

A FORM OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COMPATIBLE WITH THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION¹

ILAN GOLDBERG

1. Introduction

The United Nations (UN) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), recognizing the importance of education to their goals, have made noteworthy progress on the right to education. A few such standard setting requirements are worth mentioning. A UNESCO recommendation clarifies that education of a proper standard is one that: gives a critical understanding of problems, and an ability of rational analysis; eliminates misconceptions; teaches the true interests of peoples, people's real interests, problems and aspirations; and revises its textbooks to ensure that they are accurate and up-to-date². A UN convention stipulates the right of all peoples to be fully and reliably informed³. Another UN declaration states that

*"all states shall take measures to extend the benefits of science and technology to all strata of the population"*⁴.

¹ This is an abridged version of Ilan Goldberg, "A Form of Religious Education Compatible with the Right to Education" (M.A. diss., University of Malta, 2002).

² United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, Recommendation Concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, 1974, Art. 5, 14, 7, 15, 27, 45.

³ United Nations General Assembly, Convention on the International Right of Correction, 1952, preamble.

⁴ United Nations General Assembly, Declaration on the use of Scientific and Technological Progress in the Interests of Peace and for the Benefit of Mankind, 1975, Art. 6.

Finally, another UN declaration stipulates that education should enable everyone to enjoy the fruits of social progress and contribute to it; enlighten public opinion; and bring awareness of the changes occurring in society as a whole⁵.

The object of this work is to justify acceptance of such standards and to articulate and defend a form of religious education (RE) that complies with them. (Throughout, the words 'religion' and 'worldview' are used interchangeably.) We shall begin with a brief introduction of the concepts of Critical Thinking (CT), autonomy and freedom, which we will treat as synonymous. We then briefly outline eight arguments in support of CT as an educational ideal. They are:

- 1) Voluntary (autonomous) consent is essential for democracy.
- 2) Wise decisions are necessary for a democracy.
- 3) CT is necessary for responsibility and moral maturity.
- 4) CT provides protection from manipulation.
- 5) CT teaching is demanded by Kantian respect for students.
- 6) CT is necessary for understanding the content of education.
- 7) CT is the driving ideal of philosophy.
- 8) CT is helpful in resolution of disagreements.

We continue in an elucidation and further justification of thirteen criteria that our ideal for RE should comply with. In the process we discuss the concepts of worldview and self-deception as well as Richard Paul's Strong Sense Critical Thinking (SSCT). The criteria are:

- 1) All educable children must be educated.
- 2) Education may not transgress the boundaries set by CT.
- 3) Our ideal for RE should infuse schooling at all levels.
- 4) Education should be thoroughly scientific;
- 5) it should teach what is socially essential;
- 6) it should eliminate non-educative environmental influences;
- 7) it should give everyone the opportunity to escape the intellectual limitations imposed by the surroundings they were born into;
- 8) it should integrate society; and
- 9) it should give an understanding of our constitutive milieu.

⁵ United Nations General Assembly, Declaration on Social Progress and Development, 1969, Art. 1, 5.

- 10) In teaching CT, the subject of argumentation should be multidimensional cross-disciplinary ethical issues;
- 11) engagement with the subject matter should be thorough;
- 12) attention should be given to self-deception; and
- 13) students should be given experience in detaching themselves from, and criticizing their own deeply held beliefs⁶.

Ninian Smart's approach to RE is then outlined as one that adheres to these standards. The work then shifts into a defense of our ideal, divided into three parts. First we reply to the objection that rationality is a function of worldviews and as such it cannot

*"stand aside from a tradition and assess it from a critical standpoint in principle available to all."*⁷

Since we take it that our ideal is implied by or has science as its justification, the second objection we deal with is Milton Yinger's assertion that science as an ethic or way of life is itself a religion. Finally, we touch briefly on and try to defend our ideal in areas of conflict between other rights and the right to education as we see it. Paternalism, parental rights, toleration, group rights, religious rights, and neutrality will all be mentioned.

The discussion will have contributions from several fields of study. We shall use insights from the philosophy of education, contributed mainly by John Dewey; the work of several scholars from the CT movement; the philosophy of religion; the scientific study of religion, mainly Ninian Smart and Milton J. Yinger; moral philosophy; philosophy of science, with Karl Popper as major contributor; and democratic theory.

As this work is an abridged version of a dissertation twice its size, a brief note on the parts that were excluded from this version is in order. They are: a survey of definitions of CT; relevant defenses of the democratic ideal assumed; several other justifications of CT; Alan Gewirth's moral philosophy and its relationship with democracy and our ideal; an outline of the deficiency of education today; several important elements of Dewey's philosophy; Smart's justifications of his RE, and more.

⁶ These are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive.

⁷ Mitchell, B., "Tradition," in *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion* ed. Quinn, P. L., and Taliaferro, C., (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), pg. 595-6.

Lastly, and on a more personal note, I would like to mention the relevance I consider this work has to the Human Rights and Democratisation program that spawned it. This work is meant to highlight an important insight that is crucial for the dialogue we long for. Coming from a region that is paralyzed by hate and misunderstanding, my hope is that the following pages help raise important questions in the reader's mind: Was my right to education respected? Does my worldview seem reasonable because it is so or maybe because of chance of birth and socialization? I hope the reader will agree with me that understanding can come only after arduous self-criticism.

2. Critical Thinking, Autonomy and Freedom

We begin with a quick look at CT, an often-misunderstood concept. Ralph H. Johnson's definition brought below should be fairly illustrative of how CT is seen by CT theorists. Johnson distinguishes three attributes necessary for the critical thinker⁸.

- 1) Knowledge – The knowledge needed for critical thinking can be quite extensive. Siegel, for example, writes of a necessary understanding of both the epistemology of the subject and epistemology in general⁹. For us, knowledge of worldviews and their effects on our thinking will be of special importance.
- 2) Skills of argument appraisal, where arguments have two tiers:
 - a premise-conclusion tier; and
 - a dialectical tier, which "*addresses alternative positions to the ones we hold, objections to our own arguments, and the wider implications of our arguments.*"¹⁰
- 3) A disposition to use these skills and knowledge. The critical thinker, for example, must control the natural tendency to avoid being criticized.

⁸ Differences between definitions of CT and the critical thinker are not going to be dealt with here.

⁹ Siegel, H., *Educating Reason: Rationality, Critical Thinking, and Education* (London: Routledge, 1988).

¹⁰ Talaska, R. A., ed., *Introduction to Critical Reasoning in Contemporary Culture* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), xxi. The papers contained in this book can be consulted for more relevant definitions of CT. See also Siegel, H., above at note 9; Goldberg I., full dissertation, above at note 1.

Siegel and Talaska pick up on this last point. In CT, criticism is ubiquitous. CT questions not only society but also

*“fundamental principles of the various traditions of philosophy and of the various paradigms of science – including our own”*¹¹.

And Siegel writes:

*“For the possessor of the critical attitude, nothing is immune from criticism, not even one’s most deeply-held convictions”*¹².

Defined thus, we take CT to be synonymous with the concepts of freedom and autonomy¹³.

Scholars of the CT movement agree that an autonomous person is one who is rational to the maximum of his ability, and capable of making rational decisions on any matter confronting him without falling pray to *“faulty argument, weak evidence, or trendy opinions”*¹⁴. Such matters include choice of personal beliefs. For autonomy *“alternatives must ... be independently judged by reference to criteria”* that should be reflected upon in turn¹⁵. Without such reflection, behavior is compulsive. Under this Kantian doctrine of autonomy, not only the beliefs and actions of others, but also personal beliefs and predilection can be an “alien cause” to be opposed¹⁶. Autonomy is achieved in the degree to which “the general principles one chooses for oneself will have been arrived at by a correct use of reason ...”¹⁷.

¹¹ As above, xiv.

¹² Siegel, H., above, at note 9, pg. 39.

¹³ As above, pg. 30, 46, 156; Goldberg, I., above at note 1.

¹⁴ McPeck, J. E., “Teaching Critical Reasoning through the Disciplines: Content versus Process,” in *Critical Reasoning in Contemporary Culture* ed. Richard, A. Talaska., (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), pg. 32-3.

¹⁵ Dearden, R. F., “Autonomy as an Educational Ideal 1,” in *Philosophers Discuss Education* ed. S. C. Brown., (London: Unwin bros., 1975), pg. 16.

¹⁶ As above, pg. 3. See also Gewirth, A., *Reason and Morality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); Telfer, E., “Autonomy as an Educational Ideal 2,” in *Philosophers Discuss Education* ed. Brown, S. C., (London: Unwin bros., 1975); Dewey.

¹⁷ Gewirth, A., *Reason and Morality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978) pg. 138.

It is central to our endeavor that the criteria employed in judgment should be rationally reflected upon.

The distinction between definitions of autonomy that include this last requirement and those that do not is reflected in the common distinction between freedom and liberty. According to such a distinction, to be free to make a wrong choice is not freedom¹⁸. By way of illustration, here are just some of the things Gewirth maintains education for freedom should include: an understanding of science, knowledge of when scientific knowledge is necessary and how to communicate it; the ability and motivation for rational discussion and voting; critical judgment – being able to spot lies, misinformation, ignorance, superstition; knowledge of the components of one's own present and future personality, a will to arrange them reasonably, and so on.

3. Arguments for the Teaching of CT¹⁹

Taking CT, autonomy and freedom together, and having said that self-criticism will be of some importance, we will now outline some reasons for the adoption of CT as an educational ideal. Many arguments have been used to support our ideal. The reader will forgive me for mentioning only a few, and even these, only in outline. We begin with two arguments for proper education in a democracy that follow from the centrality of voluntariness and wise democratic decisions to the democratic ideal²⁰. *Voluntary consent is essential for a democracy* because, as Pericles put it, democracy is “for the many”²¹. This is the principle of popular sovereignty. The democratic government should rule on behalf of the people and be accountable

¹⁸ Kelly, A.V., *Education and Democracy: Principles and Practices* (London: Paul Chapman Publishing, 1995). See also discussion on Dewey in Wilfred Carr and Anthony Hartnett, *Education and the Struggle for a Democracy: The Politics of Educational Ideas* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997).

¹⁹ For reasons of lack of space and ease of reading, arguments put forward by Gewirth to the effect that CT education is a duty to one's self were left out of this abridged version. For more on these arguments and others see Goldberg.

²⁰ As we take reason to underpin both voluntariness and wise decisions, these arguments overlap somewhat.

²¹ Thucydides, “History,” Book II, Paras 37-41, quoted in A. V. Kelly, *Education and Democracy: Principles and Practices* (London: Paul Chapman Publishing, 1995).

to them²². The ideal of democracy, Israel Scheffler points out, rests society on freely given, informed consent which requires accountability to the public and critical public control or review of policy²³. Similarly for Dewey, voluntariness or intellectual freedom, is a necessary component of democracy, which demands conscious, controlled decisions. As Dewey explains:

*"Since a democratic society repudiates the principle of external authority, it must find a substitute in voluntary disposition and interest; these can be created only by education"*²⁴.

Sovereignty, however, is not the only reason democracy is essentially voluntaristic. The principle of voluntary consent is a society's method of valued progress, amelioration, or growth²⁵. A poor and inadequate operationalization of the voluntary principle, - universal suffrage, brings us to the second argument.

Wise decisions are necessary for a democracy. As democracies are driven by what is largely public opinion, it follows that "democracies rely for their health and well being on the intelligence of their citizens"²⁶. Education, defined broadly as deliberate socialization, is a powerful influence that can either make or break a democracy²⁷. If a democracy is to survive, its citizen must know how to operate democratic institutions; this necessitates education to that effect. Citizens must understand the issues about which they are asked to choose and must have access to ideas relating to these. They should have a background of knowledge to enable them to act wisely and in accordance with the values that underlie the democratic system. This implies a great deal of knowledge²⁸.

²² Kelly, A. V., above at note 18.

²³ Siegel, H., above at note 9.

²⁴ Dewey, J., *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1966), pg. 87.

²⁵ Goldberg, I., above at note 1.

²⁶ Siegel, H., above at note 9, pg. 60.

²⁷ For an example of a broad sense definition of education as deliberate socialization see Cremin, L. A., *Traditions of American Education*. (New York: Basic Books, 1977,) 12 pp. 135-136, in Kelly, A.V., above at note 22.

²⁸ White, P., "Education, Democracy, and the Public Interest," in *The Philosophy of Education* ed. Warnock, G. J., (London: Oxford University Press, 1975).

For Dewey, if democracy is to survive and grow or ameliorate; if social evil, caused by lack of vital knowledge, is to be prevented; if universal suffrage is to be trusted; if social confusion, the cause of subjugation and result of the complex and changing nature of society, is to be averted and remedied; if society is to be truly flexible and change peaceful; if consensus is to be possible; if society is to be more than "nominally democratic" and surpass the cultural inheritance from "older and unlike cultures;" if we are to pick the fruits of diversity of experience; in short, if society is to be truly social, that is, be socially directed and controlled, then "genuine and thorough transmission" of meaning or knowledge must take place. Such diffusion of knowledge should be from a point of view that includes all others. Critical thinking, which relies on the public method of science, and which adheres to the most advanced methods of free thought and meanings, singularly complies with these, as well as with the voluntary criterion²⁹.

Agreeing that decisions regarding educational policy should not be left to chance, Amy Gutmann bases her theory of education around this question: "*Who should share the authority to influence the way democratic citizens are educated?*"³⁰ Her answer is everyone, but after having been educated to deliberate democratically. As all citizens have an interest in determining educational policy, all citizens should be empowered to participate in authority over education. However, a dual obstacle presents itself. First, there are wide disagreements on educational matters, which have to be reconciled. Second, there are dangers in giving imperfectly-educated citizens the right to decide upon future education. Rational democratic deliberation is her remedy to both problems, and so she argues that democratic education should minimally empower citizens for democratic deliberation. Expanding on the second obstacle, democracy can be subverted by damage to the "intellectual foundations of future democratic deliberations" through either restriction of the ability to deliberate rationally ('repression'), or exclusion of some from an adequate education ('discrimination')³¹. The democratic ideal,

²⁹ Dewey, J., above at note 24, iii, pg. 331, 4.

³⁰ Gutmann, A., *Democratic Education* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), Pg. 3.

³¹ As above, pg. 14.

therefore, demands the constraining of the simple procedural majority rule over educational policy with two principles: non-repression and non-discrimination.

CT is necessary for responsibility and moral maturity. We take it that the morally relevant attribute possessed by humans, which gives them moral responsibility (above moral consideration), is the potential or capacity to be rational. Many have argued, however, that potential and capacity are not enough. As Dewey maintains, actual intellectual freedom is necessary for responsibility. In this respect, intellectual freedom is a moral asset, the lack of which is a moral disability³². Those who do not critically evaluate their beliefs through seeking and reasonably evaluating relevant facts are "prisoners of their own convictions." This is because they "cannot decide," (we assume for the reason that there is no free choice) whether or not their beliefs are supported, and they cannot change their beliefs where rational support is missing because they are unconscious of this deficiency³³. Such people are also unaware of the usefulness of CT and so, are unaware of the restrictions imposed upon them by their beliefs. They are oblivious to the fact that their options have been limited by their refusal to examine challenges and alternatives to their "unreasoned but presently held convictions"³⁴. Consequently, escape from such impoverished state of mental life is unlikely. Escape is necessary, however, if conscious control, and consequently responsibility, are to be achieved.

CT, then, *provides protection from manipulation.* Autonomy is part of the search for security. It makes us less vulnerable to abuse in the form of "political deception, commercial exploitation and personal manipulation"³⁵. Critical thinkers "are in a much better position to defend themselves from the hoards of unscrupulous advertisers, ideologues, and other manipulators of their beliefs"³⁶. For Donald Lazere, CT is especially necessary in this age where "*the forms of*

³² See also Gutmann, A., as above; Siegel, H., above at note 9, pg.42-3; Gewirth, A., above at note 17, on moral motivation and knowledge; Alan, Montefiore., "Chairman's Remarks," in *Philosophers Discuss Education* ed. S. C. Brown (London: Unwin bros., 1975), Pg. 195.

³³ Siegel, H., above at note 9, pg. 88.

³⁴ As above.

³⁵ Dearden, R.F., in Brown, above at note 15, pg. 15.

³⁶ Talaska, R. A., above at note 10, pg. 100.

*manipulation are hidden, sophisticated, and pervasive*³⁷. The greatest jeopardy to knowledge, reason, and the survival of democracy, he maintains, are “*anti-rational forces*” in the form of “*mass-mediated thought control and ... reason-numbing effects of mass culture,*” which result in ignorance and gullibility³⁸.

Siegel provides three more justifications of CT as an educational ideal. Only CT, he maintains, accords with *Kantian respect for students as persons*. Siegel writes:

*“Critical thinking is the only educational ideal which takes as central the fostering of autonomy and independent judgment which are basic to treating students with respect. Insofar as treating students with respect involves respecting their independent judgment and autonomy, any educational ideal which treats student with respect will centrally involve the ideal of critical thinking.”*³⁹

CT is also *necessary for understanding the content of education*. “Students who are critical thinkers stand to gain more from their courses than students who are not”⁴⁰. A proper understanding of the content of education demands “a proper understanding of the relevance of the reasons and rules of inference and evidence”⁴¹. That is, a necessary part in the understanding of a scholarly tradition is the understanding of that tradition’s evolving standards of reasons evaluation. Inasmuch as we take the role of education to be an initiation into the rational traditions, Siegel asserts, we are compelled to inculcate CT. As shall be seen below, Dewey’s pragmatism takes a similar approach. CT is *the driving ideal of philosophy*. As Siegel put it, CT as an educational ideal has “impressive philosophical credentials”⁴². Throughout the history of Western philosophy, he

³⁷ As above, xx-i.

³⁸ Lazere, D., “Cultural Literacy and Critical Literacy,” in *Critical Reasoning in Contemporary Culture* ed. Talaska, R. A., (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), Pg. 59.

³⁹ Siegel, H., “Education and the Fostering of Rationality,” in *Critical Reasoning in Contemporary Culture* ed. Talaska, R. A., (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), Pg. 100-1.

⁴⁰ As above, pg. 100.

⁴¹ Siegel, H., above at note 9, pg. 43.

⁴² Talaska, R. A., above at note 10, pg. 108.

adds, CT has been central to all the major philosophies of education. This is because philosophy has always maintained fidelity to its purpose, the ideal defined by Socrates, as the freeing of our mind from unsupported beliefs through their critical examination⁴³.

Lastly, CT is also *helpful in resolution of disagreements*. Through a publicly available method of rational persuasion it enables understanding and communication. It is "a fairer and a firmer basis for peacefully reconciling our differences"⁴⁴. Two further justifications, that CT is "the best we can do to move toward increased objectivity;" and the priority of reason, we shall return to below⁴⁵.

4. An Ideal for Religious Education

After defining and reviewing several justifications of CT as an educational ideal, we can now attempt an initial characterization of our ideal for RE. We will outline thirteen criteria (numbered in parenthesis) that our ideal will have to comply with. We begin by recalling the above arguments in support of CT and demand that

- (1) "*all educable children must be educated,*"⁴⁶ and that education properly so-called,
- (2) *may not transgress the boundaries set by CT*. All education should be critical⁴⁷.

It should inculcate freedom "in each child to the fullest extent of his abilities"⁴⁸.

As should be apparent from the discussion thus far, creating a critical thinker is no mean task. Although far from realizing its potential, schooling is at a disadvantage in this respect. Schooling is a relatively superficial influence compared to parenting as a socializing agent, for example. Gutmann answers this difficulty by insisting that democratic education should be life-long, and society-wide, in the sense that all social institutions should be infused with

⁴³ As above. For an outline of such a history see Siegel, H., above at note 9.

⁴⁴ Gutman, A., above at note 30, pg. 12, 103.

⁴⁵ Paul, in Talaska, above at note 10, pg. 143.

⁴⁶ Gutman, A., above at note 30, pg: 45.

⁴⁷ Siegel, H., above at note 9.

⁴⁸ Gewirth, A., above at note 17, pg. 243-4, 319.

it. To produce a critical thinker, Ralph Johnson maintains, "*the support of the whole educational system is necessary. No one course at any level can do it*"⁴⁹. Gewirth too holds the thesis that

*"education should be embodied not only in public institutions of formal education but also in other political and social institutions of the whole society"*⁵⁰.

Further, he claims, education should be public so that its benefits as well as its burdens will be equitably distributed. Siegel takes Popper's attempt to solve the problem as CT in all university level studies, as well as lower levels if possible⁵¹. Paul advocates his 'strong-sense' CT, elucidated below, across the curriculum. A CT course in college is too little too late, and many do not even go to college⁵². Lazere similarly holds that the solution is a "crash campaign" for CT in all relevant academic fields⁵³. As we are primarily concerned with religious schooling, and as we shall argue that our ideal is in practice necessary for CT, we shall say that

(3) *our ideal for religious education should infuse schooling at all levels.*

We now pick up on Gewirth's requirement above to teach science, its relevance, and the methods of communicating it. In the schooling that Bertrand Russell elucidated, he posited that we must understand and apply principles of science to solve the problems of the modern world⁵⁴. For Dewey too, as we shall see below, science was central. For him, the method of education should be the method of thinking and so, the method of science. This method should include the intellectual virtues that are the necessary components of learning and intellectual attitude. They are: open-mindedness, that is, the active seeking of all meaning, even that of a foreign point of view;

⁴⁹ Johnson, R. H., "Critical Reasoning and Informal Logic," in *Critical Reasoning in Contemporary Culture* ed. Talaska, R. A., (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), Pg. 76.

⁵⁰ Gewirth, A., above at note 17, pg. 319.

⁵¹ Siegel, H., above at note 9, pg. 94.

⁵² Talaska, R. A., above at note 10.

⁵³ Lazere, D., above at note 38, pg. 59.

⁵⁴ Sadovink, A. R., Cookson, P. W., Jr., and Semel, S. F., *Exploring Education: An Introduction to the Foundations of Education* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1994).

intellectual integrity/honesty/sincerity, meaning “the absence of suppressed but effectual ulterior aims for which the professed aim is but a mask;” and responsibility, part of which is a “responsibility for accuracy and vividness of statement and thought”⁵⁵.

For Siegel, a critical science education is crucial in education for CT because scientific education has as one of its aims the understanding of science and an ability to use scientific insight in matters of public or personal importance⁵⁶. In keeping with his ‘reasons conception’ of CT his scientific education focuses on reasons in three ways. First, scientific education looks at the “nature and role of reasons” in science. Second, it looks into “alternative theoretical and critical perspectives.” And finally, it investigates the philosophy of science. All this should inform “our understanding of the principles governing the evaluation of reasons in” science⁵⁷. Siegel takes Michael Martin’s approach to scientific education as support: Science education should teach different theories, even discarded ones, how to work easily within them, to change perspective from one to the other, to treat them as working hypotheses. This will help students not to be blinded by their commitments to any one of them⁵⁸.

Siegel also generalizes this method with a slight variation. Putting religion into his mold gives the following result:

“the study of philosophy of [religion], the contrast between genuine- and pseudo-[religion], and the consideration of alternative theoretical perspectives both within and with regard to [religion] and the problem of the evaluation of those alternatives, all promise to aid in the effort to make the curriculum in [religion] contribute to a critical education in [religion]”⁵⁹.

We will use Siegel’s articulation of a proper scientific education in our ideal. Later we will attempt to show that studying the contrast between genuine- and pseudo-religion (that is, the problem of

⁵⁵ Dewey, J., above at note 24, pg. 176.

⁵⁶ Siegel, H., above at note 9.

⁵⁷ Talaska, R. A., above at note 10, pg. 106.

⁵⁸ As above, pg. 109.

⁵⁹ As above, pg. 114.

demarcation) should be done scientifically, as well as philosophically. We will also argue that the demarcation line runs between religion and science thereby making science an alternative theoretical perspective with regard to religion. We will also maintain that the problem of evaluating between these alternatives is the domain of philosophy – an activity whose intellectual standards are largely similar to science. For these reasons, the study of religion should be very intimately connected with the study of science. Taking into our ideal of religious education the suggestions from above, this ideal will have to be

(4) *thoroughly scientific.*

Dewey's educational philosophy supplies us with a subject matter and method selection criterion of social worth, whereby what should be used in schooling is that which is most conducive to an amelioration of social life, or what is more humane, in the sense of helping to "appreciate the significance of human activities and relations."⁶⁰ Dewey identifies four functions of schooling, which we shall adopt as our criteria five to eight:

- (5) *Schooling should teach what is socially essential out of the huge body of accumulated knowledge.*
- (6) *It should eliminate non-educative environmental influences.* A society is responsible to transmit that, and only that, which will make a better present and future society. It should guarantee learning from, rather than a recapitulation of the past. It should correct unfair inequality rather than perpetuate it.
- (7) *It should give everyone the opportunity to escape the intellectual limitations imposed by the surroundings they are born into.*
- (8) *It should integrate society.* As Durkheim held, it should create the moral unity necessary for social cohesion and harmony. It should encourage social unity⁶¹.

Dewey also requires that education will supply us with

⁶⁰ As above, pg. 51, 213.

⁶¹ Sadovink, A. R., above at note 54.

- (9) *an understanding of our constitutive milieu, both natural and social.*

As C. A. Bowers held, we should understand the forces that constitute personal identity and social consciousness⁶². This is so, we maintain, so that education will not “close the mind to doubt on the criteria of judgment which we employ.” For Dearden this means that the learner needs to be “*an embryonic philosopher*”⁶³. Another aspect of this criterion is the understanding of the more “natural” or superficial thinking processes we engage in, as opposed to CT. With this criterion, we are merely following the Existentialist injunction to ‘*know thyself*’. This brings us firmly within the grip of Paul’s Strong-Sense Critical Thinking (SSCT) to which we shall presently turn, and from which four more criteria for our ideal shall be extracted.

5. Worldviews, Self-Deception, and Strong-Sense Critical Thinking

We take Paul’s SSCT to be a necessary ingredient of our ideal. His contribution to this effort lies in his critique of what he calls the ‘atomistic’ method of teaching CT, which our ideal will have to avoid. Before we begin with his argument, a look at two relevant concepts is necessary. They are *worldviews* and *self-deception*.

Put simply, Paul calls worldviews “background logic”⁶⁴. It is what Siegel defines as ideology: “a general framework that shapes individual consciousness, guides and legitimates belief and action, and renders experience meaningful”⁶⁵. The part that legitimates belief is the criterion of judgement, mentioned above. As Yinger put it:

“To the believer, magic often seems to work. It is well known that a person’s perceptions, the observations that he considers to be evidence, the premises on which his logical

⁶² Ozmon, H.A., and Samuel, M.C., *Philosophical Foundations of Education* (Ohio: Prentice Hall, 1995).

⁶³ As above at note 16, pg.18.

⁶⁴ Talaska, R. A., above at note 10, pg. 137.

⁶⁵ Siegel, H., above at note 9, pg. 65.

*processes are based, and other cognitive acts are not independent of his personal tendencies and his cultural training.*⁶⁶

Talaska defines worldviews or Nomoi (foundational opinions/beliefs/mores) as *"the very matrix within which logical skills and cultural knowledge operate."*⁶⁷ For him there is a necessary ingredient of self-deception in the Nomoi, which *"not only are they not questioned, but they act as a kind of lens through which all other phenomena are brought into perspective"*⁶⁸.

Dewey also held that for humans *"self-deception is very easy"*⁶⁹. Our childish curiosity and openness too easily change into a thoughtless following of routine habits and aversion of change. He writes:

*"We are made, so to speak, for belief; credulity is natural. The undisciplined mind is averse to suspense and intellectual hesitation; it is prone to assertion. It likes things undisturbed, settled, and treats them as such without due warrant. Familiarity, common repute, and congeniality to desire are readily made measuring rods of truth. Ignorance gives way to opinionated and current error, - a greater foe to learning than is ignorance itself"*⁷⁰.

With relation to worldviews as unexamined background logic he held that

*"the things which we take for granted without inquiry or reflection are just the things which determine our conscious thinking and decide our conclusions"*⁷¹.

Worldviews play a major role in Smart's theory of religious education, mentioned below. He writes of six principal dimensions usually displayed by worldviews. They are doctrine, myth, ethics,

⁶⁶ Yinger, M. J., *The scientific study of religion* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1970), Pg. 74.

⁶⁷ Talaska, R. A., above at note 10.

⁶⁸ As above, pg. 251.

⁶⁹ Dewey, J., above at note 24, pg. 176.

⁷⁰ As above, pg. 188-9.

⁷¹ As above, pg. 18.

ritual, experience, and social or institutional embodiment. Worldviews include both traditional religious systems of belief and practice and secular systems of a similar nature, such as political ideologies. Worldviews are potent. *"They are a vital factor in the shaping of civilizations and of groups"*⁷². They legitimize certain ways of thought and action and involve *"a kind of world-construction"*⁷³. By way of socialization, he posits, they create a contextually and culturally dependent rationality. Worldviews are like a collage. They are a syncretism. They are made up by an amalgamation of *"very contingent materials,"* both religious and not⁷⁴. These materials are chosen and related to each other in accordance with a particular logic. This logic, however, is *"not altogether precise,"* and allows for a considerable flexibility⁷⁵. The *"extraordinary complexity"* of our environment and the *"rich variety of experience"* that facilitate variable selection, and the lack of strict entailment between the materials selected, make for flexibility of both selection and interpretation. Choice from, and interpretation of a worldview, is thus very likely to be *"heavily determined by human strivings, social patterns, and so on"*⁷⁶. Worldview flexibility, or multiple interpretation, is the reason that a belief system is not one thing⁷⁷. It is the reason that *"every major tradition collapses into a shoal of subtraditions,"* and new ones form where traditions meet⁷⁸. It is the reason why what in theory a doctrine commits adherents to believe can differ from what they believe in practice⁷⁹. And it is also why *"it is hard to falsify a position conclusively"*⁸⁰. Smart is also of the opinion that worldviews necessarily involve a degree of self-deception, that is, that they are unsystematic, or do not have a *"consistency of perspective"*⁸¹. It is easy for people, he maintains, to hold an

⁷² Smart, N., *Religion and the Western Mind* (London: Macmillan Press, 1987), Pg. 11.

⁷³ Smart, N., *The Science of Religion and the Sociology of Knowledge: Some Methodological Questions* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973), pg. 88.

⁷⁴ As above, pg. 79.

⁷⁵ As above, pg. 153.

⁷⁶ As above, pg. 88-9.

⁷⁷ As above.

⁷⁸ Smart, N., above at note 72, pg. 5-6.

⁷⁹ Smart, N., above at note 73.

⁸⁰ Smart, N., above at note 72, pg. 21.

⁸¹ As above, pg. 17.

unsystematic worldview, or simultaneously to hold contradictory beliefs⁸². From another angle of self-deception he writes that

*“human beings are often conservative, and so easily think in the out-of-date categories of their childhood and upbringing”*⁸³.

Paul agrees that self-deception is very easy and that autonomy is not naturally or normally valued. His SSCT is an effort to remedy this form of intellectual manipulation by making our worldviews and their effects on our thinking explicit. Paul considers the teaching of ‘weak sense’ CT, or teaching in the atomistic manner problematic in this respect. This form of teaching is one that assumes that CT “can successfully be taught as a battery of technical skills [knowledge of fallacies for example,] that can be mastered more or less one by one without,” he adds, “giving serious attention to self-deception, background logic, and multicategorical ethical issues”⁸⁴. His argument is as follows.

Those who come to study CT, and people in general we presume, have firmly held but uncritical, biased, stereotypical, egocentric, and sociocentric worldviews. They process their experience in an illusory self-serving manner by misrepresentation of incompatible ideas⁸⁵. Moreover, we tend to see the beliefs we hold as part of our identity, and so their criticism is often experienced as ‘ego-threatening’⁸⁶. *“Consequently, most students find it easy to question just, and only those beliefs, assumptions and inferences that [they] have already ‘rejected’ and very difficult, in some cases traumatic, to question those in which they have a personal, egocentric investment”*⁸⁷. Teaching such people how to “recognize bad reasoning in [egocentrically] neutral cases (or in the case of the opposition)” makes for sophists, not critical thinkers⁸⁸. That is, these students fail to use their newly acquired skills to criticize their own deeply-held

⁸² Smart, N., above at note 73, pg. 107.

⁸³ Smart, N., above at note 72, pg.23-4.

⁸⁴ Talaska, R. A., above at note 10, pg. 137.

⁸⁵ As above.

⁸⁶ Siegel, H., above at note 9, pg. 16.

⁸⁷ Talaska, R. A., above at note 10, pg. 136.

⁸⁸ As above.

beliefs. On the contrary, they become more apt and better able to attack other points of view and shield their own. They tend to rationalize and 'intellectualize' their biases. Since worldviews present an irrational obstacle to free thinking, we shall have to be aware of their influence.

Another reason Paul gives is that worldviews can stand in support of any particular part of theirs should it come under attack. Paul's assertion here is that atomistic CT skills, or criticism of particular arguments in isolation from the worldviews of which they are a part, are not sufficient for rational judgement. Where we have a conflict between particular beliefs, which are a part of different worldviews, the worldviews themselves may be implicated in the conflict, and we shall need to judge the "relative credibility," "vested interests," and "track records" of these worldviews.⁸⁹ Thus, where worldviews are implicated, to be a critical thinker one needs to understand his own as well as opposing worldviews. Likewise, one also needs to be able to reason from a variety of worldviews.

To achieve this effect, Paul gives the following recommendations.

- (1) *The subject of argumentation should be multidimensional cross-disciplinary ethical issues.* This way we are directly engaging our worldviews in the conflict⁹⁰. Attention should not be spread too thinly between many ethical issues. In other words, our
- (2) *engagement with the subject matter should be thorough*⁹¹. Obviously,
- (3) *attention should be given to self-deception.* And lastly,
- (4) *students should be given experience in detaching themselves from, and criticizing their own deeply held beliefs*⁹².

Thus elucidated, SSCT enjoys the support of Dewey's 'theory of interest'. The isolation of subject matter from the individual and social context of the learner, he holds, is the leading hindrance to achieving reason. This is so for three main reasons. First, personal interest is needed if the student is to properly deliberate and be

⁸⁹ As above, pg.145.

⁹⁰ As above.

⁹¹ As above.

⁹² Siegel, H., above at note 9, pg. 12.

persistent. Second, an isolated subject matter does not enrich experience with its meaning and does not nurture thought. An education that complies with Dewey's theory of interest will take advantage of individual activities and interests that require thought, and so be vital and fruitful. Lastly, deliberation on "the deepest problems of common humanity" and methods that produce "social insight and interest" have moral priority for the enlightenment and social benefit they bring⁹³. An education that starts with a student's activity that is socially relevant, and supplies its broader meaning, complies with the criteria of his theory of interest, designed to avert these problems. SSCT fits this description well. Its subject matter is recognized to be of vital importance by the student, it is concerned with problems weighing heavily on associated living, and their understanding requires very advanced thought.

6. Ninian Smart and Modern Religious Education

We shall now take a look at Smart's approach to the scientific study of religion and his religious education. We hold that his form of religious education complies with the thirteen criteria of our ideal. As his religious education mirrors his approach to science, and as we recognize the intimate connection between science and our ideal, we take it that beginning with an elucidation of his science of religion, what he calls "the modern study of religion," will not be misplaced⁹⁴.

His modern study of religion "attempts to delineate and explain the nature and effects of worldviews"⁹⁵. Broadly, it includes two interrelated parts. They are the philosophy of religion and the scientific study of religion. Beginning with the former, the philosophy of religion has three roles in his approach.

- (1) It attempts an elucidation of the meaning of religious utterances.
- (2) It "investigates and attempts to delineate the methodology of the religious sciences"⁹⁶. And most importantly in our respect,

⁹³ Dewey, J., above at note 24, pg. 192.

⁹⁴ Smart, N., above at note 72, ix.

⁹⁵ As above.

⁹⁶ Smart, N., above at note 73, pg. 94-5.

- (3) it attempts to elucidate criteria of truth “as between and among worldviews,” it criticizes and evaluates worldviews with regard to these and other criteria, and it also attempts to construct worldviews with regard to these considerations⁹⁷. As already noted, philosophy as an intellectual pursuit necessitates the use of public scientific standards⁹⁸.

The second part of the modern study of religion is the scientific component. It is concerned with a description and explanation of religious phenomena⁹⁹. Smart identifies four characteristics in his scientific study of religion: First, it is *aspectual*. It is an aspect of existence that people behave religiously, and science has to consider this aspect in its entirety. “The aspectual study of religion is bound to be multi-area, multi-traditional [... because it is] intrinsically about religions in the plural.”¹⁰⁰ Second, it is *polymethodic*. Differing methods or disciplines are brought to bear on the religious aspect, including history, sociology, phenomenology, psychology, anthropology, sociology of knowledge, history of ideas, political science, philosophy and so on. It is a consequence of the aspectual character of our study that “it makes use of such methods as may be evolved in the disciplines which share in the study of religion,” in order to be scientific¹⁰¹.

The third characteristic is *pluralism*. This is demanded both by the aspectual plurality of the religious phenomenon, and by the comparative method of the social sciences. The former for the reason that, as there are “many different and sometimes mutually challenging religious and atheistic traditions,”¹⁰² he writes,

*“it would appear that no full study of religion can properly be undertaken without becoming immersed in more than one tradition”*¹⁰³.

⁹⁷ Smart, N., above at note 72, pg. 49.

⁹⁸ Smart, N., above at note 73.

⁹⁹ As above.

¹⁰⁰ As above, pg. 18.

¹⁰¹ As above, pg. 159.

¹⁰² As above, pg. 6.

¹⁰³ As above, pg. 9.

The latter, because "*in the human sciences experimentation is usually impossible. That is, one cannot put a society or a part of a society into a laboratory*"¹⁰⁴. The scientific study of religion uses cross-cultural comparisons as an analogical substitute to the experimental method. Thus he writes,

"The study of religion is essentially plural, crossing boundaries of the human mind, and extending if possible indeed to the whole globe."

And he adds:

"In being crosscultural like this, the modern study of religion is the antithesis of the standpoint of the older, theological model,"

which tended to confine itself to one tradition¹⁰⁵. Pluralism, together with the fact that there are new and better methods of discovering the truth, has several implications for Smart. It implies that the question of truth must be considered in any serious attempt to understand the position of one faith among the others. And it implies that "*different religious positions are themselves data, not starting points of theory*"¹⁰⁶. This means that a serious study of religion must not be "*subordinate to theological concerns,*" and that the phenomenological method (discussed below) ought to be used¹⁰⁷.

Lastly, the forth characteristic is that the scientific study of religion is *without clear boundaries*. It is impossible to generate a clear-cut definition of religion. Any definition will include family resemblances. There are many analogies between religious, less religious, and secular phenomena. As he illustrates, the

*"methods used in the study of religion may prove illuminating when applied to the Chinese ideological and social scene"*¹⁰⁸.

¹⁰⁴ As above, pg. 18.

¹⁰⁵ Smart, N., above at note 72, pg. 6.

¹⁰⁶ Smart, N., above at note 73, pg. 19.

¹⁰⁷ As above, pg. 6.

¹⁰⁸ As above, pg. 17.

And so *“religious and political worldviews belong on the same spectrum”*¹⁰⁹. It would limit our understanding, Smart maintains, if we study religion separately¹¹⁰.

As we just mentioned, Smart considers a phenomenological approach to be necessary for the scientific study of religion. Owing to the fact that, unlike the natural sciences, we are talking about humans that think and feel, phenomenology begins with the participants, trying to delineate their point of view. Phenomenology attempts to get *“at the meaning of a religious act or symbol or institution, etc., for the participants ... a kind of imaginative participation in the world of the actor”*¹¹¹. It is an *“informed or structured empathy whereby we travel into the minds of other people”*¹¹².

It is through phenomenology that the science of religion cannot be accused of unjustified reduction. As he points out, some people believe that looking at religion through science is absurd because *“the scientific approach is bound to miss or distort inner feelings and responses to the unseen,”* and *“distasteful, because science brings a cold approach to what should be warm and vibrant.”* These beliefs are mistaken because *“a science should correspond to its objects. That is, the human sciences need to take account of inner feelings precisely because human beings cannot be understood unless their sentiments and attitudes are understood”*¹¹³.

Similarly, phenomenology does not reduce religious entities to items of belief. A reduction, according to Smart, occurs where a description *“does not bring out believers’ commitments and certainties,”* or where it is *“commentarial rather than attitude-evoking”*¹¹⁴. Such cases are reductions since they fail to convey the immanence and dynamic mutual influence of the doctrinal and mythical web (a religion’s ‘focus’) on the participants,¹¹⁵ or the fact that *“nonexistent objects can be phenomenologically indistinguishable*

¹⁰⁹ Smart, N., above at note 72, pg. 82.

¹¹⁰ As above.

¹¹¹ Smart, N., above at note 73, pg. 20.

¹¹² Smart, N., above at note 72, pg. 4-5.

¹¹³ Smart, N., above at note 73, pg. 3.

¹¹⁴ As above, pg. 50.

¹¹⁵ As above, pg. 73.

from existent ones"¹¹⁶. Thus Smart distinguishes between what is *real* and what *exists*. As he illustrates: "*God is real for Christians whether or not he exists*"¹¹⁷. Phenomenology avoids the reduction by looking at the focus or "*the gods as real members of the community*."¹¹⁸ He holds that

*"in principle one should treat the gods and the spirits who inhabit the phenomenological environment of a given cultural group as part of the system. The social system consists not just of humans, but of the gods and spirits as well"*¹¹⁹.

In an effort to bracket out personal beliefs, 'Methodological Agnosticism' should be used in the phenomenological study of religion. That is, we should not assume truth or falsity with regard to religious beliefs. As we have seen, this was implied by pluralism. It is also necessitated for the purpose of testing and avoidance of circularities. Another reason for holding methodological agnosticism is that for the purpose of phenomenology, judgment on the truth or falsity of religious beliefs is not necessary. The tangible effect they have on the adherent is there in either case. A theological point of view

*"is not necessary to expound the inner meaning of a religious attitude ... it is enough to bring out the nature of the focus on which the faith is directed and to show how it is real to the individual"*¹²⁰.

Hasty judgement and some religious commitments may in fact obstruct good phenomenology. We should also be agnostic about the gods because religious objects are heavily interpreted or theory-laden, and there is wide dispute about their existence. Another reason is that immersion in other traditions helps one to escape the tendency of "*superficially imposing one's own norms of rationality upon another culture*"¹²¹. Lastly Smart writes that

¹¹⁶ As above, pg. 51.

¹¹⁷ As above, pg. 54.

¹¹⁸ As above, pg. 52-3.

¹¹⁹ As above, pg. 52-4.

¹²⁰ As above, pg. 57.

¹²¹ As above, pg. 108.

*"it is in practice sound not to jump to conclusions about the folly of other men's beliefs even if we know very well that mankind is full of folly, because, after all, some of our most profound ideas seem absurd at first hearing..."*¹²²

(The argument that the ubiquity of belief in the transcendent, or religious experience, justifies the acceptance of its existence is rejected by Smart.)¹²³ Phenomenology, and its requirement that we bracket our own views out, demands of us an analysis and an understanding of what these views are. This self-analysis, Smart holds, fits in well with the critical requirement of science. It will be the source of the greatest benefits of the study of religion, he maintains. As has already been mentioned, methodological agnosticism can be discarded at higher and more critical levels of analysis.

It would be hard to distinguish Smart's ideas regarding religious education from our elucidation of his science above. In what could be called Smart's philosophical-scientific religious education, worldview education, or modern religious education (to keep with Smart's terminology), we identify three essential elements:

- 1) His education is a "*plural, crosscultural, multi-disciplinary exploration of religion and, more generally, of the worldviews which help to shape human action*"¹²⁴. It must not be "*culturally tribal*."¹²⁵ It teaches "*all the main worldviews of the world*" as well as world histories, and establishes none of them as official¹²⁶. Rather than a localized identity, it should give people "*a sense of being human, that is members of a common human family*,"¹²⁷ – a "*historical identity*"¹²⁸.
- 2) It is both *descriptive and critical*. It should show "*the more profound and inspiring aspects of human worldviews,*" as well

¹²² As above, pg. 109.

¹²³ For more on his and other objections to this argument see Goldberg, I., above at note 1.

¹²⁴ Smart, N., above in note 72, pg. 3.

¹²⁵ As above, pg. 7.

¹²⁶ As above, pg. 29.

¹²⁷ As above, pg. 24.

¹²⁸ As above, pg. 45

as facilitate a "sensitive choice of values"¹²⁹. It should "give facts about worldviews" as well as evaluate the rationality of these facts¹³⁰.

- 3) It is an "*essential element of education*" at all levels of schooling¹³¹. The level of attainment and complexity of conceptual apparatus will be lower at lower levels of schooling but the subject is the same.

With the description of his modern study of religion, and what we called the modern education of religion behind us, we can see that we have all our criteria answered. His demand that the modern study of religion will be essential to education at all levels answers our first, third, and eleventh criteria. That is, that all educable children must be educated; that it should infuse schooling at all levels; and that engagement with the subject matter should be thorough, respectively. His demand for a descriptive and critical education makes ensures that CT and the requirements of science are not transgressed; that non-educational environmental influences are eliminated; that attention is given to self-deception; and that students are given experience in detaching themselves from, and criticizing their own deeply-held beliefs; - our second, fourth, sixth, twelfth and thirteenth criteria respectively. His plural, crosscultural, and multi-disciplinary exploration of worldviews teaches what is socially essential; and takes as its subject multidimensional ethical issues; - our fifth and tenth criteria respectively. And finally, that people should be given the opportunity to escape the intellectual limitations imposed by the surroundings they are born into; that education should integrate society; and that it should give an understanding of our constitutive milieu; - our seventh to ninth criteria respectively, are answered by the conjunction of the three aspects of Smart's education.

7. Objection One: Rationality

An objection may be raised at this point, which should be addressed. This is the objection from the historically relative nature of our understanding. It comes from the recognition that since

¹²⁹ As above, pg. 64.

¹³⁰ As above, pg. 11.

¹³¹ As above, pg. 3.

worldviews are constitutive of our thinking, as well as our thinking about rationality itself, we may lack truly rational standpoints from which to either criticize other worldviews, or rationally justify educational ideals.

Together with Dewey and Husserl, we take as uncontroversial the descriptive assertion that our rationality is a result of the all-saturating control of our worldview¹³². We further agree with Gadamer, as does Talaska, that there is no "*completely neutral Archimedean point from which to understand things with absolutely no presuppositions guiding our thought*"¹³³.

The objection, however, is more serious than this. It is the objection that rationality itself, distinct from a description of what this or another person views as such, is a function of worldviews and that "*rational justification presupposes prior ideological commitment*"¹³⁴. This is the assertion of MacIntyre. Basil Mitchell takes MacIntyre as challenging the "*underlying assumption that reason is a faculty which can stand aside from a tradition and assess it from a critical standpoint in principle available to all,*" and with it the belief that worldviews can be properly criticized¹³⁵. If we cannot criticize from more or less firm grounds, it follows that we cannot properly justify our ideal.

Our reply to the objection will be two-pronged. We begin with the *priority of reason*. As Siegel writes: "*One could non-arbitrarily embrace the thesis of ideological determination only if one had good reasons for doing so – in which case one could not embrace the thesis*"¹³⁶. That is, the objection is self-contradictory. Any criticism of reason must presuppose reason if it is to be universally justified. CT, the language of reasons, is the common language of all inquiry¹³⁷. Brann, Scheffler, and Paul would add that it is presupposed by all reflection, argument, and action respectively¹³⁸. Similarly for

¹³² Talaska, R. A., above at note 10.

¹³³ As above, pg. 255.

¹³⁴ Siegel, H., above at note 9, pg. 63.

¹³⁵ Mitchell, B., above at note 7. pg. 595-6.

¹³⁶ As above, pg. 73.

¹³⁷ Talaska, R. A., above at note 10, pg. 102.

¹³⁸ Brann, E. T. H., "Critical Reasoning and The Second Power of Questions: Toward First Questions and First Philosophy," in *Critical Reasoning in Contemporary Culture* ed. Talaska, R. A., (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), pg. 328.

Gewirth, the priority of reason, and the necessary valuation of reason in every act, is central to his moral theory. In this respect rationality is different from all other worldviews. It is presupposed by all of them, it transcends them, and so it is independent of them¹³⁹. With this much we agree. Siegel's next point in the argument, that it also follows that rationality can criticize worldviews, will require more justification. This we maintain, because the fact that rationality is presupposed by worldviews says nothing about the actual existence of good reasons. What is missing is the scientific vindication of rationality, which shall be considered when we come to Yinger's objections below. For now however, we take this point for granted and turn to the second part of our reply.

Since we are all necessarily inculcated with beliefs that we hold uncritically, at least in early childhood, and since most of us hold uncritical worldviews at later stages too, there is the difficulty of achieving the critical distance from our beliefs that is demanded by rationality. In what way, then, can we approach objectivity with regard to our own beliefs, which determine our conception of rationality? In order to surpass this difficulty an examination needs to be carried out of this or another aspect of our thought processes, and their results¹⁴⁰.

Dewey writes about becoming aware of and passing judgment on the results of our habits, which were formed and influence us without our awareness. For Talaska, to be free from the prejudices of one's worldview one must analyze the original arguments for one's beliefs as well as the arguments rejected by those beliefs. This exposure of concealed origins is a form of intellectual healing whereby we free ourselves in the degree to which we are critical toward our presuppositions¹⁴¹. This is because where our thinking is influenced by unspecified presuppositions, we may not be aware of their influence or any errors they might be inflicted with. Through their explicit formulation and investigation, we can become aware of their influence and begin to free ourselves from

¹³⁹ Siegel, H., above at note 9.

¹⁴⁰ For a somewhat alternative or complimentary approach see Reik, T., *Dogma and Compulsion: Psychoanalytic Studies of Religion and Myths* (N.Y.: International Universities Press, 1951), pg. 69.

¹⁴¹ Talaska, R. A., above at note 10, xxxi-xxxii.

it. Only historical investigations, he maintains, uncover prejudices and problems inherent in foundational belief, and so they are required for critical thinking. For Popper, the only way to advance towards truth is through error elimination. Through becoming aware of our errors we can free ourselves from their influence. His conclusion, therefore, is that as a prerequisite for learning we must consciously look for not only the mistakes of others but also our own. And we must cherish these mistakes "as stepping stones towards truth"¹⁴².

We do not abandon worldviews altogether. Rather we criticize, and so ameliorate them. The fact that beliefs are socially inherited should not disguise the fact that there is a valid distinction in the quality of beliefs held. As Talaska pointed out, this distinction is a cornerstone of philosophical thought. Throughout the ages, the philosophical ideal was a passing from mere opinion to knowledge through the analysis of foundational beliefs. This is the Socratic ideal that we already visited. Our contention is that since we necessarily hold a worldview which is constitutive of our thought, and since worldviews differ in the degree to which they are restrictive to thought or conducive to bias, our "*critical task is then not to forswear ideology, which is impossible, but to adopt the best ideology one can*"¹⁴³. The apparent conflict between the historical nature of understanding and the ideal of free thought points to the importance of the right thinking and teaching methods. The epistemological difficulty in escaping our social inheritance is just what CT and our ideal for RE can help us with.

8. Objection Two: Science

Having defended rationality, we shall have to defend our dependence on science in turn. According to Yinger's functional definition, science as a way of life, as opposed to science as a method or as a group of tested propositions, is itself a religion. Yinger includes several beliefs in his characterization of science as a way of life. First is a "*belief that man can devise secular processes for performing*

¹⁴² Popper, K., *In Search of a Better World: Lectures and Essays from Thirty Years*, (London: Routledge, 1992), pg. 149.

¹⁴³ Siegel, H., above at note 9, pg. 65.

the functions now served by religion"¹⁴⁴. Second is a belief that science is the only certain road to truth and that it disproves religion. Similarly, there is the belief that "*the best way to grapple with human problems is to extend our knowledge of nature,*" or that "*the gap between knowledge and action can be closed by knowledge itself*"¹⁴⁵. Another belief, highly important to the subject at hand, is that the scientific study of religion is beneficial to all, or that its "*total, long-run consequences ... are beneficial*"¹⁴⁶.

Yinger defines religion "*as a system of [over-] beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with [... the] ultimate problems of human life*"¹⁴⁷. The universal ultimate problems of human life he mentions are the need to find the meaning of existence, of achieving truth, justice, hope and salvation, and the vanquishing of ignorance, evil, suffering, and hostility. The second element of the definition is an alleviation of these burdensome emotional needs, by the third element - a system of over-beliefs, where over-beliefs are "*an attempt to explain what cannot otherwise be explained*"¹⁴⁸. They are beliefs that go beyond experience, beyond empirical facts. They are '*superempirical*', '*nonempirical*' but not necessarily supernatural. They cannot be substantiated or refuted by science. They are an impulsive and premature response by people where knowledge fails them. Over-beliefs help alleviate the said problems through their "interpretation," and a "lifting up," a Durkheimian '*premature completion*' of, or giving an "ultimate formulation" to, other rational or irrational attempts to deal with these problems, - attempts that are at best only partially successful¹⁴⁹.

Why is science as a way of life an over-belief? It is because "*a careful reading of the story of man in the era of science ... would scarcely lead to the conclusion that the evidence on the question is complete*"¹⁵⁰. This is so because our efforts to find the knowledge we seek, our efforts to deal with the ultimate problems of our life,

¹⁴⁴ Yinger, M. J., above at note 66, pg. 9.

¹⁴⁵ As above, pg. 12.

¹⁴⁶ As above, pg. 2-3.

¹⁴⁷ As above, pg. 7.

¹⁴⁸ As above, pg. 8.

¹⁴⁹ As above, pg. 7.

¹⁵⁰ As above, pg. 12.

continually fail us. They are at best partial and slow. Even in the most rational society "*secular responses cannot eliminate*" these problems¹⁵¹. Our knowledge does not make sense out of existence, our efforts to establish justice through law fail, and while reducing some suffering, our capacity to make more suffering through the evil use of knowledge and technology is larger today than it ever was. Thus science as a way of life, is not "*logically derived from established theory or a generalization based on empirical study*"¹⁵². Rather, "*it is an emotional and intellectual closing of the gap*"¹⁵³. It is a hasty generalization from the factual trend of science refuting specific religious beliefs to an unsubstantiated conclusion that all religion will one day be proved wrong. In the same manner, "*One cannot hope to demonstrate that the analysis of religion by science is beneficial in its consequences for all people in all times and places [... nor] that the total, long-run consequences of scientific study [of religion] are beneficial*"¹⁵⁴.

As we have already mentioned, our effort crucially depends on a justification of science. By Yinger's definition, our justification shall have to be of science as a way of life. Our contention shall be that Yinger's 'over-beliefs' are actually a suitable demarcation criterion. But while Yinger holds that the demarcation is between science as a method or tested propositions on the one hand, and science as a way of life and religion on the other, we shall put science as a way of life on the other side of the fence. To begin with, let us take a closer look at Yinger's own position on science.

Yinger is concerned with a scientific study of religion. His own 'field theoretical' approach attempts a "*complete analysis*" of religion, because as a scientific approach, it is moved by a wish of maximally understanding the religious phenomenon¹⁵⁵. He recognizes religion as a "*combined result of man's biological and learned tendencies*"; a creation of humans, subject to their failings; and a complex phenomenon, that is both the result, and an influence on, interdependent societal, cultural, and psychological

¹⁵¹ As above, pg. 8.

¹⁵² As above, pg. 12.

¹⁵³ As above, pg. 9.

¹⁵⁴ As above, pg. 2-3.

¹⁵⁵ As above, pg. 18.

factors¹⁵⁶. A study of religion needs to take account of all these factors; it needs to examine the whole field, or risk being "*partial and likely to be misunderstood*"¹⁵⁷. It needs to be "*simultaneously anthropological, psychological, and sociological,*" as well as historical¹⁵⁸. It needs to study the relevant dimensions, both individually, at a more abstract level, and their mutual influence. Furthermore, the scientist of religion must not prejudge the perspectives of either the believer, the believer of another faith, or the doubter, "*for each approach may furnish him with data valuable for the development of his theory of religion*"¹⁵⁹. The believer's perspective on religion fails to take account of all these relevant dimensions, and so is incompatible with the scientific approach. As a partial view, it is "i"¹⁶⁰. Thus far, we can gather that Yinger too is confident that science as a method is the best way to study religion and arrive at knowledge.

Yinger does not deny his belief in science as a way of life. He writes:

*"my own position is a belief – which is probably part of my religion, as we shall come to define the term – that the total, long-run consequences of scientific study are beneficial"*¹⁶¹.

It is also evident, in his elucidation of the four logical possibilities of the relationship of religion and science (or more broadly the intellectual life), that his position is that science as a way of life is harmonious or identical to religion. And further, that science is the best religion. He continues:

*"it is not that religion is good science but that science is good religion. The rational religion for the enlightenment, Comte's positivism, and contemporary views that science is not only a method but a way of life all express this view"*¹⁶².

¹⁵⁶ As above, pg. 17.

¹⁵⁷ As above, pg. 18.

¹⁵⁸ As above, pg. 19.

¹⁵⁹ As above, pg. 2.

¹⁶⁰ As above, pg. 18.

¹⁶¹ As above, pg. 2-3.

Conflicts between religion and science are thereby incidental.

We take it that he agrees with Andrew Dickson White that conflicts are as between science and dogmatic theology not religion. Science, White contends, "*inevitably contributed to the health of religion*"¹⁶³. He goes on: "*The impact of science is to require drastic changes in religion*"¹⁶⁴. This is because there are conflicts where particular beliefs about the world held by a religion have been refuted by science. In these places accommodation on the part of religion, sometimes an extensive one, is required. This, Yinger maintains, is not a destruction of religion. He hints, in an analogy with the change of government "*from an absolute monarchy through a limited monarchy to a democracy,*" that such accommodation is an amelioration of religion.¹⁶⁵ To sum up his position, Yinger maintains that use of the scientific method is justified, and science as a way of life is both best and an over-belief. It seems to us that Yinger is suggesting a kind of Kierkegaardian leap of faith from science to science as a way of life and the best religion. In our reply to Yinger, we shall try to show that this is both unnecessary and impossible. To recall Yinger's argument: science as a way of life is an over-belief because

- (1) science fails to deal or eliminate the ultimate problems of life, and
- (2) can contribute to human suffering as much as alleviate it.

We begin our reply by focusing on the first premise. In this part of our reply we hold that in order to rationally accept science as a way of life it is sufficient to establish that science is the best approach to these problems and that progress can be made.

Dewey, like Yinger, maintains that science is the only reliable way to arrive at knowledge. For him, "*we have no right to call anything knowledge except that which is scientifically supported;*"¹⁶⁶ "*science is the perfecting of knowing, its last stage.*"¹⁶⁷ His argument is that we

¹⁶² As above, pg. 57.

¹⁶³ As above.

¹⁶⁴ As above, pg. 61.

¹⁶⁵ As above.

¹⁶⁶ Dewey, J., above at note 24, pg. 338.

¹⁶⁷ As above, pg. 219.

are invariably affected by nature, and therefore, control over matters of importance to us is dependent on our ability to control nature, which in turn, requires its understanding. Consequently, the benefits of science can be reliably expected only after a *"careful scrutiny of present conditions"*¹⁶⁸. They are a result of its *"worm and intimate taking in of the full scope of a situation"*¹⁶⁹. This squares nicely with Yinger's field theoretical approach. For Dewey, experimentalism is key to the scientific method. Through experimentalism, science operates within experience and so within reason defined pragmatically. Experimentalism means that everything is tested through acting upon it. A hypothesis is valid inasmuch as results agree with predictions, and valuable in the degree to which it furnishes control. Everything is liable to be checked by others. The methods of science have been carefully and slowly developed and selected so as to maximize effectiveness of reflection. Science is thus vindicated by its results. With a lesson from evolutionary theory, Dewey posits that *"the experimental method is new as a scientific resource – as a systematized means of making knowledge, though as old as life as a practical device"*¹⁷⁰.

Without science, success and progress depend on chance and are vulnerable to deception and quackery:

*"Without initiation into the scientific spirit one is not in possession of the best tools which humanity has so far devised for effectively directed reflection. One in that case not merely conducts inquiry and learning without the use of the best instruments, but fails to understand the full meaning of knowledge. For he does not become acquainted with the traits that mark off opinion and assent from authorized conviction"*¹⁷¹.

This conclusion is central to Dewey's pragmatism, as his definitions of several of his major concepts can illustrate.

Dewey defines something's *meaning* as its uses, its bearings, causes, and consequences of action upon it. Meaning can be reliably

¹⁶⁸ As above, pg. 102-3.

¹⁶⁹ As above, pg. 236.

¹⁷⁰ As above, pg. 338-9.

¹⁷¹ As above, pg. 189.

elucidated only by science. *Thought* or *reflection* is the accurate, explicit, and autonomous discernment of all relevant meaning. It is a prerequisite for *responsibility*. Having *mind* or *reason*, or being *intelligent*, *informed* or *free* is not innate, but proportional to the degree in which one's actions are informed and guided by thought. Similarly, an *experience* deserves its name, is valued, learned from and brings added control, inasmuch as it is infused with thought. *Aims*, *will* and *volition* are related to thought in the same manner. Lastly, *culture* is capacity for constant growth in thought. Thus with science, several indispensable benefits accrue. For Dewey, science gives meaning valuable both for the intellectual enrichment and satisfaction, and for the added control it supplies. It protects against natural dispositions of self-deception and misunderstanding and the infertility and evil that accompanies them. It gives knowledge and the responsibility that comes with it. It extensively widens the quality of human communication. More significant to our reply to Yinger, it is the primary engine of progress; it emancipates humanity from custom in both means and ends; and, it gives hope by showing that amelioration of the human condition is indeed possible.

It is our contention that Dewey does not base the social utility of reason on faith. Although he writes positively of the "*faith in the social utility of encouraging every individual to make his own choice intelligent*," we believe that the main thrust of his position is to the opposite effect¹⁷². After all, he bases the possibility firmly on the ground:

*"it goes without saying that we are for such a social state; in a literal and quantitative sense, we may never arrive at it. But in principle, the quality of social changes already accomplished lies in this direction. There are more ample resources for its achievement now than ever there have been before. No insuperable obstacles, given the intelligent will for its realization, stand in the way. Success or failure in its realization depends more upon the adoption of educational methods calculated to effect the change than upon anything else"*¹⁷³.

¹⁷² As above, pg. 121.

¹⁷³ As above, pg. 316.

He goes on to write that humanity now faces a

*“future with a firm belief that intelligence properly used can do away with evils once thought inevitable... Science has familiarized men with the idea of development, taking effect practically in persistent gradual amelioration of the estate of our common humanity”*¹⁷⁴.

This, he adds in not a utopian idea.

Popper's philosophy shares Dewey's position that the future utility of science is not a utopian belief. As he writes: *“we are right to believe that we can and should contribute to the improvement of our world”*¹⁷⁵. And again: *“A shaping of our social environment with the aim of peace and non-violence is not just a dream;”* it is *“entirely feasible.”*¹⁷⁶ To understand how he reaches this conclusion we shall take a look at his evolutionary epistemology and world 3¹⁷⁷.

Life, Popper holds, is about problem-solving. All animate inhabitants of world 1, the world of physical things, and evolution by natural selection itself, are constantly involved in experimental problem solving. In this sense, a biological adaptation is seen as a preconscious form of tentative theory, the usefulness of which will influence the fate of the organism or species. The emergence of consciousness or perception, that is, the emergence of world 2, is the result of this natural process of experimental problem solving, which is also its most important biological function. Consciousness hastens problem solving, as well as adding security to the organism, by anticipating failure or success.

Adaptations, however, are selected in particular environments, a sufficient change in which may annul the advantages previously had by the adaptation. The environment in which the human mind has evolved is substantially different from the one we inhabit now, which is much more complex. Truth is hard to find and the best method to reach it is by trial and error. Moreover, our actions have

¹⁷⁴ As above, pg. 225.

¹⁷⁵ Popper, K., above at note 142, pg. 28.

¹⁷⁶ As above, pg. 29.

¹⁷⁷ Popper, K., *Unended Quest: An Intellectual Autobiography* (London: Routledge, 1993)., Popper, *Lectures and Essays.*, O'Hear, A., Popper, K., *The Arguments of the Philosophers* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982).

unforeseeable consequences, and errors can prove highly dangerous, even to humanity itself. Today, for these reasons, our mind can fail us miserably.

The solution to this problem is facilitated by the emergence of world 3. Broadly speaking, world 3 has as its inhabitants all the products of the human mind:

*"We ourselves may be included, since we absorb and criticize the ideas of our predecessors, and try to form ourselves; and so may our children and pupils, our traditions and institutions, our ways of life, our purposes and our aims"*¹⁷⁸.

The nucleus of world 3, or its strict sense, includes problems, theories, and critical arguments, and is dominated by the value of objective truth and its growth. The existence of world 3 is the result of the prior emergence of consciousness and language, which allow for linguistic formulation, communication, and criticism.

The nucleus of world 3 is the best form of problem solving available to us. It allows for

*"conscious choice, a conscious selection of theories in place of their natural selection ... a conscious and critical pursuit of our errors: we can consciously find and eradicate our errors, and we can consciously judge one theory as inferior to another"*¹⁷⁹.

Such a rational process of elimination is much better than that possible in world 1 and world 2 not just because it is faster, but also because of the safety it affords humans by detaching the experimenter from the tentative solution being put to the test. Indeed, *"in previous times the upholder of the theory was eliminated. Now we can let our theories die in our place"*¹⁸⁰.

To our interaction with world 3, we owe both our personality and the possibility of free thought. The nucleus of world 3 is the repository of critical discussion and tested solutions. In it, standards of criticism, after having been under critical selection pressure themselves, are at their most evolved state. Beliefs that failed, or have not been put

¹⁷⁸ As above, pg. 195.

¹⁷⁹ Popper, K., above at note 142, pg. 21.

¹⁸⁰ As above, pg. 28.

to the test of these standards, did not pass criticism, and cannot therefore, be considered knowledge. Their choice cannot be considered conscious or free. A proper interaction with world 3, one that helps us transcend our ignorance, is a critical interaction with its nucleus. Through this interaction we gain self-criticism, personal growth, and the growth of world 3. It is this kind of interaction that allows us to freely pick the fruits of the human body of knowledge, to choose according to it, to transcend our more instinctive inclinations. It is to the emergence of, and possibility of a proper interaction with world 3, that we owe the possibility of social amelioration through science. Far from being an unjustified belief, Popper holds that unjustified belief is dangerous¹⁸¹.

Thus far, our reply to Yinger was indirect. We did not try to show that his first premise is largely incorrect (as we could have). Our point is that his premise is unnecessary. It is enough that amelioration is possible, and that a method is the best one available for its use to be probabilistically justified. That is, if we seek knowledge and control, we are justified in looking for science before anything else. From this conclusion, we can criticize Paul's assertion that faith in reason is one of the traits of the mind essential to CT. What he calls faith in reason is "*confidence that, in the long run, one's own higher interests and those of humankind at large will be best served by giving the freest play to reason. [emphasis added]*"¹⁸². Worded thus, faith is indeed required. But the wording is loaded and superfluous. We may word it thus: We can be confident that, in the long run, one's own higher interests and those of humankind at large *will probably be* best served by giving the freest play to reason. This will be good enough.

We shall now move to another part of our reply directed at Yinger's second premise. Our contention will be that evil use of technology is incompatible with science, both because technology and science are distinct, and because science is or should be seen as thoroughly humanistic.

Science is not technology. As Smart and Dewey both hold, in science, method is prior. The doctrine of the priority of method in the definition of science is a common theme with many of the writers

¹⁸¹ As above.

¹⁸² Talaska, R. A., above at note 10, pg. 154.

we visit in this work. Indeed, we hold that it enjoys a consensus in the field most apt at the study of science – its philosophy. This doctrine can be seen in Smart's definition of science as "*critical and imaginative experimental and theoretical procedures,*" or as "*critical methodology*"¹⁸³. For Dewey, as we have seen above, and for Popper, it is experimentalism. The identification of technology with science, although prevalent, is misleading in this respect. It is not uncommon for religious writers and leaders to accept such a conception of science. Numerous faiths define science as technology, or as pre-scientific revolution science, or as limited criticism or experimentalism, that is, limited to those areas that do not conflict with those faiths. In this way, any conflict which might exist between science and religion is hidden from view¹⁸⁴. In another part of our reply to Yinger, we shall soon contend that such a conflict does in fact exist. First, though, we look at the humanistic goal of science.

Yinger takes inhumane use of technology, "*hydrogen bombs and the mass manipulation of people*" by propaganda for example, to taint science to the degree that a justification of its acceptance as a way of life is indemonstrable¹⁸⁵. But returning to Dewey, we see that the goal of science, and science education especially, is thoroughly humanistic. Science is in the service of freedom. Knowledge is valued as "*positive resources of civilization.*"¹⁸⁶ "*Egoistic specialists*" or inhumane use of the technological products of science are in conflict with science because they are not sufficiently imbued with the social component of meaning. They are not sufficiently thoughtful or deliberative in this respect, and so, they do not comply with the full meaning criterion of science¹⁸⁷.

A criterion of full meaning, Dewey holds, signifies that for an action to be intelligent, use of relevant past experience and meaning must be thorough. Both Dewey and Popper hold that all things social, including values and ethics, can and should be studied scientifically. They would concur with Talaska that the belief that morality cannot be investigated scientifically is an example of a vulgarized notion of

¹⁸³ Smart, N., above at note 72, pg. 87.

¹⁸⁴ As above.

¹⁸⁵ Yinger, M. J., above at note 66, pg. 12.

¹⁸⁶ Dewey, J., above at note 24, pg. 37.

¹⁸⁷ As above, pg. 9.

science¹⁸⁸. Thus, both misuse of technology and ethics are part of the subject matter of science. Ignorance with regard to them, especially if we consider hydrogen bombs and ubiquitous propaganda, is unscientific.

Immoral use of technology is only partially intelligent. It is a rational use of means not of ends. As Dewey maintains, scientific progress thus far is mostly a technical efficiency of achieving old goals with better means instead of a fully scientific and truly humane one of revising those goals. Siegel is in agreement with Dewey regarding the importance of being rational about ends. While noting that efficiency in achieving pre-given ends is a part of rationality, he holds that they cannot be identified. He writes:

*"The means-ends conception of rationality seems inappropriate for the study of the connection between rationality and morality, for example, for it abolishes both the distinction between morality and prudence and the possibility of specifically moral reasons ... it overlooks moral constraints on rational choice ... as many philosophers have held, moral considerations are properly thought of as moral reasons, then, in ignoring those reasons I am not only immoral but irrational..."*¹⁸⁹

To conclude our reply to Yinger we shall try to show that science as a way of life, far from being an over-belief, actually conflicts with it. To do this, we will have to contend with Yinger's following argument. Yinger brings what he considers to be three well-supported premises to back up his conclusion that science does not disprove religion. First, *"there has, in fact, been a long series of sharp conflicts between science and specific religious beliefs and practices. [emphasis added]"*¹⁹⁰. These are conflicts where particular beliefs about the world held by a religion have been refuted by science. In these places accommodation on the part of religion, sometimes an extensive one, is required. Now, a religion's approach to science is ambivalent. Sometimes contributing to its growth, and sometimes opposing it by censorship and by *"exhorting the faithful to hold fast to the established*

¹⁸⁸ Talaska, R. A., above at note 10.

¹⁸⁹ Siegel, H., above at note 9, pg. 129-30.

¹⁹⁰ Yinger, M. J., above at note 66, pg. 61.

beliefs"¹⁹¹. On the whole, however, and this is the second premise, *most of the accommodation in conflicts has been on the side of religion*. The third and last point is that "despite these drastic and continuous changes, *religion remains a vital part of the life of human societies*. [emphasis mine]"¹⁹². Even modern society, although not entirely supernaturalistic, is a religious society.

It clearly follows, Yinger holds, that science can disprove specific religious beliefs, "*but it does not disprove religion*"¹⁹³. While agreeing that "*tension between religion and the life of the intellect may be persistent because of a fundamental clash of perspectives*,"¹⁹⁴ Yinger's conclusions that science does not disprove religion, and that science as a way of life is itself a religion, lead him to hold that "*there is no general conflict between science and religion defined in functional terms*," and that science and religion are not "*wholly antithetical*"¹⁹⁵. Yinger's conclusion, we hold, does not follow.

We take issue with Yinger's second premise; that accommodation on the part of religion has occurred is undeniable. We do however object to the extent of this accommodation. Yinger's conclusion, he maintains, follows because belief is still prevalent after religious accommodation has occurred. This means that he takes society as a judge on the matter. That is, if society is still religious after religion accommodated science, it is probable that science does not refute religion. Yinger's judges, however, failed to accommodate science at crucial points.

It matters not that even scientists believe in traditional religion. This has little to do with the problem of conflict between science and religion. For as we already hinted, scientists may lack an understanding of science. As Smart holds, the study of religion is distinct from the individual and personal beliefs of the scholars in it. Religious studies "*are defined in terms of the subject matter and of the appropriate methods of scholarship and research*"¹⁹⁶. If our contentions are true, and method is prior in the definition of science;

¹⁹¹ As above, pg. 63-4.

¹⁹² As above, pg. 61.

¹⁹³ As above.

¹⁹⁴ As above, pg. 62.

¹⁹⁵ As above, pg. 61, 64.

¹⁹⁶ Smart, N., above at note 73, pg. 64.

if science is the only reliable way to knowledge; if criticism may not be limited in the search for truth, and dogmatic thinking is not true reflection, then society is not a good judge on the matter. This is because society is mostly unaware of these and other relevant facts, and in some cases is shielded from them. Yinger relies on modern society as if it was a rational society, a position which many of our writers reject. As Paul writes:

*"critical societies, societies in which fairminded critical thinking is a prominent social value. I take it as axiomatic that no such society has yet existed"*¹⁹⁷.

A much more competent judge on the matter is the philosophy of science to which we shall now turn.

We begin with Popper for whom science, including what we have considered as '*science as a way of life*', is in critical conflict with over-beliefs. For him, the two guiding principles of science flow from the maxim of fallibilism. They are the *tentative* nature of scientific knowledge and the *critical* nature of its method. Since knowledge is not manifest, is hard to come by, and is not guaranteed, that is, knowledge is fallible, scientific knowledge is always tentative, conjectural, uncertain, and open to correction. Science should not dogmatically be seen to have an authority over knowledge. Such a position, Popper rejects as scientism, and is an unjustified belief in science. A belief, he maintains, should not even be extended by scientists to their own theory, so as to facilitate discharging the duty they have to the critical method of science without which there can be no knowledge. The search for truth, which is synonymous with science, demands that all effort be made to uncover and eliminate mistakes. Nothing is immune from criticism. This, in effect, is the method of rational criticism or critical thinking. Conjectural knowledge and critical method however, should not be misunderstood as concealing the qualitative difference between scientific or objective knowledge, and other forms of belief. In fact, it is because of public methods of free discussion and criticism, and a rejection of dogmatic belief, that scientific knowledge is the best kind we have. It is so, because if the tentative acceptance of a theory is to be justified, (a

¹⁹⁷ Talaska, R. A., above at note 10, pg. 155.

theory itself can never be justified), it must be shown to have stood up to rational criticism, in a way unrivaled by competing theories.

Smart's argument is cautiously worded. Since "*many widely established religions are fairly traditional*,"¹⁹⁸ have conservative tendencies, and cannot sacrifice the essentials of their faith, "*there is or can be some tension between an open and scientific approach and traditional demands*"¹⁹⁹. This tension is as between "*history as identity-giving myth and the critical realism demanded by modern scientific methods as used to establish what the facts were*"²⁰⁰. To the extent that religions are traditional, "*new ideas may be threatening*" to it²⁰¹. We shall take advantage of his elucidation of 'compatibility systems' in our argument. Compatibility systems are "*ways of establishing, on an intellectual basis, the compatibility between religion and modern science*."²⁰² Both theology and the modern study of religion are in the business of constructing compatibility systems. Clashes between religious knowledge and secular knowledge, undreamed of in earlier periods, put strain on compatibility systems. Compatibility systems that have been put forward have varied on the continuum between religion and science. They need not hold that there is any compatibility at all. In accordance to his 'position theory', which identifies common or possible reactions open to religions when they encounter different traditions, Smart identifies four compatibility system 'positions' with regard to the encounter with science²⁰³.

- 1) Incompatibility. Modern knowledge is rejected in order to defend religion; fundamentalism as a modern reaction, for example. It can use pseudo-science, that is, it can accept the prestige of science but it makes it fit religion through the production of "*deviant scientific ideas*."²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁸ Smart, N., above at note 73, pg. 5.

¹⁹⁹ As above, pg. 6.

²⁰⁰ Smart, N., above at note 72, pg. 54.

²⁰¹ Smart, N., above at note 73, pg. 5.

²⁰² As above, pg. 82-3.

²⁰³ As above.

²⁰⁴ As above, pg. 101-5.

- 2) Accept modern science into the religion and be optimistic about the possibility of creating a genuine compatibility system.
- 3) Religion and science are separate. This runs the risk of putting religion out of modern life.
- 4) Reject religion, and accept modern knowledge. The tension between the two may prove to be too great.

It is philosophy, Smart holds, which should criticize and evaluate compatibility systems. If a compatibility system is to be accepted from a philosophical point of view, it has to correctly handle the relationship between religion and science. As philosophy is an intellectual pursuit that must work on more or less the same principles as modern science, the first position is unacceptable²⁰⁵. It seems to us however, that religions can hold only the first position. That is, it seems that the second position has never been chosen, and that the third position entails acceptance of a pseudo-science. The second position has never been fully adhered to if we include, as we should include, the conclusions about dogmatic thinking in our definition of science. Furthermore, since religions inevitably say some things about this world which are in conflict with scientific conclusions, the third position can only be adhered to by hiding these conflicts. Like the first position, belief in both the second and third positions is of course very possible in practice, but it is unacceptable philosophically. To illustrate our point, it will be useful to look at Smart's argument to the effect that in worldview/religious epistemology there is no certitude, and religious reaction to it.

Smart contrasts inner *certitude* with public *certainty* about the truth of existence claims. Certitude is entailed by faith and is a subjective sureness or private commitment. Certainty is public certainty, or sureness, or public provability. Where proof and certainty exist, it is because epistemology is 'hard', otherwise it is 'soft'. Now although proof of religious faith is possible within that faith, "it inevitably turns out that crosscultural or cross-traditional arguments on behalf of my hard epistemology over yours are soft," and so "the net result is that a worldview epistemology is soft. For soft arguments for the validity of a hard proof render the proof

²⁰⁵ As above.

soft"²⁰⁶. His conclusion is that *"worldviews are, from the angle of criteria and proofs, opinion"*²⁰⁷. He goes on:

*"This is not a conclusion that is congenial to many religious or similar worldview believers. Their phenomenological certainty of faith collides with the outer judgment of uncertainty... It will be replied that this is not how the situation is perceived in conservative seminaries and prestigious mosques, not in sacred temples or totalitarian academies... Those who resist the softness argument have to create more and more ingenious ways of keeping the situation concealed. [emphasis added]"*²⁰⁸

Similarly, but from the point of view of the child, he writes:

*"though notoriously the interpretations of authoritative traditions come to vary, nevertheless the insider – formed already by the variant interpretation – sees the preferred interpretation as authoritative"*²⁰⁹.

We hold that the primary method of concealing the conflicts we mentioned (that is, the priority of method, naturalistic explanation of religion, softness of worldview epistemology, and so on) is through misrepresentation of science. Acceptance of a pseudo-science that does not conflict with authority and is comfortable with a religion that accepts from it only that which does not conflict with its dogma, is the one followed by those religions that give any legitimacy to science. We shall not attempt to substantiate our last conclusion, as a survey of the world's religions cannot be covered by this work. Anecdotal *"evidence"* would be superfluous, as examples should be familiar. It is enough for our educational purposes for us to recognize that most of our religious-world's inhabitants are either unaware or hold misconceptions of science and the conflicts mentioned. In conclusion, we take it that science as a way of life is not a belief but the most justified working hypothesis. Furthermore, it conflicts with religion at crucial points.

²⁰⁶ Smart, N., above at note 72, pg. 123-4.

²⁰⁷ As above, pg. 29.

²⁰⁸ As above, pg. 124-5.

²⁰⁹ As above, pg. 123.

8. Objection Three: Other Rights

A brief look at how our writers reply to several popular objections not touched upon thus far could prove informative. Since these objections are relatively well known, I hope the reader will forgive me for not taking the space to elucidate them properly. We begin with *paternalism* and Dewey, who states that:

*“if a person cannot foresee the consequences of his act, and is not capable of understanding what he is told about its outcome by those with more experience, it is impossible for him to guide his act intelligently”*²¹⁰.

For Dewey, this person cannot be said to be responsible, and interference with his actions with the purpose of freeing him intellectually is permissible. Gewirth reaches a similar conclusion. He takes liberty to be reserved for those who have been properly educated. Where there is lack of knowledge or an irrational state of mind, it is possible to assume ‘dispositional consent’ to interference, if the person would have consented when in a calm state of mind and with the relevant information. It is also required to communicate any relevant information to the person who is affected by it, if at all possible, for such interference to be legitimate. The demands of his first principle of morality (the PGC²¹¹), like proper RE in our case, do not conflict with our sense of autonomy since it is “*based on rational grounds whose rightness he [the agent] is proximately capable of understanding*”²¹². Gewirth holds that all have a duty to be educated; and while agents that are empirically rational know that they, like all others, may act irrationally (and so accept institutions that take care of such weaknesses), children and the uneducated may not possess nor understand this fact²¹³. Dispositional consent is therefore safe to assume where education is concerned.

On the subject of *parental rights*, Gewirth, far from being an advocate for parents’ educational rights, talks of their duties.

²¹⁰ Dewey, J., above at note 24, pg. 27.

²¹¹ For more on the PGC, Gewirth’s moral philosophy and its relationship with education and democracy see Goldberg, I., above at note 1.

²¹² As above, pg. 138.

²¹³ Empirically rational, in the sense that they know the relevant empirical information and do not contradict it.

Parental guidance is justified insofar as it is conducive to his thoroughly critical education. In practice, then, it is rarely justified. History, Gutmann maintains, has shown that parents cannot be trusted to instill rational deliberation in their children. To the assertion that it is a part of one's right to freedom to be able to choose one's children's education, she replies that the

*"same principle that requires a state to grant adults personal and political freedom also commits it to assuring children an education that makes those freedoms both possible and meaningful in the future"*²¹⁴.

Gewirth adds, in accordance with his scientific approach, that harm to freedom and well-being is to be identified by public methods *"available to every intellectually normal person"*²¹⁵. It should be scientifically substantiated that the harm will universally accrue to every similarly-situated person, and that the harm will not be a result of idiosyncratic or other local beliefs that are not themselves substantiated in like manner. Thus, the claim that one's well-being has been reduced by not being able to inculcate an offspring in a manner that conflicts with the PGC is not justifiable under his system.

Another point Gutmann objects to is the belief that pluralism seems to be served by parental educational rights because they perpetuate ways of life. She takes a Millian view on toleration and the value of pluralism in that pluralism is valued because of its ability to enrich our lives by increasing our understanding of different ways of life. Unchecked parental rights are likely to decrease this understanding, and so foster nothing more than superficial pluralism. What is truly necessitated by pluralism as a value is her democratic deliberative education. Toleration should be qualified²¹⁶. We will not expand here on her reply to parental rights in the form of ownership over offspring. We will note, however, that in agreement with Kant, the concept of ownership is not applicable in this context. Another related issue Gutmann helpfully brings to

²¹⁴ Gutman, A., above at note 30, pg. 30-1.

²¹⁵ Gewirth, A., above at note 17, pg. 233-4.

²¹⁶ Langerak, E., "Theism and Toleration," in. Quinn, and Taliaferro, above at note 7.

the fore is that her educational theory (and so our ideal) does not wholly determine education and permits families and subcommunities to help shape it.

Coming back to *toleration*, Gewirth agrees with Gutmann that toleration has its limits. Gewirth is tolerant of whatever “falls within the limits set by the PGC’s duties”²¹⁷. Smart also puts limits on religious liberty²¹⁸. We take Lock’s ‘*inward persuasion*’ argument, that is, that one cannot force someone to be a true believer whereas authentic belief is exactly what is needed for religion, to be problematic in our educational context. Indeed, it is very possible to uncritically inculcate belief in a worldview at a young age; and we take such an inculcation to be an unjustifiable act of force in the degree to which it is uncritical²¹⁹. Lock’s pragmatic argument that what we know about history and human nature shows that toleration is necessary for civil peace, is more pertinent to our context. For Smart, only minimization of violence could justify the spread of views by force. Such a case where it is justifiable to inculcate irrationally will be outlined below, when we come to discuss Siegel’s reply to the indoctrination objection. We will reach a conclusion familiar to us from our reply to paternalism above – that such a case is justifiable (tolerable) only when teaching for CT.

Coming back to Gewirth, and on the issue of *group rights*, we can see that religious inculcation, as a morally optional activity justified by ‘*optional consent*’, does not comply with its requirement of free choice. For as we have seen, children are made religious before they can apply their rationality, and can usually not fully develop their rationality in respect to their inculcated worldview. Smart similarly holds that authority can be established only voluntarily. However, a voluntary decision should not be confused with majority or consensus. These should not be authoritative on the matter. Thinking that it is best to teach a religion where there is consensus for it imports the wrong judges. Clergy or adherents are not educationalists. The clergy “are in fact nearer to being the living data than the teachers about those data”²²⁰. What the majority thinks is good education “is by

²¹⁷ Gewirth, A., above at note 17, pg. 242.

²¹⁸ Smart, N., above at note 72, pg. 30.

²¹⁹ Langerak, E., in Quinn, and Taliaferro, above at note 7.

²²⁰ Smart, N., above at note 72, pg. 33.

itself no argument. The majority can tyrannize," as well as be wrong²²¹. Related to group rights, is the assertion that our point of departure is Western and thus, foreign to other cultures. As we have already dealt with this form of relativism above, it will suffice to say that science, our foothold, is not in essence, Western. Another related point is *religious rights*, where Smart's philosophy is again most pertinent. He writes:

*"there is neither a God-given nor a humanity-bestowed right to teach a debatable worldview as though it is not debatable"*²²².

Since worldview epistemology is soft "*dogmatism is wrong in education,*" and a proper study of religion should be plural²²³.

Another objection comes from the problem of *neutrality*. Can our ideal comply with the old demand for separation of church and state?²²⁴ More specifically, can the political and religious ramifications of our ideal allow us to treat it as neutral. Can it be taught in a neutral fashion? Smart talks of a "spillover" from the modern study of religion that changes beliefs, or of the 'reflexive effect' - the influence of the study of religion upon religion²²⁵. He writes:

*"The fact that we do not just practice religion or ideology, but study it means a new phase of human awareness. It involves a revolution in thinking and feeling... Pure belief is no longer possible"*²²⁶.

Siegel replies to the objection that an education that has political or religious consequences cannot be neutral by making a

²²¹ As above, pg. 26.

²²² As above, pg., 20.

²²³ As above, pg., 13.

²²⁴ As a version of the right to freedom of and from religion, our discussion on the distinction between religion and science as a way of life is also relevant to this question.

²²⁵ Smart, N., above at note 73, pg. 27-8

²²⁶ Smart, N., above at note 72, pg. 22-3. As with Popper, for Smart science implies a political and moral philosophy. See also Nielsen, K., "Naturalistic Explanations of Theistic Belief," in Quinn and Taliaferro above at note 7, pg. 403. Nielsen talks of the ramifications of the study of naturalistic explanations of religion.

distinction between political or religious neutrality and intellectual neutrality²²⁷. Only educational ideals that are not intellectually neutral are ideologically biased. Their acceptance and justification are a function of prior political commitment. For both Siegel and Smart, CT and the modern study of religion are intellectually neutral. Siegel writes on CT that "*it alone sanctions the critical evaluation of all ideologies – including ... itself*"²²⁸. For this reason, CT is the most justified intellectual approach. It is not an ideology in the pejorative sense. Similarly, Smart makes a distinction between worldviews and his worldview-theme, which is higher or second-order compared to worldviews. The pluralistic openness of this worldview-theme necessitates its acceptance, despite the facts that it has lower-order consequences and that it too has a soft epistemology²²⁹.

The second objection to neutrality is the assertion that teaching in a neutral manner is impossible or at least practically impossible²³⁰. Students are severely limited in the evidence they can explore and are left with what is given and selected for them; vocabulary and description of facts are value laden and so on²³¹. Of the solutions offered, several make a connection between neutral teaching and teaching which does not indoctrinate²³². We will use Siegel to illustrate such an approach. Siegel tries to solve the following paradox: It is a fact of child development that children "*hold beliefs in advance of their being able to justify them rationally*"²³³. However, it is necessary, he writes,

²²⁷ Siegel, H., above at note 9, pg., 70.

²²⁸ As above, pg. 75.

²²⁹ Smart, N., above at note 72, pg. 31, 121. In the original dissertation the writer referred to intellectual neutrality as objectivity.

²³⁰ We take these objections to be epistemological and teaching complications or difficulties that can be surpassed to a sufficiently justifiable degree. The objection that neutrality is impossible even in theory has already been dealt with while discussing the priority of reason and the possibility of escaping the limitations of one's own worldview.

²³¹ Norman, in Brown, above at note 16; Trigg on Warnock, in Quinn and Taliaferro, above at note 7.

²³² Trigg, in Quinn and Taliaferro, above at note 7; Norman, in Brown, above at note 16; Montefiore, in Brown, above at note 16.

²³³ Siegel, H., above at note 9, pg. 82.

*“for the enhancement of the child’s rationality that we get the child to embrace non-rationally a belief in the power and value of reasons”*²³⁴.

Since he sees indoctrination as anti-critical,²³⁵ he asks whether rationality can be inculcated without indoctrination. An affirmative answer is reached after distinguishing between two cases: *“that in which the lack of justifying reasons is permanent; and that in which it is temporary,”* keeping the pejorative sense of indoctrination for the former, and naming the latter as *“non-indoctrinative belief-inculcation”*²³⁶. Why non-indoctrinative? Because in the latter case the teachings *“can become criticizable”*²³⁷. Initially, rational justification of beliefs taught is missing. But such teaching is permissible only in those cases where beliefs are necessary for developing CT and are later given rational grounding. This reminds us of Dewey’s position that propaganda and indoctrination are as good as they increase ability to learn. It is also consonant with Norman’s assertion that the conception of imposing CT is self-contradictory²³⁸. Since critical thinkers are best situated to rid themselves of earlier unwarranted influences as well as justify warranted ones, education that creates critical thinkers is minimally problematic with respect to indoctrination and neutrality.

Conclusion

Our two aims for this work were to justify our acceptance of standards set by the UN and UNESCO for the universal right to education, and to articulate and defend a form of RE that is compatible with this right. After defining CT and presenting several arguments in its support as an educational ideal, we extracted thirteen criteria which we held that our ideal for RE will have to comply with if it is to comply with the standards set for the right to education. Throughout we emphasized that education demands a critical ability and disposition towards one’s worldview, and that

²³⁴ As above, pg. 86.

²³⁵ For more on the definition of indoctrination see Goldberg I., above at note 1.

²³⁶ Siegel, H., above at note 9, pg. 82-3.

²³⁷ As above, pg. 86-7.

²³⁸ Norman, in Brown, above at note 16.

RE is in a good position not only to comply with this demand but also to facilitate it. We took Smart's RE as one that complies with the thirteen criteria and so, with the right to education. Next, we moved to defend our educational ideal from attacks directed both at rationality and at science on which it depends. We concluded that the acceptance of the descriptive assertion that one's thinking or conception of rationality is determined by one's worldview does not conflict with the possible existence of a higher-level or true rationality that is capable of justifiably criticizing any and every worldview. We held that although difficult, the achievement of such rationality depends on critical thought. We then showed that what Yinger defines as science as a way of life not only is not a religion under his functional definition, but actually conflicts with it. In conclusion, we saw that our ideal may be justified even when in conflict with other rights.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Brown, S. C., ed. *Philosophers Discuss Education*. London: Unwin bros., 1975.
- Brownie, Ian., ed. *Basic Documents on Human Rights*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Byres, F. Joseph., *The Psychology of Religion*. London: Collier Macmillian Publishers, 1984.
- Carr, Wilfred., and Anthony, Hartnett., *Education and the Struggle for a Democracy: The Politics of Educational Ideas*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997.
- Dewey, John., *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1966.
- Gewirth, Alan., *Reason and Morality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.
- Goldberg, Ilan., "A Form of Religious Education Compatible with the Right to Education." M.A. diss., University of Malta, 2002.
- Gutmann, Amy., *Democratic Education*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987.
- Hood, Ralph, W. Jr., Bernard, Spilka., Bruce, Hunsberger., and Gorsuch, Richard., *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*, 2d ed. New York: Guilford Press, 1996.
- Johnson, L. Ronald., *Religion in Society: A Sociology of Religion*, 3d ed. London: Prentice-Hall International, 1988.
- Kelly, A. V. *Education and Democracy: Principles and Practices*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing, 1995.

- Macedo, Stephen., *Diversity and Distrust: Civic Education in a Multicultural Democracy*. London: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Noddings, Nel., *Philosophy of Education*. Dimensions of Philosophy. Oxford: Westview Press, 1998.
- O'Hear, Anthony., *Karl Popper*. The Arguments of the Philosophers. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982.
- Ozmon, Howard, A., and Samuel, M. Carver., *Philosophical Foundations of Education*. Ohio: Prentice Hall, 1995.
- Paul, W. Richard., "Teaching Critical Thinking in the 'Strong' Sense: A Focus on Self-Deception, World Views, and a Dialectical Mode of Analysis." *Informal Logic* 4, no. 2, pg.2-7.
- , Background Logic, Critical Thinking and Irrational Language Games. *Informal Logic* 7.1, pg. 9-18.
- , *Critical Thinking: What Every Person Needs to Survive In a Rapidly Changing World*, 3rd ed. Edited by Jane, Willson., and A.J.A. Binker.
- Popper, Karl., *In Search of a Better World: Lectures and Essays from Thirty Years*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- , *Unended Quest: An Intellectual Autobiography*. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Quinn, Philip, L., and Charles, Taliaferro., eds. *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1997.
- Sadovink, Alan R., Peter W. Cookson, Jr., and Susan, F. Semel., *Exploring Education: An Introduction to the Foundations of Education*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1994.
- Siegel, Harvey., *Educating Reason: Rationality, Critical Thinking, and Education*. London: Routledge, 1988.
- Smart, Ninian. *Religion and the Western Mind*. London: Macmillan Press, 1987.
- , *The Science of Religion and the Sociology of Knowledge: Some Methodological Questions*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973.
- Symonides, Janusz., and Vladimir, Volodin., eds. *UNESCO and Human Rights: Standard-Setting Instruments, Major Meetings, Publications*. Paris: UNESCO, 1999.
- Talaska, Richard, A., ed. *Critical Reasoning in Contemporary Culture*. Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1992.
- United Nations General Assembly. *Convention on the International Right of Correction*. 1952.
- United Nations General Assembly. *Declaration on Social Progress and Development*. 1969.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. *Recommendation Concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*. 1974.

United Nations General Assembly. *Declaration on the use of Scientific and Technological Progress in the Interests of Peace and for the Benefit of Mankind*. 1975.

Warnock, G. J., ed. *The Philosophy of Education*. London: Oxford University Press, 1975.

Yinger, Milton J., *The scientific study of religion*. New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1970.