

Life Orientation for Professionals

*Sicut enim maius est illuminare quam lucere solum,
ita maius est contemplata aliis tradere quam solum contemplari.*

(Thomas Aquinas in S. Th. II-II, 188, art 6.)

For even as it is better to enlighten than merely to shine, so is it better to give to others the fruits of one's contemplation than merely to contemplate.

Life Orientation for Professionals

*A Narrative Inquiry into Morality and Dialogical
Competency in Professionalisation*

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Table of Contents

Preface	11
Introduction	13
1 Life Orientation in a Secular Context	29
1.1 A rapidly Changing Dutch Society	30
1.1.1 Individualisation	31
1.1.2 Diversity	35
1.1.3 Secularisation	37
1.2 The Educational Context in Post-Pillarised Society	43
1.3 The Subject Religious Education in Transition	45
1.3.1 The Subject <i>Religious Education</i> in Primary and Secondary School	45
1.3.2 It's All in the Name: Religious Education or Worldview Education	48
1.4 Academic Debate on (Inter) Religious and Worldview Education	50
1.4.1 Worldview Education: Knowing Oneself and Others	51
1.4.2 Discerning Personal and Organised Worldviews	59
1.4.3 Redefining and Redignifying Yourself: A Theological Focus	68
1.5 Conceptual Positioning of 'Life Orientation'	73
1.5.1 Religion	74
1.5.2 (Loud and Silent) Ideologies	78
1.5.3 Life Orientation: A Definition	80
2 The Normative-Professional Self	87
2.1 Normative Professionalisation	88
2.1.1 Professionalism and Professionality	88
2.1.2 A Specific Focus: Normativity in Professionality	93
2.2 Narrativity, Ethics and the Self	101
2.2.1 Ricoeur: A Dialectical Narrative Perspective on the Self	101

2.2.2 Taylor: The Self as Emerging in the Space of Existential and Moral Concerns	105
2.3 The Dialogical Self	108
2.3.1 The Valuation Theory: Human Beings as Motivated Storytellers	109
2.3.2 Main Concepts of the Dialogical Self Theory	115
2.4 A Practical-Theological Perspective on the Development of Life Narratives	126
2.5 Education Through Life Orientation and Normative Professionalisation	129
3 Case: Minor Programme <i>Philosophy. World Religions. Spirituality.</i>	135
3.1 Content and Structure of the PhWS Minor	135
3.2 The Holistic Approach to Life Orientation Within a Transformative Pedagogy	140
3.3 A Pedagogy of Interruption	151
4 Methodological Framework	157
4.1 Narrative Inquiry Approach	158
4.2 Description of the Two Student Cohorts	161
4.3 Data Collection: A List of Facilitating Questions	165
4.3.1 Data Collection Procedure	166
4.3.2 List of Facilitating Questions in Cohort-A	169
4.3.3 List of Facilitating Questions in Cohort-B	173
4.4 Method of Analysis in Cohort-A	177
4.4.1 Thematic Analysis With <i>In Vivo</i> Codes	177
4.4.2 Thematic Cross-Over Analysis	179
4.5 Method of Analysis in Cohort-B	181
4.5.1 A Narrative-Dialogical Analysis Instrument	182
4.5.2 A Narrative-Competence Analysis Instrument	185
4.5.3 Meta-Analysis on the Basis of the Narrative-Dialogical and the Narrative-Competence Analysis	188
4.6 Validation Strategies	191

5 Analysis of Students' Articulations in Cohort-A	195
5.1 Thematic Analysis of the First-stage Articulation of Life Orientations	195
5.1.1 First-stage Articulation of Life Orientations	196
5.1.2 'The Meaning of Life' as Articulated in Themes	207
5.1.3 The View on the Ideal Society	214
5.1.4 Professional Beliefs	217
5.2 A Thematic Cross-Over Analysis	221
Summary	239
6 Analysis of Students' Articulations in Cohort-B	241
6.1 View on the World and on the Human Being	241
6.2 A Narrative Study in Three Phases	249
6.2.1 An Ambivalence in the Past Provides Direction – Deepening Integrating Insight	250
6.2.2 An Ambivalence in the Past Plays no Significant Role in Articulation – Broadening of an Already Integrated Insight	256
6.2.3 A Silent Ambivalence Comes to Light During the Minor	259
6.2.4 A Currently Experienced Ambivalence	263
6.2.5 No Ambivalence – Exploring and Taking a Position	267
6.2.6 No Ambivalence – Limited Articulation in an Already Taken Position	271
6.2.7 An Ambivalence Emerging During the Minor	274
Summary	276
7 Conclusions and Discussion	279
7.1 Life Orientation: A Dialogical Perspective on Professionalisation	280
7.2 The First-Stage Articulation of a Life Orientation	284
7.3 The Narrative Competencies of Students and Young Professionals	289
7.4 The Meaning of the Articulation of a Life Orientation for Professionalisation	294
7.5 Discussion of the Conclusions and Implications for Professionalisation	305

7.5.1 Articulated Moral Awareness not Self-Evidently Integrated Into the Professional Self	306
7.5.2 Life Orientation Goes Beyond an Instrumental Use of Reflection in Professionalisation	310
7.5.3 The Humanities Integrate Moral Education and Teach Dialogical Competency	314
7.6 Critical Remarks and Recommendations for Future Research	317
7.6.1 Critical Remarks and Limitations	317
7.6.2 Recommendations for Future Research	320
Epilogue: Faith Encounter on the Agora	325
Appendix A: The Curriculum of the PhWS Minor Programme	329
Appendix B: List of Facilitating Questions to Articulate a View on Life – Cohort-A	331
Appendix C: List of Facilitating Questions to Articulate a Life Orientation – Cohort-B	333
Appendix D: Narrative-Dialogical Analysis Instrument	336
Appendix E: An Overview of Results Narrative-Dialogical Analysis	338
Appendix F: An Overview of Results Narrative-Competence Analysis	342
Appendix G: An overview of each student’s development – Cohort B	346
Bibliography	351
Summary	373

Preface

On August 1, 2010, the Catholic Domstad University for Teacher Education merged with the HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht. In the merger agreement, the small Catholic university stipulated the instalment of a research group on normative professionalisation and the development of an educational programme in philosophy, religion, and spirituality – to safeguard its spiritual legacy. One of the three research interests was the relationship between worldview education and normative professionalisation (cf. Structuurrapport, 2011). This kairotic moment in time has created an exceptional opportunity for this research in an even more peculiar educational context, namely education in philosophical, religious, and spiritual sources at a public university of applied sciences.

[11]

My interest has always been in people's narratives and how they respond to the questions about the meaning of life. What interests me most is the language people use to address thought-provoking questions about what makes sense in life. As a theologian, I regard myself as an intermediary between the meaning-making and articulating process of a human being and the languages of the various wisdom traditions in philosophy, religion, and spirituality. These old traditions need a translation to gain relevance for people nowadays. A translation, which begins by putting their life questions in the front row. That is the ultimate starting point. My life motivation is to help people relate to one another by creating space and time to have a dialogue on these ultimate questions, to walk along with them in developing awareness and insight into their view on life, and to explore the rich human sources of wisdom together.

At this moment, I am a teacher-educator for primary education with a specialisation in the didactics of religious and worldview education. For six years now, I have worked at the public HU University of Applied Sciences

in Utrecht, in the Netherlands. Besides my function as a teacher-educator, I have developed – together with my colleagues Helma de Rooij and Gertie Blaauwendraad – a minor programme in philosophy, world religions, and spirituality for students of all disciplines. Every academic year, we welcome approximately 120 students from different backgrounds and studies, who freely choose to follow this half-year specialisation during their studies. For both teachers and students, each of whom has a unique story to tell, mutual inspiration and enrichment takes place. My colleagues and I have seen something happening to the students. This has taken many forms: a sudden insight causing a sparkling in their eyes, a meaningful silence, joy and frustration, and everything in between. The students have evaluated these moments in a range from a special and precious moment of time during their studies, to a life-changing event. This educational experience of the students is an important motivation to investigate what is happening in this specific form of education, within which we envision developing the professionalisation of students.