

Paradigm Shift in Religious Education:
A Reply to Jackson, or Why Religious Education Goes to War

Abstract

This article provides a defence of my theoretical analysis of paradigm shift in contemporary religious education, particularly in light of Robert Jackson's (2015) article published in this journal: 'Misrepresenting religious education's past and present in looking forward: Author using Kuhn's concepts of paradigm, paradigm shift and incommensurability'. The core of Jackson's concerns is my adaptation of Kuhn's concepts of paradigm, paradigm shift and incommensurability to religious education. Defending in turn my use of these concepts – of paradigm, paradigm shift and incommensurability – I conclude that Jackson's critique is in and of itself an apt demonstration of the position he seeks to attack. Drawing wider parallels with the methodological 'paradigm wars' in the social sciences I argue that the paradigms are why religious education too goes to 'war'.

Introduction

In this article I provide what I hope are important clarifications of my notion of paradigm shift in contemporary religious education in light of how my interpretive frame has divided critics (Barnes 2014; Baumfield 2013; Freathy 2015; Jackson 2015a; 2015b; 2016; 2017; Jackson and Arweck 2017; Lewin 2017; Newell 2014; Parker, Freathy and Aldridge 2015; Stuart-Battle 2016; Teece 2015; Wilson 2015). In scale of critique, paramount among these critics has been Jackson (2015a) notably the serious claims made in an article published in this journal, 'Misrepresenting religious education's past and present in looking forward: Author using Kuhn's concepts of paradigm, paradigm shift and incommensurability'. The core of Jackson's concerns is over my application, following Thomas Kuhn's (1996) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, of the concepts of paradigm, paradigm shift and incommensurability to religious education.

The criticisms arise particularly from and addressed primarily to a single chapter of my *MasterClass in Religious Education* which I entitled 'Pedagogies of Religious Education'. There I *began* a process of unpacking the epistemological grounds of different philosophies of religious education. I used 'paradigm' and 'paradigm shift' to identify intellectual trajectories at the historical roots and continuing spheres of influence on religious education. The analysis was designed to frame the epistemological ground of practice, a process I subsequently and substantively developed, work which forms here part of my considered

response (Author 2014), offering as Teece puts it, an ‘extremely astute and convincing analysis of the problems of, what one might call, the current paradigm of RE in state schools’ and ‘a richer vision of a subject that is still gripped in an acute identity crisis’ (Teece 2015).

In no pejorative sense, I analysed those religious education contexts no longer framed in the religious life, forms of modern religious education bounded now, as Willaime (2007) evidences, by a compulsion not towards religious authority but conformity to international norms and standards of socio-cultural, legal and political impulses, two ‘constraints’:

... *a sociological one*, in that the religious and philosophical pluralisation of European societies obliges them to include ever more alternative religions and non-religious positions into their curricula, and ... *a legal one*, through the importance of the principle of non-discrimination on religious or philosophical grounds (as well as others such as gender or race) in international law, especially in the European Convention on Human Rights (Willaime 2007: 65, emphasis added).

This ‘double constraint’ Willaime (2007) notes has resulted in a threefold model: (1) ‘no religious instruction in schools’; (2) ‘confessional religious instruction’; (3) ‘non-confessional religious education’ (Willaime 2007: 60). Instructively, Ferrari (2012) argues for a similar model: 1) disallowing religious education within the formal curriculum in schools opened by the state (e.g. France); 2) providing non-denominational teaching about religions; and 3) providing denominational teaching of religion for prevailing religion(s) within the country Ferrari (2012: 100–3). Both Willaime and Ferrari are referring to the European context. Yet Durham (2012) suggests ‘these appear to be the major options not only in Europe, but worldwide’ (Durham 2012: 4).

In paradigmatic terms, my concerns have been for Ferrari’s second category and Willaime’s third, which amount to the same thing: those forms of modern religious education which provide teaching and learning on and of religion without a connectedness or commitment to faith context. Despite claims I supposedly favour only those forms of religious education which involve initiation into the religious life (Baumfield 2013; Freathy 2015; Jackson 2015a) my core task was an unearthing of the epistemological foundations of ‘non-confessional’ forms of religious education. The global shift of epistemological grounds in this contemporary religious education provide more than sufficient evidence to demonstrate something dramatic, a paradigmatic shift, has happened to religious education.

I am not alone in considering such epistemological flux a source of conceptual and pedagogical confusion (Conroy, Lundie, Davis, Baumfield, Barnes, Gallagher, Lowden, Bourque, and Wenell 2015; Conroy, Lundie, and Baumfield 2012; cf. Osbeck 2012).

Manifold earlier epistemological analyses of the subject have been undertaken yet either within (that is limited to) a specific disciplinary boundary of, say, psychology (Greer 1984a; 1984b) or the socio-cultural (Astley, Francis, Robbins and Selcuk 2012; Avest, Jozsa, Knauth, Rosón, Skeie 2009; Grimmitt 2010). Others too have provided overviews of the way religious education has been impacted by a variety of especially social science and psychological disciplines (see for example, Buchanan 2005; Chater and Erricker 2012; English, D'Souza, and Chartrand 2003; 2005; Gates and Jackson 2014; Grimmitt 2000; Jackson 2008; Seymour 2011; Weiss and Cutter 1998). Nor am I not alone in my use of the concept of 'paradigm' to make some epistemological sense of the subject's rootedness as a form of knowledge (Barnes 2014; Author 2014; Roux 1998a; 1998b; Roux and van der Walt 2011). Thus, for example, Buchanan (2005) discusses 'pedagogical drift', the 'evolution of new approaches and paradigms in religious education'. In more general terms, Martin and de Pisón (2005) comment: 'The epistemological paradigm, known as post-modernity, challenges some of the presuppositions of educational systems in general, and of religious education in particular' (Martin and de Pisón 2005: 157). If, as Martin and de Pisón argue, critical amongst such 'presuppositions is the exaggerated primacy given to knowledge attained through reason' the cumulative effect is an ongoing search which Seymour (2011a) has defined as a quest for the 'canon of religious education' (see also Cush and Robinson 2014; Weiss and Cutter 1998). I drew significantly in establishing the paradigmatic parameters of influence I took seriously Freathy and Parker's (2010) call to take seriously historical inquiry, and drew methodologically from the comparative approach suggested by Schweitzer, F., Simojoki, H., Moschner, and Müller (2012). Manifestly, though, the search for new epistemological grounds is as old as but ranges beyond the modern subject of religious education itself and it is in process, but there are identifiable efforts from within the history of ideas which have been used by contemporary religious education to frame its epistemology and pedagogy.

Yet my explicit adoption of Thomas Kuhn's (1972) to *paradigm shift in religious education* has provoked a little ire, indeed with Jackson suggesting in the conclusion to his article that my attempt 'fails decisively'. I wish to avoid such intemperate language and suggest we not rush to hurried judgements, but both the language posited and judgements offered do I think necessitate a riposte.

The core of Jackson's concerns, as noted, then, is specifically my adaptation of Kuhn's concepts of paradigm, paradigm shift and incommensurability to religious education. Defending in turn my use of these concepts – of paradigm, paradigm shift and

incommensurability – I conclude that Jackson’s critique is in and of itself an apt demonstration of the position he seeks to attack. Drawing wider parallels with the methodological ‘paradigm wars’ in the social sciences I argue that the paradigms are why religious education too goes to ‘war’.

The Paradigms of Contemporary Religious Education

Unearthing the intellectual etiology for a subject no longer grounded in the religious life I proposed six paradigms: Scriptural-Theological; Phenomenological; Psychological-Experiential; Philosophical-Conceptual; Socio-Cultural; Historical-Political. I undergirded the framework with a caveat that whether ‘identifiably new approaches to religious education are *themselves* paradigms (in the sense Kuhn uses the term) is debatable’, but emphasised that each approach ‘draws its intellectual inspiration from disciplinary developments which are’ (Author 2013). I was at pains to suggest that no discipline or intellectual tradition is so closely bounded as to preclude inter- and cross-disciplinary overlap and so made it evident that in professional practice a plethora of religious education pedagogies will include inter-disciplinary fusions (Baumfield et al. 2015). The notion of paradigm and paradigm shift were used to indicate how attempts have been made both reify the formulation of intellectual influence and to suggest this as an (ongoing) movement in professional practice.

Jackson rightly notes I derive the idea of ‘paradigm’ from Thomas Kuhn’s (1996) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. I accept, as Jackson does, that Kuhn’s (1996) intention in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* was to posit a distinction between ‘normal’ and ‘revolutionary’ science, that is in the former case when the scientific community accepts constructs about the way the world is, until such times when an alternative model disrupts previously accepted consensus, upon the acceptance of new ideas comes a new phase of normal science or a paradigm. Kuhn’s approach is thus rooted in a story of how science and scientific communities change the way we look at the world. And yet while the concept of a ‘paradigm’ is made in reference to ‘universally recognised scientific achievements that, for a time, provide model problems and solutions for a community of practitioners’ (Kuhn 1996 10) its applications have extended beyond natural science.

Indeed, the social sciences came to see Kuhn’s work as especially useful because of the community aspects of his thinking, about the way new scientific ideas are introduced, are accepted in community, change the way we see the world and, until another paradigmatic shift, become accepted as normal or standard views, a notion which had impacts far beyond inquiry in the natural sciences (for example, Gunnell 2014). Paradigms share in the history

of ideas ‘two essential characteristics’: ‘Their achievement was sufficiently unprecedented to attract an enduring group of adherents away from competing modes of scientific activity. Simultaneously, it was sufficiently open-ended to leave all sorts of problems for the redefined group of practitioners to resolve.’ By paradigms Kuhn refers to ‘actual scientific practice – examples which include law, theory, application, and instrumentation together – provide models from which spring particular coherent traditions of scientific research’ (Kuhn 1996: 10-11). But throughout his influential book Kuhn is conscious of the applications of the notion of paradigm. Indeed he frames *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* around the notion of a paradigm being a bridge between the natural and social sciences and prefaced his theory on personal experience of ‘spending the year in a community composed predominantly of social scientists confronted me with unanticipated problems about the differences between such communities and those of the natural scientists among whom I had been trained’. It was attempting to ‘discover the source of that difference led me to recognize the role in scientific research of what I have since called “paradigms”’ (Kuhn 1996: ix-x).

Jackson’s problem seems to have been the looser and weaker senses of paradigm and incommensurability when applied to other fields such as education and the social sciences (Franken and Loobuyck 2011). And he brackets my use of the paradigm (Author 2013; along with Barnes 2014) in the problematic category. Jackson thus claims ‘anyone persisting in using Kuhn’s idea of incommensurability... is advancing the view that a newly accepted paradigm supersedes and renders implausible earlier paradigms’. My own use of ‘paradigm’, as Jackson acknowledges, is contextualised in what was a necessarily brief ‘sketch of the impact of the European Enlightenment on Western thought’ (Author 2013, 99–101), but it is one I substantially and substantively extended (Author 2014). I thus subsequently framed the ‘paradigm problem’ (Author 2015) differently in this later work, and lessened emphasis on the paradigm scaffolding and nomenclature, and re-framing without substantively altering the same epistemological problem, as follows: how are we to ground modern religious education when it is no longer grounded in the religious life?

The worthiness of this attempt is acknowledged even if there is division about how successful my attempts have been (Baumfield 2013; Freathy 2015; Jackson 2015; Newell 2014; Teece 2015; Wilson 2015). Jackson seems however to question the very task I had set myself, my distinction that is, between religious education as initiation into ‘the religious life’ and ‘all subsequent approaches using social sciences, psychology and contemporary philosophy in their methodologies’. Jackson suggests that this does not represent a paradigm

shift in the Kuhnian sense. It does. Historically the idea of a religious education beyond the context of a religious community would have made little sense. In Kuhnian terms, it would today be thus unthinkable to have religious foundations as the basis for contemporary religious education in non-confessional settings.

I began the process by examining a range of forms of knowledge in large measure defined from and by the Enlightenment, assessing the respective positions of each in relation to religion. I showed how so very many founding disciplines of modernity (the social and psychological sciences, the natural sciences, political science, even aesthetics, and so forth) were defined, or achieved their self-definition, by delineating their epistemological authority over and against those forms of knowledge represented by religious tradition (Author 2014). Yet, *declaring plainly that while rigid boundaries between disciplines and forms of knowledge are increasingly untenable*. As Newell (2014) and Lewin (2017; 2017a) concur, the intellectual milieu of a secular and secularising Enlightenment necessitated a particularly critical relationship with religion and in many senses it was a relationship which both engendered and defining the founding orientations of contemporary philosophy, the natural sciences, the social sciences, psychology, phenomenology, modern politics, and (to add the discipline not covered in the original paradigmatic sketch) aesthetics. In each case, then, respective disciplinary identities emerged in relation to, often a reaction against, those forms of knowledge held to be sacred, especially revealed truth. In each case it is possible to identify a twofold relationship: first, between religion and each respective discipline – philosophy, the natural sciences, the social sciences, psychology, phenomenology, politics and aesthetics; second, broad parameters established, then outlined are the various *appropriations* of these disciplines within religious education (Author 2014).

These appropriations I argue have pedagogical impacts. Thus philosophical models see the object lesson of religious education to make thinkers and proto-philosophers; socio-cultural models see the object lesson of religious education as creating ethnographic, cultural explorers; psychological models see the learner as a seeker after personal meaning and fulfilment, ‘spirituality’ more preferable to ‘religion’; phenomenological models see the object lesson of religious education as creating a detached observer of religion who is perpetually distanced from it; ever more prevalent political models, emphasizing the public face of religion, see teaching and learning in religious education as concerned with the creation of citizens and even activists; aesthetic models see a role for the arts in religious education, not simply the noting of art in religious contexts but also religious education

classrooms as forums, through the expressive arts, for creativity as spirituality, the artist as spiritual seeker.

Jackson rightly states that I subdivide the primary paradigm shift into ‘five separate paradigms, each associated with a particular discipline which emerged from the European Enlightenment, and each opposed to the scriptural-theological paradigm’: phenomenological; psychological; philosophical; sociological; and political (Author, 2013: 105). I do then identify in all six pedagogies ‘rooted in one particular discipline or ‘form of knowledge’: scriptural-theological (theology); phenomenological (phenomenology); psychological-experiential (psychology); philosophical-conceptual (philosophy); socio-cultural (sociology); historical-political (politics)’ (2013: 105). Jackson argues that I have moved ‘from claiming two paradigms, to six paradigmatic disciplines (theology, phenomenology, psychology, philosophy, sociology and politics), to six pedagogies’. Though cast as criticism, Jackson has it right.

The major paradigm shift has been the divide between religious education and the religious life. The grounds sought epistemologically to undergird a religious education no longer grounded in the religious life has been, principally six paradigmatic disciplines theology, phenomenology, psychology, philosophy, sociology and politics, later adding a seventh, the aesthetic (Author 2015). These disciplines are paradigmatic in maintaining identifiable traditions of knowledge, marked by their own theories, methods and interests. The six pedagogies are in large measure identifiable through their respective emphases not only in approaches to teaching and learning but in the orientations of foundational aims which underpin these.

Given the caveats with which I couched my interpretive framework it is a little unfair to suggest that my account ‘is internally inconsistent’ since I persist in (a) regarding ‘non-confessional’ religious education as ‘a new paradigm’ and (b) identify a series of ‘post-Enlightenment’ disciplines ‘as paradigmatic (phenomenology, psychology, philosophy, sociology and politics)’ (Jackson 2015: 75). These disciplines *remain* inherently secular in the sense of being independent of religious authority since they are dependent on an interpretive frame beyond religious authority (Aldrich 2015; Lewin 2017). And without exception *all* such disciplines were characterised in their origins by antipathy towards religious authority.

This epistemological distinction elided into a difference in forms of life and outlook, of worldview, as Kant famously epitomised in the opening lines of his defining essay on Enlightenment (Kant 1784), ‘Enlightenment is man's [sic] emergence from his self-imposed

nonage. Nonage is the inability to use one's own understanding without another's guidance. This nonage is self-imposed if its cause lies not in lack of understanding but in indecision and lack of courage to use one's own mind without another's guidance. *Dare to know!* (*Sapere aude.*) “Have the courage to use your own understanding”, is therefore the motto of the enlightenment’ (Kant 1784). In this is a rejection of both hierarchical and scriptural religious authority, ‘If I have a book that thinks for me, a pastor who acts as my conscience...’ (Kant 1784). As Feuerbach (1854) had defined all religion as a wish fulfilment, and made the challenging of its authority the key to intellectual freedom, so too Marx stated, ‘the criticism of religion is the prerequisite of all criticism’. The paradigmatic frame runs deep in the literature on the study of religion deeper existential, indeed anthropological sense, of distinction, vis-à-vis Rudolf Otto’s (1958) *Idea of the Holy*, or Mircea Eliade’s (1950) *Sacred and the Profane*, Mary Douglas’s (2012) *Purity and Danger* or Victor Turner’s (1970) *The Forest of Symbols*.

What we can argue here in modern religious education is in some ways precisely, as Jackson would have it, the use of the sacred and the holy let us not say for sacrilegious or unholy purposes but for those which suit secular ends. This is not as Jackson states an ‘attack’ by me on these obviously necessary forms of contemporary religious education which in non-confessional settings need to serve such secular purposes if religious education is to have a purpose, but there is still a distinction to be made, and that is what I attempted to do. Yet even those antagonistic to religion, though they abandon distinctions between sacred and profane, holy and unholy, are loathe to rid themselves of the terms of religion. We see this in Rousseau’s (1997a, 1997b) ‘civil religion’, Kant’s (1996a) hopes for the ‘founding of the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth’ (also Kant 1996b; 1996c; 1996d), and Dewey’s (1991) ‘common faith’. Jackson himself falls into this camp in his use of the term ‘civil religion’ as a vehicle for establishing and framing religious educational ends (Jackson and O’Grady 2007; cf. Author 2012; 2016; Lewin 2017).

The outline of paradigms then is not to claim that there have not been subsequent accommodations between – Jackson put it well in distinguishing between ‘religious understanding’ and ‘understanding religion’ (Jackson 2015:) – though a deep rift there remains in existential orientation as much as hermeneutical frame, between say theology and social theory (Milbank 1990), and which in religious education is signalled by on-going disputation over epistemological grounds as well as pedagogic purposes (Author 1995; Aldrich 2015; Wright 1996).

On such complex and competing frames of reference flourished the post-Enlightenment intellectual traditions I identified, whose philosophical and pedagogic influence I defined as paradigmatic, with the progressive movement towards this influence being defined as paradigm shift.

Paradigm Shift in Religious Education

Paradigm shift in this context thus implies both a movement in intellectual history and a struggle for the dominance of ideas about the way the world is and or should be. Here Jackson has my analysis of the historical context correct in relation to religious education when he states that ‘the liberation of political power from religious authority provided the environment for the shift from theological interpretations, raised confidence in human reason, precipitated the rapid development of the natural sciences and the emergence of the social sciences, as well as new approaches to philosophy’ (Jackson 2015: 65). He is correct too in interpreting me when he suggests my line of argument is indeed that ‘the new disciplines gave reductionist explanations of religion’ (Jackson 2015: 65). An important moment in the post-Enlightenment project of divorcing the study of religion from the religious life is exemplified in the Gifford Lectures given by Max Müller in which he details the application of the new disciplines of anthropology, psychology and so forth to the study of religion beyond or separate from religious commitment (Müller 1889–1893; see also Pals 2016). The study of religion *did* thus become separate from the religious life, and eventually the impact of these Enlightenment disciplines have curricula impacts, and continues to if we consider the relationship between theology, religious studies and religious education hardly settled (Cush 1999; Cush and Robinson 2014; Barnes 2016).

This is not to say that there have not been subsequent accommodations. Indeed, at no time that the Enlightenment frame was a static one. Here, in ways which Jackson does not note, I identify a twofold relationship: first, between religion and each respective discipline – philosophy, the natural sciences, the social sciences, psychology, phenomenology, politics and aesthetics; second, I identify various appropriations of these disciplines within religious education. In each case, I identify two ideal types responsive to religion: the adversary and the advocate. The adversary is not content simply to observe religion. They want something done about it, preferably its removal. Indeed, adversarial positions suggest that religion, once its delusions are highlighted, will remove itself.

The advocate does not seek a removal but better understanding of religion. The advocate thus uses frameworks more closely to observe and understand, to interpret religion. Religion, in other words, is presented through the lens of a particular discipline – philosophy of religion, psychology, the social sciences, and so on. Advocatory critiques, I suggest, thereby re-create religion in the image of themselves. For example, if religion is seen as an epiphenomenon of social or psychological factors, the model of religion favoured is one which contributes to social or psychological well-being, and so forth.

The search for new epistemological grounds is as old as the modern subject of religious education itself and is in process. Yet if the grounds themselves remain contested a core effort and distinguishing feature of religious education separated from the religious life has been to establish religious education *as education*, and above all, as ‘modern’, in the Weberian sense of characterised by rationalisation and intellectualisation (Weber 1946).

There are two identifiable reasons for this in religious education: First, early on there was an unspoken premise amongst religious education’s professional community as it moved from an orientation from religious communities and traditions to define its rationale, and primarily that to maintain its significance religious education should be seen to be addressing the modern world. An early issue of *Religious Education* thus addresses ‘the social situation’ and the relationship between ‘religious education and contemporary social conditions’ (Addams 1911). In the same decade explores science and religion ‘as factors in progress’ (Falconer 1913; 1928); the ‘new world order’ (Tracy et al. 1917), and so forth. Over subsequent decades was the ever-present pressure for religious education to be ‘contemporary’ (Deems 1949). Second, the justification of religious education as education is seen as requiring the respectability of science, defined as a methodologically rigorous approach to knowledge, and religious education as a concern with theory and practice based on this rigour. Yet it is also one in which the religious educator early recognized the need to be aware of developments in science (Rolfe 1924; 1926).

The question of which science was more suitable in attaining to this rigour became paramount. Cavan and Cavan (1928) early identified ‘rival disciplines aiming for control of child development’: ‘The past decade [the 1920s] has seen the development of movements to what is, after all, a single result, unfortunately those absorbed in one movement have often failed to take account of the others’ (see, in the same period, Hartshorne 1922). Discussing sociology, psychology, psychiatry, political programmes of citizenship, they identify a growing insularity. At that time a large literature had already accumulated, the ‘total volume of writing in each of these fields is so large that no practical worker could be adequately

familiar with it'. 'What,' they ask, 'can be done to make this huge accumulation of experience and science usable?' (Cavan and Cavan 1928: 482; Cavan 1932; Cavan and Cavan 1930; Smith 1928).

Over the decades which followed religious education flourished and has developed a strong international presence in non-confessional school curricula. The six paradigms I identified – Scriptural-Theological; Phenomenological; Psychological-Experiential; Philosophical-Conceptual; Socio-Cultural; Historical-Political – identified the major intellectual influences on the theory and practice of contemporary religious education. They were a starting point for a larger project of unearthing the epistemological foundations of a religious education no longer grounded in the religious life (Author). Each of the frames of knowledge or paradigmatic disciplines which came to form and influence different pedagogies of religious education have provided a varying critical lens for interpreting religion within their own sphere of criticality and for justifying religious education in terms of fundamental purposes. I will concede I could have taken greater pains to emphasise a sense of process and movement if I implied any sense of epistemological or pedagogical stasis. Showing how each disciplinary lens offers not only a different view of religion but has inevitable pedagogic effects, the resultant movements in epistemological foundations I defined as paradigm shift.

Incommensurability in Religious Education

A paradigmatic status is not easily achieved, to achieve it 'a theory must seem better than its competitors, but it need not, and in fact never does, explain all the facts with which it can be confronted' (Kuhn, 1996: 17-18). Paradigms 'gain their status because they are more successful than their competitors in solving a few problems that the group of practitioners has come to recognize as acute' (Kuhn, 1996: 23). The advance of science is for Kuhn agreement on concepts and theory, frameworks for unresolved problems, as well as methods and methodological thinking to solve them. A paradigm shift is marked by a radical manner of change. Kuhn here offered an interpretive bridge disciplines by a conceptual and methodological framework which potentially incorporated understandings of knowledge transformation in different knowledge communities. And yet there is here enduring the enduring difficulty of comparison of theoretical perspectives or what is known as 'incommensurability', which it is important to say does not mean different theories are entirely incompatible but that they share different orientations or outlooks, a point made by Gunnell (2014) in making an original comparison of Wittgenstein and Kuhn.

There are too, as I plainly admitted difficulties in applying the notion of paradigm shifts to history of ideas contexts *per se*. If for example we see the critical challenge of the

Enlightenment there was a *paradigm shift* from religious to secular understandings of the world – though secularization theorists expected this – and yet religious and secular worldviews have persisted, with accommodations, tensions, etc. (Author 2013: 102; Lewin, 2017). I am thus careful to state that ‘in the more defined context of our present topic [religious education] the use Kuhn’s terms can, with caveats, be usefully applied’. But *note* I write, ‘with caveats’. Here the notion of paradigm, paradigm shift and incommensurability are one way to interpret significant changes in the nature and purposes of religious education.

Jackson’s suggestion therefore that in my paradigmatic schema, there is ‘no incommensurability or intrinsic deep incompatibility’ since ‘communication between people supporting confessional and non-confessional RE is, in principle, possible, and it is possible for individuals to value both forms in different contexts’ is not a logical answer to my premise. Just because religious education professionals can communicate does not mean their dialogue is a meeting in any fundamental sense of either aims or interests (Gates and Jackson 2014; again Davis and Mirosnikova 2012).

I agree, though, that so-called ‘non-confessional’ approaches are not then in practical terms incompatible with ‘confessional’ approaches. But I maintain still that the very idea of a religious education not grounded in the religious life is a paradigm shift in the ancient, historically rooted idea of what religious education is, and is for. I would be happy to concede too that such traditions of confessional religious education are willing to learn from the non-confessional in pedagogy and approaches to learning. Yet I never claimed the paradigms in classroom practice are *absolutely* distinct from one another. In fact the disentanglement of paradigmatic emphases remains one of the major problems of contemporary religious education as a subject. As many others have noted, its rationale is often indistinct mix of aims, objectives, or rationales (Aldrich 2015; Conroy et al.; and, of late, political and even security concerns, see Author 2015; Jackson 2015).

Confessional and non-confessional models of course then co-exist but they do differ in fundamental orientation and, as noted, for reasons of legal and sociological constraint (see again Durham 2012; Ferrari 2012; Willaime 2007). I do therefore present the sufficient and necessary conditions for non-confessional religious education, contrary to reiterated suggestion I do not (Jackson 2015). Yet for those forms of religious education subject to the paradigm shift invoked by the necessity of seeking new grounds when no longer grounded in the religious life, their hermeneutical frameworks are often if unintentionally concealed by a

lack of clarity not only about concepts but about intellectual milieu and trajectory (Aldrich 2015; Lewin 2017).

Why Religious Education Goes to War

Knowledge, as Foucault (1980) had long intimated, is invariably integrally connected to either the seeking, maintain or defence of power. Foucault's (1970; 1972; 1977) lifelong preoccupation was with analysis of how dominant systems of power control not simply knowledge exchange but knowledge creation and legitimation. In *Security, Territory, Population* and in other late publications through his notional 'biopolitics' and 'governmentability' (Foucault 2009; 2010) Foucault lays bare state power as the means of controlling both the mental direction and moral choice: how we think, who we are – an onto-epistemological and ethico-moral constructivism and control (Foucault, 2009; 2010). Such power relations are what postcolonial critics also long since knew and experienced not only in the occupation of foreign powers but in the control exerted by colonial and imperial forces on the construction of colonised culture through the construction of the 'other'. Thus Aimé Césaire's (2014) *Discourse on Colonialism*, Franz Fanon's (1990) violently revolutionary polemic *The Wretched of the Earth* or the more moderate scholarly work of Edward Said's (1994) *Culture and Imperialism* all testify to the power behind the narrative created by the politically dominant. When religious education moves in the circles of the politically powerful it should be at least wary. In the search for a dominant ground for religious education there has been a long and unending paradigm war over something profoundly important, not the specifics of lesson plan or a scheme of work, but the deep structures which animate and drive the purposes of the subject of religious education in non-confessional contexts, many of these I have long tried to highlight as being of critical political significance (Author 2002; 2010; 2012; 2015).

As Jackson's own account of his life-long contributions to religious education attest, the interpretive approach which he appropriated for religious education has had wide and considerable political as well as pedagogic influence (Jackson 2017). Yet contributions, while important, are simply part of a century-or-so long process of finding a thematic and methodological identity for the subject. Jackson thus makes several specific summary points of objection Jackson places at the end of his article, very specific criticisms which he argues undermine my paradigm schema. While the arguments are couched in terms of critique we can read clearly too a defence of his personal, closely defined – paradigmatic – position.

First, he argues 'at least three of the putative pedagogies/paradigms are not pedagogies, and do not have distinct theories of teaching and learning'. A particular objection here is to

the historical-political paradigm which Jackson suggests offers ‘a particular rationale for studying religion, but not a pedagogy involving a theory of teaching and learning’. I beg to differ. Documents such as the OSCE (2007) *Guidelines* are political and security in origin and intention and offer both political rationale and nascent pedagogy. I thus detailed how the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief (an independent expert appointed by the UN Human Rights Council) has played an important role in monitoring infringement of religious freedom around the world, and in a post-9/11 decade the role has become more important. (Indeed, I was part of the Oslo Coalition meeting in 2004 which furthered the work of the International Consultative Conference on School Education in Relation with Freedom of Religion and Belief, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination, Madrid, November 2001.) There is thus a clear pedagogic rationale emergent within the political justification. Further, I noted that at the sixteenth session (2010) of the Human Rights Council, Agenda item 3 was the ‘Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development’, Heiner Bielefeldt, remarked that ‘freedom of religion or belief and school education is a multifaceted issue that entails significant opportunities as well as far-reaching challenges’, recommending States ‘favourably consider a number of principles in this regard’, and refers explicitly to the *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools*. Through the Rapporteur we see evidenced a progressively consolidated link between religion, politics and pedagogy, as I had intimated a decade ago (Author 2008). I am not averse to such initiatives in religious education, indeed I was among the first to identify for developing links between human rights and citizenship in religious education (Author 2002; 2003) but it is critical to state things as they are.

Second, Jackson states that for ‘those examples which could arguably be described as pedagogies (phenomenological, philosophical-conceptual, socio-cultural), there is no clear temporal sequence in which one “paradigm” decisively replaces another’. To begin with I suggest no temporal succession beyond consideration of the history of ideas. Further the mix and match of different paradigmatic frames is part of the issue religious education needs to resolve if it is to sustain its existence (see Chater and Erricker, 2012).

Third, Jackson suggests my association of each paradigm with a specific single discipline cannot be sustained. I have in reply suggested repeatedly, that there is a multiplicity of disciplinary end epistemological lens by which religion and religious education is interpreted – there is longstanding evidence that some religious education authors favour for various reasons one approach or another (Grimmitt, 2000).

Fourth, Jackson suggests my ‘presentation of the historical-political and the socio-cultural paradigms as complementary, shows its incompatibility with Kuhn’s view that different paradigms are incommensurable by definition’. I find this point quite helpful – I could have been clearer in suggesting what is a patent from the first point above that there is only a small step between the socio-cultural uses of religion to its political and as I have elsewhere outlined its security applications.

Fifth, Jackson states a strong claim that I make ‘various false assumptions’, for example ‘with regard to the so-called historical-political paradigm, it does not follow from the fact that researchers consider the relevance of studies of religion to social cohesion, that they must adopt the view that the only aim for the study of religions can be the promotion of social cohesion’ I agree, it does not necessarily follow, but it does not mean that my line of argument is not worth following. The evidence would seem to point out looking at Jackson’s own work (Jackson 2011) that one of the chief advantages of the interpretive approach is that it can be used for such purposes (also Jackson 2014). I do not disparage such but in terms of showing how conceptual frame leads to a certain political engagement in religious terms is useful to point out. In order to demonstrate I have no personal aversion to such engagement, I should also like to point that I am not averse to such engagement per se, and my work here includes the *UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Understanding* and at UNESCO Headquarters Paris acting as Special Rapporteur for the 60th Anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNESCO 2006; 2006a; UNESCO 2011).

Sixth, Jackson suggests ‘my characterisation of different approaches as paradigms includes some inaccuracies and misinterpretations of others’ work’. This charge in large measure seems to be in relation to alleged suggestions of collusion between REDCo researchers – whose contribution to knowledge of religion in education I have long noted – with funding bodies such as the Council of Europe. I did not nor imply ‘collusion’ nor use the word.

The heatedness of the debate is evident. The stakes are high. Modern religious education can thus be defined as the search for epistemological grounds within intellectual traditions which often rejected the holy, not only as a form of knowledge but as an orientation in life. I have suggested that modern, secular religious education, in mirroring modern, secular thought, attempts to maintain the separation of religious education from the religious life, to guard that epistemological border between the holy and the idea of the holy, constantly

attempting to ensure that religious education remains critically distanced from the object of its study.

As a more sympathetic critics has it, [I] pursue an answer to the search through ‘an historical analysis and across the disciplines ... upon philosophy and theology, the natural sciences, social and psychological sciences, spirituality, phenomenology, politics and aesthetics’, and in each case contrast the unambivalently antagonist to and those more sympathetic and accommodating to religion in those intellectual traditions, contrasting those ‘dismissive of religion with those who recognise the insights of their discipline and adapt their understanding of religion and of religious education accordingly’ (Wilson, 2015). What happens in classroom practice of course – and I know this from many years of still current practice – is that there is an effective mix-and-match of these traditions and their influences. I was trying to be helpful in unpacking the intellectual traditions that undergirded practice. The intellectual relations between religious education and said disciplines are important then pedagogically, but as Wilson suggests, this remains a major issue, not only ‘crucial for the future of religious education’ but ‘also for the future of religion’ (Newell, 2014:).

Jackson’s critique is painstaking and particular, and his attack on the paradigms presents is wholesale, crediting little of merit in any aspect of my work, and yet, from the six points of summative argument we can read too a defence of his personal lifelong engagement in the interpretive approach to religious education. Drawing heavily on Geertz, emphasising social and community cohesion through the dialogue provided by mutual understanding, the approach fits neatly within the socio-cultural paradigm (see Arweck, 2017). In this I see Durkheim’s framing of religion as important in defining the socially and culturally cohesive purposes of religion (Durkheim ; see Pals, 2016). Even if Jackson claims that the Geertzian interpretive frame has no influence from Durkheim Jackson’s adaptation of the interpretive frame to issues of dialogue and conflict has strong undercurrents of the Durkheimian. This socio-cultural paradigm has its own intellectual origins. Jackson’s own engagement in the field testifies however to an emergent historical-political paradigm where religious education is increasingly used for political and security purposes, what I define as the politicisation and securitisation of religion in education (see Jackson, 2015; Lewin 2017).

It is untrue to suggest, then, that here or in any of the paradigms I do not refer to the necessary conditions which have engendered them. The socio-cultural paradigm was formed in recognition of the needs of religious pluralism, and compounded by, *qua* Willaime, legal and sociological factors; and a post-9/11 world of seemingly incessant international terrorism has necessitated a strong political and security rationale for the subject. In previous

decades other paradigms such as the phenomenological held sway, and there were times when the psychological-experiential was in vogue, the philosophical-conceptual remains highly current. There are then competing approaches or paradigms.

We are presently though in a new counter-terrorist era where religion have found some resounding and intensified presence in public life (Burleigh 2006; 2007; Casanova 1994; Davis, Milbank, and Zizek 2005; de Vries and Sullivan 2006; Fox and Sandler 2006; Hanson 2006; Haynes 2006; Hoelzl and Ward 2006; James 2006; Juergensmeyer 2005; Runzo, Martin, and Sharma 2004; Rushton 2004; Schmid, 2011; Seiple, Hooper, and Otis 2011). Here it is natural and right for religious educators to take advantage of their knowledge and skills to make a pedagogical contribution to the political. To this degree religious education has never been more in the international limelight but the historical-political frame in which it finds itself is fraught with all sorts of problems and issues for the subject (Author). The mix of political power and pedagogic intention may not bode well for the long-term integrity of the subject, if that is it is ever-more dependent on rationales which lie beyond its professional control, even if recent and important studies of professionalism and professionalisation in religious education might detail more explicitly the often covert pressure these macro-forces have on impacting the curriculum (Freathy, Parker, Schweitzer and Simojoki, 2016).

Issues like political and increasingly security entanglements need to be identified before they can be addressed, and I have attempted to do so, not polemically, but by rooting their emergence within a complex history of ideas. Yet there seems little acknowledgement of such political entanglements beyond the notion that it is acceptable for researchers and political funders to share the same or similar political values. In a judicious and insightful piece of analysis, David Lewin has helpfully entered a conciliatory tone by contextualising the ‘Author-Jackson debate’ through a refining of our notion of secularisation (Lewin 2017a). Lewin is right to do so. Lewin acknowledges ‘[Author’s] argument about the reduction of religion to the political is both plausible and of concern if we are interested in understanding religions on their own terms’. As Lewin argues, ‘[Jackson] misses the basic challenge that religious education serves political ends’ and ‘the substantial concern of the politicisation and securitisation of education remains a problem for understanding religion’ (Lewin 2017a: 1; 9).

Underpinning these developments are some very serious and fundamental issues which I do not feel have been taken with due seriousness by others of my critics. As Carl Schmitt in his *Political Theology* prophetically declared in the decade prior to the rise of Nazism in his

native Germany: ‘All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularised theological concept’; and by which he saw how the theological had and would become further transposed and in ever more extreme ways into the political, ‘ . . . not only because of their historic development – in which they were transferred from theology to the theory of the state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent God became the omnipotent lawgiver – but also because of their systematic structure’. Therefore, ‘The idea of the modern constitutional state triumphed together with deism [over] a theology and metaphysics’ (Schmitt 2005: 36; Author 2012: 162).

There are parallels in the social sciences to competition for epistemological and methodological space in what was known as the ‘paradigm wars’. This was largely a dispute over whether qualitative or quantitative methodologies should hold sway within the social sciences, which could lay greater claims to rigour and reliability in knowledge generated, and about the validity of using mixed methods as part of research design (for example Alasuutari, Bickman and Brannen 2008; Gage 1989; Oakley 1999). Interestingly, given what has claimed about the internal consistencies in terms of the mix and match of paradigms made by Jackson – as an argument against them being paradigmatic – cannot be sustained when we see how the use of the term paradigm was used with perfect sense of validity (amidst much disagreement over epistemological and methodological value) in the said paradigm wars within the social sciences. What is at stake in religious education, however, both transcendentally and immanently, is arguably of greater not lesser import than the epistemological and methodological struggles in the social sciences.

Yet in sheer methodological terms there are still issues of positioning for religious education itself to resolve, as Teece astutely frames it:

In abandoning its formative scriptural/theological principles in search of a ‘secular’ justification and underpinning, RE in state schools is still seeking an agreed and shared epistemology ... [Author] explains so well how such an identity crisis came about and offers a possible way out of the philosophical and pedagogical maze in which the subject appears to be mired. One of the aspects of this identity crisis lies in the fact that in school terms, RE lies predominantly in the humanities whilst at the same time there has been ‘a discernible epistemological identification of researchers of religion in education beyond the arts and humanities towards the social and political sciences (Teece 2015 163).

Thus I contextualise the epistemological search for ground as also a methodological quest in C.P. Snow (2012) famously made dichotomy in his 1959 Cambridge lecture on *The Two Cultures* in which he laments the separation of the arts and the sciences. I think this, as Teece recognises, is an important further consideration for the paradigms, not polemically but in

order to delineate both epistemological grounds and methodological positioning in the subject.

Given the stakes, paradigmatic positioning is why religious education goes in a paradigmatic sense to ‘war’. In order that is – to extend the militaristic metaphor – both to make offensive attacks on forms of religious education deemed inadequate to the modern world and to provide a defensive series of bulwarks against those who would invade and threaten its territory. Jackson’s critique has these characteristics and is an apt demonstration therefore of the position he seeks to undermine.

Conclusion

Enlightenment was, as Kant has shown, as much an attitude as an epistemology. Living in the immediate afterglow of this Enlightenment, in *Fear and Trembling* Søren Kierkegaard ironically observed a prevalent tendency to lay the foundations of human life beyond the life of religious faith, which as he puts it is a mere staging post in human progress: ‘In our time nobody is content to stop with faith but wants to go further. It would be perhaps rash to ask where these people are going, but it is surely a sign of breeding and culture for me to assume that everyone has faith, for otherwise it would be odd for them to be going further’ (Kierkegaard 1941: 1).

In religious education terms a separation of religious education from the religious life has entailed, in no pejorative sense necessitated, a series of alternate epistemological grounds. This has provided a critical distance between religious education and the religious life. Enlightenment is neither a true beginning, most importantly because the Enlightenment had many immediate and ancient origins, nor an adequate or sufficient end. The eighteenth century remains, however, a decisive historical marker from which contemporary, religious education has progressively formed epistemological frames of reference from the modernity out of which it emerged. These appropriations have pedagogical impacts. Thus: philosophical models see the object lesson of religious education to make thinkers and proto-philosophers; socio-cultural models see the object lesson of religious education as creating ethnographic, cultural explorers; psychological models see the learner as a seeker after personal meaning and fulfilment, ‘spirituality’ more preferable to ‘religion’; phenomenological models see the object lesson of religious education as creating a detached observer of religion who is perpetually distanced from it; ever more prevalent political models, emphasizing the public face of religion, see teaching and learning in religious education as concerned with the creation of citizens and even activists; aesthetic models see a role for the arts in religious education, not simply the noting of art in religious contexts but also religious education

classrooms as forums, through the expressive arts, for creativity as spirituality, the artist as spiritual seeker. These approaches to religion have been appropriated by religious education and become the epistemological filters through which religion is conceived and the subject justified.

In framing such complexes I adapted three frames of reference from Kuhn – paradigm, paradigm shift and incommensurability – and defended these with extended reference to the wider project of a seeking of epistemological grounds for religious education no longer grounded in the religious life. I had little polemical intention but it has struck me in constructing this article that the vehemence of Jackson’s critique seems in and of itself of apt demonstration of the position which he seeks to attack. Drawing wider parallels with the methodological ‘paradigm wars’ in the social sciences I have argued in a metaphorical sense that the paradigms are why religious education too goes to ‘war’.

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