THEO-WEB

21. Jahrgang 2022, Heft 1

Thema: „Exploring and Engaging Ambiguity in Religious Education"

Engaging Ambiguity in Concepts of Religious Education. Socio-Ethical and Aesthetic-Theological Perspectives

von

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Abstract

Ziel des Artikels ist es, einen ersten Überblick über Ambiguität als möglichen Forschungsgegenstand in der Religionspädagogik zu gewinnen. Dazu werden zwei sehr unterschiedliche didaktische Ansätze im Bereich der deutschen Religionspädagogik daraufhin analysiert, wie sie Ambiguität einbeziehen und auf diese Weise modellieren. Da das erste Konzept, die „Religionspädagogik der Vielfalt", vor allem soziale und ethische Fragen in den Blick nimmt, wird Ambiguität hier als ein Phänomen sichtbar, das innerhalb und zwischen sozialen Differenzkategorien auftritt. Der zweite Beispielbereich verbindet zwei Konzepte mit einem Schwerpunkt auf ästhetischen und theologisch-hermeneutischen Zugängen, „Symboldidaktik" und „Performative Religionsdidaktik". Diese Ansätze befassen sich mit Ambiguität als einer Qualität religiöser bzw. christlicher Kommunikation, die auch als Teil einer religiösen Erfahrung erlebt werden kann. Anhand einer bereits bestehenden didaktischen Typologie wird am Ende skizziert, wie diese unterschiedlichen Ausprägungen von Ambiguität helfen könnten, ein zukünftiges Forschungsfeld zu strukturieren.

The article's aim is to gain an initial overview of ambiguity as a possible object of research in Religious Education. To this end, two very different didactic approaches in the field of German Religious Education are analysed in terms of how they incorporate and model ambiguity. Since the first concept, "Religious Education of Diversity", focuses particularly on social and ethical issues, ambiguity emerges as a phenomenon that occurs within and between social categories of difference. The second example combines two concepts with a focus on aesthetic and theological-hermeneutic approaches, "symbol didactics" and "performative didactics of religion". These concepts regard ambiguity as defining for religious or Christian communication, almost a religious experience. Finally, with the help of an already existing didactic typology, it will be shown how these different manifestations of ambiguity can contribute to structure of a future field of research

Schlagwörter: Ambiguität, Religionspädagogik der Vielfalt, Symboldidaktik, performative Religionsdidaktik

Keywords: ambiguity, religious education of diversity, symbol didactics, performative didactics of religion

Introduction: Localising Ambiguity in the Field of Religious Education

Ambiguity is an important buzzword used to describe a fundamental challenge of (post-)modern societies and cultures, also concerning religious traditions (Bauman, 2017, Bauer, 2018, Klessmann, 2018). In terms of a typical attitude towards life, ambiguity is part of the so-called VUCA world experiences – i.e. experiences of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (Schweiker, 2020, 87).

It is therefore obvious that the ability to deal with ambiguity in a constructive way should be considered very important. Nevertheless, finding *pedagogical* publications that *explicitly* develop concepts on this subject is difficult. In a recent volume on ambiguity in cultural and political education, Hans-Christoph Koller's theory of "transformational processes of formation (Bildung)" (Koller, 2012) is presented as a *general* pedagogical basis to shape the way we deal with ambiguity (Koller & Schnurr, 2021). If the term "Bildung" (formation) can, as Bernhard Dressler suggests, in fact be understood as a reaction to social differentiation in the early 19th century, then Bildung (formation) additionally has great potential to deal with *current* experiences of ambiguity and therefore could serve as a basic reference: "Formation (Bildung) aims at being able to live with ambiguities and endure paradoxes. One can define formation (Bildung) precisely as the non-arbitrary, discerning (urteilsfähig) handling of ambiguities." (Dressler, 2020a, 223)

In the field of *Religious* Education, ambiguity can be associated with several didactic concepts, but has not yet been analysed more comprehensively and systematically. In order to structure a future field of research, I have, as a first step, examined some well-known approaches of Religious Education in Germany to see how they relate to and deal with ambiguity and thereby model the phenomenon in a particular way.

Based on the analysis, I will argue that two basic hermeneutic and didactic perspectives can be distinguished: one that understands ambiguity primarily as an ethical challenge in terms of *ethical and social learning*, and one that regards ambiguity as a constitutive part of *religious communication* that needs to be dealt with through *aesthetic and / or hermeneutic approaches*. My main argument is that these two approaches reveal very important aspects of the phenomenon and the associated discourses and thus help to model the subject matter of further research in Religious Education. In that respect, this analysis shall be seen as a first – and maybe quite rough – step towards building a more complete and systematic tableau of ambiguity in Religious Education, which might contribute to develop a model of specific challenges and appropriate competences with regard to ambiguity. Inspired by Karlo Meyer's proposal of a four-mode-typology in relation to ambiguity in interreligious learning processes, I conclude by giving a brief outlook on such a project.

2 Ambiguity as Part of Ethical and Social Learning: Religious Education of Diversity

An important approach in Religious Education highlights phenomena of diversity in human societies. The recently published volume "Inklusive Religionspädagogik der Vielfalt" (Knauth, Möller & Pithan, 2020) is a prominent example, which I have chosen as a main object of analysis with regard to ambiguity. The keyword diversity refers to the manifold differences or heterogeneity of people, regarding the dimensions of gender, sexual orientation, cultural background, milieu and religion (Knauth, Möller & Pithan, 2020, 11). Combined with the intersectionality approach, it focuses on the unique interaction or interdependence of these dimensions on an individual and societal level (Knauth, Möller & Pithan, 2020, 23-24, 36, 44-45, Schweiker, 2020, 91).

2.1 Ambiguity Within and Between Categories of Difference

Since ambiguity, in contrast to concepts such as unity or homogeneity, negates "centrality, uniformity and absolutisation of a single perspective of perception, interpretation, development and appropriation of reality", it is obviously an important component of the diversity concept, which emphasises multiperspectivity (Knauth, Möller & Pithan, 2020, 37). The crucial challenge of this approach is the interplay between the *recognition* of differences on the one hand and the *integration* of these differences in groups and communities on the other hand. This connects to the prominent concept of "egalitarian difference" ("egalitäre Differenz", Annedore Prengel), expressing the constitutive tension between difference and equality and leading to the critical question of justice (Knauth, Möller & Pithan, 2020, 21, 36-41).

The diversity concept's claim is directed to minimise notions of what is considered "normal" or "right" in relation to categories such as "man", "woman", "family", "nation", "religion", etc. – or, in other words, to promote ambiguity *within* such concepts while expanding and differentiating them. Furthermore, the diversity approach aims to recognise *different perspectives on one and the same phenomenon*, e.g. the interplay of gender, culture, and religion, all (three) in relation to the individual student, learning groups in the classroom or the school as a whole. Ambiguity then refers to the perception of different approaches to an object and the ability to recognise the interplay between them. This in turn feeds back to each individual category and expands it in the sense mentioned above.

In summary, ambiguity in the context of diversity approaches refers to the perception of difference (Kammeyer, 2020) or foreignness (Könemann, 2020b) *within and between possible categories, including their creative interplay.*

As already indicated above, diversity approaches are caught between the *recognition* of cultural (also religious) differences and the *change* of structural inequality in the light of

justice (Knauth, Möller & Pithan, 2020, 21, 36-41). Ambiguity could thus refer to *cultural and structural concepts* as well as to their *individual expression*. Since we have also seen that ambiguity is a result of *differentiation "intra"/within categories* and of *interaction "inter"/between categories*, we can conclude that it has *intrapersonal and interpersonal, intracultural and intercultural* (including intrareligious and interreligious) *dimensions*. Leaving aside the problem of structure for the moment, ambiguity might be found in the following examples: as an experience of difference *within "myself"* (not being fully "myself" in an unfamiliar environment), as an experience of strangeness in encounters with *other people* (discomfort in conversation with a disabled classmate), as an experience of uncertainty about what is considered "normal" in "my" culture or "my" religion (e.g., what is appropriate for women in a "Western" environment), also in comparison with corresponding ideas from "other" cultural backgrounds (women in "Arab" culture), etc. These very rough examples already demonstrate that the picture of ambiguity would have to be drawn in a more complex way by interweaving these different dimensions of ambiguity.

The question of *ambiguity with regard to structure* also needs to be clarified: At first glance, structure seems to be a term that is not compatible with ambiguity, since structure implies unambiguous relationships. Used as a structural term, "poverty" would have to be defined in its relation to "wealth" and thus tends to hide aspects of ambiguity. However, if one combines "poverty" with cultural and individual aspects and "zooms in" (Wischer & Spiering-Schomborg, 2020), e.g. on the everyday life of a young woman who lives as the daughter of an industrial worker in a suburb of the Rhine-Main area (Ohde, 2020), it becomes clear that structure must be supplemented by cultural multiperspectivity and is thus associated with ambiguity.

Under these conditions, Religious Education that attempts to deal with ambiguity would have to foster the ability to *perceive differences and connect them to different levels of social or cultural practice*. This seems to be a demanding *hermeneutic* task, creating the need to train students further. In a second step, difference would have to be reflected and integrated with the help of *normative concepts* such as the more affirmative one of "*recognition*" and the more critical one of "*justice*". The tension between these concepts or, more generally, between difference and integration is then another source of ambiguity.

Schweiker (2020, 96) gives an interesting outlook on further research on diversity in Religious Education. He underlines the need for an elaborated value concept of diversity, which does not only focus on analysis, but also shows concrete ways of dealing with the tensions and contradictions of diversity and its ambivalences. In this way, it aims at an *ethically based attitude* and *specific action skills*. Ambiguity would thus not only have to be *understood and critically discussed*, but also *performed or processed* through creative action. Further research on ambiguity in Religious Education must therefore consider

this *action-oriented dimension*, including its *challenging hermeneutical conditions* explained above.

2.2 Christian Theological Justifications of Ambiguity as Part of Diversity

There are several ways of connecting the discussion on diversity with theological ideas that can also be relevant for the justification of ambiguity in Religious Education. Based on the analysis of the volume "Inclusive Religious Education of Diversity", I would like to present three examples of justification on three different levels: The first focuses on theological concepts, the second relates to the field of biblical hermeneutics and the last to the exegesis of individual texts. With one exception, all examples emphasise a Christian perspective.

On a systematic-conceptual level, the diversity approach is linked to theological movements such as *interreligious or comparative theology* (Knauth, Möller & Pithan, 2020, 40-41). Their focus is on the interplay of different religious traditions, working out common grounds and differences. Very similarly, *contextual theology* highlights the interaction between different cultures and Christian traditions. In both cases, ambiguity can be seen as the result of different cultural or religious contexts in their intermingling with other religious or "own" Christian traditions. Comparable to the above, an essential challenge is, on the one hand, to work out the differences and, on the other, to search for open, integrative concepts. At this systematic level, *ambiguity* can then be found in the *tension between religious and cultural difference* and, at the same time, in *community-building framings* – ecumenism, Abrahamic origins, the process of dialogue itself (Weiße, 2020), etc.

Another strand of justifications for diversity relates to *biblical hermeneutical aspects*: Plurality is now considered a basic hermeneutical principle of biblical interpretation, partly supported by the Bible itself (Schiefer Ferrari, 2020, 158-163). Ambiguity is thus a consequence of pluralistic hermeneutics: there is no unambiguous understanding of a biblical text. This leads to the fundamental question of limits: Are there limits to ambiguity? What are criteria for good interpretation when the text itself may have no meaning at all, but only in its interaction with different readers and their socio-cultural contexts? Since "true meaning" is obviously not to be found in the text itself, but can at best be divined as an experience of coherence in relation to texts, readers and contexts, diversity approaches take into account how power influences the process of interpretation. Who has or had the right to influence interpretations of biblical texts? Who *should* also have the right to contribute his or her interpretation? Ambiguity in this framework is thus again linked to questions of *justice as a normative horizon of interpretation*.

A third branch is dedicated to the *exegesis of individual biblical texts* and shows the

acceptance and appreciation of human differences in the Christian tradition. The creation of man in the image of God (Gen 1) is a central and quite general anthropological topos, despite its binary conception of gender (Söderblom, 2020, 147). Other texts such as 1 Cor 12 and Gal 3:28 aim at the Christian community as a consequence of Christian baptism, where differences in status, ethnicity, disability, gender, etc. are considered unimportant, while at the same time, in terms of *human* differences, they are a constitutive part of the Christian community united in solidarity.

These interpretations can be brought to a *systematic-theological level*, as they all relate to the resurrection in Christ. Here, for example, dis/ability approaches offer innovative interpretations by characterising the resurrected body of Christ as an injured one (Schiefer Ferrari, 2020, 163-168, with reference to Nancy L. Eiesland and John M. Hull). Others interpret the resurrection as a sign of victory for the weak (Nord, 2020, 121, with reference to Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza). Taken together, these texts and interpretations demonstrate the importance and potential of a *Christological approach* over the selective interpretation of individual texts that address different aspects of diversity.

In terms of ambiguity and *emphasising the Christian perspective*, this means that the dead *and* risen Christ could serve as a normative figure for the concern to justify and recognise the diversity of human beings on the one hand and to create integrating eschatological images of non-discriminatory communities on the other. Nevertheless, comparison with the following approach will show that the event of resurrection holds yet another dimension of ambiguity, concerning the adequate communicative expression of Christian faith.

3 Ambiguity as Part of Aesthetic-Theological Learning: Symbol Didactics, Semiotic and Performative Approaches

Since art is such a prominent field of ambiguity, aesthetic learning also presents ambiguity as a central didactic challenge (Gärtner, 2021). It may therefore come as no surprise that an important strand of didactic approaches dealing with the phenomenon of ambiguity in Religious Education shows clear references to aesthetic learning.

In the German-speaking area, well-known concepts such as "symbol didactics" or "performative religious didactics" promote the ability to use and reflect on religious expression. In doing so, they combine *aesthetic* awareness with *hermeneutic* reflection on religious language and / or religious performance on the basis of religious, mostly Christian culture and show a strong *theological-hermeneutic impetus*.

In a first attempt and in contrast to the diversity approach discussed above, *ambiguity can be located here at the interface between the individual and their experience of the*

"holy", "God" or "Word of God". For the following analysis, I have chosen Peter Biehl's concept as an example of "symbol didactics", its critique by Michael Meyer-Blanck's semiotic approach, and Bernhard Dressler's variant of "performative religious education" because they all explicitly deal with the phenomenon of ambiguity as part of religious expression and its didactics.

3.1 Ambiguity of Semantic Structure and / or Cultural Performances

Based on Ricoeur's hermeneutic approach, Peter Biehl (1991, 44-72, 1992) adopts Ricoeur's description of symbols as fundamentally ambiguous or "overdetermined" (Biehl, 1991, 55, 1992, 196). According to this, the surplus meaning of the symbol, or more precisely: its meaning that goes beyond itself, is the decisive difference between symbols and unambiguous, functional signs or signals. This ambiguity is the reason why the symbol, in Ricoeur's words, "makes you think" ("Le symbole donne à penser"), or, as Biehl puts it: "It is thus the symbols themselves that challenge interpretation and critical reflection." (Biehl, 1992, 196)

Biehl's didactics of symbols thus use the term ambiguity to refer to *ambiguity as part of the semantic structure of the symbol. One can therefore speak of structural ambiguity, a form of ambiguity that is rooted in the linguistic structure itself.*

Michael Meyer-Blanck has criticised precisely this structural or "ontological" understanding of the symbol. Instead, he argues for a semiotic view that makes no "ontological" distinction between symbols and signs, but reckons in each case with the conventional attribution of meaning – meaning that is constituted by the concrete use of signs in concrete situations. As for the question of ambiguity, this means that it is not a prominent quality of "the symbol" but of all kinds of "signs": "Ambiguity is not inherent in the symbol as such, as a very special sign, such that it would be able to 'bear and produce contradictory and coherent interpretations'. Rather, it is important to stage and provoke such ambiguity of signs didactically, or to recognise and name codes based on ambiguity in dealing with signs, in order to enable a versatile and at the same time critical reading of signs." (Meyer-Blanck, 2002, 105)

Although it seems that Meyer-Blanck identifies ambiguity as a quality of signs in general, this is not the case: "Signs 'are' not necessarily unambiguous, but neither are they ambiguous (in the sense of a first and second meaning). Rather, they 'are' as what they are perceived and interpreted. Different codes provide different readings for different people […]." (Meyer-Blanck, 2002, 117)

Ambiguity thus has something to do with "semiosis", the process of linking signs with contexts of meaning. It is therefore *a relational concept*. The origin of ambiguity is no longer to be found in the semantic structure as an ontological quality, but in the *variety of individual backgrounds*, the *different experiences* made when using ambiguous signs in certain situations. Very similar to the brief analysis of biblical hermeneutics above, it

must be understood as a *quality of communication or interaction processes.*

This communicative or pragmatic understanding of religious or Christian culture is precisely the starting point of Bernhard Dressler's performative approach (Dressler, 2015): "Christian religion in particular is to be understood as a cultural practice whose imaginative content is connected in a specific way with communicative performances for which metaphorical-symbolic forms of language are constitutive." (Dressler, 2020a, 226)

Surprisingly similar to Biehl, Dressler distinguishes between "matter-of-fact-statements", which he associates with an insufficient understanding of the Christian tradition, and the ambiguous character of metaphorical-symbolic language, which he sees as a typical mode of religious communication. In other words, Christian religion is part of a "culture of presence" (Dressler, 2020b) that cannot be translated into unambiguous semantic concepts. Instead of unambiguity, Dressler intends "clarity in ambiguity" ("Deutlichkeit im Mehrdeutigen", Dressler, 2020b, 291) as an adequate hermeneutic approach to religion in Religious Education. Although this slogan seems quite ambitious and still rather vague, it can serve as a rough orientation to direct didactic efforts towards ambiguity management in relation to religious communication.

Ambiguity has at least two points of reference in Dressler's approach: First, in line with the argument above, it means that religious communication cannot be translated into an unambiguous doctrine without losing its specific "mode of presence" (Dressler, 2020b, 288, with reference to Johannes Fischer). Second, ambiguity has to do with the difference *between religious communication and other kinds of social practice and their adequate forms of communication* or, with Wittgenstein, "language games": "Tolerance of ambiguity is thus based on the hermeneutic readiness to accept the rules of certain language games, both for myself and towards my interlocutors." (Dressler, 2020a, 227)

Similar to the diversity approach discussed above, we thus find *two origins of ambiguity.* On the one hand, ambiguity results from the difference of various social or communicative practices (such as science, economics, religion, etc.) and the perspectives associated with them, and must therefore be located *in their interplay* – that is, *between* them. It is therefore not surprising that "difference" in the form of "difference competence" is one of the key words of Dressler's approach (Klie, Korsch & Wagner-Rau 2012). On the other hand, ambiguity refers to this *particular quality of religious communication*, i.e. a quality *within* a specific social or communicative practice, which has its origins not only in the fundamental vagueness of communication (cf. Meyer-Blanck's critique above), but also in its *particular semantic point of reference*. In this last point, Dressler approaches Biehl's concept. Thus, we can observe a tendency to reckon with a prominent *religious, even Christian dimension of ambiguity* that comes close to a *religious or Christian experience*. I will elaborate this theological aspect in the following section.

3.2 Ambiguity as Christian Culture's Semantic Point of Reference

The common ground between Biehl's didactics of symbols and Dressler's performative approach can be seen in the religious and theological origin of ambiguity. This means that the ambiguity of the "symbol" or "religious communication" is rooted *in a particular experience of Christian faith itself*.

By referring to Ricoeur's understanding of the "symbol" in its characteristic ambiguity, Biehl also adopts his notion of its origin. According to Ricoeur and his connection of Freud's psychoanalytical approach with religious phenomenology, the symbol can be interpreted as a hiding and revealing expression. This can concern human desire, e.g. in dreams (Freud), but also the "sacred" (religious phenomenology). This double function of concealing and revealing is tied to the "absolute other", which forms the horizon of interpretation and always runs the risk of being reified into a mere unambiguous "idol". The horizon of the "absolute other" keeps the process of interpretation open. It also enables the adult individual to interpret the symbol in terms of a "second naivety", an *ambiguous process of interpretation* that on the one hand acknowledges the rational critique of the symbol, but on the other hand allows itself to be inspired by its "subrational" transcending power (Biehl, 1991, 51-58).

Biehl adds a clear Christological perspective to Ricoeur's ideas. According to him, religious symbols should be related to the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, as symbolised in the cross of Christ. This enables a critical view of the false fetishes and idols of the world – characterised by their unambiguity (Biehl, 1991, 53-54, 58-63). In comparison to the Christological background of the diversity approach mentioned above, Biehl's hermeneutical concept emphasises *ambiguity as deeply rooted in Christian experience, its symbolic expression, its theological interpretation and didactic processing.*

From a slightly different direction, Dressler also assumes that the Christian religion is grounded in experiences and promises of Christ's divine presence (Dressler, 2020b, 282-283, 286) and that Christian religious culture stages this experience through performance, metaphors and symbols (Dressler, 2020b, 287, 2020a, 225). This experience of presence therefore cannot be resolved into unambiguous meaning, but must be understood in its unique ambiguous mode (Dressler, 2020b, 286, 291), in its particular dynamics of "presence and withdrawal" (Dressler, 2018, 200).

Even if the demarcation between symbol didactics and Ricoeur's associated hermeneutic approach on the one hand, and semiotic-performative approaches on the other, is sometimes made quite explicitly, there seems to be a fundamental agreement that both the basic Christian datum and its theological interpretation are determined by the open horizon of the "wholly other" (totaliter aliter). Unambiguity opposes the open character of this interpretive horizon.

3.3 Ambiguity as Hermeneutical Effect and Didactic Quality

According to Biehl, symbols are not only ambiguous in their structure and do not only refer to the ambiguous Christian "event" of the cross, they also refer to *ambivalent inner experiences of human beings* and can therefore also be *ambiguous in their effect on the human psyche*. Biehl formulates this as follows: "Symbols have […] an ambivalent effect; they can make alive and block liveliness, encourage and generate fear, open up freedom and restrict it." (Biehl, 1992, 197)

Biehl's remarkable contribution lies in the combination of hermeneutic insights into the symbol with a pedagogical perspective grounded in his understanding of formation (Bildung). Biehl sees symbols as mediating "bridges" that connect subject and object in the transformative, tension-filled process of formation (Bildung). This could be interpreted as *pedagogical or didactic ambiguity resulting from the creative interplay between subject and object*: "As the subject creatively engages with the symbol and brings their experiences into play, the fullness of meaning of the symbol expands. The symbol releases new experiences and expectations; but it also creates a distancing from the alienated form of needs and experiences, offers the possibility of critique of the subject's delusions." (Biehl, 1992, 203)

Biehl's approach of "symbol didactics" can be seen as an attempt to "resymbolise" religious language, to give it back its poetic quality. This does not only mean that symbols have to be interpreted with regard to the open horizon of the "other". Equally important is the holistic approach that takes into account aesthetic, bodily and action-oriented dimensions, uses all kinds of creative methods to make the symbol tangible, connecting it with the diverse biographical backgrounds of the students and thus "resymbolising" it (Biehl, 1991, 154-195).

This *didactic ambiguity* could also be related to the semiotic and performative approach. This means that ambiguous religious communication or performance can have an effect on the individual participating in the religious "language game", *but the origin of this effect is not to be sought in a religious quality of the "authentic religious sign"*. Rather, it is to be found in the *contingent interplay between the individuals and suitable forms of religious language*.

A somewhat different aspect concerns the question to what extent didactic "religious language games" can also bring about religious experiences in the individual. Based on the considerations of the philosopher of religion Hartmut von Sass, one could assume that the possibility of religious "aspect-seeing" – in other words: seeing in the mode "coram deo" ("facing God", von Sass, 2008, 270-271) – is dependent on experiences of identification in processes of religious communication. It is obvious that such *existential* experiences of ambiguous "presence" cannot be pedagogically induced. According to Dressler, "performances" of Christian "presence" in religious education classes can only

aim at a *cognitive understanding of Christian religion* " (Dressler, 2020b, 283). This means that students should understand that *the ambiguity of Christian communication or performative acts* is something that moves beyond a simple semantic designation, *as a constitutive "plus" of an indeterminate religious experience.*

Despite this emphasis on aesthetic performance, Biehl's approach in particular also has implications for the socio-ethical dimension of Religious Education: working with "authentic" Christian symbols allows students to perceive society and its problems from the critical perspective of "the cross". Thus, in the end, we find that both approaches, the more socio-ethical one of diversity, and the aesthetic-hermeneutical one of "Symboldidaktik" and "Performative Religionsdidaktik", could be linked with a Christological point of reference, which could also serve as *a critical normative framework* to adapt didactic approaches to ambiguity in *Christian* Religious Education.

4 Integrating Socio-Ethical and Aesthetic-Theological Approaches to Ambiguity: The Four-Mode-Typology as a Possible Starting Point

The explanations above have shown *how* two quite different didactic approaches deal with and therefore model the phenomenon of ambiguity. As expected, the essential difference can be found in the *primary reference point of ambiguity.* Generally speaking, ambiguity can be sought in *personal, cultural, and structural differences* between people and their social environment, which can *also* be related to a theological-ethical perspective as normative background.

However, ambiguity can also have its primary point of reference in the *theological interpretation of a religious key experience and its linguistic or communicative expression*, a perspective that *also* influences the perception of social and ethical problems in society. *The interweaving of social and religious experiences of ambiguity, both of which are linked to a critical theological perspective, thus seems to be an important subject of Religious Education* that requires explicit attention and further didactic processing.

Such project can be inspired by Karlo Meyer's proposal for a four-mode-typology concerning "constructive management of ambiguity" in the field of interreligious learning (Meyer, 2019, 270-302, 2021, 157-187). It assumes that students should be able to perceive ambiguity in situations with an interreligious dimension, and that they should be able to decide whether the degree of ambiguity should rather be limited and transformed to unambiguity or whether it must be tolerated in its enduring insolubility or strangeness (Meyer 2019, 288-289, 2021, 173-174). Given the discussion above, it seems likely that Meyer's four-mode-typology could serve as a basic model to construct a complex field of competences that not only relates to *inter*religious learning, but to religious learning in

general. It should combine aesthetic-theological aspects of ambiguity with the socio-ethical level and vice versa.

Meyer's typology consists of four "typical" profiles, each of them relating to special expressions of ambiguity and its management. They show ideal aims for the learner (Meyer, 2019, 289–302, 2021, 174-187): "The researcher" has the ability to perceive vagueness, incompleteness, etc. of religious phenomena, using scientific (e.g. ethnographic) methods. These methods help to capture these ambiguous phenomena, and to differentiate them, thereby working out their fuzziness. "The thinker" has the competence to use "the unfamiliar" or "the other" as impetus for self-reflection, knowing that there is no clear answer. These two types could be associated with the aesthetic-hermeneutical approaches discussed above, since their primary point of reference are religious phenomena, both in a more distanced mode of cognitive understanding, and in a more existential, *sometimes even religious* way. Meyer emphasises the cognitive dimension of these two types when he connects them with *rational understanding and existential reflection* of ambiguity. Looking at the above analysis, one might add that there are also ways of *expressing and performing these forms of religious ambiguity*, especially by *creative approaches*.

The third type in Meyer's four-mode-typology is called "the manager". "The manager" is able to perceive and accept mental reservation about different, "unfamiliar" behaviour, attitudes, etc., to emphasise other, positive attitudes and emotions and then use them constructively to "build bridges" between conflicting parties. "The glocal actor" has the ability to recognise the over-complexity of glocal phenomena and to focus on one aspect that can be influenced by local action in the neighbourhood of the school. These two types can be related to the diversity approach with its focus on social, cultural, and (inter-/intra)religious differences. While Meyer emphasises the *emotional and action-oriented aspects* of these two types of "ambiguity management", the analysis above has shown that there are *also hermeneutical challenges* to be overcome.

Although these distinctions are only the result of a rather rough comparison between existing didactic approaches and Meyer's four-mode-typology, they indicate that extended research could help to create a complex field of competences with regard to ambiguity and its "management" in the field of Religious Education. In addition to this further elaboration of the existing typology, the analyses has led to yet another important question: While it seems quite obvious that ambiguity in *Christian* Religious Education could have a critical reference point in Christian theology (e.g. "the cross" or "presence of Christ"), this would have to be discussed for interreligious or multi-faith classroom settings.

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