

Catholic Dialogue Schools

Enhancing Catholic School Identity in Contemporary Contexts of Religious Pluralisation and Social and Individual Secularisation

Didier POLLEFEYT – Michael RICHARDS
KU Leuven

Catholic schools serve as centres of Catholic identity and Catholic religious education for the youth in their care. In Europe today – as in other international contexts – trends of religious and philosophical diversification as well as social and individual secularisation call into question the Catholic identity of these schools and the educational programming therein. What does it mean to be a Catholic school in a context where the (former) model of Catholics (only) catechising Catholics (only) is no longer operative? What does it mean for schools to conduct Catholic education in social contexts and with school populations that are characterised by this religious and philosophical pluralisation, social secularisation, and individual disengagement with traditional communities of religious belonging and believing? This contribution argues that in such contexts, the model of the Catholic Dialogue School (CDS) is an opportunity to recontextualise the Catholic identity of schools in a way that is both theologically legitimate (in continuity with the richness of the faith tradition) and contextually plausible (viable and effective in a context of religious and philosophical pluralisation).

To that end, these pages address three key foundations for the CDS model: (a) a hermeneutical and post-critical understanding of faith and belief; (b) recontextualisation of the Catholic faith tradition in relation to the current cultural context; and (c) dialogue as a pedagogical space for encountering God and ‘others’ in an environment of religious diversity, philosophical plurality, and multiple ways of relating to the Catholic faith tradition. The three main sections that follow each develop therefore one of these three foundations in turn. Each section encompasses a typological analysis, the identification of a theologically optimal position within that typology, and a presentation of the way in which empirical data from the operationalisation of these typologies can inform a thorough reflection towards the opportunities and challenges for strengthening and enhancing Catholic school identity in light of the CDS foundations.

I. COGNITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS FAITH AND BELIEF: THE POST-CRITICAL BELIEF SCALE

The first of three foundations for the CDS model concerns one's cognitive orientation to faith and belief. The questions this typology investigates are not so much concerned with the content of one's belief (what one believes) or with the religious behaviour of that person (religious affiliation and practice), but with *the way in which one receives, critiques and reflects upon the content* of (his or her) faith and religious beliefs¹. In this way,

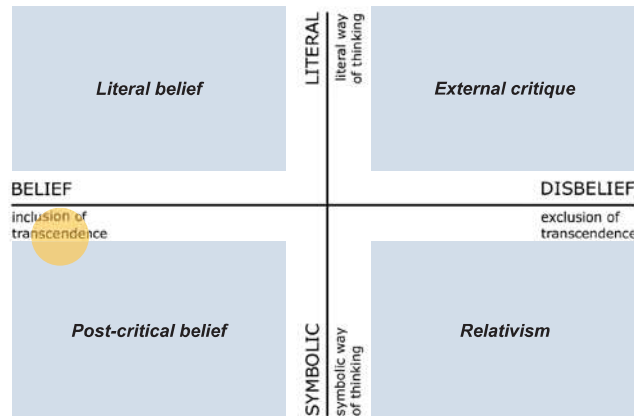


Figure 1: The Post-Critical Belief Scale with theologically optimal position (round marker)

1. The Post-Critical Belief (PCB) Scale as used by those affiliated with the Enhancing Catholic School Identity (ECSI) Research Group draws significantly on the work of other scholars. The typology has its original roots in the work of David Wulff (Wheaton College) as a way to theoretically arrange the various 'styles' with which a subject engages and responds to the content of religious belief, and was subsequently developed into the present typology and an operational questionnaire in the mid-1990s by Dirk Hutsebaut (KU Leuven) for gauging a subject's attitudes toward religious belief. With direct relevance to the context of Catholic schools, it was Didier Pollefeyt (KU Leuven), along with colleagues Goedele Baeke and Jan Bouwens, who began in 2006 to redeveloped this scale for studying the cognitive attitudes towards faith and belief in Catholic schools – a project achieved through the combined efforts of the Centre for Academic Teacher Training at the Faculty of Theology in Leuven and the Catholic Education Commission of the State of Victoria (CECV) in Australia. Further redevelopments of this scale and its operational questionnaires were made by Michael Richards in 2017-2019. See D. WULFF, *Psychology of Religion: Classic and Contemporary Views*, New York, Wiley, 1991, pp. 630-636; D. HUTSEBAUT, *Post-Critical Belief: A New Approach to the Religious Attitude Problem*, in *Journal of Empirical Theology* 9 (1996), no. 2, 48-66; D. POLLEFEYT – J. BOUWENS, *Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools: Empirical Methodology for Quantitative Research on the Catholic Identity of an Education Institute*, in *International Studies in Catholic Education* 2 (2010), no. 2, 193-211; D. POLLEFEYT – J. BOUWENS, *Identity in Dialogue: Assessing and Enhancing Catholic School Identity: Research Methodology and Research Results in Catholic Schools in Victoria, Australia*, Zürich, Lit Verlag, 2014.

the subjects of this Post-Critical Belief (PCB) Scale are the individuals within a school – students, teachers, administrators, parents, and other stakeholders – not the school itself in its institutional or programmatic sense.

As seen in figure 1, the PCB typology is formed by the intersection of two axes. The x-axis concerns the extent to which one affirms (at left) or disaffirms (at right) belief in God, while the y-axis addresses the degree to which one interprets the content of faith and belief in a literal (at top) or symbolic (at bottom) way². The perpendicular axes thus reveal a typology of four primary types (in clockwise order from the upper left): ‘literal belief’, ‘external critique’ (in the position of literal disbelief), ‘relativism’ (in the position of symbolic disbelief), and ‘post-critical belief’ (in the position of symbolic belief)³. Each of these four ideal-types is described below, beginning with ‘literal belief’ and moving clockwise around the diagram through the others.

1. *Literal Belief*

God established (one's religion) as the one true religion in black and white

Starting in the upper left quadrant of the typology, ‘literal belief’ is the type shaped by a maximal affirmation of transcendence (belief in God) and a highly literal way of experiencing and thinking about the content of (one's) faith and religious belief⁴. Theologically speaking the literal belief type is marked by the conviction that experience of and communication with God is directly accessible and unmediated through elements of religion – for example, that God's physical presence can be known imminently in sanctuary and sacrament, and sacred scripture literally communicates to us the words of God⁵. When it comes to reading scripture, ‘literal belief’ pays minimal or no attention to ‘interpretation’ when one considers questions such as literary style, context of the author, context of the translator, the ‘lost-in-translation’ effects of moving between multiple languages, and so forth. The attitude that communication with God is

2. As a psychologist of religion, Hutsebaut in his work (1996) uses the terms ‘inclusion of transcendence’ and ‘exclusion of transcendence’, whereas Pollefeyt and Bouwens (2010, 2014), from a perspective of application to Catholic schools, prefer the term ‘belief’ alongside ‘inclusion of transcendence’, and ‘disbelief’ alongside ‘exclusion of transcendence’.

3. In using any typology of this nature, it should be underscored that the primary types produced through a typological analysis should be understood as theoretical ideal-types. That is, they do not either indicate four exclusive categories into which all subjects must somehow fall or four exclusive style descriptions meant to label a subject. Indeed, the use of this scale with actual participants yields “a continuum with many in-between positions and mixed forms”. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools* (n. 1), p. 195.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*

unmediated thus becomes the primary foundation for asserting that the truth claims of the Catholic tradition offer the only true universal path, and that the objective nature and immutable qualities of those truth claims and that religion offer the only avenue of stability and security amid the challenges of a rapidly changing society⁶.

The ‘literal belief’ ideal-type is thus characterised by both (a) a binary perspective on truth claims and (b) an unquestioning acceptance of things received, akin to the ‘first naïveté’ of Paul Ricœur⁷. Pollefeyt has elsewhere described ‘literal belief’ as typically “uncertain [about or even] afraid of new, complicating problems and therefore desires absolute certainty on matters of faith. On each question of faith, one single, exact, certain and unchangeable answer should be given. Authority, ecclesiastical hierarchy and obedience are of great importance. A subjective, critical faith interpretation is risky since interpretation results in uncertainty and doubt”⁸.

This orientation of ‘literal belief’ towards preserving objectivity regarding truth claims and the content of religious belief, along with its focus on the immutable quality of God and religious faith, can be positively appreciated for the “care [with which this type approaches] the ontological referent of the Christian faith [...]”⁹. This is a type that resists any movement towards disaffirmation of transcendence (disbelief in God) as well as any movement towards a type of overly symbolic experience or overly symbolic understanding such that ‘the ontological referent’ (God) would become ‘merely’ a symbol.

At the same time, some significant concerns arise when such a literal-affirming cognitive attitude is confronted by the complexity of the contemporary world at every level. In light of a society with rapidly advancing scientific knowledge, there are inherent complications in the search for truth when one’s reading of scripture and understanding of tradition remains unwaveringly literal. In this way, the ability of a subject to maturely reconcile what might be thus perceived as contrasting truth claims is compromised in favour of strict adherence to one’s own literal reading of the content of faith and religious belief. Such a cognitive approach could easily lead one, for example, to reject outright (that is, without engagement or critical reflection) those aspects of scientific understanding that stand in contrast to (literally understood) truth claims of faith. When taken to an extreme, this literal-believing type can also fuel religious fanaticism and fundamentalism-motivated intolerance – whether violent or not – when one is confronted by difference and opposition¹⁰.

6. *Ibid.*

7. See P. RICŒUR, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. E. Buchanan, Boston, MA, Beacon, 1969.

8. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Identity in Dialogue* (n. 1), p. 45.

9. *Ibid.*

10. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools* (n. 1), p. 195.

2. External Critique

The ridiculousness of religion makes it impossible to believe (any more)

Moving in the PCB diagram from the upper left quadrant to the upper right, we turn from ‘literal belief’ to ‘external critique’. This is the ideal-type marked by the intersection of disbelief in God (disaffirmation of transcendence) and a literal way of interpreting the content of faith and religious belief. By comparison to the previous type, ‘external critique’ therefore shares a literal approach to interpretation, but relates that literal interpretation not with an affirmation of faith in God and religion but with disaffirmation thereof¹¹. It is as if one says: “This can’t be true (as stated or written). I can’t believe (in religion, in God)”.

Such literal disaffirmation does not come about because one has not yet arrived at a position of religious faith¹². Rather, this ideal-type concerns a philosophical position and outlook on religion characterised by a rejection thereof *after* already having been introduced to and reflected upon (to a certain extent) the belief content proposed by that faith. ‘External critique’ is typically aware of the tension between scientific rationality and a literal understanding of faith, values a preeminent place for science, reasoning and modern rationality, but has in all likelihood not (yet) considered an alternate and more symbolic interpretation of the belief content¹³. In this way, one perceives an ‘irreconcilable’ confrontation between the content of religion (taken literally) and modern scientific reasoning and human rationality, rejecting for example religious beliefs in transcendent realities, scripture stories of miracles and healings, the doctrines of religious observances and the like on grounds that such things are untenable given a scientifically informed rationality. Pollefeyt describes ‘external critique’ as “often framed in a modernistic, positivistic-scientific epistemology [seeking] clarity and objective certainty, as can be found in the positive sciences”¹⁴. In this way, one is “afraid of the uncertainty [found] in matters of faith and associate[s] religion with [confusion and control]”, and instead emphasises “freedom and personal autonomy, in opposition to the dependence associated with religious faith”¹⁵. In more extreme cases, this whole-sale rejection can leave one to take up a type of anti-religious intolerance or “anti-religious fundamentalism”¹⁶.

11. While ‘literal disaffirmation’ is the term used in HUTSEBAUT, *Post-Critical Belief* (n. 1), ‘literal disbelief’ is the predominant term used in POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools* (n. 1).

12. HUTSEBAUT, *Post-Critical Belief* (n. 1), p. 58.

13. *Ibid.*

14. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Identity in Dialogue* (n. 1), p. 46.

15. *Ibid.*

16. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools* (n. 1), p. 196.

3. *Relativism*

*People can just believe (in) whatever they want.
In the end, it's all the same anyway*

Continuing a clockwise rotation, the ideal-type of ‘relativism’ is found in the lower-right quadrant, at the intersection of disaffirmation (disbelief in God) and a highly symbolic way of experiencing and understanding the content of religious belief¹⁷. This is a type that can and does find meaning in the interpretation of content traditionally associated with religion(s), but denies that such ‘religion’ serves to mediate or point to a transcendent God¹⁸. Rather, for ‘relativism’, beliefs are at best representative only of the unique thinking of an individual or group situated in a unique time and place. This perspective holds that each individual’s way of interpreting meaning is one equal option among a vast many, since all religions are equally untrue¹⁹. In this way, the ultimate authority is the self, and not any common religious authority or ‘divinity’ that is revealed for humanity.

Despite the lack of belief in God, this ideal-type maintains an interest in religious and philosophical traditions. One can appreciate various aspects of a religious tradition, even religious belief, in an immanent but not transcendent (God-oriented) way. This is to say that religion(s) is (are) “not rejected resolutely [but] put into perspective. There remains a positive interest in religion, sometimes even a sympathy or fascination for religion [as well as] a great openness and receptivity towards various philosophical and religious traditions, as long as no coercion is used”²⁰. In this way, ‘relativism’ is typically perceived as “a (temporary) position of *non-commitment*: they prefer not to commit themselves and they refrain from a positive choice for or against any religious stance”²¹.

This valuation of religion – or rather aspects of religion – may very well lead one to find meaning in stories and traditions associated with religion, even if that meaning does not touch upon one’s relationship with God²². In ‘relativism’, one sees immanent beauty and meaning in religious art-work, music, architecture, stories, sermons, liturgies, and the like. To the

17. While HUTSEBAUT, *Post-Critical Belief* (n. 1) acknowledges the use of the term ‘reductive interpretation’ in WULFF, *Psychology of Religion* (n. 1), the former goes further in his model to use the term ‘relativism’ in naming this ideal-type. The same type could also be considered ‘symbolic disaffirmation’ if one were to adhere to the terms already in use on Hutsebaut’s x- and y-axis. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools* (n. 1) also introduces the term ‘awareness of contingency’ to help describe the relationship of this type to ‘post-critical belief’ when the latter is dominant (a ‘relationship’ made more evident in the analysis of empirical data further below).

18. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools* (n. 1), p. 196.

19. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Identity in Dialogue* (n. 1), pp. 46–47.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

21. *Ibid.*

22. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools* (n. 1), p. 196.

extent that one encounters ‘God’ in these stories, traditions and forms of art, this ‘God’ remains a kind of mythological character and does not as such exist outside thereof. In this way, it is impossible to speak of ‘religious *faith*’ with regard to the ‘relativism’ type.

At the same time, this ideal-type’s openness to the multiplicity of others should also be recognised as a positive quality in contrast to the binary thinking favoured by the two ‘literal’ types. In this way, it could be said that an extreme form of ‘relativism’ is not as dangerous to society as are the extremes of ‘literal belief’ and ‘external critique’. However, extremes of ‘relativism’ may lead one towards apathy, indifference, and the lack of a sense of solidarity with those who are different²³.

4. *Post-Critical Belief*

*Amid the complexities of life, God is present among us ever again,
inviting us into a mutual relationship through sign and symbol*

Fourth and finally in this typology, there is the ideal-type of ‘post-critical belief’ (PCB)²⁴. Located in the lower left quadrant of the diagram, this type is the combined result of high affirmation of transcendence (belief in God) and a highly symbolic approach to experiencing and understanding the content of one’s religious belief. This is a type that resembles the second naïveté described by Paul Ricœur, in which the “immediacy of belief” is lost to the critical mind, but faith is known and deepened where “the symbol gives rise to thought”, for “it is by *interpreting* that [one] can *hear* again”²⁵. In this type of faith and belief, one is able to relate to God through the (symbolically interpreted) mediation of religion, even while one may or may not affirm ‘direct’ revelation to varying degrees depending on one’s actual position with this type (a point taken up below with regard to the ‘theologically optimal position’). The term ‘post-critical belief’ therefore conveys the sense that one comes to faith (again and again in new ways) after (a) having encountered and reflected on other (competing) perspectives, including various critiques of religion, belief, faith, and God, and (b) having (re)developed a “renewed faith understanding” through deeper, more symbolic (re)interpretations of the content of that faith and religion²⁶.

Key therefore to developing this ‘post-critical’ style of faith-understanding is the capacity for a hermeneutical interpretation of texts and traditions

23. *Ibid.*, p. 197.

24. While HUTSEBAUT, *Post-Critical Belief* (n. 1) acknowledges the use of the term ‘restorative interpretation’ in WULFF, *Psychology of Religion* (n. 1), the former brings to light Paul Ricœur’s understanding of ‘second naïveté’ and introduces the notion of ‘post-critical belief’. See RICŒUR, *The Symbolism of Evil* (n. 7), pp. 348-351.

25. RICŒUR, *The Symbolism of Evil* (n. 7), pp. 348-351.

26. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Identity in Dialogue* (n. 1), p. 48.

in order to arrive at a meaning that is both reasonable to the rational mind and live-giving to a dynamic and ever-evolving relationship with God. Pollefeyt describes this elsewhere:

To believe is only possible and meaningful after interpretation. Here, critical reason plays an important role, so that we don't believe in nonsense against our better judgment. Biblical texts and other religious writings can only be understood and believed in after interpretation. The Bible is written in a specific historical context and employs (sometimes obsolete) mythological, symbolic, and religious language in which the story of God with human beings is told. To read the Bible, then, requires interpretation, deciphering, translation: the post-critical believer tries to distinguish the mythological images from the religious message for us, alive in the here and now²⁷.

In this way, one engages in a “continuous [search] for religious significance and meaning without ever [arriving at] a final, absolute, established and certain answer” and are ‘prepared for reinterpretation, [...] open to change, and [...] receptive to complex faith questions that feed the [perpetual] hermeneutical process’²⁸. This kind of faith-understanding thus enables one not only to locate one's faith in God amid the tension between doctrine and scientific rationality but also to develop and deepen one's faith through that ‘tension’. In this continuous search for (new) meaning, it is important to note that ‘post-critical belief’ does not therefore dismiss outright those elements of religious faith that seem ‘irrational’, but through the interpretation thereof is able to discover a deeper, richer meaning therein. Thus it is possible to assert that, in light of its perpetual hermeneutics, ‘post-critical belief’ not only preserves the fullness of Christianity but also has the potential to enrich it.

All of this is not to say that such a cognitive position is by any means a ‘safe’ place to be. In fact, ‘post-critical belief’ has to live in tension with the other ideal-types. The two non-believing types (‘external critique’ and ‘relativism’) regard ‘post-critical belief’ as a form of “disguised literal belief”, and ‘literal belief’ sees this type as not much more than “relativism and a watering down of [a] literal faith understanding” resulting, in its most extreme forms, in an attitude that affirms belief in God and espouses ‘religion’ but so ‘over-interprets’ religious content symbolically that only vagueness, uncertainty, and unending interpretations remain²⁹.

However, rather than rejecting these other types in return, ‘post-critical belief’ tends to be sympathetic (open and receptive) to others³⁰. Perhaps this is because ‘post-critical belief’ is the result of a maturation process of faith-understanding that (a) has at one point or another passed through the

27. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools* (n. 1), p. 197.

28. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Identity in Dialogue* (n. 1), p. 48.

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Ibid.*

other types and (b) has in the end come to absorb and integrate some of the more salient characteristics of each type: from literal belief, the care for the ontological referent of faith (that is, God); from external critique, the willingness to bring scientific reasoning to bear in critiquing the immutable faith claims and religious content of literal belief; and from relativism, the awareness of and even appreciation of a vast realm of other experiences and other perspectives, both those which affirm religion and the transcendent, and those that stand in opposition to faith in God.

5. *Theologically Optimal Position*

This contribution argues that a hermeneutical and post-critical faith understanding, characterised by maximal openness to transcendence and affirmation of belief in God, as well as close proximity to (but not immersion in) aspects of literal belief is the preferred avenue for faith formation at Catholic schools in contemporary contexts. This ‘optimal’ position is identified in the location of the golden marker in the figure above. Note carefully that it is not located in the extreme lower left, but in a position of ‘post-critical belief’ that is as close as possible to ‘literal belief’ without actually entering into the latter.

This position is one that is reflected in the sense of Paul’s remarks “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Cor 13,12). Recognising that he is already “fully known” by God, Paul is aware of his own desire to know God fully and no longer in part. This is a desire for a real (‘literal’ or ‘unmediated’) encounter and real (same sense) knowledge, even though Paul is also aware that this kind of encounter and knowledge are not likely to happen in this life (“but *then* face to face”; “but *then* I shall know”). Furthermore, Paul expresses the understanding (“dimly” as “in a mirror”) that encounters with and knowledge of God have a mediated quality to them. In this way, Paul underscores the dialectal nature of the theological optimal position: indirect yet yearning for directness; mediated yet thirsting for the unmediated; symbolic yet seeking the literal that is unattainable in this life.

Such hermeneutical and post-critical faith-understanding affirms a relationship with the living God and ‘lives into’ that relationship through mediations, interpretations, translations, self-reflection and (re)narration of one’s identity and one’s faith relationship with God across the span of one’s lifetime. This is a kind of faith-understanding that challenges the believer to move more deeply into the complexities of faith and belief in a context of vast religious and philosophical plurality and vast tensions between Christian traditions and the culture at large. Entering more deeply into ‘post-critical belief’ means leaving behind a (more literal) type of faith often characterised by security, limited contact with others, a certain distance from the culture, and perhaps at some level even fear of the

unknown and the uncertain. In its place, the believer is invited to give shape and meaning to one's belief and faith-understanding through well-grounded informed contact with today's world, through meaningful relationships with religious and philosophical others, and through a hermeneutical openness to discovering the movement of God in one's life and the world today. As with each of the three foundations for the CDS model, a hermeneutical and post-critical faith-understanding is not simplistic, easily defined or learnable via textbook instruction. Rather, this more symbolic way of understanding one's faith and one's religious encounters with others is a complex endeavour that likewise opens itself to the complexities of the socio-cultural context in which one lives and the complexities of one's own identity formation.

6. *Empirical Insights on Cognitive Styles of Faith and Belief*

Using instruments developed through the Enhancing Catholic School Identity (ECSI) research project at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, real Catholic schools and networks of schools (e.g. at the level of a diocese or a religious congregation) are able to gain empirical insights into the cognitive styles present among the constituent populations of their schools³¹. The figure below demonstrates what such results might look like in one particular subject population.

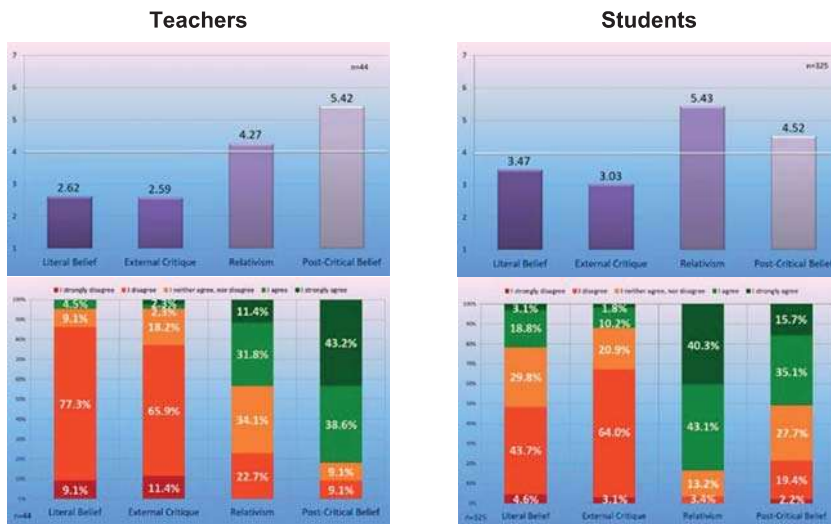


Figure 2: Sample results of the Post-Critical Belief Scale

31. In addition to POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Identity in Dialogue* (n. 1), see also www.schoolidentity.net for more information on the empirical study that operationalises these typologies.

Beginning with the mean results of the teacher population in the upper left quadrant, the ECSI instruments reveal a group of forty-four ($n = 44$) teachers that is marked most prominently by ‘post-critical belief’ (mean = 5.42), coloured by a ‘healthy’ degree of awareness that such belief takes shape in a context of plurality (‘relativism’ mean = 4.27) – the latter of which can also be termed an ‘awareness of contingency’ in relation to a dominant ‘post-critical belief’. This is also a group of teachers who largely reject ‘literal belief’ (mean = 2.62) and, to a slightly greater extent, ‘external critique’ (mean = 2.59).

The percentage distributions for that same teacher population in the lower left quadrant reflect some of the diversity and nuance within that population. The greatest amount of diversity is found with regards to ‘relativism’ and thereby the role that religious and philosophical plurality plays in one’s faith position. Approximately 42.2 percent affirm a positive contribution for such plurality, while another 22.7 percent disaffirm that contribution, and another 34.1 percent are hesitant or unsure. Regarding the two faith-affirming styles, there is a large degree of agreement on both the positive appreciation of ‘post-critical belief’ (affirmation total 81.8%) and the negative estimation of ‘literal belief’ (disaffirmation total 86.4%). For ‘external critique’, it is also worthwhile to note that there is a small subpopulation (4.6%) that affirms this style to some degree.

When looking at the mean results of the students (upper and lower right quadrants), the composite profile is noticeably different. For them as a group, ‘relativism’ is clearly the dominant style (mean = 5.43 with favourability among 83.4% of the population). This ‘relativism’ is moderately open to ‘post-critical belief’ (mean = 4.52) and somewhat hesitant about ‘literal belief’ (mean = 3.47). On the whole, the students reject ‘external critique’ (mean = 3.03), although with a notable minority that affirms this style (12.0%). The percentage calculations for the student population demonstrate a great degree of internal diversity, with the two ‘belief-affirming’ types (‘literal belief’ and ‘post-critical belief’) being the points of greatest contention. In regards to ‘literal belief’, about one-fifth of the student group (21.9%) affirms this style, while nearly half (48.3%) reject it, and almost one-third (29.8%) is indifferent or unsure. Similarly, ‘post-critical belief’ – although appreciated positively on the whole – is supported by about half (50.8%) of the population, while another one-fifth (21.6%) rejects this type and the remaining one-quarter (27.7%) is indifferent or unsure. The diversity of cognitive styles among the student population is thus visible in the data.

II. SCHOOL MISSIOLOGICAL IDENTITY: THE MELBOURNE SCALE

Shifting now to the second of three foundations for the CDS model, this section addresses the question of missiological identity for Catholic schools in contexts where there is a noticeable and increasingly large ‘gap’

between the Catholic faith tradition and the culture at large. How are we to understand the theological ‘mission’ of Catholic schools in such contexts? In what ways do Catholic schools engage and communicate the faith tradition in relation to a changing context? What happens if schools do little or nothing to invest strategically in developing a clear and robust missiological identity in light of the cultural context? Such questions can be explored theoretically through a typology that locates five ideal-types against the background of the social context: the Melbourne Scale³².

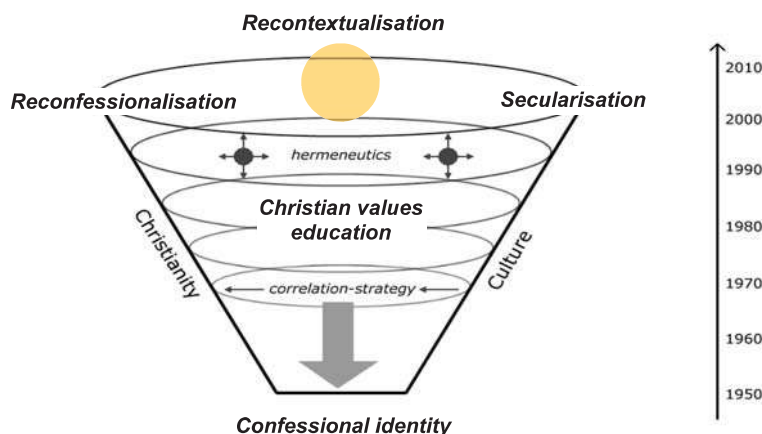


Figure 3: The Melbourne Scale with theological optimal position (round marker)

The framework of this typology is constructed in reference to a timeline (at right in the diagram) that begins around 1950 and continues as a projection through the present and beyond. Against this chronological backdrop, the diagonal vector at left represents the Catholic faith tradition and the one at right represents the socio-cultural context at large. The divergence between these two vectors (that is, as the schema moves forward in

32. The ideal-types as presented here are rooted in L. BOEVE, *The Identity of a Catholic University in Post-Christian European Societies: Four Models*, in *Louvain Studies* 31 (2006) 238-258. Although Boeve's typology was originally developed with a perspective towards the identity of Catholic universities, his work can be and has been widely applied to the context of primary and secondary Catholic schools. In fact it was Didier Pollefeyt and colleagues who overlaid Boeve's typology against an already developed schema (2004) for understanding the effects of pluralisation and secularisation in society. This convergence occurred around 2006 as Pollefeyt and research associate Jan Bouwens began to apply the combined schema and typology for use in the study of Catholic school identity – a project conducted in partnership between the Centre for Academic Teacher Training at the Faculty of Theology in Leuven and the Catholic Education Commission of the State of Victoria (CECV) in Australia. The resulting typology was named the 'Melbourne Scale' in recognition of the Australian city where the ECSI empirical research was first conducted.

time, vertically upward) reflects the increasing ‘gap’ that results from two interwoven social dynamics:

- Social and individual secularisation (understood broadly as the differentiation of social spheres, the privatisation of personal religiosity, and the withdrawal from engagement with religion)³³. In certain contexts (like Belgium, for example) where the Catholic tradition and society were once thought to be inseparable, these two vectors could be said to converge as one moves back in time (that is, vertically downward in the diagram). On the other hand, these vectors would not historically converge in other contexts (like Australia or North America, for example), where the Catholic faith tradition has always been a historical minority in terms of social demographics and societal influence.
- Religious and philosophical pluralisation, represented in the spiraling (horizontal) rings found at several places along the vertical axis³⁴.

In this way, it can be said that secularisation and pluralisation combine in such a way so as to create a context in which the overall relationship between the culture at large (secularising and pluralising as it is) and the Catholic faith tradition is one of divergence, to varying degrees. This is the ‘gap’ reflected in the Melbourne Scale diagram.

Regarding a missiology for Catholic schools, the schema then locates five ideal-types on this socio-historical framework: (1) a traditional confessional identity (bottom centre, here abbreviated as ‘confessionality’); (2) ‘education in Christian values’ (lower centre, also referred to as Christian values education and values education); (3) ‘secularisation’ as deconfessionalisation (upper right); (4) ‘reconfessionalisation’ (upper left); and

33. An analysis of ‘secularisation’ is beyond the scope of this contribution. For several relevant starting points, see K. DOBBELAERE, *Secularization: An Analysis at Three Levels* (Gods, Humans and Religions 1), Brussels, Peter Lang, 2004; J. CASANOVA, *Public Religion in the Modern World*, Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press, 1994, pp. 11-39; J. CASANOVA, *Public Religions Revisited*, in H. DE VRIES (ed.), *Religion: Beyond the Concept*, New York, Fordham University Press, 2008, 101-119; A. KURU, *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion: The United States, France, and Turkey* (Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion, and Politics), New York, Cambridge University Press, 2009; C. TAYLOR, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2007; G. DAVIE, *From Believing without Belonging to Vicarious Religion: Understanding the Patterns of Religion in Modern Europe*, in D. POLLACK – D. OLSON (eds.), *The Role of Religion in Modern Societies* (Routledge Advances in Sociology), New York, Routledge, 2008, 165-176.

34. An analysis of ‘pluralisation’ is also beyond the scope of this contribution. For starting points relevant to this framework, see L. BOEVE, *God Interrupts History: Theology in a Time of Upheaval*, New York, Continuum, 2007, pp. 139-46; G. SKEIE, *The Concept of Plurality and Its Meaning for Religious Education*, in *British Journal of Religious Education* 25 (2002), no. 1, 53-54; C. CORNILLE, *The Dynamics of Multiple Belonging*, introduction to EAD. (ed.), *Many Mansions? Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity*, Maryknoll, NY, Orbis, 2002; C. LIM – C.A. MACGREGOR – R. PUTNAM, *Secular and Liminal: Discovering Heterogeneity among Religious Nones*, in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 49 (2010) 596-618.

‘recontextualisation’ (upper centre). In the paragraphs that follow, each of the five ideal-types is described in turn.

1. *Traditional Confessional Identity*

*Catholics educating Catholics in traditional Catholicism,
just as it's always been*

This ideal-type represents the traditional catechetical missiology of Catholic schools (typically associated with the pre-Vatican II era): an education in and to the world of Catholicism, by Catholics and for Catholics. In this identity type, the many aspects of traditional Catholicity (a traditional crucifix, statue of Mary or mass, for example) are both *explicitly present* in the life of the schools and *understood* by the vast majority of the (Catholic) students, families and teachers. Schools today can and may continue to exhibit aspects of this traditional confessional identity to varying degrees. In this way, ‘confessionality’ also describes a contemporary Catholic school (or dimensions thereof) that “has not wavered from its long-standing Catholic identity in the face of a changing society, and thus still bears strong resemblance to the Catholic identity it possessed a half century ago”³⁵.

2. *Education in Christian Values*

Culture and Christianity want the same basic goal: The living of a good life

Amid the increasing secularisation and expanding religious and philosophical diversification in society, a second ideal-type emerges when the ‘gap’ between culture and tradition is perceived to be relatively limited and ‘bridgeable’. This is the type known as ‘education in Christian values’ or ‘Christian values education’ (lower centre on the diagram). As its name implies, this ideal-type aims to emphasise (humanistic) values – such as love, respect and honesty – that are presumed to be *both* Christian (that is, reflective of the Christian tradition as embodied in Jesus) *and* broadly held among a (somewhat) secularising and (somewhat) pluralising society. This ideal-type thus “aims at a compromise between culture and Catholic tradition in an attempt to maintain a Catholic school identity that ‘keeps up with the times’ and with which [seemingly] anybody can reconcile”³⁶. In this way, it is hoped that by emphasising the strongest and most ‘inextricable’ links between Christianity and the Christian heritage or Christian foundations of the culture at large that the Christian faith tradition will (continue to) be (a) appreciated for its contributions to the good of society

35. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Identity in Dialogue* (n. 1), p. 55.

36. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools* (n. 1), p. 200.

at large and (b) attractive to adherents and potential adherents thereof. This identity type is thus perceived to be welcoming, non-alienating and easily able to incorporate all manner of people into the school community and programs (Catholics, non-Catholics, non-Christians, and even those former, but now fallen away, Catholics that Boeve calls “post-Christians”³⁷).

The hallmark theological pedagogy of this ideal-type is the ‘mono-correlation’ strategy that makes possible such seemingly harmonious movement from culture and experience to the religious tradition³⁸. Through ‘mono-correlation’, teachers attempt to draw students towards an appreciation and even appropriation of the religious tradition by starting with what is presumed to be ‘common’ experiences and exposing the (again presumed) underlying Christian foundations of that experience³⁹. For example, “this approach might start with the experience of love between two human beings, give a Catholic explanation to it, and arrive at the love of God for all people”⁴⁰. In this way, themes that are perceived to engage a broad student population – such as ethics, community service, social justice, and so-called ‘gospel values’ – dominate the religion curriculum and religious culture of the school. In this way, it is hoped (a) that students (and teachers) come to value positively the contributions of the faith tradition (understood in terms of ‘values’ and ‘ethics’) to society and education, and (b) that through such (newfound) appreciation, they develop a (new-found) desire to become active participants (once again) in the Catholic religious tradition. In this way, ‘values education’ is a type that maintains “confessionalising intentions”, however hidden and unpublicised as those intentions may be⁴¹.

While ‘values education’ and its accompanying ‘mono-correlation’ strategy may be plausible in contexts where the ‘gap’ between tradition and culture is in fact limited, this ideal-type breaks down as the dynamics of secularisation and pluralisation move forward and a much larger ‘gap’ becomes evident⁴². In such cases, the fundamental presumptions of this type actually undermine its own effectiveness, leading to its own ‘mal-function’. As has been described elsewhere, “If present-day experiences are too difficult to explain and categorise them from a Catholic perspective, then the correlation movement is in danger of running aground half way. If in the long term this ineffectiveness is linked to predictability (students see the attempt at correlation coming from a long way off), then

37. BOEVE, *The Identity of a Catholic University* (n. 32), p. 252. See also POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Identity in Dialogue* (n. 1), p. 53.

38. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Identity in Dialogue* (n. 1), pp. 53-54.

39. *Ibid.*

40. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

41. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools* (n. 1), p. 200.

42. BOEVE, *The Identity of a Catholic University* (n. 32), p. 253.

this strategy can end up being counterproductive”⁴³. Such counter-productivity occurs when “values education in a Christian perspective [turns out to be just] an intermediate phase towards [...] secularization”, whether that happens at an individual level, a school level, or both⁴⁴.

A second breakdown of the ‘Christian values education’ ideal-type happens through a kind of “horizontalisation” of the Catholic faith tradition in which “those elements that are easy to link to present-day experience are selected spontaneously” and those that are perceived to be confrontational or difficult to reconcile with modern rationality and a pluralising context are left aside⁴⁵. When this occurs, Christianity risks becoming essentially equated with a commonly accepted humanistic moral code couched in Christian language: “To be Christian is to be a good person, to love your neighbour as yourself”, one might say. The result of such a ‘horizontalising’ process over time is the gradual reduction of Christianity to ethics, separated from its religious history, its wider body of teachings, its spirituality, its call to a new life in Christ – in short an emphasis on the similarities between the context and the Christian tradition without any concern for the particularities of the latter⁴⁶.

This breakdown of ‘Christian values education’ is not *per se* a rejection of correlation theology as a theological method. Rather, such a breakdown reflects the risks of a didactical application of correlation theology that results in or enables a reduction of the Catholic faith tradition to ‘values’ that are assumed to be both ‘universal’ and emblematic of the particularity of Jesus Christ. To combat this reductive tendency and its secularising effects, the solution lies in strengthening and enhancing the explicit presence of the Catholic faith tradition (replete with its richness and particularity) in Catholic schools today by releasing the tradition from ‘values’ in which students no longer see a correlation with the Christian tradition (a solution discussed below as ‘recontextualisation’ and ‘multicorrelation’).

3. Secularisation

A school that is no longer Catholic, not even in name

A third ideal-type on the Melbourne Scale is one that sees what can be called deconfessionalisation (the stripping away of Catholic identity and culture) as the solution for schools in contexts of advancing secularisation and expanding religious and philosophical pluralisation. This type, known as ‘secularisation’ (upper right on the diagram) opts for a school that is resolutely areligious in its culture, composition, educational philosophy,

43. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Identity in Dialogue* (n. 1), p. 54.

44. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools* (n. 1), p. 201.

45. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Identity in Dialogue* (n. 1), p. 54.

46. BOEVE, *The Identity of a Catholic University* (n. 32), p. 253.

curriculum and practices⁴⁷. Individual (Catholic) believers may still be present in the school (likely as a minority subpopulation) but there is no (longer any) institutional affiliation with Catholicism, Christianity in general, or any religion for that matter. Even if such a school were to have a ‘Catholic’ name, that too is likely to be left behind with the changing times.

A name change notwithstanding, this school type is by theological measures no longer a *Catholic* school. Prayer and sacraments would no longer be part of the culture and educational programming of the school. These may be replaced by optional services outside of the school day alongside other religious options; they may be replaced by multi-religious and/or humanistic prayer services; or they may most likely disappear altogether. A more sociological or phenomenological form of ‘religious’ studies may replace a more explicitly Catholic form of religious education; or there may be no such education at all. Such a school type would likely not use or refer to any religious criteria in its admissions or hiring processes, or in the assessment of students and the evaluation of staff. Priests or members of religious congregations would no longer be present (as an active choice on the part of the school), and items like crucifixes and religious statues would be relegated to storage closets or removed entirely from the campus.

It is important to underscore that such deconfessionalisation need not be *necessarily* an active and intentional process carried out as the result of critical reflection and planning. In fact it is possible that such an identity emerges as the result of a kind of passive (unreflective) evolution over time. As described elsewhere, “This school type [can parallel] the cultural context: just as the Catholic faith gradually disappears in culture, this [can happen] at school as well. The Catholic nature and the preferential option for Catholicism erode away slowly until nothing is left of them in daily school life. [...] This gradual erosion is often more an implicit process than a conscious and guided option”⁴⁸. A ‘secularising’ school such as this may therefore indeed have a Catholic history, and will likely still be a place of academic rigor in an environment that aims to guide students in acquiring widely held, humanistic values that promote a civilised and democratic society; however, such a school marginalises any interest in advancing a Catholic identity narrative or a Catholic culture in the life of the school.

Furthermore, it is also important to note that the ‘secularisation’ identity type should not be equated *de facto* with ‘neutrality’ in regards to religion, spirituality, or ethics. Firstly, if such a school were committedly pluralistic in its identity, it would “maintain, in principle, openness for debate on

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 248-249; POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools* (n. 1), p. 202.

48. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Identity in Dialogue* (n. 1), p. 55.

matters of faith and other fundamental life options and [would] stimulate the establishment of a culture in which such debate can take place. Christians in such circumstances are free to introduce explicitly their particular perspective”⁴⁹. Secondly, even if a secularising school does in fact opt for a more severe form of neutrality by banishing religion from the culture and programming of the school, such a position is philosophically speaking *not* neutral. Rather, “Where [such neutrality] is claimed, there are often unexpressed fundamental life options at its foundations, stemming from positivistic motivations and/or naïve Enlightenment thinking”⁵⁰. The variations between these two forms of ‘religious neutrality’ are further addressed in the Victoria scale (third of three sections in this contribution) by way respectively of the ‘multilogue school’ and the ‘neutral school’.

4. *Reconfessionalisation*

Standing strong in the face of culture today by recapturing the identity of “the good ole days”

Laterally opposite the ‘secularisation’ type, the ‘reconfessionalisation’ type (upper left in the diagram) responds to the same kinds of cultural dynamics by (re)embracing (once again) in a very public way and with great fervour many traditional markers of a robust Catholic school identity and culture. In this ideal-type, one looks to the comparatively stronger confessionality of Catholic schools from the early and mid-twentieth century and desires to (re)capture that kind of Catholic school identity in the context of today. This is a “disciplined [school] with a large population of practicing Catholics”, where catechesis for all is the centrepiece of the school’s religious education and close ties to the church are very important⁵¹. “Celebrations of the Eucharist are held on a regular basis. There is school prayer during the course of each day. Students have the opportunity for confession once in a while. Sometimes, religious brothers and sisters or priests play a prominent role at the school”⁵². Thus, with “the specific intention of reforming young people as traditional Catholics”⁵³, the reconfessionalising school aims to (re)establish a strong, evident, and pervasive Catholic identity marked by traditional indicators of Catholicity in its school culture and programs and even in the composition of its school

49. BOEVE, *The Identity of a Catholic University* (n. 32), p. 248.

50. *Ibid.* See also POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools* (n. 1), p. 202.

51. This description is excerpted from the 2011 version of the empirical questionnaire for this scale; thus, this is what parents, teachers and administrators read about examples of ‘reconfessionalisation’. See www.schoolidentity.net for more information about the empirical research project.

52. Also from the 2011 version of the empirical questionnaire. See note 51 above.

53. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Identity in Dialogue* (n. 1), p. 55.

community. In this way, ‘reconfessionalisation’ is said to be *an active, reflective, and intentional response* to the changing context.

Several different starting points for ‘reconfessionalisation’ are possible. This could be the identity option of a long-existing school whose confessional identity has decayed or been marginalised over time and who now consciously decides to renew that confessional identity in a move to “bring the school culture closer [once again] to [traditional] Catholicism”⁵⁴. ‘Reconfessionalisation’ could also be possible in a school whose long-standing confessional identity has in fact eroded little over time but who still desires (in a reflective and active way) to maintain and strengthen such an identity amid and against societal change. Furthermore, it could also be possible to opt for this identity type in opening new Catholic schools, seeking thereby to establish and actively develop the identity and culture of those schools as places of ‘traditional’ Catholicity.

While the ‘reconfessionalisation’ type does clearly draw upon many of the strengths of traditional Catholic school identity in service to those families who seek a school that shares a clear heritage with the traditional Catholic schools of previous generations, two significant risks face the implementation of this type of school in secularising and pluralising contexts. The greatest risk is that such a school may become overly concerned with privileging a place for Catholics and Catholicism that it closes itself off to otherness and interaction with the wider cultural context. This is an extreme but nevertheless plausible possibility that occurs when the ‘reconfessionalisation’ and ‘monologue school’ identity types (the latter is addressed in the third section of this contribution) are brought together. In such an extreme case, the school becomes what Boeve describes as a ‘ghetto’ Catholic institution: one that develops an exclusive, ‘Catholic-only’ stance, thereby alienating those families and students (even Catholic ones) who do not identify with this identity type – an effect that the school likely sees as an unfortunate but acceptable (and even necessary) consequence⁵⁵. Where allowable by law, (private) Catholic schools of this type might even exclude non-Catholics either pro-selectively or self-selectively.

Of course, ‘reconfessionalisation’ does not necessarily equate to “a closed, narrow-minded mentality” aimed at Catholic exclusivity⁵⁶. ‘Reconfessionalisation’ can in fact effectively be done in a way that is open to interactions with the cultural context and with those who stand as religious and philosophical ‘others’ in relation to the Catholic identity of the school. However, such a form of reconfessionalisation may nevertheless have limited viability in contexts where the degree of social secularisation is

54. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

55. For further discussion of the ‘ghetto’ danger of reconfessionalisation, see BOEVE, *The Identity of a Catholic University* (n. 32), p. 250.

56. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools* (n. 1), pp. 201-202.

significant⁵⁷. Put differently, reconfessionalising schools such as these may be few in number in contexts where the ‘market interest’ in such schools is limited.

5. *Recontextualisation*

*Renewed expressions of Catholic identity today
amid a complex and changing culture*

The final position on this typology moves us to the upper-centre of the schema, to the ideal-type of ‘recontextualisation’. Theologically speaking, this identity type is concerned with developing an understanding and appropriation of the gospel as “relevant for people of today and tomorrow”⁵⁸. Rather than seeking to safeguard expressions of Christianity in their traditional forms in a protected way that refuses to yield to reinterpretation (reconfessionalisation) or to reduce the richness of Christianity such that the faith (or at least the ethical dimension of it) can fit harmoniously into the wider cultural context (values education), this type seeks to invite culture and Christianity into the dialogical process of (re)interpreting Christian faith for a contemporary context while preserving its “recognizable, credible, and meaningful” expressions as found in Catholic tradition⁵⁹.

This school type is much more than just a form of inclusive confessionalism that aims to teach Catholicism to both Catholics and those non-Catholics who are already receptive to (or not opposed to) interactions with the Catholic faith tradition. Rather, ‘recontextualisation’ is dependent upon an active, deep and ‘unpredictable’ dialogue among the plurality of religious faiths and ideological worldviews within its educational environment. As Pollefeyt describes elsewhere, “It is important to understand that recontextualisation of Catholic school identity starts from a pluralisation paradigm. In fact, Catholicism is *one* option among a multiplicity of philosophical and religious positions. Catholics believe that God, in [God’s] own way, is near to all people in their search for value and meaning. This plurality is not only formally recognised, but also appreciated as a positive challenge and a chance to enrich one’s own Catholic identity”⁶⁰.

This orientation towards such openness and engagement with all who come to a Catholic school is grounded in the core sense of the word ‘catholic’; a sense which aims to be inclusive, welcoming and engaging towards not only those who identify as Catholic (who are themselves diverse in

57. BOEVE, *The Identity of a Catholic University* (n. 32), p. 250.

58. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Identity in Dialogue* (n. 1), p. 56.

59. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools* (n. 1), p. 202.

60. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Identity in Dialogue* (n. 1), p. 56.

many ways) but also those seeking truth and meaning, while respecting the uniqueness of each individual and the fundamental agency of every young person⁶¹. In this way, ‘recontextualisation’ challenges *each individual* in this type of Catholic school to develop one’s own unique self-understanding and identity narrative in conversion and dialogue with each other (and sometimes in “confrontation” with each other⁶²), *and* together in dialogue with Christian scripture and Catholic tradition⁶³.

The theological pedagogy of the recontextualisation type is then this ‘multicorrelational’ method. Compared to the other types, this ideal-type represents a radical shift in the way young people and teachers engage in religious education and faith formation. “Openness to and dialogue with otherness (including non-Catholic) is encouraged without aiming at the greatest common denominator. Multiplicity is played out; multi-vocality needs to resound. *Recontextualisation* is not substantiated by an attitude of consensus (as in *Values Education*) but is propelled by dissimilarity”⁶⁴. In this way, no two students will develop the same self-understanding in relationship to the Catholic faith tradition, nor even the same understanding of that tradition. Each student comes to the learning experience with drastically different backgrounds, presuppositions, and perspectives⁶⁵. Thus ‘recontextualisation’ reflects a radical commitment to personal witness of one’s (Christian) faith in the context of a radical engagement with the changing culture and in dialogue with all involved – the end goal of which is that each person learns to know oneself, and to autonomously develop his or her own unique identity “in tension with dissimilarities – precisely out of respect for the other”⁶⁶.

As with any other type, this type is not without its risks – the most significant of which are (a) the complexity of the multiple interactions that this type requires in order to be effective⁶⁷, and (b) its dependency upon a capacity for a hermeneutical and post-critical style of faith-understanding – the latter of which is itself complex, as noted above. Furthermore, in order to enable deep dialogue with the Catholic faith tradition, this

61. The sense expressed here is constructed from T. GROOME, *What Makes a School Catholic*, in T. McLAUGHLIN – J. O’KEEFE – B. O’KEEFE (eds.), *The Contemporary Catholic School: Context, Identity and Diversity*, London, Routledge, 1996, 107-125, p. 123.

62. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools* (n. 1), p. 203.

63. D. POLLEFEYT, *The Difference of Alterity: A Religious Pedagogy for an Inter-religious and Interideological World*, in J. DE TAVERNIER – J. SELLING – J. VERSTRAETEN – P. SCHOTSMANS (eds.), *Responsibility, God and Society: Theological Ethics in Dialogue* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium, 117), Leuven, Peeters, 2008, 305-330.

64. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools* (n. 1), p. 202.

65. H. LOMBAERTS – D. POLLEFEYT, *The Emergence of Hermeneutics in Religious Education Theories: An Overview*, in IID. (eds.), *Hermeneutics and Religious Education* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium, 180), Leuven, Leuven University Press – Peeters, 2004, 3-53, pp. 16-17.

66. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Identity in Dialogue* (n. 1), p. 56.

67. BOEVE, *The Identity of a Catholic University* (n. 32), p. 254.

identity type is necessarily dependent on the presence of a “significant minority of Catholics who are recognizable as such”⁶⁸.

6. *Theologically Optimal Position*

In identifying ‘recontextualisation’ as a one of the three foundations of the CDS model (see the position of the golden marker on the diagram) it is important to understand where this ideal-type stands theologically in relation to the others on the Melbourne Scale – particularly in its relationship to the ideal-type of ‘Christian values education’.

As discussed above, the hallmark of ‘values education’ is its pedagogy of ‘mono-correlation’ – a strategy that functions largely on a theology of inclusivism. Such an inclusivist theology presumes that the sanctifying and salvific Christ is somehow at work – albeit in a way unknown to the other – within other religious traditions and philosophies, and that an encounter between Christianity and the (religious) other is therefore not an encounter between two who are *fundamentally* other, but between (a) Christianity and (b) a religious other who is assumed to be only *superficially* other. The goal of such encounters then is to expose the fundamental Christianity ‘hidden’ in the identity, philosophy and traditions of the other – and ultimately in doing so, to draw the other to Christ by awakening in him or her the recognition that he or she is somehow already ‘implicitly’ Christian at a basic level⁶⁹.

In a similar way, this type also presumes a kind of ‘superficial difference’ in regards to the ‘gap’ between the (Christian) tradition and the culture at large; that is, it is presumed that the culture at large – although different from Christian tradition in appearance – is fundamentally constructed on ‘hidden’ Christian foundations. Thus, the context is thought to not be fundamentally other in relation to the tradition but only superficially other. In this way, the ‘values education’ approach seeks to operate at a foundational level of ‘values’ whereby the pure identification of culture with tradition will become evident. In so doing, it is hoped that the mono-correlation approach of values education will result in students recognising, although they were previously unaware, that at the core they really have Christian foundations in their identity. The implication of such a realisation is then that students should (once again) take their place in the church and shape their identity in line with Christianity, the latter of which serves as the most authentic expression of those ‘common’ values.

68. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools* (n. 1), p. 203.

69. An inclusivist Christian theology such as this is rooted in the work of Karl Rahner. For a starting point, see K. RAHNER, *Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews 1965-1982*, ed. P. IMHOF – H. BIALLOWONS, trans. And ed. H. EGAN, New York, Crossroads, 1986, p. 207. For a more in-depth treatment of inclusivist theologies, see P. HEDGES, *Controversies in Interreligious Dialogue and the Theology of Religions* (Controversies in Contextual Theology Series), London, SCM, 2010.

In contrast to such an inclusivist theology – and as a clear critique of it – ‘recontextualisation’ is located in a space between and beyond pluralist and particularist theologies. This position posits that what is needed theologically is not a type of interaction between tradition and context that *reduces the dialogue to mutually agreeable points of similarity*, but rather a type of interaction that *increases the dialogue to include much greater attention to points of particularity*. The starting point of recontextualisation is thus the recognition of a *widening gap* between tradition and context, a gap advanced simultaneously by *increasing secularisation* and *expanding religious and philosophical pluralisation*. Recontextualisation takes this widening gap seriously, upholds the many particularities of both the faith tradition and the context, and invites both into a rich and mutually critical dialogue. The multiplicity of these points of contact – some of which may turn out to be harmonious, many of which disharmonious – is what in fact makes possible the *multi-correlational approach* named above. Furthermore, whereas ‘values education’ takes both tradition and context as givens that do not need to yield to any sort of transformation, self-reflection, reinterpretation or retranslation, ‘recontextualisation’ moves in the opposite direction and recognises the living nature of both tradition and context, a nature that positions both for transformation and growth as a result of their interaction. In sum, ‘recontextualisation’ is an ideal-type that opens itself up to theological complexity, invites dialogue, and challenges the notion of a static ‘unchanged’ faith tradition – as it likewise challenges the notion of any static, unchanging culture.

7. *Empirical Insights on School Missiological Identity*

As with the Post-Critical Belief Scale above, real Catholic schools and school networks can use instruments developed through the Enhancing Catholic School Identity (ECSI) research project (KU Leuven) to gain empirical insights into the perceptions and attitudes among the constituent populations of their schools. The figure below again demonstrates what results might look like in one particular subject population and offers opportunities for interpreting those results. In the case of the Melbourne Scale, the instruments distinguish between perceptions of ‘current practice’ of the school and attitudes towards the ‘ideal school’.

Starting again with the results of the teacher population (mean scores in the upper left and percentage distributions in the lower left), the low score on ‘confessionality’ (mean = 3.19) suggests a limited ability among teachers to recognise markers of traditional ‘confessionality’ in the identity of their school. In fact, only 6.3 percent of the teacher population affirms these indicators. Secondly, the perception of the secularisation type is largely rejected by this group (current mean = 2.10 with 98.5% affirming this rejection). For teachers as a whole, the ‘current’ identity of the school is (a) dominated by ‘recontextualisation’ (current mean = 5.66

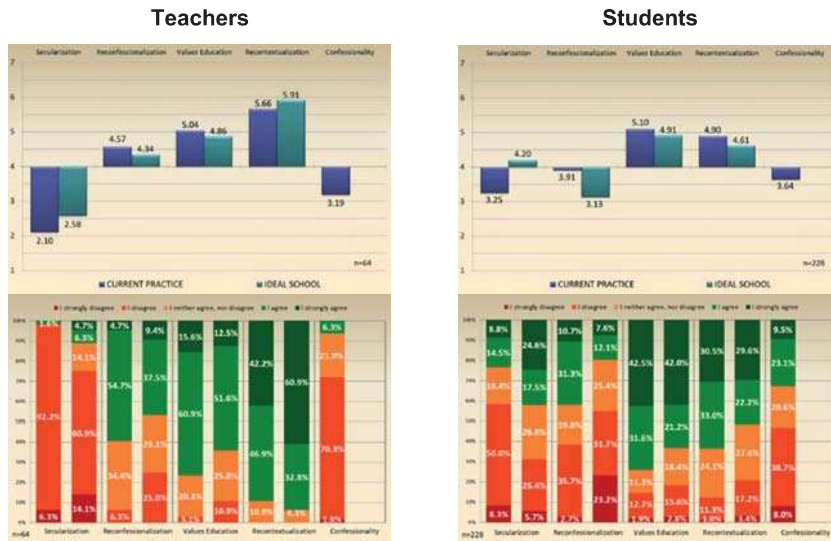


Figure 4: Sample results of the Melbourne Scale

with affirmation from 89.1% of the population and no rejection), with (b) strong indications of ‘values education’ (current mean = 5.04, affirmed by 76.5%) and (c) moderate indications of ‘reconfessionalisation’ (current mean = 4.57).

The ideal preference among teachers is clear: shift even more so towards ‘recontextualisation’ as the dominant identity type (ideal mean = 5.91 with support indicated by 93.7% of the population) – a direction that is further underscored by the teachers’ diminishing preference for ‘values education’ (ideal mean = 4.86). At the same time, a similar diminishing preference for ‘reconfessionalisation’ (ideal mean = 4.34) – although still positively valued – suggests that it will be important to help these teachers maintain a sense of continuity with the faith tradition amid such recontextualisation (for example, through external theological and pastoral partnerships). As seen in the percentage distributions, this latter point (the role of the faith tradition) is precisely the central point of discussion among the teachers and staff: while one-quarter (25.0%) normatively rejects ‘reconfessionalisation’ (but no one rejects it ‘strongly’), nearly another half (46.9%) supports this preference, with almost one-tenth (9.4%) supporting it ‘strongly’. Furthermore, it is also worthwhile to note that resistance to the secularisation type is decreasing slightly, as approximately one-tenth (11.0%) indicates favourability towards this type.

As for the students, the results of the Melbourne scale indicate a different perception of ‘current practice’ at the school. As a whole, the students also exhibit a limited ability (mean = 3.64) to read signs of (traditional) ‘confessionality’ in the identity of the school, with only about one-third

(32.6%) affirming these indicators. At the same time, in general they do not largely perceive this school as a place of ‘secularisation’ (current mean = 3.25). Rather, the students perceive their school to a significant extent as a place of ‘values education’ (current mean = 5.10) coloured by features of ‘recontextualisation’ (current mean = 4.90). They generally do not perceive much ‘reconfessionalisation’ (current mean = 3.91), although there is considerable internal disagreement about this perception, with about two-fifths (42.0%) affirming this identity type and another two-fifths (38.4%) rejecting this type.

The ideal preference of the students as a whole is oriented towards a *significantly less religious* identity for the school. A combination of three factors makes this clear. First, the resistance towards ‘reconfessionalisation’ increases significantly (ideal mean = 3.13 with opposition from 54.9% of the population – 23.2% opposing ‘strongly’). Second, their preferences in favour of ‘values education’ and ‘recontextualisation’ diminish slightly – noticeably more so for ‘recontextualisation’ (ideal mean = 4.61) than for ‘values education’ (ideal mean = 4.91). Third, their resistance towards the secularisation type diminishes significantly (ideal mean = 4.20), with a significant minority (42.1%) indicating degrees of favourability towards this type.

III. SCHOOL RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL IDENTITY: THE VICTORIA SCALE

The third foundation of the CDS model is based in a typology that addresses the ways in which religious and cultural identities interact (or do not) at Catholic schools in contemporary contexts of religious and philosophical pluralisation. To what extent is Catholic identity given prominence and salience in the culture and programming of the school? To what extent are ‘other’ identities welcomed and integrated into that same culture and programming? What kind of ‘space’ is needed to allow a Catholic identity and ‘others’ to engage each other in a mutually enriching way? For schools facing such questions, their “pedagogical responsibility *vis-à-vis* [their] faith education in a multicultural [multireligious, and multi-ideological] society” is a critical issue⁷⁰. Thus the Victoria Scale presented below aims to shed light on the ways in which the environment and programming of the school also reflects and responds to the changing social context⁷¹.

70. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools* (n. 1), p. 203.

71. The foundations for this scale are found in a typology originally conceived by Wim ter Horst and subsequently developed by Christiaan Hermans, the latter of whom gave us the four type names we use today. However, it was Didier Pollefeyt and colleagues who more deeply developed this typology for studies in Catholic schools through a project achieved in partnership between the Centre for Academic Teacher Training at the Faculty of Theology in Leuven and the Catholic Education Commission of the State of Victoria

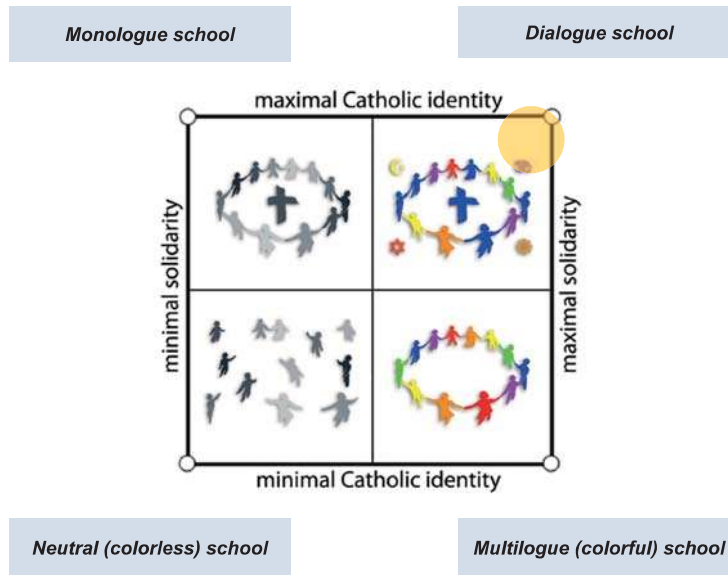


Figure 5: The Victoria Scale with theological optimal position (round marker)

This typology is constructed around the intersection of two axes: the prominence and salience of Catholic identity (y-axis, maximal at top, minimal at bottom) and the degree to which cultural, religious and philosophical diversity (that is, a plurality of identities) is embraced and integrated within the school community (x-axis, maximal at right, minimal at left, also referred to in the diagram as ‘solidarity’). In this way, the typology investigates the extent to which Catholic identity and this engagement with diversity are integrated in the school’s educational culture and programs. The intersection of these two axes thus yields four ideal-types that will each be addressed in turn in the sections that follow: beginning with the ‘monologue school’, moving diagonally to its polar opposite at the lower right, the ‘multilogue school’, then laterally to the lower left, the ‘neutral school’, and then diagonally to its polar opposite at the upper right, the ‘dialogue school’.

(CECV) in Australia. The resulting ‘Victoria Scale’ was named for the Australian state in which the Catholic school project was conducted. See W. TER HORST, *Wijs me de weg: Mogelijkheden voor een christelijke opvoeding in een post-christelijke samenleving*, Kampen, Kok, 1997, pp. 67-71; C. HERMANS – J. VAN VUGT (eds.), *Identiteit door de tijd: Reflecties op het confessionele basisonderwijs in een geseculariseerde en multiculturele samenleving*, Den Haag, ABKO, 1997, pp. 20-25; POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools* (n. 1); POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Identity in Dialogue* (n. 1).

1. *The Monologue School*

A place of Catholic faith formation for all that shelters students from any potentially harm of things non-Catholic

The first of the four types we consider, the ‘monologue school’, (upper left in the diagram) is formed typologically by the intersection of *maximal* Catholic identity and *minimal* solidarity with others (see the upper left position on the diagram). This type represents a Catholic school whose environment is *exclusively* concerned with the transmission of a Catholic identity. The ‘monologue school’ is a school where Catholicism is the only topic of conversation, with little to no attention given to the ways in which ‘Catholic identity’ interacts with other ‘others’. For this type of school in fact, the choice to keep distance from religious and philosophical others is a choice in favour of isolating ‘Catholic identity’ from any potential threats⁷². By choice or by default therefore, the ‘monologue school’ becomes a ‘safe zone’ where Catholicism can live without confrontation⁷³. In its more extreme form, the ‘monologue school’ even avoids dialogue among various viewpoints within Catholicism, preferring instead to conduct a single, ‘canonized’, consistent discourse on Catholic identity.

In order to build a strong sense of common (Catholic) identity, the ‘monologue school’ develops and guides all students through a one-size-fits-all program of Catholic faith formation. All students attend mass together; all students follow the same program of (Catholic) religious instruction; all students participate in reconciliation (confession) services, Advent and Lenten prayer services, and other rituals of Catholic liturgical practice. Opportunities to move beyond the boundaries of Catholic culture are restricted, and the school instead takes prides in helping all of its students to take on the mantle of a ‘common’ Catholic identity.

Towards this same end, this school type actively seeks to maximise the number of practicing Catholic teachers it hires and the number of Catholic students it admits. Whenever ‘non-Catholic’ and ‘formerly-Catholic’ students are present in this school, they are expected to participate non-confrontationally in the discussions on Catholicism, and little to no consideration is given to their alternative viewpoints and experiences. When ‘non-Catholic’ teachers are present, they too are expected to advance the Catholic discourse, or at least not to contradict it with any ‘uncanonised’ interpretations or alternative viewpoints. Families would generally choose to enroll their children in this school understanding that it aims to transmit ‘the’ Catholic tradition to Catholics and other like-minded young people.

72. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools* (n. 1), p. 205.

73. TER HORST, *Wijs me de weg* (n. 71), pp. 67-71. It is telling that Ter Horst, in the original construction of this type, used the term “shelter”, suggesting that the school shelters its Catholic students from the dangers of dialogue with the non-Catholic world.

Although the ‘monologue school’ seeks to enable faith and religious belonging by adopting its protective posture, this approach presents serious risks to the appropriation of faith in a social context where young people (and adults) are daily confronted with alternatives to that faith position. John Sullivan offers us a useful caution:

Whenever received religious orthodoxy is rigidly protected, not allowed to be interrogated, isolated from alternative perspectives, and only permitted to be interpreted in strictly prescribed ways, there is the danger that its assimilation will be shallow and that the faith of adherents will be precarious in the face of unforeseen difficulties. On the one hand, they will be anxious to avoid serious questioning. On the other, the faith community will be inflexible when it comes up against those who differ from them. Such faith might be inadequately appropriated. Its special features, through ignorance of alternatives, might be unappreciated. Its capacity to respond creatively, when called upon to apply itself to new frontiers of knowledge or experience, might be strangled at worst or at least stunted and inhibited⁷⁴.

2. *The Multilogue School*

*A place that honours and celebrates everyone’s right to be
whomever one wants to be*

Diagonally opposite the ‘monologue school’ stands the ‘multilogue school’ (lower right on the diagram), at the convergence of *minimal* Catholic identity and *maximal* hospitality towards others in all their diversity. This school type is a place of vibrant diversity – at every level from experience and belief to opinion and identity – and allowing this diversity to thrive in a respectful way forms an important aspect of a school’s identity and pedagogical objectives⁷⁵. In order to achieve this vibrancy, the ‘multilogue school’ withdraws itself from the question of a preferential religious identity and instead concerns itself with (a) developing a sense of equality and solidarity among all and (b) caring for the uniqueness of every individual student, regardless of his or her religious affiliation or preference. In this way, the ‘multilogue school’ actively affirms the value and equality of all religious and cultural identities, while preferring none itself – in stark contrast to the position of the ‘monologue school’, with its decided preference for the Catholic tradition at the exclusion of others.

74. J. SULLIVAN, *Education and Faith as a Dance*, in *Communicating Faith*, Washington, DC, Catholic University of America Press, 2010, 344-358, pp. 346-347.

75. In other contributions concerning this same typology, this ideal-type has been referred to as the ‘colourful school’ – a term meant to convey the sense of a vibrantly rich celebration of diversity in which no one identity is allowed prominence over another. In this contribution, we introduce the term ‘multilogue school’ to reflect the same sense of plurality that coexists and is celebrated, one alongside the other without substantive interaction. Furthermore, the term ‘multilogue’ stands in relation to ‘monologue’ and ‘dialogue’, also used in this typology.

Such a choice for ‘creating a level playing field’ does not imply that religion is not an important or even integral part of the educational programming of the school. On the contrary, religious faith may in fact be an aspect of one’s identity that the school welcomes, but respect for equality, freedom, autonomy, and diversity are values that are more central to the school’s educational aims. The ‘multilogue school’ therefore places significant emphasis on social activities that promote and celebrate such values. Freedom of self-expression is encouraged and supported at nearly all times in all contexts – art, music, theatre, writing, speaking, scientific pursuits, and so forth. Cultural activities that bring together many different cultural expressions are some of the highlights of the school year, as might be seen for example in a ‘cultural diversity evening’.

To be clear, while a Catholic school could develop noticeable tendencies towards the ‘multilogue school’ type, it is difficult to assert that the ‘multilogue school’ as an ideal-type is a Catholic school in the theological sense of religious and cultural identity. Although the intention of this school type to welcome diversity and respect differences can be consistent with a Christian attitude, this type’s minimal (if any) preference for Catholic culture and identity challenges its right to identify itself as a ‘Catholic’ school⁷⁶. Put differently, to say that a school is ‘Catholic’ *necessarily* implies that the Catholic tradition is in fact given a preferential place and constitutive meaning in the culture and educational programming of the school. Such a preference is exactly what the ‘multilogue school’ type aims to avoid in favour of its emphasis on equality in diversity.

3. *The Neutral School*

To each one’s own; the formation of any kind of identity is not our concern

The ‘neutral school’ (lower left in the diagram) is found laterally opposite the ‘multilogue school’, in the position formed by the intersection of a *minimal* preference for Catholic identity and a *minimal* sense of welcoming and interacting with those who are other. As its name implies, this is the school type noted for the absence of any attention to religious and cultural expression and to questions of religious and cultural identities in a context of diversity⁷⁷.

Unlike the ‘multilogue school’ – which calls forth plurality, celebrates diversity and honours difference – the ‘neutral school’ marginalises or dismisses any active encounters with religious and cultural diversity (from

76. Admittedly, this assertion may be difficult to reconcile in certain national contexts where ‘Catholic schools’ operate as institutions in full suppression of their outward Catholic identity. Further investigation is necessary on this question.

77. Other contributions of ours also speak about this ideal-type as the ‘colourless school’. In this contribution, we opt for the term ‘neutral school’ to reflect this ideal-type’s core attitude. In addition to the fact that ‘neutrality’ speaks accurately to this type, it also hoped that any unintended association between ‘colour’ and ‘race’ is avoided. See also the note above on the ‘multilogue (colourful) school’.

maximal to minimal ‘solidarity’ on the x-axis). At the same time, unlike the ‘monologue school’ – which is concerned with the prominence and salience of Catholic identity and culture – the ‘neutral school’ takes complete distance from such Catholicity in the identity and programming of the school (from maximal to minimal ‘Catholic identity’ on the y-axis). For the ‘neutral school’, faith, religion and identity formation are private matters and not relevant to the academic and (to a certain extent) civic discussions taking place in the classrooms and school programs. In its most extreme form, this school type would actively suppress any public expression of religion, culture or ideology, in the argument that such matters are not only private choices but that the public expression thereof interferes with or is even counterproductive to the school’s (secular) educational aims.

Where there does exist any encounter with diversity among the students in the ‘neutral school’, such encounters would “remain superficial and free from obligation or mutual commitment”⁷⁸; that is, they would not spark any intentional reflection or action. As is described elsewhere, “The [Neutral] School limits itself to a minimalistic ethics based on the [do-no-harm] principle: the focus lies on [limited] personal freedom [to the extent] that nobody hinders anyone else’s freedom. [...] People live quasi non-commit[tedly] next to each other; the prevalent mentality is one of *laisser faire, laisser passer*”⁷⁹. For the ‘neutral school’ therefore, such issues are best relegated to the private lives of students and teachers and kept out of the ‘public’ environment of the school.

To achieve these ends, the ‘neutral school’ promotes itself as a ‘non-agent’ when it comes therefore to matters of (religious and cultural) identity and diversity. However, it should be recognised that such a position is *not* a ‘non-position’, but rather an active stance on the suppression of religious and ideological viewpoints in the educational environment. As John Sullivan notes, “For religious believers of different persuasions (...) it can seem as if the so-called neutral referee functions really like a player in disguise, forcing them to suppress important aspects of who they are”⁸⁰. In this way, it can be said that the ‘neutral school’ does violence to any attempt to otherwise ‘respect’ religion by neutralising it in the school environment.

4. *The Dialogue School*

Each person's identity takes shape in dialogue with others and with the Catholic tradition

The final ideal-type in this typology is the ‘dialogue school’, located diagonally opposite the ‘neutral school’, in the quadrant where a preference for the prominence and salience of Catholic identity meets a strong

78. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Identity in Dialogue* (n. 1), p. 62.

79. *Ibid.*

80. SULLIVAN, *Education and Faith as a Dance* (n. 74), p. 349.

commitment to diversity and hospitality towards ‘others’. This is the school type not that only acknowledges and affirms the religious and cultural diversity fostered by pluralisation, but also actively seeks to promote Catholic identity and culture and works to “re-profile the Catholic faith” amid such plurality⁸¹.

In this way, the ‘dialogue school’ does not find religious, philosophical and cultural diversity (and the inherent differences therein) to be either threatening to Catholic identity or counter-productive to its educational aims, but rather a *necessary* contextual prerequisite in order to achieve those aims. Dialogue is therefore understood as a mode of learning that benefits not only the Catholic students – themselves also a diverse group – but also indeed all students. As Pollefeyt describes elsewhere:

Just like for Catholic believers, the intense conversation enriches the other-minded people at school too. Not only by what the Catholic faith has to offer them, even though they do not believe themselves, [but] also because, through dialogue, they get to know themselves better, become more distinctly aware of their own philosophical choices, learning to take responsibility for them, and so deepen their identity (identity formation in a plural perspective). The pluralisation process challenges the Catholic school to be at the service of the personal formation of all youngsters, regardless of their cultural or religious background⁸².

The prominence and salience of the Catholic faith tradition is thus not marginal but central to the identity of this school type. In fact, for the ‘dialogue school’, it is precisely a “preferential option for the Catholic message [that] sets the tone for this dialogue. [...] In the midst of plurality, one is looking to be a Catholic; from being a Catholic, one lives in plurality”⁸³. Thus, unlike the ‘monologue school’, the emphasis here is not on a universal one-size-fits-all Catholic identity, but on multiple individual identities, all shaped in dialogue with the Catholic tradition and with each other. Such focus on individual identity formation, solidarity, and engagement with the faith tradition is thereby seen as a good for all students, who “get to know themselves better, become more distinctly aware of their own philosophical choices, [learn] to take responsibility for them[selves], and so deepen their [own identities]”⁸⁴.

5. *Theologically Optimal Position*

The affirmation of the ‘dialogue school’ type as foundational to the CDS model is a clear rejection of the ‘neutral school’ and a radicalisation

81. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools* (n. 1), p. 207.

82. *Ibid.*

83. POLLEFEYT – BOUWENS, *Identity in Dialogue* (n. 1), p. 63.

84. *Ibid.* In the cited work, this identity type is also spoken of as ‘Identity Formation in a Pluralistic Perspective’. See the same page.

of the maximal tendencies of both the ‘monologue school’ (maximal Catholic identity) and the ‘multilogue school’ (maximal openness to others in all their diversity). The tensions that this position enables are complex, yet this is a position in which one – in full concert with one’s own identity – is invited to encounter God, discover value in the commitments of faith and religious belonging, and become more fully oneself.

Whether we are speaking of ‘continuity and discontinuity’, ‘sameness and difference’, or ‘identity and alterity’, the holding together of two things in tension requires first and foremost a *hermeneutical hospitality*. This is to say that in order to have an authentic and meaningful dialogue between two or more selves, each with his or her own unique narrative, what is needed first and foremost is a “concern for a concrete other because he or she is human”⁸⁵. In interpreting Paul Ricœur, Marianne Moyaert explains that such hospitality concerns “an attitude of active receptivity; it is making room for the stranger in one’s own space – it is the strange other received into one’s home in a way that does justice to the otherness of the other. Hospitality actually teaches that the interpersonal relationships are not exhausted in attempts to defend one’s ‘identity’ against the strange, the unfamiliar, the unknown, but that happiness can also be found precisely in the reception of the strange into one’s own space”⁸⁶.

This is an attitude not of one seeking confrontation, or of one just waiting quietly in order to speak, but that of a radical openness towards the other as a person and towards the possibilities of learning through the exchange. The language of ‘receiving the other into one’s home’ can be read metaphorically as the willingness and readiness to receive the other into one’s personal space; that is, in the case of religious learning and identity formation, a willingness and readiness to receive the narrative of the other into the intimacy of one’s personal (religious) narrative. To be sure, this hospitality implies a mutual reciprocity: not only is one willing to receive the other into one’s personal space but one is also – perhaps in the first place – willing to be received by the other into his or her space. Thus, the willingness to “take responsibility in *imagination* and *sympathy* for the story of the other expresses a [simultaneous] witness to be interrupted and challenged”⁸⁷.

Such mutuality and openness to the unknown underscores not only an ethical attitude towards the other but also the possibilities for one’s own

85. M. MOYAERT, *Absorption or Hospitality: Two Approaches to the Tension between Identity and Alterity*, in C. CORNILLE – C. CONWAY (eds.), *Interreligious Hermeneutics* (Interreligious Dialogue, 2), Leuven, Peeters, 2001, 61-88, p. 83.

86. *Ibid.* For more on the language of active receptivity, see P. RICŒUR, *Reflections on a New Ethos for Europe*, in R. KEARNEY (ed.), *Paul Ricœur: The Hermeneutics of Action* (Philosophy and Social Criticism), London, Sage, 1996, 3-13, pp. 4-5. The citation appears in the original.

87. M. MOYAERT, *In Response to the Religious Other: Ricœur and the Fragility of Inter-religious Encounters*, Lanham, MD, Lexington Books, 2014, p. 141.

growth and self-development. In this way, the radical quality to this hermeneutical hospitality indicates that one goes beyond seeing the other as a stranger and recognises that one is also a stranger at the same time. This mutual appreciation of each other's 'strangeness' is only possible when, through dialogue with religious others, one learns "to say farewell to the absoluteness of [one's] own tradition". Undoubtedly, learning one's own strangeness is a never-ending process, in which one can only become "open [...] to the strangeness of the other [...] in the extent to which [one is able] to acknowledge the strangeness of [one's] own identity"⁸⁸.

This appreciation – even valuation – of strangeness is not a superficial acknowledgement of difference, but rather a radical sense that the identity and narrative of the other is both beyond what one already knows and beyond what one will ever be able to know completely. Such a radical acceptance of otherness means that one seeks not to incorporate the other into one existing schema of understanding – thereby reducing the other to what is familiar (sameness) – but that one allows the other to be authentically other in his or her difference, incomprehensibility, and opacity. In this way, one is drawn in the encounter and the dialogue "away from what is known and given" and towards "what is unknown and possible"⁸⁹.

Furthermore, as one last caveat on radical hermeneutical openness in this section, we should be careful not to speak of the religious other as only the interreligious other. To be sure, every other is a religious other in that the (religious) identity narrative of every other person will assuredly be somehow strange no matter how similar it may seem on the surface. In fact, herein may lie the greater challenge for developing a hermeneutical openness towards the other: that one "must also learn to recognise the plurality of voices *within*" a religious tradition, perhaps one's own tradition in particular⁹⁰. The contemporary context of plurality cannot be seen simply as a diversity of religious and philosophical traditions, but even more so it is a diversity of identities and narratives; just as we would recognise the uniqueness of narratives between people of different religious traditions, so too should we recognise the uniqueness of narratives between people of the *same* religious tradition.

In summary, the cultivation of a radical hermeneutical openness is an indispensable condition for encountering the other in one's otherness and

88. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 141. For an even fuller discussion of this same question, see M. MOYAERT, *The (Un-)translatability of Religions? Ricœur's Linguistic Hospitality as Model for Interreligious Dialogue*, in *Exchange* 37 (2008) 337-364. See also J. BERLING, *The Process of Interreligious Learning*, in D. POLLEFEYT (ed.), *Interreligious Learning* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium, 201), Leuven, Peeters, 2007, 25-54.

90. M. MOYAERT, *Interreligious Literacy and Scriptural Reasoning: Some Hermeneutical, Anthropological, Pedagogical, and Experiential Reflections*, in M. PUGLIESE – A. HWANG (eds.), *Teaching Interreligious Encounters*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2017, 79-94, p. 85.

for opening a path to finding meaning together in dialogue. As Pollefeyt describes elsewhere:

In the confrontation with difference [one] can begin to better understand [one's] own identity. Thus it is important that many different philosophies, ideologies and religious views, practices and lifestyles can stand side in the Catholic school. [...] This openness towards 'the other' is fundamental. It is important to truly meet the other. Practically this means [listening] to what moves his or her spirit. Only when [one] look[s] the other in the eyes can [one] encounter the face of Christ. Through protecting and welcoming the stranger, God can make [God]self known to us in new and unexpected ways⁹¹.

6. Empirical Insights on Religious and Cultural Dialogue

Similar to the two previous scales, the ECSI instruments allow Catholic schools and groups of schools working together to gain empirical insights into the perceptions and attitudes among the constituent populations of their schools. The figure below once more demonstrates what results might look like in among a particular population. Like the Melbourne Scale above, the instruments of the Victoria Scale also distinguish between perceptions of 'current practice' of the school and attitudes towards the 'ideal school'.

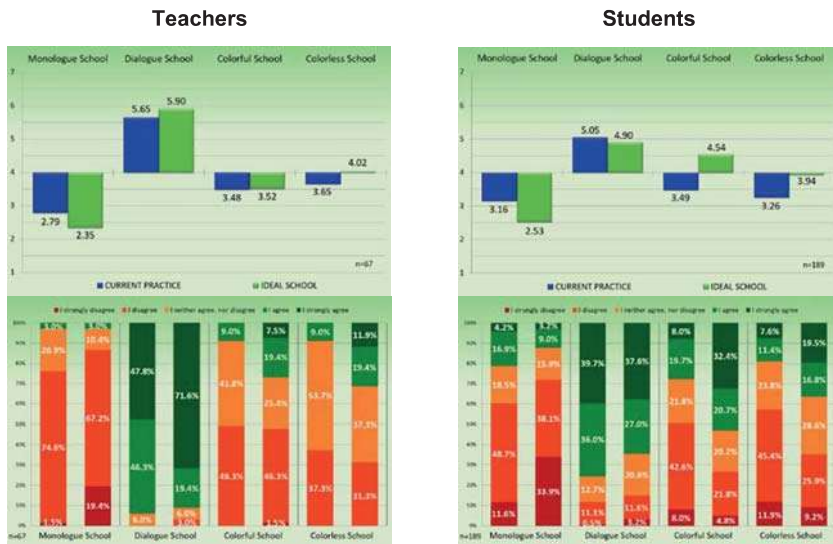


Figure 6: Sample results of the Victoria Scale

91. D. POLLEFEYT – J. BOUWENS, *Wat betekent 'dialoog' in de katholieke dialoogschool?*, in L. BOEVE – J. METTEPENNINGEN – D. POLLEFEYT (eds.), *Liefde in tijden van katholieke dialoogschool* (Katholieke dialoogschool, 3), Antwerpen, Halewijn, 2017, 21-36. The quoted text here is an authorised unpublished English translation of the original Dutch version.

Beginning once again with the results of the teacher population (upper left for the mean scores and lower left for the percentage distributions), the ECSI instruments reveal the clear perception that this school is identified as a 'dialogue school' (current mean = 5.65). This perception is affirmed by nearly the entire group of teachers (94.0% with no rejection), which also strongly rejects the perception of 'monologue school' (current mean = 2.79) and moderately rejects both 'multilogue school' (labelled here as 'colourful school'; current mean = 3.48) and 'neutral school' (labelled here as 'colourless school'; current mean = 3.65). The perceptions of these latter three identity types are further supported by the percentage data: just over three-quarters of the teacher population (76.1%) rejects 'monologue school', and nine-tenths (91.0%) indicates rejection or indifference towards both 'multilogue (colourful) school' and 'neutral (colourless) school'.

In terms of ideal preferences, it is also clear that the teachers as a group would prefer 'dialogue school' to even a greater degree (ideal mean = 5.90 with support from a total of 91.0%). At the same time, the general resistance towards 'monologue school' grows noticeably (ideal mean = 2.35 with 86.6% in opposition), while the resistance towards 'multilogue (colourful) school' diminishes slightly (ideal mean = 3.52) and even more so towards 'neutral (colourless) school' (ideal mean = 4.02). These results suggest that the kind of dialogue these teachers would prefer is something that leans more towards engaging a plurality of religious and philosophical identities and in turn one that resists any dominant role for Catholic identity.

The perceptions of the student population are largely similar to those of the teachers, albeit with a greater degree of internal diversity. The students perceive the dialogue school type quite strongly (current mean = 5.05, affirmed by 75.5% of the population), while on the whole rejecting the monologue school type (current mean = 3.16), with further moderate rejection of both the multilogue (colourful) school type (current mean = 3.49) and the neutral (colourless) school type (current mean = 3.26). The varying percentages of support and rejection for each of the latter three identity types indicate the wide-ranging diversity among the student population.

Ideal preferences among the students lean most noticeably in favour of 'dialogue school' (ideal mean = 5.05). As with the teachers, resistance towards 'monologue school' also increases among the students (ideal mean = 2.53, with opposition from 72.0%). At the same time, their collective resistance towards the neutral (colourless) school type also diminishes noticeably (ideal mean = 3.94). Most noticeably, they also demonstrate a generally favourable preference towards the multilogue (colourful) school type (ideal mean = 4.54 with support from 53.1%). That said, it is also important to note that there is a substantial amount of internal diversity among the student population. Of particular note are several minorities:

the one-tenth (12.2%) of students in favour of ‘monologue school’, the one-quarter (26.6%) resistant towards the multilogue (colourful) school type, and the approximate one-third (35.1%) resistant towards the neutral (colourless) school type.

IV. CONCLUSION

In summary, this contribution argues that the model of a Catholic Dialogue School (CDS) is best positioned for helping Catholic schools strengthen and enhance their Catholic identity and mission in contemporary contexts of expanding religious and philosophical pluralisation and increasing social and individual secularisation. In contexts like these, such (re)strengthening and enhancement of Catholic school identity can be achieved through an interwoven set of efforts towards: (a) a faith-understanding that matures through hermeneutics and a post-critical perspective on religious belief; (b) a missiology that seeks to recontextualise the living Catholic faith tradition in contemporary contexts; and (c) an interreligious and intercultural approach to dialogue that is aimed at mutual growth and rooted in mutual hospitality. Furthermore, empirical data that reflect the real perceptions and attitudes of various stakeholders towards these same three positions can offer Catholic schools an empirical understanding of the various tensions and opportunities towards enhancing Catholic identity and mission.

Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies
Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
Sint-Michielsstraat 4 b. 3101
BE-3000 Leuven
Belgium
didier.pollefeyt@kuleuven.be

Didier POLLEFEYT

6601 South San Fernando Ave
Tucson Arizona
USA 85756
richardsm@sanmiguelhigh.org

Michael RICHARDS

ABSTRACT. — Amid contexts of religious and philosophical pluralisation as well as social and individual secularisation, Catholic schools today face renewed questions of Catholic identity. This contribution argues that such Catholic identity can be effectively renewed through three key lines of development, each in relation to a religiously and philosophically plural context: (a) post-critical belief as a form of symbolic faith-understanding, (b) theological recontextualisation of the living Catholic faith tradition, and (c) intercultural and interreligious dialogue in a Catholic frame. Taken together, these three positions pose a renewed identity

for Catholic schools that is both theologically legitimate (authentic to its own tradition) and culturally plausible (in dialogue with a context of religious and philosophical plurality). In the different sections of this contribution, each of these three positions is developed through a combination of typological theory, theological reflection, and empirical data samples – the latter of which are drawn from recent studies, conducted by the Enhancing Catholic School Identity Research Group at the Catholic University of Leuven, that translate the typological theories discussed herein into empirical instruments to help inform the reflections of school and church leadership on the direction of Catholic identity for Catholic schools today.