

# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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*Theory to Practice: Curriculum*

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In space spent, I have undoubtedly exposed my own bias concerning the "how" of curriculum. I hope I have not simultaneously obscured my original point: the critical nature of the why of any "how." Implicit in any selection of a "how" is a theory of truth which ought to be made explicit and evaluated.

KIERAN SCOTT: *St. Bonaventure University*. I will attempt to do with this interview what Dwayne Huebner does so well for curriculum as a field of study. His consistent concern is to bring under suspicion the nature and content, process and politics of curriculum design. Huebner's strategy for unmasking the curriculum is to frame the following question: (1) What educative content (2) can be made present (3) to what educatees (4) within what social-political arrangements?<sup>1</sup> I will use this question as a device to get at the substance of Huebner's own comments.

*What educative content:* Two prior questions need to be raised here (of the interviewer and interviewee) before the question of content can be intelligently approached. They can be stated succinctly: Q1. What *field* is under discussion? Q2. What *curriculum* in what *settings* are the subject of conversation? The fact that neither of these questions are explicitly attended to deprives the interview of an appropriate context and focus. The question of content, subsequently, lacks an adequate reference and framework.

What field is under discussion? Is it religious education? Catechesis? Educational ministry? or Christian education? The operative assumption is that the field is set — but it is not named. I find this working assumption problematic. The current linguistic debate in our community of discourse is side-stepped and with it the foundational question of the identity of our work. Religious education is groaning to be born as a field and a profession. If it is to emerge and mature, our conversation needs self-consciously to reflect this phenomenon.

What curriculum in what settings are the subject of the interview? In terms of the overall discussion, the conversation is structured *almost* exclusively in a schooling and Christian context. Schooling as a form of education and Christian as a religious tradition both deserve affirmation. However, what is needed today

<sup>1</sup> See Dwayne Huebner, "The Thingness of Educational Content," (paper delivered at the Conference on Reconceptualizing Curriculum Theory, Cincinnati, Ohio, 18 October

is a comprehensive theory of education and a context where diverse religious traditions can meet in conversation on educational matters. Both are largely absent in the discussion.

What educative content is named? Huebner's interest is to narrow the concerns of the curriculum field. When it encompasses all the experiences of the child, he believes, it becomes too expansive and lacks a cohesive identity. The curriculum is the content and the content refers to knowledge or traditions of cultural wealth available to humankind. Huebner performs a valuable service here. He moves us beyond romance to precision<sup>2</sup> and asks us to focus on what "funded capital"<sup>3</sup> is or is not made present. In this way, the political nature of curriculum become explicit.

What is striking in the interview is the content *not* let in. The focus is on traditional materials (catechism), Christian classics (bible) and textbooks. These can and should be *part* of the content of religious education. Like theology, they can make a modest contribution<sup>4</sup> but should not be allowed to acquire a hegemony over educational programs in Christian circles. The excluded knowledge is the issue here. The diverse kinds of religious phenomena and the various forms of educational practices are not named or attended to. The *selected*<sup>5</sup> traditions need linkage to other traditions in a wider context if a religious parochialism is to be transcended.<sup>6</sup>

*Can be made present:* By asking how content (traditions) can be present, Huebner wishes to draw attention to the conscious construction of environments by means of diverse technologies. To construct the environment is to embody the content into things and skills. There is a need, he claims, to describe the *way* in which the educatee comes in contact with the traditions so as to make possible the transformation of the self and social setting. In this regard, Huebner correctly challenges the metaphors of "sociali-

<sup>2</sup> The concept is borrowed from Alfred North Whitehead. *The Aims of Education*, (New York: Macmillan, 1929), chapter 2.

<sup>3</sup> The term is John Dewey's. See "My Pedagogic Creed," in *Dewey on Education*, ed. Martin S. Dworkin, (New York: Teachers College Press, 1971): 19, 7th printing.

<sup>4</sup> On the appropriate role of theology, see Gabriel Moran, "From Obstacle to Modest Contributor: Theology in Religious Education," in *Religious Education and Theology*, (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1982): 42-70.

<sup>5</sup> See Michael W. Apple, "Curriculum as Ideological Selection," *Comparative Educational Review*, 20, (June 1976): 209-215 and *Ideology and Curriculum*, (Boston, Mass.: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979).

<sup>6</sup> See William B. Kennedy. "Ecumenical Agreed Statements: Their Significance for

zation" and "enculturation." The terms come out of a dominating relationship between the adult and the child, fail to bring under question the given and established world, and prevent the imaging of alternatives.

There is much to be learned here from Huebner's critiques. It challenges the uncritical assimilation of these metaphors into contemporary catechetical and religious education theories.<sup>7</sup> His aim is to correct the imbalance by honoring the freedom of the student, focusing on the quality of the encounter and recognizing the interactive interpretative nature of the process.

The fundamental lesson here for religious educators is loyalty to the principles and process of education. "The function of religious education," wrote Harrison S. Elliott, "is not simply the transmission of an authoritative interpretation of the Christian religion, but the reinterpretation and enrichment of the Christian faith itself in and through an educational process."<sup>8</sup> We must be committed to the search for truth within a critical environment. Without this form and guidance of education, the tradition may become irrational, dangerous and closed. Our churches do not have much patience with questions and questioning. We want answers within the established limits and we want them fast. However, the religious educator's task is to bring educational critique to the existing traditions and to the social structures that house them.

*To what educatees:* By asking what content can be made available "to what educatees," Huebner is attempting to perform a double function: 1) challenge the domination of the language of the psychology of learning in education, and 2) name the specific individual or classes of individuals in the educative environment.

Psychology, Huebner notes, has become a major stumbling block to the development of curriculum theory and educational practice. It can serve to foster self-understanding and aid in the construction of better environments. However, when the language of psychology controls educational talk, it tends to de-ethicize and depoliticize human relations and personal conduct.

<sup>7</sup> See Berard Marthaler, "Socialization as a Model for Catechetics," in *Foundations of Religious Education*, (New York: Paulist, 1978): 64-92. ed. Padriac O'Hare; and John H. Westerhoff, III, "A Socialization Model," in *A Colloquy on Christian Education*. (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1972): 80-90 and "In Search of Community," in *Will Our Children Have Faith?* (New York: Seabury, 1976): 51-78.

<sup>8</sup> Harrison S. Elliott, *Can Religious Education Be Christian*, (New York: Macmillan,

Michale Apple writes, "the language of learning tends to be apolitical and ahistorical, thus hiding the complex nexus of political and economic power and resources that lies behind a considerable amount of curriculum organization and selection. In brief, it is not an adequate linguistic tool for dealing with what must be a prior set of curriculum questions about the possible ideological roots of school knowledge."<sup>9</sup>

Religious educators need to pay serious attention to this critique. The psychological model has been a major force in the field of religious education for over twenty years,<sup>10</sup> and current developmental theories are having a fundamental influence on the content, structure and process of the enterprise.<sup>11</sup> Psychology can continue to play a modest role. But attention to the social, political and structural forms of religious education are required today if the field is to be redirected.

What specific individuals are the subject of discussion in the interview? In this regard, Huebner's orientation seems excessively focused on children and youth. Why direct religious education mainly to the young? This is a retreat to the traditional church model — where the child is central and the adult a neglected species. As long as church programs remain child-centered, we cannot expect churches to direct (the young, old and middle-aged) toward religious maturity.<sup>12</sup>

*Within what social-political arrangements?:* With this expression, Huebner explicitly draws attention to the political forms of education. The educator builds environments to allow people the opportunity to reorganize and reconstruct their experience and direct the course of their future experience. This activity is an act of power. It is intervention in the lives of people in an attempt to influence. But we do have a choice as to *how* we exercise that power. When the governing and adjudicating structures of the

<sup>9</sup> Michael Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum*: 29-30. See also Joseph J. Schwab, "On the Corruption of Education by Psychology," *The School Review*, 67, (Summer, 1958): 169-184.

<sup>10</sup> See Kenneth Barker, "The Psychological Type," in *Religious Education, Catechesis and Freedom*, (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1981): 105-127 and John H. Peatling, *Religious Education in a Psychological Key*, (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1981).

<sup>11</sup> As representative examples, see James Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981) and Lawrence Kohlberg, *The Philosophy of Moral Development*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981).

<sup>12</sup> Gabriel Moran, *Design for Religion*, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970).

educative setting are unmasked and manifest, acts of coercion and manipulation can be more easily recognized, named and resisted.

In drawing attention to the political nature of schooling, Huebner is raising a critical question for church education. We must be concerned, he says, with the structures of meaning-making. In the adult-child relationship, the adult has tended by the use of power to impose his or her meaning. Education requires, however, that the neophyte and the teacher negotiate new meaning together. What is required are imaginative ways to re-order our lives to facilitate the creative inter-play by powers in the educational setting.

Is there a naivete, however, in Huebner's discourse with regard to the political nature of education in the church? Is he aware of the conflict between some content and current church structures? Is he sensitive to the contradiction between a critical educational process and some ecclesial forms? Is he conscious of the control and short-circuiting of the interpretative process in church education? And, finally, is he attentive to the traditions that have been suppressed and excluded from religious education in the churches? In my assessment, Huebner does not adequately bring under suspicion the structures of meaning, the patterns of power and the linguistic barriers in the churches to genuine religious education. His proposal does not offer us a solution, but his initial question holds the possibility for probing toward an intelligent response.

JOHN H. WESTERHOFF: *Duke Divinity School*. As I attempt to bring this journalistic experiment to a close, I am more stimulated than I might have imagined; indeed, I'm intellectually enthused. I have more questions than when I began and I'm also more troubled. This discussion ought not to be brought to an end and I do not intend to try. Instead I would like to enhance a continuing colloquy by making a few final comments.

First, it would be useful if the original, no longer accepted, understanding of socialization as a process which focuses on the transmitter of culture and describes the recipient as a passive participant in a unidirectional model of cultural transmission that mitigates against change was abandoned and the more recent, generally accepted, understanding which focuses on the recipient and describes the recipient as an active participant in an inter-

active model of cultural transmission which encourages continuous, gradual adaptation and change was adopted.<sup>1</sup>

I have a suspicion that the differentiation some have drawn between socialization and education in terms of process is inadequate. Perhaps the real difference is in terms of our understanding of the learner. Might the language of education perceive the learner as an individual who associates with others and forms institutions and might the language of socialization perceive the learner as a communal being whose identity and growth can only be understood in terms of life in a community which shares a common memory, vision, authority, rituals and family like life together.

Second, when we ask the questions, what is the content we are going to make available and what are we going to do with it, are we not asking if it is possible to be a Christian and believe whatever one wishes or interpret the community's tradition in any way one pleases? Is not the answer to both, no? We live in a wasteland of relativity where individuals believe they can write their own creeds and interpret Scripture anyway they like. Catholicism's concern for an ordered authority may lead to tyranny, but Protestantism's concern for freedom will only lead to anarchy, a far greater danger to community.

St. Vincent of Lérins wrote "We must hold what has been believed everywhere, always and by all." The creeds are at once the criteria and the norm for believing and behaving. A Christian teacher is not free to teach or encourage private opinions, but only to propagate and defend "the faith that was delivered to the Saints." The "modern mind" stands under the judgment of the Kerygma. We are to bend our thoughts to the mental habits of the Apostolic message, for "repentance" means a "change of mind."

The Bible is the community's sacred book. St. Hilary wrote "Scripture is not in the hearing, but in the understanding". The book and the church cannot be separated and the apostolic message of the creeds provides us with a principle of interpretation so that scripture might be adequately and rightly understood. For St. Irenaeus the reading of Scripture must be guided by that "rule of faith" into which persons were inducted by the Sacrament of baptism. Our freedom is in obedience to that pro-

<sup>1</sup> See George Spindler, "From Omnibus to Linkages: Cultural Transmission Models," *Council on Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 1974, No. 5, and Marion Dobbert, "Another Route to a General Theory of Cultural Transmission," *Council on Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 1975, No. 6.

fession of belief every catechumen recites before baptism. There is a body of Apostolic tradition into which Christians are to be formed and there is a limit set by the authority of the community beyond which one is not free to interpret.

And third, there are those that contend that an emphasis on communal authority, and socialization as formation in the community's tradition is too conserving. Perhaps, however, the kerygma of the community as found in the apostolic confessions and the Gospels can in and of itself provide both the stimulant and means by which continual reform is possible without losing continuity with the past.

I am aware that these contentions may appear conservative, but I worry that the positions of both the Roman Catholics and Protestants represented in this conversation with Will Kennedy and Dwayne Huebner have written from opposite assumptions. And so the discussion must go on with others, especially our Jewish brothers and sisters. May this issue of the journal stimulate you to write and submit essays on the subject. The issue is too important to be forgotten or left at this point.

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### *Foundations and Theory*

COLLINS, GAY COLEMAN. "Anna Freud, an Educational Biography with Implications for Teaching." Ph.D. Claremont Graduate School, 1980. 643 pp. (41; 9, 4003-4004-A) Anna Freud, psychoanalyst, has worked throughout a long professional life to tailor psychoanalytic technique to meet the particular needs of children. Chapter three of this dissertation discusses teaching from a psychoanalytic perspective, including teacher attributes, the historical perspective of psychoanalysis and education, and the role of the teacher. Chapter four presents two teaching models that are congruent with the principles of psychoanalytic child psychology: the Bank Street Model and the British Infant School.

FLEMING, EDWARD JOSEPH. "The Epistemology of Jürgen Habermas: The Implications for Adult Education." Ed.D. Columbia University Teachers College, 1980. 250 pp. (41, 10, 4252-A) The purpose of this study is to examine some selected topics in the writings of Jürgen Habermas and identify their implications for a theory of adult learning. By postulating the existence of three domains of learning corresponding to the domains of inquiry, three distinct but interrelated kinds of adult learning are identified. Emancipatory learning, achieved through the power of self-reflection, is presented as being most significant for adults. The study concludes by reinterpreting as educational some of the roles associated with being a priest.

HATER, TERRY PRICE. "A Critique of North American Protestant Theological Education from the Perspectives of Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire." Ph.D.