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On Time. Continuity and Necessary Changes in Religious Education. An Epilogue

Introduction

The title of this ENRECA volume, the most recent output of a network active since 1999, points to religious education on the move and in the subtitle the unknown future is challenged. So, the focus of this book is at least on the present and the future state of religious education. It does not come as a surprise that the encompassing concept of this volume is ‘time’, and this is explained at length in the introductory chapter by Bakker and Ter Avest.

In earlier ENRECA volumes dealing with religious education in context, the spatial dimension got full attention focusing on national as well as European developments and elaborating for instance on the impact of diversity and on the competences required to deal with it, or on the importance of context as such (e.g. Heimbrock et al. 2001; Skeie et al. 2013). Now ‘time’ as a contextual factor and the different understandings and interpretations of this concept form the focus of the group of collaborating authors. However, in the introduction it is stated that although time and space can analytically be clearly distinguished as contextual factors, these two dimensions of context can hardly be separated from each other.

Four perspectives or dimensions on time are distinguished, which are also interpreted as specific dimensions of understanding: a) time as Chronos is universal, objective, measurable and quantifiable, the sequential and linear aspects of time are involved; b) time as Kairos is time as it is experienced by persons with impact on remembering and meaning-giving or has to do with shared and remarkable points in time; pedagogical situations and relations might entail kairotic moments and deliver kairotic experiences; c) the temporal dimension of hope is presented in the introductory chapter as a sub-dimension of both Chronos-time and Kairos-time, because it is seen as “an essential ingredient of education and particularly *religious* education”; d) the temporal dimension of tradition, which is also a sub-dimension of Kairos-time and Chronos-time, can make us aware of a more temporally fixed or a changing position of the role and content of tradition(s).

The book is divided in three parts. Part I is entitled ‘Empirical Research on Time and Religion in the Lives of Young People’. The focus of Part II is on ‘Past Traditions and Future Prospects in Young People’s Lives’, and Part III is dealing with ‘The Future of RE’. Having read the different chapters of the three parts more than once, it is still not easy for me to understand the positioning of

some chapters under the heading of a particular part. The chapters in themselves, however, are very interesting and of great relevance both with an eye on the state-of-art of RE and on desiderata for the future.

In my meta-reflection in this Epilogue I will especially focus on the time aspect of Chronos and of Kairos. Chronos makes it possible to approach developments on the time schedule in a descriptive and more objective or at least intersubjective way. I will distinguish here between the macro, the meso and the micro level. Thus, my question is here what in the chapters of this volume are the developments in religious education that can be traced and have emerged along linear lines of development? Is it possible to describe certain existing trends and tendencies? I will sketch some, in my view, important past developments and also developments that have crystalized in the current situation and form the state-of-art. Besides, what might be expected of the future in terms of continuity and continuation of the present state, is also influenced by past and present. Thus, what developments within the ‘normal practices’ - to paraphrase Thomas Kuhn’s distinction between normal and revolutionary science here (Kuhn 1970) – in the lifeworld, in academia and in politics can be expected from the perspective of continuity?

For the Kairos time, in contrast, I will especially look in the chapters of this book for experiences of the right or decisive moment in time, the moment of truth, when, according to authors, a different view, a reaction or an action is urgently required. Here I also distinguish between a systemic or macro level, and a meso or micro level. When are the authors of the opinion that ‘revolutionary practices’ in the lifeworld, in academia and in politics are really necessary? Do the authors see such kinds of momenta for RE now in 2020, do they point to the right or decisive moment of truth when a particular view, reaction or action is needed, and at what level? Are revolutionary changes really necessary in their view? I am mostly interested in the Kairos aspects that could be interpreted as the need for unavoidable and necessary action; aspects that invite us as readers, as religious educators to come to reflection and action with a strong commitment to change, because this could be interpreted as the decisive moment in time.

It is my aim too, that with my meta-reflection on Chronos time and Kairos time I also provide issues for a further agenda for religious and worldview education in general, and more specifically for future activities of the ENRECA-Network.

Chronos time

The first remarkable Chronos-trend that I notice in this volume is at the macro level and has to do with the necessity to continue and to repeat the urgent plea for a place for religion and worldview in the public square. Already in 2001, the German sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas pointed to the importance

of mutual learning processes and dialogue between religious and secular citizens in liberal-democratic societies. According to Habermas, 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 its unique meaning-giving contribution religion should be included in the public sphere (Habermas 2001; 2008; Habermas & Ratzinger 2006).

In his first small booklet completely dedicated to religion titled *Varieties of Religion Today. William James Revisited* (Taylor 2002), as it turned out a preparatory study for his 2007 magnum opus *A Secular Age* (Taylor 2007), the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor posed the question ‘What is the meaning of religion today?’ Although Taylor fully acknowledged the strong individualized nature of the spiritual direction individuals are taking today, he is doubtful whether this implies by definition that any relation with religious communities is completely missing (the meso level), and he doubts whether there is no relation with religion whatsoever in the factual life of individuals within the public and the political domain (the macro level) (Miedema 2006; 2014).

Already in his doctoral dissertation (Schreiner 2012), and also in his chapter in this volume Schreiner is dealing with religion in the public domain and the threats he notices at a European level. He convincingly shows that the marginalization of religion in the public square is immediately affecting the position of religion and worldview education in the school setting of the social domain (the macro level implications for the meso level).

Debates on the macro as well as on the meso level regarding RE can stimulate creativity and change of traditions in a positive way. Dealing with the transition to more sustainable forms of RE in the social domain and thus tackling internal and external criticism on the way confessional RE is shaped in Germany, he offers a pedagogical alternative. Schreiner is referring to an approach in Germany to strengthen the promotion of more cooperation and dialogue in RE under the heading of ‘confessional, cooperative and contextual’. It is at the meso level, and in line with Habermas’ view to let mutual learning processes and dialogue flourish, a plea for multi- or interreligious education in schools and for dialogue between students from different religions and worldviews to strengthen the ability to really encounter ‘others’ inside and outside the school. One could ask whether this development need not be classified under the heading of Kairos time. My answer is ‘no’, because already since 1994 several publications in Germany appeared with a plea for intercultural and interreligious education also inspired by the practices of the interreligious Juliana van Stolberg School in Ede, the Netherlands (see for a brief historical sketch on this issue in Germany Miedema 2017, pp. 88ff.; for the school in Ede see Ter Avest 2009).

The mainstream societal view on religion, also embodied in state politics, and strongly based on earlier experiences of an atheistic Soviet totalitarian regime, can still influence the view of 16–18 years Estonians dealing with ‘religion in fifty years’ and thus with the future of religion. In 2007 Pille Valk already showed in a REDCo-publication that just after the collapse of the Soviet occupation there was a rapid rise of religious interest and activity because the church was the most trusted institution in society then, but this rise was soon followed by a steep fall (Valk 2007). Three of the five different discourses Schihalejev found in her research among this age group represented the negativity towards religion: religion as rigid conservatism, or associated with a lack of education, and Estonians as naturally non-religious. The other two are ‘religion as individual enterprise’ with very limited acceptance of organized religion, and the most positive one ‘growing tolerance for religion’ both on an individual and corporative level. With an eye on the future of RE this secular and even anti-religious context should be seriously taken into account when teaching RE in schools in the hope that notwithstanding existing constraints on the macro, the meso and the micro level tolerance towards religion might grow.

On the macro level there can also be growing state control and state prescriptive power influences as Gürlesin makes clear in his contribution. Since the 1980s in the Friday sermons of Turkish and Dutch mosques certain changes have taken place due to influences and debates in the public square in Turkey with impact in Turkey but also in the mosques in the Netherlands. He characterizes these changes as nationalist and authoritarian tendencies. Religion in the Turkish and Dutch mosques become functionalized in the service of the view of the Turkish state on religion. The separation of church (mosque) and state has disappeared, and in the relation of state and religion the relationship has turned into state-religion undermining the autonomy of both religious communities as well as the religiosity of individuals.

Related to the first trend is *the second Chronos-trend*, that is whether there is still a relationship between individual religiosity and religious communities, the private and the social religious domain (see also Taylor). It is very interesting to see that Ipgrave is able to show on the basis of empirical research that in the period from 2006 to 2016 from qualitative research data it becomes clear that young people greatly express religious issues in strong communal terms and with reference to traditional forms of religion, coming from the family (especially from grandparents, while their parents formed a weak link to religiosity), or from a faith community. In the future they also want to hand it over to their own children. The young people were at the same time fully aware of the impact of rationalization, pluralization, scientific and technical advances and moral relativism in society. These insights show a stronger communal than personalized impact and the lasting influences of traditions embodied by religious communities. Past,

present and future come together here in the lives of these young people. The conclusion is that the individuality of religiosity is not the winner who takes it all, and that traditional forms of religion may still have impact in the formation of religious personhood formation. More contextualized empirical research is needed to get a clear and insightful understanding of states-of-the art.

A *third Chronos-trend* is the pedagogical focus on the private domain in terms of the formation of a personal worldview or as it is sometimes named the formation of a personal life orientation. The distinction between personal and organized worldview and worldview as the encompassing concept of religion became more and more in use recently in the field of religious education (Van der Kooij et al. 2013). Also, in line with Ipgrave's research results, it is interesting to see when there are interrelationships taken into account between aspects of organized or established (religious) worldviews in the formation of personal worldviews and when not. Van den Berg is dealing with pupils in primary education and is using Biblical narratives to challenge the children in a dialogical, imaginative and reflective way to develop their personal life orientation. Here traditional Christian texts and narratives are used to challenge the personhood formation of the pupils in primary schools.

The chapter by Sporre, Franck, Lilja and Osbeck is pointing to a *fourth Chronos-trend*, that is intertwining religious and/or worldview education with other forms of education in the school setting and figuring out what this should mean for the organization of subject matters in the curriculum. The four authors are elaborating on the already established position of ethics education in religious education in the Nordic countries, and hold that a distinction between substantive and procedural knowledge and the intertwining of the two may be helpful in respect to the content of the curriculum and to ethical competence. There are more approaches for intertwining different forms of education. For example, religious/worldview education and citizenship education (Miedema 2014); citizenship education, worldview education and human rights education (Miedema & Bertram-Troost 2014); and moral education and worldview education (Van der Kooij, De Ruyter & Miedema 2015). These domains of education are all strongly based at the side of humaniora or human sciences, and it would be a worthwhile challenge to explore whether intertwining could also be possible in the case of natural and health sciences and their related subject matters in primary and secondary education to provide even more integrated curricula.

Kairos time

In the introduction of this Epilogue I made a distinction between Kairos time on a systemic or macro level, and on a meso or micro level. I will first pay attention to *kairotic moments or events at the meso and/or micro level*.

Both Van der Zande and Leonhard refer to the concept of ‘a pedagogy of interruption’ as it is introduced by Gert Biesta who is inspired here by the writings of Emmanuel Levinas (Biesta 2014). In the interruption of being-with-yourself, according to Biesta, the human being is taking responsibility in the relationship that already exists for the personal other. In such relationships the uniqueness of the subject acquires meaning in a process of subjectification, or as he sometimes coins this ‘personhood formation’.

In Van der Zande’s case the students are invited to take reflective responsibility for their own process of subjectification/personhood formation within the context of a half-year minor programme ‘Philosophy. World Religions, Spirituality’ as part of their professionalization at the Utrecht University of Applied Sciences. The minor embodies pedagogical interruption. There is no teleological outcome formulated by the supervisors. So, what the affect is on individual students could not be predicted in advance.

Leonard is dealing with religious celebrations in a public secondary school and describes a crucial biographical disruption: the death of a young adolescent Muslim boy caused by a serious accident, and the memorial ceremony that followed. In the first case the focus is on the personal student, in the second also on individual students but on the school as a community too. In Van der Zande’s case the interruption is consciously planned, and in Leonard’s case ceremonial interruption is planned after the disruptive accident took place. But in both cases the affect on the students and the community could not be predicted.

In her chapter Ter Avest is focusing on a biographical disruptive moment. In her case it has to do with the moment in the lives of the wives of first generation Turkish and Moroccan guest workers arriving in the Netherlands in the 1960s and 1970s. What was the impact on them of their disruptive experiences and what kind of repercussions did these have on the upbringing and school choice for their children? What were the transgenerational influences of these disruptive experiences? Thus, the focus is on the kairoitic influences and experiences of the women and their children.

The difference between Van der Zande and Leonard on the one side and Ter Avest on the other side is that in the first case a pedagogy of interruption was intentionally practised. In Ter Avest’s case a more observational psychological approach seems to be practised. Is the difference between a pedagogical and a psychological approach perhaps that in the first case a pedagogical intervention takes place in the form of a planned interruption and in the latter not?

Should a potential kairoitic moment always be used from a pedagogy of interruption point of view? That is the issue Gustavsson is dealing with while focusing on vulnerability in the classroom and in research with an eye on religious education. Using three serious existential and personal experiences from her own biography, she is dealing with the need for some Chronos, that is consid-

ering context and content, to find out whether there is perhaps a right, a kairotic moment to share one's vulnerability. However, it might also be that sometimes pedagogical insights result in the conclusion that the occasion is not the right, the kairotic moment. Here, in my view, the notion of 'pedagogical tact' in the sense of the Dutch-Canadian pedagogue Max van Manen is really appropriate. It has to do with one's thoughtfulness and one's ability to act towards pupils and young people with tactfulness, that is open to their experiences, attuned to their subjectivity, holding back, showing situational confidence, showing itself as improvisational gift and with subtle influence (Van Manen 1990, pp. 168–170).

At the *macro or systemic level*, a very impressive kairotic event for me is the broad societal debate in the UK on the 2018 national plan for RE written by the Commission on Religious Education (CoRE 2018). Schreiner deals with this event extensively in his chapter. I like to quote him here because he emphasizes the importance of this kairotic event and not only for the UK. "The RE situation there is a leading and thought-provoking case for other contexts too. The development in England is particularly informative when you take into account the self-understanding of many academics in England. Many are convinced that their approach to RE has a pivotal role for others who could/should use the English RE approach as a good example for future developments in their own context. [...]. Another reason for looking to the situation of RE in England is the relatively broad public debate in society about Religious Education. This is rare in other countries. Where else do you find bodies of civil society such as the Religious Education Council bringing together 70 organisations, associations and other RE stakeholders? Or where else do you have an All Parliamentary Group for Religious Education (APPG) that acts as an advocate for RE on a political level? Although these are valuable elements for RE, England is also a case where the general trend of marginalisation RE can be observed." (Schreiner this volume, p. 35).

This kairotic event, in my opinion, calls for the stimulation and organization of such broad public debates in other countries as well and for learning from each other's experiences and insights.

Another kairotic and thought-provoking contribution *both at the systemic and the meso level* in this volume is written by Skeie. He is dealing with the future function of religious education research as such and "in relation to theory and practice and in the light of the past-present-future perspective" (p. 47). In the introduction he makes the following statement: "From a 'Chronos'-perspective, the research-based knowledge we produce in order to manage future challenges, actually belongs to the past" (Skeie this volume, p. 48). He is very critical from a Chronos-perspective on the practice and politics of mainstream research and is proposing an alternative for the future.

Interestingly enough and honestly speaking to my astonishment too, his kairotic proposal is, in my opinion, greatly in line with a more classical or old-school natural and health sciences approach. He explicitly states that he finds some potential here for religious education research. However, it seems that with his proposal he goes back to the earlier stages of the epistemology of philosophy of science in his positive reference to the interfield theories approach of Darden and Maull (1977). They want to bridge two fields of science, thus solving theoretical problems along the lines of reduction, unity and progress in science, and also predicting new domains for scientific research in for instance cytology, genetics and biochemistry. It even reminds me of aspects of the idea of unified science as stated in the *Wissenschaftliche Weltauffassung Der Wiener Kreis* written by Carnap, Hahn and Neurath (Mach 1929).

What are his other kairotic suggestions to strengthen religious education research in the future? Religious education research could profit more from theoretical and empirical insights gained in the field of education and religious studies. I fully agree here, but this is already the case, and thus in my terms Chronos. My own work, for example, as a philosopher of education, a philosopher of science and philosopher of religion (not being a theologian) has since 1993 been on the interrelation of pedagogy and religion/worldview (see e.g. Miedema 2018, pp. 144–146), and I am not the only one. More academics have dealt with these two domains explicitly. The same holds for religious studies and religious education.

Following the trend of positioning the academic discipline of religious education as a stronger research-oriented and research-based enterprise, and striving for international knowledge transfer (Schweitzer & Schreiner 2019), Skeie is pointing to the delicate equilibrium of holding together both professionalization and normative demands in terms of ethical dilemmas and relevancy for society and human life. Here we have the earlier mentioned relationship of theory and practice.

He is expecting much from systematic reviews that could provide researchers with input for ‘consensus conferences’ that may result in further contributions to religious education research and to educational policy. However positive this may sound, I fear, that he is underestimating the incompatibility and incommensurability at the level of theory, method and data in religious education research itself and in research from other disciplines dealing with education/religious education (see Kuhn 1970).

In his concluding remarks he notices that “research and politics are at the crossroads [...]” and that “policy, practice and research (form a triangle with corners all dependent on each other)”. I fully agree with this statement, however, I am hesitant whether the road Skeie has outlined is the most fruitful kairotic way to go for religious education research. What do I have in mind here?

At the ISREV-2016 conference in Chicago, I created momentum for, in my view, the need for religious educators to act as public intellectuals. This is necessary, in my opinion, because religious educators and educationalists are nearly invisible in the public arena characterized as it is by clashes of power-knowledge, by knowledge-politics. We might think that our arguments for the need of religious/worldview education are self-evident and do not require directing attention to this need of a wider public. However, we definitely need to voice our views in the public square, otherwise other parties will take our scarce space, for example loud-voiced diehard secularists. What also might be helpful is to try from a pedagogical-strategical perspective to position new generations of educationalists and religious educators as gate-watchers in governmental and semi-governmental organizations and institutions to voice from within our 'know-how' and 'know-that'. My pedagogical, theological and political manifesto was a call on religious educators especially in academia, in religious communities and working as civil servants to act as public intellectuals in society at large. Thus, what we really need now is religious educators acting in society at large as public intellectuals for the benefit of children and youngsters to support them in developing their self-responsible self-determination, their personhood in education and in religious and worldviews education. I ended my manifesto as follows: Please let us all take our responsibility in the place where we are or will be located nationally and globally! (Miedema 2019).

In my presentation in the Berlin-Consultation on International Knowledge Transfer in Religious Education in October 2018 (Miedema 2020 in prep.), I reflected on relevant knowledge and valorization. I dealt with the pros and cons of crossing the national borderlines and have especially pointed to the dangers of exclusively focusing on internationalization and an international forum to the detriment of the national contexts and debates.

Academically speaking, comparing cross-national theoretical, historical and quantitative as well as quantitative empirical findings have the benefit of offering at least hermeneutical frameworks for more adequate insights in national contexts, debates and policies. That is really positive, because it may strengthen policy-making and decision-making in respect to practice approaches. However, the core question I pose, is whether there is enough in for practices and politics. My example was my Dutch REDCo-experience. Did our work really have impact in political and governmental decision making and in educational practices from the perspective of valorization?

I am in favour of an interrelated view on the relationship of lifeworld, academia and politics, and so I criticize certain dangers of self-centred and internally driven academic research practices. Which direction should we go from? I suggest the following ones: strengthening the hermeneutical potentialities with an eye on transferability of outcomes also with a focus on the contextual and the

particular; promoting a Science in Transition or Open Science approach, that is working closely together with relevant societal partners/stakeholders in the context of discovery, the context of justification and the context of application; interpret valorization of outcomes/results/insights no longer as a by-product of academic practices but as a core outcome; stay away from perverse neo-liberal and market-oriented practices; emphasize the importance of both quality (reliability; comprehensibility) and relevancy (validity; transferability; valorization); focus on research programmes *in toto* instead of on the performances of individual researchers. It is my hope that these strategies will strengthen our view on and practices of focusing on relevant knowledge and the valorization in religious education both nationally as well as internationally.

Suggestions for a further agenda

Based on the above formulated Chronos trends and Kairos moments and events and combining some of these, I formulate the following issues for a further agenda for religious and worldview education in general, and also as future topics for the ENRECA-Network:

- We should strongly continue the plea for an open, that is liberal-democratic place of religion and worldview in the public square in all countries. Religious educators as public intellectuals should support, stimulate or should help to organize broad public debates on religion and worldview in society and the need for religious and worldview education in the school setting. As academics we need to make convincingly clear that our research is in the service of educational and political practices, working together with a broad variety of stakeholders or partners, and what this will mean for our academic self-understanding.
- Pedagogically speaking the aim of RE/WV is religious or worldview personhood formation. But the input is indirectly or directly always provided by religious and worldview communities, and from related sources. What could be the importance of a changed role and accommodated subject matter for religious and worldview communities and institutions? So, what might be fruitful revitalizations of the relationship of individuality and sociality, so important in the work of Dewey and Langeveld (see Miedema 2018)?
- Intertwining several domains of education, thus providing more integrated curricula, can strengthen the place and role of religious and worldview education. Next to forms of education based on the humaniora or human sciences, it might be explored how intertwinement could also be possible with the input of natural and health sciences and their related subject matters in primary and secondary education.

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