

The Use of Religious Material in Teaching “World Religions” in German and English Schools¹

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Abstract

Different approaches of teaching world religions² in England and Germany are discussed, how they use religious material to teach pupils from another religious background, and how they involve pupils and keep boundaries at the same time.

1 The Situation and Character of Religious Material in Secular Schools

1.1 Religious Education and Practising Religion

In Physical Education we take part in sports, in Mathematics we calculate, in English we write English essays, in the theatre-group we perform a play and in Religious Education? Do we *practise* religion? Probably not concerning the theme “World Religion”.

According to RE teachers in England, the classroom of a non-confessional state-school is *not a place for practising religion*. M. Grimmitt has called this the “secular ideology” of state-schools (in contrast to the “ideologies” of the different religions).³ Many educators in Germany, who are teaching a denominational Christian RE, are often ambivalent towards practising Christian religion, will agree with the teachers in England that the state school is not a church.⁴ Concerning the theme “world religion”, all German teachers will refuse to make pupils practise something they do not believe. This affects the use of the religious material in the lesson.

1.2 The Use of Religious Material: Witnesses

To teach world religions, different sorts of resources are commonly used. There are first hand resources (uninterpreted, original material), like artefacts, songs, holy scriptures or quotations from believers, and secondary resources (interpreted material) like video-tapes, reports or stories about religious events.⁵ In this paper I am concerned with the use of first hand material. In a classroom situation, those first hand resources are not used in their usual way as in a ceremony or a religious event. They are no longer just a holy statue or an overwhelming quotation as for the believers, but a *witness* to witness a religion in front of a group of non-believers. I would like to distinguish three characteristics of such witnesses:

1.2.1 The Characteristics of Witnesses

1) Example and Holiness

A witness is an example and it is holy or connected with experiences of the holy.⁶ This twofold character has implications for education. First of all, it is an

example of religious items, such as a religious song, a quotation. As an example it will be part of the lesson and serve specific objectives. In its religious context, it is used as a medium of religious practice. For those believers, the witness may be holy and express a value to which they are oriented.

In the lesson it is outside its original context. When the witness is used as teaching aid in a school, it is important to handle the witness with respect, while keeping in mind its individual dignity, its origin and its holiness. Therefore, it is also an *example to show how religious items should be handled* respecting their character as a medium in religious practice.

2) Representative and the Dynamics of a Living Tradition

The witness represents a part of a religion. It embodies and characterizes a religious tradition with its experiences, its questions and its answers. It is not merely a historical representative. The religious witness comes from a living tradition which has developed in the past and will continue to develop in the future. The interpretation of the witness and its tradition will differ from time to time and from culture to culture. So the witness itself can normally not be described fully in a fixed definition, neither by the textbook nor even by a believer. Believers from different background will have different experiences and different explanations concerning a witness.

3) Stranger

In a classroom situation, the witness is separated from its original context, it is no longer a medium of religious experiences shared by believers. In a school it is a *stranger*, witnessing a world outside the classroom.⁷ The religion presented is strange; it will continue to be a stranger and will always have a distance to the pupils' daily life, even at the end of the unit. For the believer it will have a strange aspect as it is connected with experiences of the holy. For the non-believer it will be strange as he or she is not familiar with its use and because of the distance between different religious cultures.⁸ In both cases the witness is different from a teaching aid like a poem. The pupils may learn a poem by heart and may make it a part of their living and thinking. The witness of a religious tradition will remain at a certain distance for all those who do not believe in it.

1.2.2 The Needs of Setting Boundaries and of Personal Involvement

Taking into account the three aspects, the ways to handle strange religious witnesses should be different from other educational material.

How is other educational material commonly used?

In Physics a steam-engine is an example of specific physical principles. The circling wheel makes the pupils curious. The pupils want to examine the machine, and will ask about its function. The machine itself will motivate the pupils to try, to examine

it and to test and discover the function of steam-engines and enter the world of physical principles of air and pressure. At the end, they might be able to construct a small steam-engine themselves.

Good teaching aids will make learners curious and invite them to use their creativity, using their “head, hands and heart”⁹ to act in accordance with its purpose (to make the engine work, recite a poem, act a scene of a drama, etc). The teachers should foster curiosity, arouse the interest of the pupils, and guide them to use their own creativity to perform and learn something from the aids, making it a part of their thinking or even living. Using them, no special boundary is necessary but intense involvement is emphasized.

However, religious witnesses need special care. Personal and creative involvement is necessary in RE (as in all other subjects) especially in order to understand that religion is not only a matter of the intellectual ability but a matter of the whole person. Using religious witness will also arouse curiosity, it may invite the pupils to perform, to act in accordance with its purpose. A borderline is then necessary: otherwise it may easily mislead pupils to attempt to practise what the witness is made for. After hearing the Muslim call to prayer two or three times, pupils will start to imitate it. Muslims may have strange feelings or even find it humiliating when hearing pupils imitating the call to prayer. On the other hand, Christian parents may not be impressed if their children chant “hare krishna” for one hour every day. So boundaries are necessary to respect the witness and to respect the background of the pupils.

Thus, it is essential for the RE teachers (a) to take into account the characteristics of the witness, marking clear boundaries towards practising a strange religion and (b) at the same time, to invite and motivate the pupils to involve in the lessons personally.

2 Approaches in Germany and in England

The choice of approaches plays an important role in teaching world religions. Different attempts and methods are used in order to bring religious witnesses into a lesson and at the same time, to find a balance between involving the pupils and making the boundaries obvious, both in respect to the witness as stranger and to the pupils.

The following approaches are commonly used in Germany and in England.

2.1 German Religious Education

In Germany, RE can be described as critical and denominational. It is divided into Protestant or Catholic RE lessons. Pupils participate in the Protestant or Catholic RE according to their denominations.¹⁰ Those who are neither Protestant nor Catholics can often choose whether to take part in one of the groups or an alterna-

tive lesson.¹¹ At least one theme each year, like “Islam”, “Buddhism”, “Judaism” should be taught in addition to topics oriented to Christianity.

I would like to describe two major approaches in handling non-Christian religious witnesses in German RE:

1) Comparative Study of Religions

The first one is based on results of a comparative study of religions, and teaches especially historic and systematic information.¹² The comparative study of religions attempts to see different religions in a neutral view. Most teachers combine the facts of one religion with teaching units on social or philosophical issues or on Christianity. Examples:

i) Angermeyer (1982, first edition in 1974) was one of the first educational scholars in Germany to write a book about teaching Islam on a tolerant basis in Christian RE. He suggested teaching facts and discussing with the pupils. He provided information about Islam based on the comparative study of religion. When it came to personal discussion, he suggested discussing questions of Christianity which are similar to those of Islam instead of questions of Islam.¹³

In this example, there is a clear boundary between the pupils and the religion taught. They are not going to discuss questions of this religion but are redirected to be involved with questions about *their own* religion. The boundaries are clearly marked, but their involvement takes place in a completely different field.

ii) During the seventies, social issues became a main part of RE in Germany. The religious material was used as a background or an introduction of a lesson in order to give information or insight for a later discussion about social matter (e.g. how to get along with the Turkish classmates or neighbours). The social question of how to get along with members of other faiths or other ethical standards became an important aim in connection with teaching non-Christian religion.¹⁴

In this case, the religious material is a teaching aid to motivate pupils to take part in an informed social discussion. The role of a religious witness tends to shift to a social teaching aid. In the end, learners will find themselves involved in social aspects not in religious ones.¹⁵

2) Archetypical Symbols

The second approach is mainly developed by the educator Hubertus Halbfas. Halbfas builds his RE on the idea of the psychologist Carl Gustav Jung. Halbfas wants the pupils to be aware of archetypical symbols (like the symbol of heaven, of the cross and of the world’s navel, subconsciously shared by all human beings).¹⁶ These symbols, represented by the witnesses, are roots of all religious traditions and can be found in myths and pictures of many cultures and religions.

They can be shared by all human beings. The teaching of archetypical symbols may help the pupils to gain strength during their personal development. The religious material becomes a medium of teaching these hidden roots.

According to this approach, the pupils focus on examining the religious material, finding and developing a set of presupposed roots of religions. During the teaching unit, the witness of a religious tradition becomes a witness of an archetypical symbol. Learning this basic level of archaic symbols all pupils can be involved without boundaries. According to Halbfas Christian children can learn in the same archetypical depth from American Indian stories or Buddhist myths. Clear boundaries are not needed.

2.2 RE in English State Schools

In English state schools, RE can be described as a “multifaith” one. At the beginning, “multifaith” was used as a synonym for phenomenological RE.¹⁷ As RE methods are diversified, it was interpreted in many ways. Today, there is still no clear definition of what “multifaith” teaching exactly means. However, this word can very well express the difference of RE in Germany with RE in England: The multifaith RE in Britain handles all main religions in Britain on a (more or less) equal base.¹⁸ Therefore, all religions can be strange to some of the pupils.

1) Phenomenological Approach

In the seventies, Ninian Smart introduced the *phenomenological approach* in Britain.¹⁹ Smart’s approach was based on the scientific phenomenological study of religion. He suggested to distinguish six dimensions (later seven) of religions (social, ritual, ethical, dogmatical, mythical, experiential).²⁰ According to this approach, the pupils should be able to look at different religions with an open and objective and empathetic attitude.²¹ This could ensure an equality in teaching different religions.

Ninian Smart also mentioned “parahistorical” discussions, i.e. an existential discussion among pupils. Accordingly, the Working Paper 36 of the School Council (1971) suggested a connection of a descriptive study with the existential approach, but many followers of Smart just held the academic descriptive teaching.²² Teaching comparative religion (i.e. describing and observing religion) became, in many cases, the only focus defining a clear boundary between the faith of the pupils and the religion taught.

2) Existential Approach

i) H. Loukes (1961)²³ introduced problem-centred teaching. The problems and social constellation in the pupils’ lives can be included in RE lessons. In his second book (1965) he extended his ideas: “A lesson on spiders, an argument about Charles I, a study of the climate of Peru, the story of Oedipus: these are all as ‘religious’ as the story of Abraham if they are treated personally

and set the hearer off into the depth ...”²⁴ “This is then the content of religious education: the ultimacy, the depth, the *realization* of everything. ... religious education, in brief, is about the life our children learn about, the depth of the life they learn about on the surface, the whole of life they learn about in fragments.”²⁵

Although Loukes’ approach was actually developed for Christian RE, it was soon included in the multifaith RE. Themes from daily life could be taught to pupils from any faiths. One just examines the deeper existential level of human experiences without the need of an explicit religious witness. In this trend lessons as the following could be included in RE:

On a sunny day the teacher asked the pupils to close their eyes for five minutes. During this time the teacher placed a flower in front of each pupil. When they opened their eyes, they saw the flower in bright light. The pupils discussed their experience. Some shared their experience at home. The emphasis of the teacher was on the experience of the beauty of nature, as a deeper existential experience. A religious item was not necessary any more.²⁶

- ii) Other existential approaches did not choose such a wide range of themes but concentrated on *explicit* religious stories, artefacts, etc. and asked: What can be learned *from* an explicit religious witness for existential insights or social development? Different suggestions were made, for example: to think about ultimate questions²⁷, ethical issues²⁸ or spiritual awareness,²⁹ to find your position in matters of core values.³⁰ For example:

After reading the creation story of Hindus, M. Palmer³¹ suggests to look at circular structures of life. These structures are related to the pupils’ life. Pupils are asked to think about circular changes of seasons and daily routine, and to paint pictures about them. The creativity of the pupils is directed to a field of shared human experiences or a psychological level, which is not any more specific for this faith. Such shared human experiences become the focus of the lesson.³²

2.3 Advantages and Disadvantages of the Different Approaches

The RE approaches in England and Germany can be grouped into two directions.³³

- 1) Pupils learn to see other religions from a scientific outsider’s point of view (a phenomenologist’s or an ethnologist’s perspective), like in the comparative study of religion in Germany and the phenomenological approach in England. There is a clear and objective set of rules how to examine religious facts and discuss them. The pupils are aware that they are outsiders; instead of practising what the witness represents, they learn the facts; and different dimensions of religions are presented as facts. It requires intellectual ability to describe and interpret religions but demands not much personal creativity and involvement, indeed many English educators hold the view today, that it positively destroys

creativity.³⁴ These strategies successfully impose a distance in favour of a neutral view. Pupils learn mainly abstract systems of religion and pieces of information. As B. Lealman described and criticized it: The major aim of this approach is to create “miniature scholars.”³⁵

In order to improve this, existential or social matters are introduced in the later stage of the unit (e.g. H. Angermeyer). This enables an active involvement. Nonetheless, this part of the lesson concerns no longer the witness nor the religion it represents but shifts to a new topic: existential or social matters.

- 2) Another direction leads the pupils to think directly about existential questions, find values or symbols shared by various religions and cultures. Religious material as witness of a specific *religious* tradition does not play an important role here. Pupils do not learn the full facts of a religion like the first group, but participate actively in understanding values and human experiences. To learn about ethics and the meaning of life is in many cases the core curriculum.
- There are those concepts which do not use an explicit religious witness. A boundary is imposed here either by ignoring the religious side of teaching aids or even teaching religion without any explicit religious material. Religious and non-religious materials may be used only as examples for philosophical or ethical themes. While teachers may regard their use and aims as important aspects of the material, believers may not agree with them. The religious character of the material is not respected in this case.³⁶ This approach tends to ignore the specific character and uniqueness of a witness for a religious tradition.
 - Another type of existential teaching ignores the strangeness of religious witnesses. They discuss some basic layer, they find in all religions (as e.g. archetypes). So they can take up materials from any religious background to teach about these common roots of all religions without the need for special boundaries. Children might only see the similarity but not the differences of religions. Also, they tend to ignore the specific character and uniqueness of the witness in its tradition.
- All these approaches do not keep a balance between boundaries and a positive involvement of the pupils. There are two tendencies in both countries, either to emphasize the boundaries, when giving facts, and to shift to another theme for involvement, or to ignore its very specific religious side.

3 Alternative Strategies

At the beginning of the 90's, two new projects of RE were published in England. One is “A Gift to the Child” which aims at introducing strategies and processes for teachers in teaching religious items. The other one is the “Warwick Project” which is based on broad research on different individuals and emphasizes on the art of interpretation.

3.1 *“A Gift to the Child”*

“A Gift to the Child” suggests teaching strategies for primary schools. The major concern of the approach is the child and his/her interaction with the religious items. This can be seen by the methods and the concept of “numen” as a specific name for the witness.³⁷ “A numen is a concrete, specific item of religious material. It might be an artefact, a story, a sound, a picture, a song or a word.” Like “[the sentence] ‘I am the bread of life’, [the call] ‘Halleluja’, [the story of] Jonah, Shabbat, the call to prayer, angel.”³⁸ “(i) ... the material occupies a more or less ... autonomous position within the life ... of the religion ... a certain integrity. (ii) It is charged with numinous power, or with the sense of the sacred or with the power of devotion. (iii) [as educational concept] It has gifts to offer to children”³⁹ (and) “... (it was) found to provoke a lively response.”⁴⁰

“A Gift to the Child” gives clear strategies and steps for the RE teachers, how to guide the child to interact with the “numen”. The strategy consists of four stages: engagement, discovery, contextualisation and reflection.⁴¹ According to this approach, children can encounter the material, observe religious items, think through questions, attain a deeper understanding, discover new aspects of the material and reflect on these aspects for themselves without crossing the boundary to the actual practising of the religion. A distance is made obvious by: a) rituals (lighting a candle before telling a religious myths and distinguishing it when the story is finished), b) introducing a third person to whom the witness belongs, c) in a later stage setting a forbidden area around a religious item where no children are allowed to enter.⁴² With the help of this clear setting of educational boundaries, “A Gift to the Child” dares to let the children interact with the witness: they listen to the myth and involve themselves in its questions, they paint the vision of the virgin Mary by Bernadette and imagine having a vision themselves, they touch the statue of the Hindu god Ganesha and discuss where they belong themselves while respecting the distance.

3.2 *The Warwick Project*

The Warwick Project is designed for primary and secondary schools. It requires children to use ethnographic methods.⁴³ The word ethnographer is chosen according to C. Geertz to emphasize that the teaching is about the “art of interpretation”, comparing one’s own experiences and those of the stranger trying to understand and learning to interpret the stranger’s acting and experiencing.⁴⁴ In school this means more than teaching a set of rules for observation. For example: On the first page of one of the textbooks a photo of children and a christmas tree is shown. Pupils are asked to imagine that they are aliens from another planet who want to find out more about this scene. They develop concepts of how the aliens would build up their research.

In order to choose appropriate material for interpretation in school, the textbooks of the Warwick Project have their foundation in a broad research on different individuals. On one hand, the textbooks look on the characteristics of the tradition, but on the other hand, introduce individuals interpreting the tradition in their specific way. "Authenticity" is one of the keywords of the research and the textbooks.⁴⁵

The Warwick Project introduces mainly children and youngsters, who share about their faith and their experiences in *their* personal ways. The pupils learn to build bridges between their own experiences and those of the witness, and keep in mind the difference between them. The children encounter an authentic voice and a person, who has grown up in a specific religious culture.⁴⁶ The authenticity and individuality allows participants to be very close to the actual witness. The process of interpreting material and another person's experience make the boundary obvious and stimulate a discussion about those experiences at the same time.

3.3 Underlying common strategy of "A Gift to the Child" and the Warwick Project

Both "A Gift to the Child" and the Warwick Project introduce abstract concepts like the word "vision". They refer to shared human experiences when it comes to discussion. Nevertheless, in both cases there is an educational *interaction* between the pupils and the religious witness. The witness is not just a medium of a paramount educational aim (e.g. to know and to remember facts on religion). It is in both cases a centre of the education itself. The curiosity and creativity of the pupils are not directed to other aspects, but used to interact with the explicit religious witness, and learn how to interpret individual expressions of faith.

In the case of the Warwick Project, it is the science of ethnography, which becomes a tool for the encounter with an individual person. The teaching method does not simply create miniature scholars of ethnography but teaches the pupils to use ethnographic insights as tools for an *encounter with a religious witness* in specific religious traditions.

In the case of "A Gift to the Child" the religious witnesses are not just introduced "in the service of the child."⁴⁷ The methods find a balance in each unit between an involvement (with central existential questions raised by the witness) and boundaries to the strange religion (rituals and educational steps).

Both approaches dare to pick up only one small bit of a religious tradition, an individual, or a "numen", not the religion as a whole, not a religion as a system.⁴⁸ Only this kind of limitation can provide the needed "partner" or interlocutor for interaction. To get close to the witness is possible and is pedagogically acceptable because the boundaries are still clearly marked. Both approaches make clear the context, both use those little hints, like lighting a candle (A Gift ...) or printing very thick quotation-marks ("...") (Warwick-Project) to say here is something different, both introduce a believer, to say there is something authentic.⁴⁹

There is no need to enter a second phase and a second theme for personal involvement. Personal questions are discussed in communication with the witness, while boundaries are still made clear.

Three general outlines of these concepts for the “use” of religious witnesses:

1 *The witness as an example*

The educational example and the dignity and holiness of its origin are taken into account by the limitation of mainly one witness. The witness is not one example among many others but the centre of a lesson where it can be observed and examined carefully. The witness is not just a *case* of a typical festival, a typical story, a typical believer or (to say it more generally), not a case of a system (deductive), rather the focus is the specific individual witness and its study brings along the background information (inductive approach).

2 *The witness as representative*

As representative of a tradition, the experiences of this tradition are taken seriously when it is not only examined, but also discussed on an existential level. The witness and its tradition suggest answers to shared human experiences, perhaps to ultimate questions. The pupils can react to this and develop for themselves provisional answers to ultimate questions.

As a part of a living tradition, it is respected by taking into account the individuality of a story, which may be different in another area.

3 *The witness as stranger*

The stranger, who will remain strange, is respected by setting clear boundaries. Rituals mark such a boundary (e.g. lighting a candle before and distinguishing it after telling a story).

The boundary shows a remaining distance, but at the same time guides a way to a first encounter. The witness is a stranger in the situation of a school, the ritual creates a space which is not ruled by the educational aims, a space encountering a witness of practised religion (by hearing a religious story, listening to a religious song).

4 Summary

“The Classroom is not a place for practising religion” means to respect boundaries. It does not mean to leave the pupils and the witness with a great distance and without personal encounter. However, regarding to its natures: (a) example and connected with holiness, (b) representative and a living tradition as background, and (c) a stranger who will remain a stranger, it should be used with care in a classroom situation in front of pupils with different religions.

Several approaches from the 60’s, 70’s and 80’s either make a very clear boundary and keep a far distance with the witness or they emphasize only personal involvement and pay no special attention to the specific religious side of the witness. In the first case there is a tendency that the children learn without personal contact, see without touching. In the second case, the specific religious side of the witness and its tradition is unexposed.

How can this balance be made, to keep a proper distance and at the same time an opportunity to have an educational encounter and a personal involvement with the witness? Two approaches “A Gift to the Child” and the “Warwick Project” use an educational boundary (e.g. using a third person or rituals), a tool for pointing out the distance while allowing pupils to come closer to a witness. Pupils learn to make a first contact with a neighbour and his or her world. In both approaches, only one specific witness is introduced, pupils can concentrate their curiosity on this; they are allowed to explore the religious items or the world of this individual and are encouraged to reflect on the aspects and questions of the religious witness including those issues raised for their own lives.

With these points and the focus on the interaction between material and pupils, it is possible to face the strangeness of the religious witness in the school and deal with it educationally at the same time. The limitation on mainly one witness, a careful communication and the observation of the boundaries are the condition of a close and respectful way to deal with religious witnesses. The children encounter and learn; interact and understand.

Notes

- 1 This article was presented in July 2000 at the meeting of ISREV in Jerusalem.
- 2 I am aware of the problems of using the term “world religions”: It indicates a clearly marked group of traditions with a clearly cut borderline. In fact there are not so distinctively marked lines. The term “religion” is a western one based on western ideas, and even in the western culture you cannot define the term “religion” without serious problems. What I am concerned about here is the teaching of (what we commonly call) Judaism, Buddhism and Islam, etc. in English and German state-schools. Cf. G. Ahn (1997), “Religion I”, TRE XXVIII. Pürstinger – Religionsphilosophie, Berlin, p. 513-22.
- 3 M. Grimmitt (1987), *Religious Education and Human Development. The Relationship Between Studying Religions and Personal, Social and Moral Education*, Great Wakering On differing interpretations of *ideology* in Germany and England cf. K. Meyer (1999), *Zeugnisse fremder Religionen im Unterricht. “Weltreligionen” im deutschen und englischen Religionsunterricht*, Neukirchen, p. 136-8.
- 4 The reasons are different in Germany and England. In England, there is a long tradition of RE not to influence the pupils first in matters of Christian denomination, later in matters of religious faith in general. In Germany, there is an old uneasiness of teachers, the church may influence the school; the fear that teachers themselves might influence pupils (indoctrinize them) in an authoritative way did not occur before the end of the sixties when the student movement took place and criticized any ideologies and strengthened the idea of free will in choosing political parties or religions. During the last few years the direction of RE seems to have changed and more spiritual aspects have been accepted in RE (Nevertheless, practising religions is still out of the questions for many teachers in German RE).
- 5 It is not always possible to distinguish those resources sharply. I would describe those artefacts which are made for or arranged for explicit religious use (e.g. being part of a service, a ritual etc.), as first hand resources.

- 6 Concerning the term "holy" I follow the concept of Rudolph Otto: R. Otto (1917), *Das Heilige. Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen*, München. On the contemporary discussion: D. Kamper/Chr. Wulf (1987, eds.), *Das Heilige, Seine Spur in der Moderne (Die weiße Reihe)*, Frankfurt a.M..
- 7 Educational aims of schools and aims of a faith do not necessarily match together. The witness will be a "foreigner" in the classroom in divergency to the aims of the school considering its original context. Cf. M. Grimmitt (1987) on divergency of religion and education and cf. the German debate on Christianity and its convergency with education, K.E.Nipkow (1975), *Grundfragen der Religionspädagogik. Band 2. Das pädagogische Handeln der Kirche (GTB 106)*, p.97f. Cf. K. Meyer (1999), p.266. Concerning the use of the words "divergency" and "convergency" to describe the relationship between the teacher's faith and his teaching in school cf. J. Hull (1981), Editorial, *BJRE* 3,1, p.1.
- 8 The term "strange"/ "stranger" is always based on an interpretation. In most cases the object interpreted as stranger has in fact not only strange aspects, there are both, aspects which are familiar and those which are unfamiliar, but unfamiliar aspects are given priority, cf. A. Wierlacher (1993), *Kulturthema Fremdheit. Leitbegriffe und Problemfelder kulturwissenschaftlicher Fremdeheitsforschung (Kulturthemen. Beiträge zur Kulturforschung interkultureller Germanistik, vol 1)*, München, p.62.
In our case the criterion for the interpretation "strange" is that the witness is in most aspects unfamiliar to most pupils and unfamiliar as religious object in the situation of the school. See footnote 6.
- 9 Involving pupils' rational abilities, their emotions and their bodies (Pestalozzi).
- 10 The teachers of the confessional RE in Germany are either Catholic or Protestant Christians. Nevertheless Christian faith is even for many Christian pupils a strange religion.
- 11 The arrangement of such alternative lessons is different in each land in Germany. Children from other or no specific faith are invited to join the protestant RE, c.f. *Kirchenamt der EKD (1994), Identität und Verständigung. Standort und Perspektiven des Religionsunterrichts in der Pluralität. Eine Denkschrift der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland*, Gütersloh, p.67, cf. 55, 64.
- 12 U. Tworuschka (1982), *Methodische Zugänge zu den Weltreligionen. Einführung für Unterricht und Studium*, Frankfurt.
- 13 H. Angermeyer (1982), *Weltmacht Islam. Lehrerheft (Analysen und Projekte zum Religionsunterricht Heft 7)*, Göttingen (first edition 1974), p.89.
- 14 Here Turkish Islam is often the focus. Cf. J. Lähnemann (1986), *Weltreligionen im Unterricht. Eine theologische Didaktik für Schule, Hochschule und Gemeinde vol. 1 and 2*, Göttingen and J. Lähnemann (1998), *Evangelische Religionspädagogik in interreligiöser Perspektive*, Goettingen.
- 15 Why do teachers focus rather on the social questions or existential Christian themes in connection with Islamic material? The teachers feel often helpless facing a material they don't know so well. They give the facts and move to neutral (and sometimes religion neutralizing) aspects of the curriculum. These become the fundamental objectives, like social behaviour, ethics, philosophy, political aspects, similiar aspects in Christianity, which the teachers know much better than other religions.
- 16 H. Halbfas (1982), *Das dritte Auge. Religionsdidaktische Anstöße (Schriften zur Religionspädagogik vol. 1)* and H. Halbfas (1989), *Wurzelwerk. Geschichtliche Dimension der Religionsdidaktik (Schriften zur Religionspädagogik vol. 2)*.
- 17 Swann-Report, Her Majesty's Stationary Office (1985), p. 470-74.

- 18 In practice, Christianity is more frequently taught than any others. On the discussion, cf. John Hull (1991), Editorial (BJRE 14,1), p.2.
- 19 Cf. N. Smart (1968), *Secular Education and the Logic of Religion*, (Heslington Lectures, University of York. 1966) Faber and Faber, London.
- 20 N. Smart (1968), *Secular Education and the Logic of Religion*, (Heslington Lecture University of York. 1966), Faber and Faber, London, p.15-18. On 7 dimensions cf. N. Smart (1989), *The World's Religions. Old Traditions and Modern Transformations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p.12-21.
- 21 N. Smart and School Council (1971), *Religious education in secondary schools* (School Council Working Paper 36), Evans / Methuen Educational, London.
- 22 Hardy (BJRE 1979) pointed out: the "neutral view" is already an ontological statement. I may express into pedagogical practice: Even the pupils might have very good imagination and be as neutral as possible, they will remain on a more or less "phenomenological" perspective outside the faith they learn about. D.W. Hardy (1979), "Truth in Religious Education: further reflections on the implication of pluralism", BJRE 1,3, p. 102ff. Cf. M. Grimmitt (1987), p. 47. and R. Jackson (1993), „Religious Education and the Arts of Interpretation“, in: D. Starkings (1993), *Religions and the Arts in Education. Dimensions of Spirituality*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, p. 150.
- 23 H. Loukes (1961), *Teenage Religion, An Enquiry into Attitudes and Possibilities among British Boys and Girls in Secondary Modern Schools*, SCM Press, London, cf. H. Loukes (1965), *New Ground in Christian Education*, SCM Press, London.
- 24 H. Loukes (1965), p.164.
- 25 H. Loukes (1965), p.148.
- 26 D. Hay / J. Hammond (1990), p.71, p.52. The authors of this book regard their approach as preface of phenomenological thinking. In this example the creation story was added three lessons later. But the unit was obviously designed without need for explicit religion. So this example can be seen in the tradition of H. Loukes.
- 27 E.g.: S. Hasted / G. Teece (1993), *Living Questions*, Stanley Thornes Ltd, Cheltenham.
- 28 E.g. ecological ethics: M. Palmer/ E. Bisset (1985), *World of Differences. Teacher's Guide*, (WWF), Blackie and Son, London.
- 29 E.g.: D. Hay / J. Hammond (1990), *New Methods in RE Teaching. An experiential approach*, Oliver and Boyd, Essex.
- 30 Cf. M. Grimmitt (1987), *Religious Education and Human Development. The Relationship Between Studying Religions and Personal, Social and Moral Education*, Great Wakering.
- 31 M. Palmer et al. (1991), *Religion for a Change. An Integrated Course in Religious and Personal Education. Book three*, Stanley and Thornes Ltd, Cheltenham, p.15f.
- 32 Many English educators tried to combine both aspects "learning from" and "learning about". M. Grimmitt was the first to suggest a combination of both approaches (1973). In his book from 1987 he suggested to build lessons in "learning from religion" on lessons in "learning about religion". He wanted to use (what he called) "core values" as "bridge" between lessons of understanding religions and those about the life of the students, for example, values like order and justice can be found in all religious traditions and in many religious stories. After a unit examining such material, another unit can follow to discuss the theme justice and order as values. M. Grimmitt (1981), p.47, "When is is 'Commitment' a Problem in Religious Education?", BJES 21,1; p.47. For a further discussion of M. Grimmitts approach cf. K. Meyer (1999), pp.195-213.

- 33 It is already difficult to draw general lines of one country. In case of two countries, it is much more difficult to draw general lines of historic development, teaching methods and so on. This can not be fully done here. Cf. K Meyer (1999), pp.97-143.
- 34 Result of a discussion with English Educators at the ISREV meeting in Jerusalem July 2000.
- 35 B. Lealman (1982), "The ignorant eye: Perception and Religious Education" BJRE 5,1, p. 59-60.
- 36 It allows the pupils (outsiders) to discuss human experience of believers (insiders) in such a different context and connected with such different questions that they might mis-interpret them. In most cases, the insiders have ideas and concepts, which are specific for their religion and not just ethical in general.
- 37 M. Grimmitt / J. Grove / J. Hull / L. Spencer (1991), A Gift to the Child. Teachers Resource Book, concerning "numen" cf. J. Hull (1995), "How can we make children sensitive to the values of other religions through religious education?", in: J. Lähnemann (1995) "Das Projekt Weltethos" in der Erziehung (Pädagogische Beiträge zur Kulturbegnung, Bd. 14, Hamburg, S. 301-14.
- 38 Unpublished paper by J. Grove.
- 39 J. M. Hull (1995).
- 40 M. Grimmitt / J. Grove / J. Hull / L. Spencer (1991), p.8.
- 41 M. Grimmitt / J. Grove / J. Hull / L. Spencer (1991), p.8-10.
- 42 "A Gift to the Child" has not just one specific point of view towards all witnesses, but is concerned about a close individual encounter; it can refer to different psychological approaches choosing each time which fits best to the educational encounter with *this specific* witness.
- 43 Cf. R. Jackson (1990), "Children as ethnographers", in: R. Jackson (1990, Ed.), The Junior RE Handbook. Stanley Thornes. Cheltenham, p. 200-13 and R. Jackson, (1993), "Religious Education and the Art of Interpretation", in: D. Starkings (1993) "Religions and the Arts in Education." Dimensions of Spirituality, Hodder and Stoughton, London, p. 148-58.
- 44 E.G. C. Geertz (1983), Local Knowledge, Basic Books, New York.
- 45 Cf. R. Jackson (1994) (unpublished paper).
- 46 E.g. R. Jackson / M. Barratt / J. Everington (1994), Bridges to Religions. The Warwick RE Project. Teacher's Resource Book, Heinemann, Oxford.
- 47 In an early stage of the approach this title was chosen. The introduction still emphasizes to teach "in service of the child", but in fact the methods of "distancing", rituals and a forbidden area serve as well the integrity of the witness! So both aspects are taken into account. In my opinion the encounter of the children with the witness is the aim of the careful arranged methods like those called "distancing device" and "entering device".
- 48 About the problems of presenting a "religion as a whole" cf. R. Jackson. (1996), "'Hinduismus' im Religionsunterricht in England und Wales – Ergebnisse eines Forschungsberichtes", in: M. Kwiran/ P. Schreiner/ H. Schultze (1996), Dialog der Religionen im Unterricht. Theoretische und praktische Beiträge zu einem Bildungsziel, Münster, p. 211-21.
- 49 In discussion with the phenomenological approach to RE D.W. Hardy (1979) has suggested to teach RE as interaction and discussion between the pupils originated from different faiths. The classmate from another faith are in fact more first hand resources than any other witness. But the educational effect of such an interaction is ambigüe. It

puts too much on the shoulder of the pupils who have only first insights in their own faith. A first hand witness from outside the school allows interaction but as well creates a healthy distance to the interaction among the pupils themselves. Cf. D.W. Hardy (1979), "Truth in Religious Education: further reflections on the implication of pluralism", BJRE 1,3, p. 102ff, and D.W. Hardy (1976), "the implication of Pluralism for Religious Education", LfL 16,2, p55ff. Cf. the argument with J. Rankin (1978) "Pluralism in RE: A Reconciliation" BJRE 1,1, p.22ff. Cf. in Germany the discussion on human witnesses K.E. Nipkow (1991), in G. Orth, p.304f., footnote 317.

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