

Dear reader

This is an author produced version of an article published in *Journal of beliefs & values*. This article has been peer-reviewed and copy-edited but does not include the final publisher's layout including the journal pagination.

Citation for the published article:

Altmeyer, Stefan

A theory of recognition as framework for religious education : reading Axel Honneth from a pedagogical and theological perspective

Journal of beliefs & values, 2018, Vol. 39, Issue 4: 416-428

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2018.1442979>

Access to the published version may require subscription.

Published with permission from: Abingdon : Routledge

Thank you for supporting Green Open Access.

Your IxTheo team

A Theory of Recognition as Framework for Religious Education.

Reading Axel Honneth from a pedagogical and theological perspective

Stefan Altmeyer

Department of Religious Education, Faculty of Theology, Johannes Gutenberg-University, Mainz, Germany

Prof. Dr. Stefan Altmeyer

Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz

FB01: Katholisch-Theologische Fakultät

55099 Mainz / Deutschland

s.altmeyer@uni-mainz.de

Stefan Altmeyer is Professor of Religious Education, Catechetics and Didactics in the Faculty of Catholic Theology at Johannes Gutenberg-University, Mainz.

A Theory of Recognition as Framework for Religious Education.

Reading Axel Honneth from a pedagogical and theological perspective

Experiences of withheld and of granted recognition constitute an integral part of everybody's learning biography, as the experience of recognition is crucial to all processes of socialization and identity formation. In consequence, the last two decades have seen a considerable interest in recognition theories, initially particularly in the field of political and social theory but later extending into educational contexts. In dialogue with the influential theory of recognition by German philosopher Axel Honneth, this paper develops an interpretation of recognition which can enrich the theory of education, and in particular that of religious education. A theological perspective on recognition is provided that aims to identify and specify the distinctive contribution that religious education can make to the realization of recognition in schools and the basic implications for theory and practice that follow from this.

Keywords: recognition; Axel Honneth; religious education; religious recognition

Experiences of withheld and of granted Recognition

After school Anna arrives at home. She is really exhausted and demotivated. The following dialogue between Anna and her mother ensues:

Anna [...]: Ms. Bari's lessons today really sucked. She asked me about the new vocabulary and I couldn't remember two forms, but that was no problem.

Afterwards I told her that I did not remember one word, which was true at first, but I recalled it just a moment later and told her the correct word. Still, she said that she wouldn't count it, and she gave me the lower grade. She told me not to give up that quickly again.

Mother: How did you feel about it?

Anna: I thought that she was a jerk and that she could eat my shorts. (Lehmann-Rommel 2009, 307–8, own transl.)

Almost everyone will be familiar with this kind of situation, either from one's own school career or from being a parent. Stories like this often become indelible part of our

memory. We will recollect these stories over years or even decades, but – in most cases – we refuse to talk about them due to the negative experiences we had to endure. In the example quoted from empirical research on after-school conversations between children and parents, Anna can talk frankly with her mother. Anna's fierce reaction shows that the prima facie unremarkable learning situation has left a lasting impact on her, induced by her teacher's behaviour: on the one hand, the teacher undermines Anna's self-confidence; on the other, she wants her to gain self-confidence by not giving up so easily. How might Anna have interpreted the teacher's performative message? Possibly as follows: 'No matter how hard I try, I will never meet my teacher's expectations.' At the same time, the whole situation could have easily ended positively if the teacher had been prepared to react carefully and empathetically. But instead this situation has become a discouraging one, and threat to the student's personal autonomy; an ordinary learning situation develops into an experience of *refused recognition*.

Experiences of withheld recognition and fortunately others of granted recognition form an integral part of everybody's learning biography. They illustrate the reasons why 'recognition is a basic psychological need that human beings have' (Vainio and Visala 2016, 556; cf. Taylor 1992, 26). Everybody is in need of recognition, and if recognition is refused it can hurt us. Recognition is crucial to all processes of socialization and identity formation, and consequently it is also of importance to educational processes (cf. Iser 2013). Against this background, it should not come as a surprise to know that the last two decades have seen a considerable interest in recognition theories, beginning particularly in the field of political and social theory (cf. McBride 2013; Thompson 2006), being followed by an emerging form of it in educational contexts (cf. Hanhela 2014b; Bingham 2006, 2001). In spite of an increasing body of international literature, the concept of recognition still upraises

several basic pedagogical questions. What does recognition mean in educational settings? Is it primarily linked to institutional issues like school organization or curriculum development, or does it rather aim at pedagogical interactions in the classroom (cf. Stojanov 2016, 766)? Is it possible and/or preferable to acquire recognition, and can there be something like a ‘pedagogics of recognition’ (Hafeneger, Henkenborg, and Scherr 2013)?

Starting with these basic questions this paper aims to show that recognition is a socio-philosophical concept which can enrich the theory and practice of education, and in particular of religious education. For this purpose, the paper provides three consecutive steps by way of clarification. First, a theoretical notion of intersubjective recognition is developed, mainly by reference to the influential recognition theory of German philosopher Axel Honneth. Second, this concept is critically evaluated and specified by moving from general to explicit pedagogical interactions. The third part develops a theological perspective on recognition in order to specify the distinctive contribution that religious education can make to the realization of recognition in schools. All these clarifications lead to the conclusion that acknowledging recognition is a key concept of religious education with far reaching theoretical and practical implications (cf. Altmeyer 2015 for a previous version of the argument published in German).

Theory of Recognition according to Axel Honneth

What does recognition mean? In everyday language, there are numerous possibilities of meaning (cf. Iser 2013). What can be recognized are quite different things like the rights of a person or group, paternity, state borders, a personal opinion, or even study courses from exchange semesters. What these cases have in common is that the act of

recognition always contains two aspects: another person or matter is firstly *perceived* and secondly *accepted*. ‘The notion of recognition can be explained as a process during which the *cognitive perception* and the *evaluative acceptance* of a person or matter take place *simultaneously*.’ (Pollmann 2008, 28, own transl.)

In social contexts, the focus of recognition lies in the relationship between two or more persons. As a special form of recognition, this social phenomenon is called intersubjective recognition with the dual aspect mentioned above being also part of it: a person who recognizes another, shows the latter that he or she is not only *perceived*, but also *positively accepted* by the first person. Hence, what constitutes intersubjective recognition is at least two persons (‘Me’ and ‘You’), who *perceive* and *accept* each other *mutually* – at least in regard to certain attributes: to recognize ‘as’ (cf. figure 1).

American philosopher Nancy Fraser puts it like this: ‘recognition designates an ideal reciprocal relation between subjects in which each sees the other as its equal and also as separate from it [...]; one becomes an individual subject only in virtue of recognizing, and being recognized by, another subject’ (Fraser 2003, 10). What becomes immediately clear here is that recognition as interpersonal relation cannot evolve in a vacuum, but only in socio-cultural contexts. Consequently, it can be and often is threatened by social or ideological dependencies or relations of power.

Intersubjective recognition always refers to the ineluctable tension between the ideal of mutuality on the one hand and the reality of unequal social relationships on the other. Just to name a few examples from a school context: if cultural or religious dietary laws are not considered in school meals, if a teacher punishes certain students by not listening to them, or if he or she deploys recognition strategically in order to evoke socially desirable behaviour; these all represent different forms of refused recognition or misrecognition.

In this light, it becomes evident that recognition does not only consist of an interpersonal dimension, but also of a societal and political dimension. How are the conditions of recognition constituted in our society and its institutions? What happens if recognition is not mutual or if it is even non-existent? These and similar questions form the point of departure for a number of social and political recognition theories that have emerged in recent years. They also occupy one of the most influential recognition theorists of our time, the German social philosopher *Axel Honneth*. In his view, recognition is the key concept for understanding social conflicts (cf. especially Honneth 1995, 2012). From the perspective of the persons concerned, social conflicts are *struggles for recognition*. For example, unemployed persons do not only perceive their situations as materially threatening, but also as a denial of social recognition; so-called ‘educational losers’ do not only ask for a less selective educational system, but also for the recognition of their tales of woe, and religious or ethnic minorities articulate their political expectations as demands for recognition.

The driving force of all these social movements is – according to Honneth – the human need for recognition. If this need is permanently disregarded, this may lead to conflicts. Anchored in the tradition of the Frankfurt school and critical theory, Honneth emphasizes that recognition is a precarious social good and inquires into the conditions of a society within which this good could be best realized. Hence, he ‘sees recognition as the fundamental, overarching moral category guiding theory-building and politicized praxis aimed at securing social justice.’ (Houston 2016, 4; for further summaries of Honneth’s approach cf. Iser 2013; Thompson 2006; Anderson 1995)

But why do we consider recognition as crucial for the understanding of human behaviour and social conflicts? Honneth develops his argument from a re-reading of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s social philosophy, which he combines with insights

from George Herbert Mead's natural pragmatism, and findings from empirical psychology (e.g. Donald Winnicott). While taking the initially speculative 'idea that full human flourishing is dependent on the existence of well-established, "ethical" relations [...] which can only be established through a conflict-ridden developmental process, specifically, through a struggle for recognition' (Anderson 1995, xi) from Hegel, he substantiates this idea by referring to pragmatic and empirical research on the 'intersubjective conditions for individual self-realization' (Anderson 1995, xi). In short, the argument focusses on identity as a personal and social concept, thus as a relational process. Identity means that individuals have to learn 'to *perceive* and *accept* themselves within the reactive views, gestures, statements and actions of significant others' (Pollmann 2008, 30, own transl.). Individuals can only attain a healthy self-relation by experiencing recognition from others. If there is no intersubjective recognition, we cannot establish a successful relation to ourselves and the development of personal identity is at risk.

Based on this fundamental argument, Honneth unfolds his theory of recognition by distinguishing three social spheres of relevant relationships (cf. Honneth 1995, 92–130): primary or close relationships (partnership, friendship), legal relations and communities of shared values. With each of these spheres, he associates a special form of recognition (cf. figure 2).

- In the sphere of close relationships, recognition appears as *emotional affection* (or *love*). It is an attitude of acceptance and the experience of being accepted by a person in his or her distinctive *singularity*. Both depend upon the relationship between individuals or small groups of individuals. A lack of recognition in this human area of closeness (through abuse, denigration, emotional neglect) threatens the physical as well as the mental integrity of a human being.

- Concerning the sphere of legal relations, from its different levels of group rules to a state's legal system, recognition appears as *cognitive respect*. 'The legal sphere of recognition allows people to be recognized as having "equal status"' (Maia and Vimieiro 2015, 163), which enables the experience of being *an equal person among equals*. People neither have to like or love one another for realizing this kind of legal relation. In this case, recognition is based on the observance of a rationally established consensus, that is to say: all members of a society deserve the same rights. If this concept is disregarded it leads to the exclusion of certain persons or groups from certain rights.
- In the sphere of communities of shared values, from clubs to religious communities or the daily working life, recognition appears as *social regard or solidarity*. In addition to the conditions of the legal sphere, people do not only aim at being an equal person among equals, but at being special *individuals among equals*. Recognition cannot only be experienced by having objective rights, but moreover by contributing one's individual talents, achievements, opinions, etc. to the community, which acknowledges them. Deprecating or even insulting individual achievements or opinions of others can be seen as typical forms of misrecognition in this sphere.

In practical contexts, these spheres of social relations and their appropriate 'forms of recognition are interlacing' (Houston 2016, 13); together they have a specific influence on the development of a person's identity. If a person is recognized in each of the three spheres, an important condition for the development of a wholesome identity is provided. Honneth emphasizes this point by associating each form of recognition with a form of positive self-relation (cf. Honneth 1995, 129). The development of *self-confidence* depends upon emotional affection; the development of *self-respect* depends

upon legal acknowledgement and the development of *self-esteem* depends upon social regard. Through this threefold form of self-relation, the development of a wholesome identity becomes possible, ‘that is, a way of being attuned with oneself so that self-respect, self-confidence and self-esteem flourish. The subject’s experience of positive recognition from others is the axial hub around which these three aspects of self-relation turn.’ (Houston 2016, 4) And vice versa: if a person is permanently exposed to misrecognition in one or more of its forms he or she will be in danger of suffering from a lack of self-confidence, from self-disrespect and impoverished self-worth potentially causing shame (Houston 2016, 18).

Since its first publication almost thirty years ago and after several clarifications and ongoing development (for instance concerning Mead’s naturalistic positions), Honneth’s theory has evoked a considerable body of discussion and criticism, many of which deal with questions of normativity and universal validity (cf. Iser 2013; McNay 2008a; Thompson 2006; Fraser and Honneth 2003). For the purposes of this paper, two critical limitations of Honneth’s concept of recognition should be considered and borne in mind before further reception by educationalists. The first limitation brings a psychological perspective to bear by the diagnosis of a problematic ‘recognition deficit assumption’ (Vainio and Visala 2016, 560 with reference to McBride 2013). What results from deficient or missing recognition? Does misrecognition in every case imply negative consequences for self-esteem and identity? It might just be the case that misrecognition, for example, also contributes to identity building by dissociation, for individuals as well as for groups. In line with this, Houston (2016, 5) criticizes the ‘assumption that experiences of disrespect, engendering the emotion of shame, lead ipso facto to social struggle aimed at seeking withheld recognition.’

The second critique stresses the social and political conditions of individual identity formation by pointing to a problematic tendency of psychological reductionism (cf. Garrett 2010, 1517; McNay 2008b) in relation to social realities. For these critics, Honneth's theory runs the risk of focusing 'too exclusively on micro encounters and interactions' (Garrett 2010, 1517) and as a consequence of paying too little attention to structural questions. To what degree does the negotiation of personal identity depend upon interpersonal interaction between autonomous subjects, and how strongly does this process result from the structural and contextual conditions of life? In short: the importance of the individual and interpersonal relationships must not be naively overestimated. For both 'inevitably lack the capacity to eradicate and combat structurally generated (mis)recognition.' (Garrett 2010, 1530). Both critiques point to the balance of external (social) and internal (personal) powers in individuals developing identity. Neither of these poles should be isolated or overemphasized.

Education and Recognition

In light of the basic ideas of Honneth's theory presented above and in consideration of its limitations, it seems reasonable to establish a close connection with educational questions, for his critical theory of recognition includes 'the social and pedagogical conditions of human development' (Stojanov 2010, 165). If education is interpreted in terms of the Humboldtian tradition of *Bildung* we are thinking of a process of growing individuation of a human being in dialogic encounter with the world and other human beings (cf. Humboldt 2010), so the connection becomes evident. In this tradition, education is aimed less at knowledge and skills and more on the identity of learners. This identity develops dialogically in contact with knowledge, in acquiring competences, and in encounters with significant others. Thus, education and recognition

seem to form a pair, but how exactly do they interrelate?

In German speaking pedagogical discourse, numerous receptions of Honneth's theory have emerged within the last fifteen to twenty years (e.g. Hafeneger, Henkenborg, and Scherr 2013; Micus-Loos 2012; Balzer and Ricken 2010) whereas international interest has remained limited (cf. Houston 2016; Fleming 2016; Huttunen and Murphy 2012; Maia and Vimieiro 2015; Hanhela 2014a; Stojanov 2007). A number of approaches in Germany were influenced by Wilhelm Heitmeyer's (2002) thesis of a 'social decline of recognition' and followed a quite simple pattern of argument. Empirical research indicated a lack of recognition in schools, with an increasing number of students not being able to develop a wholesome self-esteem and hence suffering throughout their educational careers. The proposed answer was to foster a culture of recognition in schools in order to improve learning outcomes. However, even if it is empirically evident that a lack of recognition can evoke feelings of shame, weaken the self-concept, and lead to violent conflicts (cf. e.g. Kammler 2013), an improvement of personal recognition does not necessarily result in an increase of learning achievements. Therefore, German philosopher of education Dietrich Benner (2003, 296) cautions against any 'abstract-ethically postulating use of recognition theories' (own transl.) that frame a kind of categorical imperative for educational theory and practice derived normatively from a general recognition theory but without links to specific educational tasks and processes. In contrast, Benner claims to interpret the concept from a pedagogical point of view, which takes the logic of educational processes into account.

In this vein of thought, Krassimir Stojanov (2010, 2007) has refined Honneth's theory of recognition in terms of a theory of education. Essentially, he introduces a distinction between interpersonal relationships in general and pedagogical relationships in the particular context of educational institutions like schools, universities etc. While

these relationships also depend deeply on the three forms of recognition they do so in a very special way. The example of Anna may help to clarify this. Looking at recognition as *cognitive respect*, Anna feels disregarded by her teacher in view of her *right* to receive acceptance for her correct answer even though this was not articulated in time. Furthermore, Anna experiences her performance as not *positively acknowledged*. For her, the simple logic of testing, which classifies her answers as either right or wrong, is not really the problem. Anna can accept this logic, but only under the condition that her effort receives recognition as *social regard*. Finally, the dimension of *emotional affection* seems to be addressed as well. Anna's outburst 'This jerk can eat my shorts' might lead to the conclusion that she experiences the scene as a disturbance of her *close relation* to her teacher.

Consequently, what pedagogical and interpersonal relationships have in common is that they can be described in terms of granted or refused recognition. What makes pedagogical relationships special is that they are not only about self-realisation, but also about a growing relationship to the world through the development of competences. Stojanov argues:

Honneth describes self-realisation as the reflexive constitution of personal (and personalised) futures by the satisfaction of legitimate expectations of intersubjective recognition. Thus, on his account, self-realisation occurs in the intersection of relations to oneself, on the one hand, and relations to others, on the other. The development of worldviews – that is, the constitution of relations to a de-personalised reality – is not presented as an aspect of that intersection. So, interpreted, self-realisation means indeed the [formation] and development of personal identity but not yet *Bildung*. For *Bildung* implies, at least since von Humboldt, an interchange between individual and world – that is, it implies not only the development of selfhood but also the opening of a world-horizon of objective meanings for the individual. (Stojanov 2007, 81)

Education is about self-development in the medium of referring to the world. In Anna's

case, it is about learning vocabulary. It is not about the recognition of her status as an autonomous subject; it is about Anna, as a child, who is learning a foreign language (a 'matter') simultaneously with other children under her teacher's guidance at school. Yet, this is the question of education. How can human beings develop holistically by exploring the world which is pedagogically represented in the subject matter? Stojanov (2007, 76) suggests adding this material dimension to Honneth's model of recognition in order 'to approach a threefold relation between intersubjective recognition, the development of self-relations and the development of basic forms of cognitive capabilities' (cf. figure 3).

In summary, recognition is not simply the same as education while, vice versa, education covers more than the notion of recognition. Still, the two belong together. Education and recognition are mutually dependent. In terms of a critical theory of education it has to be stated that education will become difficult if recognition is deficient in one of its three spheres. At the same time, education is about particular questions of recognition, which cover processes of self-development in the medium of acquiring exemplary and orientational knowledge.

Recognition as a Gift: a Theological Perspective

At this point, one could easily continue with consequences for the practice of religious education deriving from the philosophical and educational theory of recognition. In this case, the argument would go like this: there is a task for religious education *qua education* to foster the realization of recognition; and this is definitely correct. And indeed, in that sense much could be practically improved as outlined later in the final section of this paper. Beyond this general conclusion, I would like to ask a much more ambitious question, namely which *specific* contribution religious education can make to

the realisation of recognition. Depending on whether religious education should focus on *learning about* religious traditions or on *learning from* contact with a religious tradition, this question has to be answered differently. Here, I am taking the position of ‘teaching and learning in the combined about and from approach’ (Miedema 2017, 134). Following this, religious education aims at enabling students ‘to evaluate their understanding of religion in personal terms and to evaluate their understanding of self in religious terms’ (Miedema 2017, 133). Thus, my argument is that the unreplaceable contribution of religious education to general education (*Bildung*) lies exactly in referring to what religion itself has to say about recognition. In the following, my perspective is not generally or comparatively on religion but originates from a Christian theological perspective and is primarily oriented towards a denominational form of religious education as given in my German context (cf. e.g. Boschki 2015). The aim is to show how a theological perspective could substantially complement the theory of recognition by pointing to its crucial blind spot (for further theological readings of recognition theories cf. e.g. Saarinen 2016; Ryan 2016; Pally 2016; Hoffmann 2013; Moyaert 2009).

In order to introduce a theological perspective on recognition and to substantiate its potential for religious education, I will, by way of example, concentrate on a central biblical text, which can be regarded as a source of a Christian theology of recognition (cf. Hoffmann 2013, 315–46): the narrative of the so-called ‘Prodigal Son’ (Luke 15,11–32). In this parable, the main character loses all his filial rights after he had spent his part of his father’s inheritance that he had demanded before the appropriate time. He knows that he cannot assert any claims on his father (v. 21b). In terms of recognition theory, there is no legal argument, which forces his father to treat him in another way than any random person asking him for help. The father appreciates that his son has

forfeited his filial rights by symbolically handing them back to him: ‘Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet’ (v. 22). There is no claimable reason to recognize *this* son again, but yet *this* father decides to do so. He even goes beyond the legal sphere of cognitive respect by addressing him with emotional affection. The father has been watching for his son (why else than out of love?), he sees him coming, recognizes him from afar and welcomes him with a warm gesture of open arms. Contrary to any usual achievement principle, the father arranges a festive reception. By this action, he re-integrates the seemingly lost son into the forms of recognition that are integral to social appreciation and regard. Exactly this is what – understandably enough – evokes his brother’s displeasure. In this critical situation of recognition conflict, the father asks the elder brother whether his standards of legal and social recognition might be inadequate. The father reminds him: ‘It was fitting that we should make merry, and be glad’ (v. 32a). Why? Because it’s not about daily concern but about ultimate questions of life and death: ‘for this thy brother was dead and is alive again’ (v. 32b). The father’s standard of recognition goes beyond the legal sphere or any expectations in terms of achievement principles – for him, recognition is a gift, which is given without expecting anything. This is the logic of recognition the father has in his mind. He *perceives* the returning young man as what he himself does no longer claim to be: his son, and while he affectionately receives him and hands him back all his rights and social recognition, he *accepts* him as the one he always was and always will be: his son.

This example invites us to take a closer look at what happens at the limits of the three spheres of recognition explained above. Interpersonal recognition is fragile and reaches its limits in that very moment when an infinite human need for recognition is confronted with an always finite human ability to grant it (cf. Moyaert 2009, 303).

Hence, theologian Markus Knapp (2006) suggests adding another form of recognition to the socio-philosophical theory of recognition and associating it with the relational sphere of faith. According to him, this fourth form of recognition is related to the self-relational dimension of *self-acceptance*. Beyond self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem, self-acceptance refers to a kind of recognition which is not dependent on any conditions and social struggles. It's about the limits, deficiencies and the fragmentary nature of human existence, it's about failure and guilt which indicate a need for recognition, which is far beyond what human beings can grant.

Acknowledging that intersubjective recognition is limited, the theological reading of the parable of the Prodigal Son can show that Christian faith tells about a form of recognition which reaches beyond the sphere of social struggle. It is a search for recognition that does not have to be achieved, but that is granted unconditionally (cf. figure 4). Theologian Jürgen Werbick (2011, 299) explained this notion by reformulating Anselm of Canterbury's famous definition of God: recognition is a 'gift than which nothing greater can be given.' (own transl.) It points to the gift of unconditional acceptance of every human being by God: you are granted recognition – no matter if and how you are perceived and accepted by other human beings – and even by yourself.

Conclusion

Based on the foregoing discussions, the link to possible consequences that can be justified by the pedagogical and theological reading of Honneth's theory of recognition is made. To begin with, this concerns education and learning in general. If recognition in its three forms is essential for the development of identity, every lesson should allow the realisation of recognizing relationships. At the same time, it should consider that

social realities of recognition and misrecognition have an impact on schooling in general and on concrete lessons particularly. Education cannot change these conditions, but must take them into account. Thus, teachers have to pay attention for recognition as emotional affection, social regard and cognitive respect in all classroom interactions. At the same time, it has always to be considered how the culture of recognition in a class, school and social school context is mirrored in concrete learning situations.

Assuming that religious education should foster a 'personal religious and responsible stance' (Miedema 2017, 137) from contact with a religious tradition, it is supposed to create a peculiar profile in addition to the general striving for recognition in educational processes. Religions have to offer their very own contribution to the concept and the praxis of recognition. This is especially true for the Christian tradition. In this sense, learning from and about religion participates in general in interpersonal recognition learning but beyond this it may stand for a form of recognition which reaches beyond the sphere where people have to fight or negotiate with others or where they are in the position to grant each other anything. It may stand for the idea of recognition as a gift of unconditional affirmation with self-acceptance as counterpart in personal self-relation.

Under this premise, recognition becomes a challenge for religious education, at least if the notion in question goes beyond merely appealing to recognition theory and incorporating it into religious education. Instead, recognition could be a key concept of religious education, the potential of which still has to be explored: a content-related concept that demonstrates the distinctive core of what religious education is about. Remember one more time Anna and imagine how the after-school dialogue with her mother could have sounded if her negative experiences had been in religious education classes. The situation with the teacher could have happened just as well. It would just

not have been about vocabulary but about for instance the Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule or any other religion matter. Perhaps she would have remembered the fifth commandment too late and the teacher would not have counted it. Anna would have had to experience the teacher's behaviour as misrecognition of her right that a correct answer has to be counted, her individual achievement and her emotional relationship to her teacher. So far, there would not be any difference to the language lesson. The difference only becomes obvious, if we assume that the content of religious education relates to how it is taught and learned. In this case, the teaching situation would have lacked the religious dimension of recognition. It is only after school when this dimension is touched in talking to her mother. Now, Anna can experience that she is precious even though she does not hit all expectations.

After all, the question of exact knowledge remains relevant for religious education but this does not remain the only facet of learning. There is more to religious learning than producing correct or incorrect answers; it's about becoming sensitive to one's ultimate concern of being unconditionally recognized. If religious education conveyed a sense of this, it would have achieved its most important and most specific goal.

References

- Altmeyer, Stefan. 2015. "Anerkennen und Bilden: Zwei komplementäre religionspädagogische Grundaufgaben." *Religionspädagogische Beiträge* (73): 46–56.
- Anderson, Joel. 1995. "Translator's Introduction." In *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* by Axel Honneth, transl. by Joel Anderson, x–xxi. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Balzer, Nicole, and Norbert Ricken. 2010. "Anerkennung als pädagogisches Problem – Markierungen im erziehungswissenschaftlichen Diskurs." In *Anerkennung*,

- edited by Alfred Schäfer and Christiane Thompson, 35–87. Paderborn: Schöningh.
- Benner, Dietrich. 2003. “Über die Unmöglichkeit, Erziehung allein vom Grundbegriff der ‘Aufforderung zur Selbsttätigkeit’ her zu begreifen: Eine Erwiderung auf Alfred Langewand.” *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* 49 (3): 290–304.
- Bingham, Charles W. 2001. *Schools of Recognition: Identity Politics and Classroom Practices*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Bingham, Charles W. 2006. “Before Recognition, and After: The Educational Critique.” *Educational Theory* 56 (3): 325–44.
- Boschki, Reinhold. 2015. “Catholic Religious Education in German Schools: An Ecumenical and Interreligious Perspective.” In *Global Perspectives on Catholic Religious Education in Schools*, edited by Michael T. Buchanan and Adrian-Mario Gellel, 195–205. Cham: Springer.
- Fleming, Ted. 2016. “Reclaiming the Emancipatory Potential of Adult Education: Honneth’s Critical Theory and the Struggle for Recognition.” *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults* 7 (1): 13–24.
- Fraser, Nancy. 2003. “Social Justice in an Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition and Participation.” In *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange* by Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, 9–109. London: Verso.
- Fraser, Nancy, and Axel Honneth. 2003. *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. London: Verso. Transl. by Joel Golb, James Ingram, and Christiane Wilke.
- Garrett, Paul M. 2010. “Recognizing the Limitations of the Political Theory of Recognition: Axel Honneth, Nancy Fraser and Social Work.” *The British Journal of Social Work* 40 (5): 1517–33.
- Hafeneger, Benno, Peter Henkenborg, and Albert Scherr, eds. 2013. *Pädagogik der Anerkennung: Grundlagen, Konzepte, Praxisfelder*. Reihe Politik und Bildung. Schwalbach: Wochenschau Verlag.
- Hanhela, Teemu. 2014a. “Axel Honneth’s Idea of a Drawn-Out Process of Education.” *Pedagogy, Culture & Society* 22 (3): 369–88.
- Hanhela, Teemu. 2014b. *Educational Perspectives on Recognition Theory*. Tampere: Juvenes print.

- Heitmeyer, Wilhelm. 2002. "Soziale Desintegration, Anerkennungszerfall und Jugendgewalt in Deutschland." In *Jugendliche in Japan und Deutschland: Soziale Integration im Vergleich*, edited by Susanne Kreitz-Sandberg, 209–26. Opladen: Leske + Budrich.
- Hoffmann, Veronika. 2013. *Skizzen zu einer Theologie der Gabe: Rechtfertigung – Opfer – Eucharistie – Gottes- und Nächstenliebe*. Freiburg: Herder.
- Honneth, Axel. [1992] 1995. *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. Cambridge: MIT Press. Transl. by Joel Anderson.
- Honneth, Axel. [2010] 2012. *The I in the We: Studies in the Theory of Recognition*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Houston, Stan. 2016. "Empowering the 'Shamed' Self: Recognition and Critical Social Work." *Journal of Social Work* 16 (1): 3–21.
- Humboldt, Wilhelm v. [1793] 2010. "Theorie der Bildung des Menschen." In *Werke in fünf Bänden*, edited by Andreas Flitner and Klaus Giel. Studienausgabe, 234–40. Darmstadt: WBG.
- Huttunen, Rauno, and Mark Murphy. 2012. "Discourse and Recognition as Normative Grounds for Radical Pedagogy: Habermasian and Honnethian Ethics in the Context of Education." *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 31 (2): 137–52.
- Iser, Mattias. 2013. "Recognition." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2013 Edition)*, edited by Edward N. Zalta.
<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2013/entries/recognition/>.
- Kammler, Tilmann. 2013. *Anerkennung und Gewalt an Schulen. Eine evidenzbasierte und theoriegeleitete Interventionsstudie im Praxistest*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Knapp, Markus. 2006. *Verantwortetes Christsein heute: Theologie zwischen Metaphysik und Postmoderne*. Freiburg: Herder.
- Lehmann-Rommel, Roswitha. 2009. "Zuhören und Macht im Unterricht." In *Kinder in der Schule: Zwischen Gleichaltrigenkultur und schulischer Ordnung*, edited by Heike d. Boer and Heike Deckert-Peaceman, 297–315. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Maia, Rousiley C. M., and Ana C. Vimieiro. 2015. "Recognition and Moral Progress: A Case Study about Discourses on Disability in the Media." *Political Studies* 63 (1): 161–80.
- McBride, Cillian. 2013. *Recognition*. Polity Key Concepts in the Social Sciences Series. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- McNay, Lois. 2008a. *Against Recognition*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- McNay, Lois. 2008b. "The Trouble with Recognition: Subjectivity, Suffering, and Agency." *Sociological Theory* 26 (3): 271–96.
- Micus-Loos, Christiane. 2012. "Anerkennung des Anderen als Herausforderung in Bildungsprozessen." *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* 55 (3): 302–20.
- Miedema, Siebren. 2017. "Position, Commitment, and Worldview from a Pedagogical Perspective." In *Taking Position: Empirical Studies and Theoretical Reflections on Religious Education and Worldview*, edited by Hans-Günter Heimbrock, 127–38. Religious Diversity and Education in Europe 33. Münster: Waxmann.
- Moyaert, Marianne. 2009. "Religion in the Public Arena: Recognition, Vulnerability and Tragedy." *Ethical perspectives* 16 (3): 283–309.
- Pally, Marcia. 2016. "Recognition as Societal Glue: Theologies of Relationality as a Regulatory Principle." *Evangelische Theologie* 76 (6): 451–61.
- Pollmann, Arnd. 2008. "Anerkennung." In *Handbuch der Politischen Philosophie und Sozialphilosophie*, edited by Stefan Gosepath, Wilfried Hinsch, and Renate Rössler, 28–32. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Ryan, Gerard. 2016. "Charles Taylor and the Political Recognition of Difference as a Resource for Theological Reflection on Religious Recognition." *Open Theology* 2 (1): 907–23.
- Saarinen, Risto. 2016. *Recognition and Religion: A Historical and Systematic Study*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stojanov, Krassimir. 2007. "Intersubjective Recognition and the Development of Propositional Thinking." *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 41 (1): 75–93.
- Stojanov, Krassimir. 2010. "Overcoming Social Pathologies in Education: On the Concept of Respect in R. S. Peters and Axel Honneth." *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 43 (S1): 162–72.
- Stojanov, Krassimir. 2016. "Social Justice and Education as Discursive Initiation." *Education Theory* 66 (6): 755–67.
- Taylor, Charles. 1992. "The Politics of Recognition." In *Multiculturalism: Examining the politics of recognition*, edited by Amy Gutmann, 25–73. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press.
- Thompson, Simon. 2006. *The Political Theory of Recognition: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Vainio, Olli-Pekka, and Aku Visala. 2016. "Tolerance or Recognition? What Can We Expect?" *Open Theology* 2 (1): 553–65.
- Werbick, Jürgen. 2011. *Vergewisserungen im interreligiösen Feld*. Religion – Geschichte – Gesellschaft 49. Münster: LIT.

Figure 1: Intersubjective Recognition as a Threefold Relation

Figure 2: Spheres and Forms of Recognition According to A. Honneth

Figure 3: Recognition in Educational Processes

Figure 4: Profile of Recognition in Religious Education