Autobiographical Reflection and Faith Development: Prospects for Religious Education

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In a context which conceives itself as 'community of remembering and story telling',[1] we expect that people are convinced of the narrative character of faith. Narrative theology holds that a person's faith originates in and is constituted by a con-text of stories. This narrative perspective in theology takes account of and reflects what has been called the 'narrative quality of experience',[2] that our self-understanding rests in 'narrative identity',[3] that we are 'entangled in stories'.[4]

A person's faith itself is narrative in character as well. A person's life is subject to change; faith involves transformation and growth. Even though this is not a new finding, but has a solid foundation in theology,[5] and even though the awareness that changes and transformations in one's life and faith are connected by a narrative thread running through one's life span and finding expression in written and un-written biographies, has flourished, since the rise of religious individuality in the eighteenth century[6] — in the more recent theological discussion it appears to be a perspective which is only now beginning to emerge.[7] To speak of 'theology as biography'[8] or to discuss the issue of 'Religion und Biographie',[9] in the theological discussion of today, still seems to need justification.

What could be an image or a comprehensive expression of the narrative character of faith? It is not accidental that we repeatedly come across a metaphor: the metaphor of 'web' and 'weaving': Ricoeur speaks of life as a 'cloth woven of stories told';[10] Schapp speaks of being 'entangled', 'embroiled' (German: verstrickt[11]) in stories; Fowler named the autobiographical reflection sheet 'The Unfolding Tapestry of My Life'.[12] The attraction of the metaphor 'web' and 'weaving' is consistent with the conviction that we are not able to identify (mono-) causal relations, but rather have to engage in a multi-perspective, ecological[13] world-view: one 'thread' appears to be 'tied' to others, in a variety of relations.

Comprehending and telling the story of one's life and faith, as autobiography, is ultimately dependent upon an appreciation not only of individuality, but of subjectivity. This theme of theology and autobiographical construction and reconstruction, however, appears to be a 'lost dimension' in the theological discussion.[14]

This article is about autobiographical reflection and faith development. It is intended as a contribution to a model of faith development, on the basis of which we may adequately understand more of the significance of autobiographical reflection. Within the context of such a model of faith development, it will present the sketch of a project for autobiographical reflection in religious education.

The Problem: The Significance of Autobiographical Reflection for Faith Development

Our key question is this: Is autobiographical reflection of significance for faith development; and if so, what kind of significance does autobiographical reflection have for faith development?

At first, this seems to be a clear and very simple question. It appears to be clear if we presuppose a definition of 'development' strictly and exclusively in terms of

structural-development. The hypothesis then appears to claim that autobiographical reflection is of *developmental significance*: of significance for structural faith stage transition. And it appears to be simple, because we could test it simply: the comparison of a faith stage test before with a test after the person's engagement in autobiographical reflection would allow us to infer the developmental significance of autobiographical reflection.

If we give it a second thought, we may realize that we could also attempt to understand, of *what significance* autobiographical reflection is for a person who is seen as a 'person in development'. From this perspective, not only stage transition, but also consolidation and intensification of faith could be focused.

However, our question turns out to be even more complex, *if*, in our understanding of 'development', we want to reintegrate dimensions and perspectives that have been isolated: the psychosocial and the cognitive dimension, the 'subjective' factor and the 'objective' factors, the hermeneutical and the structural-developmental perspective. A *multi-perspective model* does not allow a simple answer: we have to engage in a kinaesthetic process of illuminating correlations between the different perspectives. This paper presents an invitation to engage in this more complex procedure.

Faith is subject to transformation, is a narrative. How do we understand, and get access to, the factors which influence and create our life narratives? To ask this question in the words of Nipkow: Who is the author of our biographies? Scientific analysis approaches transformation and development from various perspectives which account for a variety of possible factors[15] influencing — or 'writing' — a person's biography:

1. We could emphasize the interpretive activity of 'reading', 'understanding', and 'responding' to the 'texts' of cultural traditions which surround us (hermeneutical perspective);
2. The subject may appear as agent, as producer of transformation and development (subjective perspective);
3. The subject as agent may be called into question: the unconscious may appear to be the most influential factor in bringing about crises and transformations (psychoanalytic perspective);
4. The subject as agent may be called into question, once more: for an explanation of life's changes, we could refer to the genetic development of largely preconscious operational structures (structural-developmental perspective).

Do we have to consider these factors one-dimensionally as mutually exclusive, or are we able to view them as parts of an overall dynamic with an interplay of factors which constitute the changes and transformations in a person's life? Could the metaphor of 'web' and 'weaving' inspire theory and research in faith development as well?

Despite the fact that this kind of multi-perspective model was suggested at one point in Fowler's work,[16] it appears to be largely true that the theoretical approaches tend toward an over-estimation of the significance of their own factors by exclusion of the others: a person's biography then appears to be modelled according to a foreign scientific narrative.[17] Especially, in the light of the dominant role which 'objective' factors are considered to play in the transformation process, one factor is in danger of being under-estimated — therefore it may be justified to speak of a 'lost dimension': the subject as 'author' of his or her biography is either under-estimated or disregarded. The structural-developmental approach, to which this article owes valuable insights, does not make an exemption here: it tends to over-estimate the 'objective', sub-conscious factors of structural development.

Is it justifiable, what are the implications, if we work on the assumption that the individual person (subjective perspective), in interpretive interaction with the con-texts of life (hermeneutical perspective) and, at least at times, engaged in 'creative regression' (psychoanalytic perspective) is the author of his or her life narrative?

The Starting-Point: Fowler's Theory of Faith Development

For our attempt to understand the biographical development in faith, finally, to gain some insight in the significance of autobiographical reflection for faith development, the structural-developmental perspective contributes a very explicit framework and some good arguments:

1. Taking both, continuity and change, in a person's life journey, into account, the structural-developmental perspective suggests a biographical perspective. Thus, from this theory we derive a good argument for our concern: to pay attention to, and reflect on, the narratives of our life — in religious education as well.
2. The structural-developmental theory contributes to an autobiographical perspective in qualifying the latter; it promotes a better understanding of changes and transformations in one's life story: they can be interpreted as developmental transitions.
3. The developmental presuppositions for autobiographical reflection may also become visible; questions like the following may arise for which an answer is then found: When are we ready to construct and to tell our autobiography? Why do we construct a certain type of autobiography at a certain point of our development?
4. Another important contribution of structural-developmental theory is that it provides an understanding of how one has dealt with, and may go on dealing with, puzzles, problems and contradictions encountered in one's environment. If it is true that contradictions necessitate the reorganization of the thought structure, they may lead to a new integration, to further development, and there is hope that this will be the case in the future as well.

Among the theories of faith or religion which are part of the structural-developmental tradition,[18] I take Fowler's theory[19] as my starting-point, because he presents a concept of faith which displays an openness toward the hermeneutical and the psychoanalytical perspectives and which appears broad enough to include, in a multi-dimensional perspective, a subjective perspective as well.

According to one way of reading Fowler's work, faith development theory appears to elaborate precisely what Ricoeur has called 'narrative identity'. At the beginning of the theory, there are men and women with their life stories.[20] Fowler's approach to faith stories does not only involve understanding them in the light of a supra-individual, structural-developmental framework story, but, following a hermeneutical perspective, as significantly related to the 'master stories' of our tradition. 'Master images' or 'master stories'[21] integrate the symbolic representations in the coherent context of a story. Such stories are seen to be the matrix of a person's life: as comprehensive models they give orientation and form.[22]

Later, the story becomes a fundamental category in Fowler's work; *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian*[23] is summarized as 'convergence', 'interplay', 'interaction', or 'mutual interpenetration' of (a) 'personal life narratives', (b) 'the web of social interchanges', and (c) 'the core story of the Christian faith'.[24] Faith development theory seems to be open to a hermeneutical perspective.

Faith development theory's affinity to a hermeneutical approach can also be seen in the *research design*: The decision in favour of the semi-clinical interview elicits a broad spectrum of data; it includes contexts and contents and, most important for our theme, data on life history.[25]

A valuable advancement, therefore, which indicates the increasing importance of life history for faith development theory, is the inclusion of the 'life tapestry exercise' in the research. Despite my later criticism in regard to the integration and the significance of life history in the evaluation process, I regard 'The Unfolding Tapestry of My Life' as a very valuable instrument to motivate reflection on one's own life history

as well. Thus, I have used it as a model for designing my own project for autobiographical reflection which I will present at the end of this article. Including this autobiographical reflection sheet in the book published in 1987 as well,[26] Fowler speaks about this new purpose, when he suggests that the life tapestry exercise may be used as working material for the 'autobiographical task'.[27]

Also, the interview with Mary[28] allows Fowler to unfold a broader, more inclusive picture of faith development.[29] The theme of conversion represents a wider horizon of transformations in faith and life, whereby conversion has to be defined as

'a significant recentering of one's previous conscious or unconscious image of value and power, and the conscious adoption of a new set of master stories in the commitment to reshape one's life in a new community of interpretation and action'. (Fowler 1981:281)

It is in this chapter that Fowler presents his formula of the 'structuring power of the contents of faith'[30] and interprets Mary's story as providing strong support for the assumption of an interrelation of structural changes and content-motivated transformations.

In the interpretation of Mary's story, Fowler also indicates faith development theory's openness toward a *psychoanalytic perspective*. A decisive refinement of the progressive model of faith development theory emerges: the necessity of a 'healing recapitulation of earlier stages'.

'As we have seen, Mary's particular combination of strengths and vulnerabilities, which became visible in the interview, have a history that goes back to earliest infancy and possibly to prenatal life. Conversion, for Mary, will not be completed until, through recapitulative return to the places where that past lives in her, she can be met by a spirit that can re-ground the foundations of basic trust in her life. There needs to be a similar re-dwelling in the time of early childhood, where the primal images and intuitions of self-world and God took form. With contemplative prayer and active imagination — under the guidance and protection of the divine spirit — perhaps there could be a re-formation of the primal images of her faith. A similar revisiting of later childhood would enable Mary to let the stories and liturgical drama of her faith community become stories of her life'. (Fowler 1981:265)

With respect to the psychoanalytic concept of 'regression in the service of the ego',[31] Fowler postulates and emphasizes an important dimension of development which is neglected in purist structural-developmental theory: autobiographical reflection in the depth of recapitulating one's own life history; he calls it 'recapitulation in the service of faith development'.[32] Here, Fowler postulates not only healing, but even *developmental* significance of the autobiographical work.[33]

So far, I have presented some aspects of Fowler's faith development theory which may lead us toward a conceptualization of autobiographical reflection; and I have pointed to the affinity of Fowler's faith development theory to those perspectives which are important to include when we are searching for such conceptualization: the hermeneutical and the psychoanalytical perspectives. Thus, I have emphasized the openness and the 'growing edges', in faith development theory, toward a biographical perspective.

However, when we step back and try to make an assessment of the entire faith development project and its contribution to an autobiographical perspective, we may also need to qualify our reading and raise some questions.

Critique and Advancements: Toward a Correlative Perspective

It is consistent with the multi-perspective view on autobiographical reflection, that we ask questions from different angles:

1. Faith development theory claims to 'take seriously the narrative structure of life history'.[34] Certainly, given its rootedness in the structural-developmental tradition,

Fowler's faith development theory adopts a far-reaching biographical perspective, but we ask further: *Does autobiographical reflection play a central role in theory and research?*

The minor role of the 'life tapestry exercise' in research — it is 'optional'; it is 'not coded directly', but only regarded as useful for the coding process to provide background material — may be indicative of the tendency of Fowler's theory in regard to the tension between the 'subjective' and the 'objective' aspects. The client's life narrative does not remain primarily his or her own autobiographical (intrinsic) construction or theory, but rather it becomes the theorist's and researcher's work of (extrinsic) reconstruction. I think that autobiography still does not play the important role it should deserve. Another perspective needs to be focused on; structural-developmental theory has to recede and make room for the subject's own 'theory' of development.

A perspective such as Handel's[35] may widen our horizon to include, in our correlative perspective, the subjects' own theories, and may suggest to the developmental theorist that he not pretend to 'always know better'.

2. What role does the subjective perspective play in Fowler's theory? Is the subject conceived as an agent of life history? Fowler's (1985) adoption of the formula, 'becoming a subject before God'[36] could be indicative of an increasing importance ascribed to the role of the *subject* in faith development.[37] However, it describes the teleological aim of what we are *becoming*, rather than the details of *how* persons move on, in their development. Regarding the latter, Fowler's theory refers predominantly to the sub-conscious 'objective' factors promoting structural change.

Agency and initiative of the *subject* are emphasized more strongly, when Fowler speaks of 'recapitulation', 'elaboration and reappropriation', 'conscious adoption' of new contents in conversion. However, as Fowler's analysis of Mary's story shows, this active role of the subject is postulated only for a *desirable* recapitulation process, in the future. Conversion itself is not seen as the result of a *subjective* reconstruction by the person (Mary).[38]

For a more adequate, more comprehensive approach, however, we need to re-integrate the 'lost dimension', the agency of the person as *author* of his or her life history, into the psychological perspective on human development.[39] Therefore I agree with Schweitzer who suggests that we should also extend developmental theory and research by including the perspective of autobiographical construction.[40]

3. How important is the psychoanalytic perspective for faith development theory? In the interpretation of Mary's story, Fowler has presented his most advanced parallel to a psychoanalytic perspective in his work up till 1981. However, the dialogue with the psychoanalytic perspective continued to play an important role in Fowler's work,[41] although faith development theory has not (yet) arrived at the perspective of a mutually complementary relation.[42]

In his book of 1987, *Faith Development and Pastoral Care*, Fowler attempts to integrate a psychoanalytic view: Kegan's neo-Piagetian perspective.[43] Here Fowler explicitly describes 'development in faith' as inclusive of 'biological, cognitive, emotional, and moral-reasoning development'.[44] This correlative proposal can be seen as one of the 'growing edges' in Fowler's theory.

The contribution which the psychoanalytic perspective has to offer for our theme is significant: it is one of the possibilities for positing the necessity and the significance of autobiographical reflection for development in faith.

4. Can Fowler's theory claim to present an integration of the hermeneutical perspective? Fowler's notion of the significance of narratives, symbols and images for faith culminates in the statement of the 'structuring power of the contents of faith'. This may indicate the affinity and openness toward a hermeneutical perspective which, however, should not remain a marginal perspective in theory and research. But Fowler himself is aware of the tension between structure and content.[45] In my perspective, Fowler's faith development theory and research only insufficiently account for the contents of faith.

Thus with my proposal of a *con-text-ualist model for faith development*,[46] I propose to advance a hermeneutical perspective in faith development theory and research which, following Ricoeur, rests on the *text* as paradigm. The dialogue with the *text* is a *creative* dialogue: development thus appears as a series of creative re-constructions resulting from the interaction with objectifications (texts) which put the person in the position of a reader who, in this dialogue with the text, creates new meaning, encounters new possibilities of existence. Responsiveness in 'reading' or 'listening', as we learn from Ricoeur,[47] is therefore the attitude most appropriate for this perspective of development.

Fowler's account of the contents of faith is not only insufficient because of the primary focus on structure; in addition, the theory does not sufficiently account for that content which is most important to our theme: a person's own *life history*. Understanding the significance of autobiographical reflection for faith development implies paying special attention to the con-text of *life history*: to the structuring power of 'telling', 'writing down' and 'reading' one's life story; to its significance for being and becoming the 'author' and 'writing' the next chapter of one's life.

As a summary definition of 'faith development', therefore, I suggest: *Faith development is the sequence of a person's reconstructive transformations in faith which is due not only to developing operational structures, but also to the decentering interaction with the person's contents and con-texts of faith, especially with the con-text of one's own life narrative.*

On the other hand: An adequate conceptualization of a person's development in faith has to pay attention to the developmental changes in the person's capacity to look back on the life narrative, his or her *developmental readiness to construct an autobiography*. In regard to the development of the 'Form of Logic', and the 'Form of World Coherence', we can expect a person to be able to construct an autobiography with the rise of formal operations and, in a preliminary, more episodic form, perhaps already with the development of concrete operations. Until further research may yield a more detailed understanding,[48] I assume not only an increasing competency for, but also an increasing significance of, autobiographical reflection in faith development as we move on in our life.

Autobiographical Reflection and Religious Education

What are the implications of our model of autobiographical reflection and its significance for faith development as regards the understanding of *education?*

Kegan's work may contribute valuable insights. Certainly, Kegan is not a religious educator, but views himself as a constructive-developmental counsellor and therapist; however, Kegan's comprehensive perspective which includes a therapeutic point of view may help us keep in mind the subjective and personal quality of the autobiographical work. Kegan distinguishes his own proposal of intervention from the prevalent model of *provocative* educational intervention on the basis of the structural-developmental paradigm:

'An intervention which is only provocative, seeking to provide the kind of creative discrepancies which might induce disequilibrium, is essentially an address to the person in equilibrium, a presumption that the person rests in the pride of balance, in need of the ennobling Socratic itch'. (Kegan 1982:276).

Kegan then poses the question:

'Developmentalists know something now about how to join the environment to stimulate development; but have we learned how to join or accompany the meaning-maker when he or she faces a world that is already heated up, already stimulating, even to the point of being meaning-threatening'? (Kegan 1982:276f)

Consistent with his new paradigm — development in terms of 'cultures of embeddedness' — Kegan proposes to design structural-developmental counselling

parallel to 'natural therapy'. It is supposed to create a culture of embeddedness facilitating a troubled person's evolution;[49] and this means: joining the *person*:

'Therapy from a constructive-developmental point of view is an extremely delicate but not impossible affair. Its delicacy lies in the fact that the therapist is actually trying to join another person in an extraordinary intimate way; he or she is trying to become a helpful part of the person's very *evolution*'. (Kegan 1982:278)

As regards religious education, Kegan's point of view may be a reminder: the religious educator also has to *join the person*. This is true, especially, for the autobiographical task: here we are focusing not on the environment as presenting logical contradictions; not on content knowledge to be acquired; not on the context of the other; and not on the context of the cultural or religious tradition. Autobiographical learning focuses on a context of an entirely different quality: the learner's own life history is its uniqueness. The teacher's role consistent with this kind of learning can only be to join the person and accompany him or her on the journey of discovery and invention.

Kegan's point of view is also important for an educational perspective because it contradicts the prevalent assumption that the provocative contradiction-stimulation model is the only one that could necessarily and consistently follow from structural-developmental theory. To state it differently: this implies calling into question the handy formula of 'Development as the Aim of Education', the formula which Kohlberg's theory[50] claims for moral education and Oser's theory [51] for religious education. We must keep in mind the warnings against a technological, strategic arrangement of religious education.[52] It would be a misunderstanding of developmental theory, if we tried to realize the principle of 'development as the aim of education'. Faith development theory can help us to be more responsive to the developmental situation of the persons we want to educate, and faith stage transition *can* take place, in the context of religious education; but we should not derive from faith development theory a technique to *produce* and *manipulate* faith stage transition. Education also has to aim at consolidation, at finding or inventing embeddedness, to recall Kegan's ideas. This is especially true for autobiographical learning. Therefore, I would propose a modification of the problematic formula. If we want to express it in a formula, I would rather propose something like this: 'Facilitation of the person in evolution as the aim of education'. The alternative model for educational intervention can best be described as 'joining the person who is seen as discoverer (in his or her life history) and inventor (of a new beginning)'.

This leads us to the related theme of *creativity* and *imagination* which is inherent in autobiographical learning. Creativity and imagination open up new alternatives to the routine of every-day life. The creativity of inventing and projectively 'writing' a further step in one's biography has the feature of a playful activity.

Playing in the classroom, as Heimbrock[53] notes, could be the cultivation of the 'sense of the possible';[54] it indicates the way out of the problematic alternative between (highly regarded) serious reflection and (disregarded) childrens' play in religious education. Religious education could come to reflect the root metaphor of play.[55] Discovering the play which life played in writing one's past could prepare the person not only for playful 'writing', but also for more trustful reliance on the ongoing play of life.[56]

The project 'Encounter With My Own Life History', can be regarded as part of the attempt to foster and to restore, in religious education or small-group counselling, creativity, fantasy, and imagination. The creative process of representing and rendering one's biography graphically in various episodes and the projective invention of a future 'episode' are an attempt to realize this in an educational setting.

The Curriculum on Autobiographical Learning

The idea for a curriculum 'Encounter With My Own Life History' has grown out of my work on faith development theory. The seed for this project is the 'Unfolding

Tapestry of My Life', which is used in faith development research.[57] In *Faith Development and Pastoral Care*, Fowler hints at this new purpose for this instrument[58] in a different context, when he suggests that it may be used in autobiographical reflection to help the person in reintegrating his or her life and in finding a 'new beginning'.[59]

We should not be surprised if we find out that the research instruments themselves have an impact on the person's faith development. Fowler's assumptions about the role of the 'Unfolding Tapestry of My Life' in the 'dynamics of change' support these ideas. His awareness that the faith development interview can be seen as an intervention.[60]

Could the reflection on one's own faith development, on one's own life history, be arranged as an educational process? In particular, can especially the 'Unfolding Tapestry of My Life' be used intentionally to support facilitation and transformation? I would answer this question affirmatively: I engaged in designing the project 'Encounter With My Own Life History' which could be especially useful in small-group education.[61]

The following changes and advancements of Fowler's 'Unfolding Tapestry of My Life' appear to be adequate:

1. Because of its linear columns, the 'Unfolding Tapestry of My Life' suggests a linear concept of time.[62] However, we have to be aware (a) that such a linear arrangement does not allow the student to describe his or her life history other than in a linear way (what about the 'ups' and 'downs'; the sense that it has been a labyrinth; etc.); and (b) that the process of remembering one's story crystallizes in episodes which do not at first appear as part of a continuum, of a line of development, but are integrated into a plot, are connected by a red thread, only in a second, reflecting step. It appears more adequate to motivate the student to remember single episodes which occurred at various ages and to write them down on different sheets of paper; for this, I chose the form of 'clouds';[63] each person could fill out at least five such 'clouds' which can be cut and arranged on a large paper later. With this arrangement, we could attempt to minimize restrictions on playfulness and creativity.
2. Further, the number of columns has been increased: two separate columns are designed to write down the gains and losses which having faith posed at a certain time period. I found it necessary to explictly address the issues concerning enrichment by faith and the problems caused by that faith, the support and the contradictions, the meaningful comprehension of the world and the remaining puzzles. A possible outcome here is the discovery of the process whereby problems, contradictions and puzzles which emerge at a certain stage of development potentially promote further development, in turn enabling the person in question to find better solutions to these very problems.
3. Going beyond the 'Unfolding Tapestry of My Life', the possibility of projecting one's future has been incorporated: designing a 'future cloud' for oneself. This indicates the aim of the entire project. Projecting one's future could foster the openness for and the presentiment of a possible further step in an ongoing development of one's life journey; it invites imagination and creativity. But the 'future cloud' could also help the person in consolidating his or her faith, in finding embeddedness in the environment and in arriving at new faith in the play of life.

ENCOUNTER WITH MY OWN LIFE HISTORY

J. In this respect, my faith was a loss, the following puzzles and problems remained:

I. In this respect, my faith was a gain, faith was helpful:

H. This was my image of God:

G. Events and conditions in society which I remember:

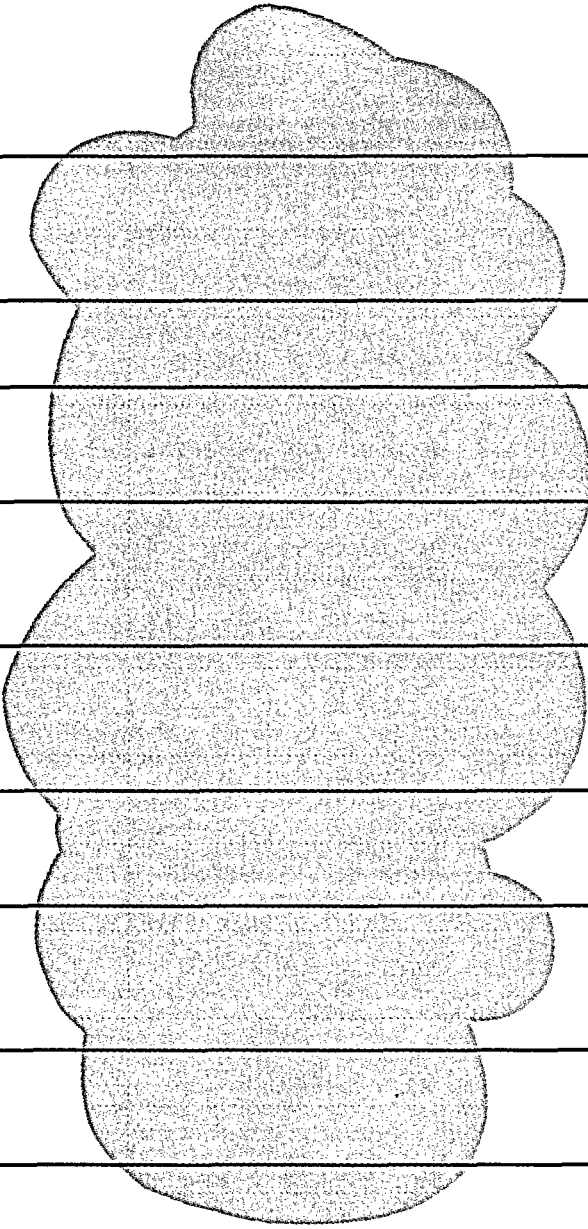F. This was the authority (figure) when I was looking for guidance:

E. Marker events in my life which caused crises and changes:

D. What I was doing, how I spent my time:

C. The person or persons to whom I had the most significant relation:

B. The place where I felt at home:

A. My age:

References

[1] 'Christentum als Gemeinschaft der an Christus Glaubenden ist von Anfang an nicht primär eine Interpretations- und Argumentationsgemeinschaft, sondern eine Erinnerungs- und Erzählgemeinschaft in praktischer Absicht . . .' (Metz 1977:189). With Metz I quote one of the originators of the discussion about narrative theology in German speaking theology (comp. Metz 1973a and 1973b).

[2] See Crites 1971.

[3] See Ricoeur *1985* 1988.

[4] 'In Geschichten verstrickt', See Schapp *1953* 1976.

[5] According to Nipkow, the emerging perspective on the development of faith can refer, e.g., to Luther, Comenius, Hamann, Kierkegaard. Comp. Nipkow 1986.

[6] Comp. Nipkow 1986:27; 1987:112; Schweitzer 1990:297.

[7] Comp. Nipkow 1982; 1983:161-189.

[8] As Metz (1977:195ff) does.

[9] See Grötzinger & Luther 1987; Luther 1990.

[10] See Ricoeur *1985* 1988:246.

[11] Schapp's expression 'verstricken' employs the metaphor of 'knitting' and 'net'.

[12] 'The Unfolding Tapestry of My Life' is used as material in the life tapestry exercise which is part of faith development research; it was designed in the Center for Faith Development in Atlanta and included in the *Manual for Faith Development Research* (Moseley et. al. 1986:23).

[13] It may be more than an accidental parallel, that this metaphor of 'web' and 'weaving' is an important metaphor in ecology, system theory and in feminist thinking.

[14] Cf. Schweitzer 1990:305.

[15] I do not claim that this list is comprehensive, but it may serve to give a more comprehensive picture of the issue in question.

[16] A sketch of the interplay of a variety of factors is presented in Fowler's figure: 'Toward a Model of the Dynamics of Adult Faith' (Fowler 1982:200).

[17] 'Die religionspsychologische Lebenslaufforschung hat die Frage der Konstruktion von Autobiographie noch kaum beachtet. Als Autor von Lebensgeschichten fungiert gleichsam die Religionspsychologie selbst, nicht aber der einzelne Mensch, dessen Lebenslauf sie untersucht und beschreibt. Strukturalismus und Psychoanalyse kommen dabei zu einer parallelen Konzentration auf die gleichsam hinter dem bewußten Subjekt liegenden Tiefenstrukturen und die dem Bewußtsein entzogenen Prozesse im Unbewußten'. (Schweitzer 1990:308)

[18] Besides Fowler's work, Oser's work also deserves attention. I focus on Fowler, because a comparative investigation would exceed the scope of this article. In *Der Mensch. Stufen seiner religiösen Entwicklung* (Oser & Gmünder 1984), Oser presents a structural-developmental theory of the development of religious judgment. I will return to Oser's proposal for religious education, as presented in *Wieviel Religion braucht der Mensch?* (Oser 1988) later.

[19] See especially Fowler 1981 and 1987a.

[20] Comp. Fowler & Keen 1978 and Fowler & Lovin 1980.

[21] Fowler 1981:277; 282; 295. As early as 1981, in the book published in that year, life story was intended to be included, as Fowler says: 'Readers of this book who are familiar with my previous writings will have noted, I suspect, that my use of interview materials here has been much more inclusive of life histories and of the impact of changes in faith on their subjects' sense of selfhood than before'. (Fowler 1981:273)

[22] Christian education, Fowler writes in 1979, *'will be faithful in holding the images so generated accountable to the normativity of the master-images which underlie and find expression in the Scriptures and in doctrine'*. (Fowler 1979:109)

[23] Fowler 1984.

[24] See Fowler 1984:137.

[25] As the *Manual for Faith Development Research*, states: '. . . the current, open-ended form of the interview is still the most appropriate research tool given the current stage of our knowledge of faith development . . . The semi-clinical interview enables us to gather a wider range of data than would be possible with a pencil and paper test, dilemma test, or other format designed to measure structure alone. Along with codable structural data, the open-ended interview yields data on the individual's life history, social relationships and images and thoughts about self that could not be gathered from a test that was designed to measure specific structures in isolation'. (Moseley et. al. 1986:12)

[26] See Fowler 1987a:124f.

[27] See Fowler 1987a:111.

[28] A large portion of a faith development interview with a woman is presented by Fowler in Chapter 22 of *Stages of Faith*, 'Mary's Pilgrimage: The Theory at Work' (Fowler 1981:217ff).

[29] The fact that the interview with Mary is not a typical interview, but has an affinity to pastoral counselling, does not disqualify this example for our theme; on the contrary, when we are investigating the significance of autobiographical reflection, the interview with Mary may be a very adequate concretization of faith development theory's openness toward both: an inclusion of life history and a psychoanalytic perspective.

[30] See Fowler 1981:273; 276.

[31] In *Life History and the Historical Moment*, Erikson interprets 'certain progressive and retrogressive group phenomena' of protesting youth as being 'analogous to what Ernst Kris has called "regression in the service of the ego", and Peter Blos, "regression in the service of development"' (Erikson 1985:193f). Erikson claims 'that at least some of the adolescent processes described so readily as regressive have the distinct adaptive function of reviving and recapitulating the fragmentary conflicts of childhood for the sake of recombining them actively in a new wholeness of experience' (*Ibid.*:205f).

[32] Fowler 1981:289.

[33] 'When the recapitulative process has done its work, the person has a new foundation of inner integration from which to move more decisively toward the next stage. In Mary's case the recapitulative experience, if truly Spirit empowered and thorough, should free her to make significant movement toward an Individual-Reflective appropriation of her Christian faith'. (Fowler 1981:291)

[34] In the *Manual*, we read: 'When abstracted from the context of life history such "scores" are meaningless'. (Moseley *et. al.* 1986:2).

[35] In his article, 'Personal Theories about Life-Span Development of One's Self in Autobiographical Self-Presentations of Adults', Handel makes a strong argument for using autobiographical self-narratives 'as source of information about the author's personal theory of development of self' (Handel 1987:93).

[36] A formula adopted from Metz (1977:58; 207; passim).

[37] For the adoption of Metz's phrase in Fowler's work, see Fowler 1985:56ff; also 1987a:53ff; and 1987b:10; 18.

[38] Schweitzer (1990:309) has pointed out this lack in Fowler's theoretical perspective.

[39] See Schweitzer 1990:305.

[40] See Schweitzer 1990:298.

[41] Erikson's work does play an important role for Fowler, as we see, e.g., in his book published in 1984 and in his recent papers on early childhood (Fowler 1989a; 1989b).

[42] It is Schweitzer's (1987;161; 170ff) suggestion, that faith development theory could find a meaningful complementary perspective in psychoanalytic theory. See also McDargh 1983.

[43] A strong notion of how the psychoanalytic perspective can be correlated with the structural-developmental perspective is presented in Kegan's (1982) book.

[44] See Fowler 1987a:102.

[45] Comp. Fowler 1987b;1; 7. I have dealt with this tension between structure and content, and with faith development theory's relation to a hermeneutical perspective, at some length (Streib 1991).

[46] See also Streib 1991 for my proposal of a con-text-ualist model for faith development theory, which is based on Ricoeur's hermeneutical perspective.

[47] See Ricoeur 1969.

[48] Schweitzer's (1990:303f) proposal to conceptualize the competency in autobiographical construction on the basis of Fowler's developmental scale in the aspect of 'Form of World Coherence' could serve as a guideline.

[49] See Kegan 1982:262.

[50] Cf. Kohlberg, Lawrence and Mayer, Rochelle: 'Development as the Aim of Education: The Dewey View' (Kohlberg & Mayer 1972). In their article, Kohlberg and Mayer take a stance against the perspectives of 'romanticism' and 'cultural transmission' and they propose a 'progressive position' which claims 'that the aims of education may be identified with development, both intellectual and moral. That education so conceived supplies the conditions for passing through an order of connected stages' (Kohlberg & Mayer 1972:94). 'It (education, H.S.) relies on open methods of stimulation through a sequence of stages, in a direction of movement that is universal for all children' (Kohlberg & Mayer 1972:95).

[51] For religious education, Gmünder postulates, programaticaly: 'Entwicklung als Ziel der religiösen Erziehung' (Gmünder 1979). See also Oser & Gmünder 1984:263ff.! In *Wieviel Religion braucht der Mensch?* (Oser 1988), Oser has presented a perspective on religious education, on the basis of his structural-developmental theory of religious development. Very precisely, he defines as goal of development and as goal of education: the development toward *autonomy* (Oser 1988:50). The proposal for the educational practice is the application of a structure transformation model ('Strukturtransformationsmodell') and even includes a detailed description of how students move from one stage to the other: 1. 'Verunsicherung, Grenzerfahrungen'; 2. 'Erkennen neuer Elemente'; 3. 'Auflösung der alten Struktur'; 4. 'Einbau neuer Elemente'; 5. 'Zusammenbau und Anwendung der neuen Struktur' (Oser 1988:54).

[52] As formulated e.g., by Schweitzer (1987;243f): 'Zwischen der *Verschulung der Entwicklung* und einer *entwicklungsbezogenen Erziehung* verläuft eine feine, aber doch entscheidende Grenzlinie. Diese Grenze wird überschritten, wenn die Entwicklungsstufen bei der Erziehung als ein festliegendes Erwartungsmuster zugrundegelegt und wenn die tatsächlichen Erfahrungen der Kinder und Jugendlichen diesem Muster eingepaßt werden . . . Entwicklungsstufen dürfen . . . nicht zu einer Norm werden, die darüber bestimmt, welche Erfahrungen zu welcher Zeit zulässig sind'.

[53] See Heimbrock 1984:179.

[54] Heimbrock here refers to the concept of 'Möglichkeitssinn' in Sölle's *Phantasie und Gehorsam* (Sölle 1968:58).

[55] 'Spiel als Weltsymbol geht über die Kategorien des Machens, des Habens und der Leitungen hinaus in die Kategorien des Seins, des authentischen menschlichen Daseins und der demonstrativen Freude an

ihm. Es betont genenüber dem Herzustellenden das Schöpferische und gegenüber dem Ethischen das Ästhetische'. (Moltmann 1971:30). See also Moltmann 1985:311ff.

⁵⁶ Cf. Moltmann (1971:30): 'Das schöpferische Spielen des Menschen ist immer ein Spielen mit etwas, das auch mit dem Spieler spielt. Er spielt mit den Wellen im Meer, und diese spielen auch mit ihm. . . . Das gilt nicht für die Spiele *im* Leben, sondern kann auch auf das Spiel *des* Lebens übertragen werden'. Moltmann goes on and quotes Buytendijk: 'Je tiefer die Daseinsanalyse fortschreitet, desto klarer wird es . . ., daß der Mensch auch noch die Möglichkeit hat, statt dem Spieler der Gespielte, der spielend Geborgene zu sein. Dann vollzieht sich eine geheimnisvolle Wandlung. Der Mensch erfährt, daß der umgreifende liebende Grund seines Daseins mit ihm ein wunderbares Spiel spielt'.

⁵⁷ See Moseley, *et. al.* 1986:23.

⁵⁸ Comp. Fowler 1987a:124f.

⁵⁹ See Fowler 1987a:111.

⁶⁰ See Fowler 1986:38.

⁶¹ What kind of learning environment would be most adequate for this autobiographical project? In my opinion, and on the basis of my experience, the situation of a small group, e.g., in small-group counselling, provides the optimal setting for this autobiographical process. To arrange such an autobiographical reflection process in a curriculum in religious education is not impossible, but it requires not only careful introduction, but also special attention to the understandable desire of the students to protect their confidential information: stable small sub-groups could meet this need.

⁶² This may not be intended and could be just the accidental result of the need to design a sheet in which consequent events can be filled in. At first I had employed a very similar sheet until I found a better solution.

⁶³ See Figure on page 51.

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