Dependent Autonomy

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DEPENDENT AUTONOMY.
TOWARDS A CONTEXTUALISED AND DIALOGIC AIM FOR MORAL EDUCATION

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Abstract
This article presents two approaches to moral education: the autonomy approach and the heteronomy approach. Generally the two approaches are considered to be mutually exclusive. The study described here, conducted among Dutch teachers at Catholic primary schools, reflects a positive relation between the two approaches. This leads to the assumption that teachers regard moral education as a dialogical, embodied and contextual process (Vygotski). In order to achieve autonomy, notions of the good life need to be transmitted to children.

Key Words: moral education, autonomy, heteronomy, Catholic education

1. Introduction

By and large the debate on moral education in schools is governed by two approaches. The first is to initiate children into particular sets of behavioural rules in the hope that they will observe these both now and in later life. We shall call that the heteronomy approach. This approach to moral education came under heavy fire from thinkers of the Enlightenment and Romanticism. Instead of inducting children into a moral tradition, they felt that individuals should be enabled to rid themselves of the alleged ballast of transmitted moral tradition. This is what we shall call the autonomy approach.

In the Western world the autonomy approach became the dominant view in moral education. If that were to apply to Catholic schools as well, we face a problem. After all, the raison d'être of these schools is to induct children into a specific religious tradition. Do teachers at these schools prefer a heteronomous aim for moral education or do they support the dominant autonomy approach? Our research is meant to answer this question.

We start by analysing the autonomy approach (2). The third section explores the heteronomy approach (3). The fourth section reports on an empirical study conducted among Catholic primary school teachers, in which we inquired into their ideas on the aims of moral education (4). As will be

seen, the results of this study are surprising from the angle of the theoretical premises outlined in the second and third section. The disparity between theoretical premises and empirical research results leads to a reconsideration of the theory. To this end we use the notion of dependent autonomy evolved by Tim Sprod (2001) (5).

2. Moral Education: Development of an Autonomous Subject

The autonomy approach is rooted in both the Enlightenment and Romanticism. The notion that moral education should contribute to the formation of free moral subjects unfettered by any tradition was first propounded by Kant. In his *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (1974) he presented his famous analysis of free will. In his opinion free will is the only thing that can be called 'good' in the proper sense of the word. The will is free only if it obeys no law other than the inner law of reason. Hence a will that is obedient to anything else, such as desires or the will of other people, is not free: it is *Willkür*. Kant maintained that to be rational a law must by definition be universally valid. This also applies to moral law. Kant believed that the categorical imperative was such a universal law: always act in such way that the rule governing your behaviour could serve as a universal law.

This is a formal approach to moral judgment. Kant consciously avoids giving a substantive definition of goodness. Good actions are not aimed at realising 'the good life' or 'the common good' but is behaviour prompted by considerations arising from a specific procedure. It was this formal character of Kantian ethics that made its influence felt in moral pedagogics. Educating a child to become a moral subject, it is argued, entails imparting the skills needed for passing an independent moral judgment: following Kant, some moral educators claim that *substantive* evaluation of educands' moral judgment is a pernicious attempt to condemn them to permanent 'tutelage'.[1]

We find the same reverence for individual development among the romanticists. Here, however, the focus is not on discovering a universal moral law but on individuals finding their unspoilt, authentic self free from the oppression of civilisation. This line of thought found an eloquent exponent in Jean-Jacques Rousseau with his *Emile ou l'education*. Children's true nature can only be cultivated by freeing them from the grip of civilisation that seeks to warp them and alienate them from themselves (Rousseau 1967). In more recent literature on moral pedagogics such trust in the goodness of human spontaneity is reflected in what is known as value clarification. Value clarification presents methods and procedures to assist pupils in clarifying their

preferences (2.1). Inasmuch as value clarification emphasises the procedural aspects of moral thought it is endebted to Kant. In its accentuation of the individual learner's preferences it follows Rousseau.

Value communication is less concerned with individual pupils and their preferences, but it also sets great store by the procedures necessary to form a moral judgment. We shall deal with in 2.2.

2.1. *Value Clarification*

The 'traditional'[2] form of value clarification was first worked out by Raths, Harmin and Simon in the 1960s and 1970s and was developed further by Kirschenbaum (cf. Van der Ven 1998, 235, 236). Value clarification implies that pupils take cognisance of their own values. Raths and his co-authors (1966, 39-44) contrast this with the traditional aim of moral education. It was a reaction to the plurality of values that characterises secularised society and perplexes pupils: which values must one choose? To help them make a choice Rath et al. present a utilitarian definition of value: value is what *I* give preference to. One has to get rid of every predetermined preference for certain values that pupils are supposed to internalise. They should consider the various options, make their choice without any external pressure and then publicly declare what they have chosen. The educator or teacher's task is confined to ensuring that pupils deliberate carefully in determining their preferences and pointing out possible alternatives to, and consequences of, their current preference which they may have overlooked. In other words, teachers should make sure that pupils follow the correct *procedure* in making their evaluation.

Hence moral education in the sense of value clarification entails declaring a preference after considering the alternatives and assessing the desirability of the consequences. It is not sufficient for pupils to indicate their preferences in a kind of hedonistic solipsism. Value clarification also entails recognising the consequences entailed by a particular choice (Raths et al. 1966, 62). Raths illustrates the point with the following example. A class debates which is better, honesty or dishonesty. At some point one of the pupils asks whether, if one opts for dishonesty, one can crib during tests. The teacher comments that the consequence of this choice would be that *she* would punish the person for cribbing (Raths et al. 1966, 114-15). If value clarification were to be confined to expressing preferences, Van der Ven's observation that this implies inconsistency would be justified (Van der Ven 1998, 242). But if the clarification process also entails, as it does for Raths et al., pointing out that certain preferences could have certain

less agreeable consequences, then there is no inconsistency. Apart from being confronted with the consequences of their choices, pupils are also introduced to values not found among the preferences in their life world. To this end one could use what are known as value sheets. One example of such a sheet tells how American students applying for a bursary in terms of the National Defence Educational Act of 1958 had to sign a statement to the effect that they did not belong to any organisation whose aim was the violent overthrow of the government. The students were asked what they thought about this requirement and were then requested to think of reasons why educational institutions objected to it (Raths et al. 1966, 98). Here, too, the educator's role is limited to stimulating pupils to involve as many elements as possible in their appraisal of their moral judgment.

Raths et al. do not say much about the course of this process. The idea seems to be that if it is spontaneous and free from coercion or outside influences, it will automatically bring out the best in human beings. Except for its religious connotations, the slogan of Rousseau's *Emile*, (Rousseau 1967), could equally well have been the slogan of value clarification. Raths and his co-authors express themselves in similar vein when they posit that 'human beings hold the possibility of being thoughtful and wise and that the most appropriate values will come when persons use their intelligence freely and reflectively to define their relationships with each other and with an ever-changing world' (Raths et al. 1966, 39).

The sketchy description of the manner in which pupils arrive at their moral judgment prompts Van der Ven to make some critical comments. He observes that Raths et al. describe the appraisal of preferences as a process in which a choosing 'I' has a fully lucid 'self' at its disposal. In fact, Van der Ven continues, the choosing self is confronted with the need to construct and reconstruct a self-image, which entails questions aimed at the unity of past, present and future – questions such as: 'Who am I?' 'Who do I want to be?' 'What do I live for?' Van der Ven (1998, 258-259) concludes:

> These questions are inextribcably interwoven with one's own individual identity. They refer descriptively to what and where one is, and normatively to what one desires to be or become . . . [Clarification, therefore,] is a mode of self-understanding. This is done by taking up, questioning, and critically reflecting what biography, community and traditon have said that one is, must commit oneself to, and ought to do . . . *'self'-clarification is a hermeneutical process.*

Van der Ven puts the clarification of personal preferences in the context of the person's biography. Following Ricoeur, he points out that this construction does not occur in a moral vacuum where 'one can choose freely', but that preferences are always determined in a setting steeped in 'biography,

community and tradition'. Weighing these choices requires that pupils are capable of both constructing their own biography and applying hermeneutic strategies to it.

2.2. *Value Communication*

Apart from criticism of the conception of self-understanding in value clarification, it is also accused of concentrating too exclusively on the individual learner. In its endeavour to promote the cultivation of an autonomous subject, value clarification shares the rejection of external moral authority with the Kantian view of autonomy, although it makes no mention of a universal moral law. Like Rousseau, it puts the accent on spontaneity and the search for a (supposedly) pure inner self uncorrupted by civilisation. The focus is on how the educator can assist pupils in their introspection of their inner selves. To Raths et al. the pupils' introspective activity is monadic: the 'I' who indicates the preference and the 'self' in which these preferences are encountered are not separate. Normal individuals, it is assumed, always have access to their desires, wishes and preferences.

Kirschenbaum (1977, 148) maintains that value clarification should include communication between pupils. He distinguishes between three phases in their communication: communicating one's own message as clearly as possible to the rest of the group; willingness to enter into the other's perspective; and a capacity to resolve conflicts between contradictory values. Pupils' choices are made in the context of a pluriform society. This has an effect not only on their hermeneutic introspection of the self but also on their communication with one another. Van der Ven (1998, 266-278) argues that cultural pluriformity should be taken into account when one appeals to pupils to transpose themselves to other people's perspectives. The intercultural model makes a distinction between evaluation and the frame of reference in which it takes place. If there are two groups with different preferences, the first step in the intercultural variant of value communication is that groups A and B both interpret their own viewpoints within their respective frames of reference (auto-interpretation of A by A and of B by B). Then group A interprets B's evaluation in A's frame of reference (auto-interpretation of B by A), while B interprets A's values in B's frame of reference (auto-interpretation of A by B). Finally A interprets B's values from B's perspective (allo-interpretation of B by A) and B interprets A's values from A's perspective (allo-interpretation of A by B). Van der Ven (1998, 272)) calls this method perspective exchange. Perspective exchange makes

it possible to compare viewpoints cross-culturally and deepens reflection on alternatives to the pupils own choices.

3. Moral Education: Initiation into Human Coexistence

In addition to moral educationists who focus on developing the skills needed to form a moral judgment, there are others who maintain that individuals derive their status as moral beings from their membership of a community. This could be a nation-state or some other community. If this is one's emphasis, it is important that children should learn the values of this (national or other) community and internalise them.

With reference to the (democratic constitutional) state these scholars maintain that it can only function if the population's dealings in the public domain are guided by certain values. In the first part of this section we try to determine which norms and values are at issue.

Within the framework of public judicial institutions groups emerge who expect the state not merely to protect their individual civil rights, but also to respect their rights as (language, ethnic or religious) groups. Here one thinks of national minorities and indigenous peoples, respectively defined by Kymlicka (2000, 20; 120-132) as 'groups that formed complete and functioning societies in their historic homeland prior to being incorporated into a larger state' and 'stateless nations'. In many instances, such as the Basque Provinces and Corsica, solutions found within the framework of existing state contexts satisfy the vast majority of national minorities.

The (descendants of) Muslim immigrants in Western Europe likewise demand state recognition of their religious and cultural identity. We shall not dwell on the problems that national and immigrant minorities pose for moral education. Instead we concentrate on the relation between the civic education of children in a liberal state and initiation into a religious community (3.3). The first aspect (preparing children for civic citizenship) is dealt with in 3.1. In 3.2 we look at the possible role of education in initiating children into a specific community such as the Roman Catholic Church.

3.1. *Civic Citizenship Education*

Opinions are divided about the role a liberal, democratic state should play in the education of its future citizens. Gutman (1995, 557-560) distinguishes between a political liberal and a comprehensive liberal approach. Comprehensive liberalism is not confined to political principles but includes a conception

of the good life, seen as a life that allows scope for individuality and autonomy. Schools should cultivate pupils' ability to value such a life (cf. Enslin et al. 2001, 129) Comprehensive liberals like Macedo and Rawls maintain that values such as mutual respect and a sense of fairness should also feature in children's education towards citizenship in a liberal society (quoted in Gutman 1995, 561).[3]

Political liberals, on the other hand, maintain that liberalism is simply a political doctrine which, according to Rousseau (1967), is concerned about peace rather than virtue. They do not take a position on mutually contradictory conceptions of the good life and have no ambition to teach children that an independent, autonomous life is 'better' or more virtuous than other ways of realising the good life. They also do not see it as their task to teach children to think independently. According to Hofstee (1992, 270-275) the school should refrain from any form of value transmission and confine itself to imparting testable knowledge. Parents' right to 'be different' should be respected: the state should refrain from defining to what extent a deviant view can be considered 'rational', especially when such a view stems from religious beliefs (Galston 1995, 527-534).[4] The only things schools should combat are repressive and discriminatory practices, since there are incompatible with good citizenship (Gutman 1995, 559).

The question is whether the two approaches really differ as much as one is led to believe. Amy Gutman argues that a society in which groups merely tolerate each other passively ('live and let live') and otherwise show no respect for people from a 'different' cultural or religious background makes the ideal of non-discrimination by a (democratically elected) government unattainable.[5] She also contests the notion that one can, as political liberals would wish to,

> teach children the skills and virtues of democratic citizenship in a diverse society without at the same time teaching them many of the virtues and skills of individuality or autonomy (Gutmann 1995, 563).

She adds that such learning of the 'virtues and skills of autonomy' will not necessarily clash with particular religious ideas or world-views and quotes John Stuart Mill, who remarks that 'both entail living one's life according to one's own best lights because one judges this a good way of life' (quoted in Gutmann 1995, 563).

Finally she points out that in Western societies only small minorities are opposed to such values as the individual's right to pursue the good life according to his or her lights, the importance of tolerance and respect for different ideas, and a sense of justice. As an example of such a group she

cites the Old Order Amish community. Like Galston, she is in favour of granting the kind of sectarian group that does not want to be part of liberal, democratic society but poses no threat to it a special position in the area of teaching and education. According to Gutmann the vast majority of the populations of Western countries can identify with comprehensive liberal values and there is good reason to believe that without these values a pluralistic society would be hard put to function if it can do so at all.

3.2. *Transmission of Community Values*

Apart from being citizens of a state the vast majority of people belong to all sorts of communities. Communities are characterised by some measure of interdependence between members, some shared values (Etzioni 1998, xiii), members' involvement in maintaining the community, sharing of common practices, and telling and retelling of narratives (Bellah 1985, 333). It is these shared practices and constitutive narratives that make it possible to identify individuals as members of a particular community, since that is what distinguishes them from other communities. If a neighbourhood arranges an annual barbecue, one could speak of a (as yet modest) form of community. In a dormitory town where residents have nothing in common bar the hedges separating their gardens there are no common practices and (therefore) no common narratives.

In modern societies people belong to various communities from an early age: family, neighbourhood, church, associations, school, peer communities and the like. Initiating children into these community contexts presupposes familiarising them with community practices and the values undergirding these. Van der Ven distinguishes between a disciplinary and a socialising phase. In discipline the accent is on learning and unlearning behaviour. Socialisation is aimed at adopting the moral judgments of behaviour that are (implicitly or explicitly) laid down by the community. Socialisation can be completed by means of transmission of values. The child is made aware of previously unconscious preconceptions, rules and patterns underlying an actual moral practice (Van der Ven 1998, 43-127).

Transmission of values may be open or closed. To understand the distinction we first need to comment on the way communities' 'constitutive narratives' function. Communities derive the goal orientations for their actions from these stories. By telling newcomers how jolly last year's barbecue was longstanding residents of the neighbourhood encourage new ones to join in the shared practice of an annual barbecue. In more highly structured communities the narratives are less situationally linked than in a neighbourhood.

Often they are ancient, recorded in writing and vested with a measure of sacrosanctness. Recording constitutive narratives in writing has the effect of what Ricoeur (1993, 87-106) calls 'decontextualisation'. Unlike stories that are communicated orally (as in the case of the neighbourhood barbecue), in the case of written narratives there is no longer any direct communication between sender (narrator) and receiver (listener). In principle a text can be read and reread by everybody, anywhere, at any time without the reader being able to discover 'what the author intended'. A speaker can back up her or his text, a writer can't. This applies all the more when constitutive narratives derive from the distant past, as often happens in complex communities. As a result readers are compelled to 're-contextualise' the text. To have even a vague idea of what the text is about they have to relate it to 'the world', that is, the totality of situations to which the text could refer (Ricoeur 1993, 152).

In the case of narrative texts, relating the 'world of the the text' to the 'world of the reader' is further complicated because of the focus on characters' actions. Readers can relate the behavioural orientations encountered in narrative texts to their own behaviour or that of other people. They can question the characters' behavioural orientations (or values), agree with them, differentiate them, reject them, modify their own values accordingly, et cetera. In this way narrative texts further the reader's self-understanding (Ricoeur 1993, 122-128). Readers 'mirror' their own world (and the behavioural orientations prevailing in it) in the world of the text (and the behavioural orientations prevailing in it).

Some texts have special meaning for particular communities. Here we think primarily of the holy scriptures of religious communities. Certain interpretations of such texts (co-)determine the community's self-understanding. People identify themselves as Christians or as Muslims on the basis of the unique meaning they ascribe to the Bible or the Koran. Every text that stands the test of time gives birth to interpretive traditions, but in the case of the constitutive texts of religious communities such interpretations have strong normative implications. In an ideal or ideological sense at any rate, they act as the ultimate criterion of behavioural orientations in religious communities. In many instances divergent interpretations of holy scriptures led to schisms in religious communities.

The conviction that there is only one correct interpretation of holy scripture leads to a closed form of value transmission. Each successive generation of believers has to learn the one, fixed interpretation of the sacred texts by heart and incorporate it into their behaviour (cf. Van der Ven 1998, 131-133). In its most extreme form traditional transmission of values will

reject any critical questioning of value orientations as an impermissible deviation from orthodoxy. In addition to the closed form of value transmission there is an open form. The most open approach regards the sacred text as a means of orientation to the good life. The accent is not on rote learning and incorporation of fixed value orientations but on an ongoing process of (joint and dialogic) interpretation and reinterpretation of the sacred text. Open value transmission seeks to familiarise pupils with the diversity of traditional interpretations of the text, but also to inculcate the skills needed to direct these interpretations to the good life lived in conjunction with other people in a context of just institutions.

3.3. *Relation between Liberal and Christian Transmission of Values*

To conclude this section we take a brief look at the two forms of transmission of values we have described. As far as community values are concerned we focus on the Christian, more especially the Catholic religious community. After all, our empirical study concerns teachers in Catholic primary education.

For a long time the relation between the liberal state and the Catholic Church was marked by manifest strain. In the 19th century Catholic theologians and church leaders often espoused the cause of the *ancien régime* and traditional values, even though some, like Lamennais, defended political democracy. In similar fashion liberals adopted an often aggressive political stance towards the church.[6] At the end of the 19th century the relation between liberalism and Catholicism came under severe pressure as a result of the conflict bertween Italian liberals and the Holy See about (inter alia) the fall of the ecclesiastic state. Against the background of this conflict the *Syllabus Errorum* was issued, in which several key liberties were condemned (Denzinger 1965, 584). This applied only in cases where liberal claims were considered to conflict with the acquired rights of the Catholic Church. In the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes* and the declaration *Dignitatis Humanae* the Second Vatican Council gave its blessing to constitutional democracy, human rights and the freedom of the individual (Grasso 1995, 33), albeit citing as its motive that these things are necessary to promote the common good. The premodern concept of the common good and the fundamental pluralism of the modern liberal state are often viewed as mutually contradictory. Novak (1989, 145-173) argues that this is not necessarily the case. In his view liberalism aspires not just to freedom for every person but also to justice for all. Reflection on justice presupposes a vision of the common good.

This second aspiration forms the background to the Catholic Church's fierce criticism of the excrescences of the free market economy, the concomitant of liberalism (Novak 1986, 12-16). This criticism brought various (Catholic and Protestant) theologians to the conclusion that, in the words of the English socialist motto, 'Christianity is the religion of which socialism is the practice'(Novak 1986, 12). Protest against the evil consequences of the capitalist economic system was forceully expressed in the work of many Third World liberation theologians, but criticism of the destructive effects of the free market also came from liberals. Hence Novak (1984, 38) seems justified when he concludes that Catholic social thougth has slowly but steadily come to embrace the basic institutions of liberal society.

4. RESEARCH CONSTRUCTION AND AN OVERVIEW OF PRINCIPAL RESEARCH RESULTS

Above we identified two main trends in the approach to moral education. The first, which we called the autonomy approach, proceeds from the premise that moral education should result in individuals who are able to arrive at a moral judgment free from outside influencing. The outstanding feature of this approach is its emphasis on the cultivation of skills necessary to form a moral judgment. The second trend is what we call the heteronomy approach. Here the accent is on rooting the individual child in social contexts. This could be the context of the state or of a specific community. In our study we settled for the Catholic community.

In this section we consider how teachers involved in the moral education of children on a daily basis think about the aims of moral education. We formulate four research questions and, on the basis of the theoretical ideas described in sections 2 and 3, we construct four hypotheses (4.1). Then we describe our data collection and research design (4.2). In 4.3 we report our findings and answers to the research questions.

4.1. *Research Questions and Expectations*

We pose four research questions:

1. Do teachers distinguish between two perspectives on moral education?
2. In how far do they agree with these approaches?
3. To what extent do teachers interrelate the aims?
4. Which categories of teachers subscribe to particular perspectives/aims?

On the basis of our premises we expect the following answers to our research questions:

1. Teachers distinguish between four aims of moral education: two 'autonomous' aims (value clarification and communication of values) and two 'heteronomous' aims (civic education and transmission of community (here Christian) values.

2. In view of the schools' denominational background teachers are expected to concur with the heteronomous aims of moral education.

3. We expect the correlation between autonomous and heteronomous aims to be negative.

4. The teachers are classified on the basis of school, class and personal attributes. School attributes refer to the degree of urbanisation of the school environment; class attributes refer to the pupils' religious background (Catholic, Protestant or Muslim). Personal attributes concern the teachers' general personal attributes (gender, age), religious attributes and pedagogical concept.[7] We expect that teachers with many non-Catholic pupils will favour the heteronomy approach. If large groups of pupils and parents have no links with the Catholic Church, we surmised, the inclination to have children initiated into that church will decline and preference for the autonomy approach will increase. In regard to religious personal attributes we expect high scores on these attributes to result in strong agreement with transmission of Christian values as the aim of moral education. As for pedagogical concept, we expect teachers who endorse 'heteronomous' aims for moral education to favour discipline. After all, the purpose of civic education and transmission of values is that children should internalise certain values. This accords with a pedagogics focused on discipline and aimed at enabling children eventually to regulate their own behaviour (Van der Ven 1998, 49-62). A pedagogical approach that allows for negotiation, on the other hand, is expected to correlate positively with autonomous aims of moral education: by allowing scope for negotiation educators/teachers indicate that their own notions of proper behaviour are equally open to correction and criticism.

4.2. *Data Collection and Measuring Instrument*

At the start of the 1997/98 school year school leaders were sent a letter asking if they were prepared to bring the study to the attention of their

teaching colleagues. Only group teachers could participate in the research. Group teachers are those who teach (almost) every subject to their classes. They teach pupils in the 4 to 12 age group. If they teach at Catholic schools, they have to hold a certificate recognised by the Catholic Church as qualifying them to provide religious education.

It is not known how many teachers are employed at Catholic schools, but we did have a survey of all Catholic primary schools. This was the sampling basis of our study. Because we wanted to know whether religious pluriformity influenced teacher's views on the aims of religious and moral education we opted for stratification based on urbanisation. Since most Muslims live in urban areas, that is where one would expect to find the greatest religious pluriformity.

We constructed five strata. Degree of urbanisation of the area in which a school is located was based on address density per km^2. These data were obtained from the Central Bureau of Statistics. We had decided in advance on a sample of 600 teachers. On the basis of these considerations we drew our sample as follows.

Table 1. *Description of sample stratified in terms of urbanisation among teachers at Catholic primary schools*

stratum	definition	no. of RC primary schools	%schools = %sample	no. of teachers (% of 600)
very highly urbanised	>2500 addresses per km^2	148	10,0	60
highly urbanised	1500-<2500 addresses per km^2	273	18,6	112
fairly urbanised	1000-<1500 addresses per km^2	323	22,9	137
slightly urbanised	500-<1000 addresses per km^2	225	15,3	92
not urbanised	<500 addresses per km^2	501	34,1	205
total		1470	100,9%	600

From the various strata we drew schools whose leaders had responded. They indicated on a response form how many teachers they anticipated would be prepared to complete the questionnaire. This number, furnished with a code on the basis of which the response form could be slotted into the appropriate stratum, was sent to the school concerned.

In many instances school leaders were a trifle optimistic in their esti-
mates of numbers of teachers that would be prepared to answer the ques-
tionnaire. Of the 634 teachers who were sent questionnaires only 469 returned
them properly completed. This number was distributed across the strata in
accordance with the predetermined percentages.

4.3. *Results*

The first research question was: what aims do teachers at Catholic primary
schools identify for moral education in a pluralistic society? We expected
the four aims identified in the theoretical domain to occur in the empirical
domain as well. However, factor analysis revealed a factor structure that
differed somewhat from the theoretical domain described above. As is evi-
dent in table 2 this structure comprises three factors.

Table 2. *Aims of moral education, relative frequencies, (h^2), factor loadings
(PAF, Oblimin rorated factor matrix), estimated reliability (alpha) and
scale means*

item I believe it is important to . . .	% disagree	% neutral	% agree	h^2	f1	f2	f3
teach children how to engage in dialogue with values and norms deriving from different religious traditions and world-views	1.5	8.7	89.3	.55	**.89**		
enable children to engage in dialogue with values and norms deriving from different traditions and world-views	2.1	11.9	85.3	.42	**.70**		
teach children to clarify their moral views for themselves	1.7	5.1	93.0	.59	**.66**		−.22
enable children to become aware of their own moral views	1.7	3.8	93.8	.60	**.56**	.17	−.20
inculcate in children the values that are important in the Christian tradition	2.8	12.6	84.4	.36		**.74**	
make children aware of how to judge good and bad in accordance with values that are important in the Christian tradition	9.6	26.7	63.5	.36		**.73**	
instil in children values that apply in our society	1.7	4.7	93.2	.45			**−.79**

Table 2 (*cont.*)

item I believe it is important to . . .	% disagree	% neutral	% agree	h^2	f1	f2	f3
transmit values that are generally accepted in our society	2.1	13.6	83.6	.44			**–.74**
Alpha/ rho					.84	.70	.75
N (missing)					462(7)	468(1)	465(4)
scale mean (s.d.)					4.3 (.56)	3.9 (.73)	4.3 (.66)

variance explained: 75%. absolute values less then .10 have been suppressed.
Legend:
f1: Communicative clarification
f2: Transmission of Christian values
f3: Civic education

The analysis presents some surprising results. Firstly, it appears that teachers make no distinction between the two aims of the autonomy approach: they see value clarification and communication of values as a single goal. Since the two items on communication of values yield the highest factor loadings, we call this new aim communicative clarification. Under the heteronomy approach teachers do discern two aims. Hence the research results do not altogether conform to the expectation that teachers would distinguish between two autonomy and two heteronomy aims.

The answer to the second research question (to what extent do teachers agree with the aim?) can also be found in table 2: they agree with all three aims. This result conflicts with our second expectation, namely that agreement with the aims of the autonomy approach would not correlate with agreement with the aims of the heteronomy approach. Another striking feature is that, relative to the other aims, transmission of Christian values scores poorly. The score distribution (first three columns in the table) show that the low scores are attributable mainly to the comparatively large number of doubtful and 'anti-votes' in response to 'I believe it is important to make children aware of how to judge good and bad in accordance with values that are important in the Christian tradition'

The third research question concerns the way teachers interrelate the aims. We anticipated that the correlation between the two aims of the autonomy approach and those of the heteronomy approach would be negative. Figure 1 represents the observed correlations.

Figure 1. *Correlations between aims of moral education*
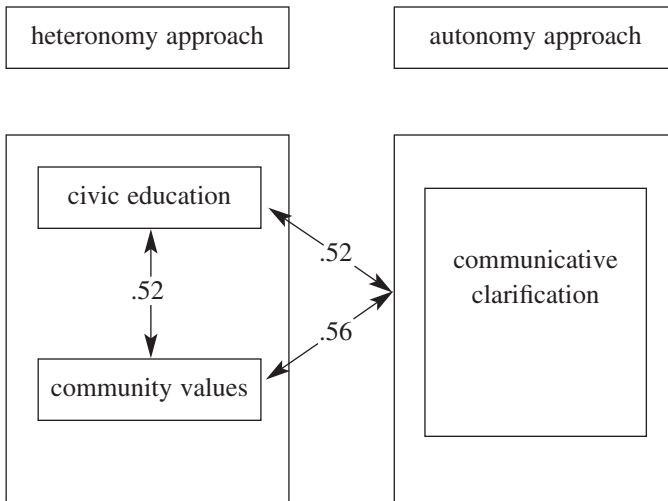
The figure shows that the hypothesis regarding a positive correlation be-
tween the two aims of the heteronomy approach has empirical support. In
the empirical domain the items on the two aims of the autonomy approach
discerned in the theoretical domain combine into a single aim. Our last
hypothesis (aims of the autonomy approach correlate negatively with those
of the heteronomy approach) has *no* empirical support: the observed cor-
relation between the aims of the heteronomy approach and the aim of the
autonomy approach is positive.

This answers the third research question (to what extend do teachers inter-
relate the aims?). The teachers correlate all aims positively.

Before looking for a possible explanation for this finding, let us con-
sider the answer to our last research question: which categories of teach-
ers subscribe to particular perspectives/aims? To answer this question we
had to calculate associations (etas) and correlations (r) depending on the
level of measurement of variables. Appendix 1 describes how we arrived
at the various categories. Appendix 2 indicates which groups display
significantly different means.

Table 3. Associations (eta's) and correlations (r) between aims of
moral education, characteristics of teachers, and characteristics
of teaching environment

	Communicative clarification		Civic education		Transmission of Christian values	
	eta	r	eta	r	eta	r
General demographic characteristics						
Gender	.05		.06		**.17***	
Age	.09		.13		**.35***	
Religious characteristics						
Church involvement	.05	.	.08	.	**.42***	
Practice of prayer	.14		.10		**.28***	
Faith in God	.04		.07		**.19***	
Religious self-definition			.06		**.24***	
Religious salience of life decisions		−.02		−.05		**.37***
Religious salience of professional attitudes		.02		−.04		**.41***
Pedagogical concept						
Pedagogical concept focused on discipline		**.27***		**.39***		**.40***
Pedagogical concept allows for negotiation		**.34***		.17		.12
Characteristics of the school and class						
Urbanization	.11		.08		.04	
Proportion of Catholic children per class	**.14***					
Proportion of Muslim children per class	**.12***					

*p ≤ 0.05

We discuss the relations per aim. The more teachers agree with discipline, the more they agree with communicative clarification. The same applies when they leave scope for negotiation: again they attach greater value to communicative clarification. Teachers estimated to have between 50% and 75%

Catholic pupils in their class agree more with communicative clarification that those estimated to have less than 25% pupils from Catholic homes. Teachers who estimate that they have 25% Muslim pupils are more in agreement with communicative clarification than those who put the percentage between 0 and 5. Agreement with the aim of civic education correlates positively with pedagogical concept focused on discipline.

In the transmission of Christian values gender, age, all religious personal traits and pedagogical concept all play a role. Males agree with this aim more than females. Teachers over the age of 35 agree more than youngerones. Teachers who describe themselves as nonreligious agree less with this aim than do Catholics or (other) Christians. Teachers who define themselves as religious agree less with transmission of Christian values as an aim of moral education than those who describe themselves as Catholic. The correlation between the two forms of religious self-definition and transmission of Christian values is positive. Finally, transmission of Christian values correlates positively with a pedagogical concept focusing on discipline.

The results of the inquiry into the relation between aims and personal attributes confirm the surmise that personal religious attributes correlate positively with initiation into Christian community values. By contrast the anticipated negative correlation with the aims of the heternomy approach does not materialise, but the expected positive correlation between disciplinary pedagogical concept and the heteronomy approach does. Likewise the expected correlation between a pedagogical concept with scope for negotiation and communicative clarification is empirically confirmed.

Finally it is noteworthy that there is a correlation between class composition and communicative clarification, whereas we were expecting a correlation with transmission of Cristian values. These correlations cannot be explained on the basis of our research data and call for further research.

5. Conclusions and Discussion

Our theoretical premise was that there are two approaches to moral education. One either tries to cultivate skills that help children develop into critical, autonomous moral subjects or one seeks to make them internalise a particular set of values. In the first case no attempt is made to provide a substantive definition of the content of ethics and education is confined to inculcating procedures deemed necessary to arrive at an autonomous moral judgment. This we called the autonomy approach. Within this approach we made a further distinction between two procedures (clarification and communication

of values). The attempt to transmit a particular set of values we called a heteronomy approach. Again we distinguished between two kinds of value transmission (civic education and transmission of Christian values). We anticipated a positive correlation between the aims of the autonomy and heteronomy approaches, but that the aims of the autonomy approach would correlate negatively with those of the heteronomy approach.

As anticipated, teachers make a distinction between autonomous and heteronomous aims of moral education but, counter to expectation, they do not discern two aims within the autonomy approach: calarification of values and communication of values are seem as a single aim. This raises the question of how they understand the relation between one's own values and those of other people. Paul Ricoeur offers a possible explanation. He maintains that we should not draw too sharp a line between clarification of one's own preferences and dialogue with and about other people's values. According to him any moral awareness worthy of the name starts with an affirmation of one's own freedom. Only a free being, that is to say one that can be different from what he or she is at present, is capable of morality. Unlike Kant, who sees freedom as willingness to comply with universal moral law, Ricoeur insists that the only freedom worth having is that which starts with individual reflection on what is of value to *me*. That which I could value merely needs to be mediated by 'others'. In that case freedom is no longer an abstract principle but a task to be accomplished in a world in which others have already realised the good life. A web of traditions, institutions and ongoing debates and conflicts, of ongoing projects of the good life determines the limits and possibilities of my own life project (Ricoeur 1995).

In terms of Ricoeur's moral phenomenology value clarification and communication of values may be regarded as two elements in the development of moral discourse which necessarily complement each other. Value clarification refers to (the development of) individual reflection on what each individual learner finds valuable and at inculcating skills to refine this perception in dialogue with other perceptions. Transmission of values features as soon as the learner is confronted with the limits imposed by the cultural environment in which she or he grows up.

Tim Sprod (2001) likewise tempers the opposition between autonomy and heteronomy that has been considered irreconcilable ever since Kant. In developing his theory of moral education Sprod proceeds from a model of dependent autonomy. He describes it as *dialogical, situated, embodied* and *emotional* (Sprod 2003, 80) and distances himself from both Kant's

monologic ethics of universality and Habermas's dialogic ethics, of which Benhabib (1992, 58-70, quoted in Sprod 2003, 80) said that Habermas offers a description of dialogue between two (or more) generalised others discussing an ideal speech situation. According to Sprod, anyone who proceeds from real-life dialogues is dealing with mutually committed people, who develop both the form of their thinking and the contents of their emotions in dependence on and in communication with other people. To engage in fruitful dialogue with others one has to learn to think correctly (Sprod 2003, 48-59), that is to say, one must be versed in the procedural aspects of (ethical) thought.

But, as Ricoeur points out, thought always occurs in an environment where notions of the good life are already present, before I start thinking about them. As a result the procedures of moral thought always relate to concrete notions of good conduct in a particular situation. If the heteronomy approach is seen not as mechanical transmission of a body of traditional values and norms but as bequeathing spiritual capital to the next generation to apply in its own, creative way, then what we have called the autonomy and the heteronomy approach – that is, cultivating autonomy and transmitting values – are not as irreconcilable as one might think. Both forms of transmitting values point out to pupils the limits that the two traditions impose on the development of the good life and the possibilities they offer. Thus the Christian component of Christian value transmission could lie in making concrete appeals to pupils to view situations from the angle of marginalised fellow humans and acting accordingly, rather than in imprinting concrete behavioural rules (cf. Van der Ven 1998, 216-223). Similarly, in civic education the emphasis could be on cultivating an attitude of tolerance and respect and a sense of justice rather than on learning or unlearning specific rules of decorum.

If transmission of Christian and civic values is conceived as learning certain fixed notions and connected rules of behaviour, it would be difficult to explain how the 'closed' concept of transmission can be reconciled with the autonomy approach. This is not what the concept of 'dependent autonomy' implies. In order to be able think for themselves (autonomy) transmission of values is needed (heteronomy). Autonomy is the ultimate goal of moral education, but this always implies an heteronomous aspect in the sense that autonomy is 'dependent' on moral tradition which are transmitted to pupils.

APPENDIX 1. DESCRIPTION OF THE BACKGROUND VARIABLES

We included four categories of background variables: general demographic characteristics, personal religious characteristics, personal professional characteristics, and environmental characteristics. The general characteristics were age and sex. Under personal religious characteristics we distinguished between a structural and a cultural dimension. The structural dimension comprised church membership, church attendance and extent of active involvement in the church community. A cumulative scale of church involvement was constructed, on the basis of which respondents were divided into non-members, marginal members, modal members, active but not ritually involved members, and core members. The cultural dimension comprised religious self-definition, belief in God/a higher power, prayer practice and religious saliency. Religious saliency refers to the degree to which faith plays a role in certain important decisions and professional attitudes. Teachers were asked about the role of faith in the following areas: attitude towards pupils, attitude towards colleagues, attitude towards their responsibility as educators, attitude towards their responsibilities as teachers, choice of profession, involvement in social issues, choice of a life partner, choice of recreational activities, and choice of a Catholic school as a workplace. Two factors emerged, together accounting for 60.8% of the variance. The first factor we call 'religious saliency in regard to professional attitude' and the second 'religious saliency in regard to life decisions'. Under personal professional characteristics we measured respondents' general views on pedagogy and education. We made a distinction between a disciplinarian approach and an approach which allows for negotiation. An example of the disciplinarian approach would be: 'Above all, the school must demand diligence and hard work from pupils.' The statement, 'Pupils should have a say in decisions about teaching methods', illustrates the approach which allows for negotiation. Respondents were given six statements which they rated on a five-point scale, with 1 representing 'strongly disagree and 5 representing 'strongly agree'. On the basis of factor analysis two scales were constructed, corresponding to the two approaches that had been identified theoretically. Two environmental characteristics were included in the analysis: degree of urbanization of the school's location, and degree of religious diversity in the class. To determine the second characteristic teachers were asked to estimate the percentages of Catholic, Protestant and Islamic pupils in their classes. The percentage of Protestant pupils was too low to be incorporated into the analysis.

APPENDIX 2. SUMMARIES OF SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES IN ACCEPTANCE OF THE MODEL BY LEVELS OF RELIGIOUS AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

Table 4. *Proportion of Catholic children per class*

	mean (s.d.)	<25%	24%-50	51%-75%	>75%
<25%	4.4(.49)				
25%-50%	4.3(.48)				
51%-75%	4.2(.64)	*			
>75%	4.3(.53)				

mean (s.d.) of the entire population 4.3 (.54). total cases 469, missing cases 10. sig. .028 eta = .14, eta squared = .02

Table 5. *Proportion of Islamic children per class*

	mean (s.d)	<5%	6%-25%	>25%
<5%	4.2(.55)			
6%-25%	4.3(.71)			
>25%	4.5(.51)	*		

mean (s.d.) of the entire population 4.3 (.55). total cases 460, missing cases 9. sig. .033 eta = .12, eta squared = .01

Siginificant differences (p≤.05) by transmission of christian values

Table 6. *Gender*

mean (s.d)	
4.1 (.67)	man
3.8 (.76)	vrouw

Table 7. *Age*

	mean (s.d)	26-35 jaar	<25 jaar	36-45 jaar
<25 jaar	3.6 (.73)			
26-35 jaar	3.5 (.83)			
36-45 jaar	3.9 (.69)	*		
46-55 jaar	4.1 (.67)	*	*	*
>56 jaar	4.4 (.61)	*	*	*

Tabel 8. *Church Involvement*

	mean (s.d)	Geen kerklid	Randkerkelijk
Geen kerklid	3.4 (.74)		
Randkerkelijk	3.9 (.66)	*	
Actief, niet-ritueel	4.0 (.79)	*	
Niet-actief ritueel	4.2 (.64)	*	*
kernlid	4.3 (.63)	*	*

Table 9. *Practice of prayer*

	mean (s.d)	Never	Seldom
Never	3.4 (.89)		
Seldom	3.6 (.67)		
Sometimes	3.9 (.66)	*	
Regularly	4.0 (.69)	*	*
Every day	4.1 (.72)	*	*

Table 10. *Faith in God*

	mean (s.d)	Twijfel eraan
non-belief/difficult to belief	3.7 (.66)	
having doubts	3.6 (.69)	
believer	4.0 (.72)	*

Table 11. *religious self-definition*

	mean (s.d)	Catholic
Catholic	4.1 (.71)	
Christian	4.0 (.66)	
Religious	3.6 (.73)	*
Non-religious	3.2 (.89)	*

NOTES

1. Hofstee (1992, 271; our translation) cites a striking example of this rejection of any form of induction: 'To the extent that one becomes aware of conveying certain non-universal values to pupils one should desist from such indoctrination.'

2. The term derives from Kirschenbaum 1977, 148.

3. According to Rawls (2001 196) the moral psychology of a liberal political philosophy is based on the notion that citizens are capable of forming a conception of what is good and what

is just. Rawls holds that the state's primary task is to ensure 'justice as fairness'. The state can only do so when the majority of citizens have a sense of fairness. To this Rawls (2001, 141) adds that such a sense of fairness can only exist if it offers scope for 'ways of life that can gain devoted support'. Different ways of life can only be accommodated when citizens respect differences in the pursuit of the good. Besides a sense of fairness, a morally mature subject must have a sense of the good.

4. In a lot of American literature the debate on the extent to which the state is entitled to promote more 'substantial values' than just passive tolerance, if necessary against parents' wishes, takes the form of commentaries on the verdict of the federal High Court in the case of Yoder vs Wisconsin. The full text of the arrest can be found on the Internet: http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/getcase.pl?court=US&vol=406&invol=205.

5. The once sectoralized Dutch society, in which all social and political life was subdivided into 'sectors' (*zuilen*, lit. 'pillars') based on world-view, still comes closest to such negative tolerance. Nonetheless there were constant cross-boundary alliances between different sectors when common interests required it.

6. Cf. e.g. Gill 1998, 25-32 and 152-157 for the relation between liberalism and Catholicism in Latin America. For developments in Western Europe, see McLeod 1996, 9-28

7. For a detailed description of background characteristics see appendix 1.

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