Stefanie Lorenzen

Changing "Diffuse" to "Profiled" Positions by Facing Religious Truth-Claims?

Contexts of Belonging as Conditions of Religious "Matching-Processes"

1 Introduction

This paper presents some results of a research dedicated to the problem of religious "decision-making" as a questionable part of Religious Education. In this article, I analyse what kind of situational conditions are suited to stimulate changing young adults' (mostly distanced) positions of "religion" and religious commitment. This empirically-based research is situated within a German theoretical discussion about the aims of Religious Education in pluralistic contexts. I start with a brief overview of "undecided" or "diffuse" religiosity as a widespread phenomenon. Second, I give two prominent examples that I consider as representative of the German way of treating this phenomenon of a "diffuse" or "soft" pluralistic stance in didactical theory. Diagnosing a lack of empirical evidence concerning the processes of existential engagement and transformation of attitudes, I give one example of my research that focuses on the concept of social "density" as a condition of further "matching-processes" concerning religion. The analysis also shows that the concept of "belief" as a condition of partaking in "religious" groups can be a severe obstacle for enabling young adults to identify with religious traditions.

Although the design of the research does not focus explicitly on the subject of value learning, the main question, methodology, and findings can easily be located within the broader context of the issue: Analysing young adults' retrospective explanations concerning their change of attitudes towards "religion" during their life trajectories can be paralleled with the phenomenon of biographical value development or value change: Interviewees' attitudes towards "religion" and the diverse ideas that they associate with this term can also be regarded as part of their value system.

2 Standing on the Threshold of "Religion": Recent Empirical Studies as a Sign of "Undecided" Religiosity among European Youngsters

Analysing recent empirical studies on adolescent religiosity, one can detect different interpretations depending on theoretical backgrounds and designs. But all

of them give strong hints to the phenomenon of religious indeterminacy, i.e. an obvious unwillingness or incapacity to agree with items that formulate religious convictions in an unambiguous, substantive way. On the other hand, this doesn't imply anti-religious attitudes, but rather an "undecided" way of staying "betwixt and between"; neither choosing the religious nor the completely secular or non-religious side, or maybe choosing both at the same time: the religious and the secular (Burén, 2015).

This kind of "undecided" religiosity is the object of rather different interpretations and is defined by various terms to catch the phenomenon. On the one hand, there are studies that have secularisation theory as their theoretical framework: They tend to read religious indeterminacy as a sign of religious decline, as something like the last step before comprehending oneself as completely non-religious or secular. A recent example in Germany is Gert Pickel's analysis of the latest survey on church membership, run by the Protestant Church (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland) in Germany (Pickel, 2014; Pickel, 2015): Pickel uses the term of "religious indifference" to designate the young generation's overall attitude towards religion, which he sees characterised by its personal irrelevance. This personal irrelevance in turn is understood as a consequence of the rising social irrelevance of religion in its institutional forms, which goes together with a decreasingly low rate of religious socialization (Pickel, 2014, 65–71; as a comment: Lorenzen, 2015; Lorenzen, 2017). The concept of "fuzzy fidelity", a term coined by David Voas (Voas, 2009) to designate a widespread attitude among Europeans, points into a similar direction: It means that they still hold on to "religion" (faith, values, institutions) in a very general and distant way, but don't identify with it more intensively or personally.

To summarise this line of argument: Especially young people can't decide to "be religious" because of the weak structural support for religion in society. This decline of structural relevance, in turn, is due to modernisation, which also means individualisation, which in turn means being independent from structural forces and therefore free to decide. In the end, according to this interpretation, people get religiously undecided the more they feel free to decide.

Other theoretical frameworks lead to very different interpretations of the same phenomenon: In 1994 already, Dietlind Fischer and Albrecht Schöll delineated the type of "social-occasional" religiosity, which is characterised by a floating position (Fischer & Schöll, 1994; 1996; 1998): Religion is only activated by adolescents when they hold it to provide helpful interpretations to cope with critical situations. This is not done in a merely instrumental manner, though, but with the awareness of a social obligation. Contrary to the studies mentioned above, the authors interpret this type as the most suitable one to meet the challenges of modernity, thereby referring to the phenomenon of individualisation with its freedom and necessity to decide without structural obligations. Not choosing to be religious or secular seems

to be the best strategy to keep oneself free of any restrictions, so that one can decide along future situational challenges.

The studies of Hans-Georg Ziebertz and Ulrich Riegel (Ziebertz, Kalbheim & Riegel, 2003; Ziebertz & Riegel, 2008) point into a similar direction, using theories of individualisation and pluralisation as a theoretical basis: On the one hand, they find autonomy as the most outstanding sign of adolescent religiosity, on the other hand, they detect a very strong tendency towards universality and generalisation with respect to young people's world views (more precisely, Ziebertz et al. speak of "Weltbilder"). In another contribution, Ziebertz summarises:

> "*In terms of content* religiosity is devoid of specific content and not dogmatically outlined. [...] No assertive claims are represented by religions [sic!] convictions. Different people are to be accepted for their faith. Faith is relative [...]. Religiosity is connected with a pragmatic attitude around which the individual must organize his or her conception of the world and discover meaning therein. Recourse to ideologies is not to be recognized; instead scientific or quasi-scientific theories like those of naturalism are accepted. Religiosity should not be ideologically loaded." (Ziebertz, 2006, 78 f.)

These observations are in line with a growing research interest in non-religiosity or secularity (e. g. Day et al., 2013), which also tries to differentiate the "borderland" in between secularity and religiosity with its typical qualities of "simultaneity" and "indeterminacy" (Burén, 2015). These won't allow "inhabitants" of the "borderland" to identify with any "packaged religion" (Rosen, 2009).

All in all, based on this review, this "borderland-position" seems to me to be the preferred standpoint of a large part of (not only) the young generation: They are not willed to identify once and for all with only one religion, but feel very open for the possibility to go into diverse religious traditions when time will come to do so. Now, the pedagogical question concerning Religious Education must be: Is this attitude of "in-betweenness" something that is judged as valuable from a pedagogical point of view or is it something that should be changed in a more clear-cut way of religious or non-religious identity? This question is of particular importance in contexts where Religious Education is grounded in and bound to specific theological (or denominational) traditions, as it is the case in Germany.

3 Religious "Decision-Making" by Facing Religious Truth-Claims – two Spotlights on the German Theoretical Landscape

Theoretical approaches to the purpose of Religious Education in Germany are diverse, but in sum, there is a strong consensus that regards "religious plurality" as the key concept to meet the challenges of the new century (cf. Schweitzer, Englert, Schwab & Ziebertz, 2002; Englert, Schwab, Schweitzer & Ziebertz, 2012). What

does this mean for the above stated "problem" of "staying in between"? I am going to outline two reactions that I regard as quite prominent within the German discussion.

One key concept, bound to the name of Friedrich Schweitzer, starts with the assumption that everybody has a certain ideological or religious standpoint of which one can be made aware and which sometimes can be transformed by entering into a dialogue with other perspectives. The most crucial moment in this process can be seen in the confrontation with religious commitments or truth-claims of different religious or ideological traditions that students are supposed to apply – in an experimental way – to their own situation (Schweitzer, 2014, 221, with reference to Hans-Georg Gadamer). By doing this, they may become aware of their own attitudes and values: they notice questions, affirmation, hesitation etc. and should be encouraged to explain and discuss these reactions. This "existential dimension" of the process can be considered to be characteristic of many of the German concepts of Religious Education and it is also part of a widespread didactic model called "Elementarisierung" which contains the dimension of "elementary truth" as one important perspective (Schweitzer, 2003). In this dialogic model, the aim of Religious Education is to find one's own orientation by facing different religious or ideological traditions in contexts of religious plurality (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, 2014).

Compared to this quite optimistic concept of Religious Education in pluralistic contexts, Rudolf Englert stresses the problems that arise from the process of pluralisation (e.g. Schweitzer, Englert, Schwab & Ziebertz, 2002, 31–50): He points out that the multiplication of (non-)religious options has effects on the way these options are conceived: Every option now seems contingent and this results in an overall awareness of relativism in terms of religion (e.g. Englert, 2008, 56). The variety of religious options also gives the opportunity for people to choose, so that people tend to explain their religious preferences with respect to their personal religious needs or longings (e.g. Schweitzer, Englert, Schwab & Ziebertz, 2002, 42). Therefore, more systematic argumentations lose their relevance and are not used to explain the own position. As a result of privatisation, people don't talk about their faith in public, lose contact to traditional religious semantics and finally aren't able to express their religious feelings (Schweitzer, Englert, Schwab & Ziebertz, 2002, 100). Along with this, Englert diagnoses a longing to experience transcendence in an immediate, direct way that displaces the former necessity to talk about religion in a more systematic or substantively coherent, i.e. "rational", manner (Englert, 2008, 70–79).

Given these conditions, Englert seems to mistrust the idea that the encounter with different religious traditions easily results in "profiled" positions – a transformation which he sees as an important aim of Religious Education (Schweitzer, Englert, Schwab & Ziebertz, 2002, 101f.). Instead, he can show that religious privatisation, insecurity and relativism have an effect on the way religion is treated

in German classrooms: In an empirical study directed by himself, he observes a strong tendency to talk about religion in a quite distanced or neutral way without showing further commitments. Besides that, he misses the ability to explain one's own standpoint by systematic arguments (Englert, Hennecke & Kämmerling, 2014). Taking up these and similar other observations, Englert sees the discipline of Religious Education in the midst of a crisis of transformation (Englert, 2014, 207).

4 The Empirical Question: How Do Young Adults conceive Processes of "Religious Self-Positioning"?

Given the assumption that Englert's critical diagnosis of religious "distancing" and "neutralisation" has something to do with the above stated tendency of "staying in between", the main question to be asked concerns motivation: If people feel uncomfortable with "packaged" religion and similar "packaged" value systems, why should they try to understand it or even identify with it – especially, if these religious traditions are completely alien to them? If they hold religion to be a private choice, why should they bother to get into public discussions about it? If they like religion in its more general, universal forms, why should they get more substantial? In more general terms: Why should they leave their more or less comfortable position of "staying in between" and change it for a more "profiled" position that at least seems to make life even more complicated and might cause conflicts?

Until now, there are no empirical studies that try to catch that phenomenon of "changing position" or "getting involved" with the aim to describe and interpret it in a more differentiated way. Exactly this is the aim of my research project. I try to describe how processes of "passing the threshold" and "changing position" take place from the perspective of the subjects themselves. For this research, I use the Grounded Theory approach as methodological framework (Strauss & Corbin, 1996), based on (until now) 14 narrative interviews with young adults between the age of 18 to 25. Finally, my aim is to create an empirically Grounded Theory of these processes – or at least a sketch of such a theory. I hope that these results give fresh ideas that help to transform the German model of Religious Education in a way that preserves its "existential" dimension, but gives more explicit thought to the fact that taking a certain position as one's "own" and knowing how to explain it in a reasonable way is the result of a very complex and demanding process.

5 A Closer Look on Different Forms of (Non-)Religious Self-Positioning: The Feeling of "Belonging" as a Condition of Matching-Processes

All in all, my results suggest that the above mentioned "matching-processes", when serving as a condition of "self-positioning", are set off by situations that are characterised by special attractive atmospheres. The interviewees often describe these situations in spatial terms or metaphors. Both, the feeling of personal involvement and the notion of space, have to be connected to catch the important phenomenon for the processes of interaction. Therefore, I coined the concept of "density" as a relational quality of those interactional contexts. It became the key concept to signify the main phenomenon of my Grounded Theory. This empirically grounded (hypo)thesis gets theoretical support from Alfred Schütz's concept of "religion" as one of various "finite provinces of meaning" with its own "cognitive style" that comprehends – along other features – a characteristic "tension of consciousness" (Schütz, 1962, 230).

Those contexts of "density" can be differentiated along various dimensions: One important dimension concerns the social form – the situation being intimate, i.e. intrasubjective, or extending to an intersubjective experience of "density" (which also includes the inner experience of the subject). In this paper, I want to focus only on the intersubjective dimension that shows the importance of "dense" contexts of community or, in other words, "belonging" as a condition of religious matching-processes. I have chosen three different examples that all take account of this feeling and show how they give rise to different "matching-processes" and different forms of "self-positioning".

Anja: "It wasn't this faith-thing, primarily, it was the community"

First, I cite a short passage of the interview with 23-year-old Anja, who is wondering why she became part of the Protestant Church in Eastern Germany, although she was brought up in a non-religious family. She describes her first contact with the protestant parish, when she came there with a close friend and his family, who were already part of the community: "[...] it was like, I came in there and I instantly felt accepted. You just felt a kind of warmth there. It wasn't this faith-thing, primarily, it was the community."

What Anja stresses here is the feeling of deep acceptance ("warmth") which gave her the impression of being part of the community. Particularly interesting is her remark which explicitly prioritises this feeling of community over the "faith-thing". By doing this, she suggests – at least implicitly – that there might be the expectation that those processes start the other way round: first experiencing "faith" and then the connection to a matching community. As the wider context of the

interview shows, Anja doesn't feel forced by the community to show "faith" as a necessary condition for participation. But on the other hand, she knows that participating in the central rituals like baptism and confirmation also means to show affirmation to Christian faith. When she explains the reasons for her "decision" (her words) of being baptised and celebrating the confirmation, she takes account of this in an explicit manner: "I was aware that I said 'yes' to this faith. But nonetheless, what was difficult for me, was this question about God: How is God and so on, but I believe that maybe this is still difficult for me."

Anja's case shows that the foregoing sense of belonging in the aftermath initiates a stronger engagement with questions of faith, like a fundamental willingness to identify with faith issues of that specific religious group. Initially, this seems to lead to a very general acceptance of faith as a whole, leaving aside "special" (although, of course, fundamental) issues like the question of God. At the same time, her sense of belonging is accompanied by a feeling of uncertainty concerning the question of believing, and it seems as if she still is uncertain whether these difficulties with the question of God actually are "okay". She seems to struggle with the expectation that there should be an adequate correspondence of both, "faith" and "belonging", with "faith" being the primal and "belonging" the later.

Nevertheless, the question of God still being a problem, she also remembers moments in which she found some "truth" in the Bible: "For example, I can still remember that once we treated the Sermon on the Mount. And that was something that really, then I thought: 'Of course that's truth what's in it'." Anja relates to this experience of something like a positive "matching" between herself and an important part from the Bible to show that her "decision" to be "protestant" is not only based on a sense of belonging, but also has something to do with a positive identification with Christian values – or, in her words, is based on experiences of "truth". She describes this experience as something like a spontaneous personal affirmation of a truth-claim that comes from a piece of religious tradition, in this case concerning a specific Christian value.

Later, Anja gives a more detailed description of the way these experiences of truth work. And this time, the process seems to change direction in that now, the tradition is the answer to an inner longing for the subject: "[...] because that are values or things which one finds good, anyway [...]. Like an answer, yes, maybe an answer, I don't know. For example, I am a very peace-loving person, I can't stand it if somebody is having an argument, and this word of 'swords into ploughshares', that really is something like an unambiguous signal of peace, and, yes, it is something like a confirmation as well. So that you are confirmed in what you are thinking. That you find the confirmation in there, while you don't find it elsewhere. Because there is so much violence in the world."

The process of "matching" that Anja describes does not consist of a simple approval of Christian doctrines, but of a sense of positive resonance with one's own convictions that already – maybe unconsciously – exist. In the aftermath, faith is

not so much an acceptance of something coming from outside, but rather a confirmation of something like an internal knowledge that is already felt in a diffuse way, but until that moment did not have something like an adequate expression, a quasi-official affirmation that legitimates this feeling or knowledge. In view of the above stated phenomenon of "staying in between", the case of Anja shows how the feeling of "belonging" sets off the willingness to get engaged in positive matching processes that eventually can get the form of personal experiences of truth. The research of Carsten Gennerich suggests a similar connection between adolescents' more or less conscious value patterns and their preference of religious and/or theological traditions (Gennerich, 2010; Feige & Gennerich, 2008).

Sonja: "I was looking for the reason why he was like this ..."

A passage from the interview with Sonja, a 25-year-old student of law serves as a second example. Although grown up in a region where being part of a protestant or catholic church is seen as something "normal", she has never belonged to a specific religious denomination and describes herself as "spiritual". As she would like to share her interest in religious or spiritual questions, she sometimes thinks about joining a religious community, but this turns out to be difficult as there is no "religion" that shows a perfect "matching" with her personal beliefs. Remembering turning points of her religious or spiritual biography, she tells about a time when she had a very negative attitude towards religion. This anti-religious stance changed when she got to know her boyfriend and his catholic family:

> "What was the turning point? I think it was when I got to know my boyfriend, when I was eighteen, and, well, he gave me strong support. I've always been a very restless person, a very vivacious person. I have always seen the negative side first and that was the reason why I often ended up in unpleasant situations [...]. And when I got to know him, well, he took me down to earth and I was calming down, and he always was there for me, even if I had something like a little explosion, and, well, I think, then I was looking for the reason why he was like this and why he could love me without any condition, although I sometimes behaved terribly wrong [...] and I found it in his faith and in his Christian education [...]. His mother was strict, but very warm [...] and it was just nice, because you were like growing into the family and thereby grasping something of the cultural goods from Christianity, because you didn't have to be afraid of doing something wrong [...] because they liked me anyway, even if I had done something wrong [...]. And I think this was the crucial point [...]. And then I started to take an interest in it [i. e.: religion, S.L.]."

As in Anja's case, Sonja remembers her partaking in a community – in this case: a family – as an important turning point in her religious biography. Both communities, the protestant parish and the catholic family, understand themselves as "religious" and both of them show their religious identities, not least by remarkable representa-

tives that stand for the possibility of "being protestant" or "catholic" (pastor and deacon; mother). At the same time, they give those "outsiders" a feeling of deep acceptance and security without forcing them to "become" protestant or catholic. And they obviously give reasons for both adolescents to attribute the atmosphere of "warmth" to "religion" or "faith". And this connection seems to set off their readiness to have a closer look and maybe "try it out" for themselves. Different to Anja, Sonja doesn't get baptized or becomes a member of the Catholic Church (she has now split up with her boyfriend), nor does she give account of similar unambiguous identification with elements of catholic "faith". Instead, she sees these experiences as important steps to her open stance towards diverse religious or spiritual traditions. All in all, the comparison between Anja and Sonja shows that the context of social "density" doesn't have to end up in a "full" conversion, but can also result in a personal readiness for religious or spiritual search. These different reactions might be grounded in varying manners of "belonging" or dependent on duration – a question which can't be analysed in detail in this contribution, but turns out to be a challenge for my research project.

Frank: "I didn't acquire or start with any faith, but I comprehended what it was about"

A third case offers the example of 21-year-old Frank who grew up in a family (from Eastern Germany) without religious background. While describing himself as quite critical towards religion during his early adolescence, he pinpoints two years of catholic vocational school and a catholic residential home as a turning point concerning his attitude: "It was my first contact with it [religion]. I didn't acquire or start with any faith, but I comprehended what it was about, or at least what it meant to the people who lived there. There was a sister in particular, with whom I talked a lot about it, and it is since then that I am aware of it as something very positive, though it is scarcely of any importance for my own life."

There are incidents in the wider context of the interview that show that the feeling of being accepted without belonging to a specific denomination and without showing a certain belief are important conditions for this change of attitude. And there is another section that can serve as a negative example of the above stated relationship of "belonging" and "believing": After having left the catholic school, Frank changed to the (stately run) vocational school he now attends. There, he first tried the catholic class of Religious Education, but dropped it immediately, because he had the impression that the teacher wanted to convert him.

As the section above shows, Frank doesn't see himself as "believing" in a religious sense, but remembers moments when he tried to imagine religious ideas (as for example reincarnation) or when he noticed that he likes the idea of the human soul. But above all, he reclaims a fundamental openness and interest to understand

the belief of others. He seems to like the position of the neutral observer or visitor, who discovers different religious communities by staying in contexts that are more or less "original" – as for example the protestant class with the protestant teacher during Religious Education in school.

In these three examples, young adults reconstruct their change of position by referring to the phenomenon which I call "social density", i.e. the experience of personal inclusion to a social space. In this space, the adolescents are accepted like "guests" and they themselves behave like "guests" by respecting the rules of their hosts. The mutual awareness of partaking in a religiously defined group seems to serve as a framework that gives shape to this "space" where religious matching-processes can take place. Religion is the "sign" of that framework that gets its individual expression by the more or less open rules of the group and the representatives or role models that "stand for" the possibility of "being religious" in a specific way. Therefore, people have the possibility to attribute experienced actions to "religion". Goffman's concept of "frames" might be a theoretical point of reference for this empirical observation (Goffman, 1974).

Consulting such a wide concept of "institution" like that of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, 54), it might even be possible to conclude that participating in these contexts also means participating in religious "institutions": This means that "religion" is carried out by these groups in a "typical" and therefore predictable way, by actors who also act in "typical" and therefore "predictable" ways. Participants of institutional contexts have internalized these "typical" actions as "normal" – they consider them as "taken for granted". There is no need to question the existence or manner of these actions or actors. They are just a "normal" part of life in these groups. The adolescents above had the opportunity to participate in such "institutional" contexts and experience "religion" as something "normal" or "taken for granted".

Taking these hypothetical considerations, one can conclude that one possible condition for matching-processes that change religious "positions" is the partaking in social contexts of interactions that serve as an "institutional" framework and provide the possibility to experience "religion" as something "normal" or "taken for granted" without the necessity to be a full member of this institutional context, i.e. with the "permission" not to take "religion" and the institutionalised actions as something "for granted" with respect to oneself.

6 Conclusion

Given the questions asked above, I brought out one context of interaction that appears to motivate young adults' "matching-processes" and might influence their change of position towards "religion". In short, this context is characterised by a social "density" that makes those adolescents feel as an accepted (but not necessar-

ily a full) part of a community which identifies in some way with "religion". This means that those adolescents can attribute the experienced atmosphere of openness and personal acceptance ("warmth") to this form of "religion". Staying on that ground, they accept the "rules" of that "religious" context, without having to "believe". On the other hand, the idea of perfect "faith-matching" as a condition of participating in religious communities may prove to be an important obstacle of opening those matching-processes.

Referring to the theoretical stances of Schweitzer and Englert, these findings help to differentiate the aim of "profiled pluralism": It shows that one (and surely not the only) important condition for the development of religious or non-religious "positions" is the experience of a social-interactional context which is bound to a specific religious tradition, gives something like a social "shape" and includes the individual as part of this social framework. It seems as if this "frameworking" serves as a condition of later trials of religious self-positioning. This points to the necessity of social bonds that open a reference frame to locate the self in it. So, if these kinds of social bonds or frameworks are lacking – as is often the case when it comes to Religious Education in schools – then it becomes more difficult to develop "profiled" positions. In view of the overall question of value learning, there are striking parallels to the often-stated observation that moral education doesn't only have to do with cognitive reasoning, but needs special social contexts in form of moral-sensitive milieus which give the opportunity to experience what it means not only to think, but also to act in a moral way (cf. Lawrence Kohlberg's idea of school as a just community, e. g. Kohlberg, 1986; Oser & Althoff, 1992, 337–458; Kuld, 2015, 177).

As none of the cases reported above is located in state-run schools, this raises the question if "social density" as a social-interactional condition is only suitable for "inner-denominational contexts" of Religious Education or could also be helpful to support existential learning in schools. Years ago, Karl Ernst Nipkow treated the question of didactical hermeneutics (mainly thinking of Religious Education in schools) that is based on different forms of "consent": Taking a possible "lack of consent" or religious "indifference" on the side of the students, he suggests to stress the dimension of interpersonal relationships, which also means group-experiences, and a didactic of "indirect notification," a "maeutic" way of a "mutual" search for "religious traces" with possibilities to talk about one's own experiences of faith. As he repeats several times, all this should be done in an "unintentional" or "passing" way, i. e. without pursuing the aim of "conversion" (Nipkow, 1998, 248–252). Although not being very specific, these suggestions seem to fit well with the observations made above. They encourage more explicit attention to the interactional dimension as an important condition of existential learning in Religious Education – an aspect that the theoretical approaches mentioned above surely are aware of but don't treat as an integral, but problematic part of the whole learning process.

On the other hand, Nipkow's strategies seem to be very subtle and therefore might carry the suspicion of being manipulative – especially in the context of stately run schools. As Nipkow obviously refers to the "classical" German model of Religious Education with its clear institutional boundaries, this reproach can be refuted. But it raises the question if "social density" in the above delineated form is only possible in clearly defined "institutional" contexts (with the German model being one of them) or if there are modifications that could also stand up to non-denominational forms of Religious Education.

My results also encourage discussion about processes of "faith" or "belief" in a more explicit way. Given the "contexts of density" as those outlined above, Englert's suggestion to reconsider theological traditions as means to elevate the level of talking about "faith" might be a helpful resource (Englert, 2013). On the other hand, the examples presented above also make clear that the idea of transforming diffuse to more profiled (non-)religious positions must include the possibility – or "option" – of "staying in between", as one can see regarding the self-positioning of Sonja or Frank. "Profiled" pluralism then doesn't mean to "decide" for "being religious" or not, but comprehends the ability to describe one's own position in a nuanced way, making clear what kind of (non-)religious ideas give authentic feelings and thoughts of resonance and at the same time seem "reasonable" and "coherent" and which ones do not.

All in all, the outcomings should sharpen the awareness of the often neglected social dimension of personal convictions concerning one's own religious position. They encourage us to actively accept and include these social backgrounds with their opportunities and restrictions in view of value learning and faith development. This seems to be a task which not only concerns individual treatment of one's own religious biography, but also challenges Practical Theology to create something like intersectional or interim concepts of "faith" which are suited for people in the "borderland" between the "religious" and the "secular".

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