

## **Inter-Religious Negotiations: Case Studies on Students' Perception of and Dealing with Religious Diversity**

*Heinz Streib*

Among the many themes and issues which have to be dealt with in religious education, the field of inter-religious issues did not have a very prominent place for centuries. The growing number of immigrant students however and increasingly culturally and religiously mixed classes, especially in schools in which the students are not separated according to their religious affiliation for religious education, and a new awareness and sensitivity for inter-religious relations caused immense changes and raised questions which have not been worked through and have not found a satisfactory solution to date. One of these – rather neglected – questions is the one asked in this chapter: How do students perceive and deal with religious diversity? This calls for engagement in basic research. Later in this chapter I present selected results of a pilot project in this area. Certainly, the question of religious diversity and of how students perceive this and deal with it is not limited to inter-religious relation, i.e. to the relation between different (world) religions, but religious diversity can also be observed in presumably homogenous religious education classes which are separated according to the parents' religious affiliation and membership: Religious orientations and world views may differ greatly e.g. between Protestant students, especially as they enter into adolescence. However, the more distinguished cases which we encounter increasingly throughout Europe yield a more contrasting relief.

In the rapidly growing literature about the challenge of religious diversity for religious education, an intelligent proposal has gained some recognition about which I will talk more in this chapter: inter-religious learning. Inter-religious learning, it is proposed, requires a perspective change on the part of the students. Before I take a closer look and turn to investigate this proposal for central competencies and procedures of inter-religious learning, it is necessary to explicate the frame of reference in which I approach the question. It is my supposition that the scientific observers and the teachers also have to engage in a perspective change themselves: a move of the point of view from the teacher's desk to the student's chair – which involves, at the same time, a shift from the grand global vista to the students' particularity. This frame of reference needs to be explained first.

### **1 Perspective Change: From the Grand View to Encounter with the Other's Lived Religion**

To decide to take the perspective of the student is consistent with a paradigmatic shift in the theory of religious education and the scientific study of religion in general which, inspired by phenomenological philosophy, has re-focussed its attention to the life-world(s) as origin and locus of religion. Terms such as 'lived religion' (Failing & Heimbrock 1998) indicate such change of perspective (cf. also Heimbrock 1998b). Consistent with this new phenomenological approach is a fresh interest in the subjectivity of the religious person, in the individual's 'subjective religion' which – moving even further – has a pre-reflective, pre-theoretical basis. If we go one step further with the phenomenological idea, we will arrive at one of the focal points of our

theme. Perception and experience involve the experience of foreignness. The contributions to the (radical) phenomenological perspective call attention to the irritation with the every-day routine, to split(s) in life-world(s), and to the experience of otherness, of foreignness (cf. e.g. Kiwitz 1986; Waldenfels 1985) – also as productive potentials for religion (Luther 1987; Luther 1992; cf. also Streib 1998a). To ask for the *students'* experience, perception and negotiation strategies in the face of religious diversity, thus is embedded in a theoretical, philosophical-phenomenological framework – which also suggests an answer to the question, whose foreignness are we talking about. In the first place, it is the *students'* experience of foreignness and their encounter with the other's religion.

Such a perspective is not taken for granted. The question with which we are dealing here is neglected or marginalized in theory and praxis of inter-religious education the more it is focussed on the teacher activity alone or exclusively on the subjective dimension of the inter-relation of the world's religions. The treatment of other religions in religious education in the past and up to the present has predominantly taken its point of departure from Christianity and has dealt with the non-Christian religions in terms of information, comparison and learning about the foreign. Here the foreign is introduced mainly by the teacher who takes the student by the hand. Many teachers have tried to take the students by the hand and climb up with them to the top of the mountain of their own religion and view, from high above, the mountain tops of the other (world) religions. The focus on the great tradition and the global institution has its compensation in the introduction of foreignness on the part of the educator. The sad truth with this caricature of a grand global vista is that such objectification of the other's (and one's own) religion is a trap into which religious education has walked all too often.

The more recent debate on inter-religious education, of course, has become aware of this trap and does its best to lead beyond pure information and factual knowledge. But it may reveal as wishful thinking the new scapegoat whether it carries the label “systems approach” (cf. Hull 1996) “multi-religious” model (cf. van der Ven & Ziebertz 1995), or “Religionskunde” (Otto 1992). Such a scapegoat might take our sins of objectification, disappear and never return. Certainly, religious education should be different from geography. We need to initiate learning processes which are not restricted to factual knowledge and attempt to objectify the other religion. As a way out of this dilemma, a proposal has gained recognition: the inter-religious model, the inter-religious learning approach. Inter-religious learning, in contrast to mono-religious and multi-religious learning, can be defined with van der Ven and Ziebertz (1995) by the change of perspectives.<sup>1</sup> Such change of perspectives is hardly possible while standing on the top of the mountain: because there, the foreign is far away; it may look beautiful from a distance, but it is difficult to go there, we enjoy a grand vista while standing on the firm ground of our own religion. Perspective change occurs rather in valley. The life-world, the “small social life-world” (Hitzler 1994), is the primary locus of perspective change. It means to see the individual, to initiate and nurture the reciprocal perspective change between them, but it means also to allow for and appreciate (!) the experience of the foreign, of estrangement in dialoguing with each other.

The change of perspective and the focus on the students as subjects and actors in their inter-religious encounter is also worthwhile on practical grounds. When we do not know or ignore what is taken-for-granted among the students, what kind of foreignness they may experience, what they already have accomplished, what kind of specific questions they may have, what their perception of and their way of dealing

with religious diversity is, we have problems to finding out their learning needs and religious education may miss its goal.

Two important desiderata follow from this brief sketch of the problem and these first thoughts and directions:

- We need to know in greater detail what exactly is going on between the students when they perceive religious diversity: what attracts their attention, what are their questions, how do they experience foreignness. This suggests paying attention to empirical research.
- We have to identify the competencies and skills which the students need – and partially already apply – when they perceive religious diversity and when they negotiate religious diversity. Religious education has the task of nurturing these skills.

From all of this, we should be able to suggest didactical arrangements which bear the promise of initiating and accompanying ‘fruitful moments’ in students’ inter-religious encounter and dialogue.

## 2 Insights: Empirical Results Relating to Students’ Inter-Religious Dialogue

Empirical research on our question is almost absent. Certainly, we can refer to data – see the recent Shell youth survey (Shell 2000) – on the religious affiliation, participation, self-designation and interest of adolescents in Germany which may allow some inference about their inter-religious relation and which documents a high appreciation among adolescents, immigrant and domestic, for mutually learning from each other; this may make us optimistic about the readiness of adolescents for inter-religious dialogue.<sup>2</sup> We also have some results on the preferences of students whether they would prefer mono-, multi-, or inter-religious religious education (Ziebertz & vanderVen 1996; 1997) which may allow speculations about their readiness for dialogue. But we have almost no results of research on young people’s perception and dealing with religious diversity – which, of course, would have to go beyond the method of using questionnaires or interviews to document the reflective statements, but would need to put observation methods into use. In the following I present two of such rare cases: qualitative pilot studies, one in high school and one in primary school. These may serve as examples and give us some insights in the subtle mechanisms of perception and dealing with religious difference and, at the same time, providing contrasting styles of students’ inter-religious negotiation.

### 2.1 *A Discussion in an 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Group*

In a recently published research project at the University of Hamburg (Knauth et al. 2000), Wolfram Weiße and his team have progressed into educational research with focus on the inter-religious dialogue in the class room. Religious education lessons in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade have been videotaped; a questionnaire has been administered to the students; students have been invited to verbalise comments about their conversation in the classroom by the method of simulated recall (Nachträgliches lautes Denken); individual interviews have been conducted; and some other framework data have been documented. Though this research project has not focussed only on the dialogue between the students, but on the whole interactive field in religious education including the teacher, some interesting results for our theme can be reported from these student groups.

I want to present here a brief section from a religious education lesson in a multi-religiously composed<sup>3</sup> 11<sup>th</sup> grade class of a high school in a suburb of Hamburg. The teacher had written on the blackboard “Does God exist?” Then a very vivid discussion develops especially between three students: Andi, a student from an immigrant family from Poland, who argues from an atheistic standpoint and finally denies God’s existence explicitly; Özkan an immigrant from Turkey who designates himself as “Moslem” and argues in favor of God’s existence; and Vikko, an immigrant from Russia who describes himself as “Protestant” and strongly believes in God’s existence (“show me a place where God is absent...”). The discussion between the three students develops very vividly and almost escalates into a fight. The students resort to various arguments, e.g. about the origin of the world. Özkan directly asks Andi whether he believes in God’s existence. Özkan and Vikko form kind of an inter-religious coalition against Andi, the “atheist.”

In order to get an impression of the way of argumentation and the style of dialogue, I present an extract from this lesson:

*Mr. Fröh (teacher): Okay, who has something to say about this topic? Andi?*

*Andi: Yeah, well, in religion there’s God, and people who are part of some religion or who belong to one, they believe in the god and what’s...whatever..uh... whatever kind of a god that is, because there are different gods in religions and it’s just a question of belief whether or not they believe in God - because there’s no proof that God exists. Especially with the Jews... uh... they definitely ask themselves whether or not there is a god, because they were almost wiped out, you know ... uh.. in the Second World War by Hitler, and God also didn’t...uh...didn’t help them...in the end, you know. So they also ask themselves the question, is there a God or not and all that. So it’s just a question of believing, whether you believe in God or not.*

*Mr. Fröh: Hmm! Yes! Verona!*

*Verona: I’d say that it’s like with truth, each person has his own truth and for some people God exists and for others he just doesn’t.*

*Another pupil (impossible to determine who): What?*

*Verona: It’s like with truth!*

*Herr Fröh: Hmm, yes!... let’s hear some more!...Özkan! You just had your hand up.*

*Özkan: Yeah, I just wanted to say, that thing about the truth, it’s like this, everyone believes in the truth they know and I believe that there is a God, that he exists and like Andi. Andi said something like it depends on belief, but that’s not an answer to the question whether God exists or not...*

*Andi: No, I was thinking about it this way... well, with belief, either you believe in it, because you can’t really prove it, you’ve never seen him, you know... you know him only from writings, things that someone wrote down a long time ago and that’s what you believe in and that’s why you believe that there is a God, you’ve never seen him, you’ve never heard him talk or anything, and so that’s just a question of belief, whether you believe in him or not. You’re not...uh.. convinced by him that he exists.*

*Özkan: Do you believe in God?*

*Andi: No!*

*Mr. Fröh: Hmm! What about the rest of you who haven’t said anything yet! What would be important, you can give your opinion about it...Vikko!*

*Vikko: When people ask me, where is God, show him to me, then I say, you show me where he isn’t. (Mr. Fröh: Hhm). Because you see it in creation and*

*everywhere, when you look at a single cell, there are just as many organs as in a human, exactly as many and so you can't just say that it all just created itself. (Knauth et al. 2000: 124-125)*

On the content dimension, the students bring forward various arguments about the possibility of seeing and experiencing God, about the Holocaust, and about the origin of the world in order to make the case for or against God's existence. They fight with arguments. Reflectiveness is the unquestioned precondition and skill. On the interactive dimension, the students open up and let each other know what they think and believe; they even ask direct questions about each other's belief. The other person's own belief and world view is what interests them most. The horizon of systems of belief in one of the world religions is not of special importance; also the affiliation of the participants with one or the other religious tradition remains in the background. The students, of course, know what religious tradition each one of them is affiliated with through their families, but they allow for, and even require from each other, an individual answer in regard to religious questions.

The results of the conversation analysis are very interesting, but cannot be presented here in all detail. The analysis of the students' own comments in simulated recall not only bring to our attention the positions of the students who did not talk in the class room, but also these comments put the statements in the class room into sharper relief and document the vigour, vehemence and even aggression in the statements. What is of special importance for our theme deserves to be noted:

- First, the students engage in inter-religious dialogue – which they shape as a dialogue *among* themselves while the teacher confines himself to discussion management and the horizon of religious traditions remains in the background.
- Second, the students fight for their opinion with all sorts of arguments, form coalitions and elicit personal confession statements from each other. They thus move beyond 'perspective change' and 'understanding each other'; they experience estrangement and deal with foreignness.
- Third, these 11<sup>th</sup> grade students perceive and deal with religious diversity by reflection and plausible argumentation. Their concern is with their own religious world view which has to be defended against the opinion of their peers.
- Fourth, the students find their unique way of dealing with contradiction and conflicting points of view: even though the discussion escalates up to a certain point, it does not end in a fight; coalitions remain flexible, as several students emphasise in their simulated recall statements.
- Fifth, the students not only like such vivid discussion and say that this makes religious education very interesting, but they gain inter-religious competence.

Certainly, this is one pilot case study from the unique Hamburg situation. More research would be necessary to generalise results for the students in Germany and in Europe. But even a limited number of case studies should not be ignored. On the contrary, they permit and support the hypothesis that inter-religious dialogue between students in a multi-faith educational setting can be very inspiring and productive and that **such a** setting does not destroy young people's religious identity, but helps to develop religious identity – with one condition: that foreignness and estrangement are given a chance to develop and be educated, that diversity can be negotiated.

## 2.2 Two Primary School Girls in Dialogue

In a pilot study at the University of Bielefeld, we have documented the inter-religious encounter and dialogue of children in primary school. We have developed and carried out the following design: two children of different religious affiliation are interviewed simultaneously by two interviewers in a separate room in the school building. The agenda is to ask, in the first part of the interview, for name, age and place of birth, but also questions about religious affiliation, participation and religious practice. Then, the children are asked to stop talking, also to stop talking to each other, take a piece of paper and crayons and draw a picture with symbols and images which they see as important for their own religion. After the drawing process, the children were asked to exchange their drawings and start to explain to each other and ask questions. The session concludes with a semi-structured interview with questions about the difference and commonality of the two religions. In the following, I present an interpretation of one of these video recordings.<sup>4</sup>

Kirsten (9 years) and Meltem (11 years) are friends, they go in the same class and, besides the regular time in school, they spend time together for playing. Kirsten's family belongs to the Mennonite Church; Islam is the religion of Meltem's family.

Both girls say that they "go to church" regularly: Meltem goes to the mosque twice or three times a month. Her characterisation of what is important in the mosque is interesting:

*M:*     *yes, m-hm, that's only here in Germany but a little bit ... there's a church called ... it's called [...] well you pray there whenever there's a celebration or something ... you go and you pray ... and they say that, that the wishes, they say that ... maybe the wishes will be granted ... and when the moon comes out and in the evening and when you pray ... then ... and then they you say what it is you wish and that, that - then it will really be, well... if you say ... God for example... do that and that and that m-hm then he does it ;*

*II.:*     *m-hm...and you also go to the mosque often?*

*M:*     *yes, with my mother then and with my father*

*II:*     *m-hm do you know about how often?*

*M:*     *two or three times a month.*

Meltem calls the location of the religious practice of her family "a church" and does not speak about the "mosque." This seems to be due to language problems: no other word comes to her mind at the moment; but also this could indicate a generalising and harmonising use of language and could be understood as "the mosque is our church." Meltem indicates what is important for her in the mosque: a "celebration" takes place; it is a place for prayer; and most important for her – Meltem mentions this twice – is "saying wishes". Meltem says that prayer is "telling God to do such and such" and that God does fulfil her wishes.

This can be interpreted as an indication of a (first) naivety which we observe also later in the interview. But certainly this statement identifies Meltem as a faithful Islamic girl who not only identifies herself with the religion of her family, but also has faith and hope in a helping God who listens to the need of his people. Meltem may also have experienced that prayers have been heard and wishes have been fulfilled. This instance of identification with her family's religion at the beginning of the interview finds its parallel and continuation later in the interview, when they talked about prayer. Meltem asks the audience (the interviewers and her friend Kirsten) whether she could

demonstrate how to pray; and, hardly waiting for the expected permission, she stands up and starts her demonstration while the camera is running.

The fact that Meltem wants to demonstrate how to pray can be understood as indication for her awareness of foreignness. She does not silently assume that her friend Kirsten and the interviews – one of them she knows as her teacher! – know how Muslims pray, but finds it appropriate to perform the demonstration of the ritual. Certainly, Meltem's demand to demonstrate this could also be understood as the desire of a 11-year-old immigrant girl to demonstrate proficiency: I have learned and know already how to perform it. But besides the indication of proficiency, familiarity and identification with her own religion, she does not assume that her audience knows it or has seen it before. Rather than assuming that everyone should know or should be acquainted with one's own tradition, Meltem acts as if she had to offer something of exotic value for her domestic audience. Such awareness and acting out of foreignness appears to be an intelligent step and procedure in this micro-segment of inter-religious interaction: it allows Meltem to identify with her own tradition without the expectation of being criticised for not being accurate or faithful enough; but at the same time it also allows the others to admit lack of knowledge and to develop curiosity.

Also Kirsten goes with her family to the church service every Sunday – except when she is ill. She does not say much about the church service or the Sunday school, but the frequency of church attendance indicates that Kirsten belongs to a family of involved and practising Mennonites. Later in the interview, Kirsten tells us that she prays regularly.

*II: (break, 5) Kirsten, do you also pray sometimes?*

*K.: m-hm... so almost every evening [II: m-hm] so before going to sleep (break,4) we actually just pray kneeling*

Note that the interviewer question is an open question and would allow an answer which refers to prayer in church and at the dinner table. But Kirsten's first association is private prayer which is a ritual before going to bed and has its locus in the family group. The family tradition is to pray kneeling and it is not silent prayer; and only because Kirsten does not want to disturb her sister, does she pray silently.

*II: do you pray alone or with your mother?*

*K.: sometimes alone [and?] with my mother*

*II: ...m-hm and when you pray alone, then you think up something on your own*

*K.: yes*

*II: so, so do you pray aloud or quietly*

*K.: quietly because otherwise Lisa always gripes, my sister (laughs).*

Not surprisingly then is Kirsten's answer on the interviewer's question about whether she is using standardised formulae in her prayers like her friend Meltem:

*K.: [m-hm no] sorry, not really ... for example that one, that everyone stays healthy or .. just because... well, if someone is sick, so that he becomes healthy again...so*

In this interaction, it is very interesting that Kirsten excuses herself for not using standardised formulae in her prayer. A tone of inferiority and of envy can be heard resonating in her statement. This is interesting for the inter-religious encounter which takes place between Meltem on the one side and Kirsten and the interviewers on the other. This however does not cause Kirsten to be hesitant or stop talking, but rather to continue saying how and what she is praying, and here again we observe a kind of pride that Kirsten is able to keep up with her Islamic friend Meltem and has to offer something strange of some exotic value for her audience.

Given this deep commitment to religion, it is surprising that Meltem and Kirsten have never talked to each other before about religious matters and their families' religious involvement. This interview is the first time and a unique opportunity to do what they never have done before: to learn something about each other's religious belief and practice. One of the reasons is also that Kirsten and Meltem attend religious education in religiously separated groups. The fact that this is new for them, is one of the reasons for a dynamic development in the interview: the girls develop increasing curiosity about each other's religion in an attitude of trying to understand – and to find similarities and consent between them. It is interesting to observe already in this first part of the interview that the girls detect more and more links between their families' religious rituals:

- Both Kirsten and Meltem are affiliated in a religious family and are regular “church goers.”
- Both girls portrait their families as open to religious issues, sometimes they talk about religion – in Kirsten's case, when there are questions from religious education in school, and in Meltem's case, when her uncle, a very devout and religiously involved man, is visiting Meltem's family.
- Both are praying regularly and – despite differences in the use of standardised formulae – both are praying on their knees.

Such an introduction in the first part of the interview can be judged as an instance of a successful inter-religious interaction which develops in an atmosphere of awareness for one's own foreignness and therefore allows the partner to develop curiosity for the other's religious beliefs and practices.

This tone of the interview continues after the drawing. It is understandable that the attention first is focussed on the symbols in the pictures: the Ten Commandments on slabs of stone; the Bible; a sign which says “No Pork;” the scarf; candles etc.. But soon the interview turns to questions of comparison between the religious belief systems. Both girls are not able to give reasons for their religious diversity and refrain from a judgement on the interviewer's question of superiority of one religion over the other, but rather, here again, the girls detect common themes and shared symbolic and mythological motifs.

Both girls strongly agree with each other about their disapproval of the atheism of some of their peers:

*M.: and some children say [...] yeah God can kiss my ass and so on and [K.: yes] I don't think that's good at all.*

*K.: really mean*

And when the interviewers press the question of superiority of one religion over the other, both girls back-out before this delicate question and avoid judgements.

*II: (break, 4) yes, um..what do you think, do you think that one religion is better than the other, you've mentioned Roman Catholic, Protestant, Moslem -*

*M.: I don't think so because they believe in that religion and we believe in Turkish religion so [...] [II.: m-hm]*

*K.: because you just don't know, you've never done it before and so you can't say which is better.*

While Meltem refers to some vague sense of religious plurality and wants to leave open the question that way, Kirsten excuses herself with the lack of acquaintance with the other religion. The girls are not in the position to answer the question of superiority, instead they develop curiosity, to try to understand and to learn from each other. Feelings and experiences of foreignness subside into the background and give way to



agreement. It appears that the girls cannot bear the contradictions between their world views and religious practices, but instantly look for harmony.

Very interesting is the newly revealed commonality in regard to the belief in a Final Judgement and in the idea of the Hell. At first, when the question was raised by Meltem, how we can imagine where God lives when there are such large planets in the universe, the dialogue was about to turn into a controversy, when Kirsten, obviously surprised about the naive question of her friend, said:

*K.: yes, he, he doesn't live here,...he made the planets and all that*

*M.: ...but where is he then? ... if planets and all that, there's no air there, they just spin around...[...]*

*K.: ...but he isn't like a human he's like a spirit or something.*

After Kirsten's brief explanation, the controversy is set aside, the danger is detected, and dealt with, and disagreement has been prevented. Meltem changes the subject and raises a related, but different issue – which turns out to reveal another resemblance between the girls' religions:

*M.: and my grandmother tells me sometimes that when everyone dies and then God will come down in his chariot and flutes will play and then everyone will come up out of the earth [...] and then*

*K.: [come] out of the grave, you know*

*M.: yes and yes and then they decide whether, whether they'll go to a good place or somewhere [K: no] where they'll be punished [...]*

*K.: no whether they'll go to heaven or to hell, you know*

*M.: yes*

*K.: yes, fine*

*M.: [...] two, two doors, so you go through there*

*K.: [...] i-if you were good then you go into a kingdom or something [like that]*

*M.: [yes, there] the animals there are so*

*K.: yes and you can play with them [M.: yes[...]] and they don't bite and all*

*M.: yes and wishes, you can [...] apple, that [...]*

*K.: no there are [M.: ...] there are trees, they bear fruit every month.*

Here, the girls enter into an extraordinary communication: developing a common mythological image of The Paradise by way of passing on and extending each other's ideas in a kind of Ping-Pong communication. The fictional story continues with an – also commonly developed – mythological image of The Hell:

*K.: well, there are also no [...] .. bad ones there, there [...] you have to be in the fire the whole time and then you burn but you don't burn up; you can kill yourself and you're not dead.*

*M.: yes, exactly and they cut your flesh and so on so that you're punished*

*K.: yes and then vampires and things come*

*M.: ...but if you, if you [...] are punished then you also go to that -*

*K.: (negating) m-hm + then you're always there, it never stops [...]*

*M.: yes it does*

*K.: it does?*

*M.: when you've been punished enough then you go back a thousand years or something [...] but you're always thirty-six years old ... when it's your birthday or something you're not allowed to celebrate it there;*

*K.: you [M.: [...]] can't at all*

*M.: ... you always stay for example [...]*

*K.: you melt then ... (laughs)*

*M.:* maybe you're two years old but then you're thirty-six

*K.:* m-hm

These interactions almost at the end of the interview are very interesting not only because the girls detect common mythological images and beliefs, and not only because of the style of communication between the two girls who enter into a Ping-Pong game of responding to, supplementing and advancing, each other's ideas, but because of the style of communication: the girls display a sense of humour, they laugh, take each other's ideas reasonably seriously, even when they could appear eccentric or odd to the other. They keep in the margins of the rules of the game – and the game is this: drawing a colourful mythological picture with one's words.<sup>5</sup> The communication of Meltem and Kirsten has the character of a serious play with images, of an experiment. In this verbal play, the rules of the game allow the girls to identify with a certain belief and myth, but do not prescribe providing an explanation or argument. Curiosity, the wish to arrive at mutual understanding, and the desire to maintain harmony are in the foreground, rather than the desire to establish one's own opinion, enter into controversy and demonstrate superiority.

The case of Meltem and Kirsten gives us insights into one possibility of children's and adolescents' inter-religious dialogue. Despite their parents' rootedness in a traditional religion with repressive traits (strict prayer rituals; fear of devil and hell; sin and need for forgiveness) and despite the girls' identification and familiarity with the strict religious traditions of their parents, they enter in a playful inter-religious exchange of ideas and images, find similarities and consent, become aware of differences, but feel no need to stress the differences and refrain from arguing for the superiority of one religion over the other. We can assume that their parents would behave differently in a comparable situation. Meltem and Kirsten very likely could not play such a game at home with their parents.

Meltem's and Kirsten's perception, and way of dealing with religious diversity, their inter-religious dialogue, is a single and unique case. The question can be asked however whether their case is typical of inter-religious encounter and dialogue in primary school age. I do not want to anticipate the results of future empirical research, but, from my experience and judgment, their dialogue can be regarded as typical. Meltem and Kirsten can serve as examples for a specific style of inter-religious dialogue which we may find in primary school.

The two case studies which I have presented yield insight in the inter-religious encounter and negotiation between students. However contrasts between the two examples have become visible. These contrasts call for explanation. In the following section, I will offer an explanatory framework. With our case material in mind, it also is now our task to reflect in a more systematic way upon the preconditions for perspective change and the inter-religious negotiation strategies, and thereby we will move on from the descriptive to the prescriptive.

### 3 Viewpoints: Preconditions for Students' Inter-Religious Negotiation

When we ask the question: what are the preconditions which are necessary for inter-religious encounter and dialogue, the answer is usually: the children and adolescents ought to develop identity in their religion. To be more explicit: first, we have to educate toward identity, then communication with and understanding of the other can take place.<sup>6</sup> In regard to this program, we have to raise questions which are of general importance when we ask for the precondition for a perspective change in the students

in inter-religious learning. In this use of the term, identity means a very specific identity: identity in a certain religious belief, e.g. Protestant identity. As in much of the literature on inter-religious learning, *identity* within and *knowledge* about one's own religious tradition stand in the foreground.

However from my reading of theological and philosophical contributions, 'identity' is something more than familiarity with, and groundedness in, one's own religious tradition. Being aware of disagreements between them, I will give a few references which confirm my conviction that identity should not be regarded a noun, but a verb, because it describes a process. Identity is always in the process of development, it is never finished, and always fragmentary (Luther 1985). The process of identity formation is not only reflexive and diachronic, but identity has to do with non-identity (Straub 1991). In our pluralistic cultures, 'identity' has lost the feature of mono-cultural identity. With due precaution, one is justified in speaking about a plural identity, a 'plural self' (Meijer 1995). In *Oneself as Another* (1990), Paul Ricoeur explicates identity as a relational concept; it is based on the encounter with the Other, it is understanding "oneself as another". Such identity is grounded in narrative, is narrative identity. Only with such a qualification could identity be regarded as a key concept in the list of preconditions for inter-religious dialogue.

Certainly, the students enter into inter-religious encounter and negotiation on the basis of a certain degree of identity. In both of our cases which I have presented, we observe identification with a specific religious orientation. Meltem and Kirsten, display clear embeddedness in their families' religion and have developed a strong and unquestioned religious identity. In some contrast to our two primary school girls, the high school students may have departed from their families' religious affiliation, but, as far as the documented discussion allows us to judge, these students have developed at least a rudimentary sense of religious identity also – which in their case comes to expression in their vigorous way of announcing and defending their own point of view about God's existence.

But what is more intriguing and important in both case studies, is the openness of the negotiation process, the experimental quality of the students' dialogue. For both student groups, identity is also an open process. Identity is not simply the precondition for negotiation, but it is also the *outcome* and *result* of negotiation: Meltem and Kirsten engage in a process of creating a shared and harmonious sense of identity, the high school students' individual sense of identity has to stand the test of argumentative negotiation. Thus, instead of taking 'identity' as a point of departure and precondition, and instead of assuming a clear-cut sequence – first comes identity, then communication –, my viewpoint is rather the reverse presumes the sequence: perception – negotiation – identity. Thus I have moved other concepts into the foreground to which I now will turn.

### 3.1 *Curiosity, Perplexity and Openness for the Other*

I begin my reflection on inter-religious negotiation by drawing attention to the very start and basis for inter-religious encounter: curiosity, perplexity, and openness to the other. In both case studies, the students exhibit curiosity, but also an obvious astonishment and initial perplexity in their encounter with the foreign religion or religious world view of their peers. In the case of Meltem and Kirsten, the exchange about their religious affiliation and belief is novel for them, they have never talked about their religion. Thus the interview process from the start and during at least the first half of

the conversation consists of the disclosure of things never heard of from the close friend. This triggers curiosity. Although the moments of astonishment, perplexity and estrangement about the other's religious beliefs and practices do not last for a long time, but become quickly superimposed by the girls' search for consent and harmony, such moments can not be overlooked, and in fact this is the experience on the basis of which the girls search for commonality. Meltem and Kirsten show a remarkable openness to each other's religion.

Also the Hamburg students enter into a new area of dialogue when, initiated by the educational arrangement, they start to think about their personal answers on the question of God's existence and begin to engage in a discussion with each other. Özkan's direct question to Andi whether he believes in God's existence is one of the most explicit examples, but also some of the simulated recall statements are an indication of the curiosity and the novelty of the theme as well. Andi's answer and all the other instances of disclosing personal opinions cause perplexity and elicit contradiction and the students are aware of this. But even in this demarcating and potentially confrontational atmosphere, the students remain curious and open to each other's opinions.

As our examples indicate, curiosity is an important precondition for inter-religious encounter to be set in motion. When openness to the other remains the basic attitude, perplexity and astonishment are the cause for taking a closer look and ask subsequent questions. These motivational factors are the starter for the inter-religious encounter. They cause the students to open their eyes. Perception of the other's religious belief and practice or of the other's religious opinion and world view is beginning here. But, at this starting point, it still is an open question whose perspective will be taken.

### *3.2 Perspective Change*

As already mentioned, inter-religious learning, in contrast to mono-religious and multi-religious learning, has been defined by the change of perspectives, more precisely: by a double, reciprocal interpretation of one's own and the other's religion by oneself and by the other. Students according to van der Ven and Ziebertz (1995) should be able to see and argue for their own religion not only from their own religion's perspective, but from the other religious framework, to see one's own religion not only with one's own eyes, but also with the eyes of the other, in another religious frame.

This definition and profile of inter-religious learning is a significant step forward when viewed on the background of mono-religious and multi-religious model. When taking a second look and considering it in light of the phenomenological perspective, it needs qualification however. The question could be asked: When 'interpretation' and 'understanding' are the main or exclusive key concepts, where is the account for non-understanding, perplexity, irritation, feelings of strangeness and possible misinterpretation? "How far can one walk in the moccasins of another?" (1998a). It should also be taken into account that inter-religious encounter could include a double reciprocal experience of foreignness. And it may even be a necessary proposal for religious education to cultivate and educate foreignness. It is thus my suggestion that the inter-religious model with its proposal for a (hermeneutical) 'perspective change' needs to be more profoundly grounded and to be qualified.

We are used to think and explicate 'perspective change' in terms of hermeneutics. Understanding the other is the key. There is certainly more in inter-religious communication and in interpersonal dialogue about religion than an exchange of truth claims

from an objectifying third-person perspective; we have to enter into a perspective change – which also involves the attempt to (rationally) reconstruct the truth of the partner in communication in his or her own terms. To walk in the shoes of the other is the often-used metaphor for this. But there is also non-understanding; the truth of the other may appear as embedded in a foreign rationality. And non-understanding is not always a lack or failure of hermeneutical carefulness, but there is – we have to insist on this especially in regard to religion! – a limit to rational reconstruction (understanding), and foreignness may remain. In the debate on the possibility of ‘rationality’ (Wilson 1970) in understanding the foreign, especially in ‘understanding a primitive society’ (Winch 1964), the validity of the one and only rationality as measure of the world has been questioned. To opt, in light of such questioning, for more hermeneutical carefulness, is certainly a valuable step. But here the limits of the hermeneutical paradigm, even when the carefulness is very great, become visible: The aim of the hermeneutical attitude is finally to understand and “grasp” (Zilleßen 1994 even talks about objectivation). And it is an illusion to require perfection in perspective change as a presupposition for inter-religious dialogue. The metaphor of ‘touching,’ the experience of perceiving, but non-understanding, the development of foreignness and estrangement have their own right and should be taken into account. This suggests a less perfectionist, but more complex understanding of ‘perspective change’: the attempt to take the perspective of the other is very valuable, but it also accounts for irritation and the experience of foreignness.

It cannot be taken for granted and cannot be guaranteed that the suggested perspective change succeeds. Instead, an attitude of openness is required which leads into experimentation. Whether we may engage in perspective change and begin to understand the other’s religion or whether we encounter foreignness, the task remains to *coordinate* the perspectives. We thus need to pay attention to the contextual embeddedness of our religious orientation in another person’s interpersonal world.

### *3.3 Perspective Coordination: The Development of Inter-Religious Negotiation*

From my viewpoint, ‘perspective coordination’ and ‘inter-religious negotiation’ are central factors and preconditions for inter-religious encounter and inter-religious learning. They are less ambitious and perfectionist than the requirement of perspective change. They stay more close to the earthly ground, to the interpersonal life-world of the students. And inherent in the concept of ‘inter-religious negotiation’, there is a more careful attention to the students’ competencies in biographical or developmental perspective.

The concepts of ‘perspective coordination’ and ‘inter-religious negotiation,’ in my own definition which I explicate here, closely relate to two important contributions which are both rooted in the developmental theory tradition: the work of Robert Selman and the work of James Fowler. Selman (1980) has drawn attention to the procedure of ‘role-taking’ or ‘perspective-taking’ which he originally explicated primarily in the terms of structural-developmental theory. In subsequent contributions based on his clinical work however he and his colleagues have focused also on a functional perspective and have included an emotional and psychoanalytic dimension (1982; 1984). They have written about the development of friendship in adolescence (Selman & Schultz 1990) and about the treatment of the troubled child (1988; 1991); and in all these further developments, they have worked with the model of perspective

coordination. Thus Selman's contribution to our question is a more detailed understanding of the process of perspective coordination in inter-religious negotiation.

Fowler (Fowler 1981; 1996) pioneered the outline of a theory of faith development with an accompanying empirical validation. He has included Selman's (and Kohlberg's) theoretical and empirical findings in his spectrum of aspects of faith, but has extended his view and broadened his focus to include additional aspects which he regards as indicative of faith. But already the inclusion of Selman's work, and also the triadic relational structure of faith direct our attention toward the other. Both theoretical approaches thus help us to understand in greater detail what is going on in students' inter-religious negotiations. Recently, I came to suggest a modification of Fowler's faith development theory and have developed a revised outline of religious styles which focus more decidedly on the inter-personal relations and on the inclusion of the life-world, while some of the assumptions for a 'hard stage' structural-developmental theory (such as 'structural wholeness' and 'sequentiality' if it understood as exclusion of regression) had to be dismissed (cf. Streib 2001a; cf. 1997b). But on the whole, from my point of view, religious studies and religious education profit greatly from the inclusion of the (revised) developmental view. This is true also for the work of Selman with its more detailed focus on inter-personal negotiation strategies: it may help us better to understand the children's and adolescents' inter-religious negotiation.

The differences between the two case studies which I have presented give the impression of a contrast which can be interpreted as developmental differences. From a developmental perspective, the style of Meltem's and Kirsten's dialogue displays features of what I call the 'mutual religious style' or, in Fowler's terms, of the 'synthetic-conventional faith,' while some features of the previous instrumental-reciprocal style (mythic-literal faith) are still visible. The girls' understanding of heaven and hell, Meltem's remark about God and the planets show mythic-literal characteristics; especially Meltem's opinion about prayer as wish fulfilment points toward a instrumental-reciprocal or 'do-ut-des' orientation. However, from the start, both girls show firm embeddedness in the conventions of their families' religion; religious rituals and belief systems are judged along the lines of "This is the way it is in my religious community, in my church, in my family." There is no need to 'give reasons for,' to make a judgement – it is an 'implicit system' (Fowler) and not (yet) an explicit system. Especially towards the end of the interview, however, it is interesting to observe how Meltem and Kirsten uncover and develop a strong mutuality between each other – a mutuality among peers. The girls regard consent and mutual support for each other's ideas as more important than attention to contradictions between them and even refuse to make a judgement about which religion is better. It is remarkable here however, that in view of this mutuality, the conventions of the girls' families subside into the background and the girls celebrate with a dash of irony the newly discovered commonality of mythological images and ideas.

Conversely, the 11<sup>th</sup> grade students in the Hamburg high school display a completely different way of dealing with and negotiating the difference between their religious world views. While Meltem and Kirsten avoid conflict and coordinate their perspectives in a rather integrative-harmonious way, the high school students fight for the truth of their own autonomous world view, but expose themselves to the counterarguments of their peers. This has to do with the expectation and desire which the students pursue: while Meltem and Kirsten strive for harmony and mutuality, the high school students are concerned primarily with autonomy which has to be coordinated with interdependence.

The interpretation of our two examples gives some plausibility to only one developmental step. Though this step is especially important for the age group we have in religious education in school – it may be the step from late primary school age to high school age (if I can speculate on the basis of our examples) –, the entire spectrum of inter-religious negotiation styles should be taken into consideration. In Figure 1, I present an outline of the styles of inter-religious negotiation which relate to both Selman's work<sup>7</sup> and to my own religious styles perspective.

<b>Niveaus of interpersonal Understanding and Negotiating</b> Based on Developmental Capacities of Coordination of Social Perspectives (CSP) <b>(Selman)</b>	<b>Action Choice            In Inter-Religious            Negotiation</b> (H.S. with reference to Selman & Schultz 1988)	<b>Religious            Styles</b> <b>(Streib)</b>
	<b>Dialog</b> as appreciation of the other as a gift, as openness for self-critique and learning through the encounter with the other / the foreign	Dialogical
Depth Psychological or Societal-Symbolic CSP	<b>Individuative Communication</b> recognizing – with attention to emotions – inter-religious interdependence, but with preoccupation for guarding one's own intimacy and autonomy	Individuative-systemic
Mutual / Third Person CSP	<b>Collaboration</b> with the other for mutual interest in inter-religious consent and harmony	Mutual
Reciprocal / Self-Reflective CSP	<b>Reciprocal interaction</b> in the service of the self's religious perspective	Instrumental-reciprocal
Subjective / Unilateral / One-Way CSP	<b>One way directives</b> or requests to consent to one's own religion	Subjective
Egocentric / Impulsive CSP	<b>Physical / non-verbal methods</b> to force consent to one's own religion	

Figure 1 Inter-Religious Negotiation Styles

In a brief explication of this spectrum of inter-religious negotiation styles, I want to point out that, on the one hand, this spectrum of inter-religious negotiation styles includes a teleology, an expected direction of development. Progress consists in increasing complexity, which means three things: an increasing recognition of the otherness of the other, an increasing account for the other's dignity, but also an increasing appreciation of the gift which the other is and has to offer. Thus these different inter-religious negotiation styles are correctly read from the bottom to the top: one-way requests for consent to one's own religion, first with physical force and then with authoritarian verbal directives, are expected to transform into a reciprocal

interaction which however is still in the service of the self's own religious perspective. Then collaboration with the other for mutual interest in inter-religious consent and harmony can be achieved which also might transform into individualistic communication which recognises inter-religious interdependence, but is still preoccupied with guarding the self's intimacy and autonomy. Finally we expect the transformation into a dialogical style of inter-religious negotiation which, in appreciation for the other as a gift, is open for self-critique and learning through the encounter with the other. These are ideal types of expectations.

On the other hand, and to ward off misunderstanding, I do not assume that it is possible to make the case for a clear-cut 'logic of development' focussing on cognitive structures. It would be mistaken to assume that the preference of one certain inter-religious negotiation style over another does depend solely on the one and only structural-developmental progress of cognitive competencies of perspective coordination; the function and the context situation have at least an equal impact.<sup>8</sup> Therefore these different styles of inter-religious negotiation do not occur purely, as "structural wholes," and regression *is* possible. Earlier styles may and do in fact return and can have a revival. It also deserves to be noted that there is no reason to assume that a certain person would solely apply one style in all situations and in interaction with all partners. Conversely, it heavily depends on the situation and the kind of partner which style comes to be used. For example, as Selman and others have observed, children use different negotiation styles in interaction with peers from those they apply in interaction with adults.<sup>9</sup>

This however does not devalue this typological spectrum of inter-religious negotiation styles, but it can be regarded as a valuable heuristic tool for research – and a promising guide for (inter-) religious education. In regard to religious education, this typological spectrum of inter-religious negotiation action styles serves to interpret a certain instance of inter-religious negotiation in the context of its developmental past and its possible future: as achievement and advancement which, at the same time, still has the option of growing and developing. Such developmental perspectives thus clearly exceed the mere descriptive task of interpreting empirical observation and yield a prescriptive dimension in the frame for which further development and aims for religious education can be specified. For instance, in respect to the Hamburg student group, it may lead to a different judgement and to different educational arrangements, when the sharp delineation of the boundaries of each individual's religious world view in the vehement discussion – though it may be in accord with the latest inter-religious negotiation style of these students which they apply in peer interaction – is not taken as the final word, but as having the potential of further development into dialogue.

#### 4 Outlook: Religious Education as Laboratory of Inter-Religious Negotiation Experiments

From my observation and research and its interpretation, part of which I have presented above, I venture to make some suggestions for inter-religious education. I have found the metaphor which is used by Paul Ricoeur to describe the work of narrative and literature toward what he calls the "narrative identity" very intriguing: Ricoeur talks about literature as a vast "laboratory for thought experiments" (Ricoeur 1990: 148) in relation to which we constantly are in the process of figuring and re-figuring our identities. I suppose that this metaphor is very helpful in describing the work of religious education also. Where should the students learn such experimentation when not in



school? It is therefore my suggestion that religious education should be conceptualised as *narrative* religious education, and to work in religious education with narratives in an experimental way (Streib 1998b; 1997a).

Working with narratives is very appropriate in a “community of remembering and story telling” (Metz 1973; ; cf. 1977) – which, I maintain, is not a specific feature of the Christian tradition, but of other (immigrant) religions as well. Christianity however, according to Metz, has very specific sorts of narratives to remember and re-tell: the dangerous and subversive stories of the victims, first and foremost the story of Jesus and the cross. Narrative religious education is an appropriate translation into the didactical arrangement that a phenomenological approach advocates: the narration is a colourful portrait of the religious truth, it is full of symbolic and metaphoric images and calls the listener to open his or her inner eyes to join the narrated scene. The value and the power of narrative is especially considerable in personal story-telling and opens up educational, transformational and even therapeutic potentials (Streib 1991; 1994; 1996; 1998b; 2001b).

To put the students’ encounter and negotiation in a prominent place derives support also from Selman’s and other’s clinical observation which has been mentioned already: peer communication may be more effective, since children and adolescents are likely to develop different – and more advanced – styles of negotiation in peer relation than they do in communication with adults. Thus the collaboration, communication and dialogue between the *students* themselves should be developed as at least one important procedure in religious education. The student interaction is important in the light of what has been said above about the preconditions for inter-religious negotiation. When this process starts with curiosity, perplexity and openness for the other, the proposal for religious education would be also to ‘educate foreignness.’ This should not be confused with fostering xenophobia, but rather has to do with the necessity to take care of not hastily giving way to – or even promoting – the tendency to alleviate foreignness by resorting to ways of dominating or harmonising integration of the other.

To end with a practical proposal, I want to reconsider our procedural arrangement for the empirical pilot research from which I have presented a piece above. But also I want to recall attention for the stimulating idea of the “Gift to the Child” approach (Hull 1996). Because in this Birmingham approach, the stimulus is a piece of religion, an object, sound or text, which not only *may* appear or sound strange and foreign to the students, but the strangeness and foreignness is rather welcome. Then during the processes of engagement, exploration, contextualization and reflection, the educational process plays with entering and distancing, with coming close and going away, with getting familiar and experiencing foreignness. These alternation processes have a high chance of educating foreignness.

A similar process of confronting a student with religious foreignness has been initiated in our pilot project. We asked the students silently to draw some things of central importance to their religion, exchange the drawings and then starting to explain and answer questions of their peer. Though for our research, we invited the students to leave the class room and follow the researcher into another room in the school building, such arrangement could take place also within the class room. The students could be asked to prepare as their homework – about which they should not talk with their class mates – a present for the rest of the class: a drawing, a photo, a story, a statue, a text – something they consider as central for their religion. After the presentation, similar processes of engagement, exploration, contextualization and

reflection could take place and the students find themselves in a 'laboratory for inter-religious negotiation experiments' in which they can engage in an open, but productive experiment how they, the students, perceive and deal with religious diversity.

By suggesting such a student-centered procedure, it is not my intention to replace the teacher or to marginalize the world's religion and focus exclusively on the *students'* religions. To learn about the great traditions certainly belongs to the field of inter-religious education, but not alone and not exclusively. Therefore, I do not excuse myself from this reminder that it may be appropriate to re-focus our attention and eventually start with the *students'* subjective theories. In the long run it is their inter-religious negotiation skills which count.

## References

- EKD, Kirchenamt . (1994). *Identität und Verständigung. Standort und Perspektiven des Religionsunterrichts in der Pluralität. Eine Denkschrift*, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlag
- Failing, Wolf-Eckart & Heimbrock, Hans-Günter . (1998). *Gelebte Religion wahrnehmen. Lebenswelt - Alltagskultur - Religionspraxis*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer
- Fowler, James W. (1981). *Stages of Faith. The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, San Francisco: Haper&Row
- . (1996). *Faithful Change. The Personal and Public Challenges of Postmodern Life*, Nashville: Abingdon Press
- Heimbrock, Hans-Günter . (1998a). "Identifikation und Differenz - Wie weit und wohin kommt man in den Mokassins eines Fremden?", in: Heimbrock, Hans-Günter, (Ed.): *Religionspädagogik und Phänomenologie. Von der empirischen Wendung zur Lebenswelt*, Weinheim: Deutscher Studienverlag, 112-129
- . (1998b). *Religionspädagogik und Phänomenologie. Von der empirischen Wendung zur Lebenswelt*, Weinheim: Deutscher Studienverlag.
- Hitzler, Ronald . (1994). "Sinnbasteln. Zur subjektiven Aneignung von Lebensstilen", in: Mörth, Ingo & Fröhlich, Gerhard, (Eds.): *Das symbolische Kapital der Lebensstile. Zur Kulturosoziologie nach Pierre Bourdieu*, Frankfurt/M.; New York: Campus,
- Hull, John M. (1996). "A Gift to the Child: A New Pedagogy For Teaching Religion To Young Children", in: *Religious Education* 91:172-190
- Kiwitz, Peter . (1986). *Lebenswelt und Lebenskunst. Perspektiven einer kritischen Theorie des sozialen Lebens*, München: Fink
- Knauth, Thorsten, Leutner-Ramme, Sibylla & Weiße, Wolfram (2000). *Religionsunterricht aus Schülerperspektive*, Münster: Waxmann
- Luther, Henning . (1985). "Identität und Fragment. Praktisch-theologische Überlegungen zur Unabschließbarkeit von Bildungsprozessen", in: *Religion und Alltag. Bausteine zu einer Praktischen Theologie des Subjekts*, Stuttgart: Radius 1992, 160-182
- . (1987). "Schmerz und Sehnsucht. Praktische Theologie in der Mehrdeutigkeit des Alltags", in: *Religion und Alltag. Bausteine zu einer Praktischen Theologie des Subjekts*, Stuttgart: Radius 1992, 239-256
- . (1992). "Schwellen und Passage - Alltägliche Transendenzen", in: *Religion und Alltag. Bausteine zu einer Praktischen Theologie des Subjekts*, Stuttgart : Radius 1992, 212-223
- Meijer, Wilna A. J. (1995). "The Plural Self. A Hermeneutical View on Identity and Plurality", in: *BJRE* 17 (1995):92-99
- Metz, Johann B. (1973). "Kleine Apologie des Erzählens", in: *Concilium* 9 (1973):334-342

- (1977). *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology*, New York: Seabury Press 1980
- Otto, Gert . (1992). "Allgemeiner Religionsunterricht - Religionsunterricht für alle. Sieben Thesen mit Erläuterungen", in: Lott, Jürgen, (Ed.) : *Religion - warum und wozu in der Schule?*, Weinheim: Deutscher Studienverlag, 359-374
- Ricoeur, Paul . (1990). *Oneself As Another*, Chicago: Univ.of Chicago Press 1992
- Selman, Robert L. (1980). *The Growth of Personal Understanding: Developmental and Clinical Aspects*, New York: Academic Press
- (1991). "Fostering Intimacy and Autonomy", in: Damon, William, (Ed.) : *Child Development Today and Tomorrow*, San Francisco; Oxford: Jossey-Bass, 409-435
- Selman, Robert L., Demorest, A. P. & Krupa, M. P. (1984). "Interpersonal Verhandlungen. Eine entwicklungstheoretische Analyse", in: Edelstein, Wolfgang & Habermas, Jürgen, (Eds.) : *Soziale Interaktion und soziales Verstehen*, Frankfurt/M.: suhrkamp, 113 -166
- Selman, Robert L., Lavin, Debra R. & Brion-Meisels, Steven . (1982). "Entwicklung der Fähigkeit zur Selbstreflexion bei Kindern: Forschungen zum reflexiven Verstehen und die Untersuchung praktischer Verständnisleistungen verhaltensgestörter Kinder", in: Edelstein, Wolfgang & Keller, Monika, (Eds.) : *Perspektivität und Interpretation. Beiträge zur Entwicklung des sozialen Verstehens*, Frankfurt/M.: suhrkamp, 375-421
- Selman, Robert L. & Schultz, Lynn H. (1988). "Interpersonal thought and action in the case of a troubled early adolescent. Toward a developmental modal of the gap", in: Shirk, Stephen R., (Ed.) : *Cognitive development and child Psychotherapy*, New York, London: Plenum Press, 207-246
- (1990). *Making a friend in youth. developmental theory and pair therapy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Shell, Deutsche (ed). (2000). *Jugend 2000*, Opladen: Leske+Budrich.
- Smart, Ninian . (1984). "Phenomenological Approach to Religious Education", in: Sutcliffe, J. M. , (Ed.) : *A Dictionary of Religious Education*, London:
- (1998). *The world's religions*, 2 edn. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press
- Straub, Jürgen . (1991). "Identitätstheorie im Übergang? Über Identitätsforschung, den Begriff der Identität und die zunehmende Beachtung des Nicht-Identischen in subjekttheoretischen Diskursen", in: *SLR* 14 (1991):49-71
- Streib, Heinz . (1991). "Autobiographical Reflection and Faith Development: Prospects for Religious Education", in: *BJRE* 14:43-55
- (1994). "Erzählte Zeit als Ermöglichung von Identität. Paul Ricoeurs Begriff der narrativen Identität und seine Implikationen religionspädagogische Rede von Identität und Bildung", in: Georgi, Dieter & Heimbrock, Hans-Günter, (Eds.) : *Religion und die Gestaltung der Zeit*, Kampen; Weinheim: Kok, 181-198, URL: <http://www.tgkm.uni-bielefeld.de/hstreib/Literatur/zeiterz.htm>
- (1996). "Heilsames Erzählen. Pastoraltheologische und pastoralpsychologische Perspektiven zur Begründung und Gestaltung der Seelsorge", in: *Wege zum Menschen* 48:30-44, URL: <http://www.tgkm.uni-bielefeld.de/hstreib/literatur/Erzähl.htm>
- (1997a). "Mass Media, Myth and Narrative Religious Education", in: *British Journal of religious education* 20:42-52, URL: <http://www.tgkm.uni-bielefeld.de/hstreib/literatur/massmedia.htm>
- (1997b). "Religion als Stilfrage. Zur Revision struktureller Differenzierung von Religion im Blick auf die Analyse der pluralistisch-religiösen Lage der Gegenwart", in: HOLM, Nils G., MÖDE, Erwin & PETRI, Heinrich, (Eds.) : *Archiv für Religionspsychologie*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 48-69, URL: <http://www.tgkm.uni-bielefeld.de/hstreib/Literatur/stil2.htm>

- (1998a). "Alltagsreligion oder: Wie religiös ist der Alltag. Zur lebensweltlichen Verortung von Religion in praktisch-theologischem Interesse", in: *International Journal for Practical Theology* 2:23-51
- (1998b). "The Religious Educator as Story-Teller. Suggestions from Paul Ricoeur's Work", in: *Religious Education* 93:314- 331
- (2000). "Gottesbilder fallen nicht vom Himmel. Kindliche Malprozesse als Gestaltung von Religion.", in: Fischer, Dietlind & Schöll, Albrecht, (Eds.) : *Religiöse Vorstellungen bilden. Erkundungen zur Religion von Kindern über Bilder*, Münster: Comenius-Institut, 129-141
- (2001a). "Faith Development Theory Revisited: The Religious Styles Perspective", in: *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 11 (accepted for publication)
- (2001b). "Fundamentalism as Challenge to Religious Education", in: *Religious Education* 96 (accepted for publication)
- van der Ven, Johannes A. & Ziebertz, Hans G. (1995). "Religionspädagogische Perspektiven zur interreligiösen Bildung", in: Ziebertz, Hans G. & Simon, Werner, (Eds.) : *Bilanz der Religionspädagogik*, Düsseldorf: Patmos, 259-273
- Waldenfels, Bernhard . (1985). *n den Netzen der Lebenswelt*, Frankfurt/M.: uhrkamp
- Wilson, Bryan R. (1970). *Rationality. Key Concepts in the Social Sciences*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell
- Winch, Peter . (1964). "Understanding a Primitive Society", in: Wilson, Bryan R., (Ed.) : *Rationality. Key Concepts in the Social Sciences*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1974, 78-111
- Ziebertz, Hans G. (1997). "Religionendialogue in interkulturellen und interreligiösen Lernprozessen", in: Grözinger, Albrecht, (Ed.) : *Gelebte Religion*, Rheinbach: CMZ-Verl., 73-95
- Ziebertz, Hans G. & van der Ven, Johannes A. (1996). "Religion in Religious Education. an Empirical Study in the Netherlands and Germany", in: *Panorama* 8:135-145
- Zilleßen, Dietrich . (1994). "Dialogue mit dem Fremden. Vorüberlegungen zum interreligiösen Lernen", in: *Der Evangelische Erzieher* 46:338-347

---

<sup>1</sup> We will return to van der Ven's and Ziebertz' proposal below in section 3.2.

<sup>2</sup> For the German young people, the recent Shell youth survey (Shell 2000) includes statistical results about the religious orientation and affiliation of adolescents (between 14 and 28 years of age) drawn from a representative sample of more than 5.000 adolescents. This empirical study reports significant differences between the German adolescents and their immigrant peers. In the self-description "being a religious person," 55% young Germans (78% in Eastern states / neue Bundesländer and 47% in the West), but only 30% of the Turkish young people deny being a religious person. In other words: the part of the German adolescent population who designate themselves as religious are a minority, in some regions as low as 20%, while the majority of the immigrant youth does not hesitate to affiliate themselves with their religion. The results on religious affiliation and participation in a religious community are similar; also here, the Shell Study reports significant differences between the adolescents of German (mostly Christian) origin and the immigrant adolescents. This has to be kept in mind as a precondition for the inter-religious dialogue of students. And Germany may not be an exception in Europe in regard to the distribution of religiosity between domestic and immigrant young people. More important as a precondition for the inter-religious dialogue of students is the following: Both the German young people (73%) and the young Italians and Turks (more than 80%) agree that Germans and

immigrants could mutually learn from each other. This high level of agreement indicates a intercultural openness and readiness for communication and dialogue among the (domestic and immigrant) youth living in Germany. While for their leisure activities, the students are mostly separated, however, their meeting place is primarily the school. These high results on readiness for mutual learning and very low results on religious affiliation and participation among German adolescents not necessarily indicate a contradiction: Their declared readiness for dialogue and mutual learning can – and does – come true, as more specific research demonstrates. Since there, we see in greater detail what exactly is going on between the students when they perceive religious diversity.

- <sup>3</sup> Against the background of German religious education which is usually divided according to denominational and religious affiliation at least from 1<sup>st</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> grade, we have a special situation in Hamburg: Multi-religious composition of religious education classes is the rule. Therefore, Hamburg is one of the rare and unique places for engaging in research on inter-religious dialogue in religious education classes across the school age.
- <sup>4</sup> Students' names (M = Meltem; K = Kirsten) have been changed in the transcription; I1 is the female interviewer and temporary teacher of Meltem's and Kirsten's class; I2 is a male interviewer.
- <sup>5</sup> This style of dealing with religious ideas verbally has parallels with the drawing of a picture. In another empirical project (cf. Streib 2000), we video-tape the drawing processes of children; and there we come across a very similar style of developing an image. Especially when the children are verbally extroverted and talk much for themselves or to each other (when they draw while sitting next to each other), we observe something sensational: The children deal with very complex theological, philosophical and natural science questions (Where does God live? How can God sit on a cloud and not fall down? How can God hear the humans call for help? How does God relate to the human world? How does God fight the Devil? Will evil supersede?); And in the next moment, they continue drawing these very images in their child-like imagery: the cloud, the fire in hell, Mickey Mouse ears for God (that he can hear the alarm on earth), etc.. In the communication of Meltem and Kirsten, we observe a similar trait.
- <sup>6</sup> In 1994, the Protestant Church in Germany (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, EKD) published a memorandum about the perspectives on religious education in school (EKD 1994). Its title, *Identität und Verständigung*, not only suggests that the two concepts 'identity / Identität' and 'communication / Verständigung' are central for religious education, but that the sequence of these terms should be prescriptive for the relation of Protestantism to the other faiths and religious traditions. From such sequence of identity and communication, denominational separation in religious education as the rule appears to be justified, and cooperation rather has the character of an addition or exception.
- <sup>7</sup> From Selman & Schultz' (1988) four „functional components“ of interpersonal negotiation strategies (problem definition; action choice; justify strategy; evaluate feelings) only the action choice has been chosen here for reasons of more easy reading.
- <sup>8</sup> Also Selman (1991; cf. Selman & Schultz 1988), in concern for the troubled child and focussing on the therapeutic intervention in pair therapy to foster intimacy and autonomy, had come to extend the structural-developmental framework of social-cognitive perspective taking and include a functional perspective.
- <sup>9</sup> “Relationships with peers, although never ideally equal, have greater likelihood of having more symmetry and reciprocity, which facilitates relationships that are more likely to come to be, or to come sooner to be, structured by cooperation and collaboration. This view suggests that adolescents may more readily develop and use reciprocal or collaborative strategies in the context of their interactions with peers, and then perhaps transfer these skills to negotiations with adults.” (Selman & Schultz 1988: 222)