

**UNIVERZITA KARLOVA**

**HUSITSKÁ TEOLOGICKÁ FAKULTA**

**Teaching Religion in Czech schools – a pragmatic approach**

**Výuka náboženství v českých školách – pragmatický přístup**

Diplomová práce

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Praha 2020

## **Poděkování**

Chtěla bych vyjádřit moje upřímné poděkování všem, kteří mě podporovali během počátků mé práce. Především děkuji mému vedoucímu práce Gerald Robertu Ostdiekovi za jeho trpělivé a inspirující vedení. Nikdy bych nebyla schopna dokončit svou diplomovou práci bez něj.

Děkuji Bohu za schopnosti a moudrost, kterou mi dal. Také bych chtěla velmi poděkovat mým rodičům za jejich nepodmíněnou podporu. Děkuji za jejich klid a snahu ulehčit můj život v čase, kdy jsem zpracovávala toto téma. Rovněž chci poděkovat mým kolegyním a kolegům z práce za jejich podporu a připomínky. Děkuji i mým kamarádům, že si u mne zvykli na nedostatek času.

## **Acknowledgement:**

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all who supported me during the genesis of this work. Especially, I wish to thank my thesis supervisor, Professor Gerald Robert Ostdiek, for his patient and inspiring guidance. I would never have been able to finish my master's thesis without his advisement.

I thank God for wisdom and skills, which He gave me. I would also like to thank very much my parents for their unconditional support. I am grateful for their calm, and for their effort to make my life easier while I was working on this topic. I want to thank my colleagues from work for their support and reminders. I even thank my friends, who got used to me not having time for anything.

## **Prohlášení**

Prohlašuji, že jsem předkládanou diplomovou prací „Výuka náboženství v českých školách – pragmatický přístup“ vypracovala samostatně s použitím níže uvedených pramenů a literatury. Dále prohlašuji, že tato práce nebyla využita k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

V Praze dne 20. července 2020

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Bc. Veronika Miškejová

## **Declaration**

I declare that I developed the presented master's thesis "Teaching Religion in Czech schools – a pragmatic approach" individually using the sources listed below. I also declare that this work was not used to obtain a different or same university title.

In Prague on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2020

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Bc. Veronika Miškejová

## **Annotation**

In this thesis I worked with the hypothesis that pragmatic pedagogy as presented by John Dewey offers a superior methodology to that of traditional approach commonly practiced in the schools system of the Czech Republic in the topic of world religions. My thesis begins with a look back into the history of the pragmatic approach. I show how pragmatic pedagogy could be used in teaching about world religions, and the place world religions have in the educational system of the Czech Republic. I studied the textbooks that are for public use for the school subject meant to teach about world religions. I use the comparative methodology of Bloom's taxonomy levels as well as contents with which the teachers work. I try to ascertain if the textbooks are useful enough for the praxis that the students might meet in the world outside of school. I conclude my thesis with practical preparations and a modified internet textbook based on the pragmatic approach. This textbook has activities and practical tasks through which the student can learn useful information about world religions.

## **Anotace**

Tato práce se zabývá hypotézou, že pragmatická pedagogika, jak je představená Johnem Deweyem, nabízí kvalitnější metodologii než tradiční přístup, který je běžně používán ve školském systému v České republice při vyučování světových náboženství. Na začátku práce se vracím do historie pragmatického přístupu. Ukazuji, jak může být pragmatická pedagogika použita při vyučování světových náboženství. Dále uvádím, kde v RVP a NVP najdeme zmíněno náboženství. Provedla jsem studii několika veřejně dostupných učebnic předmětu, kam je začleněna výuka světových náboženství. Pro srovnání metod jsem použila Bloomovu taxonomii a rovněž jsem se věnovala obsahu, se kterým učitel může pracovat. Hledala jsem důkazy, jestli jsou učebnice dostatečně užitečné pro pozdější život studentů mimo školní prostředí. V rámci zakončení mé práce jsem vytvořila vlastní návrh upravené učebnice podle pragmatického přístupu. Lépe užívá aktivit a praktických úkolů, skrze něž student může získat užitečné informace o světových náboženstvích. Tím svou práci zakončuji.

## **Keywords**

world religions, pragmatism, John Dewey, John Gatto, textbooks, pragmatic pedagogy, praxis, experience

## **Klíčová slova**

světová náboženství, pragmatismus, John Dewey, John Gatto, učebnice, prag. pedagogika, praxe, zkušenost

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## Introduction

Religion was always important to me. Because I am a believer and I grew up in two social groups. One was the group of my classmates who knew nothing about my religion, who were all deeply atheistic. The other group was my church group, who knew everything about my religion and always tried to advise me. All of my life I tried to explain one group to the other and I am worried I didn't succeed. Partially I felt let down by my own school system. My religion was described as old, out-lived and proved as a lie by science. It was one of the reasons I went to study teaching at a theological faculty - to right the wrong I lived.

Through studying pragmatism I found a different way of teaching and I formed a hypothesis that correlated with my own life. Pragmatic pedagogy is superior to that of the traditional approach, which is commonly used in the school system of the Czech Republic. Pragmatism thinks of consequences and usefulness. The traditional approach thinks of students only as sponges and empty buckets the teachers need to fill with information. All the student has to do is to retain said information and later prove that he/she remembered it all. The pragmatic approach thinks of students and teachers as both members of a community of inquiry, engaged in a mutual praxis, where the teachers learn from students how best to approach and engage the knowledge that the students obtain through engagement in the community.

Why is my thesis important? It is written in a quote many take as their own: "We fear what we do not understand." Though politics are ruled by the need of power, society is too often simply led by fear. Knowledge is the surest way of defense. That is why I think students should learn more than just the history of world religions. They also need to demystify religion, and interpret what it means for everyday life.

The etymology of the English word 'religion' includes the meaning "to bind fast". The definition I work with is that religion binds interpretation into being through action. This is another reason why religion is so important. Our interpretation of faith changes our actions. We can accept the sociological definition of religions as sets of rituals or practices, but maintain that religions are defined by what they do within people's lives. Based upon what people believe they change their actions, reactions, and behaviors. Religion is subjective, which may be a reason why some don't want to teach about it or take it seriously. But the fact of its subjectivity is

not a reason to throw this topic out of the curriculum, it is part of global culture and in our effort to live peacefully and in a tolerant society we have to try to have as few misunderstandings as possible. Knowledge is the real power and religion is a part of culture that changes lives of the whole world population.

For John Dewey's pedagogy, the key word could be experience. Experience as something that we make, but that simultaneously makes us. Experience is viewed as a story we tell ourselves about ourselves through what we notice in the world, and bring into our focus. Experience is never objective, and is always changing as we bring it forward. Experience connects us, the world around us and our knowledge. A system of pedagogy based on experience is nurturing to the experiencing of the world around us. The important thing is praxis, and using such praxis that furthers our engagement with and within the world around us. Pragmatic pedagogy teaches its students to be aware of interpreting, experiencing and connecting it all together.



# 1. Philosophy behind pragmatic approach

My thesis proposes the hypothesis that the pragmatic approach is superior to the traditional pedagogic approach in the teaching of religion. To demonstrate my hypothesis, I first need to present the philosophical roots of pragmatic pedagogy.

“Pragmatism is a philosophical tradition that – very broadly – understands knowing the world as inseparable from agency within it. This general idea has attracted a remarkably rich and at times contrary range of interpretations, including: that all philosophical concepts should be tested via scientific experimentation, that a claim is true if and only if it is useful (relatedly: if a philosophical theory does not contribute directly to social progress then it is not worth much), that experience consists in transacting with rather than representing nature, that articulate language rests on a deep bed of shared human practices that can never be fully ‘made explicit’.”<sup>1</sup>

To really understand pragmatism, we must look into the problems it tries to solve. The main topics for those who began this tradition were inquiry, meaning and truth. The most important thing for any human is his/her life. We are living right now and we are living through those experiences that we interpret and make meaning out of. And that is how you get to usefulness. This is far from where philosophy stood in the era in which Pragmatism began. Previous generations began with a quest for the first IS, and generally with an inquiry into existence through the “basic” question: What is? Through history there were disputes over what is, and whether or not an idea – a concept exists (haecceitas vs. quidditas). But pragmatism doesn’t really care about existence. They only care about usefulness to life and it’s consequences for life. To show it on an example - Is it really that important to establish if a god is real or is it more important to how such believe changes human life? To a pragmatist belief is a propensity to action. The skepticism of questioning everything is inquiry and yes, I would say that this is a continuity of philosophical tradition. Philosophy is based on asking questions. Yet, pragmatism is sometimes viewed as not a proper philosophical tradition, because it doesn’t answer any of the big questions previously mentioned.

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<sup>1</sup> LEGG, Catherine a Christopher HOOKWAY. Pragmatism. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [online]. Stanford University: Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2020, Aug 16 2008 [quoted 2020-07-15]. Available from: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pragmatism/>

Pragmatism is about the life we actually live. There is no absolute in this life; rather, life is perhaps better understood as the Pragmatists view it - as a non-stop interaction with and within the world that surrounds and succors life.

For this exact reason pragmatism is a thought process in sociology, education, ethics and religion. John Dewey was a pragmatic thinker, and through his study of what it means to have an experience and to make meaning, he developed a new system of educating students. William James, who was a friend of Dewey and who first developed this approach, did the same. James and Dewey both connected the theory with methods of praxis, and expanded it each in their own ways. This new philosophical tradition is human centric, likewise, Dewey's education system is pedo-centric. Truth is found in connections that are correspondent, coherent and useful. A pen is only a pen if you recognize it as such. Making connections makes value.

In terms of philosophy, pragmatism answers the question of 'why' with a simple word - consequence. In this, it served as an inspiration for both analytical philosophy and process philosophy. Pragmatism is an American-English philosophical tradition and it shows us how useful philosophy can be in an everyday life. It is a tool with which those who study it can use to better see philosophy as a whole and use the heritage of philosophy in making inquiry into their own individual thoughts, through their own interaction and experience. It is a basic premise of pragmatic pedagogy that this is what is needed most when it comes to teaching in schools.

## **2.Methodology on teaching religion**

Religion isn't exactly a topic that appears in many pragmatic writings. Many of pragmatic thinkers are atheists or world religions aren't their priorities. For this reason I am starting the chapter with William James. He wrote about religion and how important it is in peoples' lives. I want to show how religion connects to pragmatism and why it is important to teach it.

### **2.1. Teaching religion according to William James**

William James was a son of the theologian Henry James Sr. James who gave a series of lectures later made into a book - *Varieties of Religious Experience*<sup>2</sup>. In his lectures he shows different views people can take on religion. If we think of religion as a propensity to action, we see that religion is important in the sense that it's object – it's ground of being, is the human mind. Religion changes how people think and how they behave, even how they view their experiences. In his first lecture he argues that even if the objects of a person's belief may not exist, they have value and they can change human lives and those around. This is because religion is connected to our feelings - emotions. As James argues:

“Alfred believes in immortality so strongly because his temperament is so emotional. Fanny's extraordinary conscientiousness is merely a matter of over-instigated nerves. William's melancholy about the universe is due to bad digestion—probably his liver is torpid. Eliza's delight in her church is a symptom of her hysterical constitution. Peter would be less troubled about his soul if he would take more exercise in the open air, etc. A more fully developed example of the same kind of reasoning is the

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<sup>2</sup> JAMES, William. *The varieties of religious experience: a study in human nature*. New York: New American Library of World Literature, [1958].

fashion, quite common nowadays among certain writers, of criticizing the religious emotions by showing a connection between them and the sexual life.”<sup>3</sup>

“Medical materialism finishes up Saint Paul by calling his vision on the road to Damascus a discharging lesion of the occipital cortex, he being an epileptic. It snuffs out Saint Teresa as an hysteric, Saint Francis of Assisi as an hereditary degenerate...(...)... I ask you, how can such an existential account of facts of mental history decide in one way or another upon their spiritual significance? According to the general postulate of psychology just referred to, there is not a single one of our states of mind, high or low, healthy or morbid, that has not some organic process as its condition.”<sup>4</sup>

Religion as an institution that believes in something supernatural, metaphysical can make one clear argument for religion - that you cannot prove something doesn't exist. There is no scientific way of knowing what isn't. To be exact – there is no proof of the non-existent. James talked about tests of belief, for example, in his discussion of one Dr. Maudsley's approach:

“In the end it had to come to our empiricist criterion: By their fruits ye shall know them, not by their roots, Jonathan Edwards's Treatise on Religious Affections is an elaborate working out of this thesis. The roots of a man's virtue are inaccessible to us. No appearances whatever are infallible proofs of grace. Our practice is the only sure evidence, even to ourselves, that we are genuinely Christians.”<sup>5</sup>

The empirical criterion cannot be the testing the existence of any god, it cannot be the testing of the faith, but you can test human behavior. Religion changes human behavior and as scientists we can watch and describe behaviors pertaining to religion.

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<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* 010

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.* 013

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.* 019

As I was reading his lectures, I was worried more and more about teaching such a subject that is so complicated and so deeply intertwined with people's opinions. Because to tell the truth you cannot teach religion. You cannot teach a believer not to believe and you cannot teach a non-believer to believe. It is not as simple as that. Changing opinions, deep rooted behaviors and social groups is hard. James writes about it in his book *Pragmatism - How an individual settles into a new opinion*.<sup>6</sup> As with all opinions – they are subjective. People make them, they interpret the data and facts they are given. What kind of opinion they form depends on them. I can't forget the comic strip with two "prophets". One had a board saying - The end is near and the other - This will ever end. The second saying to the first "Your optimism disgusts me." There is a television show called the *Taskmaster* - six comedians every episode try to complete tasks that are afterwards scored by points from the *Taskmaster* himself. If you would watch this show, you could see they never do things the same way. Maybe they do it sometimes in a similar way, but never the same. Even though they are given the same task, at the same places, not knowing what and how the others did, they usually do something wholly different. Imagine teaching 26 or 28 different individuals. That is teacher's everyday life. How then to teach?

Sometimes I think traditional pedagogic methods present a much simpler task. If the teacher has to only transfer the knowledge for the students to have it exactly as it is teacher's head – there would be no reason for discussion, no reason for misunderstandings. Yet we know this isn't so: thanks to psychology we know that

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<sup>6</sup> JAMES, William. *Writings 1902-1910*. 7th print. New York, N.Y.: Library of America, [c1996]. Library of America (Library of America). ISBN 978-0-940450-38-7.

people make their own knowledge, and not just ‘upload’ it from others, or from experience – this too is a development of James’ pragmatic approach to psychology. But more, we know that people understand subjectively, and the traditional approach cannot function in the way of just transferring information from one memory to another. Teachers have a difficult job to work not with just students’ minds, but also with their bodies, their social connections, their circumstances and the moods these engender. By connecting these to the praxis of religious education, we may find a way to teach religion at our schools. Not merely by reading or memorizing sacred texts, and trying to prove what exists and what doesn’t, but by showing what is: the people. Test religion as Dr. Maudsley did - by the practices they hold sacred, as seen in their behavior, and in the consequences thereof. In a place where the shallower and profounder spheres meet. I want to teach religion from the point of equality. To be truly equal (in races, in genders, in religions) and to build tolerant society we need to know more.

In his famous essay *Circles*, Emerson writes: “The key to every man is his thought. Sturdy and defying though he look, he has a helm which he obeys, which is the idea after which all his facts are classified. He can only be reformed by showing him a new idea which commands his own. The life of a man is a self-evolving circle, which, from a ring imperceptibly small, rushes on all sides outwards to new and larger circles.”<sup>7</sup> Change is an inevitable process. Knowing more is an inevitable process. Because if we live, we experience ‘things’ around us. We interpret them and make information about them and of them. So maybe it is not possible to not know. In

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<sup>7</sup> EMERSON, Ralph Waldo. *Circles*. American Roots, 2016. ISBN 978-1429096249.

the essay *The Tigers in India*,<sup>8</sup> William James writes about knowing as pointing towards something. If we don't know then we can't point towards anything, basically we can't move. Knowing opens possibilities, knowing more opens more possibilities. We can then ask: Is it better to have more possibilities or less possibilities? Generally speaking, more possibilities are a good thing. More possibilities mean more opportunities, making better informed decisions, forming good arguments etc.

In *Talks to Teachers*<sup>9</sup> we read about the Stream of Consciousness. And how normal education doesn't give as much importance to the surroundings of the act of teaching and the collateral learning that draws from it. Why is this important? Earlier, I proposed that students are not just their minds. They are also their bodies. Since we cannot just transfer data from one human to another, teachers have to make students notice the course material with all of their senses. You notice what you care about. Teachers basically make their students care. It is important, for example, that students care about history, because otherwise we are doomed to repeat it. But I think for the social studies, or as it is now called Education in civility, it is even more important. Making students care. Not making them into believers, but making them care. Back to my question about how to teach many different individuals at once. Take them to the same level. Channel what we all have in common. Experience. Things we care for. Practice. Use the making of habits. Rituals and symbols shape the minds of every human being. In ways that are both good and bad. Habits are essential to

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<sup>8</sup> JAMES, William. *Writings 1902-1910*. 7th print. New York, N.Y.: Library of America, 1996. Library of America (Library of America). ISBN 978-0-940450-38-7.

<sup>9</sup> JAMES, William. *Talks to teachers on psychology: and to students on some of life's ideals*. New York: H. Holt & Co., 1910.

rituals; and habits are part of everyday living. Every religion has its own sacred rituals, sacred habits such as prayer, meditation, giving thanks, celebrating yearly holidays. Each is unique, both all are built of the same praxis.

## **2.2. How to teach religion according to John Dewey**

For my points, I focus primarily on his book: *Democracy and Education*<sup>10</sup>.

To be good teachers we need to know about the social situation of that society in which we are teaching. It is not just about nationality, but also about tradition, socio-economical groups, etc., there are also differences between teaching at private and public schools. All this and more, the teacher needs to take in account.

"Particularly is it true that a society which not only changes but-which has the ideal of such change as will improve it, will have different standards and methods of education from one which aims simply at the perpetuation of its own customs."<sup>11</sup>

"If it is said that such organizations are not societies because they do not meet the ideal requirements of the notion of society, the answer, in part, is that the conception of society is then made so "ideal" as to be of no use, having no reference to facts; and in part, that each of these organizations, no matter how opposed to the interests of other groups, has something of the praiseworthy qualities of "Society" which hold it together. There is honor among thieves, and a band of robbers has a common

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<sup>10</sup> DEWEY, John. *Democracy and Education* [online]. The Pennsylvania State University: The Pennsylvania State University, 2001 [quoted 2020-07-12]. Available: <https://nsee.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/KnowledgeCenter/BuildingExpEduc/BooksReports/10.%20democracy%20and%20education%20by%20dewey.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. page 85



interest as respects its members. Gangs are marked by fraternal feeling, and narrow cliques by in-tense loyalty to their own codes.“<sup>12</sup>

Every religious group has something to offer in a sense that their rules and traditions stood the test of time. Even the cannibalism of Aztecs lasted a millennia, but it can teach us something about human sacrifices we face today – going to the army, young women selling themselves to save the family in poverty stricken countries, giving your own life for others. Some of those praiseworthy qualities could be the things we want to pass on to – that is, encourage development within and by - the students. Some vile qualities students should definitely know – but at a remove, e.g., teaching the holocaust so as not to be blind to the horrors of the past. And there are limitations, religion is not the answer to all our problems, it does not cover every topic. I simply want to show that religion has its place among the topics beneficial to student life. Some might ask why religions are worthy of teaching, why schools shouldn't rather be teaching about other social phenomena in the limited time available. My answer is that religion collected wisdom from a multitude of human experience, that it is old, that it could be easily used as a starting point for discussions, other topics and learning about human nature. But every group has something to bring to the conversation and it shouldn't be closed off to others who want to contribute. “Any education given by a group tends to socialize its members, but the quality and value of the socialization depends upon the habits and aims of the group.”<sup>13</sup> That is where the danger dwells. Some groups might be aggressive and fanatic in the way of expressing their worthy opinions or contributions to the society.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid. page 86-87

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. page 87

That should never happen in academic setting, as it is destructive to the open society upon which academia depends. School should always uphold the democratic approach. Give an equal voice to all. The danger inherent to narrative control can come from inside the classroom as well as from the outside. Teachers have the hard job of knowing what is a fact, what is a lie, what is a half-truth, which statements were made through fear and which are those of freedom. “...all the members of the group must have an equable opportunity to receive and to take from others. There must be a large variety of shared undertakings and experiences. Other-wise, the influences which educate some into masters, educate others into slaves.”<sup>14</sup> School can offer different opinions and different cultural experiences. This is something family cannot do and cannot offer. Because of this, I find school and education at school beneficial. Any individual who goes to school gets to hear different opinions, to see different lifestyles and to live a different life than family can offer. Again it depends on the teachers and which school parents choose for their child, to bring different opinions into the mix. Education can also fail: “What we call education is actually indoctrination.” Jane Elliot (Red Table talk, TV show, 2020) Teachers should never allow for their classes to become indoctrinating. Teachers should open discussions that are difficult to resolve, and work through problems so the students could be ready for them when they encounter them in a more dangerous setting. Open

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<sup>14</sup> DEWEY, John. *Democracy and Education* [online]. The Pennsylvania State University: The Pennsylvania State University, 2001 [quoted 2020-07-12]. Available: <https://nsee.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/KnowledgeCenter/BuildingExpEduc/BooksReports/10.%20democracy%20and%20education%20by%20dewey.pdf> .page 88

discussion is not only good for listening to other problems, but to let yourself be heard - to know your opinion matters, to know your experience is valued.

Indoctrination easily happens when habit becomes automated. All habits can become automated. When habits of thought are automated through inculcation from the outside, indoctrination happens. It can happen when students just follow the teachers' directions "slavishly" without thought: in time they don't want to understand, they don't want to care, they just want to pass the next test and be done. The worst part for me is that when this happens, and especially when it happens systematically, the students doesn't bring anything to the experience, which means he doesn't take anything either. Another element of this danger in such a classroom is that if there is no balance of opinions, there usually remains only the loud opinion: the one opinion that always gets heard. The result is the isolation or exclusiveness of groups and cliques that are formed as a result of this system of not caring. Because as humans we form groups, and demand care, if there is no stimulation from the teacher or the school towards openness, the students will form their own little societies that will provide the care and experience. They will make a better place for them – but it will tend to be only for them, and exclude the openness of experience upon which a quality education depends.

Democracy needs education. "The superficial explanation is that a government resting upon popular suffrage cannot be successful unless those who elect and who obey their governors are educated."<sup>15</sup> Democracy and any democratic society or group trusts that its members are educated enough to make decisions and

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. page 91

vote and elect the people who share their findings and opinions which are rooted in education. Democracy only works when the minority respects the decisions of the majority and the majority respects the opinions and reasons of the minority. This is something that is not true for religion. Religion is a theocracy, and it is believed that God is the one who decides. It could mean that the prophet decided or the theologians made the choices for everybody and later said that it was the Holy Spirit that led them. It may then seem that in religion, education would not be as needed, but only instruction; and yet usually there is a choice to make – to enter a religion or not enter – or, to enter this religion and not that religion. For this reason people need to educate him or her self, and be taught openly about the upsides and downsides of each religion. Knowledge is powerful which means that in every society education is the key to success. Controlled education has helped many totalitarian regimes.

According to Dewey: “A society which is mobile, which is full of channels for the distribution of a change occurring anywhere, must see to it that its members are educated to personal initiative and adaptability. Otherwise, they will be overwhelmed by the changes in which they are caught and whose significance or connections they do not perceive. The result will be a confusion in which a few will appropriate to themselves the results of the blind and externally directed activities of others.”<sup>16</sup> Every society and every democratic system is better prepared and better off if it has good, accurate facts. As religion is a part of lives of more than 80% of the world

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<sup>16</sup> DEWEY, John. *Democracy and Education* [online]. The Pennsylvania State University: The Pennsylvania State University, 2001 [quoted 2020-07-12]. Available: <https://nsee.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/KnowledgeCenter/BuildingExpEduc/BooksReports/10.%20democracy%20and%20education%20by%20dewey.pdf> .page 92

population I find it worth the effort to educate children in it. Education should show the variables and changes. What is not growing is dying. Religion as a part of cultural education can enrich the dialogue by bringing up topics and different solutions: it can also show the variety of possibilities and cultural lives.

„The nature of experience can be understood only by noting that it includes an active and a passive element peculiarly combined.“<sup>17</sup> Every experience is an action, but also a reaction or consequence to that action that makes us stop and note that something happened. It is an act of storytelling that happens in conjunction with the act of perceiving. There are many actions that are happening at the same time everyday, but we do not experience them because we do not acknowledge them. We categorize experiences into useful ones and useless ones. If we experience something repeatedly with a high frequency it might become a habit for us or a warning for other encounters with such experiences. The most important thing for teaching is that experience is not only an action, but also reflection: students must stop and acknowledge that action and its consequences. To show this with an example: it is taught that 1 plus 1 equals 2, but for many students, this is an out of body action without any consequences. But if we show it on objects or even better their objects they might see that one coloring pencil is less than two coloring pencils. If school subjects stay in the stage of only actions, students won't be prepared for seeing and meeting with consequences outside of the school. “When an activity is continued

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<sup>17</sup> DEWEY, John. *Democracy and Education* [online]. The Pennsylvania State University: The Pennsylvania State University, 2001 [quoted 2020-07-12]. Available: <https://nsee.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/KnowledgeCenter/BuildingExpEduc/BooksReports/10.%20democracy%20and%20education%20by%20dewey.pdf> .page 145

into the undergoing of consequences, when the change made by action is reflected back into a change made in us, the mere flux is loaded with significance. We learn something."<sup>18</sup> This is the aim of education. Teaching so others may learn. Giving significance to subjects taught at schools. What is the first page every teenage student finds in a biology textbook? It is a picture of a naked man and a woman - significance. Teachers not only have to show his or her student that there are connections, but also must make stops to show the students the consequences of the connections, or make them live through those consequences, but he/she also has to find a point that connect the students to the subject at hand. Give them reason why should they care. It is not an easy job, sometimes the students won't understand until later, but through reiteration they each might find their own significance.

This system is one of making connections. It is not world of things or a world of strict morale or logic as some philosophers might argue. This method of teaching is based on making connections. It means putting things together and in context.

"In schools, those under instruction are too customarily looked upon as acquiring knowledge as theoretical spectators, minds which appropriate knowledge by direct energy of intellect. The very word pupil has almost come to mean one who is engaged not in having fruitful experiences but in absorbing knowledge directly... It would be impossible to state adequately the evil results which have flowed from this dualism of mind and body, much less to exaggerate them. Some of the more striking effects, may, however, be enumerated. (a) In part bodily activity becomes an intruder. Having nothing, so it is thought, to do with mental activity, it becomes a distraction, an evil to be contended with...

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<sup>18</sup> DEWEY, John. *Democracy and Education* [online]. The Pennsylvania State University: The Pennsylvania State University, 2001 [quoted 2020-07-12]. Available: <https://nsee.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/KnowledgeCenter/BuildingExpEduc/BooksReports/10.%20democracy%20and%20education%20by%20dewey.pdf> .page 145

premium is put on physical quietude; on silence, on rigid uniformity of posture and movement; upon a machine-like simulation of the attitudes of intelligent interest. The teachers' business is to hold the pupils up to these requirements and to punish the inevitable deviations which occur."<sup>19</sup>

Dualism of body and soul has been a point of discussion for hundreds of years, and to this day, neither philosophers nor scientist have clear answers to the problems posed by the concept. But the mind is the part that everyone wants to educate. The body can be only trained, but not educated. Schools forget that students have both. Classes are not for ghosts, but for people with bodies. Twenty years ago students couldn't drink during lessons - only on breaks. Things changed, but not everywhere and this dualism is so drilled into us systematically, teachers forget that they are also teaching bodies. What is even worse, they are teaching teenage bodies. And if teachers try to suppress bodily actions, trying to control something the students themselves are not able to control, in many cases students take it up in some other way or at some other time. My classmates jumped out of the window on the first floor because they didn't want to wait for the gatekeeper to open the main doors for them. Some burned their textbooks; some threw them out windows.

"Some bodily activities have to be used. The senses — especially the eye and ear — have to be employed to take in what the book, the map, the blackboard, and the teacher say. The lips and vocal organs, and the hands, have to be used to reproduce in

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<sup>19</sup> DEWEY, John. *Democracy and Education* [online]. The Pennsylvania State University: The Pennsylvania State University, 2001 [quoted 2020-07-12]. Available: <https://nsee.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/KnowledgeCenter/BuildingExpEduc/BooksReports/10.%20democracy%20and%20education%20by%20dewey.pdf> .page 146-147

speech and writing what has been stowed away.”<sup>20</sup> Teaching should use all of the senses. Education should work with the idea that body and soul are connected and we can use this connection to make learning easier and better. While teaching subjects such as history and social studies, it is important to not forget that only explaining and retelling the past won’t help the students develop experience. It is the gory details and fun facts that students remember and not who won which battle.

“We get so thoroughly used to a kind of pseudo-idea, a half perception, that we are not aware how half-dead our mental action is, and how much keener and more extensive our observations and ideas would be if we formed them under conditions of a vital experience which required us to use judgment: to hunt for the connections of the thing dealt with.” Connecting experience with thinking - meaning making is also one of the most important things in education. Experience without making meaning is an empty experience. Thinking without a real life experience to prove it or disprove our theories is likewise useless for living. Theory without evidence is a dead theory; just as faith without action is dead faith.<sup>21</sup> While teaching about world religions we should remember that. As much as we want to teach theory and facts - one experience is invaluable. “An experience, a very humble experience, is capable of generating and carrying any amount of theory (or intellectual content), but a theory apart from an

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<sup>20</sup> DEWEY, John. *Democracy and Education* [online]. The Pennsylvania State University: The Pennsylvania State University, 2001 [quoted 2020-07-12]. Available: <https://nsee.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/KnowledgeCenter/BuildingExpEduc/BooksReports/10.%20democracy%20and%20education%20by%20dewey.pdf> .page 147

<sup>21</sup> Paraphrasing Bible - James 2,17



experience cannot be definitely grasped even as theory.”<sup>22</sup> This is a very clear criticism of the traditional system of teaching. Experience based teaching is a new concept even though John Dewey presented it as early as 1916. Helping students to experience the world around them is one role of the teacher that deserves more discussion. It is harder than teaching pure theory, but a learning method that lacks this is useless for future life. Experiences affect us deeply; this why when students reminisce they talk about school trips and not about biology lessons. It is also why the chemistry experiments are the most popular lessons. Practical lessons were always more popular than theoretical ones. Even students feel like they learn more. “All our experiences have a phase of “cut and try” in them — what psychologists call the method of trial and error. We simply do something, and when it fails, we do something else, and keep on trying till we hit upon something which works, and then we adopt that method as a rule of thumb measure in subsequent procedure.”<sup>23</sup>

This is how we learn in life. There is no teacher to guide us, so we try and then we learn from our mistakes to have better results. Why shouldn't we use this element in teaching? Self-reflection is a good tool for our life outside of school. To evaluate our trials, failings and successes. The sooner students know how to be critical of themselves in a positive growing way, the sooner they will be able to learn by

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<sup>22</sup> DEWEY, John. *Democracy and Education* [online]. The Pennsylvania State University: The Pennsylvania State University, 2001 [quoted 2020-07-12]. Available: <https://nsee.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/KnowledgeCenter/BuildingExpEduc/BooksReports/10.%20democracy%20and%20education%20by%20dewey.pdf> .page 150

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. page 150

themselves. If at the end of school attendance students are ready to learn by themselves the school system gave them all they will need in the present and future.

Dewey writes about how we as humans can be trained to think. The more we make mistakes and the more we try, the better we can be at assessing consequences and changing our behavior so that fewer mistakes occur. Students thus can learn how to change their circumstances and with it the outcomes of their behavior. This would be very dangerous for totalitarian governments and totalitarian systems. Person who can think for himself/herself, can notice if she/he's manipulated, if she/he's being lied to. But not only to despotic systems, it also challenges authority and individuality. It a person can learn on his/her own - he/she are independent. They develop the ability to choose whom they give authority, and they learn to value their own individual opinion more than they can in a system built on dependence.

There is a modern parable I heard: "God is like a teacher of mathematics, that give a complex task (an exercise) to the students and leaves. Everyone is trying their best, counting, writing, but failing. Some of the students give up and say that the teacher has given them an impossible task that equation cannot be solved. But other students notice that they cannot use the thinking and logical step they always used - they must figure out a new way based on their previous knowledge. They trust that the teacher wouldn't give them something without a solution. The teacher just wanted them to find new ways to solve it."

Every lesson should pose a problem for students, Paulo Freire wrote in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*<sup>24</sup>. And in every lesson students should need to try to find new ways to solve problems. Putting it all together, making connections, making sense out of the world to be able to live a good life.

“the change is so significant that we may call this type of experience reflective—that is, reflective par excellence. The deliberate cultivation of this phase of thought constitutes thinking as a distinctive experience. Thinking, in other words, is the intentional endeavor to discover specific connections between something which we do and the consequences which result, so that the two become continuous...a unified develop-ing situation takes its place. The occurrence is now understood; it is explained; it is reasonable,”<sup>25</sup>

The opposite of thinking and making meaning is routine and capricious behavior. Routines are good for our mental state, because it gives us solutions that we don't have to think about. Routine is good as a root, something for us to hold while we live through everyday changes. But routine has nothing to do with thinking and making connections. It is in the definition of routine that it doesn't change, you are not supposed to be thinking about it – because if you do, it changes.

“Reflection also implies concern with the issue—a certain sympathetic identification of our own destiny, if only dramatic, with the outcome of the course of events. For the general in the war, or a common soldier, or a citizen of one of the contending nations, the stimulus to thinking is direct and urgent. For neutrals, it is

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<sup>24</sup> FREIRE, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. 30th anniversary edition. Přeložil Myra Bergman RAMOS. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017. ISBN 978-0-8264-1276-8.

<sup>25</sup> DEWEY, John. *Democracy and Education* [online]. The Pennsylvania State University: The Pennsylvania State University, 2001 [quoted 2020-07-12]. Available: <https://nsee.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/KnowledgeCenter/BuildingExpEduc/BooksReports/10.%20democracy%20and%20education%20by%20dewey.pdf> .page 150

indirect and de-pendent upon imagination."<sup>26</sup> It is very hard to be objective as a teacher, because you want the students to care, you want to motivate them, but you must stay objective to be able to do a good job at teaching. Dewey uses the example of a general that is motivated by his care for his people, but needs to plan a perfect attack without any emotions, because they could cloud his judgement. Everyone has some connotation with religion and every teacher has an opinion on religion. Teachers need to be passionate about their subjects, yet objective in a way that they teach. As Dewey summarizes this:

"So much for the general features of a reflective experience. They are (i) perplexity, confusion, doubt, due to the fact that one is implicated in an incomplete situation whose full character is not yet determined; (ii) a conjectural anticipation—a tentative interpretation of the given elements, attributing to them a tendency to effect certain consequences; (iii) a careful survey (examination, inspection, exploration, analysis) of all attainable consideration which will define and clarify the problem in hand; (iv) a consequent elaboration of the tentative hypothesis to make it more precise and more consistent, because squaring with a wider range of facts; (v) taking one stand upon the projected hypothesis as a plan of action which is applied to the existing state of affairs: doing something overtly to bring about the anticipated result, and thereby testing the hypothesis,... And since it can never take into account all the connections, it can never cover with perfect accuracy all the consequences"<sup>27</sup>

The real problem of today's education at school is the same as Dewey saw hundred years ago. Conspiracies might say that it is weird we haven't yet fixed our educational system. Students get demotivated at schools. Outside of schools children

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<sup>26</sup> DEWEY, John. *Democracy and Education* [online]. The Pennsylvania State University: The Pennsylvania State University, 2001 [quoted 2020-07-12]. Available: <https://nsee.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/KnowledgeCenter/BuildingExpEduc/BooksReports/10.%20democracy%20and%20education%20by%20dewey.pdf> .page 153

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.page 153

ask their parents a hundred questions, but at school they have none? What school teaches now is silence and how not to move for 45 minutes at a stretch.

To summarize what I learned while reading John Dewey - democracy stands and fails upon educating voters. Voting citizens who do not see the connections will make their political choices based on manipulation, propaganda and familial obligation ( “in my family we always voted for ...”). One example I would give is an interview with British export business man who thought Britain leaving UK would not change anything for his business. He works as an exporter of goods. But he never made the connection that a lot might change if the borders close or if there are different tariffs. Education at schools could be enriching for all the actors (students, teachers and parents - the whole society), but as of right now it teaches obedience, a disconnected dualism of body and soul, blind memorization, and how to lose interest in everything. Good teachers should always prioritize praxis over theory, at the same time teach bodies and souls, make students care about all of it and help them grown through trial and error. This should be the basis for any subject teaching.

### **2.3. How to teach religion according to John Gatto**

These points are from the Seven Lesson School Teacher<sup>28</sup> written by John Gatto. As I try to demonstrate that pragmatic approach is superior to traditional pedagogic approach, I focused on seven lesson students learn collaterally while going to school. These demonstrate how traditional pedagogy can be oppressive to the human mind

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<sup>28</sup> GATTO, John Taylor. *Dumbing Us Down*. 2. edition. Gabriola Island, United States: New Society Publishers, 2017. ISBN 0865718547.

and body. According to Gatto, the upshot of traditional education can be summarized in these seven lessons, these are what students really learn in the classroom. The first of these is confusion:

### 1. Confusion

Confusion is what children are taught nearly at any school, but need not be. Lessons that have no connection leave children wishing only to survive the day - to go into the same whirlwind the next day. How to connect religion with curriculum? By make it coherent and relevant to both their other studies, and their lives. The easiest way is to connect it with history – and that is a good start, because religion is the backbone of many historic events. The second easiest connection is with literature. Many books were written and are still written about religion, and most of all showing world religions in many different views. Some authors despised religion and you can see it in their work: while discussing such literature in class. Then there are those who were inspired by religion and it shows in their work (e.g., Christopher Marlowe, C. S. Lewis, Marjane Satrapi ). Then there are subject where it would be hard to make a connection to world religions. And I think its good to tell children something they can then remember these things easily. Making connections should help students sort out the confusion we sometimes inadvertently make, due to shortcuts, a lack of time or the way teachers teach.

### 2. Class Position

John Gatto wrote about how we teach children to keep their position in classrooms. “You come to know your place”. This can certainly also happen with the traditional teaching of religion, and so we endeavor the pragmatic approach. While teaching about religion we show the differences that make every religion unique – not

stacked one better than the other, but unique in their connections. This is no different than how we are unique in our connections. Instead of making children prisoners and just giving them numbers, we can show them that various cultures in history have tried this, and failed. Religion can make prisoners out of their believers and teachers shouldn't steer clear of these topics. Religion is sometimes the institution of putting people in categories, teaching them "This is your position - nothing you can do will change that". But teachers can draw inspiration from people who fought those rules and students can also see whether or not such societies prospered. Human nature is always as diverse as biology. In good culture and good religion there is always a balance between unity and uniqueness. And by good I mean free, inspiring, inducing, leading to making people's lives better. In a healthy culture, a person can find their unique place through being different. And religion can teach us a lot about this, because we can learn from their mistakes. History repeats itself. And even religions can offer place to be free. Children should be able to learn about society. Of course no amount of ought is equal to an is. School has been mandatory in the Czech lands for 151 years. And world religions are still not truly on the plan.

### 3. Indifference

I say to this: Not today, not on my watch, not ever! Caring is basis of all the religions, philosophies and sciences. And for me it is one of the most important lessons of religion. Children may be taught in this indifferent system how not to care - how nothing really matters. Yes. I lived through that in my own experience. My niece told me that she won't vote in a election when she's 18, because it never changes anything. Indifference is very sneaky and easy to adopt. Caring hurts too much. Caring can make our life difficult. But if we don't care, we can't live in a civilization. And every proper teacher is a guardian of civilization (Bertrand Russel). Above all other professions, the teacher should keep the indifference at bay. Religion is based mostly on stories about gods that care for us or about people caring for other people. All the religions in the world see that there is a need for caring. Ah, but there is the question - "Caring about what?" I think in every religion there is a point of caring about other people and society around us. The easiest way to teach caring is to teach about self-care, because if you care about yourself, you can learn to care about the people and

things around you. School systems sometimes destroy in children the sense of wonder and care while teaching the “important” stuff. Teaching about different religions might change that. even when you just show that they care about different things. I first learned about environmentalism through Buddhism. If schools will continue to teach indifference, we will leave the world to a small group of people that may not care about us or the society, just about their profits.

#### 4. Emotional dependency

Command, authority, systems of rewards... It all teaches children dependency. Every child lives for those moments when he/she can shine. When they get the gold star for good work. They live for every good word. And then when puberty kicks in they go into the opposite direction. Every good word and every prize means you are the “nerd”. Those good kids can’t be cool. I wish for balance, but that is not something we see at our schools. Most of the times we see broken kids who hate school and grow to a place of apathy. I believe that the study of religion can change even that. By teaching religion you can spark some very good discussions. If it’s done properly. And if you have a sufficiently diverse group, you can see different religions and none of them can truly say “I am the only right way” because none of them can truly prove it. The beauty of this approach is found in the question: the Authority of what? Every religion has a different authority. Commands – every religion has different set of commands, some don’t even have commands. The teacher can spark a good discussion with little kids and even with teenagers. Religion is such a controversial topic that it can wake up even those in eternal slumber. This is the ideal. I always strive for those, but we need to be prepared for the more problematic situation. Fundamentalism is a religious way of emotional and intellectual dependency. It is the opposite of a healthy religion as religion is about interpretation, and fundamentalism rejects the fact of interpretation (Karen Armstrong). But maybe on that we can teach some valuable lesson of tolerance and life in a free society. Emotional dependency is not something I want to eliminate, but make healthy, and to this end, religion offers an abundance of material through which we can develop such themes.

#### 5. Intellectual dependency



“Good students wait for a teacher to tell them what to do” says John Gatto in his *Seven-Lesson schoolteacher*. There lies a problem for me. Religions has been known for their “I know this is right!” “This is the only truth” But then arguing if you do it right - through it you can put the truths to test. Discussions about different religions can lead to very interesting waters. And it should lead the student to critically think about religions and hopefully not just religions. These discussions should be lead as in *Philosophy for Children*.<sup>29</sup> Because maybe if religion can be wrong everything else can be wrong too. If children want to know more about religion it is very easy to find because many books were written about it. Teacher can’t really choose what they should learn. Discussions are dangerous. But how can you teach religion without a discussion? Even in our classroom, religion had to be taught story by story. And every good story makes you think. Yet too much information can lead to confusion on the student’s part - there is the important part of teacher’s job. The job is helping students figure out what should they know, help them see what could be useful later and in the present. Teacher should not be a preacher. No “here’s the story and here’s what it means...”. Intellectual dependency does not help student think. Meaning making of the students is the core of a pragmatic pedagogy. You cannot undo the intellectual decency of those learning. That is why teacher are the guardians of civilization. They have the power to help students learn to teach themselves.

## 6. Provisional self-esteem

Kids are constantly evaluated and judged. All people are judged, kids just get it in reports from 1-5 or A to F. Sometimes even adults get evaluated and they are not happy about it. We are teaching people from young age that you can measure success based on how you are evaluated. But because of the dependency that children already have, they don’t even think about how unfair the system is or how judged they are. The stereotypes we encounter through teachers who, for example, give better scores

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<sup>29</sup> for more information see: MIŠKEJOVÁ, Veronika. *Usage of Biblical Stories in Philosophy for Children*. Praha, 2017. Bakalářská práce. Husitská teologická fakulta UK. Supervisor: Gerald Robert Ostdiek, BA, M.A., Ph. D.

to boys or pressure czech-asians to be the best of the class, make it even worse. The judging alone can have impact on kids' lives. Society does this, because people who have provisional self-esteem, who were raised on the idea that their self-worth is based on what other people think are very easy to manipulate. Religion as education can go both ways when it comes to judging - we can learn from it, from all different religions as an example of how to deal with judgement. Religion can help by learning that only god can judge you, or that you are your own judge. There is the notion held by many Christians that the Pope is the voice of God and then anything he say is the proclamation of God. Traditional pedagogy is built on the idea that the teacher has the role of a pope. Religion can teach us a lot about the price of our lives. Starting with Christianity and Jesus sacrificing his own life for yours, and moving to Buddhist meditation that tries to cultivate compassion and love, as well as techniques that focus on developing these qualities toward one's self. When teaching religion, teacher should always think about the students and be clear when it comes to what religion is right. There are some scientifically proven outcomes from meditation, prayers or even confessions. But the teacher should be always beware of the pitfalls of going only one way and not the other.

## 7. One can't hide

John Gatto wrote about how school is one of the best surveillance systems ever devised by man. Religion knows something about that too. There are all-seeing gods or ever present karma. Nobody is ever truly alone. When teaching about religion, we should always think about this. Because it is not just about being it better for the governing party or dynasty to have people ready to surveillance themselves or others. It is about people being better people when they think someone is watching. I think there would be a good point of showing that even though we are all watched we can do mistakes and that we are all human and that we all have secrets. And it's okay. In these times we cannot no longer pretend that we are not watched. There is no privacy when it comes to our phones and other technology. We gave up our privacy, and some are even giving up ever more privacy for money. There could be a valuable lesson taught here, and again nothing new is under the sun, so teachers can take from religion and maybe even here it could help them to have a good discussion.

I believe in religion. Not as the ultimate cure. But definitely not the scarecrow of every subject. Most of the people with whom we share the Earth have (or practice) some sort of religion. We share the wonderful planet with them. And if they are like me – religion is part of them, part of their culture. Understanding this might help understanding each other. Religion can be taught in ways John Gatto describes, but that is not a religion of the sort of state religion that needs zombies who will go to their places of worship and not think about it. It is not this something we know from the Middle ages. True lessons of religion can be taught the opposite way – the way that John Gatto tries to show in his upside down world.

## **2.4. Teaching religion according to Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner**

These points are from *Teaching As a Subversive Activity*<sup>30</sup>. John Gatto wrote about the failures of the traditional approach, while Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner have written about the way teacher should teach. They called it a subversive activity. This is the way pragmatic teacher should teach, it is based on Dewey and many others. For them it's important to first challenge the proposition that teachers are just transmitting data from them to the students.

The role of a teacher has always been somewhat unclear. Postman and Weingartner present few ways people look at teachers and sometimes how teachers can see themselves.

Lamplighter - trying to illuminate student's minds.

Gardener - trying to cultivate minds, to plant seeds that will grow.

Personal Manager - trying to keep student's minds busy, efficient.

Muscle Builder - trying to strengthen flabby minds.

Bucket Filler - trying to fill student's minds.

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<sup>30</sup> POSTMAN, Neil and Charles WEINGARTNER. *Teaching As a Subversive Activity*. Random House, 1969. ISBN 0385290098.

But what is a mind? What do we talk about when we talk about “the human mind”? As John Dewey before them, they think of mind more as a verb than a noun. Nouns point us in a direction of a thing. But what if mind is not a thing, but a process? Every metaphor has its problems. By using wrong metaphors we show people wrong perceptions. If we think of a mind as a bucket that needs to be filled, what do we do when the bucket is full? Are we to presume we all have the same sizes of buckets? What will be the first thing we forget when the bucket overflows?

If we see mind as a process we could see that there are other processes that happen at the same time. Not compartments, separate categories, but a person who thinks, lives, believes, sits and eats at the same time. Dewey talks of “collateral learning” - learning that goes on when teachers are concentrating on “the intellect”. Curricula seem to have forgotten that there are differences between girls and boys, white middle-class students and black non-middle-class students. The price to be paid is demotivation of all, preferential treatment of a group over the other who has to adapt or drop out. That is just the ones I saw through my experience with educational systems.

Another thing about teaching is perception. It is very important to the teacher to know how students perceive her/his lessons. Everything would be perfect if our perception was based on what we see around us. Postman and Weingartner use Ames’ experiments. Adelbert Ames created several demonstrations to test and study the human perception. Some were simply named optical illusions, but for some people the experiments showed how our mind negotiates with things that are outside of our skin.

“What is it Ames seemed to prove? The first and most important fact uncovered by his reception studies is that we do not get our perceptions from the “things” around us. Our perceptions come from us. ... It does mean that whatever is

'out there' can never be known except as if is filtered through a human nervous system."<sup>31</sup>

Let's say we are 'minding' and through the process we make assumptions about the world around us based on previous experiences. This process will then lead me to something that will work for the world I experience. And until we are met with a problem, we keep our perceptions as long as we can; it doesn't matter how many times we are told we are wrong. It is our opinion, we see it that way, how could we be wrong? Every process can have a different outcome based on those previous experiences. "If rain is falling from the sky, some people will head for shelter, others will enjoy walking in it."<sup>32</sup> The same starting point - RAIN - ends with a different outcome. They didn't perceive it in the same way.

No matter what metaphor we use for teaching and teachers, we shouldn't assume everyone is the same and everyone is learning in the same way or that their 'minds' work the same. Children whose parents are right in the middle of a divorce are often getting worse marks, because they just cannot be bothered to learn their chemistry, physics etc. Their process of perception and minding is different than the process of a child from a happy functional family. One would be too anxious to do homework while the other would not be able to wait to tell his/her mother about all the things he/she will show her in /his/her notebook.

To support the theory of perception is also the Pygmalion effect. Many times over this has been confirmed by teachers and scientist. Children who are told they will do better, will do better than those are told they will fail. Many times those who are expected to do poorly do poorly, because they perceive the atmosphere and it demotivates them to try to do better. There are some who work harder in spite of those who say they won't succeed (mentioned in<sup>33</sup> *Becoming*), but those are rare cases and usually they find help in other social circles.

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<sup>31</sup> POSTMAN, Neil and Charles WEINGARTNER. *Teaching As a Subversive Activity*. Random House, 1969. ISBN 0385290098.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> OBAMA, Michelle. *Becoming*. USA: Crown Publishing Group, 2018. ISBN 978-1524763138.

Teachers have the difficult task to help modify perceptions, and can bring to student new experiences that will perhaps even change some of the students' perceptions. It is important that we use criteria for meaning making, for minding the world around us, for living in the process. "We need to distinguish the difference between psychopathic statement and a scientific one."<sup>34</sup>

A few principles from their book exemplify this: The teacher rarely tells students what he thinks. Generally he does not accept a single statement as an answer to a question. He encourages student-student interaction. He rarely summarizes the positions taken by students on the learnings that occur. Closure would not help students to think about the problems out of the classroom. Generally, each lesson poses a problem for students. The lessons develop from his knowledge of his students and not some arbitrary "logical" structure.<sup>35</sup>

I think this all ties very well with teaching religion. Beliefs are similar to 'the mind', we should talk more about the process of believing – as a verb, and what it means in the reality of the believers' lives, and how our beliefs shape us. For example, if we believe it will rain, we will take an umbrella with us outside. Also there should be made deeper point about collateral learning. Teachers don't teach just minds, but they teach bodies. Every teacher will recognize that there is a difference between teaching in the morning or after lunch. If you teach student in uncomfortable chairs or sofas. Or how quickly the lesson can go in different direction if it starts snowing outside. Teaching religion should also be about the senses, about working with all the things around us. Teach the mind, but the body also. Perception - if we associate some religious groups with violence it is possible we will see religion as only having to do with those who are violent and the few who are non-violent as rare exceptions. Not just that the topic of religion is close to the topic of meaning making, but it is easy to find their principles in the teaching.

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<sup>34</sup> POSTMAN, Neil and Charles WEINGARTNER. *Teaching As a Subversive Activity*. Random House, 1969. ISBN 0385290098.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

The teacher should never tell students what he or she thinks of any religion. As it is with voting. Teacher should not tell his student who he or she votes for. The children might see and might try to figure it out. If we teach religion in a way that single statements are okay as an answer for teacher's questions, education is doing something very wrong. Religion is not question of two plus two. It hasn't the absolutism of mathematics. Student-student interaction seems to be the best way to modify perception. Discussion is good, but teacher is always viewed as an older generation, as a kind of person who doesn't have his or her life before her. But fellow classmates are those who are closer to the kind of perception they might have themselves. Every lesson on religion should pose a problem. It is easy because every religion tries to answer unanswerable questions. 'Why are here?, What comes after death?, Is there something bigger than us?, How to be a better person?, What does it mean to be better?' The lessons should not be prepared years in advance, and set into the schedule like stone, but specifically made for the class that is before the teacher. There might be just small changes, but sometimes, the times call for changes. Jane Elliot started her blue and brown eyed exercise because of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. If every lesson would be the same it could never speak to the class and problems they face at that time in their lives.

### 3. World religions in the Czech Framework Educational Program

Religious affiliations in the Czech Republic, census 1921–2011<sup>[1]</sup>

Religion	1921		1930		1950		1991		2001		2011	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Christianity	8,974,423	89.7	9,668,948	90.5	8,287,957	93.1	4,486,296	43.5	3,028,941	29.5	1,317,087	12.6
–Roman Catholic Church	8,201,464	82.0	8,378,079	78.5	6,792,046	76.3	4,021,385	39.0	2,740,780	26.8	1,082,463	10.4
––Ruthenian Greek Catholic Church	9,307	0.1	12,149	0.1	32,862	0.4	7,030	0.1	7,675	0.1	9,883	0.1
–Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren	231,199	2.3	290,994	2.7	401,729	4.5	203,996	2.0	117,212	1.1	51,858	0.5
–Czechoslovak Hussite Church	523,232	5.2	779,672	7.3	946,813	10.6	178,036	1.7	99,103	1.0	39,229	0.4
–Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession	-	-	46,777	0.4	57,741	0.6	33,130	0.3	14,020	0.1	8,158	0.1
–German Evangelical Church	-	-	130,981	1.2	6,401	0.1	-	-	-	-	-	-
–Czech and Slovak Orthodox Church	9,221	0.1	24,488	0.2	50,365	0.6	19,354	0.2	22,968	0.2	20,533	0.2
–Jehovah's Witnesses	-	-	-	-	-	-	14,575	0.1	23,162	0.2	13,069	0.1
–Christian churches not exactly stated	-	-	5,808	0.1	-	-	8,790	0.1	4,021	0.04	91,894	0.8
Judaism	125,083	1.3	117,551	1.1	8,038	0.1	1,292	0.01	1,515	0.01	1,474	0.01
Believers identified with another certain religion	168,046	1.7	53,743	0.5	57,287	0.6	36,146	0.4	257,641	2.5	75,190	0.7
Believers not identified with a certain religion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	705,368	6.8
No religion	716,515	7.2	834,144	7.8	519,962	5.8	4,112,864	39.9	6,039,991	59.0	3,604,095	34.5
Not stated	1,564	0.01	-	-	22,889	0.3	1,665,617	16.2	901,981	8.8	4,662,455	44.7
<b>Total population</b>	<b>10,005,734</b>		<b>10,674,386</b>		<b>8,896,133</b>		<b>10,302,215</b>		<b>10,230,060</b>		<b>10,436,560</b>	

This table of census results was downloaded from Wikipedia.<sup>36</sup> I show these as illustration of how proportionate the Czech Republic is. Religion might not be priority for this country, because it is not the way of living for the majority of population. Yet I want to propose that since the majority of the world around us is in some type of religion we should pay attention.

When I write about teaching religion I always mean teaching world religions. I do not mean the possibility of teaching one religion at the request of students or their parents. That would fall under the voluntary subject of just the religion the student believes in. It is common practice in some schools to offer such lesson, mainly opening classes for catholic students. But I am not speaking about this practice. Nor do I mean the mandatory religious courses some countries maintain, whether with or without the parents' wishes. The lessons that are my concern are part of a subject

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<sup>36</sup> Religion in the Czech Republic. In: *Wikipedia: the free encyclopedia* [online]. San Francisco (CA): Wikimedia Foundation, 2001- [cit. 2020-05-03]. Available from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion\\_in\\_the\\_Czech\\_Republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_the_Czech_Republic)



called at the moment Education in citizenship (in the past there were names such as Civics or Social Studies).

Teaching religion at school in the Czech Republic has been always complicated. Because most of the population of the republic does not want to state they are believers (44,7%) or they are not believers of any religions known on the census (34,5).<sup>37</sup>

According to the law of Czech Republic, churches can teach at schools voluntary subjects called Religion if at least 7 pupils want to go to this course in their free time. Only a person who has the permit from given church can teach this subject and the teacher has to be paid by the school - they have to have a signed contract. As a teacher of a voluntary subject he or she has to have a pedagogic education. If there is nobody with the right credentials the school can still have but only as a club course or a "study group". In the Czech mind, when you say teaching religion, it usually goes to teaching dogma or specific churches tradition. I could attest to this, since I started writing this thesis, many asked about what I am writing and I said teaching religion and they immediately went to: "So what kind of religion will you teach?" But I mean all the religions. As much as the time allows.

The Czech educational system is based on RVP (Rámcový vzdělávací program) - in English it would be Framework Educational Program.<sup>38</sup> These documents are the base of all frameworks of every school in CZ. It is the school's decision if they teach more of this or that, but RVP is the basic knowledge every student studying in these institutions should leave with. There are three types for high school level - for gymnasiums, for sport-oriented gymnasiums and for specialized high schools.

On the gymnasium level, religion is mentioned in this way: students should learn about geography of the world and with that know at least what are the biggest religions in each state, in history teachers should mention religious centers and as

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<sup>37</sup> Religion in the Czech Republic. In: *Wikipedia: the free encyclopedia* [online]. San Francisco (CA): Wikimedia Foundation, 2001- [cit. 2020-05-03]. Available from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion\\_in\\_the\\_Czech\\_Republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_the_Czech_Republic)

<sup>38</sup> *Rámcový vzdělávací program. Národní ústav pro vzdělávání* [online]. 2020 [cit. 2020-05-03]. Available from: <http://www.nuv.cz/t/rvp>

students are taught the basics about democracy - they should also learn not tolerate intolerance towards any race or any religion.

On the upper secondary level, religion is mentioned in this way: again in the Geography and History subjects plus Fine arts subject, where the students should learn about history of art and how it is connected to religion. But finally there is the INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES: "The pupil shall: explain the principles of philosophical questioning, compare the bases of philosophy, myth, religion, science and art for depicting reality and Man;... distinguish between important religious systems, identify manifestations of religious and other kinds of intolerance and recognize indications of sectarian thinking"<sup>39</sup>. And in the Cross-Curricular Subjects there is again mentioned discrimination and how it cannot be a part of a democratic system.

In the version for schools such as business or technical high schools: Students learn how to understand the world and the society, where they live and learn how to understand themselves in it (who they are in the terms of nationality, place in the world, religion, social bubble, lifestyle etc.). They will recognize such terms as church, religion, sects, religious fundamentalism, atheism.

If we would look at what is above RVP - NVP - National Educational Program (White paper) - there is no mention of religion, only to say there cannot be any discrimination of any race, religion, gender or political opinion in a democracy like ours.<sup>40</sup>

The National Educational Program is the cornerstone of all the aims of education in Czech Republic. Yet, because it is mandatory for all educational programs or frameworks to stem from this, it is quite oblique. In the start the authors of such documents tried to bring the population closer to making this national program by host a nation wide discussion. But as it is with all internet discussions it didn't bear any fruit and the experts were called, analysis made and research done.

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<sup>39</sup> Rámcový vzdělávací program pro gymnázia v angličtině: Educational Framework Programme for Grammar School. Praha: Výzkumný ústav pedagogický v Praze, 2007.

<sup>40</sup> KOTÁSEK, Jiří, ed. National programme for the development of education in the Czech republic: White Paper. Prague: Institute for Information on Education, 2001. ISBN 80-211-0413-9.

The pillars for making of the document were given by UNESCO<sup>41</sup>. Yet this document fails to define why it exist and why do we need it for our educational system. It only states: “Such an introductory section is necessary, as Czech society and the various groups within it need a more detailed presentation of the anthropological-pedagogical and sociopolitical starting points of a democratic educational policy than is possible in Education Bills.”<sup>42</sup> Yet it is only mentioned here a not anywhere else. Other problems with such documents can be noted as making it too quickly. The two documents (White paper and FEP) were made so Czech education would be united. It has the utmost importance since it would influence every child in the Czech republic. It was not nearly prepared. There are no distinctions between short-term aims and long-term aims. There is no mention of lifelong learning or how it deals with the change that occurs with new possibilities and new technology. The periodic table or the states that fought in the Second World War might not change, but mental health, technology, culture might change and the education system should be ready for it. Because such changes could be predicted.

Teaching about world religions, doing the starting point of Religious Studies, is in the hands of teachers. It stands on how much time they assign to it and how much they prepare for it. Even though the FEP mentions aims the teachers should adhere to, it is not mentioned in the White paper and school might take liberties with it since they already don't have enough time to teach it all. Even when religion is taught at schools it doesn't develop citizenship education, it is shunned aside sometimes because of the fears of multiculturalism and sometimes because it is thought to be only a marginal topic. It is problematic from many points of view. Teachers are not

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<sup>41</sup> Wikipedia contributors. Delors Report [Internet]. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia; 2019 May 21, 17:03 UTC [cited 2020 Jul 16]. Available from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Delors\\_Report&oldid=898140676](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Delors_Report&oldid=898140676).

<sup>42</sup> KOTÁSEK, Jiří, ed. National programme for the development of education in the Czech republic: White Paper. Prague: Institute for Information on Education, 2001. ISBN 80-211-0413-9.

taught enough, so they don't feel qualified. The topic is problematic since the history of communism, restitutions and being an atheistic country.<sup>43</sup>

## 4. Study of Czech textbooks for Social studies class

To properly investigate the attention of the Czech Republic to the topic of world religions I studied 5 textbooks. I didn't expect to find many references to the topic. I hoped to see some pragmatic practices. I hoped to see more extra materials than it had 10 years ago when I was at school.

I have looked into basic Czech textbooks that are available for every school. Some schools might use their own textbooks or teach without textbooks. This is what the textbook market offers. I chose these because they are in every bookstore and they are used in public schools. I am only working with the pages that mention religion. For each textbook I describe the intended student, if it is a new format or an older format only updated, if it has the addition of extra material on the internet, or on a CD/DVD. What are the contents and what I induce as an outcome?

### 4.1. Občanská výchova 7<sup>44</sup>

This textbook is made for the seventh year of basic school or the second year at an eight-year gymnasium. The students in classes are 12-13 years old. This is a part of a series meant for basic schools to make it easier for them. The series are from 6 to 9 grade. It is a quite a new textbook, they updated an old version. There is no extra material nor student's book for more exercises or activities.

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<sup>43</sup> HEISLEROVÁ, Markéta. *Výuka o náboženství na středních školách*. Masarykova univerzita, 2015.

Magisterská diplomová práce. Masarykova univerzita, filozofická fakulta. Vedoucí práce doc. PhDr. Dušan Lužný, Dr.

<sup>44</sup> BROM, Zdeněk, Dagmar JANOŠKOVÁ, Monika ONDRÁČKOVÁ, Dagmar ŠAFRÁNKOVÁ, Hana MARKOVÁ a Jitka ŠEBKOVÁ. *Občanská výchova 7: učebnice pro základní školy a víceletá gymnázia*. 2. upravené vydání. Plzeň: Fraus, 2019. ISBN 978-80-7489-471-8. p. 33.

As it is meant for younger students it doesn't distinguish between different religions on topics, it is mainly about any belief and just basic facts about world religions. There are many activities. At the start there are more questions I suppose because they are used as an introduction to the topic, which is something I like about the book. I wonder how they processed which information to put into the textbook and what is not as important. As an example I would choose question about Cathars, yet they only mention on the margins that there is more than one church - that Christian are not monolithic. There are really short paragraphs about the religion and usually one question or activity to do. At the end they try to put in again more activities, but they focus on Christianity. The activity I like is this: "Find out how should we act while visiting a Christian church, Jewish synagogue or Islamic mosque."

It is Eurocentric textbook; this is readily apparent because the only religions that get the short paragraph and a bit of an explanation are those that are major in Europe - Christianity, Judaism and Islam. And even though Hinduism is third biggest religion in the world, it is only mentioned as a name of a religion. I am sure this has its reasons, we are living in the center of Europe, but we are also living in a globalized world, where multiple genres on Netflix and YouTube feature Desi youth and there are also many movies from India and other Hindu cultures as well.

This textbook is really trying and that should be highlighted. It has some project activities and information about lives of those who believe in those religions. It is not trying to indoctrinate anybody, but it is centered in Europe and some of the questions are yes or no. There could have been more information about Hinduism and more about the Buddhist way of life. But all in all, as a textbook for 7th graders it is quite sufficient, even though for such a young audience it could have been more activity driven and less about the peculiarities of Ten Commandments. There is not much time and I get it. I appreciate that they mention it at all, that they give it at least that.

## 4.2. Výchova k občanství 9<sup>45</sup>

This textbook is made for the last year at basic school - the last year of mandatory school attendance. It is meant for 15 -16 year old students. I am starting with this because this is one of very few textbooks for students of this young age that even mentions world religions. It is a relatively new textbook. It uses multimedia, extra material on the internet and extracurricular work for the student to discover if they would like to.

Inside the textbook, at the start of every topic, there is a motivational quote. There are short explanations about the religion, their holy book or main sacred texts. Few questions that link to other subjects. My objection to this textbook is mainly that it omits the basics about the various religions. If I am a believer and I see this, I might feel underrepresented. And if I am a non-believer in this specific religion I am not getting enough information to even have a conversation about this topic. It covers only the very main points.

Let's look at the page of Christianity. At the top of the page there is the most famous prayer (Our Father prayer), a short text about the roots of Christianity and an even shorter text about Bible. There are only three questions on the whole page. One of them could be a good opener for discussion - 'What do you know about Jesus?' The others are to my knowledge not much informative. There is a follow-up question that again could open some discussion - How do you feel inside of a church if you've never been. Not much has been explained, not much has been shown. There is also a photo of prayer beads, but there is no explanation. It feels as a history lesson and not as something 2.4 people around the world live everyday. Also, the Catholic Church is only half of those 2.4 believers. There are at least four branches that should be mentioned more than just mere names to be remembered. On the other page for Christianity there are more questions, but they are not any to open a discussion, and are only about various kind of traditions of celebrating Christmas. It is forgetting the

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<sup>45</sup> LAICMANOVÁ, Antonie. *Výchova k občanství 9: učebnice vytvořená v souladu s RVP ZV. 5.* aktualizované vydání. Brno: Nová škola, 2018. Duhová řada. ISBN 978-80-7600-008-7.

option that there might be students from other religions who don't celebrate Christmas at all.

I think that as a textbook for 15-16 year old student it is slightly insufficient. It is really just to get a most basic information about world religions. I know some basic schools are not even teaching about world religions. So, students who end their studies after their 9-year mandatory attendance won't know anything about any religion. So in this case something is better than nothing. But since we know it is students' first meeting with such topic, I would use more questions and different set of information.

### **4.3. Společenské vědy pro střední školy<sup>46</sup>**

I picked this textbook because it is one of the most famous textbooks on the subject of Civics or Social Studies (depends on the school). It is used by many teachers. It was shown to us at our classes as a kind of a good example. This a series of 4 textbooks and student books - one for each year. The one textbook that mentions world religions is for the oldest class - seniors - right before their state maturita exam. So it is for 19-20 year old students. It is not the newest textbook but once in a while it gets updated and the authors expect teachers to be using computers and internet. There are links to certain sites to get more information, but not any special CD or extra material on the internet.

To be consistent I will review now the contents of the topic Christianity. In this textbook they've put Christianity and Judaism together into one topic. They cover two pages with information. No questions, just explanations about symbols, main characters and sacred texts. It is again like a textbook of history. There is not much about praxis. In small praxis paragraphs authors write only about organization of church, notes about Monty Python's Life of Brian and dietary differences when it comes to Judaism. There seems to be enough information. Two whole pages from top to bottom full of information. My only question about it is - is this information helpful

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<sup>46</sup> BRÁZDA, Radim a Martin DRNEK. *Společenské vědy pro střední školy*. Brno: Didaktis, c2011. ISBN 978-80-7358-175-6.

when it comes to understanding people of that faith? Will it teach students to be more tolerant? Will it teach them something about those who practice this kind of faith? My answer is that I am not sure. There are some pages before that should introduce this topic to the students and there might be something helpful about how to be more understanding and there might be a good discussion. But as far as the textbook goes it has little information beyond that seen in the previous textbook. So even though it is for students who are 4 years older, it makes little difference.

This edition has students' books too. So I looked if I could find some activity or discussion questions there. Half of the students' book is just test questions about things written in the textbook. There are activities about the Ten Commandments, famous Bible verses and even discussion questions about Czech Republic being an atheist country. There are not many follow-up questions, but it seems like a good start. If I think about lesson plans, it feels like having one lesson about important information and the next having a discussion. But do teachers have time for it? If we do simple math, we discover that - this textbook has 7 main topics, this subject has one lesson per week, average number of school weeks is 33 - this means around 5 lessons per topic. Just religion in this textbook has 6 subtopics (Function of religion, Christianity and Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, New religion groups and sects). That means not even 1 lesson per subtopic. That is a tough spot for teachers who want to have interesting lessons, teach students not only the facts, but maybe the meaning behind those facts and deeper understanding of each faith.

My summary is that this textbook with a students' book is average study material for high school students. If I compare the textbook from basic school and this one, there is not much added. This textbook seems to be expecting the student to hear about world religions for the first time in the last year of high school. I am worried that many students won't pay any attention to it because they will be preparing for their exams and their future at universities or future jobs. It is put upon the teachers to find extra material and add to the basic information. It seems like the textbook is expecting the subject to have more lessons than is possible by the system we have now - to use both textbook and a student's book.



#### 4.4. Občanská nauka pro SOŠ<sup>47</sup>

I picked this textbook because it is for Specialized High Schools. It is not for general schools like gymnasiums, but for those who might in other lessons learn auto-mechanics or medical help for nurses. This is not part of a series, it one book for four years. It is fully in the hands of the teacher how will he or she approach it. There are no extra materials, not even a need to use internet or computers. It is one of the older textbooks. The problem here is simple. Some specialized schools have only one or two years that teach subject of Civics or Social Studies. It means 33 to 66 lessons for all of the topics - Philosophy, Finance, Law, Politics, Logic, Global problems, World religions and Workplace. It seems nearly impossible to mention it all, so priorities take over. For many teachers World religions won't be a priority and we can see why. On the usefulness ladder the knowledge of finances, law and work practices are above world religions.

When it comes to the contents of this textbook, it is more than enough shown that it is not for those who would need information about any religion. This book only uses religion as part of teaching about tolerance. That is their goal. But I must say I appreciate it. There are few subtopics (different shapes faith can have, about faith and religion, the need for tolerance) They themselves write: In this textbook and in the subject of Civics there is not enough space for learning all the different world religions. The aim of this topic is something else - think about the meaning of faith and generally any religion, to think about our need for it and value in it.<sup>48</sup>

I like this sentiment. It is much more important than remembering who the head of Catholic church is. After every subtopic there are three questions. Not easy to answer questions, but discussion questions like How would you describe tolerance? It is not trying to play the game of giving facts and information about every important religion. It really tries to have important discussions and even in the little time the teacher has to learn something important about religions. It is not about the sacred

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<sup>47</sup> DUDÁK, Vladislav. *Občanská nauka pro střední odborné školy a pro studijní obory SOU*. Praha: SPN - pedagogické nakladatelství, 2004. ISBN 80-7235-264-4.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

texts, it is not about the traditions, but about how we behave from day to day. It teaches students that there might be people who call themselves believers, but they don't act like it and that means they are hypocrites not that their religion teaches them indifference.

I think teachers could make two lessons about religion. Maybe some very short introductions and then some discussion from this textbook. The outcome won't be same as from the other textbooks of course, but it could be a start and at least some tolerance towards people with different religion. Like it could be useful for nurses to know about religions that view transfusions as problematic or the ones that prohibit it. Chefs and cooks should know about the dietary traditions of kosher food, halal food, etc. It is true this textbook doesn't offer any information about particular religions, but it is asking questions the one before didn't ask. If used properly I feel like this could educate students more than the textbooks before.

#### **4.5. Společenské vědy v kostce pro SŠ<sup>49</sup>**

I picked this textbook to look at the type of textbook that is made for those who want to take the state exam and need to revise. Some teachers use it even through the school year. But it is a revision textbook. It is not specified for whom it is. There is no extra material. Again it is one of the older textbooks, because there is not much to change.

The whole book is trying to be modern and 'cool' for teenagers. They are using a visual of an app window. It seems like a good idea, but they forgot how fast the change happens in technological world and how teenagers hate when people from other generations try to be cool. The app window is not longer used in actual computers. The contents of it are much better than in any other textbook I saw. It is revision textbook. They do not try and make it pretty. They just state facts. In special little app windows are things students should remember for additional points. There aren't any questions. Through bullet points you get everything important, even a

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<sup>49</sup> ZUBÍKOVÁ, Zdeňka a Renáta DRÁBOVÁ. *Společenské vědy v kostce: pro střední školy*. Havlíčkův Brod: Fragment, 2007. V kostce (Fragment). ISBN 978-80-253-0190-6.

small stop in a history lesson. Information is given in short sentences, not written as a story, but more as a notes of students. I would say, that student can learn right from the textbook and not make any notes. As a revision text it is quite complex because it mentions Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and other religions that are not so well known.

The chapter about Christianity is rich in content, very descriptive and quite long. It contains short vocabulary of words that might be useful, short history lesson and description of main holidays and Bible. As I mention before it doesn't say much about life of a practicing believer in modern times apart from description of the holidays. The topic is made in a way that if you remember it all you will successfully pass the end state exam.

When I first looked at this textbook I was excited because it seemed it had most of the information, but as with the ones before, it takes religion as something in the history and not much as a still living and evolving thing. It might not say much about lives of those who believe in this religion. There is a lot of information, my fear is if the student will just remember these facts or if it will actually lead to more understanding and helping the student to make a better sense of the world.

## **4.6. Summary**

Textbooks that are publicly available are not useful for teaching world religions. There are some that don't even mention world religions (even though they are supposed to be used for revision) like *Občanský a společenskovední základ*<sup>50</sup>. The biggest problem with textbooks for this subject is that they forget about the timetable of a school year. 33 lessons per one year is not enough for all that is planned. With changing of the conversations around the world subject like Civics or Social studies are being even more used for teaching about environmental problems, finances, economics, law and politics. Six years ago when I was ending my high school studies I didn't have even one lesson about finances or anything that connects to bank

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<sup>50</sup> BARTONÍČKOVÁ, Klára. *Občanský a společenskovední základ - přehled středoškolského učiva*. Brno: Computer Press, 2009. Maturity. ISBN 9788025126318.

accounts and personal finances. With more and more to teach in this subject, teachers can feel desperate about how to choose what to teach and for what they just won't find the time. None of these textbooks help teachers with these choices; none of them show prepared activities for the teachers to use. It only offers information. To be blunt, with students who can use internet at home, textbooks don't offer more than you can find on the Wikipedia. Some try to connect it to a pop-culture reference, but those connections can be misleading. It is quite clear they are made with a single form of teaching in mind: frontal education (teacher in front of the whole class). It works for a teacher that says what student should remember for the next test, maybe adding some questions, but at the end of the day it is just teaching for a test. Only one textbook didn't seem to be teaching frontally and that was the one that knew they didn't have enough time to teach about all of the world religions. That was the only one with good questions that support discussions and talking about tolerance and staying informed. Also I should highlight the textbook for basic schools. They are trying and they even connect it with links and videos. The only problem is that I don't think the teacher will have enough time for it all.

Even if we look past the problem of time and basic content - none of these textbooks actually showed what does it mean to live next to a Christian, Muslim or Buddhist. Only some of the textbooks approached the subject of tolerance and only superficially. The textbook for seventh graders showed some promise, but due to too short texts it couldn't really elaborate on the thought that people of certain religions live in a different way. In my own experience, it was very hard for me to explain at every school trip that I don't eat pork. None of my classmates understood me and some even asked me: „If you ate pork, would you go straight to hell? If I secretly put pork into your food would it kill you?“ Because of it I usually explain my dietary restrictions as allergies and not religious traditions. World religions might not be as important as other topics that fall into the category of social studies, but it is useful to understand each other and the world around us. 84% of the world's population

believes in some form of a religion.<sup>51</sup> For many young people it can be hard to show to their class they are believers in something the others don't believe. Schools should be supportive to their students and do not try to ignore this part their lives. The Czech Republic might be an atheist country, but every student is expected to know how to decorate a Christmas tree, make decorations for said tree, burn candles at school for every Advent Sunday. Textbooks might mention global problems like global warming, hunger, inequality, but religion is looked on only as a historic progression of myths, bundle of holidays and slight mention of some traditions.

Teachers cannot draw much help from textbooks and that is why some choose to teach without them. They make their own materials and they spend hours making them. It is hard work and could have been done for them. Accessible textbooks are usually older and not updated enough. There was only one textbook that had an extra material available. Contents are basic and not enough explanatory. Outcomes of most of the textbooks are the basic knowledge of world's foremost religions, but it is knowledge remembered and not learned, not even much discussed.

At the end I would like to write from my own life. In my first year at this faculty (a theological faculty) I attended an introductory course of biblical theology, and half of my classmates didn't know the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament of the Bible. This is the religion our country should know most about.

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<sup>51</sup> HACKETT, Conrad a Brian J. GRIM. The Global Religious Landscape: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Major Religious Groups as of 2010. *PewResearchCenter* [online]. Washington D.C., USA: Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2020, 18 December 2012 [quoted 2020-06-29]. Available from: <http://www.pewforum.org/global-religious-landscape.aspx>

## 5. My suggestion

I based my suggestion on the pragmatic approach and the thought of Radical Empiricism. Every lesson should propose a problem for the class to solve. There needs to be a challenge for the students and the teacher should never stoop to tell the students what he/she thinks or how he/she would solve given problem. Students should learn through doing, through experiencing the world around them. Confusing students enough to keep them interested, while not too much to make them apathetic about solving the problems; and encouraging the formation of habitually thinking critically, which is thinking itself. Religion as that process of binding things together, making sense of the world so when they walk out of the school they will be better at knowing the things they know, as well as knowing how to use them to know more and better. Students need to care about learning and knowledge. Because as I wrote there is not enough time to teach them even the bare necessities. But if we teach them how to learn and why they should love learning new things, they will find what they need. I think that a good teacher is a one who teaches student without them even knowing. The most successful teacher is a one teaches his/her students how to teach themselves. If they make habits out of discovering new things and learning more about them. Teachers should know that there is no one way to do things, but many ways to teach and there are many more forms of teaching they can use in their lessons. Bertrand Russel in his *The Functions of a Teacher* wrote about how teachers are guardians of civilization.<sup>52</sup> And that is the important part. Every student that goes through our school system should be taught about the importance of learning, about the importance of learning about subject that might not be connected directly to his/her life, but to the life of others in our civilization. Teacher is the one that chooses what student will learn and how will they learn. Good textbook is a big help for those who don't have the time to prepare every lesson or want to get inspired for betterment of their own work.

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<sup>52</sup> RUSSELL, Bertrand. *The Functions of a Teacher*. *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell*. USA: Routledge Classics, 2009, p. 413-420. ISBN 0415472385.

## 5.1. Material according to pragmatic approach - Christianity

This part of my thesis is my attempt to make a material that would include all of the teachings and points of interest I mentions before and which are parts of radical pedagogy. I prepared one lesson plan for Christianity as it was the topic I looked at in the textbooks in the chapter before. I drew inspiration in materials made by the non-profit organization ADRA<sup>53</sup>. All the materials should be interactive and downloadable. There could be printable materials, but only to be part of students' portfolios. I saw this approach at the Lauder school in Prague 2. Every student makes his/her own portfolio in which they collect materials that they make and the ones they are given. Quarterly they let the teacher to read them to show what they found important and interesting - as a part of an evaluation. This is a method I find the best for radical pedagogy approach.

- The students choose what to keep as a material - the teacher can only discuss with students why they chose what they chose and maybe change the learning experience to show importance of keeping other information
- The students feel more in control about their learning
- The students are dependent on themselves and not on teacher and what he/she will give them
- The students have to self-evaluate their systems - if their notes and the material they kept was not enough to help them with the teacher-based evaluation (tests, exams etc.) - they have to change the system to be successful

The role of teacher in this is to be helpful and guide students through the mistakes and discoveries. Because no matter how many times a teachers says an advice, it only matters if the students have an experience to connect to the advice.

I prepared an interactive way of new textbooks could be prepared.

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<sup>53</sup> Materiály pro ZŠ: Metodická příručka pro výuku o globálních souvislostech. ADRA [online]. Praha, 2019, 2019 [quoted 2020-07-05]. Available from: <https://adra.cz/oddeleni-vzdelavani/pro-pedagogy/materialy-pro-zs>

It is made on the Prezi site, which is free site for making interactive presentations. It could be used as an educational tool or any other site could be used. I chose this one for its interesting possibilities. Anyone with a link can open the presentation and teach with it. Or prepare a lesson with it.

<https://prezi.com/view/tR5hNiCcqWNe9iSixryI/><sup>54</sup>

There doesn't need to be any book or paper material, just the portfolio the students will gather in the notes or some of the copies teacher makes. The teacher chooses which activities to do and what is the most important for his/her students. There always needs to be preparation, but not as long as if they would have to prepare the whole lesson themselves. It will be harder than the frontal method of teaching, because that is the easiest to prepare.

The first slide in my presentation is basic information. There 6 bullet points, really just the most basic information everyone should know. Teachers can add anything or even start the whole class with an easy mind map about what the students already know. Afterwards just add to the information. It is meant as a starting point for the lesson. It shouldn't take more than 10 minutes. It is meant as a point of knowledge for the teacher. The class has a time to calm down, the teacher notices what atmosphere is in the class and how many students are there that day. In the Bloom's taxonomy it would fall under remembering and understanding. There might be students who never heard of the topic and teacher would have to present it as a new information. It would take more time, so the teacher should know what kind of knowledge his students have and check for it at the start of the main topic. This lesson plan is not made for it.

Activity: Who's Jesus? is about looking into the main character of Christianity. It is a group activity, students have to work with texts and present their results. The class is divided into three groups. How the teacher divides the class should be based

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<sup>54</sup> The whole presentation will is showed as an Appendix no.1



upon his/her knowledge of the class. The teacher watches how they work in the group. The activity is meant as a detective/archeological case about Jesus. The student can look it up on the internet and they should be given some amount of information from the teacher to start with. They have 8 minutes to make their case and then there should be discussion. The result should be more than just informative. They should learn how to look information on the internet. Teacher can use this as a check for understanding if they already had a lesson about the internet and dangers on it. Also at the end of the activity teacher should open a discussion about work in a group. Every activity should result in self-evaluation. One of the best ways I found was writing 2 good things about the activity (for younger students helps if the teacher gives a start of a sentence - I liked...) and 2 bad things about the activity. These are anonymously given to the teacher who reads them out loud and together they think about them all. It takes more time, but the lesson is more helpful in more ways than one.

Activity: Social Media is about a fun way to make students learn about the topic. It is a pair activity, students have to work with texts, internet and their hands. This is an all lesson activity. The students have to make a social media profile for Christianity. Then they have to present it to the rest of the class. It uses multiple method of education. First they have to gather the information they will need for the profile. Second they will have to use that information and analyze it, evaluate which is factual and useful information and at last they will create on paper or a tablet their profiles. The students might move to top of Bloom's taxonomy in one lesson. At the end of the activity there will be again self-evaluation and it might be interesting if the students picked out the most interesting presentation. Make it as a companion judged not by the teacher, but by the other students. If the students would do it for all of the world religions then there could be a school wide exhibition.

Activity: Prayer is about the meditation quality of prayers. Nearly all of the world religions have some sort of way to pray or meditate. The teacher needs to be ready and prepared to dispose of the prayers. It is a short activity to calm down the class after an interesting activity or a lunch or a break. Together they make their

prayers and then they dispose of them in some way. Burning them might be too dangerous, so tearing them to small pieces might have the same result. It should show to the student how easy it is and what is a part of a religious life. The teacher can read Pater Noster to show students how pray those of Christian faith. It could take a very personal turn if the student share something they don't want to be public, so be careful. It doesn't need to be read and should only be done in a class the teacher knows well. All of the conditions should be very clearly stated at the start of the activity. It is supposed to be an individual activity and to basically apply what they already know and just try it in a secular way.

Activity: Symbols and Terminology is a basic scavenger hunt. It should be fun and an easy way to make a vocabulary that could be used in exams or in ordinary life. Teacher will have to gather symbols and terminology from all the worlds religions he/she wants to mention. There are 3 groups. One hides the papers with different words on them, one group looks for the right symbols and terminology for the religion that is as a topic for that day and the third group are used as extras in a film. Depending on the time, the groups might change up as much as they want. At the end they all should know the symbols and terminology connected to Christianity. It is an easy way to check for understanding. The students don't have to move past remembering and understanding in Bloom's taxonomy. It is an activating method for groups. It could be done as a completion, but the teacher should be aware of the danger that might pose in a small classroom and with too active students and those who are less active. It would be better if a cooperation was needed. It could be modified that every student would move only in some places and not in other and they would have to help each other to get to the words.

Activity: Mass and services is again a group activity that starts with a text work. Then it changes into a kind of a small theater piece. Every group gets a type of a Christian service. They have to act it out. The teacher observes and helps with props and stay true to the real thing according to the religion. It could be an all lesson activity, but it is just a part of the religious life. The teacher should inspire students to be funny and creative with it. At the end there should be enough time for the students

to make their notes and describing the interesting things they found out. In the Bloom's taxonomy the students have to create and methods like demonstration and praxis are used. An interesting debate after the activity could be had about the atmosphere and all the differences. Students could work on why there are those differences. This is activity I like the most because it really shows the cornerstone of a believers life and the student can have fun with it. They could perform a funeral, baptism or a regular mass, but instead of eucharist there will be Oreos. The possibilities are endless and it is on the teacher how inspirational can he/she be to the students.

Activity: Problems is a discussion activity. Discussion activities are one of the hardest and it's the one teacher cannot ever be truly prepared for. Teacher picks three problematic topics, in 2 minutes he/she presents the problem to the class and then the class chooses the one they are most interested in. The teacher is like a moderator and every minute he gives more information about the problem. It is a collective activity and in Bloom's taxonomy we get to level analyze. Since the discussion is about religious problems it will be a very loaded discussion. The teacher should make sure the class is a safe place for everyone and that the discussion can be civil and organized. Let's not have a discussion just for the discussion sake. At the end there should be some outcome of the discussion and also self-evaluation. This activity isn't for everyone, but it could maybe help with the understanding that Christianity has its problems and it always had.

Activity: Mental Maps is a group activity for the whole class or could be used in smaller groups. In Bloom's taxonomy it is at the top with create. Students can create their own mind maps or they can make together one big map, that could be printed and given to every student. It is also an easy way to check for understanding. There are many apps, programs, sites for making mind maps. Teacher can use any of them. The easiest could be making one big map on paper which invites more details and creativity. Making connections is what education is about and mind maps are perfect showing of that. They can be used in individual, group or collective form. It uses

activating and demonstrative methods. This activity doesn't need a self-evaluation at the end because as an activity it is self-evaluating.

Extra materials are for students and also for teachers. There could be any number of links to other sites focus on such topic. I added two videos in English that could be useful if the class has a good enough English level to gather information from the video. But for most basic school lesson it won't be useful, since student won't be proficient enough. Teacher could use it in preparation for the lesson. Extra materials should be helpful to students and to the teacher. There should be always enough links to study up more on any given topic the theme brings. I didn't have enough time to do that and I am afraid Czech language doesn't have enough publications for self-education. Czech books about religion are usually written with the intent to convert the reader, to make you believe what they believe. Purely informational books are not that common. Which is why that on some Wikipedia pages the only source is a book by our faculty teacher Dr. Vojtíšek.

This has been a prototype of what a textbook could be and according to me should be. Gathering materials for students' portfolio teaches them responsibility and analyzing important information out of all the facts students are given. Textbooks should be mainly for teachers to know what to teach and what kind of activities are there to be used. Teachers who work everyday to teach our children should not have to find the time to search the internet for the best methods and newest apps for the best experience. This is what a textbook should offer them. For a student it should offer the possibility to learn more, if the student wants, and simply put forth tasks that offer participation and praxis. I wanted to show that there is no need for long texts that are used in place of a teacher. The information contained in these can be found on Wikipedia. If I would call for something, it is a text written by experts on such topic to be available for further study if the student so wants or for the teacher to study in preparation for the lesson - instead of searching on the internet. I remember one teacher who watched 10 hours of a documentary for 1 lesson of History. And it isn't just 10 hours of watching. It is 10 hours of making notes, thinking of activities that could be used and preparing a short summary of 10 hours in 10

minutes for the students. That shouldn't be teachers work. Yet if we want to give the best for our students and for our youth we should try to be the best.

My teaching plan for world religions is similar to teaching Christianity. Each activity I prepared could be adapted for different religions. Some would be better for the lesser known religions and some would be better for well-known ones. But methodologically I used all possibilities. At the start of each lesson there should be a short introduction – the explanatory method familiar to us all, of a teacher talking to the whole class. Who is Jesus activity is a text method and working with the texts - it an individual or group form of teaching. You could pick any important figure of any religion. Social media activity is a project method typical for stimulating and motivating students, also could be used for any religion. Mass and services activity is more of a theatre method of teaching. Students themselves show and teach their classmates. This is an activity that can be used only for religions that have different ways of weekly gatherings. But maybe it could be used in an ending lesson to summarize more than one religion. Problems activity is a difficult way to teach through the discussion method. But every religion has its problems so it could be used in any lesson. I utilized many levels of Bloom's taxonomy and it depends on the teacher which level he/she seems most fitting for their students.

I did not select any of the modern activities that seems to me to be used at schools now. I tried to look at something new and different. The method that is becoming more and more popular is Philosophy for Children - reading a text and discussion it. Not only in philosophy, but also in other topical subjects. It is a good method and a great method for discussions, but I discarded it. My reasoning is that there is not enough time to talk about more than one text, or to contain the important points in one or two texts from the scripture that is holy to a specific religion And as I wrote in other places of my thesis, I don't want the students to see religion as something historic, but as something living and a part of a person's life. Of course I am aware how important it is for a believer, but if I have so little time to teach about religion then the way it shows in ones life is more important.

Some teachers try to teach through activities that are supposed to amuse students such as making their own classroom 10 commandments or 5 pillars. Again I didn't put it in my own material because I cannot see the results. Since they will be

concentrating on their own rules they won't pay much attention to the ones of those religions. They will probably make rules that are just funny or very specific to them and their needs. However, if the teacher would make them live by those rules and they would have the opportunity to live and see consequences of their rules, I would see the educational benefit of this activity.

My mission was to never let the students know what the teacher thinks. This comes from the pragmatic notion that students learn better when teaching each other. The students make their own notes from materials and through discussion they discover both side of said topic. Teacher is not the one who asks questions, he is only as a guardian of the materials and knowledge that he passes on. In all of my activities I ask the teachers to be only listeners and to encourage student-student interaction. If there is any summary it is only on factual level, never on a subjective matter. I wanted each lesson to be a problem solving mystery. I am not sure that all of my activities succeeded in that endeavor, but I would argue that on some level each activity should bring questions to students and not easy answers. Every lesson should be a unique experience and every experience should be educational.

Schools and education is not miraculous. It cannot do everything at once and I do not want it to sound as a savior of all teaching methods. But for me the most important thing is to introduce to a class full of students who are most likely to be raised agnostic or atheistic as nearly 80% of Czech people are, knowledge about the 84% people worldwide who believe in something or someone(s).<sup>55</sup> Knowledge is power and the more we know, the more we care about each other and about the world.

## Summary

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<sup>55</sup> Demographics of atheism. In: *Wikipedia: the free encyclopedia* [online]. San Francisco (CA): Wikimedia Foundation, 2020 [quoted 2020-07-12]. Available from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics\\_of\\_atheism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_atheism)

The Czech school system doesn't leave much space to teaching about world religions. The most commonly used method of teaching at most school is still traditional frontal teaching, sometimes dressed up a bit differently, but in the core it is the same. As I tried to show in my textbook attempt, the pragmatic approach is not radically different from what textbooks are trying to use as methods. It is mainly about praxis and usefulness in life. I showed in my attempt how it could look, based on what I studied in the books of John Dewey, John Gatto and other teachers of the subversive method. My hypothesis is that the pragmatic pedagogy by John Dewey offers a superior methodology to that of traditional approach especially in the topic of world religions. If we look at religion as a part of world culture, we might better understand that religion needs to be experienced on some level and not just remembered as a set of holy scriptures and some commandments.

The biggest weakness of my thesis is that I couldn't make a bigger research into how it would work in actual lessons and schools. I chose not to go that way because I know it takes a lot of time to change the systematic methods students are used to. It would take years of thorough planning of every subject and every lesson to properly analyze if it is truly superior method to traditional teaching. Yet I want to point out that many alternative schools use similar techniques and they are quite successful with it.

The next step would be to make an electronic textbook for teachers for all the world religions. Prepare a ready to use textbook, and then try it at multiple schools and get back feedback on it. Maybe it could be presented at some of the alternative schools and see what kind of feedback they will provide and how it compares to the "traditional" schools. Also, it could be made into a one-day seminar to offer schools and have a feedback on it, even though it will be just superficial since the students will experience the different approach just for one day.

My aim was to present a different kind of view on teaching religion: pragmatically, I will have to try it to see if I succeeded, but in this I have reason to be hopeful. The Pragmatic approach is about interpretation, and the channeling of that interpretation. Religion binds science and signs, and out of the binding of these interpretations comes culture. Religion connects to nearly everything students are taught at schools. If we limit the knowledge of this process of religion, we limit the

skills students have to interpret the world around them. If there is anything the schools should teach students, it is to interpret and to understand the world around them. These are the qualities students can take to any line of work or any field of academia.

When I started writing this thesis I asked myself what is the value of teaching religion. As I said before, I think religion can be used as way to discuss many other topics; it can open other topics such as culture as well as worlds of multiculturalism. In the Czech Republic, many people were not taught about religion and that left a big space for stereotypes and false narratives to emerge. The only place people get information is media coverage and the Internet. Since anything can be written on the internet, and as news organizations have little interest in anything but drama and driving up the viewership, people do not have trustworthy sources and it's hard to find the factual information. If the schools promoted healthy skepticism with critical thinking as the pragmatic approach does, it would be much easier to make sense out of the news, world around us and many other situations.

I believe education can help fight narrow-mindedness and stereotypes. So we can all live in a society that won't make fun of you if you believe in god or not. I trust the pragmatic approach to create a safe space for discussions, different interpretations and new ideas.



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## Appendix No. 1



### KŘESŤANSTVÍ

- jedno ze tří náboženství vycházejících od praotce Abrahama
  - monoteistické náboženství
  - zjevuje se jako Otec, Syn a Duch
  - posvátná kniha - Bible (Starý a Nový Zákon)
  - 2,5 miliardy věřících
- rozdělení - Katolická církev, Protestanté, Pravoslavní a Starobylé východní církve

## Detektivní případ - Kdo je Ježíš?

15 min

- třída se rozdělí do tří skupin

1. materiály o historické osobě Ježíše
2. materiály o Ježíši z evangelií
3. materiály o Ježíši z pozdějších reálií

8 minut na procházení materiálů + 7 minut na diskuzi

Diskuze

Jaké závěry z našeho pátrání můžeme udělat? Kde se dá sehnat více lepších zdrojů?

1. [https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historick%C3%BD\\_Je%C5%BE%C3%AD%C5%A1](https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historick%C3%BD_Je%C5%BE%C3%AD%C5%A1)

2. [https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Je%C5%BE%C3%AD%C5%A1\\_Kristus#%C5%BDivot\\_podle\\_Nov%C3%A9ho\\_z%C3%A1kona](https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Je%C5%BE%C3%AD%C5%A1_Kristus#%C5%BDivot_podle_Nov%C3%A9ho_z%C3%A1kona)

3. <https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kr%C3%A9do>

## Sociální média

30 min

**POMŮCKY** - papír, psací potřeby

Představte si, že pracujete pro marketingovou firmu. Nový klient je Křesťanství. Chce, abyste mu vytvořili platformu na sociální síti.

Rozdělte se do dvojic. Vyberte si jakoukoli sociální síť a vytvořte pro Křesťanství profil. Informace o Křesťanství musíte najít na internetu a dejte si pozor na hoaxy a lživé zprávy. Pouze základní informace.

Máte 20 minut na práci a 1 minutu na prezentaci

# Modlitba

10 min

Modlitba je jeden ze základních prvků života víry nejenom křesťana - slouží ke zklidnění, ujasnění a hlavně ke komunikaci s bohem věřícího

Pomůcky: papír, psací potřeby, kovolá nebo porcelánová nádoba na spálení a sirky (nejlépe v chemické laboratoři)

Nejdříve si přečteme základní modlitbu Křesťanství - Otčenáš

Potom každý dostane kus papíru a na něj napíše nějakou prosbu, papírek ohne a pošle dalšímu, a budeme to opakovat několikrát, potom si vaše prosby vyberu a opatrně je spálíme.

Spojíme tak téma modlitby s židovskou tradicí obětí.

<https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otčenáš>

# Symbyoly a termíny

30 min

Pomůcky: vytisknuté symbyoly a termíny různých náboženství

Třída se rozdělí do dvou skupin (pokud je více než 20 studentů do 3 skupin)

1. skupina jde k zadní zdi a nevidí a nejlépe ani neslyší

2. skupina ukrývá vytisknutí symbyoly a termíny po třídě

3. skupina sedí na místech a tvoří komparz

až je vše připraveno 1. skupina hledá symbyoly a termíny, ale pouze k náboženství, které se právě probírá

Podle času se mohou skupiny prohazovat

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Religious\\_symbols.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Religious_symbols.svg)

<https://lukas-koubek.signaly.cz/DBOB/slovnicek-termínu-z-nabozenství>

dobré by bylo vést si na každé hodině slovník termínů, které se pak takto mohou použít

## Mše a shromáždění 25 min

Třída se rozdělí do tří skupin. Každá skupina si zvolí svého vedoucího, kterou celou aktivitu povede (může být náhodně). Každá skupina si vyhraničí svůj prostor, který bude sloužit jako jeviště. Náhodně si velitelé/lky vyberou, kterou část křesťanské tradice budou reprezentovat. Katolictví, protestantismus nebo pravoslaví. Podle toho nacvičí a sehrají, jak se shromažďují. Nacvičení 15 min + 3 minuty na prezentaci

<https://www.pastorace.cz/tematicke-texty/co-je-mse-a-jejici-casti-petr-sabaka>  
[https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pravoslav%C3%A0#Liturgick%C3%A1\\_praxe](https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pravoslav%C3%A0#Liturgick%C3%A1_praxe)  
<https://www.e-cirkev.cz/clanek/4413-On-line-vyjitani-bohosluzeb-Cesko-bratske-cirkev-evangelicke/index.htm>  
<http://files.malvazinky.webnode.cz/200001471-421b-f421c2/57.4.7.20.pdf>

## Problémy ! 20 min

Základní témata - Křížácké výpravy, církevní majetek a moc, sexuální zneužívání, vztah k eutanasii, vztah k LGBT+, ...

Učitel krátce představí tato témata (3x2min) a studenti si vyberou o jakém z nich by se chtěli dozvědět více.

Řízená diskuze - 15 min.

[https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/K%C5%99%C3%A0%C5%B5ev%C3%A1\\_v%C3%B0pravy](https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/K%C5%99%C3%A0%C5%B5ev%C3%A1_v%C3%B0pravy)  
<https://www.cirkev.cz/archiv/180330-cirkevní-majetek-v-ceských-zemích>  
[https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/C%C3%A0rkevn%C3%A0\\_restituce\\_v\\_%C4%B0cesku](https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/C%C3%A0rkevn%C3%A0_restituce_v_%C4%B0cesku)  
[https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/C%C3%A0rkevn%C3%A0\\_restituce\\_v\\_%C4%B0cesku#Kritika\\_restituov%C3%A1n%C3%A0](https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/C%C3%A0rkevn%C3%A0_restituce_v_%C4%B0cesku#Kritika_restituov%C3%A1n%C3%A0)  
[https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sexu%C3%A1ln%C3%A0\\_skand%C3%A1ly\\_katolick%C3%B0ch\\_duchovn%C3%A0ch](https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sexu%C3%A1ln%C3%A0_skand%C3%A1ly_katolick%C3%B0ch_duchovn%C3%A0ch)  
<https://www.seznampravy.cz/clanek/mapa-sexualnho-zneuivani-v-kefolicke-cirkevi-v-cesku-je-53-dolozenyck-obeti-49243>

# Myšlenková mapa

15 min

<https://app.contextminds.com/>

<https://app.mindmup.com/map/new/1594029538056>

<http://www.havrlikova.cz/myslenkove-mapy/>

## Zdroje a extra materiály

- Wikipedie
- <https://www.edutopia.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/blogs/edutopia-finley-53ways-check-for-understanding.pdf>
- <https://mycasemaker.org/all-challenges/>
- <https://app.contextminds.com/>
- <https://cz.pinterest.com/studentcenteredsocialstudies/world-religion-activities/>
- <https://www.acsi.org/resources/cse/cse-magazine/a-better-way-to-teach-social-studies-51>





## Abstract

World religions should be taught at the secondary level of education. In this, a pragmatic approach is superior to the traditional approach, because it shows not just the history of this topic, but it also lets students experience the everyday life of those who believe. It is not in any way a method to convert anybody to this or that faith or tradition. It is a pedagogic method for critical thinking and both making and challenging interpretations of the facts before each student. In my thesis I showed my own method and I made my own version of a better textbook that utilizes the basic points of pragmatic pedagogy. I studied the works of John Dewey, John Gatto, Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner. And I propose a method that takes no more than 4 lessons, if needed, which is the most time teachers can give to such topic. I looked at the educational programs of the Czech Republic and found that world religions are a very small portion of the subject Education in citizenship.

Since John Dewey was an atheist, it is not common for people to think of religion as a topic to teach with his methodology. Most of the social sciences are still taught as history lessons and not as the fun and interesting lessons they can be. I think it is not just the natural sciences that should have their laboratories at schools and do experiments, it is also the social sciences that can have their fun. The most basic could be the experiment of people voluntary paying. Students could put out drinks or biscuits and leave a can where people can put money. Then they can watch how many pay and how many don't. It is an easy and fun experiment that anybody can do. This is an example of my belief that a praxis and experience driven education is a part of social sciences, which contains the study of world religions. I showed this in my thesis through my study of public textbooks and I identified what I believe they lack. I studied how many activities they have prepared for the students and if the activities have a meaning behind them, or if it is just an exercise in blind memorization. Some textbooks failed, some are above average, yet I still cannot identify a social studies textbook that succeeds in presenting useful praxis, as understood within a pragmatic pedagogy.

I studied the pedagogic parts of pragmatic philosophical tradition and I've written about how religion connect to such pedagogy. I identified where the Czech

Republic educational system places teaching about world religions. The subject of Education in Citizenship is the one which should apply religion to its curricula, but with the time funding of only one lesson per week, I calculated that the topic of world religions only gets at best four lessons. I studied the publicly available textbooks and I found correlations. Since it is only 4 lessons per 4 years at a tertiary level of education, textbooks don't pay much attention to religions. Some discard it, some mention it, and some even write quite long texts about it, yet none do any of the religions justice. All of the textbooks are written as a tool for traditional frontal education – a transmission of data from teacher and textbook to student. They are not prepared for teachers who would like to teach with a pragmatic approach. For this reason, I made my own version and tried to adhere to the principles of pragmatic pedagogy.

## Abstrakt

Světová náboženství by měla být vyučována na sekundární úrovni vzdělávání. Pragmatický přístup je kvalitnější než tradiční, protože nevyučuje pouze historickou část náboženství, ale umožňuje studentům "prožít" i každodenní život těch, kteří jsou věřící. V žádném případě to není metoda, která by měla studenty nutit konvertovat k nějaké víře nebo tradici. Je to pedagogická metoda pro kritické myšlení a vytváření zvyku výkladu faktů, které získá každý student. V mé práci předkládám vlastní metodu a verzi části učebnice, ve které používám základní body pragmatické pedagogiky. Tyto body jsem vypsala na začátku kapitoly, týkající se mého vlastního návrhu, jež jsem předložila v příloze a je možné ho stáhnout z internetu. Prostudovala jsem práci a myšlenky Johna Deweye, Johna Gatto, Neila Postmana a Charlese Weingartnera. Představila jsem metodu, která využívá tolik času, kolik učitel má. Zhlédla jsem vzdělávací programy České republiky a zjistila jsem, že světová náboženství jsou ve velmi malé míře součástí předmětu Výchova k občanství.

Protože byl John Dewey ateista, mnoho lidí by si jej i jeho metodologii nespojilo s výukou náboženství. Já jsem ale zjistila, že většina sociálních věd se stále učí jako hodiny historie a ne jako zábavné experimenty a zajímavé hodiny, kterými by mohly být. Nemyslím si, že jsou to jenom přírodní vědy, jež mají mít své vlastní laboratoře a speciální hodiny pokusů, ale že sociální vědy také mohou ukázat zábavnou část jejich obsahu. Věřím ve vzdělávání praxí a zkušeností jako součást humanitních věd, které rovněž obsahují světová náboženství. Toto jsem ukázala ve své práci, ve studii veřejně dostupných učebnic. Zjišťovala jsem, co jim chybí, jaké aktivity jsou připraveny pro studenty a jestli jsou tyto aktivity pouze pro lepší zapamatování informací nebo mají hlubší smysl a nutí k zamyšlení. Některé učebnice fungují pouze jako soupis faktů k zapamatování, jiné jsou kvalitnější a nutí více se zamyslet, ale dobrá učebnice předmětu Výchova k občanství na českém trhu chybí.

V mé práci jsem studovala pedagogickou část pragmatického filosofického směru. Popsala jsem, jak se náboženství spojuje s touto pedagogikou. Zjistila jsem, kde ve vzdělávacím systému České republiky najdeme světová náboženství. Jediný předmět, který se přímo zabývá ve svém učebním plánu světovými náboženstvími, je Výchova k občanství. Jenže tento předmět má časovou dotaci jednu hodinu týdně, a to

ještě na mnoha školách pouze dva roky. I kdyby se vyučoval všechny čtyři roky na vyšším sekundárním stupni, na světová náboženství by vyšlo okolo čtyř hodin. Proto některé učebnice s tímto tématem vůbec nepočítají. Některé ho zmíní a jiné začlení dlouhé, však nic neříkající texty. Všechny přístupné učebnice jsou připraveny pro tradiční frontální výuku. Učitel s pragmatickým přístupem ke vzdělání si musí vytvořit vlastní verzi. Tím jsem svoji práci zakončila. Vytvořila jsem vlastní kapitolu učebnice, ve které jsem se snažila dodržet principy pragmatické pedagogiky.