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RESEARCH ON RELIGIOUS
AND SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

Arniika Kuusisto
Liam Gearon (Eds.)

Value Learning Trajectories

Theory, Method, Context

WAXMANN

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edited by

Theo van der Zee, Kirsi Tirri and Ulrich Riegel

Volume 10

Religious and spiritual education in plural societies are emerging areas in the field of research on learning, development, socialisation and formative practices in various religious and spiritual contexts – an interdisciplinary field in which scholars of religious studies, pedagogy, educational studies, psychology, anthropology, neuroscience, theology and philosophy are engaged.

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and Liam Gearon (Eds.)

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Introduction

This volume provides a theoretical, methodological and contextual framing of value learning alongside educational and professional life trajectories of individuals and groups in a diverse range of international educational settings. It brings together philosophical approaches on value learning with empirical research findings from both national and international comparative settings. A critical interdisciplinary bridge between value learning and life trajectory research, the volume brings together contributions from leading and emergent researchers to facilitate evidence-informed insights and future collaborations in the field.

The book is divided in three parts: the theoretical, the methodological, and the contextual, each of which begins with a framing chapter by the editors gathering together a more general foundation and framework for the section. Besides these, the included contributions are as follows. The first part, *Theory*, begins with an Australian contribution by Daniel J. Fleming on the enduring contribution of Religious Education to reason's good functioning, presenting the case of moral excellence. This is followed by German contributions, first Konstantin Lindner's article on the experiencing of values in Religious Education, and then Janosh Freuding's contribution on the "Maps and Landscapes of Meaning", examining othering, transculturality and 'Lebenswelt' in interreligious learning. Thereafter, Angela Kaupp writes on the impact of 'Spaces and Places' on theories of Religious Education and socialization. The first part of the book is concluded by Stephanie Lorenzen's article on the changing of 'diffuse' to 'profiled' positions by the facing of religious truth-claims, particularly focusing on the contexts of belonging as the conditions of religious 'matching-processes.'

The second section of the book, *Method*, focuses on the empirical approaches and implications of examining value learning trajectories in research. After the editors' framing chapter, Terence Lovat introduces an Australian case study on the countering of radical Islamist discourse through inter-theological education. This is followed by a Dutch contribution by Monique van Dijk-Groeneboer presenting an examination of longitudinal research in young people's values. Finally in the Method section, Ulrich Riegel and Eva-Maria Leven elaborate some of the methodological considerations related to a video analysis on the assessing of the mediation of religious truth claims in religious education in Germany.

The final part of the book, *Context*, includes, besides the framing chapter by the editors, an examination of the value learning trajectories embedded in the Iranian educational system by a team of authors from the universities of Helsinki and Kurdistan, namely Nasibeh Hedayati, Elina Kuusisto, Khalil Gholami and Kirsi Tirri. Their article is followed by Helena Stockinger's chapter on religious diversity and religious education in Austrian kindergartens. A perspective on vocational teacher education in Finnish and Estonian teacher education curricula is then provided by

Heidi Paju, Kirsi Tirri and Tero Autio. After that, Molalign Tamiru examines caring relationships in the interaction between teachers and students in Ethiopian settings. Finally, the chapter by Juha Luodeslampi and Arniika Kuusisto present an examination of the socio-political value tensions in religious education teachers' career trajectories with a life history approach with 1930s born teachers who taught in the 1960s and 1970s Finland.

The editors, Arniika Kuusisto and Liam Gearon, would like to thank the European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI) Special Interest Group 19: Religious and Spiritual Education members for supporting this interdisciplinary and international venture over the past year.

We would also formally like to thank each author contributing to the rich texture of value learning and life trajectories in this collaborative research project through their respective chapters.

Dr Arniika Kuusisto would further and fulsomely like to acknowledge the generous professional and financial support of the Academy of Finland for her research, particularly funding Grant 298052 'Nature or Nurture? Technology Assisted Multi-Method Autobiographical Approach to Value Learning during Transition to School.'

August 2017

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Part one: Theory

On Theory: Framing Value Learning in the Life Trajectory

Epistemology, Ethics, the Existential

1 Introduction

In his foundational work, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Durkheim advanced a theory of religion that society makes god in its own image – constructs its gods from the substance of that which it values most (Durkheim, 2008). In the societies Durkheim studied, he focussed on the totem – a symbol of great mystical power often remarked on by early anthropologists –, a physical object which defined tribal identity. The symbolic totem embodied in concrete terms that which was difficult to define but also embodied it, the sacred ineffable, both within the societal frame and transcending it. Durkheim extrapolated from this an entire theory of religion (Pals, 2016). For Durkheim, to lose a sense of this highest value is to lose meaning, to enter the state of anomie, or meaninglessness when the transcendental referent has been lost and, in doing so, can result in disorientation and despair (Durkheim, 2002). It is what Max Weber defined as the consequences of increased rationalisation and intellectualisation, resulting in the disenchantment of the world in ‘Science as a Vocation’, originally delivered in 1918 as a lecture at Munich University (Weber, 1946):

The increasing intellectualisation and rationalisation do not, therefore, indicate an increased and general knowledge of the conditions under which one lives. It means something else, namely, the knowledge or belief that if one but wished one could learn it at any time. Hence, it means that principally there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation. This means that the world is disenchanted. One need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits ... for whom such mysterious powers existed. Technical means and calculations perform the service. This above all is what intellectualization means. (Weber, 1946, 7).

In a metaphorical sense, value-seeking life trajectory research pursues those symbols and referents which too define the fundamental undercurrents – the motivations, the unseen directives which hold together individual lives as much as they do societal contexts. If for many today the transcendent ground of value has receded, the distant remnant of it we still see in those things we value most.

For those to whom the transcendent referent still holds, such God-infused values still impact on a world no longer sharing common bonds. Thus, the totem in the classical anthropological literature was always described as something which

symbolically embodied immense power; it was surrounded by an aura not only of mystery but of danger; the power of the tribe resided often precariously within the figurative representation of what protected it from harm and what could, if offended against, do harm. Offences against what is of value still have the power to protect and pollute in society today. So, we viscerally recognise today violence done to books, flags or other cultural artefacts that offend. Or we see wars waged in the name of democracy and human rights. We thus see the power of the highest value impact, whether or not there is a transcendental referent to value.

Values thus remain the antecedent power of our motivations and engagements, and understanding values moves us towards an understanding of what shapes our lives. The theory of values always requires, as ever then, a critical or interrogatory and self-interrogatory framing if we are to access it, to have knowledge of value, to understand it. The underpinning of the theoretical frame of value characterises much educational research around values formation, value learning, including in fields such as moral and character education, religious education, multicultural education, and citizenship or political education, and for the most part in classrooms or institutional or administrative settings (Arthur & Lovat, 2013; Peterson, Hattam, Zenbylas & Arthur, 2017) but always necessitates consideration of values conceived beyond institutional boundaries (see Gadamer, 1992 also Fairfield, 2012; Grün, 2005; Poulter, Riitaoja & Kuusisto, 2016; Ubani, 2013; and critically Schwartz, 1992; 1999). Furthermore, with a wider time frame, the life trajectory approach engages with narratives, biographies and accounts of personal histories. Ivor Goodson (2017a; 2017b) confidently frames this as a response to and a reaction against the objectivity and distancing of the individual from the empirical and rationalistic strictures of modernity: ‘... life history, whose methods failed the objectivity test under modernism, has once again come into its own’ (Goodson, 2017b, 32). We might wonder however if here Goodson has not overstated the more generalised claims of narrative research (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2013; Denzin, 1989) in placing it in such historical terms – there is a strong case that narrative methods of philosophical and life-reflection were apparent deep into antiquity, and we can think here of Plutarch’s (2008) *Lives* or Augustine’s (1961) *Confessions*.

That aside, our task has been to combine this notion of value learning with the life trajectory, to examine values in the life story or life trajectory, attempting here to provide some narrative form to the multiplicity of variant directions that values take individual lives. This chapter presents three meta-theoretical categories for framing this synthesis of value learning and the life trajectory research. These are: the ontological-epistemological; the ethical; and the existential.

2 The Ontological-Epistemological Frame of Value Learning and the Life Trajectory

Research collections concur in providing a deep sense of contestation and tension between conflicting value systems while, at the same time, tending towards the exploration and exposing of common values as a means of promoting them in the societal context and, particularly, educational context in those sorts of curricula (again, Arthur & Lovat, 2013; Peterson, Hattam, Zenbylas & Arthur, 2016). Such approaches thus generally examine the specific context of values in particular educational settings or within the framework of certain educational subject matter such as citizenship or moral education. We seek here to provide an outline of epistemological framing in order to suggest what it means to know value.

Value theory can be used in at least three complementary ways in philosophy. First, it can be used as a broad referent of moral philosophy or those evaluative branches of inquiry which order human life and give it meaning, such as social and political philosophy, philosophies of religion, ethics or aesthetics. In a second narrower sense, value theory refers to systematic determination of what is defined as the good (in personal, social and political senses) and the ends or purposes of the good, which can be termed ‘axiology’, or the ‘classifying what things are good, and how good they are’ (Schroeder, 2016). Overlapping with these is a third designation, a branch of moral philosophy concerned ‘with theoretical questions about value and goodness of all varieties – the theory of value’ (Schroeder, 2016).

Investigations of value in the human life are of considerable antiquity. Throughout Plato’s works, one finds the critically engaged search for what is of value; this is the very lifeblood of the *Dialogues*, whether the personal or the societal and political; the meeting place is in the critical space where personal and political encounter become indistinguishable from each other. Thus, questions of what form a society should take and how it should be governed are the subjects of Plato’s *Republic*, *The Laws*, *The Statesman*, and so forth, but so too are the values of polity and governance which are to direct and form individual lives.

Aristotle’s (1941a) *Nicomachean Ethics* is concerned fundamentally with the ends and means of the good in the context of the different strata of society and the professions – of medicine, say, or warfare – which sustain the *polis* or state. In Aristotle’s *Politics*, he determines the roles and responsibilities, the duties, of the citizen as part of a complex of social and political value. Both Plato and Aristotle reason their ways to an ideal set of societal-political values which should determine the individual life but they do so importantly by dismissing alternatives as a lesser or even harmful good. This is important because we know that what is of value is the pivotal locus of disagreement in the materially cultural as much as the militarily conflictual. Thus, disagreement about what is of value in the artistic and literary by way of a theory of aesthetics is shown by the strong differences exhibited around

poets and poetry in Plato's (2014) *Republic* and, say, Aristotle's (1941b) *Poetics*; Plato argues for their removal from the polity as the emotional weakness art can engender is thought not merely to weaken the individual but ultimately the state, whereas Aristotle sees a far more beneficial personal and ultimately societal benefit through the cathartic functions of art. In these, and many other instances, we see the search for value being contested, but also that models of value are not regarded as judgements independent of societal good. Yet, from classical or contemporary philosophy to modern-day theories of economics – where moral value is often reduced to monetary worth – it is no less easy to define, to pin down, what is of value, what is (in monetary terms) valuable. Finding, articulating and living according to certain values is less an abstract process than what Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* calls practical wisdom or *phronesis* (Aristotle, 1941a).

The framing of the value, in ourselves as much as in others, is important if it enables getting on with our lives. Carr (2013) discusses this in relation to classical (secular) as well as religious traditions: '... reasons for action – including the reasons that underpin values – are always practical rather than theoretical reasons' (Carr, 2013, 10; cf. Arthur, 2013). Carr reminds us of Hume's statement about pure reason: in and of itself, it is incapable of inspiring action. Merely theoretical reason makes us, as Hume puts it, 'the slave of the passions' (Hume, 1969; Carr, 2013). As Carr suggests:

To be sure, effective action requires accurate evidence, information or facts if our everyday human projects are to succeed: we need to know – through scientific experiment if necessary – the levels of ground pollution if we are to have safe water supplies or the correct geographical locations of places if we are to get to our meetings on time. But such information cannot in and of itself direct or guide action for which we need reasons in the sense of motives or intentions. (Carr, 2013.)

We cannot – following Hume (1969) – derive ought from is, a value in and of itself, from the world; or, to put it this way: we cannot know how to be in the world simply from the facts of the world. The facts of the world are the determinants and the constraints of value but they are not its configuration. As Carr argues:

My sense of what I should or ought to do is conditioned by what I actually want or desire: information about the levels of ground pollution will be relevant to me only if I want to have safe water, and of accurate geographical location only if I want to attend the meeting. So, the scientifically or otherwise experientially acquired information about the world that we need in order to get successfully around in it cannot itself be the source of the desires, motives and values that give us reasons for acting. (Carr, 2013, 11; on the implications of this thinking for professional values, see Carr, 1991; 2011).

For many philosophers of value, this has meant seeking a source for value in story, as Carr puts it, an explanation of value in non-scientific narratives. This model,

we might say, presents analysis in some less than literal, propositional or strictly formal analytical sense and more as an exploration, a seeking out or – to maintain the exploratory metaphor – a journey. It is not straining the metaphor overly to state that value learning and life trajectory takes the form too of a journey, a matter of uncovering the patterns of value in the structures in those lives which, as researchers, drive our interest or motivate our curiosities. In exploring what is of value and how such value is learned, life trajectory research places itself within the heart of a quest which reaches back to antiquity and forward to the present. If the seeking of value, value itself, what we find of value, is no more easily determined with certainty today than in antiquity, then Plato's dialectical method remains a conversational constant.

Education in values is arguably then this enabling of practical wisdom, whether in the formal setting of a school-day present or in 'lifelong learning'. It might be a good test of the efficacy of values education itself to examine whether the education for life which this presupposes does enable or facilitate such practical wisdom, or whether formal value learning actually hampers the creation of meaningful value, where schools and other institutions are perceived as having a harmful and deleterious impact on lives. In whatever form it takes, the task of the research here is to tell of that story, the journey through a narrative form sympathetic to the story told.

Value learning and life trajectory research is almost entirely dependent then on those various tools which are at hand to listen to, to tell, to engage with, to converse, to be in dialogue with the life story and what is important there. Its tools then are the spoken and written language and most resemble the story whose narrative form is the determinant of the shape and order in the telling of lives and what matters there.

We know then only in imprecise ways, through hesitant articulations, in conversations – dialogue, in formal terms the dialectic – with others who might share or differ from our perspective. There is now a vast literature on how this type of knowledge can be categorised as knowledge, and the common distinctions still hold between the natural sciences and the human sciences, accounts of which permeate standard research textbooks of social sciences methods (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2011; Flick, 2014; Punch & Oancea, 2014; Robson, 2004).

In general terms, Gadamer puts it authoritatively, distinguishing between the laws and regulations common to the natural sciences and the untidier picture of knowledge we find in the human sciences: '... the specific problem the human sciences present to thought is that one has not rightly grasped their nature if one measures them by the yardstick of a progressive knowledge of regularity.' The methods by which we account for knowledge in what Gadamer calls the 'sociohistorical world' are not those of the natural sciences. The ideal is rather 'to understand the phenomenon itself in its unique and historical concreteness'. (Gadamer, 2014, 4; see also Malpas, 2016; Shroeder, 2016.)

There is nothing especially new in this but it is useful to be clear about the limits of our claims to knowledge. The sociohistorical world described by Gadamer is qualitatively framed conversationally, that is, tentatively, just as we see Socrates, Plato's interlocutor, uncover new understandings through the dialogic form. We note too that the Platonic *Dialogues* give us hints of Socrates' life as well as his thinking, as in those profound final engagements – Euthyphro, Phaedo, and so forth – which Plato has marking the last days of Socrates as he awaits trial and death.

The pattern of philosophers self-interrogating in the context of their lives – of looking at how they know the world through living it – has indeed been similarly evident throughout the entire history of philosophy since Plato. René Descartes' (2015) *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting one's Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences* explores this territory. Descartes uses the self-perspective and life orientation throughout his philosophical work as he does in his philosophical life. The philosopher's life and the philosopher's work thus intimately mirror each other. Descartes' *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting one's Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences* is lesser known but more amply demonstrative of this mirroring than any of his works. In this *Discourse*, Descartes uses the tools of his philosophical enquiry not to dismantle his life or its principles but to lay them bare, not to distance himself from the life he leads through thinking about it but to use thinking as a means of engagement. Unlike the somewhat cerebral Descartes of the *cogito ergo sum*, in the *Discourse*, Descartes uses his own life history to illustrate his reasoning and his judgement, his life trajectory as a process of both personal value clarification and methodological guiding for the philosophical life:

I don't hesitate to report my opinion that in one respect I am above the common run of people. Ever since my youth I have been lucky enough to find myself on certain paths that led me to thoughts and maxims from which I developed a method; and this method, it seems to me, enables me to increase my knowledge gradually, raising it a little at a time to the highest point allowed by the averageness of my mind and the brevity of my life. There are two reasons, one personal and the other general, why I might expect that my method won't amount to much. In making judgments about myself I always try to lean towards diffidence and away from arrogance; and when I cast a philosophical eye on the various activities and undertakings of mankind, I regard almost all of them as pointless and useless. And yet, despite these two facts, I have already achieved such results from this method that I'm extremely satisfied with how far I think I have already gone in the search for truth, and am so hopeful about the future that if any purely human occupation has solid worth and importance I venture to think it is the one I have chosen. (Descartes, 2015.)

Just as the searching out of and knowing what constitutes the good life is of considerable antiquity, so too then are the means of the telling. We have only to examine the dialogic form of Plato's writings to see they are as much about conversations

as they are about arriving at definitive, propositional statements of truth. The life journey is, in its own way, a science, in Gadamer's terms and those of many others, a human science in the sense of a systematic or sustained enquiry but one whose epistemology differs in fundamental ways from that of the natural sciences. In philosophical (rather than scientific) terms, we see the division similarly expressed in the different approaches to language in Anglo-American or Anglo-Saxon approaches and the continental. Simply put, analytical philosophers (associated with the Anglo-American tradition) stress the use of language to achieve knowledge and truths about the world through propositional statements of truth and formal logic. In continental philosophy, the narrative form takes precedent, along with metaphor, story, and other forms which acknowledge the imprecise nature of language.

Here, the language of philosophy takes on a narrative and even novelistic form, emphasising the blurred edges between being and knowing. In continental philosophies of language (pre-eminently associated here with Derrida), philosophy itself is a kind of metaphor. It is an approach which, in existential philosophers such as Camus and Sartre, means there is little separation between philosophy and literature. Literary works become a form of philosophy. In a wider sense, it is why so many forms of modern 'continental philosophy' use forms of analysis and thinking which do not refute the propositional and the logical but extend the frame of thinking to narrative – a move which has opened such forms of philosophy to aesthetic theory, to literature, to forms of philosophising which mirror indeed the form not of formal statements of logic but the internal sense of the story. Influenced by Kierkegaard's (1941; 2008; 2013) brand of an angst-ridden reading of modernity, Camus and Sartre are rightly identifiable as the modern (existentialist) masters of the translation of philosophy into literary form (cf. Weinsheimer, 1985, 1991; also Arthos, 2013, on Gadamer's literary-philosophical leanings). As philosophical work, the creative literature of Camus and Sartre and others has arguably been more influential in terms of life stance than their works of more formal philosophy. It is a form of being and knowing which has come to be associated with hermeneutics, and it is why Hans-Georg Gadamer's (1960) landmark *Truth and Method* is so preoccupied with the aesthetic as an instance of the human sciences that can be justified as a form of knowledge different from, but on a par with, the empiricist of the natural sciences. It is an interpretive frame form of knowledge incorporating and justifying a method towards attaining that knowledge of the world known as philosophical hermeneutics (see also, Heidegger, 1978; Gadamer, 2004; Ricouer, 1976; 1980; 1990; cf. Coltman, 1998; Crowley, 2003; Scheibler, 2000; for a review of these types of thinking in education from a philosophical perspective see Williams, 2016).

Gadamer is in methodological as well as epistemological conversation with the classical traditions of Plato and Aristotle: it is through the dialectic, or the conversation, that we know the world, and often in seemingly imprecise ways do we relate to the world and make judgements of value based on and filtered through language itself. In the latter philosophy of language sense, Gadamer has much in

common with both the early and later Wittgenstein. Through Heidegger, notions of the given-ness and situatedness of our being-in-the-world, our ontology, are powerfully addressed in the opening of *Being and Time*, the ‘exposition of the question of the meaning of being’. Heidegger’s opening provides a sense of such being in profound ways both mediated by and prior to language, granted that we are in the world without always the means of knowing it imprecisely, distantly, and expressing what we know of the world falteringly through language, our narrative of being in the world. This faltering is a kind of humility in relation to our knowledge of the world and our being in it. It is a characteristic of Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics understood as a kind of conversation, philosophical interpretation in engagement and encounter with the world (an external relation) and philosophical interpretation as a conversation with or within philosophy itself (an internal relation).

Gadamer’s approach and influence can be seen as fourfold (Gadamer, 2004). First, Gadamer is noted as a leading proponent in the development of a philosophical hermeneutics. Second, Gadamer’s work is a demonstration of philosophy as a discipline in conversation with itself. Gadamer can be seen here as a notably ongoing conversation with Plato, both in terms of content but, more importantly, in methodological terms, or even more so as an ongoing conversation in form. Gadamer is thus noted for having published philosophical outputs which take the form precisely of conversations, what social scientists call ‘interviews’ (Hahn, 1997, 588–599; also Gadamer, 2001, 2003; Wiercinski, 2011; cf. Atkinson, 1998). Third, given the emphasis upon language and conversation, the dialogue in its multiple forms, it was natural that Gadamer’s interest and influence ranged to a considerable extent into aesthetics, into theories of art and literary form. It might be said that Gadamer was as interested in literature as much as literary scholars were to become interested in him. Fourth, Gadamer’s interdisciplinary range of influence and interest extended to practical philosophy, Aristotelian *phronesis*. This emphasis is the particular determinant of the ‘external’ relation of philosophical hermeneutics and is seen in a reciprocal interest of Gadamer in the questions of political and public life, in the moral and the ethical. Through such preoccupations, Gadamer can be seen in dialogue with Heidegger, with the later Wittgenstein, and more contemporary figures such as Habermas (1984; 2003), MacIntyre, (1984; 1988), Dworkin (1986), Brandom (2002), McDowell (1996; 2002), Rorty (1979; 1989), and his work remains an enduring influence (Warnke, 2016). As a frame of interpretation, the core of Gadamer can be stated thus ontologically and epistemologically, being here cannot be separated from the attempt to know where we are. This stance unifies both the ontological sense of being in the world and the epistemological means of knowing the world.

Value learning and life trajectory enquiry is thus too situated as a being-in-the-world. Its approach stresses a situatedness of the life story, its ontology. The means of knowing what is of import, of value, of meaning in this situated story, its

epistemology is the multiple narrative forms which can tell the story – and iterative retelling of narrative – through all the intricacies and inadequacies of language, most commonly for the researcher in that form of conversation which resembles dialogue, which social science researchers with over-familiarity call the interview (for an account of the life history ‘quest for lived truths’ as a ‘modifying methodology’ see Kalekin-Fishman, 2017; also Horsdal, 2017).

3 The Ethical Frame (and Moral Precipices) of Value Learning and the Life Trajectory

Ontology and epistemology are, by the nature of being-in-the-world, situated in the societal and political. What is of value, following Durkheim, shapes the societal and the political as much as our choices within these complexities. The individual is, in such terms, a natural part of what helps shape the societal, the cultural, the social and the political. Life trajectory research is not, then, merely an examination of individual lives but individual lives in relation and this necessitates an ethics (for an overview of the ethics of ontology and narrative inquiry, see Clandinin, Caine & Huber, 2017; also, on ‘narrative ethics’, see Baldwin, 2017; Bolen & Adams, 2017; Denzin, 2017; Hoonard, 2017; Reed, 2017; Vicars, 2017). Such ethics constitutes an account of how such relations might be ordered at both the personal (Bolen & Adams, 2017) and the political (Andrews, 2017), and in the meeting of the two (Phoenix, 2017; Plummer, 2017; Sandino, 2017; Squire, 2017; Tamboukou, 2017).

The study of how individuals learn to value becomes a study not simply of value learning but societal and political formation. The life trajectory provides insights and understanding not only of the individual but their societal and political context. These are the contexts that determine not simply the shape and direction of individual lives but of society, its politics in the widest sense, and its values. These complex determinants are elements in the understanding of the individual life trajectory but also of society, its politics, and its value orientations. These value orientations have a past – value learning trajectories are always narrated in a past tense as narrative is of the past. The tense of their expression is however inevitably rooted in the present, the situatedness, and their determination – the value clarification given by the researched and sought by the researcher – is a factor in the shaping of the future.

Value learning and life trajectory research is therefore always temporal. It presents a strong case, the narrative of lives in relation, their life-givens, their life choices, and the negotiations that these narratives present. In individual terms, we call this a life trajectory. In the lives of societies, we call this history. As noted, however, individual life trajectory is inevitably a part of the life trajectory of society, just as individual lives are part of societies. If history is composed of those life trajectories that have had significant impact in the shaping of societies, life

trajectory research – unlike historical biography or researching elites, leaders and the powerful (see Williams, 2012) – tends to focus on the seeming substratum of the historical.

The thinkers who helped shaped hermeneutics are an interesting case. These individuals, often of little political or historical importance, provided ways to understand the life trajectory of value in historical and political situatedness, the individual being-in-the-world in relation, in ethical relation. The lives of the influential proponents of philosophical hermeneutics provide though a provocative insight into ethical situatedness in the historical and political worlds which they inhabited. Heidegger, Gadamer and others of the originating period of (philosophical) hermeneutics did not historically or politically shape these worlds but they provided the means to understand them. Their own place in the political mire of their time, however, is perhaps less easy to understand and provides an ethical challenge when addressed to these philosophers but – if we are to be self-critical of their method and ours – a nascent flaw in the philosophical approach of hermeneutics itself.

Thus, the relations of Heidegger and Gadamer, in particular, as philosophers at the time of the rise of Nazism, just happen to be controversial (Dorstal, 2002; Grondin, 2003; Farias, Margolis & Rockmore, 1991; Wolin, 2000). They have long been regarded as such, and demonstrate just how challenging can be the relationship between the life trajectory of the individual and the value system of which they are a part. Here, we need simply to refer to the wide and now familiar literature which narrates the manifold ambivalences of both Heidegger and Gadamer to the Nazi regime of which they were successful university scholars, and for which successes they had to spend the remainder of their academic careers justifying, or, as in the case of Heidegger, remaining more or less silent (Farias, Margolis and Rockmore, 1991; Wolin, 2000). Heidegger and Gadamer are extreme cases. Yet, as another philosopher of the time – the legal jurist and avowedly pro-Nazi thinker – Carl Schmitt (2005) argued, in politics as in philosophy the exception can help if not define then provide definition to the ‘norm’.

In framing value learning in the context of life trajectory research (metaphorically speaking), the ethical edges of a life can become a moral precipice. It is an integral part of life trajectory’s integrity as an approach to highlight such areas of ethical ambiguity, or even avowed extremism, beyond such ‘norms’ and suggest the moral precipices that haunt all lives. Yet, it is perhaps a flaw of value learning and life trajectory research as a whole that it tends precisely to understate judgements of ethics and morality. In examining the lives of those researched, it tends towards the allaying of judgement.

The extreme case brings into focus the ethical red line, the historical cataclysm of the moral precipice. The ethical and the moral clash collide with the societal and the political through the life trajectories of those thinkers who have contributed so much to the ontological and epistemological frame of hermeneutics itself. This is

perhaps ironically nowhere more apparent than in the life trajectories of Heidegger and Gadamer.

Franz Neuman's (2009) *Behemoth* is a contemporaneous account of National Socialism by a member of the Frankfurt School that was so integral to the formative ideas of critical theory which addressed some of these issues. *Behemoth* defines and critiques the institutional structure of National Socialism. As a contemporaneous work, it highlights as none other had done previously what was happening, how it happened, and what complicities an abhorrent ideology required of the people. It is not difficult, through the examination of Nazism, to arrive at the importance of political context. Gadamer in his extraordinarily long life (he lived to be over a century) saw it, as Franz Neuman saw it, that anyone who lived through National Socialism saw it or those who lived with the dictatorships of Lenin or Stalin or Mao. What though are we to say of the colonial and imperial pasts and presents of the West, of Europe and North America? We cannot look at the histories without being critical not simply of the structures of the present but the trajectories of the past. As the postcolonial critics such as Cesaire, Fanon and Said or critical pedagogy (Darder, Mayo & Paraskeva, 2015) have long intimated cannot politically de-contextualise life trajectories.

How did things come to be as they are? This is a question for the historian. It is also part of the method of the narrative, life trajectory and biography research, to ask at a micro- or individual level just this sort of question. Gadamer puts it well and interrogatively in terms of the human sciences when he asks, 'What kind of knowledge is it that understands that something is so because it understands that it has come about?' (Gadamer, 2004, 4). The being-in-the-world and individual situatedness in sociohistorical and political context are an aspect of the other. If ethics and morality are judgements of value, then life trajectory research concerned with value learning – how values are learned – cannot set aside ethical and moral assessments.

If practical wisdom, *phronesis*, and dialogue provide the basis for philosophical hermeneutics, in life trajectory research dialogue is the means, the method, of laying bare the practical wisdom of those whose lives we examine, through language, in dialogue, in conversation, through (as we have stated) what social scientists call the interview. If *phronesis* and dialogue unify both the ontological sense of being in the world and the epistemological means of knowing the world, the language of ethics and morality will be an inevitable and ever the most difficult and challenging aspect of a conversation. None of us is an ethically or morally neutral participant in our life-worlds. For such reasons, investigating life trajectories becomes an integral aspect of the ethical and moral self-examination of the life trajectory of the researched and the researcher.

If life trajectory is a pathway, a series of pathways, interweaving, interlocking, the values which determine the choices of those trajectories are 'things' of value. And if their nature is difficult to gain and gain access to – values have no measur-

able weight or dimensions – their form and the force of their form can be seen in and by what they do in the world, their being-in-the-world, their situatedness, and by the names we hesitatingly give to them in language.

The ontological sense of being-in-the-world and the epistemological means of knowing the world are expressed through the hermeneutical method by the language of conversation. If these are the facts of the world, the examination of value learning shows the facts of the world as encountered in the life trajectory then, tautologically, the life trajectory is always to be value-laden. Life trajectory research highlights here (for example) ethical and moral choices. Even if the approach makes some pretence at reserving ethical and moral judgement, we see from the extreme cases of the lives of the founding proponents of philosophical hermeneutics themselves, that it is difficult in the end entirely to reserve judgement on a life. The means we have at our disposal for making such judgements remains problematic.

4 The Existential Frame of Value Learning and the Life Trajectory

In Camus' (2013) *The Outsider* the protagonist Meursault opens with the famous lines, 'Mother died today. Or maybe yesterday, I don't know.' We are introduced thus to a person of seeming moral ambivalence or at least casual indifference to what most in the character's society would value. There is little in terms of character development in the novel. Meursault goes to the cinema with his girlfriend, takes a walk on a North African beach and kills a nameless 'Arab'. He shoots dead the man who had threatened him with a knife. But in an act of symbolic indifference, he shoots four more shots into the lifeless body. As the narrator says, it was like taking several sharp knocks at the door of unhappiness. He is arrested and tried for murder. At the trial, the prosecution lawyer brings to bear on the character of Meursault all the events of the everyday life with which Meursault had been preoccupied following his mother's death. It does not bode well for Meursault. He is sentenced to death. Awaiting his hanging, he imagines outside his cell the baying crowd calling for and delighting in the prospect of his execution.

Camus is portraying an amoral character, one indifferent to the societal norms of which he is a part. If we note the publication date of *The Outsider* in the early 1940s, we might adjudge Camus as laying commentary on the wider collapse of the moral order. Like Durkheim, except in more direct ways, for Camus the only question of import in life for human beings was the question of suicide. Thus, in *The Myth of Sisyphus* Camus (1991) re-works the ancient Greek myth of a man rolling a heavy stone to the top of a hill and rolling it down, before beginning the process again as a metaphor for human existence.

The book has for decades been the subject of intense criticism from postcolonial critics, less for Meursault's killing of the Arab as for Camus' leaving the Arab unnamed. Indeed, Kamel Daoud's (2015) *The Meursault Investigation*, supposedly an homage to Camus' famous novel has been interpreted as a rebuke and a view from the Algerian side of the killing (Zerovsky, 2015). This, if anything, illustrates the enduring power of narrative and philosophical literature. No one outside the Academy is today writing responses to *The Myth of Sisyphus*, but *The Outsider's* portrayal of the Arab still provokes a reaction because of the abiding sense that Camus is creating, in the unnamed Arab, an 'other'. This notion of otherness constitutes the framing that the postcolonial theorists write most clearly of, as evidenced in the diverse writings of Aime Cesaire's (2014) *Discourse on Colonialism*, Franz Fanon's (2014) violently revolutionary polemical *The Wretched of the Earth* and the more moderated tones of Edward Said's (1994) *Culture and Imperialism*. In each case, they reverse the value certainties of the West into a mirror view of enmity.

In political terms today, the emergence of religiously inspired forms of global terrorism are seen as a threat to a value system in the West held together currently by the principles of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and the order of elected government over the people for the people. That which is seen as a threat to stability – such stability that ever exists in the political sphere – is defined as contra-, as opposed, as extremist, as fundamentalist, as radical, as other. The UK's Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 even defines extremism as the opposition to 'fundamental British values' (for a discussion, see Richardson, 2015). Again the extreme case of security and countering extremism brings to relief a problematic quest for value and determining acceptable spectrum of value against the 'norm'.

A character like Meursault is, however, indifferent to moral norms. For Camus, it is the existential frame of human life which makes any trajectory a matter of supreme indifference. Systems and institutions are simply the means of societal control of individual freedom which, for the existentialist, is the supreme value in a world devoid of apparent value. For Foucault (1977; 2009; 2010), schools are little different from prisons or state security apparatus, in that they are systems which impose values and punish their infringement, themes have also been taken up by some life history researchers (for example Bathmaker & Harnett, 2010). The existentialist must strive to construct his or her own sense of value, a morality which is ever-aware of the contingency, the random chance, what the existentialists defined as 'the absurd'. No one has put it better perhaps in formal terms than Richard Rorty when, in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, he states, 'There is no non-circular reason not to be cruel' (Rorty, 1989, 3). For Rorty the development of moral value is through societal coherence, his notion of 'solidarity'. It is a matter not only of value choice but value construction. This notion of constructivism permeates the social sciences in terms of the construction of knowledge. Needs must however return us to the sources of power behind such construction, and be mindful – following say

the postcolonial critics – of the now clichéd but nevertheless still abiding dictum that knowledge is power. In its own small way, values learning and life trajectory research might be said to empower by enabling self-knowledge.

5 Conclusion

We have stated that ontology and epistemology are, by the nature of being-in-the-world and situated, societal and political. We have intimated that what is of value, following Durkheim, shapes the societal and the political as much as our choices within these complexities. The individual is, in such terms, part, we suggested, of what shapes the societal, the cultural, the political. Our sense of being-in-the-world is known in the terms we have offered through a hermeneutical situatedness. We have here suggested that the dialogue and practical wisdom which are the foundations of choices made in life have implications for the direction of individual lives – their life trajectories. These reflections have guided our meta-theoretical framing for values learning and life trajectory research, its ontological and epistemological frame, and its ethical and moral orientation, we finally presented some literary-philosophical reminders of the ultimate existential framing of values learning and life trajectory research. In narrating the life trajectory journey, the end is too often left out of mind; it is a worthy reminder that our being and our knowing, and the ethical-moral consequences of our life choices, are ultimately framed by the unknown.

Value learning is not here a passive process; the conjoining of value learning with the life trajectory has an added active sense, the trajectory implies movement. The constant shift in value learning is a matter of encounter with challenge, meeting, negotiation, and often only partial resolutions, and the determination of value a maze of often conflictual professional, social and cultural, political settings. The theory of such processes is then as contextual as it is, of necessity, conversational. Our method, our means of understanding, is language, a dialogic, in common parlance, conversation. It is made ‘scientific’, takes on the characteristics of research by the systematic and self-conscious nature of the enquiry. Unlocking our understanding to access what is of meaning in the lives with which we are in conversation lies at the heart of life trajectory and life biography research. It is, *qua* Heidegger in *Being and Time*, writing of understanding like finding a clearing in the forest, a clearing of the path towards, if not some ultimate truth, then a glimpse of it. Given the shifting temporality of our subject, life trajectories, in seeking what is of value, what gives meaning, entails that finding the forest clearing is enacted in the often less than linear path of lives lived, but lives lived in the recognition that there is only one ultimate end.

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