Public Religious Pedagogy – An Emerging New Paradigm?[1]

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Abstract

This essay outlines the recent development and basic aspects of the concept of "Public Religious Pedagogy" in Germany. In the German context the academic discipline that addresses the intersection of religion and education is called "Religionspädagogik" – which I will translate as "Religious Pedagogy". It is predominantly conceptualized as a theological discipline that deals with matters of the religion-education-relationship in the public sphere as well as in church contexts. Within the public sphere Religious Pedagogy usually has a strong focus on Religious Education (RE), which is an ordinary subject in the majority of German schools. Against the backdrop of the resurgence of the public relevance of religion(s) in Western societies the concept of "Public Religious Pedagogy" has arisen from the strongly-felt necessity that the public responsibility and political dimension of RE should be taken more seriously than it used to be over the past thirty years. However, as the essay shows, references to the public relevance of the Christian faith and to public theology in RE discourse go back much further, and offer interesting aspects for present conceptual questions.

1. Introduction: Public Religious Pedagogy ('Öffentliche Religionspädagogik') – an Emerging New Paradigm in the Field of Education and Religion?

In Germany, the academic discipline that addresses the intersection of religion and education is called "Religionspädagogik" – which I will translate as *Religious Pedagogy*. It is predominantly conceptualized as a theological discipline that deals with matters of the religion-education-

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relationship in the public realm as well as in church contexts. Within the public realm Religious Pedagogy usually has a strong focus on the school subject of Religious Education (RE). According to Art. 7 of the German Constitution ("Basic Law") RE must be an ordinary school subject that is conducted "in accordance with the religious communities", which means that the churches or other religious bodies are responsible for the goals, contents and teacher education for RE in cooperation with state authorities. Although, consequently, RE is confessional in most of the German "Länder" (federal states) – with alternative ethics classes for those who make use of their opt-out right – it is fundamentally conceived of by the major Christian churches as a form of diaconical service for the benefit of *all* young people and thus of the common good. Both the Roman-Catholic and the Protestant churches in Germany have emphasized that in RE pupils should learn to make their own free decisions, develop their own power of critical judgment in religious matters and learn from other religions and worldviews – at least partly together with pupils from other faiths and none.[2] Beyond RE at school, other objects of Religious Pedagogy in the public realm include school education in general, faith-based schools, public media, adult education (in universities, academies and communal educational institutions) and pre-school education. In all these fields research in Religious Pedagogy focuses on links between religion and education, but also on using theological perspectives to illuminate public educational discourse. In this sense, Religious Pedagogy is generally very close to public theology. However, this was not always the case. Recent developments have led to an intensified rediscovery and revaluation of the political dimension of RE and this has also regenerated and deepened the links to public theology. These trends have promoted the emergence of the concept of "Public Religious Pedagogy", which seems to have the potential to become a new paradigm in the field of Religious Pedagogy. In the following, I will briefly

[2] In their latest official statements on RE the Protestant and the Catholic churches in Germany have envisaged an ideal of RE that opens up to co-operative teaching between the different denominations as well as with RE run by other religions and with ethics groups (Kirchenamt der EKD, 2014; Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, 2016; Kirchenamt der EKD, 2018).

outline these developments from the post-war period onwards in order to show how (the cause of) public theology and religious education in Germany have been historically intertwined and to provide the necessary context to appreciate the current discourse that surrounds the concept and practice of Public Religious Pedagogy. I will conclude by formulating some major chances and challenges that I perceive in the present situation.

2. Public Theology and Religious Pedagogy – an Evolving Relationship

After World War II, the major churches in Germany expressed their awareness that – despite the resistance of some church leaders and committed Christians – they had not sufficiently exercised their public responsibility during the National Socialist reign. Catholic as well as Protestant churches demonstrated their willingness to engage more in political and societal affairs. This happened most visibly in the educational field by establishing church-run "academies", in which fundamental and urgent questions and problems of society and politics should be discussed. At present there are 27 Catholic and 17 Protestant academies of this kind that make well-recognized contributions to public discourse, the oldest one, the Protestant Academy Bad Boll, dating back to 1945.

While the public role of the churches was being theologically discussed[3] and found its expression in church commitment and official pronouncements on various aspects of society and politics, the school subject of RE remained quite apolitical. For the most part it followed a kerygmatic or hermeneutic concept that almost exclusively focused on the Bible and endeavoured to communicate the gospel without any serious grounding in educational theory and with limited reference to the pupils' life world. The decisive turn of RE and Religious Pedagogy in Germany is connected with the student revolts of the 1960s. At that time RE became a favourite object of hostility, as it was deemed a symbol of reactionary conservatism,

[3] Among the earliest contributions are Thielicke (1947) and Gerstenmaier, Berg & Krimm (1948).

authoritarian church interference and anti-liberal manipulation. The upheavals and critical movements in society were academically mirrored and fuelled by Critical Theory in philosophy (e.g. Theodor Adorno, Jürgen Habermas), critical and emancipatory concepts in educational theory (e.g. Klaus Mollenhauer, Herwig Blankertz), and – in theology – the 'New Political Theology' (e.g. Johann Baptist Metz, Dorothee Sölle, Jürgen Moltmann), which can be regarded as a kind of precursor of public theology. In this context, a paradigm shift in Religious Pedagogy, primarily with reference to RE at schools, came about. Under the key concept of a 'problem-centered RE' issues from the pupils' life world, from society and from global challenges were integrated into the RE curriculum, and objectives such as maturity, emancipation and critical judgment were adopted in an effort to justify RE as compatible with the general goals of public school education and as a school subject on an equal footing with other subjects. It is in this historical setting that the notion of "public theology" appeared for the first time – several years before Martin Marty (1974a, pp. 332–359; 1974b, pp. 139–157) used it, who is usually credited with having introduced the term to theological discourse. In 1966, a new ecumenical book series titled "theologia publica" was established that was to grow to fourteen volumes by 1970. The editors were not university theologians but rather a Catholic theologian who worked as a radio journalist, Ingo Hermann, and a professor of philosophy at the University of Education in Bonn, Heinz Robert Schlette. In their introduction to the book series they recommend St. Paul's speech on the Areopagus as model for a "theologia publica", for "theology facing the public square" (Hermann & Schlette, 1966, p. 7). They welcomed the new theological developments around the II Vatican Council and the speech of Pope Paul VI before the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York in 1965, but lamented that most preachers and religious educators still tended to use traditional vocabulary that does not appeal to people any more. For them, the context of public broadcasting with its educational intentions clearly requires a different language and a different theology, because radio sermons and lectures must address the public beyond devoted church members. The books in the series

assemble lectures, first delivered on the radio, that are intended to meet their demand for relevance.[4]

The renewed awareness of the significance of the public dimension of the Christian faith and theology in the late 1960s and the important role of educational theory in this connection can be illustrated by a book from 1970 on the relationship of practical theology and the public sphere (Cornehl & Bahr, 1970). It contains a programmatic contribution by Protestant systematic theologian Sigurd Martin Daecke entitled "The Public Dimension of Theology, Preaching and Religious Education. Notes on a Didactically Reflected *theologia publica*". Clearly influenced by the New Political Theology Daecke sketches the then recent developments as follows:

> Today, the demand comes from various sides that theology, preaching and religious education should be "public" in the way that their foundation and their contents should not exclusively be the Bible but at the same time the reality of the world. (Daecke, 1970, p. 219, my translation)

With further references to the public media, which point to the growing importance of TV at that time, he defines public theology as a theology "whose *where from* is also the empirically explorable societal and political reality; whose *where* – whose context and criterion – are also the public media; whose *where to* is the non-theologian, the layperson"; and a theology that wants to make an impact (Daecke, 1970, p. 260, my translation). For Daecke the corresponding concept for schools is a "'public' Religious Education" which is "profane, related to society, school-centered, critical, with active participation by the pupils, emancipatory" and so on (Daecke, 1970, p. 263, my translation)

[4] Among the authors are also well-known Protestant theologians of that time such as Dorothee Sölle or Hans-Dieter Bastian.

It is instructive to realize how in Daecke's contribution the necessity of a general reformation of RE is linked with the theological shift away from the Barthian "Theology of the Word of God" towards a "public", "empirical-critical" and "political" theology. Daecke also assigns significance to RE as providing resources for the practice of theology. Because "the public" is the "essential medium of theological search for truth and for Christian preaching in general" – as Daecke (1970, p. 218) quotes Johann Baptist Metz – and because theology should be intelligible for a wider interested public, in his view *didactics* (i.e. the theory of teaching and learning) gains relevance for the whole of theology. With its aim to address specific groups of people in specific situations, public theology has to answer the basic didactical questions of "where from, where, where to, to what end, why, when and who", before it can answer the question of "what".

> In other words, insights from didactics must be taken into account not only for the theory and practice of RE, but for all areas of practical theology, e.g. for preaching – and not only for practical theology, but for theology as a whole. (Daecke, 1970, p. 218, my translation)

In the 1970s, political and societal perspectives were integrated into Religious Pedagogy (and into RE at schools) in Germany, but lost importance by the end of the decade. Under the influence of postmodern trends in philosophy, mediated through the arts and theology, aesthetic aspects were pushed into the foreground in the 1980s and 1990s. However, in this context, the public relevance of religion in *popular culture* gained increasing attention in theology and Religious Pedagogy.[5] This led to a specific perspective on the public sphere with a sociological and a theological punch line. Sociologically, the numerous analyses on "religion in popular culture" and on the quasi-religious functions of popular media culture[6] contradicted those secularization theories that proclaimed that religion in modern societies would become

[5] For more detailed accounts of the following see my historical overviews in Pirner, 2001; Pirner, 2003.
[6] For overviews see Fechtner et al., 2005; Schroeter-Wittke, 2009.

progressively privatized and individualized. By contrast, it could be demonstrated that 'religion' – albeit mostly conceptualized in a wider sense – proved to be publicly present and attractive for mass media audiences. Theologically, the new cultural-hermeneutic approaches opposed mainstream theology's – in their view – elitist and biased blanket criticism against the "trivial" and "superficial" culture of popular mass media. The new theological perspective programmatically demanded a precise and differentiated perception of the various religious phenomena in the seemingly secular life and every-day world of ordinary people as well as a constructive kind of critical assessment which is also open to self-criticism and to learning from popular culture (see e.g. Gutmann, 1998, pp. 177–219).

My post-doc (habilitation) book from 2001, that developed the concept of a "media culture approach to religious education" with a special focus on TV (Pirner, 2001; see also, in English, Pirner, 2009), belongs in this current of pop-cultural approaches in theology and Religious Pedagogy. I explicitly located my perspectives in the context of public theology. With reference to David Tracy I argued for taking the public presence of religion in popular culture seriously in terms of a "public theology" and a "Religious Pedagogy with responsibility" (Pirner, 2001, p. 24).

From his international perspective, sociologist José Casanova (1994, p. 3) diagnosed an increasing "publicity" of religion already for the 1980s. He points to the Islamic revolution in Iran, the Solidarnosc-movement in Poland, the role of the Catholic church in the Sandinistic revolution in Nicaragua and the revival of Protestant fundamentalism in US politics – from a German perspective one could add the role of the Protestant churches in the process of the German re-unification. Eventually, around the turn of the millennium, the 9-11 attacks and subsequently ever increasing Islamist terror have in a dramatic and tragic way enforced the insight that religion can no longer be regarded as a "private matter". These developments as well as growing religious diversity in western societies have contributed to the rediscovery of

the public and political dimensions of religion and religious education in both theology and Religious Pedagogy in Germany over the past years. While a number of major scholars such as Karl Ernst Nipkow, Peter Biehl, Friedrich Schweitzer and Hans-Georg Ziebertz have always kept the public and political dimensions of Religious Pedagogy in mind and present in their writings (see e.g. Nipkow & Biehl, 2003; Schweitzer, 2004, 2011; Ziebertz, 2002; Ziebertz & Francis, 2011; Sjöborg & Ziebertz, 2017), I will in the following concentrate on some exemplary evidence of the aforementioned increasing rediscovery of these dimensions in recent academic discourse with explicit references to public theology.

Already at the beginning of the 1980s, Johannes Lähnemann,[7] one of the pioneers of interreligious learning in Germany, founded the conference series "Nuremberg Forums for Intercultural Encounter". These (up to the present, twelve) influential international and interreligious conferences have repeatedly placed religious education in the context of political, societal as well as global challenges. The political und public dimensions of the Nuremberg Forums can clearly be seen in the last three organizing themes: "Media Power and Religion" (2010), "Human Rights and Inter-religious Learning" (2003), and "Public Theology – Religion – Education" (2016).[8]

One of the recent protagonists to rediscover the political dimension of RE and Religious Pedagogy is Bernhard Grümme.[9] His analysis that the political dimension of RE had for a long time been neglected in academic discourse as well as in practice motivated him to write a book titled *Religious Education and Politics*, which was published in 2009. In it he dedicates one chapter to the discourse on "public religion" as well as Jürgen Habermas' recent contributions (e.g. Habermas, 2001; 2008) and explains why the political dimension is so significant for RE

[7] Johannes Lähnemann is emeritus professor of (Protestant) religious education at the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg.
[8] All three have been documented in book and journal publications (Pirner & Lähnemannm 2013; Pirner, Lähnemann & Bielefeldt, 2016; Pirner, 2017a; this volume is, together with Pirner, Lähnemann, Haussmann & Schwarz, 2018, part of the documentation of the last Nuremberg Forum).
[9] Bernhard Grümme is professor of (Catholic) religious education at the University of Bochum.

(Grümme, 2009). Meanwhile he has enlarged and concretized these perspectives in a separate book on *Educational Justice* (Grümme, 2014) and has complemented them with a collection of essays in a volume titled *Public Religious Pedagogy* (Grümme, 2015a). Consistent with the basic ideas of public theology, Grümme emphasizes that for a Religious Pedagogy which is cognizant of not being able to express truth claims authoritatively, the public square becomes the place where debates about the right and the true assume central importance. Religious Pedagogy, in his view, must be directed by public principles, namely equality, liberty, rationality and universality. It should take account of the public critical discourse and at the same time make its own constructive and critical contributions to it. However, Grümme also warns against the politicization of faith and religious education. For him, especially the prophetic motifs of the biblical tradition can guard against the political instrumentalization of faith and contribute to the critical relativization of political power as well as the temptations of civil religion (Grümme, 2015b). Grümme programmatically speaks of "Public Religious Pedagogy".

In 2009 Ingrid Schoberth[10] dedicated a special chapter in her book *Discursive Religious Pedagogy* to the public dimension and political profile of RE (2009, pp. 96–114). She argues for a necessary differentiation and liquefaction of the notion of "the public". There are, no doubt, numerous "publics", which in her view shows that conceptually "the public" should rather be understood as "the *modus* in which plurality becomes real and viable" (Schoberth, 2009, p. 99, my translation). She sees the major task of education, and also of RE, in "perceiving and promoting those public dimensions that are to be found in the life world of the young people" (Schoberth, 2009, p. 102, my translation).

[10] Ingrid Schoberth is professor of (Protestant) practical theology with a focus on religious education at the University of Heidelberg.

In 2010 Thomas Schlag[11] published a comprehensive post-doc (habilitation) book on the various relationships between Protestant Religious Pedagogy and politics with a focus on ethical learning (Schlag, 2010). He explicitly takes into account the approaches and discourses around public theology and, similarly to Grümme, engages in dialogue with the didactics of political education. Drawing on pragmatist concepts of political education on the one hand and hermeneutic theology on the other, the notions of "life conduct" (*Lebensführung*) and "life interpretation" (*Lebensdeutung*) prove to be central. He sees the task of a Protestant praxis of interpretation in "not just allocating political meaning to the contents of Protestant faith, but rather to disclose their politically relevant deep sense and with this horizon to open up margins of freedom" (Schlag, 2010, p. 494, my translation). More recently, Schlag (2012) has further developed his perspectives on public theology in a separate book on church theory titled *Public Church*.

Another post-doc book (habilitation) published in 2012 by Henrik Simojoki[12] on the challenges of "globalized religion" for religious education draws substantially on Max Stackhouse's public theology (Simojoki, 2012). Similar to Ingrid Schoberth, Simojoki emphasizes that the public sphere is diverse, but his special point is that these diverse public spheres exist in characteristic mixtures of local, regional, national and international or global dimensions. These mixtures are to a major extent facilitated by the digital media and the different forms of popular culture. When, for instance, young people in Berlin discuss Islam, their first-hand experience with local Muslims from personal encounters will be complemented by TV news about national and international Islamist terrorism as well as opinions on various forms of Islam from their online social networks. The global widening of the horizon leads Simojoki to emphasize cosmological and eschatological perspectives in theology and to challenge one-sided individualism in didactics and Religious Pedagogy.

[11] Thomas Schlag is professor of (Protestant) practical theology at the University of Zurich, Switzerland.
[12] Henrik Simojoki is professor of Protestant theology and religious education at the University of Bamberg.

Bernd Schröder[13] can be credited with having first conceptually unpacked the notion of "Public Religious Pedagogy" in his inaugural lecture at the University of Göttingen in 2012, which was published as a journal article in 2013 (Schröder, 2013). For him, Religious Pedagogy as a theological discipline is constitutively related to the public square, because most of its places of learning are and correspondingly its arguments are public, in the sense that they try to win public consent (Schröder, 2013, p. 210). With recourse to Jürgen Habermas' book *The Structural Change of the Public Sphere* (1991) – originally published in German in 1962 – Schröder on the one hand elaborates the significance of the public sphere for modern societies. On the other hand he demonstrates how the fundamental public dimension of religion, the gospel, theology and church has increasingly been recognized and emphasized in recent scholarly and societal discourse. Against this backdrop Schröder sets out the significance of the public sphere for Religious Pedagogy:

> Religious pedagogy participates in the public dimensions sketched so far. It participates receptively in the developments of a 'bourgeois public sphere' resp. of diverse public spheres, and it participates constructively in the public claim of the gospel, the church and theology. On the basis of its own research object, its central modes of thinking and its objectives Religious Pedagogy constitutively participates in the building of a public sphere that is enlightened in religious affairs – and precisely this participation was already part of it in its early times and has been exercised ever since. (Schröder, 2013, p. 124, my translation)

Schröder then unfolds these public dimensions of Religious Pedagogy in four areas, for which he outlines the significance of religious education – the perception of public religion(s) in pluralistic societies; religious cultures as supporters of the public sphere in society; the

[13] Bernd Schröder is professor of practical (Protestant) theology with a focus on religious education at the University of Göttingen.

promotion of communicative competencies for the public and for religion alike; and the direction of the public sphere towards the common good and to enlightenment.

Judith Könemann is, beside Bernhard Grümme, another *Catholic* theologian and religious educationist who has prominently explored the relationship between religion and the public sphere and is arguing that religious education must be political (Könemann & Mette, 2013; Könemann, 2016a).[14] Focusing on the issues of educational justice and peace education, Könemann has made valuable contributions to fostering dialogue between Systematic Theology and Religious Pedagogy and in particular to clarifying the relationship between the concepts of "the public sphere" and "civil society" which in the context of public theology are mostly equated with each other (Könemann, 2016b, p. 143). She sees the civic, public task of the academic discipline of Public Religious Pedagogy mainly for those arenas of education "which are organized by the church and for which the church is responsible" and argues that through acting in these areas Religious Pedagogy exerts rather an indirect than direct influence on the civic public sphere (Könemann, 2016b, p. 149). For her, the central obligation for a Public Religious Pedagogy is to promote, through quality religious education in these arenas, competencies that enable participation in civil society and thus to contribute citizenship education (Könemann, 2016b, p. 150). Important as this task doubtlessly is, one might wonder, if the public responsibility of a Public Religious Pedagogy should not be conceived more energetically as extending beyond the realm of (church-run) religious education. It should, in my view, include the presence (or inappropriate absence) of religion in secular school subjects such as ethics, history or social studies as well as in school culture, and it should also include theological perspectives on public education in general – as the already mentioned edited volume by Könemann and Mette (2013) in fact does.

[14] Judith Könemann is professor of religious education and educational research at the University of Münster, Germany.

These brief highlights of recent publications indicate that Public Religious Pedagogy in Germany is a contemporary concept that has the capacity to reflect, to bundle up and systematize diverse threads of recent revaluations of the public dimension of theology and religious education. This estimation is also supported by the fact that two major academic journals recently published a special issue on this topic.[15]

3. Public Religious Pedagogy – Linking Public Theology with Public Education

In my own perspective and understanding of Public Religious Pedagogy – that I have been developing over the past years (see Pirner, 2012a; 2012b; 2015a; 2015b; 2016; 2017b) – one aspect of public theology is particularly prominent and relevant for linking it with public education: Public theology aims to explicate Christian perspectives in such a way that non-Christians, too, can relate to and benefit from them. As has been shown above, this is precisely what (confessional Christian) Religious Education at German schools has been trying to do since the 1970s; and this is also what the notion of "learning from religion" implies for the British model of Religious Education: nonreligious pupils can learn something for their own lives from Christian and other religious worldviews; Christian pupils can learn something for their own lives from Muslim, other religious and non-religious worldviews; and so on. It is my contention that for the promotion of such learning processes phenomenological religious studies perspectives on religions are not enough (see also Pirner, 2018a). Rather what is required are internal religious, that is: theological, perspectives that are grounded in their own religious tradition and at the same time offer "translations" into other religious and non-religious understandings of life and the world.

[15] The *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Pädagogik* published a thematic issue in 2015, 67(4) titled "Religious Pedagogy and the Public Sphere"; *Theo-Web. Academic Journal of Religious Education* published a thematic issue in 2016, 15(1) titled "Public Religious Pedagogy Beyond the Churches".

As I have outlined in detail in other publications (Pirner, 2016; 2018b) this understanding of Public Religious Pedagogy – and of public theology – can be well contextualized within a philosophical framework of "public reason" and "overlapping consensus" (John Rawls, 2001; 2005) or of "complementary learning processes" of religious and nonreligious citizens (Jürgen Habermas, 2008; 2017). It is also in accordance with those concepts of public theology that emphasize the necessary bilinguality of public theologians. As, for instance, Heinrich Bedford-Strohm has repeatedly pointed out the public theologians must be familiar with the language of their religious tradition on the one hand, and they must also be familiar with the current general language of the partly secular and pluralistic society in which they live (see e.g. Bedford-Strohm, 2011; 2018; see also Graham, 2017; and in this volume; for a critical view on translation and bilinguality see Wabel in this volume). There is an obvious parallel between this conception of public theology and the basic conception of didactics according to which the teachers have to be familiar with the language and special terminology of their subject matter on the one hand, and with their pupils' everyday language on the other hand. Only then will they be able to communicate subject matters to the pupils in a way that they can relate to and understand. This goes as well and in particular for Religious Education at state schools in which teachers face a great religious and worldview diversity among their pupils and must find ways how to "translate" the religious tradition that has often become quite strange to the young people into their language and their life worlds.

A public theology perspective may help to perceive and address such tasks and specific challenges to RE more clearly. To exemplify this, I will concentrate on the challenge of nonreligious pupils in RE classes and nonreligious citizens in our society. Despite the above-mentioned intentions of (Christian) RE to offer – in the spirit of public theology – a benefit for nonreligious pupils as well as for Christian and other religious pupils, empirical evidence shows that the acceptance of RE in Germany is significantly lower among nonreligious respondents. This applies for the level of the general public as well as for the level of those pupils who

currently take part in RE classes. A recent representative opinion poll among the population in the German state of Bavaria[16] showed that the attitude towards RE highly correlated with the respondents' religiosity: Those who indicated to be "very religious" or "rather religious" strongly endorsed that RE should remain an ordinary subject at German schools (91 %; 84 %), whereas those who indicated to be "less religious" or "not religious" had much lower approval rates (58 %; 26 %). Similar tendencies can be seen in an empirical study conducted by Susanne Schwarz and Adriane Dörnhöfer among pupils at Bavarian secondary schools ("Mittelschule" and "Realschule"): The pupils' motivation to attend RE is clearly linked with their belief in God (Spearman's rho = .28 with $p < .001$) (Schwarz & Dörnhöfer, 2016, p. 208); the same goes for their estimation of the relevance of RE.

These findings, and similar ones in the rest of Germany, point to the fact that RE has not gained the plausibility and appreciation among the nonreligious that it has among the religious. It should be noted in this context that, according to the study of Schwarz and Dörnhöfer, almost a quarter of the pupils attending RE confess not to believe in God (Schwarz & Dörnhöfer, 2016, p. 228) – which gives evidence that nonreligious students are no longer a quantité négligeable in RE even in very traditional German states such as Bavaria in which opt-out rates from RE are still very low. This corresponds to the findings of general youth surveys in Germany that have over the past years reported a substantial part of about 25 % of the young people who do not believe in any God or higher power and about just as many who are uncertain about what to believe (see e.g. Gensicke, 2015, p. 254–259).

It should be clear from these findings that Religious Pedagogy must take nonbelievers more seriously in RE and other fields of public education. A Public Religious Pedagogy

[16] The survey was suggested and co-conceptualized by myself and our Research Unit for Public Religion and Education (RUPRE); it was commissioned by the Protestant Lutheran Church of Bavaria and conducted by the renowned poll agency EMNID. See for more details: http://www.rupre.uni-erlangen.org/news.shtml. A publication on the survey is in preparation.

perspective that draws on public theology discourse may prove helpful to review and reconceptualize RE along the following lines.

1) It should be made clearer that (Christian) RE is seen by the churches not as an opportunity to proselytize or socialize pupils into the church but rather as a diaconical service to all pupils and thus to the common good of society. Its major aim is to help young people find orientation and develop competence in matters of religion, worldview and ethics – irrespective of their own present belief or disbelief.

2) It should be made clearer that (Christian) RE does not just foster particularistic religious perspectives and values, but shows how religious perspectives and values can be linked with basic general principles and values of our (secular) liberal democratic and human rights-centred society and thus promote social cohesion (see in more detail on this point Pirner, 2016; 2018). It should be more emphasized conceptually as well as in public discourse that thus, RE contributes significantly to democratic, citizenship and human rights education *in a specific way* that cannot be simply substituted by general (secular) moral education.

3) RE should concentrate on dialogical approaches, in which (diverse) religious and (diverse) nonreligious pupils can exchange their views and learn from one another as well as from theological and (secular) philosophical perspectives. In Germany, at present such dialogical approaches are increasingly developed in the context of structural models of RE that aim at establishing learning groups of mixed Christian denominations or even, as in Hamburg, mixed religious affiliations (see e.g. Linder, Schambeck, Simojoki & Naurath, 2017).

4) While fostering dialogical approaches, the internal (theological or philosophical) perspectives of each religion or worldview should not be marginalized. Rather learning programmes should be offered to help pupils to deepen and reflect their own religious or secular views and practices.

5) It is not enough to take better account of the nonreligious pupils in RE classes, but the diaconical thrust as well as the dialogical, complementary learning processes between religious and nonreligious actors should also be mirrored in the contents of RE:

- In *biblical units* it can be shown how the Bible shaped Western culture far beyond the church walls, and how Greek philosophy and critical secular scholarship have interacted with theological hermeneutics in a fruitful and challenging way.

- In *historical units* it can be shown how Christianity contributed, however ambivalently, to many social and cultural developments in Western countries, and how religious and secular traditions have mostly been intertwined, have supported and criticized each other and by doing so benefitted from one another.

- In *ethical units* the diverse processes of translation from Christian values into general values and, vice versa, the influence of secular principles – such as those of human rights – on Christian ethics can be demonstrated in order to prevent exclusivist and arrogant attitudes from either side.

- In *interreligious units and dimensions* the secular should not be forgotten or marginalized but included in what could better be called inter-religious *and* inter-worldview education. I have recently elaborated this point and developed a competence model of inter-religious and inter-world-view competence which tries to avoid the 'blind spots' that are usually associated with what we call "interreligious learning" in RE (Pirner, 2018c).

To conclude: As I have been trying to show in this essay, linking the public theology discourse with the discourse on public education in general and on RE in particular under the programmatic label of Public Religious Pedagogy has indeed much potential for all sides – and will hopefully prove to benefit our young people as well as to enhance cooperative endeavours for more humanity in our societies.

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