

DOES EUROPE NEED RELIGIOUS EDUCATION?

Living and learning in an ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse Europe

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Introduction

The title suggested by the organizers of this *Multiplier Event* for this presentation was “DOES EUROPE NEED RELIGIOUS EDUCATION? Living and learning in an ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse Europe”. I immediately agreed with this title because it adequately accommodates the view that I have regularly articulated in my writings. So, my answer to the question is an unconditionally ‘yes’, because learning to live in an ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse Europe is a pedagogical as well as political necessity. However, there are some constraints that might prevent or hinder optimal conditions for realizing this aim.

Firstly, I will deal with neoliberal policies and practices that reduce teaching and learning to the basics, focusing on ‘hard’ and thus controllable outcomes. Schools are interpreted in an instrumentalist way in function of market, economy and bureaucracy. Secondly, I will focus on the concept of ‘Bildung’ and point to a small and a broad connotation of that term. I’m pedagogically in favor of the broad connotation and provide arguments for that stance. Then, thirdly, I will plea for a sophisticatedly outlined pedagogical paradigm that might work as a filter for penetrating and even colonizing societal and political

powers. I will present the hard-core components of such a transformational paradigm. I will, fourthly, explain why I am in favor of using the encompassing concept 'worldview' of which religion is a sub-concept, because it is all-inclusive and can keep strong secularist approaches as well as exclusivist claims out of the door. Fifthly, I will point to great thinkers who all address very positively the importance of religion in the public sphere. Although, there are positive signs now, we need to stay alert.

Against neo-liberal policies and practices

Neo-liberal voices are in Europe and also worldwide still very strong in education broadly speaking. These voices have a marginalizing impact on normative pedagogies like religious and worldview education. This is the reason, in my view, that there is still an urgent need for a continuing awareness in education and religious education towards pedagogy as a necessary counter-voice against the still influential neo-liberal rhetoric, politics and practices in which labor-market orientation and schooling as preparation for the knowledge-based economy are praised as *the* core aims of education in schools. These neo-liberal voices are not only a threat for education in general, but have in practice a marginalizing effect on all normative oriented pedagogical approaches such as moral, aesthetic, intercultural, civic and religious and worldview education.

This still tremendous neo-liberal impact in education has to do with the fundamental changes that have taken place since the 90s in the educational systems of many countries like the US, the UK and also the Netherlands. These changes followed the American (Reagan) and British (Thatcher) led neoliberal economical and financial politics starting in the 1980s (Terreblanche 2012). Since the 90s there has been in education a shift towards far greater external,

mostly governmental control over the curriculum, and a far greater emphasis on measurable output and accountability, often related to tight systems of inspection. In this process the purpose of schooling has become increasingly defined in terms of the effective production of pre-determined output, often measured in terms of exam-scores on so-called ‘core subjects’ such as mathematics and first language acquisition (Biesta & Miedema 2002; Biesta 2010; Miedema 2014).

This last development of education’s orientation focusing on Europe and the Europeanization of education in terms of the labor market and education seen as preparation for the knowledge-based economy in terms of employability, flexibility and mobility, has been carefully reconstructed by Peter Schreiner on the basis of documents of the Council of Europe (being the ‘conscience’ of Europe) and the European Union. Schreiner has convincingly shown that notions such as ‘learning society’ and ‘knowledge-based economy’ cannot mask what he so adequately characterizes in Habermasian terminology as the ‘colonization of education policy by economic policy imperatives’, and the determination of national educational policies on the basis of economical-educational analyses (most extensively in Schreiner 2012; but also in later articles e.g. Schreiner 2016).

The return of ‘Bildung’

Even when the notion or the rhetoric of ‘Bildung’ (for the English equivalent I use Richard Rorty’s notion ‘edification’; see also Robert Jackson 1997) is recently used again by politicians and school administrators, this could not hide away the fact that in educational policy and practice the basics are still overemphasized to the detriment of the formation of the whole person of

children and young people (see for example Taylor 2016). There is still greater emphasis on tests and exams as safeguarding and justifying the so-called basic quality of teaching in contrast to emphasizing the holistic development and learning processes and outcomes of children and young people in schools. The later aspects focusing on visions and aims also point to soft skills in relation to moral, religious/worldview and civic education and presuppose a wholistic view on and wholistic practices of teaching and learning.

In respect to the fact that the use of the very concept of edification or Bildung is all over the place now, also internationally speaking (see for example Nussbaum 2010), we need carefully look what kind of connotation is really used. Especially when this notion is used by politicians and administrators it is too often Bildung as a coverup of a different ideology.

Quite often the connotation used, is that personhood formation of pupils means having the possibility to make those subject matter choices that fit best with the pupils' own personality. I characterize this as *a form of hyper-individualization*. Thus the personality, the personhood of the pupil, is something that already exists in the form of a fixed identity and this already fixed personality need to be discovered by the pupil her/himself. The pupil should be able to discover who they in essence are and what their already existing capacities are.

However, a dynamic conceptualization of the notion of 'Bildung' doesn't presupposes an already existing, an already given personality, but personhood formation or Bildung is conceptualized as the development of the pupil in relationship, via encounter and dialogue with the other persons and the surrounding world and thus also being confronted with oneself. I characterize this development of the pupil as the formation of an *emergent identity*. This is happening in a process of socialization, participation and distantiating, that is liberation as an emancipatory process (Wardekker & Miedema 2001a, 2001b; Wardekker 2016). A process that Hannah Arendt has characterized as *natality*,

the new beginning inherent in birth in which a person is realizing and showing her/his unique identity, their personal self in the context of a collectively created intersubjective public space. Due to such processes and practices in which the other as other is equal to me, plurality and freedom can flourish and the world can become more human (Arendt 1958).

So, the shift towards a one-sided and even narrow conception of the aim of schooling and a narrow conception of the very notion of Bildung makes the question as to whether there still is or could be more space and place for 'education' or 'pedagogy' in the school an urgent one for those who are in general concerned about the purpose of schooling.

This especially holds for the teachers in the schools who quite often feel that these developments miss the very point of what they think the aim of their work is all about. Our own recent research on principals of Dutch Christian elementary schools has convincingly shown that their view is fully in line with this kind of criticism. It is clear that the principals are in favor of a concern for the whole person of the pupils instead of instructional and transmission approaches of a reductionist kind. One of the most important threats the principals experience is the discrepancy between their view on Bildung as the core and embracing aim of their professional work, and the strong emphasis on instruction, on the basics, and control on particular outcomes as such embodied in governmental policies and the way the Inspectorate of Education is operating in assessing their work (Bertram-Troost, Miedema, Kom & Ter Avest 2015).

Although I am hopeful, I notice that the neoliberal tanker is very slowly heaving now in more pedagogical directions. Some principals and a young generation of teachers are organizing themselves on a national scale, for example in the Netherlands, and have a loud and strong pedagogical voice in the public domain as well as impact on the level of politics.

In plea of a transformative paradigm

To be really able to create space for pedagogy and religious and worldview education in the social and public domain (Miedema 2006) we need, in my opinion, a sophisticatedly outlined pedagogical paradigm. I have outlined different aspects of a *transformative pedagogical paradigm* aiming at personhood formation, and I will bring these aspects here briefly together (Wardekker & Miedema 2001a; Biesta & Miedema 2002; Miedema & Biesta 2004; Miedema 2012b). This paradigm implies that schools assist pupils in the double process of socialization and individuation, of becoming competent members of communities of practice. Presentation and representation of information, norms and values must always be seen in the perspective of how pupils are able to transform this into elements of their own participation, in the process of the formation of their own personhood. This transformation is an active and dynamic process on the part of the pupil, in which the subject matter – the educational ‘stuff’ – being the starting point, becomes the personal property of the pupil. The transformation is an activity authored by the pupils, and necessary for them, in order to acquire their own personhood. In this respect, it is a problem rather than an asset that schools have developed into practices in their own right, separated from the social practices into which they are supposed to introduce pupils, because learning to participate is best done by participating.

Such a transformative view rests on a conceptualization of how human beings act in the world. The basic image is that of humans as signifiers. Humans in most cases do not make explicit decisions for action based on objective knowledge of the alternatives. Instead, by being bodily in the world and transacting with it, they form images and meanings on which they act. There is thus a continuous interplay between action, signification and reflection.

Meanings are never ‘objective’ but are always the result of the momentary and creative relation between the human being and its environment, a relation that may be characterized most adequately as “a moving whole of transacting parts” (Dewey 1980, 291). Not all transactional relations,

“... ask to be known, and it certainly does not ask leave from thought to exist. But some existences as they are experienced do ask thought to direct them in their course so that they may be ordered and fair and be such as to commend themselves to admiration, approval and appreciation. Knowledge affords the sole means by which this redirection can be effected” (Dewey 1980, 296).

So, knowledge is not aimed purely at the continuation of acting as such, but at the problematical in the broadest sense of the word. And knowledge has a function for the other domains of experience too, for example for religious or worldview, moral and aesthetic experiences. From this perspective knowledge is “a mode of experiencing things which facilitates control of objects for purposes of non-cognitive experiences” (Dewey 1980, 98).

Defining education in school in terms of participation and transformation, implies that learning is seen neither as exclusively cognitive nor as a purely individualistic act. On the contrary, all domains of human potentiality and ability - be it cognitive, creative, moral, religious, expressive, etc. – thus the development of the whole person should be taken into account by the schools (see also Wardekker & Miedema 2001a). And ‘the formational stuff’, brought in by the teachers, but also embodied by their peers, should invite pupils to take responsibility for their *self-formation*, their self-actualization both from an individual as well from a societal perspective. *Transformative pedagogy is never solely dealing with the presentation of knowledge or facts, nor*

practiced as a technology. It is about creating opportunities for pupils to respond, to speak, to take stance, positively or negatively, towards knowledge, facts, practices, doctrines, narratives, traditions and visions. And teachers may feel responsible to create in their school classrooms such opportunities for pupils in optima forma to open up.

No human being, however, ever finds herself or himself in a position in which she/he can signify at will, and is then able to coordinate the created meanings with other humans at a later time. Humans are born into a culture, which means that the whole world already has a meaning. Newborn humans have to acquire these meanings in order to be able to participate. Most of this acquisition process is not, at least not initially, made explicit (in fact, the ability to 'learn' meanings in an explicit way, as in schools, has to be learned in itself); learning to participate develops by participating in socio-cultural practices. Although no two human beings construct exactly the same life-world, enough of it is shared to make communication and coordination of actions within practices possible. In fact, cultural practices may be interpreted as culturally predefined meaning systems that enable coordinated activities. Such meaning systems encompass interpretations of the world (including other human beings), abilities for interacting with it in order to obtain intended results, values and norms, etc. The group of people that engage in the practice, and thus form its associated community of practice shares them. Thus, growing up may be described as acquiring the abilities to participate in practices, or as becoming a competent member of several communities of practice.

The process of socialization, however, presupposes a process of individuation, the process of personhood education, for its necessary reverse side. One cannot become a competent member of a community of practice if one does not contribute at an individual level. *This process of individuation*

rests on the fact that cultural meanings have to be appropriated, transformed into one's own personality. In this process, personal elements like genetic make-up, emotions, and unique experiences gained in past and present circumstances play a significant role, so that no two persons grow up to have exactly the same personality. This forms the basis of the uniqueness of personhood. It is precisely these uniqueness and these interpersonal differences that make for changes in cultural practices. Some of these changes simply occur because of the different views participants bring to the practice; at other times, changes are intended. Ultimately, no practice can stay 'alive' without change; and being able to contribute to changes that are perceived as necessary is a structural element of the competency of participants. *This implies that participation is never merely technical, manipulative or instrumental, but always has a normative side because choices have to be made concerning the direction in which a given practice should develop (see Mead 1934, 200 ff.). Just like other meanings, the material where this normative side is built upon, like goals, ideals and values, comes into being within the context of acting.*

This plea for a transformative pedagogical paradigm is not celebrating a monadic or isolated view on personhood. I have already articulated the relation of individuality and sociality, of socialization and personhood formation. With Gert Biesta, I will not leave out another important task of education in schools, the qualification aspect of education, that is providing children, young people and adults,

“with the knowledge, skills and understandings and often also with the dispositions and forms of judgment that allow them to ‘do something’ – a ‘doing’ that can range from the very specific (such as in the case of training for a particular job or profession, or the training

of a particular skill or technique to the much more general (such as an introduction to modern culture, or the teaching of life skills, etc.)” (Biesta 2010, 19-20).

There is of course a connection here with the earlier critically mentioned labor market and economic development and growth. *But, and that is the different perspective I am favoring, qualification is and should, as Biesta adequately states, not be restricted to preparation for the world of work.* Knowledge and skills are also important where other domains of life, of formation and personhood are in a more general sense at stake, for instance in respect to political, cultural, religious and worldview literacy.

Crucial in a transformative pedagogy is the view that both the qualification and the socialization aspect of education should be evaluated from their adequate or inadequate contribution to the personhood formation of the pupils. So, the pedagogical perspective as a *meta-perspective* keeps the three aspects of qualification, socialization and personhood formation together. These aspects should always be interpreted as intertwined. The pedagogical criterion is whether there is a dynamic balance, equilibrium, between the three aspects. Reducing for instance the aim of education only to qualification terms, that is just positioning pupils for the labor market or preparing them for the knowledge-based economy, is reducing both the community of practice (the socialization aspect) as well as the view on the formation of personhood (the subjectification aspect). What is absolutely necessary here is to take a critical-deconstructive stance in the sense of Caputo’s notion of deconstruction:

(T)hings – texts, institutions, traditions, societies, beliefs, and practices of whatever size and sort you need – do not have definable

meanings and determinable missions, that they are always more than any mission would impose, that they exceed the boundaries they currently occupy. What is really going on in things, what is really happening, is always to come. Every time you try to stabilize the meaning of a thing, to fix it in its missionary position, the thing itself, if there is anything at all to it, slips away (Caputo 1997, 31).

Thus, the fixation of any of these aspects - qualification, socialization, personhood formation - can lead to essentialist and fixated views on either qualification, socialization or personhood formation, and such views will block forms of dynamic intertwinement, and form a hindrance to a pedagogical and transformative defensible equilibrium that is contextual embedded. The intertwinement should strengthen the potentialities of social engagement, solidarity, encounter and dialogue and tackle the bad practices of religions and worldviews as well as the neglect of human rights education within the setting of schools.

Religious education and worldview education

A transformative pedagogy addresses all pupils, is non-separatist, non-segregational, non-exclusivist, and thus inclusive by definition. Such pedagogy wants to see transactional relationships between pupils with different cultural, ethnic, religious etc. backgrounds flourish. John Hull has so convincingly stated that religious education is not restricted to the teaching of Christianity but has a multi-faith perspective. To quote his own words on this issue: “Christians in education are not there to advance their own cause or to win selfish recognition for their own faith, but they are there to serve” (Hull 1998, 6).

Regarding religious education I prefer to use the concept ‘worldview’ with ‘religion’ as a sub-concept of it, and define it as the system, which is always subject of changes, of implicit and explicit views and feelings of an individual in relation to human life. ‘Views and feelings in relation to human life’ can refer to everything with which people can be occupied and consider important to them. In empirical research with students we use a short ‘stipulative definition,’ namely: “A worldview is the way one looks at life” (Bertram-Troost, De Roos & Miedema 2006). Using the concept of ‘worldview’ may help to avoid *strong secularist approaches* against religion, which want to leave religious education out of the curriculum of the school *in toto*. Everyone has at least a personal worldview that may or may not be directly influenced by an organized worldview, and this should be taken into account pedagogically as we have claimed elsewhere (see Van der Kooij, De Ruyter & Miedema 2013). The concept ‘worldview’ – a view on life, the world, and humanity - can also prevent *exclusivist claims* leading, for example, to preferential argumentation in paying attention only to one religion, for instance the Christian one. Both cases can be interpreted as universalistic worldviews or religious claims against, for instance, the universal claim in human rights of self-development and self-appropriation. *A thick conception of worldview education* includes teaching and learning about and from worldviews, and this in contrast with a thin conception which is just teaching and learning about worldviews.

I use the following conceptualization of the notion of ‘worldview education’ (Miedema 2012b, 78-79):

“Worldview education is that part of personhood education of children and youngsters that focuses on the more or less systematic intentional as well as non-intentional meaning-making processes, relationships and practices. Here different aspects come into play, be it cognitive, affective-emotional, volitional et cetera. All personhood

education in schools is inherently worldview-laden, because it has to do with meaning-presenting, meaning-giving, meaning-making, meaning-taking and meaning-in-action.”

Fostering worldview education can be pedagogically considered as an integral part of personhood education and can form a substantial and integral part of the curriculum of every school. Worldview education should not be conceptualized exclusively in knowledge-based or cognitive terms. In that case schools organize stand-alone activities which only provide so-called neutral or objective information about a worldview or about different worldviews, for example in a teaching and learning-about approach, most of the time embedded in a religious studies paradigm.

The teaching and learning about approach does not provide optimal conditions for active and dynamic personhood education as I outlined earlier. Besides, in worldview education the acquiring of worldview experiences and worldview attitudes should not be separated from the wider processes of obtaining other experiences and attitudes. Any artificial distinction between the domain of worldviews and other domains of experience should be precluded. Explicit presentation and representation of a rich and plural array of worldview ‘subject matter’ in the form of frames of reference, models, practices, rituals, and narratives is an essential prerequisite for making individuation possible on the basis of socialization processes. These presentations and representations are not intended to be simply transmitted by the teachers and internalized by the pupils in their presented or represented form. *They can be offered to the pupils as potential transformative material.* Such an interaction between the presented material and the pupils is characterized by a non-dogmatic, non-compelling ‘openness’, which offers pupils multiple possibilities for the formation of their own personhood. Contrary to the notion of the school as an institution for the linear

transmission of knowledge, skills, beliefs or worldviews, schools should function as communities of diverse practices. In such schools the pupils can learn to see each other as citizens of the embryonic, the mini society of the school community. The pupils can learn in and through that community that they are responsible for one another and must pursue their common ends through dialogue, participation and cooperation.

Personhood formation through worldview education can be supported by the encouragement of a critical-evaluative attitude on the part of the pupils. Unquestioned acceptance, or non-reflective, full identification with the views of the teachers is not an appropriate practice for the development of successful worldview formation on the basis of personhood education. Rather, the focus should be upon the growth of the potentiality for an active and critical reconstruction of different and differing perspectives in terms of ideals, norms, values, knowledge, narratives or beliefs. Such practices and processes in school will enhance the capacity of the pupils to integrate these perspectives into their own personality, promote the ongoing organization and reorganization of their perspectives, and form resources for the reconstruction of the self, for self-transcendence.

It is my contention that there is a dynamic balance, equilibrium in this conceptualization of worldview education between the three aspects of qualification, socialization and personhood formation. The qualification aspects are not isolated, and on a cognitive level only, but are functioning culturally as well. Honoring the social and group aspects of worldview, adaptation in terms of proselytizing cannot be the goal here, but the social and socializing aspects are a function of the flourishing of the worldview personhood of the pupil. Finally, personhood formation is not defined in monadic terms, isolated from the surrounding context, but conceptualized from within the intertwinement with the two other aspects.

Religion and worldview in the secular age

On the level of society at large and of Europe, there are sustaining powers at work. Most of the former defenders of the so-called secularization theory, for example Peter Berger, acknowledge now that today this theory is in need of sophistication (Berger 1999; Berger, Davie & Fokas 2008). In contrast to developments in the 1960s and 1970s, religious growth has been more persistent and on a larger global scale than was expected. The dramatic events of '9/11' have given an extra impetus to the debate on the place and role of religion in the public sphere, nationally, in Europe and globally (Miedema 2012a).

Besides, during the last decade great thinkers like Charles Taylor, Martha Nussbaum and Jürgen Habermas have addressed the importance of religion in the public sphere. In liberal-democratic societies, according to Habermas, mutual learning processes and dialogue between religious and secular citizens should flourish. The state needs to take a positive stance towards the contributions of religious communities and persons in the public domain because they can provide liberal-democratic societies with important and necessary sources for attributing and creating meaning. Due to this meaning-giving unique contribution of religion and worldview they should be included in the public sphere (Habermas 2001; 2008; Habermas and Ratzinger 2006; see on the advantage of Habermas' above Rawls' view Shabani 2011).

Charles Taylor (Taylor 2007) has pointed to the secular age in a very particular sense that is with a focus on the conditions of belief. This form of secularity focuses on "a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace. (...) Secularity in this sense is a matter of the whole context of understanding (i.e. matters explicitly

formulated by almost everyone, such as the plurality of options, and some which form the implicit, largely unfocussed background of this experience and this search) in which our moral, spiritual or religious experience and search takes place” (p. 3). That most people are looking and longing for meaning in life is a characteristic of our secular age, Taylor says. Their pilgrimage should be taken seriously, and it is important to encourage them to pursue their search to the end and to facilitate their journey, while also taking into account the plurality of spiritual choices people make (see the interview with Taylor in Jacobs & Overdijk 2011, 311-312).

Martha Nussbaum (2012) has convincingly surveyed the politics of fear in an anxious age and uncovered the roots of ugly fears and suspicions that disfigure today all Western societies. Nussbaum describes fear “as a primitive emotion. ...All it requires is some rudimentary orientation toward survival and well-being, and an ability to become aroused by what threatens them” (Nussbaum 2012, 25). As one of the motto’s of her book, she quotes Iris Murdoch, who states that: “Anxiety most of all characterizes the human animal. This is perhaps the most general name for all the vices at a certain mean level of their operation. It is a kind of cupidity, a kind of fear, a kind of envy, a kind of hate. Fortunate are they who are even sufficiently aware of this problem to make the smallest efforts to check this dimming preoccupation...” (Nussbaum 2012, vii). Nussbaum challenges us to expand our capacity for empathetic imagination by cultivating our curiosity, seeking friendship across religious lines, and establishing a consistent ethic of decency and civility. Based on greater understanding and respect we can overcome the politics of fear toward more openness and inclusivity.

This positive support also stimulates a few burning questions. What is the impact of these views on the position and function of religious/worldview edu-

education in public and private/denominational schools? Should religious education be banned from or neglected in public schools, or should religion and worldview be included in the core curriculum? Should the state deny funds to religiously affiliated schools if religious education is characterized as a private matter? Here the relationship of state and religion is at stake, and we need to keep in mind that there is a difference between that relationship and the relationship of state and church, that is institutionally organized relationships of religious or worldview communities and the state. Should all schools recognize that citizenship education necessarily includes teaching about and from an approach that aims at the religious/worldview identity formation of the pupils? In what way do religious communities foster the identity formation of their children and young people with an eye on their participation in, being able to take critical stance to, and contribute to the necessary transformations of social and public spaces?

Educators and religious educators have to face these questions and challenges explicitly now from the aim of religious/worldview identity formation of pupils. It is my contention that here we need to reflect anew on the different modes of exploration, commitment, and participation that might result from religious or worldview education in schools, but also distinguish more adequate between belief, faith and worldview if we want to do justice to what Taylor has so convincingly characterized as ‘options’.

Although I am positive about these developments, we need to stay alert also at the European level. Just take the *Signposts – Policy and practice for teaching about religions and non-religious world views in intercultural education* book that was published in August 2014 (Jackson 2014). It is the result of an expert group that since 2008 was working at the European level on a document aiming at formulating guidelines and indications how to deal with religions and worldviews within the context of intercultural education in schools. *Signposts*

brings the discussion on the place of religious education in Europe a firm step further. Just a brief sketch how at the European level was dealt before this publication with religion and education. In 2002 the debates started on intercultural education and the place of religion as part of that in the Council of Europe. Till '9/11' religion was regarded as just a private matter. The tragic events of '9/11' broke the ground for a growing concern that religion is an issue that should be dealt with in the public square too. In 2002 a project started on the religious dimension of intercultural education with the aim to foster the understanding in schools of pupils of religions and beliefs in education, and to make them also attentive to the misuse and discordant sides of religion.

I will just make a few comments on this important and programmatic book. After 2002 the undifferentiated concept 'religion' was used. For reasons of inclusivity gradually the notion 'non-religious convictions' was introduced next to religion. In the book this is further developed into the phrase 'religions and non-religious world views', and in education these should be dealt with in an integrated way. The aim is to stimulate mutual respect, intercultural understanding and dialogue and encounter between pupils in the safe space of the school by using dialogical methods that relate to the lifeworld of the pupils. Pupils should meet a plurality of religious and/or worldview positions in schools and on the basis of knowledge, skills and attitudes be able to develop the competencies to deal with this. Such an approach could also be linked to education for democratic citizenship and human rights education. Although, the embracing notion 'worldview' with religion as sub-concept as well as the distinction of organized and personal worldview is dealt with, in the conceptualization – see also the title of the book – religion is not defined as a specific worldview, and the 'rest' is still defined in religious terms, namely as 'non-religious worldviews'. So, the approach is still very strongly focused on the knowledge side and not on the personhood formation of the pupils. In my

view, the emphasis is still too strong oriented at the socializing and qualifying aims of religious education, and religious education is still in function of other aims – for example social cohesion, security, citizenship education, intercultural education, human rights education - and not interpreted as a pedagogical domain *sui generis*.

In conclusion

My answer on the question “DOES EUROPE NEED RELIGIOUS EDUCATION? Living and learning in ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse Europe” is a firm ‘yes’. In this presentation I have given pedagogical as well as political underpinnings for my stance. I have done this by criticizing neo-liberal trends in society and schools, by pleading for a broad connotation of the concept of ‘Bildung’, the necessity of a comprehensive transformative pedagogical paradigm forming a filter for penetrating and even colonizing societal and political powers, and adhering to the arguments that emphasize the importance of religions and worldviews in the public and social domain. Yes, there is the need and there are growing possibilities, but we should be still alert for the sake of the formation of the pupils learning and living in an ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse Europe.

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