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'The sky is not a cow': interpreting religion beyond the propositional frame.

In her editorial for a special virtual issue of the *Journal of Philosophy of Education* on 'Religion and Education', Anna Strhan has offered a concise yet comprehensive overview of the diverse range of debates that have preoccupied discussions of the relations between religion and education over recent decades. What is striking about her account, and Strhan hints at this in the closing paragraph of the editorial, is how discussions within philosophy of education have presupposed that the *belief* dimension of religion is the core of religious life, to the exclusion of almost everything else, that "the way in which religion has been theorised, in particular the focus on indoctrination, has privileged the equation of religion with belief" (Strhan 2014).

The privileging of belief is evident, for example, in Michael Hand's reply to Trevor Cooling's argument about the marginalization of religion within education. Here associating belief with the idea of a "theory of the meaning of life" or a worldview, Hand states:

> Theories of the meaning of life need not be religious, and a religion need not include a theory of the meaning of life. But, at least in the case of the major world religions, religious commitment typically does involve subscription to such a theory. It is appropriate to speak of a 'Christian worldview', for example, because the core Christian narrative of the creation, fall and redemption of humanity is plausibly construed as an account of the significance, origin and purpose of human existence (Hand 2012, 529).

This subscription to a theory of the meaning of life assumes that doctrines and beliefs can be interpreted as propositions. Even more explicitly in reference to the propositional nature of religious beliefs Hand states that "[t]he differences between the followers of different religious and irreligious paths are fundamentally differences of belief: the followers assent to different propositions about what the world is like" (Hand 2015, 35). Hand's broad concern seems to be with the explicit consistency and justification of any worldview so that the relation between a worldview and education may or may not be rationally justified.[1] Schools that promote worldviews considered epistemically controversial are a problem: "faith schools are objectionable because they attempt to secure children's assent to epistemically controversial propositions" (Hand 2012, 536). Hand's privileging of propositional belief and worldview in framing religion is, as Strhan suggests, typical within debates across educational philosophy. In what follows I argue that this approach is problematic primarily because it significantly misrepresents the nature of religious life. Framed propositionally, the kinds of debates across education are those to do with indoctrination or rights (e.g. of the rights Catholic parents have to bring up their children in Catholic the tradition), and this significantly impedes our understanding religious life and its relation to education.

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[1] Hand 's concern here is to present two general conceptions of the term 'worldview', first as a theory of the world and/or meaning, and second, as a conceptual scheme that makes experience possible at all, such as Kant's categories. Hand does not present either as correct (though finds the former to be consistent with the idea of holding a religious worldview), but rather wants to show that these two senses are conflated by Cooling. I present this here to draw attention to a characteristic framing of the concept of worldview as a theory of things which Hand does appear happier to attach to many religions (Hand 2012, 531). However, I do not believe these two conceptions of worldview can be kept quite as distinct as Hand suggests because our conceptual scheme forms what Taylor calls our social imaginary which itself has an impact, albeit at a subliminal level, on our general view of reality and what meanings we ascribe to things in the world. This is clearer where Hand goes on to suggest that some agnostic people opt out of having a theory about the world – a worldview. If agnostic people avoid having a theory of the world they still have an 'orientation' to reality which, in the terms of my argument, has greater impact upon religious life.

Framing religion otherwise

In the 1960's Ninian Smart pioneered Religious Studies as a subject for university research and teaching distinct from the more confessional Theology or Divinity. An important part of his work was to identify seven dimensions of religion: doctrinal, mythological, ethical, ritual, experiential, institutional, and material (Smart 1999). It cannot be denied that doctrine is an essential aspect of religious understanding for many practitioners. [2] Smart's influential understanding of world religions led him to recognize that in the West, the religions of the book, also known as the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) since they share the Hebrew Bible, have encouraged Western scholars to interpret other religions through the doctrinal/ propositional lens. The real legacy of this Western lens is the tendency to reduce religions to propositions, truth claims, or worldviews. Educationalists are preoccupied with how competing worldviews should be handled, or to what extent transmission of worldviews is justified. These debates would be framed differently were they addressing the foods eaten, clothes worn, or languages spoken by different traditions. Bringing up a child as a vegetarian, the norm across much of the Indian subcontinent, would hardly be considered indoctrination. The suggestion that foods can have religious significance might sound reductive in a different way – that we teach religion through experience of 'saris and samosas' is often cited as trivializing other cultures – but Hindu families take food to be an extremely important expression of religious identity and social bonds. It seems to be the presumption that beliefs or worldviews entail an intellectual or cognitive dimension, and that this dimension is the core of religious life, which makes requiring religious assent of the child 'indoctrination' rather than just socialization.

In contrast to this it is my contention that for many religious practitioners, beliefs will be unreflectively assumed and therefore less important than is often assumed. Many religious practices, in India and China for example (which might be categorized as 'Hindu' or 'Buddhist', though these terms are not uncontroversial among scholars of religion), may have ethical, experiential and material significance for the practitioners, but ask the practitioner about why they perform the rituals they do, and the answer may well be suffused with symbolism, or quite possibly be just unclear or irrelevant. There is scarcely a consistent and affirmative metaphysics or 'theory of the world' behind a *puja* in which prayer, song and ritual are performed to bless a newly purchased car on the streets of Bangalore, for example. The puja rituals are ostensibly to host, honour or worship one or more deities, but the rituals seem unrelated to doctrinal theology or worldview in Hand's sense of the term. When considering the gods of the Hindu pantheon it is better to wonder at their significance than to argue for or against their existence. It could be argued, therefore, that Hindu devotional rituals offer practices rather than metaphysics. For this reason, Hindus can follow *dharma* (duty or law[3]) without dogma and can, therefore, simultaneously follow Christ, for example.[4]

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[2] It would also be a mistake to assume doctrine to only exist as regulative and propositional. The term 'doctrine' originally refers to *teaching* which can be interpreted more as a process. Thus doctrines do not need to be reduced to propositions, but can act to give shape, rather than directly regulate belief.

[3] The concept of dharma is used by Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains and is translated in various ways including to do one's duty, to be virtuous, or the right way to live. That forms of the term cut across a range of religious traditions further reinforces my argument that religious identity is porous and flexible, and does not rest upon specific, still less exclusive, propositional truth claims.

[4] Of course Hinduism, if it even exists as an identifiable religion (Smith 1962), is a diverse community of practitioners and practices. In particular the Bhakti traditions prioritize devotional aspects of religious practice. This is not to say that there is no metaphysics. The Bhakti tradition often identified with Shaivism in which the god Shiva is revered as the supreme being. My point is that even in modern Shaivism the metaphysics really seems to withdraw in significance.

In contemporary India (and across the world) the picture is complex due to the social capital that different religious commitments confer, whether that is *Caste capital*, or the economic and cultural advantages that some Dalit (untouchable) Hindu's perceive within conversion to Christianity. While complex, the basic message for my argument from Hindu culture is that on the whole doctrines and worldviews play little role in defining religious identity. This distance from doctrine and worldview is not only characteristic of Hinduism, forming a significant part of most religious lives, where we distinguish the traditions contained in writings from the religious lives of the 'faithful'. But what about the more explicitly doctrinal, creedal, and dogmatic Christian religion which is generally taken to be the largest religion in the world?

Cultural Liturgies

James Smith's writings on 'liturgy' (which for Smith is roughly synonymous with worship) show that the propositional or worldview conception of religion does not do justice to the power and meaning of Christian liturgies. Drawing together Christian theology, philosophy, and educational theory, Smith's basic view is that the Christian religion is first and foremost a set of formative practices. That formative process addresses us less at the cognitive level of worldviews than is often assumed. Religious liturgies are, then, inherently educational: those liturgical practices, "whether 'sacred' or 'secular'—shape and constitute our identities by forming our most basic attunement to the world" (Smith 2009, 25). Note that, for Smith it is not only 'religions' that enact formative liturgies. All kinds of identity are shaped through liturgical practices, whether or not they are explicitly 'religious'. The point for Smith is that we generally do not recognize secular practices as formative liturgies that shape and transmit identity because we take the secular domain to be value-free. One consequence of Smith's argument is that "there is no such thing as a 'secular' education" (Smith 2009, 26) in the sense that all kinds of educational practice entail an orientation to the world which is imbued with something fundamental to religions everywhere: liturgical practices.

To illustrate the power of secular liturgies, Smith presents the habit of visiting a shopping mall in which ritual performances structure the experience and shape the desires of the shoppers (Smith 2009, 18-22). It is the effective shaping of human desires that makes Smith's interest educational as much as theological. In the mall, as in Western culture more broadly, consumerism coheres around consumerist liturgies. Icons are visible here: celebrity advertising presents the good life that many of us aspire to, seeking not to convince us of the consistency or rationality of its ideals, but appealing to the imagination. The shoppers receive this vision of the good as…

> …a religious proclamation that does not traffic in abstracted ideals or rules or doctrines, but rather offers the imagination pictures and statues and moving images. While other religions are promising salvation through the thin, dry media of books and messages, this new global religion is offering embodied pictures of the redeemed that invite us to imagine ourselves in their shoes (Smith 2009, 21).

From this point of view, the distinction between secular and sacred liturgy is not clear-cut. This suggests that our everyday practices enact a way of being-in-the-world which cannot be straight-forwardly separated from religion. The ways in which our everyday activities are liturgical, suggest that those activities orient our desires. Indeed that is the point of the shopping mall, that our desires are oriented towards the acquisition of more stuff. For Smith, Christian liturgy is oriented in a different direction: towards God.

Smith's argument is reminiscent of that developed by the theologian Paul Tillich. Tillich argued that faith is less about the intellectual or cognitive content of beliefs than with our ultimate concern, a concern which grasps us as much as we grasp it (Tillich 1964, 8). Both

Tillich and Smith see worship operating at a level that might be seen as part of our 'pre-understanding' or framing of the world (both thinkers owe an intellectual debt to Heidegger in this and other respects). The significance of this is that *liturgy* or *concern* happens whether we like it or not (rather like Heidegger's notion of care – *Sorge* – as the structure of Dasein's being-in-the-world). This disrupts the notion of religion as a choice or decision, as well as disrupting the propositional /worldview conception of religion since it is, in a sense, pre-cognitive. Like Smith, Tillich was skeptical of the voluntarist conception of religious life, which tends to frame religion in terms of making choices between competing worldviews. Tillich regarded other concerns (e.g. political, social or moral concerns, or indeed personal interests and consumerist concerns) as preliminary or provisional and understood that preliminary concerns could be – mistakenly – treated as ultimate. Tillich applies the term *idolatry* to the elevation of a provisional concern to ultimate status (Tillich 1967, vol 1, 13ff.). In other words, where we stake our lives on a successful career with financial rewards, then we effectively worship the provisional as though it were ultimate. It is the continuity between secular and religious concerns in Tillich and Smith that is important here.[5] Clearly then, religion is not just what we do on Sundays, or what we say we believe in propositional terms, our theory of the world. It is these things but a lot more that is less visible and less cognitive. Equally the religious nature of a school, for example, is not easily defined as though it can be contained within a mission statement, or the church attendance of its staff or students.

The reader might be tempted to reply that the consequence of my argument is that since everyone is engaged in some kind of liturgy, then everyone is effectively religious - a pretty meaningless proposition! My provisional reply would be only that I am not ultimately interested in establishing a correct propositional claim about the nature of religious life and its connection to education. To say that everyone is religious, while not being straightforwardly true, can offer some useful insight in certain contexts (where people do not recognize that any way of life is deeply value-laden), so it is less a general truth claim than a device. It is a useful device within Hindu thought to suggest that we are all devoted to something, we had just better be conscious of our devotional practices, rather than let the market dictate them, and hence ritual practices are there to bring attention to and shape our devotional life. At a more subtle level, the reader should note that my argument speaks not only to issues around religious epistemology /ontology but seems inevitably to raise general epistemological /ontological questions about commitment and belief in general. There is a subtle shift here: from seeing religious commitments as propositional truth claims, to seeing commitments as forming and formed by religious practices. This notion of *practicing doctrine* is interestingly reflected in Rowan Williams' reservations about the reduction of religious life to a set of propositions:

> All the major historic faiths, even Islam, which is closest to the propositional model at first sight, assume in their classical forms an interaction between forms of self-imaging and self-interpreting, through prayer and action, and the formal language of belief; that language works not simply to describe an external reality, but to modify over time the way self and world are *sensed*. (Williams 2012, 16).

In other words, the classical propositions and creeds of religious traditions are to be 'practiced' more than taken to be true (or false) propositions. There is, then, a philosophy of language built into this relation which rejects that correspondence view in which terms stand for objects. Language is performative more than propositional. This again affirms the point that this philosophy of religion also entails an examination of ontology and epistemology.

Smith's account engages more directly with the question of education about which there is more to say. The point here is that the way liturgies are enacted has little to do with the

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[5] It is worth noting that Smith himself claims his position "has no truck" (Smith 2009, 87, n. 18) with Tillichian claims around ultimate concern for the reason that Tillich's ultimate reference point I not pluralist as Smith's position is.

adoption of a belief system, a set of truth claims, or a worldview. This is why Smith, employing the language of Charles Taylor, goes on to argue for the primacy of worship over worldview in the formation of desire: "it might be more helpful to talk about a Christian social imaginary than to focus on a Christian worldview, given that the latter seems tinged with a lingering cognitivism" (Smith 2009, 133). So for Smith the formation of desire shapes our being-in-the-world at a level that is *ontologically prior* to the decisions we make as religious or non-religious subjects. Our intentions precede our actions, but those intentions are themselves shaped by formative practices. Stated bluntly, all actions are liturgical, just as all actions are educational. The question for Smith is this: how are our varied liturgies forming us? What kind of being-in-the-world is developed in the liturgical practices of the present consumerist age?

Formations of freedom

Both secular and religious liturgies contain within them a conception of the good life. The secular liturgy of the shopping mall inculcates a culture into lifestyle habits more perniciously, perhaps, than religious indoctrination. I say this because the religious liturgies are, at least, framed as formative practices, whereas secular liturgies hide behind the appearance of freedom of choice: the indoctrination of secular liturgies employs the desires of apparently autonomous individuals who regard themselves as free to choose (between one brand and another). Smith finds that the conceptions of freedom and autonomy embodied in consumerist liturgies also conceal the enframed nature of the choices before us. How often to we see adverts for perfumes, for example, telling stories of breaking out of conventions and becoming 'free'? As Smith notes, our modern conceptions of liberty are more or less universal in their rejection of teleological conceptions of the good life. Traditions that attempt to shape desire towards the good life, for example, the Platonic or Christian traditions, are objectionable because they impose a heteronomous vision of the good life. A heteronomous vision of the good is almost inconceivable today simply because it opposes of autonomy which has become the liberal 'ultimate concern'. The material benefits of modernity are profound, but perhaps the greatest achievement is that sense of individual liberty and choice over the kind of life one wishes to live. Indeed our education system today places this libertarian conception of autonomy at its core: the goal of education is often taken to be the successful transition from dependency to autonomy (Brighouse 2009). One could argue that it is precisely this goal of autonomy which distinguishes our modern education system from pre-modern initiation, inculcation or indoctrination. With this concept of freedom installed within our social imaginary certain problems and questions present themselves to educational theorists: the rights of parents seem to be in competition with the rights of the child with respect to 'life choices'; the right of the state to impose a particular form of common schooling is in tension with the individual choices of parents and their children. These debates might then explore the point at which the child's rationality is sufficiently developed to challenge the authoritative rationality of the parents, or where the limits of state authority over individual freedoms lie. These examples seem, broadly speaking, to reflect that well-known Hobbesian ontology, in which the fundamental condition of human subjects is to be at war with each other. From the perspective of freedom as radical autonomy, a genuinely common good where interests can be shared rather than simply sublimated or repressed is almost inconceivable.

Theologically speaking, the opposition between autonomy and heteronomy is fallacious since it presupposes that divine law and personal freedom must be opposed. The general theological view, often regarded as paradoxical, sees personal freedom as only realized when aligned with divine law. Various attempts to mediate this polarity exist, such as the Kantian paradox between individual autonomy and the moral law, Tillich's attempts to demonstrate a continuity between freedom and destiny (Tillich 1967, Vol 1, 185). Smith's argument develops a similar account of freedom which questions the radical autonomy of the individual

subject. He suggests that modern secular liturgies form within us this sense of freedom, making any other conception of freedom, such as that entailing the submission or negation of the self, hard to conceive. The concepts of freedom and autonomy, imposed and reinforced by the secular liturgies within the consumerist culture of late modernity, are not recognized as historically or culturally contingent inventions or constructions, but are taken to be the human condition. In philosophical terms we are *condemned to be free*, having no ultimate law but the nihilistic will of our own making. Some accounts of philosophical and intellectual history seek to inform us of that context and educate us of the contingency of our view of subjective freedom. But these narratives largely operate at the propositional level, and so one wonders how they can compete against the secular liturgies that convince us of our freedoms in more imaginative ways. Our religious traditions offer imaginative 'counter-liturgies' which Smith is keen to draw attention to.

As we have seen, the terms of this debate, particularly 'religion' and 'belief', are complex and contested. There is reason to suppose that these terms act as devices, or abstractions, indicating a range of practices and presuppositions that for the most part are embedded in the lifeworld of communities. Is there even such a thing as 'Hinduism', the word originally used to refer to communities East of the Indus river?[6] Where modernity raises questions about those beliefs and practices, they come to the fore as claims that seem to require rational justification. Whole schools of modern theology have sprung up whose chief concern is to seek some kind of reconciliation between the changes in worldview from Copernicus to the present. These events, bound up as they are with secularization more broadly, have shifted our general view of what we mean when we speak of religion. Religion as 'belief systems' then begins to seem like a reasonable shorthand for religious life. With this shift we are also compelled to examine whether one belief system is 'better' than another: which is more ethical?; which brings about greater happiness?; which is more 'plausible' or 'defensible'? These questions are not neutral inquiries. They frame our thinking about the nature of religion and its place in education and provide the context in which we seek to separate private religious practice from shared public life. That different worldviews need to be, in some sense respected or reconciled is one logical outcome, and the classroom is one place in which various forms of respect and reconciliation might be tested. No wonder then, that educationalists often seek to sharply distinguish religion from education, as in French laws of laïcité where the division between public and private in state education is robustly upheld.

Other historical processes also play into the division between private and public. The establishment of state-funded schooling in the 19th and 20th centuries across much of Europe cannot be understood apart from the Enlightenment legacy of the 18th century in which education was often aligned with the promotion of rationality and empiricism. As the Age of Reason took hold, so did the philosophy of positivism, a view of the world in part shaped our current view of religion. We can, then, link the conception of religion as set of beliefs or propositional truth claims and the secular move to separate private and public. The privileging of belief over other dimensions of religious life rests upon a broadly positivist ontology and epistemology in which truth is accessible in propositional statements interpreted through reason and logic. This positivism – its history and contingency – should be more widely acknowledged than it is since it forecloses alternative conceptions of the relations of religion and education.

The propositional frame

Echoing Taylor, I call the framing of religion in terms of doctrines and propositions the 'propositional frame.' As already noted, the propositional frame works subliminally to

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[6] The view that concept of 'religion' is a peculiarly European construction of recent origin has been strongly argued by Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1962).

structure our thinking on the subject, and there are reasons for this identification of religion with doctrine. Much of this work is undertaken by philosophers and theorists who are working within a Western 'culturally Christian' context in which the propositional view of religion is the norm. Despite James Smith's strong account, I would not deny that the history of Latin Christianity could plausibly be read as a history of belief and doctrine, where disputations, inquisitions and creedal formulations take propositional form. But we have noted that there are many dimensions to religion beyond the notion of belief systems. I now turn to another respected religious studies scholar who further disabuses us of the propositional conception of religion.

Wilfred Cantwell Smith argues that the idea that believing is religiously important is a modern idea, that "a great modern heresy of the church is the heresy of believing". Smith goes on to say that is it the 'anti-religious' thinkers who hold "even more doggedly than theologians that believing is what religious people primarily do" (Smith 1998, v). He illustrates his point with the example of the ancient-Egyptians, a highly sophisticated culture of people who believed that "the sky is a cow" (11). With the benefits of modern science we now know that the sky is not a cow. But were the Egyptians plain wrong? The question is not whether the Egyptians were right or wrong, but what they meant by this idea.

> I am seriously suggesting that the ancient Egyptians' apprehension of their environment evidenced in and made possible through such statements may well have been—however partially or poetically—of a reality that is indeed there. My guess is that they perceived something about the sky, about animals, about themselves, and about the relations among these, that Ayer and his friends have missed (Smith 1998, 14).

Smith is, of course, referencing the reductive dismissals by the logical positivists for which Ayer stands as totem. Smith analyses a number of key terms: opinion, creed, faith, and belief, in order to develop a convincing case that the term *believing* does not, in fact, primarily refer to holding propositionalist opinions about states of affairs (41ff). To believe is related to the German *belieben* which, signifying love (German *Liebe*; Latin *libido*), means "to hold dear" or "to prize", evoking senses of loyalty and faithfulness (further indicating that 'faith' refers to a commitment of the heart rather than assenting without evidence). These linguistic associations are alive in present day English. If the prime minister implores us to 'Believe in Britain' as the election approaches, or a teacher encourages a student to believe in herself in advance of the exam, the usage of belief is, in Austin's terms, performative rather than representational. Thus believing, especially in its verbal form does not need to be equated with assenting to propositions about, for example, the existence of God. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Charles Taylor, James Smith and Rowan Williams all share the desire to problematize the common sense idea that religious beliefs correspond with propositional truth claims. And if this propositional view of religion is a straw man within philosophy of religion, it is not so in philosophy of education.

My target here is the common sense nature of certain views, not the idea that beliefs can be propositional per se. It would be disingenuous to suggest that there is nothing intellectual or cognitive at stake in debates between religious and other worldviews, that scientific discoveries had no substantial impact upon religious beliefs. Some theologians regard the modern discoveries of science as reawakening a sense of the real contribution that theology can make: not in competition with science, but by raising questions about the meaning of science as such.[7] Such discussions are beyond my scope. My intention here is to question the propositional framing of religion as the way to think about the relations religion and education. More importantly, I am concerned that we no longer notice the common sense nature of the propositional framing of religion.

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[7] The best exponent of a theology that synthesizes science and religion is the French priest and paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

Alongside the propositional view of religion, I strongly take issue with the view of history as the inexorable rise of enlightened secularism. For this Whig history, which regards secularization as an inevitable outcome of modern science, industrialization and democratic state politics, needs to come to terms with the fact that religion is a pervasive and ongoing influence. This progressivism suits one narrative of modernity, the mainstay of sociological theories of secularization that Taylor is particularly keen to denounce: namely the subtractive view. This subtractive view sees rationality replacing superstition, naturalistic explanations replacing theological or spiritual forces, and the world becoming progressively disenchanted following Weber's thesis. In this account the removal of faith and the subsequent separation of church and state should lead to a "zone of absence" (Warner, VanAntwerpen, and Calhoun 2010, 8) in which neutral secular reason should be employed to structure social institutions in non-partisan terms. But this neutral zone, often framed as the private sphere, turns out to privilege those for whom religious life has no meaning. Far from being neutral, such forms of secularism appear to some commentators as doing violence to certain expressions of religious faith.[8] Taylor's account, on the other hand, tends to be more circumspect, defining secularism as something of a productive process, in contrast to a subtractive one. What is important for my argument is that the subtractive view which sees autonomous reason in terms of universal rationality and self-determination that is in tension with religious commitments, has "sunk to the level of common sense" (Taylor 2007, 525) and so is part of the assumed backdrop of our worldview, or what Taylor calls, our "social imaginary" (Smith 2014, 26). This Whig history has informed the social imaginary of educational culture inasmuch as we tend to see the trajectory of human life in developmental terms, and this narrative forms part of the critical and emancipatory view of the child just as much as of the society. The influence of this developmental assumption and the progressivist narrative attached to it should be critically examined. But this can only happen when the presumed notion of what it means to be rational – itself part of the social imaginary - becomes questionable. In other words, only through bringing into question what has become common sense – progressivism and religion as proposition – can we begin to reimagine the proper role of religion in public life, and in education specifically. Then perhaps we will not begin with the assumption that religion is a 'problem' for education (Strhan 2014).

Conclusion

We began with reference to the debate between Trevor Cooling and Michael Hand and return to it again to further illustrate the subliminal operation of the propositional frame. Of course Hand's propositional framing of religion does not necessitate an outright rejection of it: "[s]ome religious propositions are sufficiently well supported by evidence and argument as to merit serious consideration by reasonable people" (Hand 2003, 162). Although Hand's view of religion is rather more reductive than many others, if we expect Cooling to take a more nuanced view of the matter we might be disappointed. It is true that Cooling does not agree with Hand that education should be "shaped only by neutral, objective, secular thinking" (Cooling 2010, 24). At first glance Cooling would appear to support my argument since he supports a role for religion within education. Cooling believes that education cannot be neutral since "beliefs, including religious beliefs, are integral to human knowing and therefore education" (27). Cooling's analysis that all worldviews should be treated 'fairly' might be lent to what Rowan Williams (2012) calls a procedural secularism in which a range of perspectives, religious and non-religious, form and inform the debate. A clue to the problem with Cooling's analysis lies with his use of the term 'worldview'. For Cooling the question is not whether religion should be conceived in terms of worldviews, but whether the idea of an

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[8] See Milbank 2010. Rowan Williams calls Milbank's thesis of an innate violence to secularism "a striking reversal of the received wisdom of modernity, for which religion is the inherently violent presence in culture" (Williams 2012 15). Milbank's provocative thesis makes sense only in the sense that "it takes for granted contests of power as the basic form of social relation" (Williams 2012, 15).

education that is 'worldview neutral' is coherent. Worldview neutral education is, according to Cooling, partisan, absorbing and reflecting the assumptions of a secular consumerist culture. In other words Cooling does not perceive or question the propositional framing of the debate itself. Both Cooling and Hand take different sides on an argument that does not question the nature of religion as belief in a set of doctrines or truth claims which amount to a worldview. One might say that Cooling and Hand share a metaphysical stance, an ontology, which is positivist, propositional and reductive. No wonder, then, that Cooling fails in the end to convincingly reply to Hand's criticisms (Hand 2012) since Cooling is playing the game by the rules of the secular reduction of religion to the propositional.

David Aldridge convincingly shows that the real problem here is that neither Hand nor Cooling are prepared to address the ontological significance of seeing a theoretical and explicit worldview as derivative of a prior ontological intentionality (Aldridge 2015, 180). Aldridge has in mind a Heideggerian analysis of being-in-the-world which I am very much sympathetic to. It is worth asking whether the propositional frame is straightforwardly equivalent to Heidegger's pre-understanding of being – not that Heidegger's ontological considerations can ever be described as straightforward. From a Heideggerian point of view, our intentionality is not something we do or something we can entirely thematize. As constitutive of the being of Dasein, our intentionality precedes us – certainly preceding any cognitive intervention. The propositional frame moves in this direction, being neither something we do, nor something we can critically assess.

In summary, the propositional framing of religion is a product of a history of being which invites a more thoroughgoing ontological investigation. Within the present 'propositional ontology' the result of much theology is, as Heidegger puts it ontotheology. This essentially refers to the reduction of religion to the present state of metaphysics which I have argued results in the propositional view of religion. The only way out seems to be an interruption to this ontology though I am not sure whether a 'liturgical interruption' will do.

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