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On the Possibility of Religious Education

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On the Possibility of Religious Education

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Introduction

Imagine this is a court of law, and we are all prospective jurors. The defence attorney and crown counsel are about to challenge each of us for cause, by asking the following question: "Would you be able to set aside your religious beliefs and reach a verdict based solely on the evidence and the law?"

This is not a hypothetical question; it is the question that was posed to prospective jurors at a Morgentaler abortion trial in Toronto. If you were one of those prospective jurors, and if your answer to the above question were "No," could it be, as critics of religious education might claim, that you had been indoctrinated during the course of your religious upbringing?

My purpose in this essay is to defend the thesis that religious education is possible without indoctrination. The claim that indoctrination *could* occur in the context of religious or other areas of education is neither surprising, nor particularly interesting. What is challenging, however, is the assertion that all religious education, as I understand it, involves indoctrination. For example, Robin Barrow has said that:

> It follows directly from the nature of religious discourse that, if schools attempt to initiate children into a particular religion, if, that is to say, they take particular steps with the intentions of committing children to a set of beliefs, they are guilty of indoctrination. For we have defined indoctrination as the intentional implanting of beliefs so that it will stick, by non-rational means. Since the basic propositions of religion are unprovable, there are no rational means of establishing their truth, and any success in evoking permanent commitment to them must rely on non-rational means.[1]

Moreover, it is often the case that when discussing religious education and, as they see it, the inevitable problem of indoctrination, various authors have in mind particular brands of religious education. In this regard, Magee suggests that the paradigm case of indoctrination is that of ". . .a priest teaching the catechism."[2] And Flew maintains that:

> . . .certainly in Britain and surely in the U.S.A. also, the most widespread and the most successful program of indoctrination is that of the schools which maintain their separate and independent existence precisely in order to inculcate belief in the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church.[3]

Woods and Barrow also purport to describe what they call an uncontentious example of indoctrination—one which they believe virtually everybody would see as an incontrovertible case of indoctrination, as follows:

> . . .a Catholic school. . .all the teachers are committed Catholics. . .all the children come from Catholic homes and have parents who want them to be brought up as Catholics. Imagine also that the teachers are determined to try to bring up their children as devout Catholics. They deliberately attempt to inculcate in their pupils an unshakeable commitment to the truth of Catholicism. . . .[4]

And, finally, it is Gribble's view that:

> the clearest cases where we have good reasons for being worried about indoctrinating are when we are passing on such doctrines as Marxism or Catholicism or Mormonism—if we are trying to convince children that such doctrines are true.[5]

Given the significant relationship for many people between religion and morality, it is not surprising that religious individuals and groups bring their moral convictions and judgements to bear on important and controversial public policy issues: abortion, capital punishment, government program priorities, sex education, curriculum censorship, foetal tissue experimentation, and so on.

It seems, therefore, that we should be concerned about the way in which religious education can influence one's moral views, and thereby one's stand on major public issues in the political arena in our democratic pluralistic society. While my focus in this paper is on our publicly financed schools and their students and teachers, my analysis and conclusions will be equally relevant to religion-affiliated private schools, interested parents, and churches, universities and other institutions interested and/or engaged in religious education.

Given the significant implications, then, that religious education can have in one's life, it is appropriate to ask whether these critics are right. In this paper, I will argue that they are mistaken because religious education is possible without indoctrination.

Delimited Focus

The present effort does not purport to constitute a defence of religious education, as such; rather, it is an attempt to defend its logical possibility. While their position is not always clear on the point, it seems to me that the critics of religious education here examined do not allow for that logical prospect. Even were one prepared to admit that certain contingent realities make indoctrination likely when religious beliefs are at stake, this would only warrant the conclusion that religious education is difficult, improbable, and so on; what is not warranted is the conclusion that, given the nature of the propositions concerned, religious education without indoctrination is impossible. I focus on what I judge to be the most well known and possibly the strongest challenge to the very *possibility* of any such activity as religious education.

A Working Conceptual Framework

Posing, let alone answering, the question, "Is religious education possible without indoctrination?" logically entails, among other things, some concept of education. For present purposes, I will simply stipulate that I am happy to work with a concept of education along the lines drawn by Richard S. Peters, who sees education as a process whereby human beings are deliberately initiated into worthwhile activities and states of mind to which they develop some commitment, and as a result of which they acquire knowledge and understanding along with perspective, as a result of morally defensible procedures.

We also need some sort of definition of religious education. I propose, as sufficient for my purposes, that religious education involves, as a minimum, the

presentation of theological propositions for consideration and possible assent. I see this as a necessary condition because it seems clear to me that being a religious person entails believing at least some religious propositions—for example, "There is a God."

Now it is beyond the scope of this essay to offer any adequate account of the logic of theological propositions, let alone provide any appropriate justification of religious education, whether in general or in any of its particularized versions. And so I anticipate that my stipulation will not satisfy any of the interested parties—neither the critics, nor the advocates of religious education. Nevertheless, given the object of this essay, the stipulation seems to me both appropriate and reasonable.

Those engaged in, for example, religious education in the Catholic separate schools of this country—a not inappropriate example given how common a concern of the critics—would argue, I believe correctly, that religious education involves much more than some detached reflection on and possible assent to certain propositions. They would emphasize the importance they attach, in addition, to the promotion of the development of certain attitudes, dispositions, and so on. And to such religious educators, I reply that I agree, but that I do not here purport to offer an adequate account of religious education, in general, or of Catholic Religious Education, in particular. What is important, for my present purposes, is the undeniable fact that, whatever else it involves, Catholic religious education necessarily and most fundamentally involves the presentation of certain theological propositions; and it is with the nature of these propositions and their treatment that the present essay is concerned.

For their part, those critics of religious education whose views I here confront, would argue, perhaps, that I trivialize the issue by attempting to reduce religious education to a mere matter of "the presentation of beliefs for possible assent." And to such critics I reply in the same manner; I agree, there is much more to it than my stipulation suggests. For example, beyond "presenting for possible assent," the usual intent is to promote, to instil, to implant, to foster belief in, acceptance of the propositions in question. But, what is important, for my present purposes, is the critics' claim that what passes for religious education is really indoctrination, because of the very nature of religious propositions themselves. Against this position, I argue that, while recognizing the danger of indoctrination, religious education is possible because it need not involve indoctrination as the critics maintain.

Thus, religious educators and critics of religious education alike will have to look elsewhere for any adequate description and defence of religious education, as such. I do intend, however, to address this matter briefly, before concluding the paper.

Finally, it will be necessary to clarify our understanding of indoctrination. As a preliminary, we note the distinction between two senses of the term. There is, it is true, an older, neutral sense of "indoctrination," in which sense it is, for all intents and purposes, synonymous with what we mean ordinarily by the term teaching. More recently, however, particularly in politics and education, the term "indoctrination" has come to be used almost exclusively in a pejorative sense, in which case it is used to pick out what are regarded as illegitimate ways of influencing people's beliefs. We will attempt to explain the illegitimacy later, as we further clarify this concept.

The Indoctrination Charge

With this minimum amount of spadework, we return to the challenge posed in the introduction to this paper, namely the claim that what goes by the name "religious education" is in fact indoctrination, and most obvious in the case of Roman Catholic religious education. Before attempting to answer this charge, we must first consider, I suggest, a logically prior question, namely, "Is religious education possible, *simpliciter*?" That is, is there such a thing as "religious education" at all? Is there a body of meaningful propositions to be presented to students, and can these propositions be supported by relevant evidence and adequate arguments? This logically prior question arises as a result of the challenges posed by the various empiricist criteria of meaning that have been advanced over many years. We have no time here to review in any detail this tradition which runs through Hume, the early Wittgenstein, the Vienna Circle, and the logical positivists and their oft-modified, so-called verification principle.

Whereas the logical positivists had made the verification process the criterion of meaning or meaningfulness, Popper shifted attention to the other side of the coin, as it were—namely to the falsification process. He emphasised a certain lack of symmetry between these two processes of verification and falsification. Whereas any positive instance provided some degree of confirmation for the truth of any proposition, no additional number of instances could ever assure the certainty of the truth of the proposition concerned. On the other hand, following Bacon's insight—the force of the negative instance being always greater—one legitimate counter-example is always sufficient to demonstrate the falsity of a proposition. For these reasons, Popper made falsifiability the criterion of demarcation between science and non-science.

It seems to me that much of the recent and influential work of Flew, for example, attempts to apply Popper's criterion of falsifiability to the field of theology. Flew discusses the problematic epistemological status of certain propositions and, as a remedy, proposes what he calls "The Falsification Challenge": "just what, please, would have to happen, or to have happened, to show that this statement is false, or that this theory is mistaken?"[6] Thus, in his influential article "Theology and Falsification," Flew says:

> . . .it often seems to people who are not religious as if there were no conceivable event or series of events the occurrence of which would be admitted by sophisticated religious people to be a sufficient reason for, concluding "There wasn't a God after all. . . ."[7]

Flew goes on to say that while theological propositions look at first sight very much like assertions, the single central question which religious people and theologians do not seem able or prepared to answer is, "What would have to occur or to have occurred to constitute for you a disproof of the love or the existence of God?"[8] This, it is clear, is the falsification challenge directed to those people who advance theological assertions. Flew's point is that:

> . . .if there is nothing which a putative assertion denies then there is nothing which it asserts either: and so it is not really an assertion.[9]

Barrow, writing more recently about the nature of religious discourse, maintains similarly that the central philosophical problem of the religious domain is, "What can a claim such as 'God exists' possibly mean, and how can it possibly be known to be true or false?"[10]

In support of his position, Barrow cites Flew's version of Wisdom's parable of the explorers and the untended garden and the "death by a thousand qualifications," and asks: "Are we actually talking about anything comprehensible?"[11] Barrow concludes:

> . . .I cannot see that talk of God's existence. . .can have any descriptive meaning at all. . .it seems impossible to classify "God exists" as a descriptive utterance, whether true or false.[12]

A Preliminary Reply

The first point that I want to make with respect to the use of the falsification challenge in the case of religious or theological propositions is that it is irrelevant. If Flew, Barrow, *et al.* are attempting to use Popper's ideas as a way of determining the meaningfulness or non-meaningfulness of religious propositions, then they are attempting to use falsifiability in a way in which Popper did not intend it to be used. Falsifiability was seen by Popper as the way of distinguishing between science and non-science, not as a criterion for distinguishing between sense and nonsense. Thus, while logical positivists would have said that "God exists" is just meaningless noise as are all other theological and metaphysical statements, Popper himself allowed that such statements had meaning and could, in fact, be true. But because there was no conceivable way in which such propositions might be falsified, they could not be classified as *scientific* statements.[13]

Any attempt to advance any such criterion of the meaning(fulness) of propositions, including religious ones, logically presupposes what it purports to be a criterion of. That is, simply put, what is *it*, the meaning(fulness) of which we intend to test? Surely, it is clear that we somehow have to know (believe) what *it* is, which implies that, in some sense, we must already know (believe) what *it* means.

What follows, therefore, on any Popperian test of falsifiability at least, is simply the conclusion that theological propositions are not scientific propositions; and that should hardly count as a surprising assertion to anyone interested in and familiar with both of these logically distinct fields of inquiry.

Further, it is odd, it seems to me, that anyone should expect that a religious person—a person of faith—should be prepared to admit that there is some sort of evidence, such as human suffering and misery, that would ever be sufficient to destroy that person's faith and trust in the existence and love of God. This is not, of course, to deny the obvious human reality of people of faith experiencing crises of faith in their lives; but that is a different question. The question before us is straightforward: should a religious believer be prepared to admit that his or her belief in the existence of God is in principle falsifiable? I suggest that the only answer to this questions is clearly no. It seems to me that whereas propositions such as "God will punish certain human beings with eternal damnation" are indeed subject to the falsification challenge, propositions such as "there is a God" are impossible to falsify; for if there is no God, there is no way anybody is ever going to *know* that!

Where do these considerations leave us? We have ignored the original version of the verification principle which suggested that a proposition was meaningful only if it could be verified by observation and experience. We ignored this primitive version of the verification principle, more recently called the verifiability principle, for the good reason that the principle was silly: it suggested that it was not possible to understand a proposition until it has been tested; obviously, in order to undertake a relevant type of test, one would need, in some sense, to understand the proposition to be tested.

We have suggested that Flew, Barrow and similarly minded persons are mistaken in suggesting that theological and other statements, which cannot meet their falsification challenge, should be dismissed as meaningless nonsense, arguing that the falsifiability test does not apply in this case.

Given then that we have some idea of what is meant when people say things such as "there is a God," is there any way in which the truth of such propositions might be demonstrated? It seems to me that John Hick provides a defensible answer to this question in his idea of eschatological verification. He introduces what seems to me to be a paradigmatic instance of a proposition which, though it may one day be verified, if it is true, can, however, never be falsified, even if it is false: the proposition that "there are three successive sevens in the decimal determination of 9."[14] He contends that at least some theological propositions are very much like this. The proposition "there is a God," while it can never be falsified, if in fact it were false, may, nevertheless, one day be verified, if in fact it is true. And the form of verification that would be relevant in the case of a proposition such as "there is a God" would be what he has labelled eschatological verification, namely, the ". . .possibility. . .of a situation which points unambiguously to the existence of a loving God."[15] Hick admits that the alleged future experience of this state cannot be appealed to as evidence for theism as a present interpretation of life, but he does see it as sufficient to make the choice between atheism and theism "a real and not merely empty or verbal choice."[16]

On the basis of the above considerations, I conclude that religious propositions are not only meaningful but are indeed subject to possible verification, at least of the type described by Hick. It follows, other things being equal, that the answer to the logically prior question posed above is that religious education is, indeed, possible, in that at least some religious propositions are both meaningful and verifiable in principle. In this crucial respect, the critics' claim fails.

It is, obviously, not my intention to suggest that belief in the existence of God is beyond rational debate among reasonable persons. I suggest merely, in answer to those critics whose views I here address, that religious education is not, as they seem to believe, ruled out as impossible because it is always and everywhere, if I interpret them correctly, necessarily indoctrinatory. My counter with Hick is intended to show that what I take to be the most fundamental religious proposition is, (paradoxically?) in fact, verifiable in principle. This does not deny the reasonableness of continued debate of the truth of this or any other important religious proposition. A cursory examination of recent issues of the *Philosopher's Index* will quickly confirm that the question of the existence of God is indeed alive; whether well or not, I leave open to judgement.

The Concept of Indoctrination Reviewed

To defend the main theme of this paper that religious education is possible without indoctrination, it is necessary to clarify further the concept of indoctrination. While Hare[17] argued that the teacher's aim or intention was the necessary and sufficient condition of indoctrination, he was promptly challenged by Wilson,[18] Flew,[19] Crittenden,[20] and Gribble,[21] all of whom pointed out that content was also a relevant consideration in determining whether or not students were being indoctrinated. Crittenden was also, so far as I know, one of the first to emphasize that it mattered not whether the teacher was malicious or merely mistaken. Crittenden, therefore, suggested that indoctrination involved the teaching of a requisite type of content—namely, significant and influential sets of beliefs such as world views and philosophies of life, in combination with the use of certain deficient teaching procedures. The procedural deficiencies involved would be those constituting violations of the general requirements of rational inquiry, and/or procedures which were deficient with respect to the requirements of the logic of particular forms of inquiry such as science, morality, and theology.

In my opinion, it was the work of Rosemont[22] which demonstrated most clearly that intention is not a necessary condition of indoctrination. Rosemont used the example of two different teachers teaching the same set of beliefs to similar groups of students in essentially the same way, with the effect that both of these groups of students ended up holding essentially the same beliefs in essentially the same way, that is, non-evidentially. Both these groups of students ended up being in, what is here called, the indoctrinated state of mind. Rosemont stipulated that in the case of one of these teachers, there was a conscious, deliberate attempt to get these students to hold these beliefs in this admittedly deficient way; in the case of the second teacher, there was no such aim or intention. As suggested by Flew and others, it may very well be that this second type of teacher was himself or herself the victim of a previous process of indoctrination, and so was, as he or she understood the situation, simply passing on true beliefs as known to be true. Rosemont argues that it does not matter. Each teacher is responsible, though in different ways, for the consequences which are the same in both cases; and each is, therefore, accountable, though on different grounds, for these same results. The difference is one as to the type of responsibility and blame involved. In the former case, indoctrination is the result of a moral deficiency; in the latter, it is the product of professional incompetence.

In brief, it can be said that those who have written on the concept of indoctrination, have tended to focus on some one or some combination of four criteria, namely aim/intentions, method, content, and/or results. On the basis of the preceding succinct but, I believe, accurate review of the relevant literature, and allowing for the distinction between the task and achievement senses of indoctrination, a distinction now commonly accepted in the case of teaching itself, the crucial logically necessary and sufficient conditions of indoctrination are, I believe, content and method.

I do not mean to deny that the activity of indoctrination is an intentional activity; my point is that one need not explicitly intend to indoctrinate to deserve to be held responsible for the consequences of one's actions. Analogously, one

need not *intend* to teach to engage in the activity of teaching. So long as one had the intention to help someone learn something, together with whatever other conditions are logically necessary and sufficient, then one would be teaching. I say "crucial " because these are the telling considerations in the hard cases. In the case of a "religious educator" who willingly—perhaps even proudly—allows that s/he intends to indoctrinate, or who holds some equivalent intention, as in my "teaching" example above, we have a clear case of indoctrination, at least in the task sense. Hopefully, and probably, such instances would prove to be the exception. The hard cases, I believe, involve the otherwise "well-intentioned" teacher who unwittingly brings about an indoctrinated state of mind. Not only are these the hard cases, they are, from an educational perspective, the more important cases; when teachers have good will, there is the likely prospect of their being prepared to take appropriate remedial action. Also, these seem often to be the focus of the critics, namely teachers who themselves have likely been subject to indoctrination, and who, consequently, do not really understand what they are doing in their classrooms.

Now, it is patently possible for teachers to take care to be clear and precise when formulating intentions, and simultaneously to monitor their general procedures. Well-intentioned teachers of good will might even routinely invite peers to observe their religious education classes. I, therefore, conclude that, if the charge that religious education is impossible without indoctrination is to stand up, then it will have to be because of some fundamental problem with the nature of the content, with religious propositions themselves.

The Critics and the Content Criterion

Using the above general discussion as a necessary preliminary, I now want to move on to the work of those authors who have been primarily concerned with the question of indoctrination as it arises, in their opinion, in the context of "religious education." Consider, for example, the definition of indoctrination provided by Flew:

> . . .indoctrination. . .is a matter of trying to implant firm convictions of the truth of doctrines which are in fact either false or at least not known to be true; usually, of course, though not necessarily, the indoctrinator himself believes mistakenly that the doctrines in question are both true and known to be true.[23]

Gribble, in turn, emphasizes the same point in delineating the essential characteristics of indoctrination when he says:

> In its "doctrinal" sense, "indoctrination" is distinguished by the nature of its content. It refers to the passing on of a body or set of beliefs which rest on assumptions which are either false or for which no publicly accepted evidence is or can be provided.[24]

Gribble goes on to add that what he means by "publicly acceptable" is that "anyone who tests the evidence will come to the same conclusion."[25] Woods and Barrow have argued that the four factors already discussed above come into the picture: they argue, for example, that the content concerned involves "unprovable propositions that cannot be demonstrated to be unquestionably true."[26] In terms of results they claim that "it must involve causing someone to have an

unshakeable commitment."[27] With respect to the method criterion, Barrow and Woods claim that given that the content involves unprovable propositions and since such propositions cannot rationally be determined to be true, it follows that "some form of non-rational persuasion is necessary."[28] Finally, they conclude that the fact that unshakeable commitment is a criterion shows "that intention must come into the picture."[29] Elsewhere, and more recently, Barrow has defined "unprovable propositions" as those "such that it is not known what would count as evidence for or against."[30] These unprovable propositions, then, which constitute the kind of content involved in the process of indoctrination are to be contrasted with those other propositions which are at least "provable in principle"; and Barrow defines propositions as provable in principle when it is the case that "we know and agree on the sort of evidence that would constitute proof or refutation of the claims."[31]

In summary, that religious education cannot occur without indoctrination is purported to be accounted for in the following representative ways:

(a) Barrow: What necessitates indoctrination in the course of religious education, as I understand his position, is that it is ". . .wrong to teach as true, propositions which are not known to be true."[32]

(b) Flew: He sees, it seems to me, a similar obstacle in that, ". . . indoctrination. . .is a matter of trying to implant firm convictions of the truth of doctrines which are in fact either false or at least not known to be true. . ."[33]

(c) Gribble: His position is not essentially distinct from those of Barrow and Flew in that he sees the problem arising out of the fact that religious education involves ". . .the passing on of a body or set of beliefs which rest on assumptions which are either false or for which no publicly accepted evidence is or can be provided."[34]

I do not intend to pursue at this time the interesting question of just what is meant by "publicly accepted evidence," nor the related questions of the justification of its use as a criterion for distinguishing between justifiable teaching, on the one hand, and indoctrination, on the other. The challenge posed by Flew, Barrow, and Gribble can be addressed on other grounds.

Religious Education is Possible

I suggest that these critics of religious education have failed to recognize the possibility of making a crucial and relevant distinction. I hold that the problem as seen by Flew, Barrow, Gribble and others is only a pseudo-problem. This pseudo-problem is the result of the widely accepted view which holds that religious education necessarily involves indoctrination because it entails, as we have seen claimed above, in a variety of what I take to be synonymous forms, ". . .the presentation of propositions as true, when such propositions are either false, or at least not known to be true."

I agree that a real problem would be posed were it the case that religious education always and necessarily involved, ". . .the presentation of propositions *as known to be true*, when such propositions are either false, or at least not known to be true." This would, in my opinion, constitute a paradigmatic instance of indoctrination in the guise of "religious instruction," and Flew, Barrow, Gribble, *et al.* would be entitled to the objections which they have raised,

though not, of course, on the basis of their stated positions. However, there is, fortunately, a rational alternative in the case of religious education, and, indeed, in the case of any type of education involving controversial sets of significant beliefs—namely, ". . .the presentation of propositions as *believed to be true*, when such propositions are either false, or at least not known to be true." I note in passing that the distinction I am drawing is compatible with the fact that Christians, for example, characteristically admit of the central role of faith in their religion, and compatible also with the fact that the *Credo* (I believe) constitutes the central profession of the faith of Roman Catholics, for example. Therefore, I see no good reason to expect that conscientious and sincere Christian religious educators, would object to this proposed rational alternative.

I conclude, therefore, that indoctrination is neither logically or empirically necessary when persons are engaged in what is justifiably called religious education. This is not intended to deny that indoctrination has been a feature of some religious instruction in the past; nor is there any attempt here to suggest that indoctrination will not be characteristic of some attempts at religious education in the future. I say attempts because what would then result would be indoctrination and not religious education. Religious education is either possible without indoctrination, or "religious education" is not possible. To speak of "religious education" with indoctrination would be, as I see it, to contradict oneself.

Granted, religious education, as I conceive it, is not content with simply "the presentation of propositions as believed to be true . . . ." This could correctly be construed as a case of merely informing students *about* someone's beliefs, as in a sociological report. Obviously, in religious education, much more is involved; at the very least, the propositions concerned are being presented as legitimate objects of belief, and, hopefully, discussed as propositions grounded in reason. And while a reportive/descriptive interpretation is plausible in the case of some external observer's account of another person's or group's beliefs, such a perspective can hardly do justice to the case of an insider's account of the shared beliefs at stake in religious education.

For example, there is a significant difference between a teacher presenting students with a sociological account of the kinship system and associated beliefs of this or that group, and a Catholic teacher in a Catholic separate school teaching Catholic students that, for Christians, "Easter Sunday commemorates the resurrection of Jesus from the dead." And it is precisely the nature of such propositions as this, as I understand the objections examined here, that leads the critics to conclude that religious education is impossible without indoctrination. I note, in passing, that in the case of this crucial religious proposition, for Christians of supreme importance, the falsification challenge clearly applies.

Flew holds that "the doctrines to be implanted, *as if they were matters of known fact*, must be either false or at least not known to be true. . ."[35] What I have argued is that the central and likely controversial beliefs at issue in the religious education I have in mind, call some of them doctrines or even dogmas if you will, need not be implanted "as if they were matters of known fact." They can rather be taught as reasonable beliefs; in fact, in my opinion, they, epistemologically, should so be taught. And in the case of some of the central components of (Catholic, at least) religious education, namely those which ultimately depend on authority, they, morally, ought to be so taught.

Earlier, I indicated my intention, before concluding this effort, to address the question of the defence of religious education, and not just its possibility. Briefly, I hold that there are rational and moral constraints on both the matter and the form, the content and the method of what deserves to qualify as religious education. What these constraints are is the appropriate subject of a future inquiry, now in progress. Here I attempt to defend the very possibility of religious education; and while that may not account for everything, I believe it accounts for something.

In summary, I have argued, first, that, on the basis of any reasonable test of meaningfulness, religious propositions, at least some religious propositions, are, indeed, meaningful, and teachable, because they are, in fact, verifiable and provable, at least in principle. Second, while there are dangers of influencing the minds of human beings, and of young human beings in particular, in illegitimate ways when engaging in religious education, I have tried to show that indoctrination is not a necessary component of the process, and will not be involved when competent teachers go about this business in a rational way.

Postscript

Incidentally, in introducing this paper, I used the case of a prospective juror who is expected to ignore his/her religious morality; I thought this case, in the important context in which it occurs, useful, precisely because the inability (or unwillingness?) to do so could be construed as evidence of indoctrination.

Be that as it may, this case raises, it seems to me, some interesting and important questions in its own right: for example, is it possible for a person to set aside their personal, religious morality in such a situation; and, if it is possible, is it reasonable to expect someone to do so? These questions, and others, I leave for another occasion.

Notes

[1]Robin Barrow, *The Philosophy of Schooling* (Brighton, Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books, 1981), 150.

[2]John B. Magee, *Philosophical Analysis in Education* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 65.

[3]A. Flew, "What is Indoctrination?: Comments on Moore and Wilson," *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 5(Spring), 1967, 273.

[4]Ronald Woods and Robin Barrow, *An Introduction to Philosophy of Education* (London: Methuen and Company, 1982), 65.

[5]James Gribble, *Introduction to Philosophy of Education* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1969), 33-34.

[6]Antony Flew, *Thinking About Thinking* (Glasgow: Collins, 1975), 55-56. It should be noted that Flew is clear about Popper's position; see *ibid.*, p. 54.

[7]Antony Flew, "Theology and Falsification," in John Hick (ed.), *The Existence of God* (New York: MacMillan, 1964), 227.

[8]*Ibid.*, 227.

[9]*Ibid.*

[10]Robin Barrow, *The Philosophy of Schooling, op. cit.*, 145.

[11]*Ibid.*

[12]*Ibid.*, 46.

[13]Bryan Magee, *Popper* (Glasgow: Collins, 1973), 46-49.

[14]John Hick, "Theology and Verification," in John Hick (ed.), *The Existence of God, op. cit.*, 258.

[15]*Ibid.*, 260.

[16]*Ibid.*, 261.

[17]R. M. Hare, "Adolescents into Adults," in T. H. B. Hollins (ed.), *Aims in Education* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1964), 47-70.

[18]John Wilson, "Education and Indoctrination," in Hollins (ed.), *Aims in Education, op. cit.*, 24-46.

[19]Antony Flew, "What is Indoctrination?," *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 4(3), 1966, 281-306.

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[27]*Ibid.*

[28]*Ibid.*, 70.

[29]*Ibid.*

[30]Robin Barrow, *The Philosophy of Schooling, op. cit.*, 147.

[31]*Ibid.*, 146.

[32]*Ibid.*, 163.

[33]Antony Flew, "What is indoctrination?," *op. cit.*,

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[35]Antony Flew, "Indoctrination and Doctrines," in I. A. Snook (ed.) *Concepts of Indoctrination* (London: Routledge, Kegan & Paul, 1972), 85.