. For example: 'The way you (pointing to one of the participants) played Sand reminded me of my own experience of blocking someone's way, which gave me a feeling of . . . '. A strict distinction must be kept in mind between the staged role and the person of the 'actor'.

Below we elaborate on the sharing session. We present a few more statements, all of which show how dramatically the narrative triggered emotions that are recognisable from concrete situations in daily life. This creates awareness for the participants' development of consciousness regarding their search for meaning and the impact thereof on their daily lives. Action insight!

'I felt how much River struggles with the fact that it cannot pass through Sand. When I'm busy with something then I want to be able to continue, when something stops me, or when something intervenes, it gets on my nerves'. Another participant joins the conversation and says: 'I have that too, I played a River that said: 'I'm doing well right now, I feel the drive flowing in me and now I have to stop'. Then I, too, get angry at Sand who lies in the way.'

> 'As 'Sand' I really felt too much, like I wasn't allowed to be there. Even when I listened to those other Rivers, I felt confirmed in my identity of obstructor, something I recognise from daily life'. The director intervenes for a moment, correcting: 'You weren't assigned the identity of obstructor, that's what Sand felt when River came rolling in . . . : 'labeled as an obstructor'. Do you ever have that feeling?' The participant replies: 'No, I don't feel like an obstructor, but if you play Sand you do feel like that. Why is Sand not allowed to be there? As human beings, we all have the right to be respected, don't we?'
>
> A very different kind of experience is expressed by another participant who played the role of Sand. 'I liked being sand. I thought it was great to stop the river that just kept on rolling'. The director asks: what did you find so 'great' about it? The participant replies: 'The feeling of strength, of personal strength. In daily life, I don't always dare to stop someone when I think that person has crossed a line. When that happens, I keep quiet, I let it pass . . . In cases like those, I would like to be like Sand. It was good to feel what power I had.'

4. Conclusions, Discussions and Recommendations

Now that we have presented the theoretical background of bibliodrama in Part I, and provided examples of real-life bibliodrama sessions in Part II, we will connect theory and practice in this concluding part. We are well aware that no general conclusions can be drawn on the basis of the few examples we have given. Our recommendations will focus on the possibilities of bibliodrama practice in an educational setting.

4.1. Conclusions

Based on our definition of bibliodrama and the experiences in the group of 18–20-year-old students of the Odisee Hogeschool (Odisee University of Applied Sciences) of Brussels (Belgium).we conclude that dramatisation, role-play and the imaginative practice of 'as if' are key ingredients in a group process of identity development that takes place in bibliodrama sessions through the interpretation and performance of stories from a narrative tradition. The method of bibliodrama is characterised by a preparation phase followed by three phases of the staged drama: warming up, acting and sharing. By 'staging' and acting, insight is gained into the nature of the characters that are being role-played, and, as a consequence, the participants may gain insight in their own positionality vis-à-vis the theme that is at stake in the bibliodrama. The facilitating remarks and comments of the leader of the group (the facilitator/'director') together with the sometimes unexpected and surprising interventions of participants function as disruptive moments [19,20], inviting a person to leave her/his comfort zone and take another until then unknown perspective on the situation and on her/himself. By consequence students become aware of the multifacetedness and multivoicedness of their self and their positioning process regarding world view traditions. This latter aspect is verbalised in the so-called sharing phase. After shaking off their roles, the participants share first the feelings they experienced in their role and, secondly, the insights that came to the fore and what the performance and the gained new insights mean to them as a person in their daily practices. No evaluative comments, no judgments are expressed in this phase. The focus is exclusively on sharing and listening. This is the way bibliodrama casts its influence in everyday life.

4.2. Discussions

For students, bibliodrama offers interesting opportunities to become aware of tense situations in their daily lives and to become aware of the fact that contemporary dilemmas, examined from a meta-perspective, resemble dilemmas described in age-old narratives—whether they are part of religious or secular tradition(s).

This article describes a single example of bibliodrama practice, an exploration of a single scene from a narrative. This one example shows the strength of bibliodrama, which is not just about

role-playing, but also about role-taking and acting based on a person's own intuitive and associative interpretations of the characters in a narrative.

In the examples we saw that the participants—as actors—can experience emotional inclinations towards actions they never considered before. Like River saying to Sand: 'You don't know me yet!' or Sand admitting: 'That's right River, I don't know you, but I know me. The way you come pouring from the mountains, that's something worth seeing, I don't want you to disappear. We must deliberate.'

4.3. Recommendations

Bibliodrama can be enriched by giving the audience a more active role, i.e., more active than just observing. The audience might be invited to 'double' a character on stage, by whispering inner thoughts they expect the character to have [12] (p. 30 ff). When River says to Sand 'you don't know me yet!', for example, a 'double' by a member of the audience might be 'and I don't want to be known by you, Sand!' A 'double' should always be verified by the 'director' with the question 'Is this in line with what you think or feel?' A 'double', whether or not approved, will contribute to the growing insight of the actor.

Another way to enrich a bibliodrama is by 'mirroring' the scene to one of the actors on stage. In such cases, a member of the audience is invited to copy the actor's position exactly and the actor is asked to watch that mirrored performance. What does she/he see and what kind of feelings does the scene evoke? Looking in the mirror, being confronted with one's own verbal and nonverbal expressions can be a disruptive experience, stimulating awareness and creating insight at the same time.

A third way to extend and deepen the process of dramatisation is through role change. This means that River takes on the role of Sand, and vice versa. To see how the opposite actor takes on the role (role-taking) you have played (role-playing), can result in a moment of wonder or recognition [12] (p. 35).

These three ways of enriching and deepening a bibliodrama are strongly reminiscent of psychoeducation and therapeutic applications of bibliodrama. The kind of insights that emerge during bibliodrama offer interesting starting points for psychoeducation about identity development and the multivoiced character of identity as described in Dialogical Theory. In addition, Dialogical Self Theory provides a challenging method—the so-called Self Confrontation Method—to explore the emotional relationships between the variety of 'voices' in the multivoiced society of mind in a verbal way (see [2,7]).

To make a bibliodrama a success, the expertise of the session leader is pivotal. She/he is the 'director' of the play, to whom a variety of essential tasks are entrusted: asking sophisticated questions to stimulate the imagination before the performance, giving finely tuned directions for role-play, being sensitive to dramatic experiences of participants that need a more therapeutic approach and keeping an eye on the group dynamics [12] (p. 115).

Bibliodrama, in our opinion, creates a safe space for the exploration of, and communication with, a plurality of narratives from a plurality of life orientations, like narratives from the Qur'an, the Bible, the Bhagavad Gita or the Anansi stories. Learning about the dogmatic content of traditions is only one aspect of interreligious teaching and learning, and probably a less inspiring aspect at that. Experiencing the actual meaning of these traditions requires a different approach, and in our view the method of bibliodrama offers interesting practical methods for experiential learning from traditional narratives. Students' own experiences with role-playing and role-taking will inspire and motivate them in daily life to practice their action insights. Bibliodrama, as shown above, enables young people to learn with and from each other [21]. Their creative, playful communication in their peer group with the story and with each other makes them smarter, not only cognitively but also—and especially—in an emotional and empathic way.

Bibliodrama as an open and safe space in a plural school community contributes to intercultural and interreligious understanding. The exploration of narratives and characters from 'other' cultural and religious traditions make them a part of the explorer's own multivoiced self. Integrating 'the other'

into one's own 'society of mind' is the basis for mutual respect in a context characterised by diversity in our secularised/secularising world.

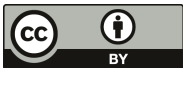
Funding: This research received no external funding.

Acknowledgments: Sincere thanks to Stijn Van Tongerloo for the critical proofreading of this text, and for supplying improvements (both textual and content-wise) to make this article an integrated whole.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

1. Van der Zande, E. Life Orientation for Professonals: A Narrative Inquiry into Morality and Dialogical Competency in Professionalisation. Ph.D. Thesis, Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands, 2018.
2. Hermans, H.; Hermans-Jansen, E. *Self-Narratives: The Construction of Meaning in Psychotherapy*; The Guilford Press: New York, NY, USA; London, UK, 1995.
3. Hermans, H.; Hermans-Konopka, A. *Dialogical Self Theory*; Cambridge University Press: New York, NY, USA, 2010.
4. Arendt, H. *Denken: Het leven van de geest; [The Life of the Mind: Thinking]*; Klement: Zoetermeer, The Netherlands, 2013.
5. Vygotsky, L.S. *Educational Psychology*; St. Lucie Press: Boca Raton, FL, USA, 1997.
6. Marcia, J.E. Identity in Adolescence. In *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*; Adelson, J., Ed.; Wiley: New York, NY, USA, 1980; pp. 159–187.
7. Verhofstadt-Denève, L. *Handboek ontwikkelingspsychologie: Grondslagen en theorieën*; Bohn Stafleu van Loghum: Houten, The Netherlands, 2003.
8. De Haan, D.; Schellekens, E. *Onze klas, mijn Wereld; [Our Classroom, My World]*; SWP: Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2014.
9. Kellermann, P.F. *Focus on Psychodrama: The Therapeutic Aspects of Psychodrama*; Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London, UK; Philadelphia, PA, USA, 2006.
10. Sundèn, H. *Die Religion und die Rollen; [Religion and Roles]*; Alfred Töpelmann: Berlin, Germany, 1966.
11. Du Preez, P. The Human Right to Education, the Ethical Responsibility of Curriculum, and the Irony in "Safe Spaces". In *Safe Spaces: Human Rights Education in Diverse Contexts*; Roux, C., Ed.; Sense Publishers: Rotterdam, The Netherlands; Boston, MA, USA; Taipei, Taiwan, 2012.
12. De Laat, P. *Psychodrama: Een actiegerichte methode voor exploratie, reflectie en gedragsverandering*; Koninklijke Van Gorcum: Assen, The Netherlands, 2005.
13. Winnicott, D.W. *Playing and Reality*; Basic Books: London, UK, 1971.
14. Stanislavski, C. *An Actor Prepares*; Taylor & Francis Inc.: Hoboken, NJ, USA, 1989.
15. Goleman, D. *Emotional Intelligence*; Bantam Books: New York, NY, USA; Toronto, ON, Canada; London, UK; Sidney, NSW, Australia; Auckland, New Zealand, 2005.
16. Bocchino, R. *Emotional Literacy: To Be a Different Kind of Smart*; SAGE Publications Ltd.: London, UK, 1999.
17. Needa, V. An Introduction to Playback Theatre. Available online: http://static1.squarespace.com/static/55e46f2be4b0e4feabf8160e/t/56811efaa976af5d46193f08/1451302650077/INTRODUCING+PLAYBACK+THEATRE+-+Dec+2015+.pdf (accessed on 15 December 2015).
18. Shah, I. *Derwisjen vertellen; [Tales of the Dervishes]*; Ankh-Hermes: Deventer, The Netherlands, 1976.
19. Biesta, G.J.J. *The Beautiful Risk of Education*; Routledge: London, UK; New York, NY, USA, 2014.
20. Bakker, C.; ter Avest, I. Disruptive Moments and Normative Professionalism: An Exploration of the (Im)possibilities of a Provocative Pedagogy to Stimulate the Development of Normative Professionalism. *J. Divers. High. Educ.* **2018**, submitted.
21. Andree, T.G.M.; Bakker, C. *Leren van en met elkaar*; Boekencentrum Uitgevers: Utrecht, The Netherlands, 1996.



education sciences

MDPI

Article

The Appropriation of Symbolic Language in Worldview Education through Bibliodrama

Bas van den Berg * and Cocky Fortuin-van der Spek

De 7evende Hemel, Association for training and coaching bibliodrama and bibliodans, Couwenhoven 56-04, 3703 EW Zeist, The Netherlands; c.a.fortuin@planet.nl

* Correspondence: bwp.vdberg@ziggo.nl

Received: 4 February 2019; Accepted: 17 April 2019; Published: 24 April 2019

Abstract: One of the main questions regarding Dutch primary education in our secularised and religiously diverse society—both with regards to public and religiously-affiliated schools—is how to get students acquainted with the symbolic language of religious and worldview-affiliated life narratives. Teaching literacy in symbolic language has become less important in the education programmes of modern-day primary schools. The dominance of scientific descriptive language is evident in the majority of contemporary curricula. This language may be highly important for teaching mathematics and science, but for religious and cultural education, and for teaching art and history, symbolic language is the vehicle for acquiring knowledge, insight, and wisdom. Our aim in this article is to reflect on the idea that stimulating symbolic speech in primary school education through role playing, will bring out the sensitivity of current-day students to confer meaning to life questions and life themes.

Keywords: symbolic language; philosophy of life; religious sources of meaning; metaphoric sensitivity; inventive imagination; role playing/bibliodrama

1. Introduction

How can we teach children the skills to develop their own life orientation in a society where the cultural climate is dominantly secular and, in some ways, hostile and biased towards religion and religiosity? Besides this dominance, the language that is used on a daily basis in education is particularly the language of information, description, argumentation, and facts. The language of experience, dreams and ideas, which is at the heart of religious, cultural, or psychological speech, will be heard in personal and private communication, but not in public interactions. In order to improve the use of symbolic speech in religious education offered by primary schools in our secular age, we will advocate for a prominence to be placed on symbolic language acquisition in contemporary curricula for primary school education. Two questions require answering: (1) How can we improve the learning and appropriation of symbolic language by students of primary schools? (2) How can we support teachers in primary schools in coaching students in metaphoric literacy in the context of worldview education?

Our goal in this article is to explore the following statement: When primary school pupils learn to read and interpret the symbolic language of religious or cultural resources in an interactive way—and with the help of role-playing/bibliodrama—they will be able to confer meaning to life questions and life themes. This process of making meaning will have a deep impact on the journey they make in developing their own worldview and personal lifestyle (also socially). The text is structured as follows: Section 1 introduces the playful approach to religious stories called 'bibliodrama', in which insight can be gained into the way young people use symbolic language. In the section that follows, we construe a theoretical framework to describe exactly how symbolic language works and how new generations become acquainted with it. By proceeding in this manner, we acquire insight into the concepts of

metaphoric sensitivity and inventive imagination. This is followed by an intermezzo, in which we present an example of working with bibliodrama to make the readers more conscious of what is at stake. In Section 3 we present some materials and methods for working with bibliodrama in relation to religious texts, and we introduce the religious text used in this article, the Book of Esther (a part of the Hebrew Bible). The Esther story is one of many narrative and poetic texts of the Bible, which are useful in bibliodrama. For more information about the Esther narrative, see Section 3. In Section 4 we give some examples of how to work with the characters of this religious text through the use of role-play/bibliodrama. Finally, in the last Section, we reflect on the process through which young people appropriate symbolic language, and consider the ways in which this process is stimulated and facilitated by coaches.

In what follows, we will clarify and verify the above statement with some examples of a creative dialogical learning process undertaken by primary school pupils, through interaction with the symbolic language of religious stories and their teachers. Bibliodrama is a perfect tool for triggering and enhancing the process by which pupils confer meaning on religious or cultural resources [1]. Bibliodrama is a way to experience the dynamics of a religious or cultural narrative by taking on the roles of characters from such a narrative [2]. By assessing the interaction of certain roles around certain chosen events (role playing), the process of meaning-making and discovery of meaning is expected to start. At the same time, role playing covers a wider and more open domain than bibliodrama. Every form of bibliodrama is based on the interactions between roles taken from a religious story that participants play, and constitutes a search for the meaning of life themes and life questions, embedded in such a story. In the process of a bibliodrama, the participants deliberately look for the meaning and sense between roles in the framework that a moral and spiritual loaded narrative will evoke. A bibliodrama allows students to discover the symbolic language of cultural source-narratives, such as the Bible, next to bibliodans, creative writing and making music.

First, we will elaborate on an example from our practice as leaders of bibliodrama sessions to make it clear that teachers themselves need to develop a renewed sensitivity for symbolic language. Without such a revitalised awareness, teachers cannot coach the learning process of students on their journey to a personal worldview. We indicate how pupils practiced the appropriation of the symbolic language of the Book of Esther by means of role playing. To coach the process of role playing in the classroom, teachers familiarised themselves with some forms of role playing from the repertoire of bibliodrama, as it has been practiced in the Netherlands over the past thirty years [3,4]. For the majority of students, role playing is an open and inviting way to come into dialogue with an example of cultural artefacts out of a tradition. In that sense, role playing does have a broader scope than bibliodrama. This form is specifically developed for learners to find out their own stance on examples of cultural/religious source-narratives from different traditions.

The practicing of symbolic language in schools gives students the opportunity to express their response to a life event in a narrative, and to enter into a dialogue with each other, with the teacher, and with the story. Their different responses support them in the articulation of their own dreams, ideals, and desires in symbolic language—in relation to the story role they have taken on. Acting in this way, they learn to share their experiences, dreams, and desires in their life with other students and with their teachers in order to give meaning to these experiences. Schools need to provide more space for the articulation and sharing of the playful, poetic, and creative practice of symbolic language, through which students discover their own worldview and their own lifestyle. Teachers, in turn, become competent by coaching and accompanying this process of emerging symbolic awareness and literacy on the part of their students.

The authors of this article are experienced in, and draw inspiration from, the practice of role playing/bibliodrama. Bibliodrama forms a special way of conducting an intense dialogue with a biblical narrative—or a narrative from another religious tradition—through the technique of taking on one of the story roles, in order to explore the living dynamics of the narrative [5]. By exploring the role in interaction with other role players, the participant possibly experiences something new

in the trialogical interaction with others, his/her inner world, and a spiritual question or life theme that is addressed in the narrative. From the life philosopher Martin Buber we learn that you never approach a 'resource of wisdom' as an object, but as a subject that addresses you and invites you to respond with a personal, articulated answer [6]. Following this idea, we see a range of possibilities for working with rich 'resources of sense' [7]—from different religious and cultural traditions—in role playing/bibliodrama in the classroom.

When students—and also their teachers, who undergo their own development—get better acquainted with symbolic language, they will find more creative ways to discover the rich and layered meanings of cultural, historical, and religious resources [8]. The symbolic language embedded in a creative artefact evokes a world of images, associations, and allusions, and learners can develop the sensitivity required to connect with the power of figurative language through their emotions, imagination, intuition, and cognition. All pupils in primary schools in the 21th century should learn two kinds of languages: The language of information, which is the language of the dominant culture of economy, business, science, ecology, and politics, and the language of experience, practiced in the subculture of education, which is the language of care, arts, worldviews and religion. Schools, colleges, and universities have the public task of creating a special learning environment in which students practice the appropriation of both languages to understand the rich physical and cultural world outside of them, as well as the world of experiences, emotions, dreams, desires, and beliefs within them [9]. These two worlds meet in the in-between world—the world that education creates every day in the dialogue space between learners, resources, and their inner worlds. This encounter of three worlds can challenge students, their peers, and their teachers in their development process to become wise and social human beings who can find their place in life, and take the responsibility of others and the shared world.

2. A Conceptual Framework

For the development of this article we describe two important concepts that are further explored in a publication of one of the authors [10]: Metaphoric sensitivity and inventive imagination.

2.1. Metaphoric Sensitivity

Narratives have their own distinct language. In narrative theory, the language is called metaphoric language [11,12]. Metaphoric language plays with the space that can be found between the literal and figurative meanings of words, such as 'source' and 'tree'. In a narrative, language is used in such a way that the actual reality is described, while an imaginative reality is evoked, forming a meaningful coherence. According to Ricoeur, a metaphor has the power to rewrite the visible and imaginable reality [13]. Metaphors, in his view, are an expression of a working imagination. The figurative language of a narrative invites readers or listeners to respond authentically within their own environment, evoking their imagination.

As Ricoeur puts it, listeners and readers of religious narratives move, in their associative interpretations, unconsciously 'from the work of imagination in the text to the work of imagination about the text' [14]. Primary school pupils who engage in a dialogue with a religious narrative, must learn how to read, understand, and interpret the specific figurative language of this narrative. This requires the development of sensitivity to metaphoric language. Based on the assertions made about the figurative language of religious narratives, we can determine that the activation of sensitivity to metaphoric language is an important condition of familiarising children with a traditional, religious narrative. In 1997, the philosopher and educationalist, Kieran Egan stated that young children are in fact capable of thinking and speaking metaphorically, the latter being defined as 'metaphorising' [15]. Egan believes that our current ways of learning and teaching—more than is the case today—need to challenge students to activate their imagination in their exploration of the rich reality.

According to Egan [16], children aged nine to ten, in their encounter with religious narratives, are capable of becoming sensitive to various aspects of religious narratives, as described in the introduction.

They can learn to identify characters through their actions and speech, learn to identify the selection of actions and events involved in the plot, and also the specific stylistic characteristics of religious narratives, such as key words and existential themes that turn a religious narrative into a 'proposal for meaning' [13].

2.2. Inventive Imagination

In his hermeneutic philosophy, Ricoeur was particularly interested in the open spaces between the world of the narrative and the world of the reader or listener: 'The world which can be revealed through text will be deployed before the text' [17]. Each narrative contains these open spaces, which can be filled in [18]. Moreover, each narrative also contains signals that can serve as road markings for the reader. The 'inventive imagination' in a narrative, which is a trait of the story itself, is *what brings potential meanings* to light. 'Interpretative imagination', on the other hand, is the means through which the reader/listener is able to turn this meaning into a 'source of meaning'. To understand and comprehend the narrative, these open spaces between the world of the narrative and the world of the reader/listener need to be filled in step-by-step, by deploying interpretative imagination. Imagination as an *imagination productrice,* thus plays an important role in the *configuration* of a (religious) narrative [13]. More specifically, imagination as interpretative imagination, plays an important role in the *refiguration* carried out by the readers/listeners, because as an audience, they can only acquaint themselves with the narrative through a *creative interpretation* of the actions performed by the characters in the world of the narrative, and by transferring this interpretation to their own life world.

Following in Ricoeur's footsteps, the philosopher Richard Kearney [19] seeks to conceptualise the effect of imagination in relation to (religious) narratives. He describes his outlook as 'a model of poetical-ethical imagination' [19]. By means of this model, Kearney aims to transcend the two extremes of the pre-modern paradigm (prevalent until the Renaissance) and the modern paradigm (prevalent between the Renaissance and the First World War). The one-sidedness of the pre-modern paradigm lies in the fact that there is no room for human creativity, because of the predominance of a higher power. The one-sidedness of the modern paradigm, according to Kearney, is the tendency to solely recognise the autonomous individual as a source of meaning-making, and to deny any kind of external authority. With his poetical-ethical model, Kearney wants to do justice to the autonomy of human individuals (subjects), who develop themselves by making personal choices in the interaction with sources of meaning, or with other individuals in a concrete context.

2.3. Imagination as an Exploration of Possibilities

Based on her analysis of the work of such authors as John Dewey and Iris Murdoch, Hans Alma concludes that imagination cannot be properly described as an intrapsychic capability, but rather as a mental dynamic that allows humans to see reality as a field of possibilities. Alma believes that imagination can therefore best described as a 'process of perceiving, remembering, experimenting and anticipating unprecedented possibilities'. After exploring the literature of philosophy and developmental psychology, Alma coins the following provisional working definition of imagination: 'A personal and emotionally involved exploration of possibilities that exceeds the boundaries of the strictly factual' [7].

2.4. An Imaginative Approach to Learning

In the 1980s and 1990s, Kieran Egan developed a theory about narrative and imaginative learning and teaching, which he called the 'imaginative approach'. He affirmed this theory in the research that led to his publication *The Educated Mind* in 1997—research, which he further refined in the following years, through numerous studies on the development of a narrative and imaginative curriculum. This innovation of both theory and practice led to new initiatives across the globe, in which the student as a subject of investigative, dialogical, and creative learning is centralised [16].

According to Egan, children think metaphorically. The perception and interpretation of reality, and the dialogue that is conducted as a part of it, are realised through the use of cognitive skills that are formed in the 'spoken language phase'. These skills, such as 'mentally picturing' and 'emotionally understanding a metaphor', emerge out of the hearing process and the process of learning to express oneself in everyday spoken language. In this 'mythical' phase, according to Egan, the cognitive skills of the next 'romantic' phase are already in place. These second-order skills are developed as a result of learning how to read and write symbolic signs. By deploying these skills, children gain access the symbolic world of writing, visual, sound, and movement. Egan believes that, in Western civilisations, children become 'culturally literate' between the ages of eight and fifteen. During this time, they learn to use a system of symbolic signs more or less fluently in a variety of situations. The cognitive skills and capacities of the previous phase remain intact and active during this phase of 'increasing symbolic literacy'.

2.5. Intermezzo: A Workshop for Principals of Primary Schools—Becoming Sensitive to Symbolic Language through Playing Bibliodrama

In November 2017, the authors of this article (Van den Berg and Fortuin-van der Spek) organised a bibliodrama workshop for principals of primary schools, with the goal of making these professionals sensitive to the power of symbolic language. The title of the workshop was: 'Bringing a valuable source of meaning to life'. The principals were invited to reflect on the question: Which cultural and religious narratives are important for the development of primary school pupils? In a bibliodrama session, an encounter with the characters from a religious text was put on stage. We approached the story as a subject, not as an object. With body and soul, the participants experienced the power of a living encounter with a 'source of wisdom'.

We started with an introduction to the Book of Esther (a narrative from the Hebrew Bible). The plight of the Jewish people, who were forced to live outside their own country in exile, was sketched. For the workshop we chose to focus on a critical moment in the lives of Mordecai and Esther, a situation where a religious life theme is at stake—to bow or not to bow down before another human being. This theme is linked to the worldview of the characters in the scene. We examined how Mordecai and Esther's perception of the act of bowing down could be explored by pupils in the twenty first century primary schools, in relation to the life situations that these children are themselves dealing with. What would you do in such a critical moment? We began the workshop by giving examples from our own lives or work at school. The instruction was: Tell us about a critical moment that arose during your work. What was the situation? What did you do, and why did you choose to act in that way at that time?

Before starting to read chapter 4 from the Book of Esther, we explained the social, cultural, and religious situation that the characters find themselves in [20]. Esther is the young queen of King Ahasuerus, but because she is not allowed to present herself to the king unsummoned, arriving without an invitation could mean death. Mordecai, Esther's cousin, is a critical man and has previously refused to obey the law, by not bowing down before the king's prime minister, Haman. With the group we read the text of Esther 4: 1–17 out loud, asking the participants which part of the text touched them during the reading.

In the next step, everyone read Esther 4: 1–8 slowly. Following this, the participants were asked to close their eyes, imagine the situation, and after a few minutes, to make their mood impression of the situation Mordecai finds himself in, by drawing lines and colours. After a few minutes, the participants shared their mood impressions in pairs, and spoke about Mordecai's situation. In a third step, we asked them to read Esther 4: 9–14 in a special way, using the so-called 'I-reading' technique, where wherever you read 'Esther', you read 'me'/'I' instead. For example 4:9: '*And Hatach went and told* (Esther) *me what Mordecai had said*'. 4:10: '*Then* (Esther) *I spoke to Hatach and commanded him to go to Mordecai*'. Subsequently, the participants were asked to imagine Esther writing about this situation in her diary, and to write a diary fragment from her perspective. Using this form, we prepared the

participants to take on the role of Esther. Taking on the role of a character from the story is elementary for bibliodrama. After writing a diary fragment from Esther's perspective, the participants shared their writings in small groups. In a fifth step, an open chair was used that was placed in front of the group. By providing a few clarifying examples, the participants were instructed to ask questions to Mordecai, Esther, or Hatach (for each person a different chair was used). Questions could be put freely and everyone was invited to come up with an answer, including the person who initially asked the question.

The dialogue between Mordecai and Esther can be played out in a more dramatic way. It is a very special dialogue, because the characters do not speak with each other directly. It is always the servant Hatach who transmits the message. The first step is to choose a moment from the dialogue. One option is to perform this fragment in small groups, using improvisational theatre: Esther in the palace, Mordecai outside and Hatach in the space in between. One person starts the dialogue. Esther and Mordecai can only speak with Hatach, while Hatach can move between them. After the performance of this micro drama, the participants step out of their role. They can speak about their experiences as people with their own identity and biography. In the sharing of, and reflecting on these experiences, they can talk about the manner in which a life theme from the narrative has touched their lives. This form of bibliodrama can just as well be used for texts from other religious traditions. If teachers develop their own experiences with religious stories in this way, they may unlock a world of wisdom packaged in the stories' symbolic language. By means of this example, we have demonstrated real forms of intense dialogue in symbolic language, and revealed a playground for improvisation—bodily, socially, and religiously. Bibliodrama represents an educational form of learning or for religion.

3. Materials and Methods

To conduct a bibliodrama, a bibliodrama leader must become familiar with the tools and instruments available. In this paragraph we present some of these materials and instruments, which were developed in workshops. Some of these instruments we used in sessions held with principals and teachers, to deepen their sensitivity for the 'language of experience'. This sensitivity is important for teachers who coach their students to improve themselves in the appropriation of symbolic language. Principals, in turn, need to understand why poetic or figurative literacy is a prerequisite for teaching, and for educating students to become good citizens in the world of tomorrow. Once again, the story used here, which challenges and touches all participants who practice symbolic language in a playful and creative way, is the Book of Esther from the Hebrew Bible [20]. Of course, other stories out of The Hebrew Bible or of other cultural source-narratives could have functioned in the same way.

3.1. The Book of Esther

The book of Esther is an example of a well-created novella from the 4th century BC that is a part of the Old Testament (Christian perspective) or Tenakh/Hebrew Bible (Jewish perspective). The story of the Book of Esther revolves around saving the Jewish people from persecution by the Persian Prime Minister Haman. The main characters are the young Jewish Queen Esther and her cousin Mordecai on one hand, and King Ahasuerus and his prime minister—and opponent—Haman on the other. The novella is composed as a story with lots of suspense, following a rhythm of steadily changing perspectives. It is a beautiful narrative full of symbolic language and life themes that students, teachers, and principals can discover, provided they become curious about, and sensitive to, the language of existential and spiritual life experiences. One of the themes in this cultural-religious story is the question: Will this young queen, helped by her nephew who doesn't live in the palace, succeed in exposing the opponent Haman, who plans to destroy the Jewish community?

The instruments we used in conducting bibliodrama-processes, as a role play around a scène of the narrative or an improvisation around an episode between two main characters (Mordechai and Haman for example) also helped us gather data for the analysis of the responses of students to utterances of actions of the characters in their interaction. So we made film fragments of the improvisations, made

descriptions of the dialogues and interactions of students taking up their roles, and analysed them as researchers afterwards. See for example the two written scripts of the two short improvisations in Section 4.

3.2. A Creative and Playful Learning Environment in which Teachers Coach Students in Discovering the Symbolic Language of the Book of Esther

In this sub-paragraph, we show how teachers have become aware of the voices of their students, in the process of appropriation of symbolic language. Primary school pupils develop their life view by immersing themselves in a valuable resource together, or by jointly exploring an important life question. Partly due to their training, and also out of love for their subject, teachers tend to be the ones speaking during class. Precisely in the case of a subject like worldview education however, the key is to invite the pupils to think for themselves and to invite them to articulate in their own words what they think or how they feel, for example, about the actions of a character in the Book of Esther. The transition from passing on subject matter to challenging one's pupils to explore a 'source of meaning' together, is a complex one. It is a complex transition in the sense that teachers need a lot of time and practice to become aware of their pupils' voices, needs, and questions in the domain of worldview education [21].

Teaching practice: Teachers feel fulfilled when they can pass on the subject matter to pupils. You can walk into a random classroom and notice that the teacher is busy giving voice to a subject. The space allotted to pupils to get to know a story from the Qur'an together, or to jointly reflect on a question like, why would people trust each other? is rather limited. When taking the time and space to allow pupils to give their opinions, teacher can make surprising discoveries about what pupils think or come up with.

Also, in relation to the process of guiding a bibliodrama, we have used descriptions of dialogues with questions and instructions of the accompanying teachers of the two classes in order to collect signals of emergent metaphoric sensitivity. For this aim, we also made films of the interactions between teacher and pupils around a salient topic in the story of Esther. A written dialogue about a question of a teacher and the different responses of the pupils is given in paragraph four. The responses and remarks of the teachers in their process of initiating and guiding a bibliodrama have produced a reservoir of different reactions and gave us as researchers a lot of materials to think about.

3.3. Playful Activities of Pupils in Grade Four to Practice the Use of Symbolic Language

We organised a two-week project with two primary schools, in which we invited pupils to engage in dialogue with scenes from the Book of Esther. Several instruments were used to generate data, containing expressions of symbolic language, by 9 to 10 year old pupils. Among these instruments were verbal 'provocations', based on the Book of Esther, which led to conversations held by the pupils, both amongst themselves and with the participation of the teacher, and written assignments that invited the pupils to produce visual and literary *creations* (drawings, symbols moulded from clay). In addition to these two instruments, we used forms of drama or role playing. These drama forms were taken from our repertoire that we developed, by conducting past bibliodrama sessions, both with young people and adults.

During the preparatory sessions, we developed in collaboration with the teachers a script for every day of the week, with attention for a special pedagogical form to invite pupils to access the dynamics and symbolic language of a scene from the Book of Esther. On the day that the teachers used the playful entrance to the Book of Esther, they practiced forms of drama, which they were familiar with, through their daily practice of teaching. In the example that follows, Miss Janine was familiar with the method of question-asking combined with including the pupils in role playing.

The pupils worked in teams of four—two boys and two girls—and sometimes also in pairs—a boy with a boy, or a girl with girl. In this publication, we limit ourselves to analysing a few playful

creations from the pupils' journey to discover the Book of Esther. For us as researchers, points of interest for the analysis of playful creations are:

- Pupils' own words and actions when taking on roles, versus the words and actions of characters in the scene.
- Pupils' own expressed ideas and emotions when taking on roles.
- The meaning pupils discover while interpreting the words or actions of a character.
- The meaning pupils discover in the interspace between a character's actions and the life world and inner world of a pupil.

Next to the playful creations, we have used different tools to gather relevant data, in order to find answers to our research question. For example, we have used every day we worked with the group 'comics', with a double row of drawings with text balloons. In the upper row figures and balloons of one of the main characters—in the case of the Ester story Esther and Mordechai—and in the lower row, the development of the personal view and interpretation of an action of one of the characters in relation to the life-theme.

These 'comics' have given us a lot of materials to reflect on in the process of analysing the data of the students.

4. Interpretation and Meaning Giving

Regarding our research results, we focus on our analysis of the interactions between teachers and pupils in the coaching process—looking for an entrance in the world of the Book of Esther—and of the activities of the pupils who engage in a dialogue with the characters from the Book of Esther through role playing [10].

4.1. The Emerging Sensitivity for Symbolic Language on Behalf of Teachers while Coaching Pupils in the Appropriation of Symbolic Language

Miss Janine is telling a story: 'Esther first lived with Mordecai, now at the palace. Mordecai misses her very much and makes the trip to the gate every day. Every day, he asks how Esther is doing. He hears two servants of the king exchanging gossip, whispering to each other. This happens another day, and what did he hear? The two servants are angry with the king, but hey, is he hearing this well? They want to kill the king!' Miss Janine asks the pupils: 'What would you do?'

Joanne: 'Tell the king'.

Mawjoed: 'Get help'.

Elize: 'Tell the king and fire them'.

Joram: 'Tell the king and sentence them to death'.

Janine: 'Is that punishment not too heavy?'

Joram: 'But don't they want to kill the king, too?'

Joanne: 'I would approach them and arrest them'.

Marjan: 'I would tell it to a chambermaid so that she can tell the king'.

Michiel: 'The palace has a front and a backside. Go in at the backside and tell the king. And call the police'.

Together, the pupils explore the story's character's range of possible actions. Seven possibilities are examined. In this way their perspective on the story is broadened: They discover meaning and sense while thinking and speaking about Mordecai's situation. In addition, they become a little bit more ethically sensitive through the questions asked by the teacher. The pupils start their own reflection because of two actions performed by Miss Janine: She presents the story in an interactive manner and asks a clear question at the right moment. Miss Janine offers the students all the space they need to

find answers together. Those answers are allowed to coexist peacefully. In addition, the dialogue example given above illustrates that Janine has been studying the symbolic language of the narrative. She knows well how the plot progresses, as demonstrated for example by her ability to portray the essence of a scene through her performance and questions. She converts her personal relationship with the dynamics of the story in her pedagogical actions, in this case by means of visual storytelling and by asking a good question at the right moment, like: 'What would you do?' Thirdly, she raises questions about a response of pupil Joram, with the effect that Joram and the other pupils become curious about the actions and statements of the character.

4.2. Students' Playful Responses to the Symbolic Language-Filled Scene from the Book of Esther

We witness two role playing sessions at a primary school, relating to the unmasking of Prime Minister Haman. Setting: Three pupils perform improvisation theatre in the classroom. The other pupils are sitting in a half circle around the scene. The theme of the improvisation is Esther who exposes Haman in the presence of King Ahasuerus.

Role playing session 1:

Setting: Esther is sitting in the middle with a beautiful robe and shawl. Haman sits at the right side, Ahasuerus at the left.

Roles: Haman: Jeremy; Ahasuerus: Nania; Esther: Shannon.

E: Starts crying and says: 'I'm Jewish'.

A: Walks away.

H: Falls before the feet of queen and says: 'I don't want to die'.

A: Comes back: 'You're the traitor!'

A: Leads Haman away and has him hanged.

Role playing session 2:

Setting: Ester and Ahasuerus are sitting together.

Roles: Ester: Zara; Ahasuerus: Tanja; Haman: Rachman.

E: 'Shall we invite Haman at our table?'

A: Nods. Queen Esther invites Haman to join them.

E: Haman comes over and she says: 'You're looking so handsome tonight'.

H: 'Thank you my lady'.

E: 'Will you have dinner with us?'

H: Nods. They eat in silence.

A: 'Do you want to tell me something?' (to Esther)

E: (Speaks softly): 'Yes,... I'm Jewish... and Haman would like to kill all the Jews'.

A: Walks away.

H. Falls on his knees and says: 'I didn't knew you were Jewish'.

A: 'Uhm . . . come with me'.

4.3. Reflection on the Role Playing Sessions, the Emotions and the Process of Meaning and Sense Making on Behalf of the Pupils

Role playing: in the first role playing session, the event of Esther bursting into tears gives the impulse for actions. Ahasuerus walks away. Haman falls on his knees before Queen Esther and begs for his life. Ahasuerus takes notice of this event and orders to have Haman hanged. In the second playing session, it is Esther's invitation to Haman to join her and the king for dinner that gives the impulse for actions. They eat and there is a long silence. In the middle of that silence, King Ahasuerus puts a question to Queen Esther. When Esther reveals who she is, Haman falls on his knees to beg for his life. King Ahasuerus leads him away when he returns to the scene.

Identifying emotions: In the first role playing session, Esther expresses emotion that she is Jewish (she cries). Haman expresses his fear to die, and King Ahasuerus gives voice to the unmasking of Haman: 'You're the traitor!' In the second role playing session, Queen Esther surprises Haman and the king by her statement: 'You're looking so handsome tonight'. Next, in a double step, she reveals that she is Jewish and that Haman is the villain. Remarkable in this scene is Haman's statement that he didn't knew that Esther was Jewish. King Ahasuerus' remark is special in the sense that he only says: 'Uhm... come with me'.

Meaning/sense making: Both in the first and the second role playing session, the pupils that take on the role of Esther discover that she is Jewish, and that in her position of queen she is very loyal to her people. Haman, on the other hand, has proclaimed a law that all the Jews in the country must be killed. The character of Haman becomes invested with meaning and sense for the pupils by giving expression to his fear of dying (role playing session 1), and his amazement about the fact that he did not know that Esther is Jewish (role playing session 2). King Ahasuerus acquires a double insight into the situation: He discovers simultaneously that Esther is Jewish and that Haman is harassing Queen Esther. The two pupils who play the character of the young queen, during their performance, get a sense of the courage it takes to come out for your loyalty to a certain minority group.

5. Reflection

We want to reflect on the insights we gained from the interpretation of the two descriptions analysed above—insights regarding the work of teachers, who accompany pupils in the process of becoming familiar with the symbolic language of religious and cultural resources, and regarding the playful expressions and responses of the pupils in their dialogue with the scenes and themes of the Book of Esther. We pay attention to signals of teachers, such as Miss Janine, during her interactions and improvisations with the pupils, and signals of familiarisation on behalf of the pupils, of both primary schools, while involved in their playful interactions and role playing. We interpret the findings concerning the pupils, in light of the two concepts 'metaphoric sensitivity' and 'inventive imagination', which helped us to become aware of, and sensitive to, the growth of symbolic literacy among primary school pupils. We pay attention to the relation between growth in symbolic literacy and increasing sense making abilities regarding religious narratives on behalf of the children.

5.1. Observations and Dilemmas Concerning the Sensitivity and Agency of Teachers

Observations: A teacher like Miss Janine who finds her way in the no-man's-land of pupil-orientated worldview education, sometimes experiences beautiful moments, for example, when a pupil gives an unexpected answer to a question. Teachers sometimes arrive at new actions, as demonstrated by Miss Janine in her interaction with her pupils (see page 9), by the way in which she draws attention to a story scene at exactly the right moment. And when teachers have a working knowledge of the cognitive and social capacities they call upon when interacting with their pupils, they are able to ask a correct question at the right moment, as Miss Janine demonstrates. This leads to powerful and beautiful learning for pupils and teachers. Further examples of situations can be found in a publication of one of the authors, about three projects, in which teachers did not know what to do, or did not understand why a class was not working [10]. On this occasion, the teachers discovered that they did not have

sufficient insight into the development of the pupils, particularly in moments when they were not able to perceive well what was happening in the group, and fell back on known and safe routines, due to uncertainty [22].

Dilemmas: In Miss Janine's teaching practice, different dilemmas can be recognised. The first can be described as whether or not to show guts or boldness in the no-man's-land of pupil-oriented worldview/religious education within a secular society. You enter that no-man's-land when, like Janine, you do not teach religious traditions, according to the book, but dare to go on an adventure with pupils. Where Janine succeeds in arousing the curiosity of the pupils, worldview learning starts. That space is fragile and valuable. Knowing how to create a space in which pupils can respond, which subsequently dominates the teacher's range of actions, requires modesty and insight. Is every teacher capable of facing this uncertainty, of not knowing beforehand how to act? What does a teacher primarily need to handle this? Sensitivity for the responses pupils want to give, making space for more silent pupils in the interaction process among them about the story involves and creating an atmosphere in the classroom that stimulates students to participate and to activate their imagination in order to make sense to an important episode of the story involved. It is this atmosphere that supports pupils to open their ears and eyes, not only for their own voice, but also for the voices of their peers. And that is the start of a shared process of co-operation, co-creation, dialoguing and co-reflection.

A second dilemma that can be seen in the example of Miss Janine concerns her knowledge of the worldview development of every pupil, which is noticeable in her style of question-asking. This knowledge seems to be of crucial importance in the decisions she makes in concrete teaching situations. When it comes to worldview/religious education, students develop themselves in the interplay between others and themselves, between cultural forms that are provided and their responses to them, and between their own perceptions and the imaginings they encounter in cultural and worldview/religious resources [23]. The condition for deep learning, which focuses on meaning-making, is the development of higher cognitive, creative, and social capacities, and abilities such as being able to project oneself mentally into someone or something, or the capacity to conduct a genuine dialogue with a (fictional) person or with a 'source of meaning' [7]. Miss Janine calls upon these capacities and abilities by her style of storytelling and question-asking. The educationalist and philosopher Kieran Egan [24,25] shows in his studies that the activation of the cognitive capacities to marvel, imagine, and think, and of higher cognitive, creative and social capacities such as dialogising, symbolising, philosophising, and role playing, is crucially important for the worldview development of students in both public and religiously-affiliated schools [22].

Emerging Sensitivity: First of all, it was noticeable that Miss Janine gradually became more sensitive to the pupils' own voices. The more experience she gained in letting the children play with the symbolic language of a religious story, the more sensitive she became to the pupils' own voices and the uniqueness in every pupil's contribution. She gained insight into the seven ways in which her pupils reacted to her questions about the Book of Esther. The more concrete her questions and instructions to the pupils became, the more powerful their voices resounded and the more their eyes started to shine.

Secondly, throughout the project, Miss Janine discovered and mastered new methods, which allowed them to give shape to student-oriented worldview education. They discovered that, as professionals, every creative method required them to draw on specific capacities, and to activate specific abilities. Miss Janine discovered the power of challenging students to come up with their own answers to a question. This required her to adopt a basic attitude characterised by open, flexible, and involved attention to what is taking place in the interaction between pupils and a life question, theme or source. This is an attitude, which prompted her to act more consciously and wisely in concrete teaching situations. Such an attitude required an openness, which led her to act inventively and assertively in such a way that pupils who hesitated, started to participate. Teachers who learn to act wisely, boldly, and inventively, in such situations dare to begin the search for meaning with students, and in that process learn to engage with students in a more flexible and natural manner. This process goes hand in hand with falling over and getting back up again, and every school deserves space and

time to let student-oriented worldview education emerge through teaching practice. In this playing room, teachers can develop into wise, bold, and inventive professionals by learning from their strong moments and moments of resistance.

5.2. Reflection on the Emerging Sensitivity of Pupils Regarding Use of Symbolic Language

We interpret the results of the analysis of the playful and dialogical expressions of the pupils (during two role playing sessions) from the perspective of the two concepts described in our conceptual framework: Metaphoric sensitivity and inventive imagination.

5.2.1. Discovering Sense and Meaning through Emerging Metaphoric Sensitivity

Sense and meaning were discovered and created by the pupils during moments when they felt invited to respond to the actions of the characters they were connected with, and when they were in a position to apply the narrative to their own reality. The more they familiarised themselves with existential themes from the Book of Esther after being invited to do so, and the more multilaterally they proceeded, the more concretely they were able to use the symbolic language of their character and were able to make sense of, and give meaning to, scenes of the Book of Esther on an individual an private level. This was particularly noticeable in the assignments, through which the narrative world came into direct contact with the topicalities of the everyday world that surrounds the students. In case of the Book of Esther, this occurred mainly in regard to three themes: The planned attack on the king, the courage shown by Queen Esther and her cousin Mordecai in their resistance of Haman, and the saving of the Jewish people from Persian aggression.

5.2.2. Discovering Sense and Meaning through Inventive Imagination

The characteristics of inventive imagination—the abilities to imagine, empathise and connect—are, looking back at the results of the data analysis, apparent in the interpretations made by pupils. The characteristics of inventive imagination become visible in the playful expressions of all the pupils, even if their personal interpretations of the symbolic language of the characters differ to varying degrees. We assume that these differences can be partly attributed, first of all, to different skill levels regarding the ability to express oneself in a dialogue with a scene from the Book of Esther. Secondly, we are probably dealing here with different levels of experience in the practicing of inventive imagination. Finally, these differences may possibly be attributed to the level of familiarity with symbolic language in general, both in its wielding and its interpretation. We expect that having more or less experience in the reading and interpretation of symbolic language—e.g., in films, television programs, games, and youth literature—plays a role in this. Accurate coaching of such a process is a matter of the utmost importance.

6. Conclusions

Our narrative research [26,27], enriched with analyses of the examples of role playing/bibliodrama cited above, shows that the pupils we accompanied are able to develop their own interpretations of a valuable narrative, and are able to familiarise themselves with the symbolic language contained in such a narrative by engaging in role playing/bibliodrama or another form of drama. The activation of their faculty of imagination appears to be a good catalyst for individual and collaborative sense and meaning-making. Varying degrees of experience and talent when it comes to visual, literary, or playful expressions, can account for the differing degrees to which students are able to make a personal sense of, or give personal meaning to, religious narratives.

We also gained insight into the religious/worldview development of each pupil at the primary schools in question. Few studies are available in which systematic research has been conducted into the development of the cognitive abilities of students in relation to religious/worldview education. Gaining more knowledge about the relation between the activation of the faculty of imagination and the process

of making sense of our culture's valuable resources, to make it possible for pupils and students of new generations to connect with the contents of these resources in an open and critical manner.

7. Further Research

We believe that further research, based on the following two questions, is desirable: How could the difference in familiarity with the symbolic language of religious narratives and its influence on students' sense and meaning-making of the Book of Esther—as an example of an existential and spiritual resource—be made more tangible? The same question we can put to other stories out of the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, or to cultural source-narratives in other religious and worldview traditions. How can the influence of sensitivity to symbolic language on the religious development of each individual student be made more tangible?

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, B.v.d.B.; methodology, B.v.d.B.; validation, B.v.d.B. & C.F.-v.d.S.; formal analysis, B.v.d.B. & C.F.-v.d.S.; investigation, B.v.d.B., C.F.-v.d.S.; resources, B.v.d.B.; data curation, B.v.d.B. and C.F.-v.d.S.; writing—original draft preparation, B.v.d.B. & C.F.-v.d.S.; writing—review and editing, B.v.d.B. & C.F.-v.d.S.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

1. Van den Berg, B.; Mulder, A. *Leren Van Betekenis. Dialogisch Levensbeschouwelijk Onderwijs op Negen Basisscholen*; Marnix Academie: Utrecht, The Netherlands, 2017.
2. Pitzele, P. *Scripture Windows. Toward a Practice of Bibliodrama*; Torah Aura Productions: Los Angeles, CA, USA, 1998.
3. Agten, J.; Herrebosch, E.; Verduyn, K.; Vervoort, L. *Bibliodrama Begeleiden*; Antwerpen-Apeldoorn: Garant, Belgium, 2007.
4. Hogerzeil, C.; Van den Berg, B. *Verhalen in Beweging. Werkboek Voor Bibliodrama*; Meinema: Zoetermeer, The Netherlands, 2018.
5. Agten, J. Bibliodrama: Introducing Stories from Narrative Traditions in the Development of Young People's Life Orientation. *Educ. Sci.* **2019**, *9*, 107.
6. Kepnes, S. *The Text as Thou. Martin Buber's Dialogical Hermeneutics and Narrative Theology*; Indiana University Press: Bloomington, IN, USA, 1992.
7. Alma, H.A. Grensverleggende exploratie: Een (godsdienst)psychologische verkenning van verbeelding. *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* **2002**, *56*, 115–129.
8. Van den Berg, B. *Wijs Worden met Bronverhalen. Een Visie en Praktijkboek Voor Leraren Basisonderwijs*; Kwintessens: Amersfoort, The Netherlands, 2017.
9. Egan, K. *The Educated Mind. How Cognitive Tools Shape our Understanding*; University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL, USA, 1997.
10. Van den Berg, B. *Speelruimte Voor Dialoog en Verbeelding. Basisschoolleerlingen Maken Kennis met Religieuze Verhalen*; Narratio: Gorinchem, The Netherlands, 2014.
11. Lakoff, G.; Johnson, M. *Metaphors We Live by*; The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL, USA; London, UK, 2003.
12. Nederlof, A.; Vane, S.J. *Metaforen aan Het Woord. Betekenisvolle Beelden Binnen de Therapeutische Praktijk*; ACCO: Leuven, Belgium; Den Haag, The Netherlands, 2009.
13. Ricoeur, P. *Temps et Récit Tome 1-3*; Éditions du Seuil, L'Ordre Philosophique: Paris, France, 1983–1985.
14. Ricoeur, P. *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative and Imagination*; University of Minnesota Press: Minnesota, MN, USA, 1995; p. 166.
15. Egan, K. *An Imaginative Approach to Teaching*; Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, CA, USA, 2005.
16. Egan, K. *Romantic Understanding: The Development of Rationality and Imagination, Ages 8–15*; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 1990.
17. Ricoeur, P. *Du texte à l'action. Essais d'herméneutique II*; Éditions du Seuil, Esprit: Paris, France, 1986.

18. Marguerat, D.; Bourquin, Y. *Pour lire les récits bibliques. Initiation à l'analyse narrative*; Les Editions du Cerf: Paris, France, 1998; p. 164.
19. Kearney, R. *On Stories*; Routledge: Abingdon, UK, 2002.
20. Jagersma, H. *De Ester-Satire. Een Vertaling Met Commentaar*; Skandalon: Meppel, The Netherlands, 2003.
21. Van den Berg, B. How Primary School Teachers Learn to Act Wisely, Boldly, and Inventively. The Complex Transition from Tradition Oriented to Pupil Oriented Worldview Education. In *Complexity in Education. From Horror to Passion*; Bakker, C., Montesano Montessori, N., Eds.; Sense Publishers: London, UK, 2016; pp. 189–209.
22. Parlevliet, L.J.; Van den Berg, B.; Zondervan, T. *Het kind en de grote Verhalen: Levensbeschouwelijk Leren in het Basisonderwijs*; Kwintessens: Amersfoort, The Netherlands, 2013.
23. Van den Berg, B.; Kopmels, T.; Ter Avest, I. *Geloof je het zelf?! Levensbeschouwelijk Leren in het Primair Onderwijs*; Marnix Academie: Utrecht, The Netherlands, 2013.
24. Egan, K. *The Future of Education: Reimagining the School from the Ground Up*; Yale University Press: New Haven, CT, USA, 2008.
25. Egan, K.; Cant, A.; Judson, G. *Wonderful Education: The Centrality of Wonder in Teaching and Learning across the Curriculum*; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2014.
26. Stern, L.J. *Schools and Religions: Imagining the Real*; Continuum: London, UK, 2007.
27. Stern, L.J. *The Spirit of the School. Monologue and Dialogue in and Beyond Religious Education*; University of Hull: Hull, UK, 2008.

education sciences

MDPI

Editorial

Epilogue—"There is a Crack in Everything ..."

K. H. (Ina) ter Avest [1,2,3]

[1] Em. Professor in 'Education and Philosophy of Life', Inholland University of Applied Sciences, OZW Building, De Boelelaan 1109, 1081 HV Amsterdam, The Netherlands; khteravest@gmail.com
[2] Former senior lecturer Pedagogics of Religion, VU University Amsterdam, De Boelelaan 1105, 1081 HV Amsterdam, The Netherlands
[3] Independent researcher, www.inateravest.nl

Received: 19 June 2019; Accepted: 26 June 2019; Published: 28 June 2019

In the contributions to this Special Issue, a wealth of context-related approaches and reflections on the relationship between education and religion have been brought together. The various contributions, with their presented examples, case studies, and research results, each stimulate in a unique way the ongoing exploration and elaboration of the relationship between education and religion in the secularised/secularising world of today and tomorrow—with its cracks in the sacred canopy.

In the Introduction to this publication, I wrote that the concept of secularisation is contested, referring to the decrease of the influence of institutionalised religion in the public domain, as well as to the fact that believing in God does not go without saying anymore. Up to that point, 'religion' and 'God' are seen as an integer and complex whole, connected with belief, and concretised in rituals. Without knowing much about religion(s), however, a person can be touched, inspired, and comforted by participation in rituals or by being in the presence of what is called materialised religion. The wide-spread horror expressed at the destruction of the Buddha statues in Afghanistan's Bamiyan valley in 2001 and the prayers in front of the burning fire of the Notre Dame in Paris in 2019 are just a couple of examples of openly and publicly expressed emotional involvement in religious statues and architecture, respectively. Like the headline of a newspaper stated: 'Burning Notre Dame touches the soul of France'. Religion is the soul of a culture [1]. The performative power of materialised religion and religious rituals cannot be overestimated; participation in rituals realises religion as 'the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine' [2] (p. 42); [3] (p. 24). In the contributions to this Special Issue, the relationship between education and religion(s) is explored, in most cases without explicit reference to God. The question pops up—is there a space for religion without God within education in our secularised/secularising age [4]? In their dialogical essays, the philosophers De Boer and Groot [4] point to what they perceive as a persistent misunderstanding—that religion would consist of dogmas wrapped up in a verbal and physical cover of texts, rituals, customs, and so forth. According to this understanding, the belief system and the dogmas form the core of the religion, and the way in which these are embedded in texts and rituals must be seen as completely beside the point [4] (p. 68). As we will see below, it is precisely through participation in the 'beside the point'-aspects of religion that religion 'happens'. Rituals are performative actions; they create religion through the medium of re-presentation. At the moment they speak about God, God exists—in the ritual of prayer or in the sacrament. Having stated this, De Boer is of the opinion that it is not necessary to answer the question about the existence of God [4] (p. 38).

For a different approach to the question of a space for religion without God, I take as a source of inspiration the Japanese concept of religion '*nihonkyō*', depicted as 日本教.

In this concept, the introduction of children and adolescents into the world is symbolised. Starting at the left side, the first character depicts the sun and refers to the warmth that is the source of all life on earth. This character might also refer to the inspiration that moves people and provides them with intuitive associations regarding 'the good life'. At the same time, such inspiration motivates

them in their daily actions in their pursuit of 'the good life', according to their own interpretation and context-related understanding, which is possibly—hopefully—verbally communicated and shared in a community of believing individuals. Human beings balance between verbal expression and silence. The second character depicts a tree. Human beings live under the sun and on the earth. Like a tree that is undeniably rooted in the earth, human beings live in an undeniable and unbreakable relationship with the world they inhabit. This rootedness displays similarities with our incontestable relationship with 'the other' and is linked to an attitude of stewardship and responsibility vis-à-vis the world, the contexts in which human beings live, and the people with whom we live together. The third character is in fact a combination of three characters and refers to the interrelated activities of teaching and learning, the child as the subject of—and as subjected to—both of these processes, and the recurrent activities to familiarise the child with knowledge about the world. This can be interpreted as an introduction of the younger generation into the world and as enculturation in their societal context. This kind of transmitted knowledge is needed as a starting point for the beginning of something new—in accordance with the child's own authentic construction of 'the good life'. I am well aware of the negative connotations that can accompany '*nihonkyō*', such as indoctrination into the negative features of the collective Japanese mind (e.g., nationalism and populism) (personal and e-mail communication with Professor Jun Fukaya, [5,6]). Nevertheless, positive connotations regarding the inspirational power of religion, the contextualised relationship with 'the other', and the need for teaching and learning can also be interpreted from this concept. It is the inspirational power of religion and spirituality that Taylor turns to at the end of his voluminous work *A Secular Age* [7].

The End of Religion as a 'Dull Habit'

At the end of *A Secular Age*, Taylor reaches the conclusion that the current definition of secularisation as an ongoing historicist process—a subtraction in which scientific knowledge will push out religion—will lose its convictional power in the near future. In the heart of modernity, according to Taylor, the longing for transcendence and spirituality will regain its strength recognising 'that what is really of value for people, gets away from any computability and human autonomy' [7] (p. 31).

Taylor articulates that people's spiritual needs have not diminished in recent times, and they will find new expressions after the implosion of established religious traditions. Not only new expressions but also a new language, as demonstrated by Vaclav Havel, who is extensively quoted at the end of Taylor's *A Secular Age*:

> 'Again, I call to mind that distant moment in [the prison at] Hermanice when on a hot, cloudless summer day, I sat on a pile of rusty iron and gazed into the crown of an enormous tree that stretched, with dignified repose, up and over all the fences, wires, bars and watchtowers that separated me from it. As I watched the imperceptible trembling of its leaves against an endless sky, I was overcome by a sensation that is difficult to describe: all at once, I seemed to rise above all the coordinates of my momentary existence in the world into a kind of state outside time in which all the beautiful things I have ever seen and experienced existed in a total 'co-present'; I felt a sense of reconciliation, indeed of an almost gentle assent to the inevitable course of events as revealed to me now, and this combined with a carefree determination to face what had to be faced. A profound amazement at the sovereignty of Being became a dizzy sensation of tumbling endlessly into the abyss of its mystery; an unbounded joy at being alive, at having been given the chance to live through all I have lived through, and at the fact that everything has a deep and obvious meaning—this joy formed a strange alliance in me with a vague horror at the inapprehensibility and unattainability of everything I was so close to in that moment, standing at the very 'edge of the infinite'; I was flooded with a sense of ultimate happiness and harmony with the world and with myself, with that moment, with all the moments I could call up, and with everything invisible that lies behind it and has meaning. I would even say that I was somehow 'struck by love', though I don't know precisely for whom or what' [7] (pp. 728–729).

In light of Vaclav Havel's stammering sentences, one can almost do nothing else but conclude that it is better to remain silent about what seems to be inexpressible in words. However, to give voice to all our experiences we, as human beings, have nothing else at our disposal besides words. In order to share our deepest feelings and experiences relating to God or whatever we consider to be the divine, we must make an effort to improve our literacy—both verbal and nonverbal—regarding the longing for the transcendent as an undeniable human quality.

A religious community is not only the result of the existence of a religious tradition. At the same time, it is the presence of 'the other(s)'—either in person or within the communal framework of materialised religion(s)—that constitutes religion in its literal meaning of a response to the deep human need for belonging and community [3] (p. 37). In addition to religion's relationship with the human need for community, religion is in need of 'a minimum of words; there is *something* people have faith in, *something* people hope for'. 'Experiences do not get any content when nothing can be said about them' [3] (p. 39). 'All experiences require a certain vocabulary' [3] (p. 40)—a vocabulary that is brought together in traditional narratives. Narratives establish a relationship with the past and offer a point of orientation for the future. Narratives enable human beings to identify with their protagonists who live through conflicts and dilemmas that we ourselves—as modern-day individuals—experience in our own lives, in our own contexts. They offer age-old—yet at the same time refreshingly new—perspectives on our own situations. Collectively listening to narratives or jointly re-enacting them creates a feeling of togetherness and belonging [8] (p. 41); (see also Agten in this volume). The protagonists in traditional mythical narratives show an open attitude towards transcendence; this 'sense of ultimate happiness and harmony with the world and with [ourselves]... 'struck by love', though [we] don't know precisely for whom or what' is something we humans have faith in.

'Something'

This *something* for which our vocabulary is inadequate and insufficient, and which transcends usual daily affairs, is central to the posthumously published work of the physicist and theologian Geurt Oosterwegel (1933–2012). Oosterwegel takes as his starting point that 'in the history of European culture the human ability to position oneself as distinct from reality', i.e., the competency to transcend, was first thematised by Plato (427–347 BC), Aristotle (394–322 BC), and their predecessors [9] (p. 7). By consequence, human beings, unlike animals, have an indirect relationship with the reality of which they are part of. In a sense, this indirect relationship can be seen as a form of detachedness of the world they live in, in order to gain a greater access to this reality. Following Oosterwegel's line of thought, humans are elements of the natural world but not entirely determined by the laws of this natural world, which results in an eccentric perspective and a search for the meaning of what is encountered in the world. The human condition of being an inseparable part of the world and of simultaneously having the ability to take a meta-perspective on one's own position in that world (a so-called 'dual foundation') results in an '*I*'—an antipodal point—that is aware of its own body and unique being in the world. This antipodal '*I*' transcends the aspect of being just an element of the natural world. This transcending of the world and the reflection of '*I*' on 'the world—including '*I*'' and the interrelationship of '*I*' with '*others*' constitutes the 'art of living together'; an art that is founded on '*I*', which is designated as a 'soul' (Plessner, in [9] (p. 101)). Inherent to this transcendence of the 'soul' is an openness to 'the other' and 'otherness', coined by Oosterwegel as 'receptivity' and 'responsiveness' [9] (p. 102). This other-directedness is related to being of service to others and to the world in which we live together. For this orientation towards 'the other', Oosterwegel coins the concept of 'kenotic subjectivity', described as the ability to open up, be receptive, and put aside everything else in order to make a great effort to respond to any appealing task that crosses your path [9] (p. 210).

Communication in Plurality

An important question that has so far remained untouched is how we can communicate about what we do not seem to be able to find the right words for—our deepest feelings and experiences

relating to God or whatever we consider to be the divine. Talking about the relevance of religion in contemporary education, we inevitably need to address the topic of religious literacy, understood in a minimal way as having developed the required attitude and having the necessary language at one's disposal to enter into an inter (religious and secular) worldview dialogue. Even when speaking of a lack of religious literacy and the failures of students, Jäggle [10] states that, although they lack knowledge of religious concepts, 'young people do have the language to speak about God and to speak to God' [10] (p. 212). Jäggle refers to the expressive power of the language of students in relation to their sensitivity to disruptive moments of misery and suffering, which often result in a quest for meaning and possibly a quest for God. Such moments facilitate the integration of God into their lives, while at the same time God remains hidden in transcendency. For Jäggle, the challenge of religious education lies in exploring the expressive language of young people in order to discover, if possible, in their subjective spoken language, an updated way of expressing our deepest feelings and experiences relating to whatever we consider to be the divine.

Dialogicality—Second Language Acquisition

Receptivity and responsiveness (on behalf of the students) and responsibility (on behalf of the educators) are core concepts that relate to the question of the relevance of religion today and in particular—linked to the theme of this Special Issue—to the relevance of religion in contemporary education. Educators bear responsibility for the accessibility of the world, as Arendt states [11]. Responsiveness to their teachers based on trust is preconditional on the part of the students to give themselves over to the facilitating leadership of their teachers.

By linking up with the actual and informal language of young people, the language of inter-worldview dialogue can be taught to students as a second language, in addition to the everyday informal conversational terms and abbreviations that they acquire. This process must take into account the three-fold aspects of second language acquisition—language 'of' learning, language 'for' learning, and language 'through' learning [12] (pp. 257–258). The first aspect focuses on the acquisition of knowledge about religious concepts, such as 'prayer' and 'fasting'; the second aspect emphasises the language needed to accomplish a particular task, like preparing for a church service; and the third aspect actually develops through active participation, for example, by attending religious rituals. Empowering students in the world of plural sacred canopies, imagining future ways of taking responsibility for the world in which we live together, and—through dialogue—developing an understanding for 'the other' in spite of different—or even conflicting—life orientations is what I see as the main tasks for scholars studying education and religion today.

" . . . That's Where the Light Gets in"

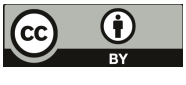
The cracks in the sacred canopy compel creativity from all educators involved to move away from traditional confessional religious education and its methods of teaching religion. According to Leonard Cohen, 'there is a crack in everything that you can put together: physical objects, mental objects, constructions of any kind. But that's where the light gets in.' We have to follow the light and move in the direction of... of what? In the direction of the unknown future, while being receptive to the wisdom that comes to us from the past from a plurality of religious and secular worldview traditions and their different ways of responding to existential questions. We have to move, since 'those who won't move, won't be able to throw off their chains' [13] (pp. 44–47).

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

1. Vroom, H. *Religie als ziel van cultuur. Religieus pluralisme als uitdaging* [Religion as the Soul of Culture. Religious Pluralism as Challenge]; Meinema: Zoetermeer, The Netherlands, 1996.
2. James, W. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*; Collier MacMillan Publishers: London, UK, 1961.
3. Taylor, C. *Wat betekent religie vandaag?* [What Is the Meaning of Religion Today?]; Klement: Kampen, The Netherlands, 2003.
4. De Boer, T.; Groot, G. *Religie zonder God. Een dialoog* [Religion Without God. A Dialogue]; Uitgeverij Sjibbolet: Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2013.
5. Fukaya, N. 'Nihonkyo'. Presented at the ISREV XXI Conference, 'Comparative Perspectives and Contextual Challenges in Religious and Values Education', FAU University, Nuremberg, Germany, 29 July–3 August 2018.
6. Fukaya, N. 'Further Clarification of the Concept of Nihonkyo', email, 18 April 2019.
7. Taylor, C. *A Secular Age*; The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, USA; London, UK, 2007.
8. Van der Lans, J. *Religie ervaren. Godsdienstpsychologische opstellen* [Experiencing Religion. Essays in Psychology of Religion]; Tilburg: KSGV, The Netherlands, 2006.
9. Oosterwegel, G. *Christelijk geloven in een seculiere wereld. Over de relevantie van het geloof voor de hedendaagse technologische maatschappij* [Christian Faith in a Secular World. On the Relevance of Religious Belief in the Contemporary Technological Society]; Eburon: Delft, The Netherlands, 2015.
10. Jäggle, M. 'Zur Funktion religiöser Bildung in der postsäkularen Gesellschaft' [On the Function of Religious Education in the Post-Secular Society]. In *Religiöse Rede in postsäkularen Gesellschaften*; Rose, M., Wermke, M., Eds.; Evangelische Verlagsanstalt: Leipzig, Germany, 2016; pp. 203–215.
11. Arendt, H. The Crisis in Education. In *Between Past and Future*; Penguin Putnam Inc.: Berkley, CA, USA, 1954.
12. Ter Avest, I. Entwicklung der religiosen Kompetenz. Einde Art von Fremdsprachenunterricht [Development of Religious Competency. A Type of Second Language Acquisition]. In *Religiöse Rede in postsäkularen Gesellschaften*; Rose, M., Wermke, M., Eds.; Evangelische Verlagsanstalt: Leipzig, Germany, 2016; pp. 255–262.
13. Hermsen, J.; Ottjes, B. 'Monter ondanks alles'; honderd jaar Rosa Luxemburg ['Cheerful in Spite of Everything'; One Hundred Year Rosa Luxemburg]. *De Groene Amsterdammer* **2019**, *143*, 44–47.



MDPI
St. Alban-Anlage 66
4052 Basel
Switzerland
Tel. +41 61 683 77 34
Fax +41 61 302 89 18
www.mdpi.com

Education Sciences Editorial Office
E-mail: education@mdpi.com
www.mdpi.com/journal/education

MDPI
St. Alban-Anlage 66
4052 Basel
Switzerland

Tel: +41 61 683 77 34
Fax: +41 61 302 89 18

www.mdpi.com

ISBN 978-3-03921-278-1