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Religious and Axiological Education in the Post-modern Society

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Editorial

We live and work in times of violent civilizational change. Due to the pace of social and cultural transformation, unknown to former generations, there is a constant need for adjustments to teaching contents and methods. Both teachers and students have to face up to the challenges brought by the contemporary world. The high complexity of the educational process calls for responsible teachers, particularly with regard to religious and axiological education. On the one hand, this kind of education goes against the cultural grain. On the other, the need for it is observable, and traditional values seem important for the younger generation as well. Religious and axiological education fosters safety and social stability, and it helps to develop socio-cultural identity. But in order to rise to this educational challenge, teachers need to constantly update the content knowledge they transmit, as well as their teaching methods and techniques. Teachers must develop their critical skills despite the constancy of Church tradition. What is more, the teachers of religious and axiological education should bear authentic, mature witness to the values they profess. That teachers practice what they preach is of crucial importance for students at each level of education, as they need reliable models and guides. High quality religious and axiological education is indispensable to counteract the mass consumerist culture. It helps us to cope with the effects of the information technology revolution, such as the ubiquity of virtual reality. It develops the ability to interpret, analyze and evaluate ideas and arguments found on the Internet. Without proper reflection and with low critical thinking skills, information obtained from such sources can have harmful effects on both the personality and the character of a child. It can even produce a sense of losing one's identity. In this connection, religious and axiological education appears invaluable, as it enables students to rediscover the true hierarchy of values in an erratic world.

In sum, teachers need to become moral models, as well as competent and competitive sources of knowledge, to help their students to manage the information deluge. This is also the task of religious and axiological education, particularly given the decline of authority, information overload, fake news and advertisements which have nothing to do with the truth. That is why religious and axiological education is necessary in the contemporary world.

The articles published in the present volume take on various aspects of religious and axiological education. There is also one contribution in the final section entitled 'Reflections on Teaching'. While this text does not necessarily meet all the rigorous criteria of an academic research paper, the author shares his valuable reflections on his own particular teaching experience.

Renata Jasnos
Maria Szymańska

Thematic Articles

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Religious Identity as a Contributing Factor to the Integration of Middle Eastern Immigrants Into Croatian Society

Abstract: The migrant crisis in Europe is one of the most challenging problems that the European Union has faced since the very start of its existence. By examining the process of the acculturation of Middle Eastern migrants in Zagreb, this paper will provide a basic insight into this cultural phenomenon. The possibilities for successful integration lie within the religious identity of Islam as being partially common both to migrants and the Muslim population in Croatia. Another positive factor for successful integration can be found in the history of the Muslim population in Croatia, whose rich tradition and integration into Croatian society can be regarded as highly instructive. The main goal of the paper is to present the experience of the encounters that individuals from the Islamic Centre in Zagreb had with immigrants from the Middle East using qualitative methodology and the deep interview method. This research should provide a better understanding of the importance of religious identity in the process of the integration of Middle East migrants into European society and guidelines for overcoming the risks of parallel societies. In addition, the authors will present an overview of the problems that occur in the education process in the context of religious identities, with an emphasis on Islam in the Croatian educational system.

Keywords: integration, Islam, migration crisis, identity, Croatian society

Introduction

Immigration issues and the arrival of a growing number of refugees and asylum seekers have become preeminent political issues for many European Union member states. The complex international political situation in the Middle East has raised not only ethical and civilizational questions but has also led to a type of stigmatization of Muslims in the media (Kovač 2009: 207). For the last twenty years in EU member states, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers have been considered security threats. Problems that Western European societies encounter today require a re-evaluation of one's cultural identity not only as a European identity, but as one opposed to the growing Muslim population. An important feature of contemporary migration flows in Europe today is the adaptation of European society to these changes and the design of a new European migration policy. The elusive crisis in the very sense of the word is often misunderstood. International migrations do not happen by chance (Mesić 2002: 9). The consequence of contemporary migrations can be of a geopolitical nature, mixed with cultural and economic changes with a global perspective. Contemporary migrations are a challenge for local populations, but also for the migrants, refugees or asylum seekers. Europe in general is a challenge for Islam and Muslims because, as a religious minority, they must find a way to acculturate and integrate themselves into the secular and democratic conditions that often differ from the countries of their origin.

The challenge presented in the migrant crisis is manifested in the problem of acculturation. As a process, acculturation has four basic strategies: assimilation, integration, separation and marginalization (Teske and Nelson 1974). In order to have effective acculturation there should exist a policy of integration. Well-thought-out integration, in order to succeed, needs an organization that provides a safe space for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers (Giddens 1984). Anthony Giddens defines such an organization as a potential for action. It presents the possibility of action towards a structured goal of either the individual, group or society.

The main goal of this paper is to examine the role of the Islamic Centre in Zagreb towards the integration of Middle Eastern migrants into

Croatian society. Additionally, the paper will examine the Muslim religious identity in its correlation with the education process in the Republic of Croatia.

This paper is structured into several sections to provide a better insight into the results of the research. It starts with a short introduction to the historical context of Islam in Croatia. Its complexity and long presence is one of the arguments that suggest that historical developments have led to the contemporary integration of the Muslim community into Croatian society. The second part of the paper will introduce different theoretical concepts: the theory of multiple modernities (Eisenstadt 2000) and the theory of religious pluralism (Berger 2014a). The Islamic Centre in Zagreb and its role in the integration process of the Middle Eastern immigrants are presented in the third part of the paper. In this part, the transcendental similarity, despite the reflexivity of modernity, is analyzed. Lastly, the potential of the integrative religious identity for the educational process of immigrants from the Middle East is described, with an emphasis on several possibilities.

The historical context of Islam in Croatia

In modern societies it is not easy to discuss Islam or Muslim people objectively or coherently, mostly because their historical background is a complex one. Islamic religion is an integral part of the world's history and culture. That is why it must be acknowledged through dialogue and coexistence rather than be regarded primarily as a potential threat or as the opposition (Kovač 2009: 208).

Generally speaking, Islam and Western culture share almost fourteen centuries of entwined history. The complexity of that history comes from the fact that it has often been permeated with wars, many of which have still been insufficiently researched by historiographers. Narratives which present Muslims as heretics and conquerors of the West, as well as the ones that observe the West through the lens of the Crusades or colonialist imperialism, are mostly based on ignorance and fear. Those judgements

do not take into consideration the many positive examples of dialogue and peaceful coexistence, for example, the period of coexistence in the 11th and 12th century in the Mediterranean basin countries (Watt 1972).

The position of the Muslim community in Croatia is similar to other South Eastern European countries where they are practically a part of the autochthonous population. This is an important factor which significantly dissociates them from Muslim communities in Western European countries. The region of South Eastern Europe witnessed the growth of Islam after the conquests of the Ottoman Empire. At that time, the territory of Croatia witnessed constant changes while it was under Habsburg, Austrian and later Hungarian control. Parts of its territory fluctuated between the Austrian and Ottoman Empires, meaning between primarily Christian and Muslim control, thereby producing a distinctive imprint on the people. Such a unique situation makes Croatian Islam an interesting subject for discussion and for research in order to provide a better understanding of integration processes.

It must be noted that it is difficult to determine when Islam was first introduced to the Croatian population. Contacts most probably existed as early as when Arabian merchants first reached the Adriatic coast. According to written documents from the 11th century, Muslim communities in Croatia existed in that period (Omerbašić 1999). Although only their presence in the coastal area can be confirmed, there were probably other small groups of Muslims who came from Hungary and other regions to the Croatian hinterland, but the reasons for their arrival have been insufficiently researched.

Intensive contacts between Islam and Croatia occurred under the Ottoman Empire, especially from the 14th century onwards. During those centuries, the Ottoman conquest left its mark and partly influenced the shaping of the Croatian national identity through the creation of a self-awareness of being the 'bulwark of Christianity'.

By the end of the 19th century, after the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, many Muslims moved to Zagreb and Croatia in general looking for work, military service or to acquire education. This period brought a new experience for the Muslims who were, for

the first time in several centuries, living in a country whose supreme authority was not Islamic. It was also a very important period for the Croatian people, who had just started the long journey of rediscovering their national identity. For the Croats, this period provided an interesting new experience of Muslims. After centuries of fighting the Islamic conquerors, they were now getting to know and live alongside members of the Islamic community.

The fact that Muslims have been settling in Croatia since the end of the 19th century indicates the autochthonous identity of the Muslim community. With more than a century-long presence in Croatia and by contributing to its economic, social and cultural development, Muslims have enriched the Croatian community as well as built their own recognizable cultural identity.

Statistical data for Muslim communities in Croatia has been recorded since 1910, when only 204 members were counted. After the First World War, the number reached 3,145 members and in the 1931 population census there were 4,750 Muslims registered in Croatia (Kulenović 1997: 187). According to the population census from 1991, there were 43,469 people who declared themselves as Muslims. In relation to that statistic, Muslims were proportionally the second largest ethnic community or minority in the Republic of Croatia. That situation was confirmed by the population census from 2001 with its figure of 56,777 Muslims and by the latest population census from 2011, in which 62,977 Muslims were registered in Croatia (DZS 2011).

Describing the history of Islam in Croatia inevitably requires at least a short description of the history of the Islamic Centre in its capital city. The Muslim community in Zagreb was institutionalized in 1878 (Hasanbegović 2007). In 1916 the Croatian Parliament acknowledged Islam as an equal religion (with Catholicism and the Orthodox Church) with all the rights that are due to it from the state constitution and with all the activities that result from it (Čičak-Chand 1999: 452).

The Islamic Centre in Zagreb has been active since 1987. It is recognized as one of the largest and most active in Europe in the context of faith, culture and its social-political plan. Its leaders invest great efforts in

interreligious dialogue and cooperation and often emphasize their contentment with the position of Muslim people in Croatian society, which should be an example for other European countries. In 1991 the Islamic community in Croatia became independent from the Islamic community in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Meshihat (the highest executive body of the Community) was established for the first time in Croatia. Among its many activities, the Islamic Centre in Zagreb provided incredible help during the period 1991–1995 when they accepted over 300,000 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, providing them with accommodation, medical treatment and other help (Mašović 1997: 138).

The example of the Croatian Muslim community proves that plurality can exist if the identity of the other is respected in the context of the general good. Although few in number, Muslims are integrated in the historical, cultural, political and social settings of modern day Croatia. They have no significant problems with their identity, language, skin colour, religious or cultural customs. Voluntarily adopting Croatian work ethics, concepts of time and calendar, clothing and other circumstances of life has reduced the distance between Muslims and others in Croatia. Maybe this Islam will one day be an example to the whole of Europe (Balić 1998: 10).

Religious identity and its components

The concept of identity is one of the most important concepts for modern theory regarding social psychology and sociology itself. In its general meaning, identity can be understood as an individual sense of self, group, affiliations, structural positions, and roles (Peek 2005: 217). According to that concept, we can separate the collective components of identity from the personal identity that includes the meaning and understanding of those collective components. Identity as a concept can be discussed through phenomenology, clinical relevance or measurements. The historical context, its development and its origins also influence that concept (Akhtar and Samuel 1996). Despite the broad theoretical understanding of identity, it is certain that society provides

a component which is internalized in the individual's understanding of self and society.

In order to determine a religious identity, different methods could be applied. Different structural components should be examined in the context of religious identity. Religious identity can be determined by the role of religion in the process of forming a collective identity. Religious identity has its own components of integration that mainly depend on the context in which this identity forms interactions. In the context of Croatian society, these components have been proposed by Krunoslav Nikodem (2004). In relation to the methodological aspect, he suggested different categories in order to determine the religious identities in Croatian society. The categories include the traditional dimension of religion (positive religion; see Hegel in Pavić 2004: 19), the moral dimension, the individual dimension and the social asceticism dimension. There is a unique understanding of those dimensions as the collective response to the transcendental via symbolism. In this paper the concept of religious identity is understood as a symbolic response to the transcendental. This response can form a collective integration, as will be presented further on in the paper.

Special attention must be paid to the coexisting duality of the transcendental forms of religious practise and the everyday life of an individual. Since religious identity forms a specific relation towards the transcendental dimension of human existence, it also provides a ritualistic form of social cohesion. Symbols of faith provide a relation towards the profane part of life. According to this idea, religious identity can form the basis of the collective action in a social context. It can be a powerful tool of social integration, or it can lead to disintegration.

Theoretical approaches

In order to explain the complex correlations between education and religious identity in the Islamic Centre in Zagreb and its role in the integration of Middle Eastern migrants, an analytical methodology based on

a comparison of different theoretical approaches is required. The answer to the main research question can be approached by referring to the theory of multiple modernities (Eisenstadt 2000) and the theory of religious pluralism (Berger 2014a).

The theory of multiple modernities was introduced in the work of the Israeli sociologist Shmuel L. Eisenstadt. The theory of multiple modernities criticizes the traditional view of modernity as a stable system of new structural, institutional and cultural features and formations which decompose the older 'closed' institutional frameworks (Eisenstadt 2010: 1). The focus here is to search for the variations of modernity during its history. Eisenstadt tends to explain modernity in the sense of the multiplicity of cultural programs in the global context. The historical component of his theory gives him a wider perspective for his description of modernity. Historical analyses tend to focus on the actors and their capacity to modify certain aspects of modernity which can be considered as universal, but also as being generated by Western civilization (Eisenstadt 2000). The reflexivity of social behaviour is the force of modernity's modification. Together with the theory of multiple modernities, it is essential to describe the phenomenon of Islam as a religion which developed a contextually different type of relation towards modernity, especially modernity in its Western modification. Due to a wholly different historical context, Islam in Croatia is different to Islam in the Middle East. This, however, does not imply completely different forms of transcendental and ritualistic forms of practise, but rather the fact that these forms of religion hold values and norms that are complementary to their cultural context. While the Croatian Muslim community proudly shares the same transcendental substrate as other Muslims, it nevertheless retains a distinct and unique cultural flavour.

The theory of religious pluralism (Berger 2014b) has developed from two theoretical frameworks: the phenomenology of Alfred Schütz and the theory of multiple modernities of Shmuel Eisenstadt. While Schütz deals with consciousness, Eisenstadt presents a variety of perspectives on modernity. These influences prompted Berger to advance his theory of religious pluralism which originated in posing these questions: how

do we manage religion in the contemporary world, and how does religion manage in contemporary society (Berger 2013)? To answer these questions, Berger assumed the presumptions of the modern secularization theory which correlates modern reflexivity with a decrease in religious behaviour. He proposes religious pluralism as an alternative concept to the problems of secularization and religions as strong opposing factors in societies. In this concept he recognizes the necessity for religions to adapt to technological and social progress as well as the possibility for them to coexist within multi-religious societies. In correlation with those presumptions, a specific religious identity of context can be addressed. Muslims in Croatia are connected in a transcendental sense with other Muslims, but Islam in Croatia did adapt to the specific societal context. Such a religious identity has the potential to connect other forms of similar religious identities that do not have the required contextual knowledge (Berger 2014b).

Methodology

The main research goal of this paper is to examine the role of the Islamic Centre in Zagreb regarding the integration of Middle Eastern migrants into Croatian society. The role of the Islamic Centre in Zagreb is described through the formation of meaning that determines the ability to integrate. To make the meaning empirically reachable, the main method in this research is phenomenology. Phenomenology is one of the methods in the qualitative methodology of social research that strives for the hermeneutical knowledge of phenomena. The main orientation of phenomenology is to understand the problems of the meaning and significance of certain phenomena (Creswell 2007). By understanding the meaning of the integration from the contextual framework of the Islamic community in Zagreb, we can understand the way in which they can contribute to the process of the integration of Middle Eastern immigrants.

The applied research method was the use of focus groups. The reason for the use of this method was that it would help in investigating

a collective understanding of integration, specifically for the Islamic community in Zagreb, and for Croatia in general. With this method, we could investigate different approaches or proposed solutions for the current problem of the Middle Eastern migrant crisis. The sample for the focus groups was selected via a method of intentional, intense experience cases. In this context, the case that was selected for participation in the focus group was the Imams of the Islamic Centre in Zagreb. Specifically, the participants were Imams with experience of teaching Islam. All of the participants had more than five years' experience in teaching. In order to gain a better understanding of the present generation of Muslims in Zagreb, the Imams included in the survey were under 40 years of age. That means that the included Imams were educated and socialized at the time of the cohesive coexistence and integration of the Muslim community in Croatia as well as of the ongoing process of reflexive modernity. The focus group was held on June 13, 2017 in Zagreb. The participants of the focus group and their responses are marked with the following codes: G1, G2, and G3.

The Islamic Centre in Zagreb and the integration of Middle Eastern immigrants

There are different opportunities for the Islamic Centre to intervene with Middle Eastern immigrants. A shared transcendental and ritual basis of Islam allows a coherence in their religious identity which can be a functional modality of integration and a potential starting point for their re-socialization in a new environment. On that subject, there has been a great contribution by the Imams, who have had an influential role for the young generations of Muslims in Croatia. According to the testimony of the participants, they decided on the role of the Imam purely because they had experienced the positive influence of their Imams in the past.

> I decided on the call of Imam, the priest in Islam. I was in the 6th grade of elementary school, and by that time I already knew what I wanted to be in life. My influence was my Imam who

> taught me the principles of Islam. I simply wanted to become someone like him because he was my role model. Along with my parents he was one of the most important people in my life. (Brezovec, 2017; G1)

This statement is a clear example of the influential role of the Imams in defining the faith as well as the path of an individual's life. Imams share their experience through their teachings, and they define Islam as the religion of peace and coexistence because they are well integrated into Croatian society.

By learning the possibilities of religious pluralism, immigrants can achieve a basic understanding of Croatian society as well, with the help of the Imams. Understanding in this case means an actual reflexivity towards the values and norms of everyday life in Croatia and the successful integration of Islam into the society. The Islamic Centre in Zagreb, along with other Islamic Centres in Croatia, is considered to be a valuable cultural factor in the production and reproduction of the social reality.

The Islamic Centre in Zagreb has been actively involved in managing the migrant crisis. Based on research using qualitative methodology and the deep interview method, several important aspects of the role of the Islamic Centre can be presented. Firstly, the Islamic Centre in Zagreb provides important financial aid to the immigrants. This kind of aid is primarily based on religious solidarity, especially noted as one of the pillars of the Islamic faith, the Zakāt.

> We have the fourth Islamic duty, which is Zakāt. Zakāt is given by the wealthy Muslims who have annual savings of about 25,000 Kuna [Croatian currency] or 3,500 EUR. It is mandatory to give 2.5% for Zakāt. So if someone has one 1 million Kuna, he is obliged to give 25,000 Kuna. It is all collected in the so-called Bejtul-mal, or the treasury of the Islamic community. The collected funds are managed by the Islamic community. It is the resource from which they can give to the ones in need. (Brezovec, 2017; G1)

In this manifestation, the pillars of faith present a description of collectiveness and religious solidarity. It is an example of how religious identity can provide an approach to culturally diverse individuals or people. Due to being of the same faith, the Islamic Centre in Zagreb can approach the immigrants more easily than the civil institutions, which are often viewed as overly bureaucratic with a crude normative stance.

The Islamic Centre in Zagreb is the central site for Islamic cultural, religious, educational and social interaction. It is perceived as an Islamic oasis in Zagreb. It includes a mosque, a high school, a coffee house and a restaurant. Running a complex as large as this one requires human resources which creates opportunities to employ immigrants, providing them with a regular income and a sense of independence and self-worth.

The Republic of Croatia has organized and provided accommodation at the asylum for immigrants in Zagreb. Because it is a long way from the mosque, the Islamic Centre in Zagreb has organized daily bus transports to and from the asylum and the Centre in order to provide the immigrants with easy access to the mosque for their prayers.

The duality and richness of the content provide a certain value, which can connect the religious with the profane cultural identity. The sacred part of the Centre gives them a possibility to express their religious identity, but, more importantly, the profane part gives them a chance to see the social reality of Muslims living in Croatia. The Islamic Centre not only provides a first view of the cohesion between the two cultures but also provides them with an opportunity to stay in Croatia.

> We are helping the immigrants by giving them a chance to practice their religion in our Centre. By means of interaction with the local Muslim population they can observe our everyday life, our work, our practices, our customs. We organize a transport from the asylum to the Centre where they pray, socialize and learn. (Brezovec 2017; G3)

Immigrants have to adapt to the social space that is regulated by values and secular laws. Croatian law restricts and prevents any discriminating

action against any religious or ethnic group (NN 83/02, 73/13). For immigrants it is not essential to learn the form of the law, but rather to understand the purpose of the law in the specific context. The Islamic Centre in Zagreb provides a good example of how one religious minority in Croatia can function in a fully integrated manner in society. Their norms of conduct can successfully integrate immigrants into Croatian society.

This positive example of functional integration on the part of the religious identity of Muslims in Croatia contributes to the process of contextualizing the framework of the religious identity of Middle Eastern Muslims in terms of the value of religious pluralism in the theoretical context.

Religious identity in the process of education

Education as a process of acquiring knowledge, skills, beliefs and habits requires skilled educators and settings that provide a formative effect. The right to education is recognized by many governments and, in Croatia, state law declares education as compulsory at the primary and secondary stages. Religious identity is often not recognized as a problem in the context of the education process due to the universality of the prescribed curriculum. Religions are included in the curriculum mostly as a subject in history or specific religious courses. The educational system in Croatia acknowledges the possibility of enrolling in religious subjects according to personal preference. Most students at the primary and secondary education levels are enrolled in the Catholic religious course, which also includes many lessons about other religions. The interdisciplinary approach that is denoted in the curriculum offers an insight into the history, development and characteristics of the major religious systems and the cultures of their practitioners.

> In Croatian schools we can organize and provide a course on Islam. That way, we are given the possibility to teach children the basic contextualization of Islam in Croatia. We have a secondary school (gymnasium) in the Islamic Centre in Zagreb, with

> a curriculum approved by the Croatian Ministry of Education and Science. In the gymnasium students are taught, along with many courses that are directly connected to Islam, other courses, in order to gain the competencies they need to successfully enrol in a desired college or university. (Brezovec, 2017; G1)

The importance of religion in defining the cultural foundations and values, i.e. ethics and moral systems, of a society is well recognized in the contemporary educational process. If the focus is placed on just one religious identity, there is a chance of an identity crisis, which reduces the possibility of successful integration. In such circumstances the successful education process of the whole society becomes questionable (Dollot 2000). As Weisse has noticed, the modern world can mostly be described as de-secularized and, in order to enable religious pluralism in its ideal form, there is a need for the implementation of religious education. He continues by saying that the reduction of social tensions and conflicts requires a dialogue between people of different religious beliefs or different cultural values (Weisse 2010: 187–188). Inspired by these problems, the European Commission has launched a major project dealing with religion and education in schools. The results of that project point to the need for a focused education for teachers concerning the development of critical thinking, because a high number of young people did not possess a critical approach to the dominant media discourses on religious subjects, especially about Islam and Muslims (Jackson 2011: 105). The implementation of the basic presumptions of mutual tolerance and respect is presupposed in the educational setting. According to that model, religious communities that belong to a minority group in a society could acquire adequate education.

The basic premise that has to be fulfilled for the successful integration of Middle Eastern immigrants comes from the positive examples of Muslim communities in Europe – for example, the Islamic Centre in Zagreb. Its main contribution is in providing a safe place while also introducing the immigrants to the social reality that is dominant in Croatian

society and offering them a chance of achieving a successful integration. One of the most important tools that can be used in this process is the education process. The immigrants could attend the school that is in the Centre's complex in the future, but it is not yet possible. The potential of the Islamic Centre in Zagreb in the process of the education of immigrants is enormous and it will probably function in the future.

The positive example of the Islamic Centre in Zagreb, which is actively involved in aiding immigrants with their economic, religious and social needs, should be used as a model for other societies. In a setting discharged from cultural discrimination, the foundations have been laid for further integration in all aspects of society. The importance of education in this process is unquestionable. Hopefully, the future will provide a possibility for the immigrants to enrol in the school in the Centre, where they already have a sense of belonging.

Conclusion

The main goal of this paper was to introduce the role of the Islamic Centre in Zagreb to the process of integrating Middle Eastern immigrants into Croatian society. In plural societies, an essential precondition for successful integration is the positive reception of the new society. In the case of the presented example, the Islamic Centre in Zagreb shares a religious identity with the immigrants. This is the foundation of the conditions that ensure a starting point for positive integration.

The positive attitude towards Islam in Croatia is grounded in the historical context of this region. The Muslim community is a minority in Croatia that is practically a part of the autochthonous population. Therefore, Islam in Croatia can be distinguished from Middle Eastern Islam in the sense of its relation towards secularism. In order to integrate successfully, the immigrants have to adapt their religious beliefs to the specific context of the host society. The Croatian Muslim community demonstrates that this is possible for them without losing their religious and cultural identity. In Croatia this is made possible because its laws regulate the

rights and obligations of religious communities as well as provide a certain level of financial aid.

With the help of the Islamic Centre in Zagreb, immigrants have experienced the Croatian reality. The next step for functional integration must include their substantial involvement in the education process. With their integrative potential, enrolling the migrants in the educational system should provide them with a formative education as well as culturally enrich Croatian society.

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Moral Upbringing in the Process of Religious Education

Abstract: The article is aimed at showing the meaning of moral education in the processes of religious education. The authors pay attention to the meaning of moral values influencing man's behaviour, and attitudes towards the Self, other people, the world, and God. Experience obtained in the relationship with the Self, others and God has a significant role in the trajectory of educational processes, particularly the process of the moral upbringing of a person. Attention paid to natural cognition and cognition rooted in God can help to underline the sense of religious education, as well as the religious education of a child. Moral imagination producing moral images becomes the subject for analysis in terms of a teacher's responsibility concerning the selection of literature items, or methods of their analysis. A moral upbringing that is tightly connected with religious education elicits the meaning of work upon one's own character and catechesis as a tool enhancing its quality. The research question of this article can be posed as follows: how does moral upbringing participate in the processes of religious education?

Keywords: moral upbringing, moral imagination, religious education, work, catechesis

In the contemporary world where we meet the promotion of diverse ideas on upbringing (Śliwerski 2015), what results is the possibility of varied perceptions of moral upbringing processes. In this article we focus on the reflection upon the specificity of morality promoted by religious education emerging from Christianity. The key point in this analysis indicates the corporeal-spiritual nature of a man who goes as a 'pilgrim' to a new quality of life that has been offered to him by God. This quality is defined as eternal life.

In the analysis provided below, one can pay attention to the following aspects: religious education, the formation of the mature man, and religious education in the processes of a moral upbringing. These aspects can make those who deal with moral and religious education in particular more conscious about the meaning of moral upbringing in the processes of religious education and its significant role in a person's integral development.

1. Religious education

Educational processes have a significant impact on the shape of upbringing processes and a person's approaches to life. Their leading aim is to form the conscience and culture of a man living in different life spaces. In a wider meaning, education is aligned with the whole scope of activities supporting man in his social functioning. Mainly, we mean the social processes that allow the person both to use pre-existing culture and to create new culture as well. In this way, education helps the person to develop her/his abilities and enables her/him to function in varied areas of life such as intellectual, emotional, interpersonal, motivational, physical and so forth (Rubacha 2005: 25–26). We do not identify education with activity that features a technological-adaptive dimension. We do not identify it with information transfer, either; we see it as a specific dialogue in which achieved experiences can be exchanged (Milerski 1998: 123–124). Such a dialogue, which Kujawiński calls the talk of free and equal partners, aims, first of all, at the joint cognition of something new and unknown, to

explain something incomprehensible, to check something that is uncertain, to assess something that causes doubts, to discover something in the whole that is hidden, and to create something new and useful at the same time. However, the atmosphere of the mutual kindness, respect, and love of all its participants is needed to perform the functions of educational dialogue. It should lead to understanding each other better, a closeness of points of views, and to further the teacher's cooperation with students and that of the students with each other, when such a possibility occurs (Kujawiński 2010: 68). In this way, it fosters learning through experience (Kolb 1984), which can be exceptionally fruitful for both sides participating in this human activity.

One should notice that many of the gathered experiences and questions connected with them cannot be explained reasonably and empirically. We mean here the existential questions concerning the origins and predestination of man and the world: the existence of evil, injustice, death and suchlike. The impossibility to give them appropriate answers makes a person seek them out in different sources.

One of these sources is religion. In this case, man's reasoning is not as productive as God (goodness) simply replying to such questions. He reasons with the use of religion (Korherr 2008: 118–119; Bagrowicz 2004: 316–322). Explanations that we align with reality that are obtained in this way are what is named 'religious cognition'. This cognition is different, but not opposite, to the natural one (empirical-intellectual). The difference between these forms of cognition is in the fact that, in natural cognition, man uses reason to supply him with knowledge, while in religious cognition he uses the 'knowledge' delivered by religion.[1] This method of cognition is characterized by the deferral of one's own experience and insight into reality in favour of the acquisition of particular content, behind which is God's authority and His evidence. One should remember that religious cognition explicates only the reality that is accessible for human cognition. It explicates how God sees man and the world in which he lives. This

[1] In the Christian understanding, such knowledge is transmitted by God through His revelation.

certainly does not mean that religious cognition provides man with complete and satisfying answers to his questions. Nevertheless, it gives him the opportunity to broaden his knowledge of the Self and the world in the light of the content and explanations of concrete religion (Marek 2017: 90–94). That is why, when the dissonance between reason and faith takes place, what happens is that the search for the truth stops being a prior value for man, and it is reduced to the cognitive abilities of reason itself.

Educational processes that comprise not only natural cognition but religious cognition as well are defined as 'religious education'. In this notion, two elements are joined together: a human being's experience and God's revelation. This alignment not only has a theoretical meaning, but it also delivers real pedagogical-religious support. It depends on a theocentric understanding of humanistic education (Rogowski 2007: 140–141; Milerski 1998: 127). Following this path, religious education enables:

1. A more complete cognition of material, social, and mainly spiritual reality, which is possible thanks to disclosed relationships joining man with God. Here, first of all, being of the belief that God – according to the content transmitted in the Bible – bestows man with only one feeling, which is love, appears crucial;
2. Bringing a person into the world of religious and moral values through obtaining the ability to acquire and acknowledge religious values and treat them as one's own, as well as the hierarchy existing among them;
3. Finding models that show and form man's attitudes and behaviour owing to the obligatory principles and norms of religious life. This function has the task of directing a person towards their own internality, which certainly does not exclude an openness to life and culture. On this path, a person obtains the experience of their own internality, which means a particular wander towards one's own interior makes the person the subject that experiences the result of their own acts, which include the decisive ones connected with choices of good and evil, beauty and ugliness, justice and injustice (Nowak 2012: 117);

4. Giving a person help and support during the self-formation of their own personality (de Tchorzewski 2014: 9–10). Thanks to religious education, a person's relationships with themselves and the environment become broadened by their relationship with transcendence – God. On this path, man gets acquainted not only with the principles and norms of a harmonious social life, but discovers the obligatory, objective norms which are given by God.

This broadened shape of education enables one to claim that, thanks to religion, education strengthens the person in forming their own identity, and, owing to their openness to transcendence, God facilitates her/him to overcome her/his own limits, which supports her/his integral development (Rynio 2016: 449–450).

These explanations lead one to pose questions about the core of the integral development of the person. This term should be understood as changes taking place in man's biological, psychological, and spiritual spheres. Such changes should take place in all aspects of a human being's life and, therefore, in the dimensions of their physical, intellectual, emotional, personal, social, cultural, and religious life as well. Their function is to give help to the person in achieving a higher 'quality' of her/his own life: a larger maturity expressed in her/his attitudes to the Self, the world, people, and God (Rynio 2016: 449–450). Thus, it is about man being able to act morally, which means that he should have perpetuated habits to respect the norms that bring harmony to social life (Pieter 2005: 62).

In reflecting upon the integral development of man, one cannot forget that we have to deal with something dynamic, with a process, not an existing and unchangeable reality. This fact demands us not to treat the developing student as a miniature adult, as such thinking excludes his development. Hence, one should show an appreciation for the upbringing processes, in which moral principles are already brought closer together and inculcated to perform a significant role. Then, we can talk about a moral upbringing, the sense of which means man's development as understood not in terms of his development as a species, but in terms of perfecting him in all areas of his life and activity (Majka 1982: 41).

The trajectory of these processes is influenced by, on the one hand, the ideology promoted by man's environment and, on the other, by the ways of understanding man's nature. We can notice here that religious education promoted in the area of Western culture refers to Christianity and the personalistic point of view built by it, because it defines and explains the already promoted moral norms of man's living standards that come from the Gospels.

2. Religious education supports the formation of a mature man

What purpose does religious education serve? How does it make man richer? What competences does it develop in him? How should religious education work in the individual and social life of contemporary man? Providing an explicit answer to these and similar questions seems to be impossible because of the fact that, owing to religious education, we are touching upon a non-material reality that we are not able to measure with empirical methods. Here, the issue is first of all about discovering connections between man and God. One should remember that the reality of faith included in religious education, although it is the subject of man's searches and efforts, is a gift from God, which man is not able to obtain himself with his own powers. In this understanding one should say that religious education, in opening man up to overcoming his own limitations, also opens him up to the truth, the source of which is God.

Religious education shows the person a new quality of possessed dignity, which comes from religious cognition. The importance of this effort is appreciated by, among others, Katarzyna Olbrycht, who writes that it is not possible either to bring up a man to complete his personal development, or to build communities that guarantee the help and protection of this development to their members without stressing the importance of dignity in education and upbringing. Only then – when pupils in the process of upbringing understand what it means to behave 'worthily' and 'unworthily'; why one cannot humble either oneself or others; why man should always be respected and treated as a subject; why

success does not determine his dignity – can we expect that he could have an effect upon his own development, an effect including his servitude to others (Olbrycht 2007: 109). Hence, one can talk about the fact that, thanks to religious education, it is easier in one's social life to find common directions of activity so that the expectations of particular persons do not collide with each other. What is more, religious education depicting ideals going beyond man's natural capacities can cause collaborative, social initiatives to be undertaken in order to achieve them (e.g. charitable activity in the name of fellow human beings). Similarly, one can talk about the meaning of religious education in the development of the person. Thanks to educational processes, man learns how to recognize the existence of objective norms of proceedings and how to make personal choices connected with their discovery, including the choices of faith and non-faith. With their help he can develop such competences as religious sensitivity, the skill of religious language expression, religious communication, and the ability to live a concrete style of life (Boschki 2017: 92–93). Owing to these kinds of competences gained thanks to religious education, it is possible to achieve a more complete maturity.

Maturity is an ambiguous term. In the educational dimension, it is tied with obtaining the ability to be responsible in life. Describing the symptoms of the achievement of maturity, we can say, following Parmanda Divarkar SJ, that it reflects the intangible reality that we experience and describe, but which is difficult to define. We express this reality in varied ways. Most often, we join it with social life abilities, in which there is responsibility and selflessness in varied aspects of a human being's life, comprising, first of all, the cognitive (intellectual), emotional, and moral (volitional) ones (Divarkar 2002: 153; Cichoń 1996: 163-169; Wojtyła 1969: 190). The measure of such achieved maturity is an acceptance of moral values. It demands an understanding of the nature of culture as expressed in a sense of responsibility for one's own and others' lives. It is based on the freedom which emerges from the spiritual development of the person. It is noticed in the processes of making values absolute, in their selection, and in personal choice (Murawski 2002: 121).

The relationships established with God owing to religious education also support a person's processes of achieving maturity. Thanks to this education, she/he is able to see and accept the fact that maturity can be worked out, and it becomes a gift obtained from God as well. This gift allows one to notice that such significant values for man as good, happiness, truth, and beauty exist beyond him. Discovering this fact can elicit new energies for activities oriented towards their achievement. As a result, one starts engaging someone else (God) in these matters (Podrez 1994: 189). In this case, it is about performing His will of salvation – gifting people with happiness, goodness, life, and love for the whole of eternity. Such visible maturity is based on the openness to entrusting oneself completely to God and one's readiness to perform His will (Pasierbek 2004: 72). This willingness is defined as religious maturity. Thanks to this, man is able to apply not only mental motifs but religious ones as well in his activity.

3. Religious education in processes of moral upbringing

Man expresses his own maturity in his everyday behaviours and attitudes. Their shape is affected by his processes of upbringing, in which religion can perform a significant role. Thus, looking for a possibility to include religion in the processes of forming the mature personality of a man appears to be crucial. These expectations seem to be possible, as they cover such dimensions of a human being's life as are connected with explicating his existence directed towards transcendence – God. Here, we intend to deal with signalling possibilities to support processes of moral growth through religious education. For example, we will present the possibilities of religious education to form the moral imagination with the use of children's literature. Furthermore, we are going to depict how religious education can broaden the moral understanding of man's work, and, finally, how the Catholic Church's catechesis refers to matters of the formation of moral attitudes.

3.1. The maturation of a child's moral imagination through literature for children

When bringing up a child, one is faced by many challenges, among which moral development seems very crucial, particularly for her/his integral development, and moral values perform a significant role in it, since they:

- form the basis for inner judgment for the person;
- are norms of behaviour guided by social, moral, spiritual and aesthetic criteria to select the desirable;
- are ideals in various fields of behaviour: the right way to think, to behave and to do things;
- are important for character formation and personality;
- enable an emotional evaluation of actions, thoughts or behaviour;
- enable the resolution of everyday problems in a positive and ethical way;
- enable the development of self-confidence, self-esteem and self-respect;
- enable socialization and sharing;
- are the building blocks of a clean, fair and just society (ICAC 2006, p. 9);[2]
- foster spiritual or religious development.

Taking into consideration the aspects mentioned earlier, it seems necessary to indicate that biological, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual development, understood in terms of developmental evolution, can be "influenced by early experience: Security, Engagement, and Imagination" (Narvaez and Lapsley 2009: 262). In this context, one should

[2] The realization of this handbook, entitled *Promoting moral development through play during early childhood*, is the outcome of a fruitful collaboration between the Independent Commission Against Corruption and different professionals in the preschool sector; available at: www.doiserbia.nb.rs/img/doi/0579-6431/2006/0579-64310602401P.pdf (accessed December 20, 2017).

emphasize the meaning of moral imagination that "performs a special role in building moral character" (Szymańska 2017: 153). Furthermore, Guroian writes: "The moral imagination is the distinctively human power to conceive of men and women as moral beings, i.e., as persons, not things or animals whose value to us is their usefulness. It is the process by which the self makes metaphors out of images recorded by the senses and stored in memory, which then are employed to find and suppose moral correspondences in experience" (Guroian 2005). In this light we can pose the thesis that moral imagination bears and nourishes moral images. They are reflected in visual pictures built in particular with sounds and words interfusing the process of thinking and emotions influencing the area of experience. They also seem to be recognized and judged from the perspective of values. Hence, moral images have a lot to do with moral values that undergo the process of interoception (Kunowski 2003: 103–135; Chałas 2016: 461; Szymańska 2017a: 51–63), tightly aligned with the process of transaction (Rosenblatt 2007: 1–20) taking place between the message and the reader. Having considered that images help us build the language of narration, use it for expression, in descriptions of our experience, and, above all, to understand other people and to be understood by others (Sztuka 2010: 82), the following conclusion emerges: moral images foster widely understood communication on an interpersonal and intrapersonal level. Such a point of view must necessarily be considered, especially in the field of child education and, to be more precise, in the field of children's moral upbringing. How the moral imagination is built in a child's moral development and what functions it performs cannot be neglected by teachers and caregivers either. One should notice that the images of the different items of the world appearing in children's minds have a lot in common with working memory, which "can be described as a system to remember the items of information such as words, pictures, special locations etc. and to manipulate these or other items at the same time" (Oberauer and Kliegl 2006: 601–602). This working memory 'awakens' in concrete situations when man has to make a choice, take a decision. Hence, it is not indifferent to the development of the moral imagination taking place through a moral upbringing. One of the devices

stimulating the maturation of a child's moral imagination is literature for children. The way it can be implemented in the area of moral development depends mostly on those who work with children and those who take care of them. An adult's moral consciousness in this respect appears to be very important. The choice of literature items, the way of conveying the stories, and the analyses and interpretations in the domain of moral values – considering their functions and roles mentioned above – belong to factors influencing the upbringing process of the moral imagination. Guroian provides the following example of the application of literature in developing moral imagination:

> After a child has read Hans Christian Andersen's *The Snow Queen* or Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time*, her moral imagination is sure to have been stimulated and sharpened. The powerful images of good and evil in these stories show a child how to love through the examples of the characters she herself has come to love and admire. Such memories become the analogues that the moral imagination uses to make real-life decisions, and these memories become constitutive elements of her self-identity and character. (Guroian 2005).

Therefore, working with literature for children brings with it some implications. First of all, it requires a mature approach to moral education rooted in moral values; second, it requires an understanding of the meaning of the necessity to build the moral imagination and moral images through appropriate stories for children; and third, teacher formation conducted in terms of the enriched moral imagination should be the subject of special workshops. These implications can be reinforced by the same author's words: "Our society is failing to cultivate the moral imagination in part at least because very often the stories we live by—the stories we read ourselves or read to our children, the stories we watch on television or at the movies—are not stories that grow the moral imagination, but stories that crowd it out" (Guroian 2005). They ought to be treated as a warning directed to those who deal with children's education in particular.

Finally, the maturation of a child's moral imagination appears to be crucial nowadays in the 'melting pot' of many different ideas on morality. For while this appears to be crucial for morality, it also appears to be crucial for religious education as well. Experience and emotions relived during the child's interaction and transaction with literature draw out concrete associations which have an impact on forming a valuable moral imagination linked with a religious imagination. The images bred in the child's mind can foster a deepening contact with the Self, other people, the world, and God. Therefore, literature for children has to be well-selected and interpreted according to the symbols and messages hidden in it. In taking care of the integral development of the child, teachers have to remember that how they are going to work with this sort of literature will affect the child's moral and religious imagination.

3.2. Moral upbringing through work

Man's work has the characteristics of an educational upbringing. The multi-dimensional aspects of the relationships between man and work build the conditions for the development of the person through triggering in her/him different sorts of creative initiatives that foster the achievement of a mature morality. This process goes through discovering such virtues (man's skills) as, for example, dutifulness, honesty, responsibility, conscientiousness, persistence, a positive attitude to work and its performance, a readiness to perform tasks and duties, and cooperation with others (Mółka 2016: 7-10). The problem lies in the fact that work should be discovered by a person as a factor fostering her/his development (Baraniak 2015: 142–144).

In pedagogical reflections upon the signalled issue, one should pay attention to the fact that work is an indispensible element of the correct integral development of man, because it influences his physical, intellectual, spiritual, cultural, and moral potential in a meaningful way. We underline that its perception and performance forms a man's character, will, and interests, and that it affects his state of being, both in terms of physical and mental health. Thanks to its performance, a person can realize herself/himself. It teaches collaboration, builds interpersonal relationships,

and creates an appropriate system of values (Piekarski 2015: 163). Obtaining appropriate qualifications is connected with these acts of doing. Pedagogical sciences have worked out the theory of qualifications for work and the methodology for how to gain them. From Tadeusz Nowacki's point of view, qualifications are shown in one's attitudes and skills and, moreover, one should see the ethical dimension in them (2005: 308).

In educational processes, work is seen as a method of upbringing (Piekarski 2015: 163). Zygmunt Wiatrowski considers these processes as an intended, goal-oriented, organized sort of upbringing activity, in which a particular feature is referred to the use of work in processes of upbringing, influences an individual and makes changes to her/his personality (2005: 154–155). In discussions on the goals, tools and accuracy of upbringing 'to' and 'through' work, one should pay attention to the many issues concerning an appropriate understanding of the process itself through work. It should be emphasized that it not only has a material and economic value, but also a spiritual-personal one, for it forms the right working attitudes in a person, contributes to creating new kinds of work, etc. Besides, through work man becomes "more of a human being", and acquires moral virtues (Przybycień 2008: 175). Czesław Bartnik states that man becomes moral, in the contemporary meaning, mainly through doing his occupational, social, ordinary, everyday, and extraordinary work, depending on one's age (2005: 49). As a result, one can say that, for man, work can have both an individual and a social value as well. Its appropriate performance becomes an ethical imperative for a person. As far as its social dimension is considered, it requires activities to be undertaken that are oriented towards the construction of a system of work which respects the dignity of a person and her/his subjectivity (Przybycień 2008: 175).

Perceptions of a human being's work, mentioned above, have been broadened in the course of religious education processes. In the Catholic Church's understanding, work is a value, and its performance is regarded as cooperation between God and man, who perfects visible creation (CCC 1994: no. 378).[3] This results in significant consequences for its

[3] Cathechism of the Catholic Church – CCC will be used hereafter.

understanding: work exists for man, not man for work. Thanks to work, everyone should have an opportunity to obtain the means to live, support one's own relatives and help the human community (CCC 1994: no. 2428). These reasons indicate the fact that working can be considered as a duty for man (CCC 1994: no. 2427). In this way, its dignity and internal alignment with man is appreciated. Work makes him perfect and, as a result, makes him closer to God. Moreover, finding the meaning of human work in the course of educational processes shows that religious education broadens the possibility of seeing its maturational quality through a religious explication of its sense and meaning for man's development. We can assume that perceptions of work, made richer by religious education, can induce new motifs for its deeper understanding and performance, which results in achieving a higher, more mature level of moral life.

3.3. Moral upbringing in religious catechesis

The term 'catechesis' refers to the activity conducted by the Church which continues Jesus' mission through the preaching of the Gospel and teaching the faith, which makes it a place of redemptive dialogue between God and man (Marek 2000: 13). Catechesis is addressed to man who is offered salvation – life without end in happiness and love – by God through Jesus Christ. These explanations pay attention to the fact that catechesis is about man's goodness, the sense of which is explicated by God Himself. This fact results in further consequences that come from an acknowledgement of His authority in matters referring to the goal that appears before man. In discerning the processes based on the natural (mental) principles of a social-moral upbringing, in catechesis, the first step is to show the norms and principles of human beings' coexistence. First, efforts connected with forming a picture of God based on the Bible's message are made. The justification for undertaking such steps lies in the belief that it strongly influences the relationships between human beings and God. The christening dimension of catechesis is seen as important for these efforts. It is about showing God's irrevocably friendly approach to man, which is most completely expressed by the word 'love' (Marek 2007: 95). One should pay attention to and be inspired to recognize and

affirm God's love, and make an attempt to respond with love to this recognizable love of God. Such individual responses include prayer, acts of love, obedience to God's commandments, and – in one's social life – participation in the religious life of the congregation (liturgy), and in taking responsibility for one's social life.

Based on this scheme, the processes of moral upbringing conducted in the course of catechesis are featured in a person's pursuit of discovering Jesus' commandment of love as a summary of Christian morality. Certainly, this assumption does not depreciate the value of the Decalogue and other norms of morality. An example of such a conducted process of moral upbringing in catechesis is the handbook for the first grade of school education (for children aged 6-7) titled *Elementary handbook for God's child* (*Elementarz dziecka Bożego*; edited by Z. Marek and A. Walulik, 2015). This handbook starts with a set of texts enabling children to understand what Jesus' love for people means. But we cannot only talk about the information concerning God's mystery. It is accompanied by activities enabling a child to get into a relationship with Jesus through meeting with Him in the word of God, listening to His words, and talking about Him. The core topic of a moral upbringing conveyed as such is to recall the event of the baptism, thanks to which we are friends of Jesus.

A significant dimension of upbringing in this part of the handbook is to discover the closeness of God, after He came to people in Jesus Christ, and to stand by Him. The next crucial element of the moral upbringing is tied to the idea of meeting with people: Jesus shares His gifts with people, and these people learn how to take them in and care for them. A child has to discover the world that she/he lives in as God's gift and learn to take responsibility for it. A further component of the moral upbringing is aligned with explications of Jesus' sense of life and formulating the motifs connected with one's desire and readiness to take this gift. In this part, attention is paid to the value of a human being's freedom. This has become a foundation for subsequent topics supporting a moral upbringing. God's offer of salvation has been presented as Jesus' invitation to vigil – an appropriate way of functioning. The motifs of staying with Jesus are also developed. Among them, one indicates His disinterested love for

people, shown on Calvary. This thought is expanded upon in the next chapter, where children come to know the truth about his victory, rising from death – about Jesus leading people to happiness. On this stage, for a moral upbringing, the truth that Jesus, who has risen from death, does not leave man, but rather strengthens him in faithfulness with the Holy Spirit, seems to be significant.

Summary

Reflections upon the meaning of religious education for a moral upbringing shows that it is a form that enriches and broadens the human perception and understanding of the world in which we live. Assuming that the educational task includes religious education, it should support man in understanding the world, in finding his own place in it, and in taking responsibility; we can also claim that religious education enlightens, from a religious perspective, the matters of man's existence, and in different ways enables him to achieve his own development and teaches him how to carry out tasks of responsibility. This dimension of human life in particular is seen in the aspect of moral upbringing, as religious education puts man closer to the objective norms regulating the harmonious coexistence of people with each other. It also provides new, religious motifs for taking the effort to care about others' goodness. All these things are aimed to refer to religious contents in order to form social-moral attitudes and the human conscience.

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Adults' Need for and Interest in Religious Education

Abstract: Adults indicate their needs for and interest in religious content in a variety of ways. They express a conviction that adult religious education should not be limited to catechesis and look for such forms as correspond to their needs and expectations. One of these is the Bible Correspondence Course (BCC). This form of adult religious education has been present in Poland for over 20 years, and in Austria for even longer. The Course is not only attracting growing interest amongst adults but also meets their expectations and brings (often unexpected) results. By analyzing the motives for their participation in the BCC, one can see that this form of adult education is a significant event for many people and has become a unique part of their lives. Thus, its effects relate to many areas and dimensions of human existence.

Keywords: religious education of adults, religious knowledge, developmental tasks, religious competence

Introduction

The religious education of adults is often associated with catechesis and restricted to it. Moreover, although in the documents of the Catholic Church it is considered to be the most valuable form of catechesis, in pastoral practice it is often marginalized and the main focus is put on the religious education of children and youth (CT 1979: 43). At the same time, adults indicate their needs for and interest in religious content in a variety of ways. Assuming that adult religious education should not be limited to catechesis, we will attempt to understand adult educational activity based on religious sources through the prism of the participants of the Bible Correspondence Course (BCC). This form of religious education – present in Poland for over 20 years, and for even longer in Austria – is not only attracting growing interest amongst adults, but also meets their expectations and brings (often unexpected) results (Krysztofik and Walulik 2016: 101–128).

The research on adult religious education that we have conducted shows an ever-growing interest in this issue and ways of using the acquired knowledge in everyday life. The analysis of the collected research material (narratives of the graduates of the Bible Correspondence Course and the demographics of the participants) shows that arguments arising from a natural cognition of reality are not sufficient for the adult to realize their developmental tasks. This paper aims to show how religious education can be a part of the postmodern everyday life which is considered an area of lifelong learning.

Religion in the lifelong learning of adults

The term 'lifelong learning' has become almost a 'catchall' phrase in educational policy. It replaced the term 'continuing education' which was equally popular in the 1970s and 1980s (CEC 2000: 3). This change is expressed in recognition of the complementarity of formal, non-formal and informal education, and, in regard to adults, in the transition from teach-

ing to learning (Malewski 2010: 41). This way of thinking about education associates lifelong learning mainly with the task of supporting humans in the broadly-defined idea of 'development'. The lack of formal restrictions is to enable "the need to create a multi-dimensional social and individual identity, becoming aware of a balanced functioning in many social dimensions (family, community, parish, regional, state, national, continental, planetary) in combination with multiple dimensions of the creation of identity of the individual" (Nikitorowicz 2013: 25).

The idea of lifelong learning sets important tasks for religion and opens up new (or rather recalls postponed) perspectives of its presence in the daily lives of adults. Therefore, one can talk about the need, or even the necessity, to achieve religious competencies. They are inextricably bound up with learning, and their broad contemporary understanding must not restrict them to the religious dimension of human life (Walulik 2013: 198–202).

Permission for the participation of religious competences in life and the development of the individual implies a recognition of the existence of two different forms of human cognition. One of them is based on the achievements of scientific research, which is possible through the use of natural methods of cognition. The other requires that the given content is taken for granted, as provided by the professed faith. Religion, thanks to the possibility of going beyond the natural study of reality, adds a new dimension to individual components of competence, as well as to the purpose of achieving them. It enriches the natural study of reality with religion-based cognition (Marek 2014: 49-54). Amongst other methods, the Bible Correspondence Course enables the use of these two methods of cognition.

The purpose of this form of religious education of adults is to popularize the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Its organizers assume that, due to the proposed form, participants will be able to go beyond a casual knowledge of Scripture, which in turn will enable a more efficient use of Scripture in their religious life. This means that the Course helps them to acquire the knowledge necessary to understand the Bible. The completion of the Course does not, however,

eliminate any possible difficulties arising from the reading of Scripture. Moreover, that is not the aim of the Course, since the elimination of all difficulties related to the understanding of the content of faith or the exploration of Scripture is quite impossible. Thinking otherwise would not only put an end to the intellectual development of the adult but would bar the way to their development as well. Moreover, it would deny the expectations and needs of adults interested in religious issues. In their statements, graduates of the Course combine their knowledge acquired through the study of the Bible with their everyday life experiences in a variety of ways.

Young adults relate religious competences, inter alia, to professional and personal tasks. The Course becomes a part of the significant task for a young adult to seek a mentor:

> Children ask a lot of questions. (...) Sometimes I think to myself that the only questions missing here are whether Jesus used a Nokia or a Samsung mobile phone, what the address of St. Peter's webpage is or whether IPN has got Judas' portfolio? There are many such questions and I have to answer them in a serious way, or while smiling, because even people asking those questions smile as well, expecting my embarrassment or shame. In this tragicomic situation of encounters with contemporary youth, good religious knowledge gives me a sense of security and expands the area of teaching opportunities. (Female, 30, higher education, teacher of religion)

> I decided to take part in the Course because I wished to deepen and understand my Christian identity. I was raised in a Christian family, but I do not understand many 'things'. We have small children, a young family, an uncertain job market, turbulent times – they all surely drain people. This course gives you the feeling that you are moving closer to God in all of this. (Male, 34, higher education)

For middle-aged adults, religious education creates the space necessary to answer the question about the meaning of their actions to date:

> The greatest value of the Bible Course was the self-realization that I should not waste my time. (...) My life seemed pretty hard and I'm a little bruised now. It's really hard for me to pull myself together again. What is most painful is the sense of wasted time. (Male, 40, craftsman from a small town near Gliwice)

> Scripture has taught me how to experience love. Nowhere else have I gained such a condensed amount of knowledge about human love and the love of God as well as God's love for us humans. (...) Now, we have a broader understanding of death, although that does not eliminate suffering. As the affirmation of life is so important in the Gospel, we decided to take a ten-year-old, Hania, away from the orphanage. We haven't done that out of pity or the need to find our daughter in Hania. (Female, 44, teacher of mathematics in a junior high school in Sosnowiec)

For graduates of the Course who are in their late adulthood, religious education enables them to appraise their lives:

> The knowledge I have acquired during the Course is in constant use and serves me as a compass on my way through life. I'm still living a pensioner's life but I do a lot things with greater motivation and joy. (Male, 73, secondary technical education)

> I started well because the entire Bible Course I went through gave me a new sense of life and a deeper meaning to my religion. I wish I had learned about this course much earlier because my life might have worked out differently if I had completed the BCC twenty or thirty years ago. (Female, 66, teacher of Polish in Szczecin)

> I have forgiven the person who once attacked me because love for your neighbour is most important, and he did not know what he was doing. (...) If I had behaved and thought differently, what would be the point of my faith and the Bible Course in which I put so much effort and heart? Is it easy for me to forgive? It's hard. However, my religion is based on forgiveness. If Christ forgave those who crucified him, then why would I not forgive in much pettier matters? (Female, 55, with disability pension)

The need for adults' religious education

Observations of everyday life and studies on the presence of an adult in the postmodern world show that humans "seek various forms to satisfy their religious needs, however not necessarily in institutionalized religions and churches" (Mariański 2010: 195). This does not mean a lack of interest in educational activity in organized forms, however. The need for adult Poles to explore religious content in this form is shown by the following statistics (Krysztofik and Walulik 2016: 27–28).

In May 1993 about 50 people started the Bible Correspondence Course. Over the next few months the number of participants went up to 300, and by the end of the year the number of submitted applications was already over 1,300. The largest increase in interest in the Bible Correspondence Course was recorded in the years 1999–2001, which might be the result of the increased interest in religion at the turn of the century. During the 20 years of the presence of the Course in Polish adult religious education, more than 5,500 people who sent the Office their declaration of participation in the Course have taken part in it. In addition, another group of people use its materials: those who individually come into possession of the *Notebooks* by purchasing them in Catholic bookshops. That is clearly shown from the data of the WAM Publishing Company, which is the publisher of the *Notebooks* (more than 7,000 copies have been sold to date). In addition, since 2014, there has been a possibility of implementing the Course in an electronic version (kursbiblijny.deon.pl). Those

figures point both to individuals who actively and systematically do the Course as well as those who can be described as a circle of supporters. Some of them started to work on the Course, actively participated in the work for a certain period of time, and then decided to stop. The statements of the people who came back after a break and are now continuing their work on the Course provide some reasons for this state of affairs:

> My long pause in the Course [approx. 2 years, A.W.] – I guess I started in March 2005 – was caused by quite a complicated family situation. The last months required organizational effort and kept me awake at night. The situation is more or less settled now and I've started to work again. (Female, 58, higher education)

It can also be assumed that some of the causes for the termination of the Course are reasons typical of many participants of distance education. This kind of education has its own specific character and requires that participants have personality traits such as, for example, regularity, perseverance, and not being discouraged by difficulties (Kusztelak 2003: 65–68). At the same time, due to the use of the principles of correspondence education in exploring the content of the Bible and the reduction of all formalities to the bare minimum, interest in the Course, regardless of age, is getting higher and higher.

The youngest person that sent in an application was 17 years old and the oldest was 84. People in their late adulthood make up the smallest group, which in some way goes against the common belief that mainly elderly people are interested in religiosity. The largest participation in the BCC is by people in their mid-adulthood, and that may be associated with developmental tasks typical of this period, such as midlife crises, the phenomenon of the 'empty nest' or giving support to children who are growing-up to become happy and responsible adults (Cross 1981: 124–131; Oleś 2000: 11–13; Miś 2000: 45). The lower participation of young adults in the BCC can be similarly related to the typical developmental tasks of this period, such as one's first professional job, or starting a family. They require, on the part of the adult, not only a time

commitment but above all an emotional and cognitive commitment (Gurba 2011: 302–305).

The Course participants also differ in regard to their educational background. Still, it should be noted that, in each stage of adulthood, the number of participants who have gone through higher education is highest. The statements of the participants of the Course also indicate that raising the level of professional education broadens cognitive horizons and develops the conviction that new knowledge and skills are also needed in other areas of life. The phenomenon that professionally active people take up non-vocational training may indicate their appreciation of the role of education and may be caused by their participation in various forms of professional training. In addition, professional activity can develop other forms of activity, including learning. This relationship in the case of participants of the BCC is confirmed by the small number of unemployed people enrolling on the Course.

The above statistics, obtained from the information included in the declarations of participation, show that the assumptions made by the organizers of the Bible Correspondence Course in relation to the recipients of this form of religious education correspond to the needs of society. The Course's open form (anyone interested in the Bible can become a participant) is increasingly becoming a way to popularize the content of the Bible. It also presents the Bible as a learning source. In addition, it helps us to learn that religiosity and faith can be areas of education.

Religious Distance Education

Since the earliest centuries of Christianity, the religious education of adults has been associated with distant learning. Despite the fact that direct teaching was the most common form of early Christian preaching, the Epistles and their didactic character can be considered as spreading the Good News 'by mail'. The use of forms of correspondence enabled the strengthening of faith and its adequate transmission as well as facilitated the development of the methodology of the transfer of religious content. For example,

St. Augustine, at the request of the deacon of Carthage, Deogratias, sent his guidelines in the form of a treaty arising from the practice of the teaching of the early Church. The origins of distance education as a way of gaining knowledge in the field of religion can also be spotted in the practice of the American Bible Colleges that taught Hebrew in this way (Walulik 2009: 60-61).

The experiences of the participants and alumni of the Bible Correspondence Course point to both the advantages and shortcomings of this form of religious education. Sometimes, however, this form of acquiring knowledge is quite decisive:

> The fact that the course is of a correspondence character was an additional motivation for me. (Male, 21, secondary education)
>
> I work when I want to and when I can, I don't have to spend money on transport, I save time, it's at home, in my own kind of atmosphere, there's good music, I can cook dinner, the family is happy that I stay home... (Female, 50, secondary education)
>
> I'm compelled to make a stress-free, mental effort, and I need it. I decide on my own when to make it. (...) I work very slowly. I am only just about to finish the second notebook. (Female, 65, secondary education)
>
> Materials are sent to me, I do not need to move anywhere, it is good. (Female, 47, university education)

Religious education by correspondence may not meet the expectations of learning in adulthood, however. Even the same people who see a lot of positive sides of that form at the same time consider it as a weakness of the course:

> The correspondence form, the lack of mobilization to fill the notebooks – they're drawbacks. I'm late with postal payments – my fault. Correspondence is just your own work. I have no direct contact with the teacher, what's important for me is the content and the lecturer – their gestures, behaviour, voice, the atmosphere

> of the facility where the lecture takes place and so on. (Female, 50, secondary education)

Other participants suggest in their letters some form of personal contact:

> I think it would be a good idea to meet from time to time. Loneliness isn't good in the long run. The feeling that one is together with a group of people who seek God just through the course is important. How about a 'live' meeting for a few days being organized once a year? (Female, 51, higher education)

The experiences of the participants and alumni of the Bible Correspondence Course in the chosen form of educational activity clearly underline two aspects of adult religious education. The first is related to the pervasive sense of a lack of time and to the difficulty of planning one's time that is dedicated to religious education. The other aspect (perceived by the participants as negative) refers to the inability to ensure the community dimension of catechesis. The question of whether a virtual space for exchanging ideas can meet the need for community reflection on religious content remains open.

Motivation and Effects of Participation in Adult Religious Education

The decision to undertake adult educational activity based on religious sources is a result of many factors, both internal and external. Both categories of motives for learning change in the course of human life. The number of choices of external motives remains at a similar level at each stage of adulthood. On the other hand, the intensity of internal motives decreases with age (however, there is no statistical relationship between age and the type of motives declared). This trend might be caused by the fact that a person entering adulthood is focused on their own

development, their search for intimacy, and their responsibility for their own family. Conversely, community involvement is characteristic of middle-aged adults, and a sense of responsibility for three generations broadens its scope, which goes beyond that of one's closest family. People in their late adulthood engaging in life in a new way discover many personal references in their surrounding reality.

Taking into consideration the fact that the decisions of the participants of the BCC relate to religious education, one can spot links between the choices made and the way of experiencing faith. As noted by James Fowler, many young adults, under internal pressure for even greater autonomy, enter the phase of individual-reflective faith by changing references "from outside" to "inside of themselves" (Fowler 1981: 117–213). Since then, the person becomes subject to their inner voice and requirements. Faith experienced in this form helps to assess one's own world of values and one's own affiliations. It is ruled by the need for truth and integrity. Due to the dominance of critical and rational thinking, this form of walking in the faith is called "the phase of self-reference" or "the period of broken symbols" (Giguère 1997: 60–61).

The acquisition of religious knowledge in the course of educational processes is closely connected with getting to know the faith, and that consists of providing humans with the support necessary for them to be able to be open to the mystery of God and His transcendent presence. Getting to know the faith is to help one to learn how to interpret one's life through a Christian way of looking at its history, to strengthen one's life by faith and to provide grounds for it. It can therefore be concluded that participation in the Bible Correspondence Course is designed to meet the cognitive and spiritual needs of adults. These needs fill a person with a creative anxiety related to the search for both intellectual and transcendent values. They express one's need to discover the meaning of life and existence (Makselon 1995: 260). They are created, but only partially, by external factors that are mainly of a personal nature. This kind of relationship shows that adults are into the search for the forms of educational support that will not only satisfy their intellectual curiosity, but first and foremost will be an inspiration to cope with the developmental tasks of adulthood.

By analysing the motives for participation in the BCC, one can see that this form of adult education is a significant event for many people and has become a unique part of their lives. In consequence, its results relate to many areas and dimensions of human existence. The graduates and participants of the BCC, when asked to describe the relationship between their lives and a systematic study of the Bible based on course materials, indicate the multiple effects that their participation in the BCC has had on their lives. They evaluate, in a way, how the contents of the Bible help them to shape their everyday lives:

> Participation in the Correspondence Course is a meeting with the Bible. For me, it has become a book for every day, for every moment. The Bible has opened me up to the wealth of words, wise words, the Words of God. I am astounded by its messages which are so up-todate for modern man. (Female, 74, lawyer, capital of a voivodeship)

The graduates of the BCC see the effects of religious education in primarily three areas: personal, intellectual and spiritual development (Walulik 2012: 243–321). The authors of the narratives cited above concluded that they had experienced many changes in relation to themselves that were the results of studying the Bible. They show dynamism in the perception and understanding of oneself and of the surrounding world. The dynamism which was spotted by the participants and which is associated with the formation of their own personality through the study of the Bible also expresses itself in their discovery of valuable traits and mental dispositions. The perception of reality presented by the BCC participants (although it might give the impression of being idyllic) is neither naive nor futuristic, but full of the hope that love and respect for the highest values can prevail in the world, provided that there is a bit of good will on the part of an adult. In order to form such a world, involvement on the part of the believer is needed. He or she must accept that their faith is dynamic and subject to continuous maturation (Fowler 1984: 128–147). Both the acquired religious knowledge and a change in existing attitudes, and even shaping them in new ways, may serve that purpose.

The effects noted by the respondents also indicate that their experiences connected with the course changed their attitudes towards other people. Some effects show that the level of their relationships with loved ones has been raised. Others refer to their relationships with other people, regardless of existing relations. The BCC participants are aware that the pace of change taking place in postmodernity calls them to take a position on it. For people in late adulthood, this kind of experience may be difficult and can cause defensive and escape reactions, as well as offensive reactions. Thus, it can be concluded that religious education based on Christian sources aids the activities of individuals and groups, aimed at forming and strengthening in an adult a mature attitude towards themselves and towards others in vast spheres of life.

Conclusion

In the adult who has knowledge in many areas of their professional and social life, a need to get to know what he or she believes in is born. The statements of the participants of the Bible Correspondence Course point to the need for religious competences among adults. They also show the need for a diverse offering of adult religious education where the educational needs of adult learners and new ways to satisfy them must be taken into consideration. It is hoped that such a broad demand for religious education in the perspective of the lifelong learning of adults, as declared by the participants of the Bible Correspondence Course, leaves religious education with new perspectives for practice and theoretical reflection.

When analyzing the arguments of the graduates concerning their reasons for participating in the Course, certain expectations of and suggestions for the organizers of adult education can be spotted. They vary depending on people's ages, and in some sense they echo the developmental tasks for various stages of adulthood. Among young adults, the search for a mentor is expected. Middle-aged adults expect that their need to get involved in a social life will be noticed and utilized, and that their participation in education will enable more mature forms of it. People in their

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late adulthood, trying to cope with the new situation of their retirement, are willing to offer their time, knowledge and skills in various forms of educational and charitable activities.

Fig. 1. Twenty years of the Bible Correspondence Course in Poland

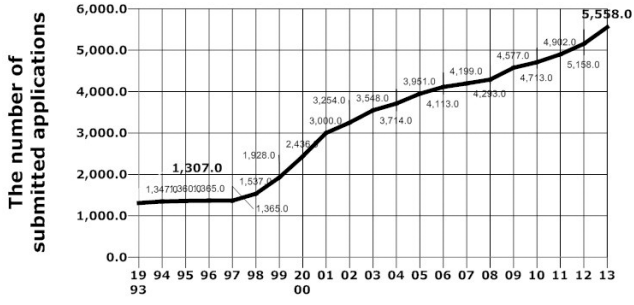


Fig. 2. Religious education in various stages of adulthood

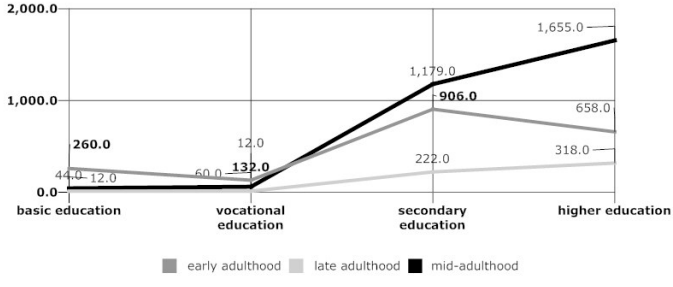
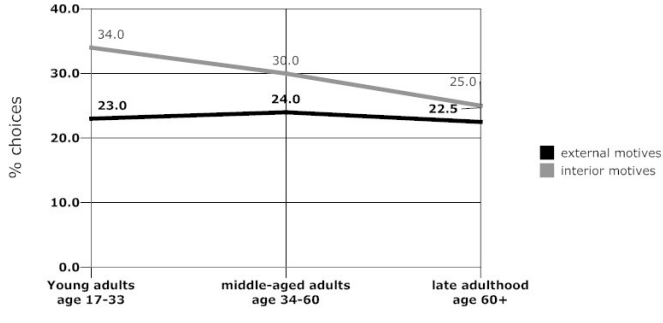


Fig. 3. Motivation in the Stages of Adulthood



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Hospice Voluntary Service as an Educational Environment

Abstract: Hospice volunteering is a special kind of voluntary service. According to research, the average age of hospice volunteers is higher that the average age of volunteers in other types of voluntary services (Przewłocka, 2011; Seredyńska, 2018). However, this does not mean that there are no young persons in hospices, especially when one remembers that contact with the sick and dying allows people to realize the most important things in life and to gain a more realistic view of their limitations. So, it can be said that the environment of hospice voluntary service offers valuable upbringing and educational opportunities. The paper is based on the analysis of subject literature and address several upbringing and educational aspects connected with the environment of hospice voluntary service. These aspects include the analysis of hospice volunteering which educates for accepting: the central position of God in human life, death as an integral part of life, weaknesses and limitations in the maturing process, and the attitude of 'imagination of mercy' towards the sick and dying. Other educational and upbringing environments do not confront a person with these aspects of life to such an extent.

Keywords: hospice voluntary service, educational environment, volunteer

In Poland, voluntary services are defined by the Act on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work (*Ustawa o działalności pożytku publicznego i o wolontariacie*), which describes a volunteer as "a natural person who provides

services voluntarily and without remuneration, under the provisions hereof" (Act of April 24, 2003 on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work, Art. 96, Item 873, as amended). According to this Act, a volunteer must "be duly qualified and conform to all requirements appropriate for the type and scope of services provided, whenever separate legal provisions provide for the obligation to have such qualifications and to fulfil relevant conditions". He "provides services within the extent, in the manner and within the time-frame defined in an agreement signed with the beneficiary". Jadwiga Przewłocka, referring to the Act, wrote that "a volunteer is a natural person who voluntarily and without remuneration provides services for non-governmental organizations, church (religious) organizations, social cooperatives, and various institutions within public administration" (Przewłocka 2011: 7). Both definitions emphasize two features of voluntary service: the lack of remuneration and its voluntary aspect. Marta Gumkowska added another dimension in her definition of voluntary service, which extends it beyond purely friendly relations: "voluntary service is unpaid, voluntary and conscious service to other people, extending beyond ties that bond a person with his family, acquaintances and friends" (Gumkowska 2005: 3). This definition also emphasizes the aspect connected with the conscious service offered to others. Ewa Bodek, who was a coordinator of a team of volunteers at the St. Lazarus Hospice in Krakow, underlines the selflessness of voluntary work, which goes beyond the lack of remuneration and its voluntary nature (Bodek 2009), but is closely linked with the intentions and motivations with which volunteers embark on their service. Bodek believes that such motivations, which are purified in contact with the sick and dying, are very important.

The Board of Directors of the Polish Hospice Forum (Zarząd Forum Hospicjów Polskich) defined the tasks of hospice volunteer services in the following way: "hospice voluntary services provide comprehensive support to a terminally ill person in order to enable him to lead a dignified life until the moment of natural death. Volunteers also provide support to families during a painful period when a family member is dying and during a bereavement period. A volunteer is a part of a team of people who take care of a sick person and his family. Volunteering is an

integral part of hospice and palliative care" (Zarząd Forum Hospicjów Polskich 2009: 12).

St. Christopher's Hospice was the first hospice in the world based on the rules of palliative medicine. It was opened in 1967 in London by Cicely Saunders – a nurse, social worker and doctor (Górecki 2000; Krakowiak 2007; Du Boulay and Rankin 2009). At present, after over 30 years of the hospice movement, there are about 4,000 hospice and palliative centres, which employ thousands of volunteers and regular workers (Krakowiak, Janowicz and Stolarczyk 2015), and which all share the same principles. According to Saunders, the main task of a hospice centre is to alleviate broadly understood pain, whether physical, mental, social or spiritual (Saunders 1980). A hospice is a part of a 'care system', which complements a 'cure system', the most important task of which is to provide a sick person with physical and mental comfort. This comfort requires the company of a whole team of volunteers, alongside family and friends (Smolak 2009). The principle of accompaniment is one of the most important principles of the hospice, and it also constitutes the basis for the educational and upbringing role of the hospice environment, which will be discussed below.

Religious education in voluntary hospice service

As stated by Lalak and Pilch, following Radlińska, an environment is a certain set of conditions in which a person stays (Lalak and Pilch 1999) and which shapes their personality and influences them. When this influence is intentional, it becomes part of the upbringing process. The hospice environment purposefully attempts to influence hospice volunteers, and that is why care of the sick is an educational area of the hospice environment. Volunteers are educated, firstly, to respect patients' agency and, secondly, to exercise self-control (Kaniok 2005). A volunteer is obliged to engage in a continuous self-reflection of his internal world view and external behaviours in order to be always guided by patients' welfare and a respect for their dignity. What is more, the hospice

environment also exerts an impact on the local environment through the principle of care offered to the patient's family. Additionally, the principle of gaining supporters of the idea of a hospice in the environment is connected with educational activities in this environment, conducted through, for example, Internet websites, lectures or media campaigns (Kalinowski 2008). Through its interactions with the local environment, the hospice environment is guided by a principle of tolerance based on Christian love (Szot 2008), which means that hospices offer their services to everyone, regardless of their beliefs or world view. Volunteers are, of course, brought up in this spirit. The hospice environment is particularly well-suited to taking an active part in religious education (Orłowska 2012). Religious education is primarily aimed at shaping attitudes, moral and religious norms, and a continuous process of bettering oneself as a human being. Moral and religious values are the key ones in religious education, and the most important of them are the values of human life and human dignity. The hospice environment educates these values and moves away from "describing the support it provides as 'accompanying the sick' towards other descriptions, e.g.: 'being with the sick', which entails openness and participation in the emotions experienced by a dying person, 'a servant of accompanying', which entails a conscious and caring presence, 'a servant of dialogue', which denotes an internal predisposition for proper communication (gestures, listening and talking) with a dying person" (Kalinowski 2008: 302). That is why, as far as religious education is concerned, the hospice environment, first of all, teaches appropriate attitudes towards a person in general, and towards a sick person in particular. However, in order to shape this attitude, the hospice environment educates volunteers in a proper attitude towards themselves, their own weaknesses and their own limitations, showing that God is the source of everything and that He gives strength to accept oneself and others in the Christian spirit.

Methodology

The main research question of this study was: What is the educational and upbringing role of the hospice environment? Three detailed questions implied by the context of the main research question were then posed:

- How does the philosophy of hospice care educate volunteers to perceive the position of death and the centrality of God in human life?
- How does a hospice educate the perception of one's own limitations as a hospice volunteer?
- What attitude towards the sick and dying is shaped by hospice volunteer service?

The attitudes of selected hospice founders towards death, God, their own limitations and the sick and dying were selected as the variables of the study. These attitudes were investigated through an analysis of the subject literature containing the works of Cicely Saunders, Eugeniusz Dutkiewicz, Jacek Łuczak, and Jolanta Stokłosa, the founders of hospices in Poland and in London. The literature analysis was complemented by an analysis of an interview conducted in 2016 by the author of the paper with Ewa Bodek, the first and a long-term coordinator of a team of volunteers at the St. Lazarus Hospice in Krakow. The interview focused on the founders of the St. Lazarus Hospice in Krakow and St. Christopher's Hospice in London.

Death as a part of life and God as the centre

One of the principles of the philosophy of hospice care is expressed by the statement that death is an indispensable part of human life. Cicely Saunders talked about this aspect during one of her visits to Poland: "we want to learn how to treat death as an indispensable part or a consequence

of life" (Saunders 1980: 290). This statement is important in upbringing because, if we accept that death is a part of human life, students should be taught about it. We should treat it normally and introduce young people, in a way that is appropriate to their age, to care of the sick and dying. This difficult task becomes easier if we bear in mind that God is the centre of life and that He is a reference point for life and death, which is something that hospices remind us of. According to the founder of the hospice in Gdańsk, Eugeniusz Dutkiewicz, the goal of hospice care is to "accompany a dying person in his journey towards the threshold of eternity" (Dutkiewicz 1997: 111), and the "answers to questions regarding the philosophy of hospice care will refer not to principles and rules but to your own personal answers and motivation – why you are a hospice doctor or nurse and treat patients in a palliative or hospice institution and not somewhere else. And this is a question linked with your vocation" (Dutkiewicz 1997: 119). This means that hospice service in its basic sense is not only voluntary service in a legal sense, but is also a response to God's call. Ewa Bodek quoted the words uttered by Father Józef Gorzelany, the founder of the St. Lazarus Hospice in Krakow, in the new hospice building: "The host is in the centre. He explained it standing with his hands spread out: here we pray and receive power and strength – and he pointed at the chapel – and there we go to the wards to serve with these hands. To share what we have received here" (Bodek 2016). Bodek also talked about the first chaplain of St. Christopher's Hospice in London, who "began every day with a prayer, because they began work at 7 in the morning. And again it was not devotional prolongation. Everyone who wanted to pray could come and do it 15 minutes before work" (Bodek, 2016). If we accept that death is a part of the life that has been offered to us by God, human weaknesses and limitations no longer appear as our enemies but as challenges.

Accepting one's own limitations

Success has become a priority in the contemporary world, and limitations and weaknesses are treated as its enemies. However, the founder

of the first hospice in the world treated personal weakness as an opportunity to gain better understanding and insight. She said: "we need such people – people who can thoroughly understand a person who suffers because they have suffered themselves" (Saunders 1980: 288). Ewa Bodek commented on Cicely Saunders's attitude towards her own weakness: "To come to a foreign country, to take a young girl who is a volunteer and who knows a language to help me in the toilet. Yes, that was Cicely. And that is why she never talked to people in a condescending way. Because she had already been in a wheelchair for a year" (Bodek 2016). This attitude has guided the philosophy of hospice care until today. Numerous volunteers are disabled to various extents, and thanks to this quality they can understand the sick better. They understand that hospice service is not about the efficiency of their activities but about accompanying another human being. As Bodek said: "And these elderly persons who still attend volunteer meetings today – it might seem no one knows what they are there for because they are over seventy and not very firm and fit for work. They are there because they care. And even if they cannot dress a wound, or if their hands shake and they have to be very careful when they are serving tea or food because of their old age, they come because they know, they remember Marysia by their bedside. And they know how important it is. To be." (Bodek 2016). By Marysia, she was referring to one of the doctors working at the St. Lazarus Hospice, Maria Leńczyk, who supervised the team of volunteers.

The hospice environment educates not only an acceptance of one's physical limitations but also other kinds of flaws and weaknesses. The founder of the St. Lazarus Hospice had a personal experience connected with them: he used to collaborate with the communist government and sent them reports on Cardinal Karol Wojtyła. His transformation was mentioned by Bodek when she described the meeting between him and the future Pope. Wojtyła wanted Father Józef Gorzelany to build a new church (Arka Pana Church in Nowa Huta), but he said: *But I am reporting on you*. The Cardinal replied: *Good. You know the right people, you will build the church*. Wojtyła accepted his apologies, forgave him and gave him a church to build. And Gorzelany repented (Bodek, 2016). Something good

was built on weakness and limitation, and this truth can be transformational for volunteers in hospices. A person who has accepted the fact that he is to some extent limited and restricted, that he is weak and fragile, can serve the sick because, thanks to this attitude towards himself, he will not hurt others who are also weak and fragile at the end of their lives.

Attitudes towards illness and weakness

The hospice environment is primarily an environment that teaches attitudes towards the sick and dying. As Cicely Saunders said, "a dying person should never experience the feeling of loneliness, isolation or total dependence on people who are indifferent" (Saunders 1980: 285). She also emphasized that "apart from painkillers, we need to have good people in hospices, people who will always find time for listening to others patiently, who can serve tactfully, with total engagement and calmly at the same time" (Saunders 1980: 287). She also said, contradicting a common belief about hierarchies in hospitals, that "in our hierarchy patients come first, then nurses, and finally, at the very end, doctors. The sick are the most important also because it is them who give the most of themselves, and we use it, take advantage of it, we learn from them. In order to understand that it is not a cliché but the truth, one needs experience, one needs to work in a hospice, not only hear or read about it" (Saunders 1980: 288). In order to make it happen, the forerunner of the hospice movement worldwide wanted to create the right environment at St. Christopher's Hospice and wrote – as quoted by her biographers – that:

> We have to pay attention to the tiniest details – the right arrangement of beds, the right atmosphere in the common room, which should be conducive to the sense of freedom and the feeling of beauty. I am against solemnity. I believe that we must create a place in which one can feel at home. We must try to understand how we can improve patients' well-being. We must understand the meaning of serious disease and parting. We must learn peace

> ourselves in order to be able to offer peace and safety to patients. Thanks to this, they will find real safety in God. (Du Boulay and Rankin 2009: 142).

Every patient in St. Christopher's Hospice was treated with enormous sensitivity. Saunders described it in this way: "when someone is dying in our hospice, we never let him alone. There is a comfortable armchair by every bed. If this person has no family, if he is alone, one of us always accompanies him, if only to hold his hand and prevent him from feeling lonely" (Saunders 1980: 290). This aspect was commented on by Jacek Łuczak, the Polish founder of palliative and hospice medicine: "every suffering, terminally ill patient requires comprehensive and all-embracing care, which includes alleviating pain and other troublesome symptoms and providing psycho-social and spiritual support" (Łuczak 1997: 15). He also wrote that:

> Palliative care is aimed at alleviating pain and other troublesome symptoms, at relieving suffering and at increasing the meaning of a fleeting life. Palliative care is directed at fulfilling psychosocial and spiritual needs, allowing the sick to spend the last period of their life with dignity – possibly as long as possible with the family, whose members should be offered support during the sickness and later during the bereavement period. Constant care should be provided both at home and in a hospice and in a hospital, where it should be aided by a supportive team of palliative carers. Palliative care means respect for life and opposition to euthanasia. By accepting death as a natural part of life, it opposes futile medical care aimed at prolonging life at all costs. (Łuczak 1996: 28–29).

The above considerations were summed up by Eugeniusz Dutkiewicz, who wrote that "time is the key to the philosophy of hospice care if it is to be infused with hospitality of the heart" (Dutkiewicz 1997: 119). According to Teresa Weber, a doctor and a volunteer at the St. Lazarus

Hospice, this means that "when a conversation is no longer possible, members of the team taking care of a given patient should sit by his bed and hold his hand – sometimes a helping hand means more that medicines" (Weber 2001: 40), because "patience is another quality team members need" (Weber 2001: 40). As Dr. Weber wrote, "people taking care of a patient should be available all the time, day and night, regardless of the hour, both to the patient and to his family" (Weber 2001: 41).

The hospice atmosphere can be described using the words uttered by Jolanta Stokłosa, the President of the St. Lazarus Hospice in Krakow:

> St. Lazarus Home-Hospice, run by St. Lazarus Hospice, the Society of Friends to People in Disease [Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Chorych "Hospicjum im. św. Łazarza"], is one of the places where we try to restore an attitude of effective sympathy for a person who struggles with his suffering alone, with the thoughts of leaving his family, and with existential questions regarding the meaning of life, illness and death. But a hospice also means a team of people who try to satisfy the needs of terminally sick persons by accompanying them in passing away, who try to help them to carry the burden of passing away and to give hope. Hospice care also embraces the patients' family, who require adequate support. (Stokłosa 2001: 88).

Educating such an attitude in voluntary service is possible thanks to the uncompromising and transparent attitudes of the hospice's founders. One of them, Maria Leńczyk, a doctor from the St. Lazarus Hospice in Krakow, was described by Ewa Bodek in her interview with the following words: "It was not about her academic achievements, she was like this, she had been brought up this way – that when she talked to volunteers about how they should behave, it was the ethics of service, it was first eye contact, it was delicacy in the treatment. Not necessarily questions, but sending signals, which were not meant to 'catch' the person but to discover what he needs from me. And only then – giving" (Bodek 2016). When she described the doctors who created this first hospice in Poland – Jan

Deszcz, Maria Leńczyk, Janina Kujawska, Teresa Weber, Ewa Drozdowska and others – Bodek concluded that their most important feature was "a human attitude. Something that is not taught to future doctors. Yes, this interpersonal communication between a doctor and a patient. I saw it because I drove them to patients and I witnessed these conversations. When they entered, they sat as close to the family as possible. And sometimes it was unpleasant due to aesthetic reasons, the smells, the appearance, sometimes the flats were dirty. And they looked at them with sympathy" (Bodek 2016).

According to Bodek, a hospice stands for the education of the right attitudes towards fellow human beings in general, and towards a sick person in particular. She underlined "such thinking. Not rational planning – 'I have an hour to spare in a week'. No, love of one's neighbour" (Bodek 2016). And it is probably this love, this attentiveness, and this imagination that lie at the core of the educational role of the environment of hospice volunteer service.

Conclusions

At present, voluntary service is often a social activity based on noisy, conspicuous advertising, which has contributed to the increasing interest in this kind of activity. Hospice voluntary service is an exception. It requires silence, patience, permanence and agreement for the abandonment of activity. Human activity must cease in the face of death. Accompanying a dying person is a kind of agreement to the mystery that a person has no access to. Death is also a collision with human limitations and human weaknesses. That is why it seems that hospice volunteer services occupy a special position among educational environments. It allows one to pause in the world, which is running ahead faster and faster, and to reflect on the meaning of this race. Summing up, there are numerous upbringing and educational aspects of the hospice environment, and the present paper has focused on three of them: educating perceiving death as a part of life and placing God in the centre, educating accepting one's

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limitations, and educating the right attitudes towards the sick and dying. These three aspects have been chosen as they are the ones of particular importance nowadays, and they differentiate the hospice environment from other educational and upbringing environments.

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International Mindedness in Education: An Approach to Literature

Abstract: In this paper we will explain what international mindedness is, why we should teach it and how. International mindedness could be understood as an interest in problems that require the efforts of different people and nations in order to be successfully resolved. As educators, we not only want our students to be aware of global issues, but to actually care about them. If they are the ones who will lead the next generations as scientists, politicians, or economists, they are the ones who can contribute to the end of certain practices, such as student drop out or global warming. So, as teachers, we have to give them the necessary skills, abilities and knowledge to help them deal with personal and global issues that will contribute to a more tolerant and peaceful world.

Keywords: mindedness, intercultural understanding

The term 'international mindedness' is not new, although it did only start to be used in the field of education not long ago. The rise of this term in education is probably due to the appearance of more international schools in recent years.

Thomas (1996, in James 2005) explains the reason for the rise in international education as a way to "provide lasting solutions to the major problems facing world society". International education was meant to promote "world peace through the development of better world citizens" (Mattern 1991; IBO 1996; Paris 2003; UWC 2005, in James 2005), thereby

enhancing values such as tolerance, respect and cooperation (Mayor, in Peel 1998; McKenzie 1998; Norberg 2000; Hansen 2002; Lam and Selmer 2004, in James 2005). This is due to the fact that we live in a rapidly changing world where the current socio-political climate and the ongoing economic crises have created tensions in individuals of many different societies across the world. The demotivation of our students in class, along with the rise of new technologies, the economic crisis and globalization, has caused a change in our mindsets and in the way we see education today. It is because of this that many teachers and their institutions are trying to develop a local and global consciousness – they are trying to make their students 'globally aware', that is to say, internationally minded people (Singh and Qi 2013: 1). There is a belief that international education will provide "more meaningful learning for their students, given the focus on providing them with the linguistic tools and intercultural understandings to pursue global engagements" (Singh and Qi 2013: 2). But what does it actually *mean* to be internationally minded?

In order to clarify the term, we can turn to Ian Hill (2000), deputy director of the IBO in Geneva, who believes that "an internationally minded person is someone who understands that people of different backgrounds hold different views, examines why they hold them and respects other points of view without necessarily accepting them" (quoted in Cause 2011: 36). Therefore, international mindedness could be defined as "an attitude of openness to, and curiosity about, the world and different cultures" (IBO 2015: 6). Hence, we could say that international mindedness suggests "an interest in problems and issues which require the efforts of multiple nations in order to be successfully resolved (global engagement). This aspect adds a 'global issues awareness' to IM" (Hreha 2012: 3). So, according to Hreha, one conclusion that could be drawn is that international mindedness "involves looking at other nations from a predominantly economic perspective (...) A focus of this sort leads to IM becoming a preparation of young people for successful competition with others in different regions of the world" (Hreha 2012: 3).

A different idea of international mindedness is the one suggested by the IBO, which defines international mindedness as an aim "to develop

inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect" (IBO 2015).

If we take a closer look at the term 'intercultural understanding', we can understand that the term implies more than just 'being familiar or acquainted with'. According to Geller, international educators should focus on "issues and problems that are trans-cultural as well as trans-national" (2002, quoted in James 2005: 325). Norberg (2000) claims that cultural awareness is important for all teachers, since international education "seeks to build bridges between countries and works consciously to reduce tensions and misunderstandings across nations" (Norberg 1998: 244, quoted in James 2005: 325). Therefore, being 'internationally minded' was defined by the IBO as people "gaining awareness of cultures other than their own", that is, "appreciating cultures and attitudes other than one's own, and being tolerant and able to communicate with others on a range of topics about which students have already formed considered opinions" (Hill 2007).

So, learning about 'other cultures' does not mean having a superficial idea of a specific festivity. For instance, I may know that Irish people celebrate St. Patrick's Day dressed in green and that they have a memorable parade. But this does not necessarily mean that I am familiar with their tradition, why they do it, how they do it and the people's feelings towards it. So, if we wrongly assume that by teaching students a little about a country's flag and food we are teaching international mindedness, then students will only have a superficial grasp of the real understanding of other cultures.

Teaching our students 'understanding' means much more than just that. It implies pedagogical, curricular and assessment planning wherein we not only aim to acquaint our students with other values, beliefs, traditions and customs but also give them the opportunity to "explore the grounds upon which people hold them, their meaning for the people involved, and how they are similar to, and different from, comparable beliefs in our own cultures" (Hreha 2012: 4). Now, understanding it does not necessarily mean *agreeing* with it. The aim is to understand other people's

beliefs and practices before actually judging them. In this way, students can understand that "other people, with their differences, can also be right" (IBO 2015).

But we cannot understand international mindedness without mentioning the IB learner profile attributes – inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced and reflective – since these 10 attributes of the IB learner profile are associated with the three key concepts of international mindedness, which are global engagement, multilingualism and intercultural understanding (Singh and Qi 2013). Multilingualism is a key point, since it encourages students to be 'communicators', that is, to learn to communicate in a variety of ways and in more than one language, because this is the way to develop intercultural understanding. "Intercultural understanding involves recognizing and reflecting on one's own perspective, as well as the perspective of others" (IBO 2015: 6). The IB achieves this by "fostering learning how to appreciate critically many beliefs, values, experiences and ways of knowing" (IBO 2015: 6). Global engagement is closely related to the explorations of global and local issues, including appropriate aspects of the environment, development, conflicts, rights, cooperation and governance.

So international mindedness and culture can be taught through our subjects, for instance, language and literature. Students learn a language, such as English, and also the literature associated with it; these are key elements in developing international mindedness. We can choose from a wide range of works that can pave the way to teaching intercultural understanding. We can work through problem-based learning or project-based learning, through GRASPS[1] tasks, see how our students feel about that culture, reflect on it, and see how they act as a result of such understanding. So, as teachers, we are not only pursuing 'understanding', but 'caring' about it. Through *caring*, we want our students to contribute, in the ways that they can, to the ending of global issues such as global warming.

[1] GRASPS stands for goal, role, audience, situation, purpose and standards.

How can we teach international mindedness through literature?

It is said that learning becomes meaningful when it is experiential and when it is connected to the student in some way, whether it be personally, locally, nationally, internationally or globally. According to Haywood (2007: 86-87), schools that hold international mindedness "as one of its professed outcomes must ensure that ... the learning experience provides for all these areas" – curiosity and interest in the world around us, open attitudes towards other ways of life and tolerance as regards other cultures and their belief systems, knowledge and understanding of the earth as a common entity of value to everyone, a recognition of the interconnectedness of human affairs, and human values that combine respect for other ways of life. In line with the author, "it may … be possible to draw up content, skills and attitudes that are genuinely universal in these five areas" (Haywood 2007: 87).

If we focus on the study of language and literature, students "will develop an understanding of how language works to create meanings in a culture" (IBO 2014: 4). It also "contributes to a global perspective, thereby promoting an insight into, and understanding of, the different ways in which cultures influence and shape the experiences of life common to all humanity" (IBO 2014: 5).

Below are two practical examples of activities that can be done in a literature class to foster international mindedness.

1. *A Christmas Carol*, by Charles Dickens

This novel, written by Charles Dickens and published in 1843, is probably one of Dickens' most popular novels. It tells the story of a man called Scrooge who is greedy and selfish at the beginning of the story, but who changes the way he sees life after a ghostly night. It is a story of self-redemption, compassion and forgiveness, and therefore ideal to work on in class with students during the first semester due to its proximity to Christmas and the fact it has interesting attributes to work on in class, such as being caring and principled.

The main topic of the story is compassion and forgiveness. For this reason, it is important to encourage discussion and reflection. I recommend

that the story is read in class in order to be able to discuss aspects such as workhouses in Victorian times, etc. After reading the story, the class can start with the following question: How can your attitude and personality affect your own personal and cultural development? Students can talk about their own experiences and their own points of view. They can also compare them to the story.

The class can then move on to asking more questions, such as: How does the main character's attitude affect himself and his relationship with others? Students can be asked to identify moments in the novel that reflect the character's attitude of selfishness, for instance, and to identify how the characters react to Scrooge's attitude.

After reading the story and having a class discussion, it is important to 'connect' students not only to their personal life but also to the story. Therefore, students could attend a soup kitchen where they will be able to help people in need and experience the virtue of generosity, something that the main character of the novel lacks. The visit to the soup kitchen would be connected to the question: How does helping others contribute to your personal and cultural development? During the visit, students would be able to reflect on the importance of community service.

However, I believe that 'experiential' activities must go hand in hand with self-reflection. Therefore, students will also do a GRASPS task. The goal of this activity is to have students reflect on their feelings and relate them to the main character of the story, explaining why they think community service is essential to develop good personality characteristics. To do so, they could be asked to write a reflection paper to their local newspaper, trying to convince the editor-in-chief to publish their reflection paper during the Christmas break to make people aware of the importance of community service. The standards for success should be determined by the teacher, but they could include the following: 1) write a reflection paper explaining why you think community service is essential to develop good personality characteristics; 2) make sure your writing is clear and well-structured; and 3) include a comparison with the main character of the story, Scrooge.

Through these activities, international mindedness is being promoted. Students learn to be more culturally aware if they are involved in community service. They are also developing personal character traits such as being caring, principled and reflective. Through the reflection paper, students are not only thinking about the importance of community service, they are also encouraging others to think about it. Through the novel, we can teach our students about the importance of forgiveness and an understanding of others.

2. *Oliver Twist*, by Charles Dickens

Oliver Twist was the second novel written by Charles Dickens. It was first published in monthly instalments that began in 1837 and ended in 1839. The novel reflects Victorian England and the Poor Laws, Victorian workhouses and the way in which impoverished people lived (Lacarte 2016).

Oliver Twist is a story of resilience and self-improvement. Although resilience is not one of the IB learner attributes, it is one of the values that students have to work on and try to develop. In this rapidly changing world, we have to help our students to be resilient, open-minded and able to think independently.

Through this story, students will get to understand how people lived in Victorian times. They will be able to learn about the workhouses and the differences between social classes that existed at the time. The teacher can start by asking the following question: How were people in need helped during Victorian times? Students can discuss the question in class, and they can watch documentaries about workhouses in order to have a better idea of what they were like. The novel clearly describes what life was like at the time, so students can establish a comparison between then and now.

To do so, students could be asked to find out how people in need are helped today. The teacher can ask them to think of the many ways in which their government helps people. For instance, this may be by providing a minimum guaranteed income, scholarships, soup kitchens, etc. Students could establish a comparison between the ways in which

people were helped in the book and the ways in which people are helped today.

As part of the more experiential activity, students could be asked to create a personal project answering the following question: How can we contribute to ending poverty in our community? Students would then have to do research and suggest ways in which they could contribute to ending poverty in their community. These kinds of activities are not only related to their personal life, but also develop international mindedness. Older students could be asked to find ways to contribute to ending world hunger.

Through these class activities and/or projects, we engage students in their learning process. When they are able to construct their own learning, it then becomes more meaningful to them and, therefore, more interesting.

How else can we promote international mindedness in school?

Haywood claims that "international learning outcomes must be identified just as precisely as those we set for mathematics, science, humanities or other components of the traditional curriculum. (...) [W]e really need to include it as a 'formal' learning area ... accompanied by assessment strategies and approaches to teaching and learning" (2007: 88).

As we have seen in the practical examples, it is possible to include international mindedness in subjects such as literature. However, it may not always be possible to teach international mindedness in the classroom or through our subjects. According to Cause (2009), the data collected during her investigation suggest that it is quite difficult to expose students to international mindedness when teaching topics such as 'the human body', since it is already quite a universal topic. Since the class curriculum is not enough to teach international mindedness, the school community has to commit to it.

One good way of promoting international mindedness within the school community is to organize international tournaments with schools

from other countries. Students would have an opportunity to practice the target language, meet people from different cultures and practice sports. It is certainly a friendly way to get immersed in other cultures and traditions, which will not only enrich their learning experience but will also make them more open-minded. Another way of fostering international mindedness is through community service. By helping others, students become aware of the problems that some people may have within their community, and it will help them become more empathic and caring. Other activities can include celebrating an international festivity in their school. Learning about the country, its traditions and customs and having the chance to experience the festivity can help them understand other cultures and, therefore, other people. Trips are also a good way of promoting international mindedness, because students can experience the culture of the place *in situ*.

Conclusion

Sampatkumar (2007) argues that the role of today's education is to promote positive attitudes in children and teenagers in order to build a future in which diversity will be an asset and interdependence will be the pillar upon which this society is supported. It is our responsibility as teachers to teach our students to overcome difficulties without resorting to violence and to promote peace among individuals and communities. As teachers, we need to create an environment where everyone is respected and valued. We are the ones who should be creating bridges between the different cultures that co-exist in the school community. "Right attitudes are vital to enable present and future generations to cope with the complexities of life fuelled by diversity and globalization" (Sampatkumar 2007: 75).

We need to engage our students in being caring and understanding. We need to be aware of cultural diversity and take advantage of it in our classes. We can create an 'international day' in class in which students present their countries of origin, and organize activities to explore the different cultures and traditions.

By actively involving our students in the different aspects of the cultures of other nations, we are creating an interest that requires cognitive development but also an affective dimension. In doing so, students are also developing appropriate personal attributes such as being caring and principled, as we help them to develop an understanding and cooperation between the students and the community they live in. We must create in our students the capacity "to appreciate the world in which they live, beyond their own city, province or country, and contribute to a better and more peaceful world" (IBO 2015).

As Munro says, "we live in an increasingly internationalizing world. The need to understand international learning is not restricted to teachers in international schools. Our students and our cultures experience information that is increasingly international in its sources and dispositions" (Munro 2007: 125).

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Posibles invitaciones para la formación ética de los maestros [Suggestions Concerning Teachers' Moral Education]

Abstract: La formación ética de los maestros es una necesidad ineludible. No es que se trate de seguir unas indicaciones que nos hablan de una formación universitaria adaptada al siglo XXI, tampoco es que el nuevo modelo educativo exija tal cosa. No se trata de nada de eso. De lo que se trata es de que nuestros maestros y maestras sean aquellos artistas de la educación que tanto necesitamos y deseamos. Este trabajo trata de recuperar esta necesidad y condición del ser del excelente maestro, y aporta algunas posibles vías de tratamiento para que los maestros demuestren altura ética, y por lo tanto, para que el encuentro educativo se convierta en algo que vale la pena ser vivido.

Palabras clave: ética, formación del profesorado, formación universitaria, espacio europeo de educación superior

Abstract: The ethical education of teachers is an inescapable necessity. It is not that we are trying to follow some directives regarding university education adapted to the 21st century, nor is it that the new educational model demands it. The point is that we need and want our teachers to become the artists of education. This paper aims to highlight this need as well as the criteria of teacher excellence. It also gives some suggestions regarding the training of prospective teachers, which might help them acquire moral virtue, so that their educational encounters could prove worthwhile.

Keywords: ethics, teacher training, university education, European Higher Education Area

1. Introducción

En el frontón que daba entrada a la Academia platónica había escrita una frase: "Que no entre aquí quien no sepa geometría". Por lo visto, el gran discípulo de Sócrates tenía claro que para empezar a filosofar con ciertas garantías, antes había que conocer otras cosas, hoy diríamos disponer de conocimientos previos. Razonar, discurrir, meditar y cavilar no se puede llevar a cabo de cualquier manera, eso es, como Dios dé a entender a cada uno. No es esta una mera anécdota, sino el reflejo de un asunto que debería importar a nuestras actuales universidades. Sería interesante debatir sobre algo que cada vez más empieza a preocupar a no pocos profesores y también estudiantes, a saber: si todas las personas que acceden a la universidad están preparadas para ello. No me refiero a si han superado la selectividad o pruebas similares que demuestran que uno ha hecho suyo todo un elenco de conocimientos, o en el peor de los casos, que uno tiene una envidiable capacidad de memorización. Me refiero más bien a si uno quiere y desea emprender la aventura universitaria, si uno ansía vivir una suerte de transformación personal en el sentido más amplio y profundo del término.

Wilhelm von Humboldt, el padre de la universidad moderna y fuente de inspiración de gran parte de nuestras instituciones universitarias, consideró que las pruebas de acceso debían comprobar la madurez de la persona que se enfrentaba a ellas, valorar si el aspirante a la universidad ya no dependía de un profesor ni de una materia de estudio, sino de un espíritu aventurero que le impulsara a buscar la verdad, el bien y la belleza de las cosas que se le pusieran por delante. Aunque esa propuesta nunca vio la luz, y la máxima platónica anteriormente mencionada no se encuentra en el frontis de ninguna de nuestras universidades, no deberíamos dejar que pase demasiado tiempo para evaluar si todas las personas que acceden a la universidad quieren realmente convertirse en buscadores, si están

preparadas para aprovechar la universidad o si, por el contrario, están dispuestas a aprovecharse de ella.

Sin embargo, y a pesar de su relevancia, no es este nuestro asunto. Aquí se le ha dado la vuelta al eslogan de Platón, esta ponencia se titula: "que no salga de aquí quien no sepa geometría". Eso es como decir, que no marche de aquí nadie que no esté universitariamente preparado, o que no se esfume ninguna persona que no demuestre ser un experto en la más importante y loable competencia que un estudiante puede adquirir en ese lugar que llamamos universidad: la competencia de ser y moverse como un universitario. Esta consideración es importante para muchas cuestiones, también para poner en marcha pedagogías como son el aprendizaje y servicio u otras similares. Esas maneras de concebir la formación universitaria, tan actuales y novedosas, parecen ser pertinentes para los tiempos en los que vivimos, pero no es menos cierto que corren el peligro de reflejar una incompleta interpretación de la formación universitaria. El objetivo de esta ponencia es doble: primero, presentar, ni que sea someramente, la ladeada situación en la que actualmente, y por lo menos a mi entender, se encuentra dicha formación; y segundo, se quieren señalar dos cuestiones que quizá podrían reconducir el actual desconcierto, especialmente cuando de lo que se habla es de la formación ético cívica, una formación típica y esencialmente universitaria.

2. Una situación descompensada

Se puede pensar bien o con criterio sobre prácticamente cualquier cosa. Cambia el objeto sobre el que se discurre, pero no la manera de proceder. ¿Y cómo es esa forma de acercarse a las cosas?, ¿cómo saber que se está pensando con criterio, que se está razonando correctamente y no de cualquier manera?

El criterio es, precisamente, el título de uno de esos magníficos libros que jamás se haya podido escribir. Jaime Balmes (1810-1848), conocido como el filósofo del sentido común y valorado por la profundidad de su pensamiento, dedica la primera consideración de ese texto a lo que

hemos llamado pensar bien, con criterio. Y cuando el gran teólogo y sabio se pregunta en qué consiste eso, responde: "o en conocer la verdad o en dirigir el entendimiento por el camino que conduce a ella. La verdad es la realidad de las cosas. Cuando las conocemos como son en sí, alcanzamos la verdad" (Balmes, 1964).

Ciertamente, se piensa bien cuando se conoce la verdad de las cosas, cuando uno sabe como son las cosas en realidad. Por ejemplo, se piensa con criterio cuando se conoce la verdad de la hibernación de los osos, cuando se advierte la realidad de ese curioso y maravilloso proceso. No son animales a los que les encante dormir durante largas temporadas, eso no es verdad, no es esa la realidad. La escasez de alimentos en determinadas épocas del año demanda un ahorro de energía, y dormir a pierna suelta durante una larga temporada es una buena manera de conseguirlo. También se piensa bien cuando se entiende la realidad de la amistad, cuando se conoce su verdad. La amistad no es una estrategia para conseguir favores en momentos puntuales, no consiste en servirse de personas según convenga. La realidad demuestra que quien utiliza esa táctica tiene muy pocos amigos de los de verdad. La amistad es algo que se cultiva y cuida como un auténtico tesoro, esa es la verdad y la realidad de tan apreciada virtud.

Ahora bien, hay algo más que apunta Jaime Balmes, y que es de gran importancia. Poseer una verdad, algunas o muchas es síntoma de pensar con criterio, está claro, pero tal adquisición no es debida a la suerte o la casualidad, es más bien el resultado de un proceso por el que ha de pasar todo hijo de vecino, incluso las mentes más privilegiadas. Tal sugerencia, dicho sea de paso, debería inquietar a aquellos que se creen estar enterados de todo o casi todo sin haberse dedicado con esmero a enterarse de cómo funcionan las cosas. Quien haya encarado alguna vez el proceso de conocer la realidad de las cosas, quien en alguna ocasión se haya atrevido a pensar sabe que ha emprendido un camino apasionante, pero también asume que ha tenido que encarar un reto inquietante: abandonar el confort que produce de la ignorancia. Sí, plantarse ante algo y preguntarse ¿qué es esto en verdad?, cuestión con la que uno comienza a asumir tal reto, no es algo grato.

Llegados a este punto, vale la pena preguntarse cuál es la verdad de la formación universitaria, con qué criterios podemos identificarla y diferenciarla de otras formaciones o de posibles imitaciones. A poco que se piense, es fácil caer en la cuenta de que la cuestión no es fácil de responder. Y por ello, aunque solo sea por asumir la realidad ante la que estamos, es preferible alejarse de aquellas explicaciones que parecen tenerlo todo demasiado claro y bien atado pero que evidencian inseguridad, que en el fondo no hacen más que esquivar la complejidad del asunto. Es mejor acercarse a aquellas otras explicaciones que dan que pensar, que sugieren y dan pistas, que dejan dudas, que quizá no ponen a todo el mundo de acuerdo porque, precisamente, muestran la seguridad de que el problema se encara asumiendo su complejidad. De entre todas esas explicaciones que podríamos presentar y que conforman una auténtica filosofía de la formación universitaria, veamos algunas de ellas, las que, por lo menos a nuestro entender, son más clarificadoras. El gran filósofo de la Ilustración Immanuel Kant señala, en uno de sus escritos dedicados a la filosofía de la religión (Kant, 1999), que la universidad es una realidad que está envuelta en una tensión permanente, que está sometida a diferentes fuerzas que la atraen y la mantienen en un estado de tirantez, rigidez y presión. Y quizá lo más importante, advierte que esta manera de vivir que está determinada por su propia naturaleza, si es que se puede decir así, no es para nada perjudicial sino buena y saludable. Sí, la universidad, y por lo tanto la formación que allí acontece, está viva, briosa y respira con normalidad cuando, precisamente, mantiene esa tensión particular. En los años sesenta del siglo pasado se edita el libro *The Uses of the University,* uno de los trabajos más citados y mencionados cuando se trata el tema universitario con un poco de seriedad. Clark Kerr, su autor e insigne presidente de la modélica Universidad de California, se refiere, aunque de diferente manera, a esta misma cuestión. Justo en la primera frase del prefacio de dicho texto, se advierte que: "Universities in America are at a hinge of history: while connected with their past, they are swinging in another direction" (Kerr, 2001: 1). Esa visión está contextualizada en la realidad norteamericana de aquellos años, pero es difícil negar que su significado se extiende al resto de realidades y también de

épocas. La universidad, y la formación universitaria que en ella acontece, vive en una suerte de coyuntura, de tensión, decía Kant, que se asemeja a la que pueda vivir una bisagra: debe estar bien collada en dos superficies diferentes para acometer su función, para cumplir debidamente con su verdad.

Quizá fue el eminente filósofo y politólogo inglés Michael Oakeshott quien, a finales de los años noventa del siglo pasado, ilustrara de una manera lúcida y clara esta cuestión que estamos señalando. La formación universitaria debe responder a un mensaje, tirar desde uno de aquellos extremos kantianos o mantener con firmeza una de las partes de la bisagra de Kerr, y ese mensaje dice: "Allá fuera en las calles se está gestando algo nuevo que va a acabar con los silogismos y las fórmulas de las escuelas: adáptense o quíntense del camino" (Oakeshott, 2009: 154). La formación universitaria también debe actuar así cuando escucha otra cosa, cuando oye que se le dice: "allá fuera en las calles todo es un caos, por favor, ayúdenme a distinguir entre lo bueno y lo malo" (Oakeshott, 2009: 154).

El mensaje que habla de la adaptación a lo nuevo e indica que la formación universitaria que no cumpla con tal cometido debe echarse a un lado, es harto conocido. Esa adaptación es algo más que un mero acomodamiento, no se trata solo de habituarse a lo que se está cociendo allá fuera en las calles. La realidad es concebida como un nido de oportunidades, un lugar que debe ser conquistado por almas inquietas, por personas salerosas capaces de hurgar, indagar y remover para, sobre todo, encontrar utilidad y rendimiento, para sacar provecho de todo aquello que pudiera dar algún fruto. Hace más de 2.500 años, cuando aún no había universidades, la sofística griega levantó una liebre que todavía perseguimos afanosamente. El conocimiento, decía aquel movimiento, está al servicio de la utilidad, se calibra por el rendimiento que pueda proveer, es algo que debe garantizar eficiencia y eficacia.

Visto así, la formación universitaria que necesitamos es aquella que alimente y desarrolle el espíritu que demostraron tener los tripulantes de aquel majestuoso navío que aparece dibujado en el *Novum Organum* del filósofo británico Francis Bacon (2004). En esa embarcación que atraviesa

el Estrecho de Gibraltar entre los Pilares de Hércules y se adentra en el inmenso mar de lo desconocido con la bandera de la Ilustración izada en el mástil más alto, van personas que agrandaron el conocimiento, ensancharon las ciencias experimentales, la medicina y la física, desplegaron las matemáticas y el racionalismo, desenvolvieron el derecho natural y ofrecieron nuevas ideas sociopolíticas. Allí podemos encontrar a Bacon, claro está, pero también a Boyle, Galileo, Descartes, Newton, Locke, Hobbes, Leibniz, Spinoza, Rousseau o Boerchaave entre otros ilustres e ilustrados navegantes, a personas que abandonaron la puerilidad mental, miraron de manera crítica y sarcástica lo que se llevaba diciendo y haciendo desde tiempos inmemoriales y tomaron una sabia decisión: pensar con atrevimiento sin el auxilio ni la protección de nadie, ¡*Sapere aude*! El propio Bacon decía que de nada sirve seguir caminando de la mano de Aristóteles. Y si la formación universitaria es eso, mantenerse en el regazo de ese pensador u otros similares, hay que salir de ella. Y, ¿cuántos teóricos del asunto, estudiantes, profesores o personas que miran de soslayo la formación universitaria de nuestros días no son herederos y portavoces de este pensamiento?, ¿cuántos de todos ellos no expresan más pronto que tarde el "para qué sirve esto" cuando la formación universitaria mueve un músculo? Sin duda muchos. Y, ¿no es lógico pensar de esta manera?, ¿no es razonable defender una formación que sea útil o de la que uno pueda sacar provecho de alguna manera? Pues claro que sí, todo lo dicho parece ser una contundente verdad y realidad de la formación universitaria. Sería ilógico negar todo lo dicho hasta el momento.

Vayamos ahora al mensaje que considera que en la realidad suele reinar el desorden y el desconcierto y que solicita auxilio para distinguir entre lo malo y lo bueno. Sobre el asunto de que la realidad muestra una cierta tendencia a la confusión cuando de lo que se habla es de ética, no hay demasiado que decir porque, efectivamente, así es. El día a día nos demuestra que las cosas no suelen ser fáciles, que demasiadas situaciones no se presentan de manera clara y meridiana, que hay multitud de resortes que a la mínima de cambio activan el desbarajuste, que el desacuerdo y el enfrentamiento con frecuencia ganan la partida a la concordia y la avenencia, o cosas parecidas. Hay algo de razón en aquello de que la realidad

es irracional, tal y como decía Hegel, y en aquello de que hay un infierno de los vivos que existe aquí, que habitamos cada día, y solemos construir cuando estamos juntos, tal y como señalaba Calvino. Y ese desorden ético es quizá el peor de los desbarajustes posibles. También hay algo de verdad en aquello que decía Cicerón, en que nada perturba tanto la vida humana como la ignorancia del bien y el mal. Sí, bastan cinco minutos en compañía de alguien que confunde lo uno con lo otro, o en medio de una comunidad que mezcla lo otro con lo uno, para darse cuenta que la vida puede ser un caos absoluto o una broma de mal gusto.

El saber diferenciar entre lo malo y lo bueno, entre lo execrable y lo admirable, entre lo feo y lo bello, entre lo nocivo y lo beneficioso o entre antagonismos similares, no es cualquier cosa. Ese saber permite alcanzar altura ética, llegar a ser mejor de lo que uno es, lograr una existencia lograda, cultivar una vida buena o como se le quiera llamar, y es un saber que, por supuesto, atañe a cualquier persona; pero más si cabe a individuos que están llamados a ejercer actividades de alta cualificación, ocupaciones que, de una manera o de otra, repercuten en muchas otras personas. A estos, de una manera especial, se les imagina como profesionales que saben identificar lo que está bien y reconocer lo que está mal, como individuos que garantizan cierta confianza y tranquilidad porque, tal y como reclama el mensaje, están preparados para poner orden ético en el patio social.

Al igual que sucedía con el mensaje anterior, tampoco aquí se está diciendo nada novedoso. La formación universitaria y la de esa persona que apuesta por lo bueno y se aleja de lo malo forman un binomio inseparable. Así lo demuestra la maravillosa historia de la universidad (Rüegg, 1994), lo proponen las apasionantes filosofías que escudriñan el significado y el sentido de la formación universitaria (Wyatt, 1990) e incluso lo sugiere el sentido común. Algo nos dice que el verdadero impacto de la formación universitaria tiene mucho que ver que ver con la calidad ética que puedan demostrar los graduados, y no tan solo con las habilidades técnicas o aptitudes profesionales que puedan llegar a dominar.

Ahora bien, ni Kant, ni Kerr, ni Oakeshott, y ni nadie que haya planteado la verdad y la realidad de la formación universitaria en términos

similares, dice que estemos ante una cuestión maniquea. Aquí no tenemos que elegir entre lo uno o lo otro pues, aunque diferentes, los extremos, hojas de bisagra o mensajes, son perfectamente compatibles. Es más, la maravillosa convivencia entre la adaptación y la orientación es, precisamente, el sello de una *universitas*, el nervio de una corporación de maestros y estudiantes que se dedica a buscar la verdad de las cosas. Los griegos, aun sin universidades, fueron un auténtico ejemplo de lo que aquí se está señalando. Nos enseñaron que no tiene porqué haber enemistad alguna entre el conocimiento útil, positivo y eficaz y el conocimiento especulativo, filosófico y ético, y por eso no se encuentra en aquella realidad una lista de filósofos y otra diferente de científicos, y por eso se entiende que Galeno afirmara que el buen médico, para ser un buen profesional, debe ser filósofo.

Que la convivencia sea posible, y sobre todo recomendable, no significa que se dé ni que se lleve a cabo de la mejor manera posible. Sin duda, no es este un asunto fácil, y la relación que hoy en día mantienen el discurso de la adaptación y el de la orientación no es, por lo menos a mi entender, la más adecuada. Eso provoca que la formación universitaria actual no atienda a toda su verdad y no considere su completa realidad; y que en consecuencia, esté adquiriendo una hechura particular, una curiosa carta de presentación.

Se podrían dar diversas situaciones respecto a esa compleja convivencia entre mensajes que se anunciaba en el punto anterior. Pudiera suceder que ambos mensajes hablaran idiomas diferentes, y consecuentemente, existieran problemas de comunicación, o no, que hablaran en la misma lengua pero faltara la intención y el ánimo de entenderse por uno u otro lado. Lo que aquí se defiende es que, entre todas las situaciones posibles, las anteriores u otras que se puedan plantear, actualmente estamos viviendo una en particular. Esta es: uno de los mensajes presentados ha ganado terreno y el otro se ha visto reducido. Ya veremos si las cosas cambian o si uno sigue expandiéndose y el otro empequeñeciendo conforme pasan los años, aunque algo nos dice que es más probable que suceda lo segundo. Sea como sea, la actual circunstancia está generando una formación universitaria peculiar. El mensaje que ha agarrado las riendas de

la formación universitaria es el que señala que la verdad y la realidad de dicha formación consiste en la preparación para lo que se cuece allá fuera en las calles. El discurso que se ha erigido como la principal manera de interpretar dicha formación es el que señala que esta debe servir para que uno se presente presto y dispuesto ante la realidad, el que, en definitiva, dice que dicha formación debe ser útil, eficaz y eficiente para todo aquello que se le pueda demandar.

Ese discurso no solo domina la situación, lo curioso e interesante es que también se ha vuelto inconmensurable. Su magnitud es tal, que se le otorga potestad para explicarlo todo, lo que le corresponde y lo que le es ajeno. La formación adaptada a la realidad también trata de explicar que la formación universitaria consiste en aquello de discernir entre lo malo y lo bueno. Sí, suele decirse que hoy hay que formar universitarios que, por ejemplo, sean responsables y dialogantes. Y eso suele declararse porque, por lo visto y gracias a Dios, las organizaciones empresariales prefieren a un trabajador responsable que a un jeta de campeonato y a alguien que solucione las cosas hablando y no imponiendo su parecer. Sin embargo, lo suyo sería decirlo porque ambas cuestiones colaboran en ese saber discernir entre lo malo y lo bueno del que se hablaba en el apartado anterior, porque contribuyen en la cimentación de una vida buena, y no porque sean más rentables ni más necesarias hoy en día. Pudiera darse el caso, de hecho ocurre, que haya ocasiones en las que lo más provechoso sea ser un cara dura o un déspota, que lo más útil sea dejar la responsabilidad y el diálogo en el mismo cajón en el que se apilan los libros y apuntes universitarios. Ese abandono es más inverosímil que suceda cuando se asume que la formación universitaria sirve para orientar el mundo, cuando se piensa que el universitario es alguien que está llamado a poner orden ético en el desorden.

No se puede decir que el discurso dominante haya fulminado al otro. Por supuesto, de vez en cuando hace acto de presencia algún Pepito Grillo, de tanto en cuanto asoma la cabeza alguien que no comulga con lo establecido o se escucha una voz que dice no creer en la formación universitaria que se plantea y tiene a la mayoría convencida. Si, a veces aparece alguno que se niega a embarcarse en el navío de Bacon, alguno

que, quien sabe si es de carácter miedoso y prefiere lo malo conocido a lo bueno por conocer, si es que se trata de una personalidad apoltronada y vaga, o si es que tiene un talante rancio y carca. En muchos casos, efectivamente, es alguna de esas cosas o todas juntas, pero no en todos. No está de más leer con atención algunos de esos textos que se muestran críticos con el discurso dominante para caer en la cuenta de que "los otros", si es que se les puede llamar así, no se quejan porque sí, sino porque atisban un serio problema: que al defenestrar el discurso de la orientación y la educación personal se pierde la esencia de la formación universitaria, se malbarata su *telos*, se llega incluso a hacer cosas que no son propias de una comunidad de buscadores de la verdad (Lewis, 2006; Collini, 2012; Delbanco, 2012; Hernández, Delgado-Gal y Pericay, 2013). "Una vida dedicada radical y auténticamente a la verdad no es posible en la universidad" (MacIntyre, 1992: 62). Eso escribía Nietzsche en 1879 en una carta que envió a su amigo Erwin Rhode antes de renunciar a su cátedra en la Universidad de Basilea, y de alguna manera representa lo que aquí se está señalando. No se sabe qué diría el gran filósofo alemán hoy, pero si eso es lo que pensaba por aquel entonces, nos lo podemos imaginar.

Volviendo al hilo de la cuestión, considerar que desde un discurso se puede explicar todo, para todos, de cualquier manera y en cualquier caso, es perder de vista la realidad y hasta el sentido común. Y lo que es peor, es forzar a la formación universitaria a ser lo que no es, a adoptar una posición incorrecta. Hermes no es tan de fiar como parece. Homero lo presenta también como el de astutos pensamientos, jefe de los sueños o guía nocturno. El reconocido profesor Alejandro Llano describe este tipo de situaciones con mucho acierto. Hoy en día, la verdad de la formación universitaria se ha dejado en manos de un único discurso y eso significa que "se transfiere a uno cualquiera que no es nadie en particular ni tampoco todos en general, sino un "uno" indeterminado y envolvente. Ese tal sujeto indeterminado, pero no por ello menos real, es el que impone sus decisiones y nos somete de manera inapelable (Llano, 2016: 12)". ¡Yo no camino junto a ese alguien!, ¡a mí no me guía nadie, ni estoy representado por aquel conjunto de ideas compartidas!, ¡ni por asomo dejo que nadie ni nada hable por mí! Hay quien pueda afirmar tales cosas porque

considera que se ha liberado del modo de pensar más compartido y generalizado, porque cree que va contracorriente. En algunos casos quizá sea así, pero no en todos ni en la mayoría. Ser libre no es pensar lo que uno quiera sino saber responder acerca de lo que se piensa, y para ello, mal que sepa, se necesita el soporte de una manera de pensar, una red de ideas a la que agarrarse. Dicho de otra manera, ese uno que nos domina y conquista es lo suficientemente condescendiente como para hacernos creer que actuamos y vivimos en absoluta libertad.

Bien, pues es en este panorama del dominio de la adaptación y el ostracismo de la orientación donde se gesta lo que hemos venido a llamar la formación universitaria descompensada. No afirmamos que la actual formación universitaria no sea tal cosa. Nada de eso. Decimos más bien que no está completa ni entera, que viene desustanciada, o si se prefiere, que no mantiene la tensión kantiana que le da vida; que, siguiendo la metáfora Kerr, no ajusta bien porque una de las superficies de la bisagra no está bien collada; o que uno de aquellos mensajes de los que hablaba Oakeshott se está desatendiendo. Incluso se podría decir que es una formación universitaria pobre, no porque haya perdido riqueza, sino porque ha multiplicado sus deseos, muchos de los cuales, bien mirado, no debería anhelar.

3. Algunas observaciones para la formacion ética de maestros

3.1. Aprender contenidos que quizá solo se aprenden en la universidad

Juan Solís Ruíz (1913–1990), Ministro de la dictadura franquista, defendía en las Cortes españolas un proyecto de ley para otorgar más horas escolares al deporte y quitárselas a las lenguas clásicas. En una parte de su discurso propuso a la audiencia una sugerente cuestión: ¿para qué sirve el Latín? Es de imaginar que el susodicho Ministro se había planteado esa misma pregunta más de una vez, y no había encontrado ninguna respuesta positiva. Lo que está claro es que Adolfo Muñoz, allí presente, (1915–1974) y quien fuera un eminente Catedrático de Filosofía, político

y Rector de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, sí que tenía una provechosa y firme respuesta para tan cautivadora pregunta. Desde su silla alzó la voz y contestó al Ministro: "Por de pronto señor Ministro, para que a su señoría, que ha nacido en Cabra (municipio español de la provincia de Córdoba), le llamen egabrense y no otra cosa". No hace falta decir cómo se podría llamar a alguien nacido en Cabra si se desconoce su gentilicio latino. Saber Latín, por lo menos en este caso, evita que se utilicen palabras malsonantes y algún que otro disgusto.

La renuncia de la cultura, las ideas y producciones científicas y humanísticas, o como se le quiera llamar, que nos han permitido llegar hasta donde estamos, facilita el ganar tiempo para enseñar contenidos de hoy, actuales, prácticos y prestos para ser utilizados más pronto que tarde. La cuestión está en pensar si realmente se gana tiempo o no. Lo clásico también es actual y muy práctico, y no por cualquier razón, sino para interpretar y comprender muchas de las cuestiones que hoy nos interpelen. Conocer los fundamentos de cualquier asunto, subirse a los hombros de los gigantes del conocimiento, es algo más que estar informado, es primordial para discernir si lo que hoy se dice y se hace se sostiene o no, si los nuevos pasos que se van dando se acomodan a la naturaleza humana o si la pervierten y corroen. Nadie afirma que lo clásico sea lo acertado y que no hay nada más que hablar, lo que se afirma es que conocerlo es lo que permite seguirlo, mejorarlo, incluso negarlo, o todo eso al mismo tiempo, que de hecho es la mejor de las opciones posibles. La consecución de una vida razonada y sustanciosa, que es lo que la sociedad espera del quehacer universitario, y quizá una de las mejores maneras de servirla, necesita del auxilio de referentes de enjundia.

Adquirir cultura, como es lógico suponer, exige encaminarse hacia la sabiduría. Aquí no se trata de dominar las maneras de cómo se conocen y aprenden las cosas, sino de saber las cosas que vale la pena saber. Ello nos sitúa ante un asunto que tiene una importancia radical, y que debería ser tratado como se merece. Este asunto es el de la formación cultural de los profesores. A ello se han referido algunos autores de una manera incisiva. No estamos defendiendo que uno se tenga que empapar de libros clásicos y contemporáneos, sino que se empape de erudición, ilustración

y educación, aunque esto segundo pasa inevitablemente por lo primero. Mal que pese, no se pueden explicar cosas fascinantes sin disponer de cultura, sin estar dentro de ese pozo sin fondo que se ha ido llenando a lo largo de la historia, y en el que uno puede encontrar aquello que necesita para explicar lo que quiere explicar. En la cultura se pueden localizar ejemplos, metáforas, comparaciones, analogías, etc. ¿Qué historias podrá explicar un profesor, sea de la materia que sea, que ha leído la *Ilíada* y la *Odisea* de Homero, la *Utopía* de Tomás Moro, *La democracia en América* de Tocqueville, *Las aventuras de Tom Sawyer* de Mark Twain, *La montaña mágica* de Thomas Mann, o la poesía de Machado y Juan Ramón Jiménez?, ¿cuáles podrá explicar si también ha podido detenerse un largo rato ante la bóveda de la Capilla Sixtina de Miguel Ángel, *Las meninas* de Velázquez o *Los fusilamientos del 3 de Mayo* de Francisco de Goya?, ¿y si encima ha escuchado *Las cuatro estaciones* de Vivaldi, de la Primera a la Novena sinfonía de Beethoven, la discografía entera de los Beatles, Johnny Cash *At Folsom Prison*, *Bad* de Michael Jackson o *My Way* de Frank Sinatra?, ¿y si ha visto obras teatrales como *El sueño de una noche de verano* de Shakespeare, la *Muerte de un viajante* de Arthur Miller, *Un hombre para la eternidad* de Robert Bolt, o *Doce hombres sin piedad* de Reginald Rose?, ¿y si ha visionado películas como *El gran dictador*, *Ciudadano Kane*, *Doctor Zhivago*, *Espartaco*, *Bailando con lobos* o *Matrix*?, ¿y si ha escuchado óperas como *El barbero de Sevilla* de Rossini, *La traviata* de Verdi, *Edipo rey* de Carl Orff o *Tristán e Isolda* de Wagner?

Con todo ello, uno está en disposición de mostrarse delante de los alumnos de una manera ciertamente especial y atractiva, como alguien que mantiene el equilibrio entre la sabiduría y la ignorancia, entre lo que conoce y lo que aún le queda por conocer. Así se han presentado a lo largo de la historia los grandes maestros que han dejado huella. Por supuesto, nada garantiza que los alumnos se conviertan en personas sabias o cultas, pero hay muchos números de que se sientan atraídos por una forma muy interesante de vivir, que dicho sea de paso es una de las más grandes manifestaciones de la humanidad, a saber: el deseo y la pasión por aprender lo mejor de lo mejor.

3.2. Vivir situaciones que quizá solo se viven en la universidad

La formación universitaria no es algo que esté a expensas de lo que se pueda decir sobre ella, que deba acometerse según convenga a unos u otros, o que incluso deba parecerse mucho a la realidad que hay fuera de la universidad. La formación universitaria es una vivencia, una auténtica experiencia de vida. El universitario, visto así, no es tanto el que se adapta y soluciona entuertos, sino el que demuestra que hay otras formas de vivir, de encarar la realidad, y por lo tanto, de pensar y hacer las cosas.

En ese sentido, la formación universitaria debería acontecer en una especie de *Petit Paradise,* debería ser el encadenamiento de una serie de encuentros performativos únicos. Sobra decir que la gran mayoría de aulas de nuestras universidades son espacios desangelados. Su paisaje está compuesto por un conjunto de sillas y mesas, un retroproyector y un ordenador, un encerado, a lo mejor una tarima, y quizá un corcho en el que se cuelgan anuncios varios. Además, son espacios por los que van desfilando docentes y estudiantes, lugares impersonales en los que difícilmente nadie se ve identificado. Algunos pensadores, como Wittgenstein, aducen que ética y estética son lo mismo. ¿Qué tipo de ética se gesta a través de la estética de nuestras aulas?, ¿por qué los docentes, por lo menos aquellos que se encargan de las asignaturas fundamentales en el sentido más profundo del término, no disponen de sus aulas y las visten de tal manera que éstas se conviertan en una experiencia ética? Un lienzo, un busto, una pequeña estantería con obras magistrales, un artilugio científico, etc., pueden convertir un aula en algo que los estudiantes pueden llevarse consigo para siempre.

Además, las aulas universitarias de hoy parecen haberse convertido en un conglomerado de valores, fines morales y/o concepciones del Bien. Sin duda, es bueno que así sea. El aula universitaria como cualquier otro espacio social y educativo, también es un espacio plural y diverso, y sobre todo, el docente de hoy debe ser respetuoso con todo ello. En este sentido, su liderazgo se enarbola en la bandera de la neutralidad, en una buena gestión de las situaciones, en el fomento del respeto y la evitación de conflictos. Ahora bien, visto así el aula se convierte en un lugar por el que pasan los grupos de estudiantes que, desde el punto de vista

humanístico, desaparecen tal y como aparecieron, o en el que, quizá, alguno se percata de que hay proyectos de vida diferentes al propio. Convertir el aula en un *Petit Paradise* implica apostar por los estudiantes, comprometerse con ellos, hecho que significa, por cierto, una excelente manera de respetarlos. El buen profesor no sabe a ciencia cierta cuál es el mejor proyecto de vida, y en ningún caso tratará de inculcar ninguno que se le antoje como bueno, pero sospecha que educar va más allá que liderar o guiar. El buen profesor se atreve a presentar aquellas maneras de vivir universitariamente que merecen la pena ser vividas, y también aquellas otras que de las que lo mejor que se puede hacer es huir. Entre ellas se encuentra, por ejemplo, el amor por el conocimiento, por lo mejor de lo que se ha dicho. La defensa de esta forma de vida tan típicamente universitaria, por un lado, no debería ofender a nadie, por lo menos a nadie que piense que la universidad es algo más que una expendeduría de títulos, y por otro lado, su manifestación no debería provocar incomodidades ni temores.

Las aulas universitarias de hoy, como otros muchos espacios sociales y educativos, parecen ser un lugar idóneo en el que sacar a relucir los mandatos privados o las elecciones personales, un lugar de concentración de *"preferidores racionales"*. Para algunos está bien que así sea, pues refleja que se ha alcanzado un ambiente de comodidad que estaba vetado hasta hace pocos años, cuando en el aula se debía acatar y respetar el clásico *magister dixit*. Docentes y estudiantes organizan el aula buscando el bienestar general, o reduciendo los momentos que pudieran ocasionar algún tipo de fastidio. El docente líder, en comunión con los estudiantes, acuerda la cantidad de trabajo a realizar, las páginas web a consultar, las diversas formas de evaluación de los aprendizajes, incluso la hora de entrada y salida del aula, y por qué no decirlo, los usos del *WhatsApp* en momentos de clase. Su liderazgo consiste en romper con un pasado farragoso que no casa con las nuevas formas de ser y estar. Ahora bien, el aula que se organiza de tal manera que conduce a la excelencia personal y profesional, es el aula que se rige por unos principios y normas que, aunque no se compartan o comprendan, merece la pena practicar. Nos referimos a todos aquellos hábitos morales mediante los cuales

no sólo se consiguen bienes externos, sino y sobre todo, internos. El buen profesor, aun a riesgo de perder su liderazgo ante determinados estudiantes o de salir mal en la foto de la evaluación docente, trata de convertir en aula en un espacio donde rebosa la elegancia, eso es, en un lugar de convivencia organizada que admite muchas formas de estar, pero no de todas las posibles.

Sin duda, se podrían presentar otras interesantes observaciones que contribuyeran en una formación universitaria que garantizase que los futuros maestros se presentaran en la realidad con algo más que con las ganas de querer ayudar y aprender, es decir, con un conocimiento típicamente universitario y una manera universitaria de vivir.

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Reflections on Teaching

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Social Commitment: Voluntary, Obligatory? A Theological View on the Freedom of a Christian

Abstract: In this article I would like to highlight our Erasmus+ K1 project concerning the aspect of 'voluntary social engagement' in a German vocational school and focus on the aspect of 'voluntary', taking into account theological topics – including 'Free Will', the "new man" of St. Paul, and the problems of 'power and temptation' – before finally drawing conclusions for project work in the field of social engagement from the perspective of theology. An empirical attempt will be made to connect statements of youngsters about their image of God and the consequences of this to the aims of social engagement. From the qualitative methodology of grounded theory, categories emerge which can be crucial for concepts of social engagement.

Keywords: Erasmus+, voluntary, social engagement, free will, new man, power, temptation, project work, refugees, competences, qualitative research, grounded theory

Erasmus+ project: social commitment in the educator's profession and learning

At St. Ursula Berufskolleg in Düsseldorf, we see volunteer social commitment as an integral part of the students' studies – and as a key to Europe. At our school we encourage students' social commitment, which we call volunteer commitment. Over the course of about three years, they

can demonstrate this commitment by, for example, spending time in a nearby youth club after school, or in evening classes during term time.

The project came about following exploratory discussions with colleagues from Belfast, Krakow and Düsseldorf surrounding the importance for our students to experience social engagement in a variety of contexts. It was agreed that students from the three countries could experience this best through engaging with children in a number of different placement settings in a variety of contexts, including working with refugees, the homeless and the travelling community, which reflect those in society who are marginalized.

The main subjects will be dealing with 'social commitment' in the educator's profession and learning. The aim of integrating social commitment within the training of qualified educators has already been translated into action in Düsseldorf in the course of several projects. For example, a project called "Equal Opportunities and Solidarity: Working with Refugees" has been established at St. Ursula Berufskolleg.

This means, in practice, that a number of socially committed students regularly gather together in order to try to find suitable ways of supporting refugees. At the moment, activities take place in the field of intercultural encounters through cooperative games, cooking and eating together, and doing intercultural artistic workshops. Last year students were committed to educational support, games and sports as well as language lessons for refugees. They were also able to show their social engagement by being responsible for a machine which sells fair trade chocolate.

Gaining competences, learning on the job

The personal competences that are to be acquired by the students over the course of the placement are as follows:

- Minimizing feelings of strangeness
- Developing a tolerance for ambiguity

- Acquiring and refining additional language skills
- Dealing with personal challenges
- Developing and refining intercultural competences
- Dealing with different educational and training concepts in Europe
- Gathering insights into the world of children in the Czech Republic, the UK, and Poland

> In the meantime, trainers also value this form of learning in order to provide their junior staff with the technical knowledge as well as the personal and social skills required by future employees in the increasingly complex world of work. Personal skills such as empathy, sensitivity, tolerance, resilience, flexibility and initiative are not only in demand for service-oriented occupations and customer contact. These competencies are just as important when it comes to respectfully interacting with one another in one's own team, taking responsibility for one's own actions, finding new solutions or dealing with very different people in unpredictable situations. In addition, social learning is also considered to be an important training-integrating offer, since in view of the shortage of new talent, training institutions and inter-company educational institutions will increasingly be confronted with applicants of various educational qualifications in the coming years. (Sturm 2015).

Some words from the reflections of two interns talking about their social commitment support these views. One of them said:

> During our meeting with the Eritreans as part of our preparations for the internship, we encountered many stories and impressions. I was very surprised how open and positive these people are with you if you just gave them a chance. They were visibly grateful and pleased that we showed an interest in them and their stories. They talked to us about their families, how they live, where they work, what plans they have for the future, and

> what they are doing at home. There were stories and impressions that made us think that many of them had mastered German better after 6 to 12 months than some inhabitants who have already been living and working in Germany for years.

This brings me to my next point, that of losing the social preoccupation with many of our prejudices – the prejudices that we are not even aware of, which may be given to us by the media and society, which we do not necessarily perceive but that could still be dormant somewhere within us. Another intern talked about how social engagement enhances people's knowledge, how self-esteem can be strengthened by small things.

> We found that qualities such as empathy, tolerance, acceptance, appreciation, and helpfulness are very important, especially in educators' education. These are qualities that also have to be present to a great extent in social commitment, but above all that have to be strengthened and trained, which can be all the more helpful both in retrospect and before or during training. In addition, patience and dedication are important issues that play a role in both areas.

The routine of our project and problems with volunteering

The routine of our project is as follows: applying for a grant for a project about social engagement in Europe, obtaining EU money for this – asking for voluntary commitment from the students – helping students to gain competences – sending these students to Europe (on international placements) – reporting the results of the project – applying for a grant for another project, and thereby beginning the process anew.

But it has turned out that voluntary commitment on paper is not always voluntary in life. One of my pupils once asked me: "I have been to the youth club meeting refugees four times now. Is that enough?" It was enough, I said, thinking about two words: 'commitment' and 'voluntary'.

Free will in showing one's commitment is very often limited by the students' and professionals' strategic questions: Does it fit into my timetable, and do I want to spend my spare time on it? Teachers could argue the same from a different position – not every educator is searching for ways to link formal and informal education.

But our partners from the Catholic youth agency that runs the youth club also have such questions: In the youth club everybody is welcome who wants to meet there, but do we accept that teachers from formal education systems should cooperate with us? Do we want to see them visiting their pupils in our rooms? Do we want to allow agents from such school systems to use our equipment and our infrastructure, which should be at the service of non-formal, non-directed youth work?

How much freedom, free will and volunteering is possible in interactions between Erasmus+ projects, schools, pupils, teachers, institutions, social workers, refugees and voluntary senior helpers? So many institutions and people, with their formal and informal roles, are trying to find a way to take action. Things become even more complicated when taking into account the criteria for good engagement.

Successful participation depends on the right framework conditions

The following questions help with critically analyzing planned participation processes (Flügge, Gerrits and Wenzl 2013: 157–168):

1. Relevance: Does the voluntary social commitment relate to the lifeworld of the target group and is this relevant to them?
2. Support: Are there enough relevant advocates in the public who support the project?
3. Voluntary: Has it been ensured that participants are not required to participate against their will?

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On the Freedom of a Christian

This leads me straight into an old theological discussion, which has been explored by Saint Paul, Saint Augustine and Martin Luther, who wrote on it in his *On the Freedom of a Christian* (Luther 2017):

"A Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none; a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to everyone". Luther says: "Although these statements appear contradictory, when they are found to agree together, they will be highly serviceable to my purpose." These are also both statements of Paul himself, who says: "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all" (1 Cor. 9:19).

This means, in regard to our project, that in being a Christian, in the eyes of Luther, we are not free to help and to serve, as this should already be in our nature.

Consider the example of the helpless refugees coming into Europe and Germany.

As Christians, there should not be a single doubt about whether we are free to help or not. The matter should be as clear as water: we should serve. And now, our reality: even those amongst us who consider themselves as Christians have doubts about whether this is possible: "What about our job, our time, our family, our spare time, political guidelines… we cannot take everybody, we cannot help everybody".

Martin Luther tries to explain this in his work *On the Freedom of a Christian*:

> Let us examine the subject on a deeper and less simple principle. Man is composed of a twofold nature, a spiritual and a bodily. As regards the spiritual nature, which they name the soul, he is called the spiritual, inward, new man; as regards the bodily nature, which they name the flesh, he is called the fleshly, outward, old man (…) The result of this diversity is that in the Scriptures opposing statements are made concerning the same man; the fact being that in the same man these two men are opposed to

> one another; the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh (Gal. 5:17). (Luther 2017)

Regarding the spiritual nature, we have charity, commitment, helping each other – in short, voluntary social commitment!

Regarding the bodily nature, we have all-powerful things: structures, positions, contracts, borders – in short, *reality*.

On temptation

Let us talk about temptation like the Salzburgian theologian Hans-Joachim Sander does, like the Bible does, like Jesus does. Why is there, as far as I know, no *temptation* to fulfil one's 'spiritual nature', to do the good things: charity, commitment, helping each other? Why is temptation always the '*old man*'? Structures, positions, contracts, borders, *reality*.

This is what Hans-Joachim Sander from the University of Salzburg, Austria identifies as a fundamental and paradoxical gap between power and powerlessness, fundamental for every aspect of 'Christian dogmatics'.

Every Christian icon, such as the cross, is in the twilight zone between man's powerlessness and God's powerfulness, and, even more paradoxically, between God's powerlessness and man's power. This dialectic process is theologically and existentially opened to a third dimension: at Pentecost, this third dimension between power and powerlessness emerges – the Holy Spirit.

This paradox, in my opinion, can be depicted in three stages:

- Freedom and bondage
- Old man and new man
- Power and powerlessness

Temptation always leads us, following Sander, to bondage (using people, oppressing people, prostituting people), to the old man (position,

hierarchy) and to the admiration of power (in business, in politics, in sports, in war).

It is quite curious that this is even possible when talking about religion. Calling himself a religious Christian official, Sander says that talking about God can be very creative, but leads to the temptation of hypocrisy: "He who speaks of God cannot avoid his power, but at the same time he invites all sorts of self-righteousness. This is not God's self-righteousness. It is the self-righteousness of those who use God for the sake of their salvation, in which, at the same time, ominous desires lurk over others" (Sander 2017). Remember the Augustinian reflection about freedom, the new man and the paradox of the powerless man on the cross .

The question of God amongst youngsters: The key to social engagement?

The interesting thing about all this is that the first students who showed their social engagement to some extent and then went abroad some years ago (before our Erasmus+ project started) tend to know the question I am dealing with, and this comes by asking them questions about their image of God.

Questioning and Study Methods (see Prokopf and Ziebertz 2001)

How do these youngsters who we know and who are willing to be socially engaged think and talk about God? This study of the images of God held by young people attending our school was designed to reach conclusions about the religiousness of this particular demographic group in order to find a base for religious communication. For the purpose of practical religious education, such knowledge is important in order to understand the starting point of religious processes. From a scientific point of view, this study aims to understand the 'semantics of talking about

God' and make a competent contribution to theological dialogue in the modern age.

The study began by asking questions in an empirically descriptive fashion: How do young people think and talk about God today? What are the religious semantics attached to their image of God (e.g. linguistic images, symbols, concepts)?

The empirical material for this work was provided by a larger study under the title *Korrelation von christlicher Tradition und individueller religiöser Semantik* (see Prokopf 2008). In connection to this work, 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted. These were guided by a questionnaire on topics such as the 'functional aspects' of religion (dealing with crises, the meaning of life, etc.) and the substantial aspects of religion (e.g. the image of God held by young people) as well. Three young people have been chosen as examples in this paper for their very differing views of God. The interview segments, in turn, will be evaluated in two steps.

The newer method of 'Grounded Theory' is built on action and decision-making theories (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Several concepts guide the analysis: the phenomenon to be explained (the image of God), the phenomenon's origins, the context in which it plays out, and its intervening influences which follow in turn. Its origins and context are the spaces in which action and interaction strategies arise. Finally, there are consequences which may be deduced from the course of events. The interviews are then analyzed according to the following categorical questions:

(1) How do the respondents describe their image of God (the phenomenon)?
(2) What were the origins that led to this particular image of God?
(3) What is the context? What are the intervening influences on this image of God?
(4) What interaction strategies may be derived from this image of God?
(5) What are the consequences derived from this image of God by the respondents?

The extensive coding of the relevant segments cannot be shown here for reasons of space (for more details with regard to the handling thereof, see Prokopf 2008).

For our methodology, we have used Oevermann's technique of 'Objective Hermeneutics'. Oevermann's concept of the latent structure of meaning (objective structures of significance within interaction) is useful here. Its reality is independent of one's personal life history and the exact historical point of interpretational decoding (Oevermann et al. 1979: 381ff.). The analysis is based on reconstructing the structure of the interview, one which the respondents are not necessarily aware of. From a knowledge theory point of view, this methodology may be termed as 'abductive', since a new theory is being generated through the combination of previous knowledge and new experience (Prokopf 2003). Oevermann developed four category pairs to clarify the connections between 'old' and 'new' in a concrete case structure:

(1) Reproductive yet simultaneously transformational: Every action taken, or statement made, may be identified as the transformation and possibly reproduction of a tradition. If a statement is split into sequences then options for decision-making become obvious, which were chosen with a view to an uncertain future. These contain moments where tradition is carried on, but also moments where tradition has been overtaken, i.e. transformed (see Oevermann 1991: 274).

(2) Particular yet simultaneously general: A case is 'particular' because it contains a concrete individual life practice which is not applicable to others. At the same time, every case is 'general' because it makes a "claim to being generally applicable and justifiable" (Oevermann 1991: 272).

(3) A diachronic yet simultaneously synchronic structure: The course of the process taken in a structure of interaction has a visible development (diachronic structure). Synchronic structures indicate the active presence of a background which is not brought to light during the interview (see Oevermann 1991: 274).

(4) Discontinuing and continuing courses of latent structures of meaning: Structures of interaction may be separated from each other and regarded separately (see Oevermann 1991: 274). A continuing process, which is constantly being interrupted, is visible in the background. Continuity is (also) established through breaks in continuity.

These category pairs allow us to view an image of God in its 'double' form: on the one hand as an individual, 'newly'-created image, as a unique example, as a personal, partially syncretic 'mix' of selected traditions. On the other hand, we may also see it as a revelation of a store of symbols, which draws on transmitted (already present) base patterns and decision-making options.

With this double methodological base, we are looking to grasp not only the symbolic contexts consciously used by young people, but also the latent horizon of meaning where these symbols are to be found.

How do voluntarily socially engaged young people talk about God?

The Structure of Philip's image of God

Philip's image of God is marked by the absolute transcendence of a "higher power" and "energy" which cannot be explained by man. This power does not touch him in any way. On the other hand, he expresses the closeness of this "divine force" by characterizing it as an "energy" which is present in each of us, and to which all souls return. For Philip, this "divine energy" is both transcendent and immanent. This 'middle position' is defined as "Panentheism" (Pieper and van der Ven 1998). Philip does not speak of a personal God who leads every single individual, but of an impersonal omnipresent energy which he calls "Braman" (after the Hindu breath of life). At the same time, this energy sets off a process which works differently in each of us and aims to "unify all souls". Philip describes this as a "spiritual base for taking action", present in every person

and part of a stream of energy which surrounds everything and makes "things happen".

The origin of Philip's image of God lies in his belief in the supernatural. He assumes that there are many things which give off forces and energy, whose origin is unknown and which words cannot describe. The "inexplicable" is a natural part of this world and goes beyond the human realm of understanding. Philip does, however, also believe that this "inexplicable" matter will one day become something quite natural in our daily lives, and that it will then be comprehensible.

Philip's ideas play out within the context of a world where the immaterial and the inexplicable have their set places. According to Philip, much of what influences the world is immeasurable, unconscious or invisible. He does not answer the question about whether these mysterious forces surrounding every one of us, which he calls "aura", have something to do with God. He does, however, find the existence of guardian angels believable.

Strategies for taking action within Philip's image of God are limited to imaginary and sentimental worlds on the numinous level. He speaks of secret powers, such as "fortune telling" and "mind reading", which may be irrational or speculative, but may also be learnt through a random inner examination. He describes his faith as "non-non-faith", and has difficulties summing up its content.

One consequence of Philip's image of God is 'faith in the soul', which is intertwined with his religious views. He assumes that there is a place where all souls come from and to which they return in a cyclical fashion after death. A part of this unity described by Philip, the origin and destination of all things, is anchored in each of us. This corresponds to the "spiritual basis for taking action", which is a part of the omnipresent divine force and, simultaneously, Philip's most prominent image of God.

The Structure of Lucia's image of God

Lucia's image of God is based on the doubt she has in the existence of a personal God. She speaks of a higher power that she believes in. This

"higher power" is the incorporation of the good in the universe and appears to her in the form of her conscience. This conscience has a very concrete influence on her life. The belief in the "higher power" manifesting itself within her conscience is connected to her belief in herself and her friends.

The origin of her belief in a "higher power" lies in the repeated experience of crisis in her life. She is not always sure of herself, and sometimes the behaviour of her friends puzzles her. In order to find stability in this life of uncertainty and crises, Lucia trusts her conscience. It is not exactly "God directly" that speaks to her through her conscience, but rather a higher power that is capable of guiding her life and is available to her in times of difficulty.

The context of this image of God is Lucia's displeasure with the banality and uniformity of her everyday life. She is neither satisfied with the role she takes on in school and her professional development, nor with the role she takes on at home with her family. She looks for a meaning within this dissatisfaction. She does so in the very concrete form of a conversation with her conscience, which, to her, is capable of bringing some sense and order since it is in contact with a "higher power". She is disappointed with the Church as an institution and is not optimistic for the future of her relationship with it. She does not trust her vicar, who she describes as conservative. She finds church services to be boring and monotonous. She can also not imagine there being a "God in heaven", an idea she finds illogical. She does, however, assume that she is being guided onto the right paths by a higher power through her conversations with her conscience. She feels that her conscience not only gives her solace in cases of painful, personal hurt, but that it also inspires hope.

Lucia has developed a strategy for taking action, which she calls "prayer". She is referring to regular walks in the dark where, as she puts it, she talks to herself, her conscience and maybe another person. The reflection and conscience probing that she goes through in the dark has a clarifying and inspiring effect on her. She is not clear on whether this "prayer" is actually heard or not, but the only important thing for her is finding herself and feeling at peace while doing so.

The consequence of Lucia's world view is, surprisingly, that God is "good". A person led by his or her conscience is somebody who is at peace and helping to create "heaven on Earth". This abstract image of God, the "conscience", is rendered more concrete – God's intentions for people are good.

The Structure of Lea's image of God

Lea assumes that every person has an individual "higher power" at his or her side, which protects the person in times of need. This power can be undefined, nebulous or even unreachable. Lea believes that this "higher power" is "individual" for each person and that it is a part of a greater "unity power", which she identifies with the Hindu breath of life, Karma.

The most important origin of Lea's individualistic image of God lies in her presumption of man's and God's dependence on each other. According to Lea, God exists because man is continuously creating him in thought. For man, too, however, belief is essential to life. She claims that God's death would mean the death of mankind, too, as all hope would be lost.

Her strategy for taking action in relation to the question of God focuses on the individual speech of God. She sees the latter as a constant challenge to define 'God' again and again according to her individual experiences. Her own attitudes are the basis for this definition, which is constantly in a state of change. Lea openly speaks of the need for a personal construction of divine images.

The consequence of Lea's thoughts about God is that man must take the place of God, that "religion" has to step back. The figure of a "higher power" can only be identified through the ideas and pictures that arise when a person has experiences through and with it. She does, however, insist that this dependence is two-sided. Man is dependent on hope and, as such, on the higher power that gives him the hope and protection that he needs. The person creating his or her personal image of God is not completely free and is even dependent on this image of God.

Empirical conclusions in the context of theory

These three cases point out, in a very practical sense, what religious sociological theories have been considering for years. Some central concepts used to build these theories are: religiousness has syncretic characteristics; religiousness is in a process of deinstitutionalization; a central characteristic of modern religiousness is individuality; and, finally, religious attitudes have a constructivistic content. We intend to show these theoretical concepts within the empirical data. This will build a bridge between empirical descriptions and theory construction. This can only be done in a summary style.

Syncretism: Philip uses several traditions to describe his image of God. He uses the concept of a soul, which has Christian connotations, along with Hindu traditions (Braman).

Having lost the relief function of religious institutions, the individual today must search for "fundamental unity" within the horizon of openness and personal responsibility. This is why syncretism is a "socially spread form for dealing with religious pluralism" (Dubach and Campiche 1993).

Individualization: In the form of her conscience, Lucia has a very subjective and individual bridge to God.

The loss of plausibility experienced by traditional religious patterns as a product of the increasing specialization of society leads to a release of religious decision-making and experience: "The developed modern age clears the way for lasting reflexive forms of religious action and experience as a subjective reconstruction of the Christian faith" (Kaufmann 1989).

Constructivism: Lea openly says that every person must construct their own image of God, and she also sees this as a simple necessity.

The presently differentiated form of society no longer allows "the representation of the unity of society in society" (Luhmann 1977), because modern society is composed of complex and differentiated subsystems that recursively orient themselves through a special form of the system-environment relationship that seeks to construct its own continuity – in short, the unity of society can only be defined pluralistically (Luhmann 1989).

In the following theological hermeneutical analysis, we would like to consider these four theoretical concepts again. The question is whether – and, if so, in what ways – Christian content is present in the syncretic, deinstitutionalized, individualistic and constructivistic images of God.

Power linked to powerlessness, unifying souls and making things happen

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This corresponds to the "spiritual basis for taking action" which is a part of the omnipresent divine force and, simultaneously, Philip's most prominent image of God.

Banality of the 'old man' being a 'new man' through conscience

Lucia speaks of a higher power that she believes in. This "higher power" is the incorporation of the good in the universe and appears to her in the form of her conscience. This conscience has a very concrete influence on her life. Her belief in this "higher power" manifesting itself within her conscience is connected to her belief in herself and her friends.

The context of this image of God is Lucia's displeasure with the banality and uniformity of her everyday life. She is neither satisfied with the

role she takes on in school and her professional development, nor with the role she takes on at home with her family. She looks for a meaning within this dissatisfaction. She does so in the very concrete form of a conversation with her conscience, which, to her, is capable of bringing some sense and order since it is in contact with a "higher power". She does, however, assume that she is being guided onto the right paths by a higher power through her conversations with her conscience. She feels that her conscience not only gives her solace in cases of painful, personal hurt, but that it also inspires hope.

The consequence of Lucia's world view is, surprisingly, that God is "good". A person led by his or her conscience is somebody who is at peace and helping to create "heaven on Earth". This abstract image of God, the "conscience", is rendered more concrete – God's intentions for people are good.

Freedom and dependence/bondage – God and people

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The most important origin of Lea's individualistic image of God lies in her presumption of man's and God's dependence on each other. According to Lea, God exists because man is continuously creating him in thought. For man, too, however, belief is essential to life. She claims that God's death would mean the death of mankind, too, as all hope would be lost.

The figure of a "higher power" can only be identified through the ideas and pictures that arise when a person has experiences through and with it. She does, however, insist that this dependence is two-sided. Man is dependent on hope and, as such, on the higher power that gives him the hope and protection that he needs. The person creating his or her

personal image of God is not completely free and is even dependent on this image of God.

Summary of the interns' images of God – a hint towards the "new man"?

One thing is clear regarding the images of God of some of our youngsters: they seem to know the ambiguous and paradoxical structure of the believer's position between freedom and powerlessness, between power and powerlessness, and they also seem to know something about the 'old man' (banality/structures) and the 'new man' (being responsible for others, the unification of all souls). This is very important for me as a teacher and theologian: there is sense in bringing the idea of voluntary commitment into structures of education, because the consequences of the results of this study can even – and this is my hope for the coming years – change these structures' direction towards what St. Paul called the "new man".

To come back from these theological heights (or depths), the experience of the first year of our projects was as follows.

Yes, we were successful in motivating youngsters to be regularly involved in social commitment; yes, we changed a bit of our structural curriculum and still have plans to develop this; yes, we made contact with other institutions and youth clubs and fixed a link between formal and non-formal education; and finally, yes, we send 17 interns to Plzen, Prague, Belfast, Warsaw and Krakow and linked our institutional roots, but the truth is also this: the images, films and highlights of all this is one thing, but the other thing is that we still very frequently came across the "old man":

Students: "Is my engagement now sufficient?"
Teachers: "It's stressful for me to organize my lessons and the pupils so they can take part in the voluntary project."
Schools: "How can we use the output of the results of the students' work in voluntary commitment, what competences do they earn?"

Youth clubs: "This is not our idea of youth work when teachers run around in our non-formal place, this is our place."

Perhaps reflecting on the bipolar images of God can shed some light on these "old man" questions towards a more dynamic and deeper understanding of 'voluntary'.

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