Religious Education Perspectives on Narrative Self-Constructions in the Context of Digitality

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Introduction

How do the new worlds we enter every day influence young people and their self-image? Does public self-presentation on social media promote self-reflection, or is it just a virtual catwalk where everyone flaunts their (material) successes in search of recognition?

Before all these questions, which revolve around the individual and societal effects of digital technology, there is an important fundamental question: Does a new technology emerge due to societal needs, i.e. does society shape technology? Or is it the other way around? This would then mean that technology shapes society, thus leading it to new needs.

As far as the emergence of technology is concerned, the following can be observed: As early as the 19th century, a kind of *digital society* existed. This is the term used by the renowned sociologist Armin Nassehi to describe social patterns that people developed to organize their everyday lives. As populations grew due to industrialization, statistical means had to be invented to ensure food supplies. A few decades later, these calculations were no longer executed by human hands, but by machines.[1] From that time, technological progress then led us to the achievements that we use every day today: Smartwatch, smartphone, voice assistant, etc. According to Nassehi, social order does not emerge randomly but is based on recurring structures and processes. Digitalization is particularly interesting to him because it makes these patterns visible and reinforces them by collecting, processing, and making decisions based on repetitions. Rather than being a radical reinvention, digitalization is a further development of existing structures for pattern recognition and knowledge management. The key difference, however, is that digital technologies perform these tasks with a speed, connectivity, and level of automation that were previously impossible. For

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1   Cf. Nassehi, Armin (2019): Muster. Theorie der digitalen Gesellschaft, München, 31p.

Nassehi, the analysis of patterns is therefore a key to deciphering the logic of modern societies.

Based on these considerations, it can be argued that technology evolves from societal needs. However, this can only answer part of the questions mentioned at the beginning.

Once a technology is established, i.e. socially accepted and correspondingly widespread, it changes our perception and understanding of reality. This can be seen not only in current technological developments, but also in past ones, such as the invention of the telephone or the camera. The telephone made it possible for people to talk to each other, despite spatial separation. The first telephone calls were confusing for people, since they had to be in the same place to be able to exchange with the other person–in the truest sense of the word.[2] The phenomenologist Stéphane Vial therefore speaks of a *technical ontophany* (freely translated from French) and claims that the appearance of things can only happen by means of or through technology. There are numerous realities, according to Vial, that become perceptible only thanks to technology (e.g., a microscope). And so technologies condition our experiences. Today, it is digital media through which we perceive the world.[3]

In connection with virtual worlds, assumptions can be observed again and again that assume a virtual and a real identity. The problem is that the virtual world is strictly separated from the *real* one. Among other things, this is due to a conceptual imprecision. If we speak of realities (called in German "Realität"), we mean the realm that exists outside my perception, as unmediated. By "reality" (called in German "Wirklichkeit") phenomenology refers to that which operates through perception. The English term *virtual realities* is therefore a not quite correct designation, but there is no suitable term that does justice to this differentiation between "Realität" and "Wirklichkeit". Users are not forced to assume another or different personality in virtual space. Even though virtual and real worlds are two different realities, both are part of our reality and thus closely intertwined.

The big tech companies like Meta, which includes the Zuckerberg empire, intend through the metaverse to create a virtual space that combines physical, augmented and virtual realities. Thus, virtual experiences are no longer components of our real ones, but vice versa. Thus our real realities

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2 Cf. Vial, Stéphane (2013): L'être et l'écran. Comment le numérique change la perception, Paris, 138–147.
3 Cf. ibid., 108–120.

would be part of a virtual space and thus also of meta. The journalist Thomas Assheuer predicts that this power is unstoppable.[4] What effects this new arrangement and this new relationship between real and virtual reality will have on our society remains to be seen. One thing is certain: new media are fundamentally changing our understanding of reality.

What tasks result from the changed living environments for the education sector? If we assume that education is personal appropriation of the world through engagement with it, then the new virtual environments also have an influence on what is taught in school. To what extent must education adapt to virtual worlds in terms of content as well as methodology? How do young people learn whose lives consist largely of virtual spaces of experience?

The confrontation with one's own existence calls for religious education. Here, young people are confronted with the questions of life. This also includes their development across their various life contexts, i.e., also the virtual worlds. Religious education is also about the question of what transcends us and our lives, what is not tangible and visible. Some may call it *God*, others speak of a *new creation* in relation to virtual worlds, such as Matthew Ball, the former Amazon manager:

> "One way I try to think about these three areas from a procedural perspective is via the Book of Genesis – first, one must create the underlying universe ('concurrency infrastructure'), then s/he must define its laws of physics and rules ('standards and protocols'), then s/he must fill it with life ('content') that's worthwhile, evolves, and iterates against selection pressures. God, in other words, doesn't create and design the world as though it were a miniature model, but enables one to grow across a mostly blank tableau etc."[5]

These cross-disciplinary questions can be summarized in one main question: To what extent can religious education offer pedagogical and didactic possibilities for connecting with the narrative identity constructions of young people in a culture of digitality? Can the approach of the virtual worlds to the religious ones be fruitful for considerations around a contemporary religious education?

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4 Cf. Assheuer, Thomas (2022): Eine Welt ist nicht genug, in: Die Zeit, no. 8 (February 17, 2022): https://www.zeit.de/2022/08/metaverse-virtuelle-realitaet-technologie-silicon-valley (April 30, 2025).

5 Ball, Matthew (2020): The Metaverse: What it is, where to find it, and who will build it: https://www.matthewball.vc/all/themetaverse (April 30, 2025).

The narrative approach derives from the assumption that we process the world, our experiences, and ourselves narratively, as the philosopher Paul Ricoeur has convincingly argued.[6] Social media represent a narrative space: Here we have at our disposal not only verbal means of expression, but above all pictorial ones, to tell about ourselves and our lives.

Using the following line of argument, I will break down the question already mentioned: First, I place the focus of virtual worlds on the field of social media. The term *virtual worlds* is mostly used in connection with gaming. For the present considerations, which primarily focus on questions of identity, social media are more often used by young users as narrative spaces.

I then provide insights into young people's social media use: How much time do they spend in virtual worlds according to their own statements? Which apps are particularly popular? Here I draw on last year's JIM study. I then look at the image as a means of communication, since social media worlds function primarily through pictorial exchange. The following considerations relate to the question of identity: How do young people answer the question "Who am I?" in a context of digitality? Is it more difficult for them to develop answers to this existential question? What challenges do they face due to their changed life and narrative spaces?

Finally, I analyze its resulting potential and the challenges it poses for Catholic religious education: What can religious education do in relation to today's identity issues? To what extent can it meet today's needs?

1. The context of the considerations

As a teacher of Catholic religion, I encounter students who are at home in virtual worlds every day. This is evident not only in the fact that some of them hardly manage to leave their smartphones in their schoolbags. In an exchange about what is on their minds at the moment, the students report on trends on social media or show photos of recent events that they carry with them on their smartphones, like a collection of memories.

In addition, I am part of a generation that has been using social media since I was a teenager. When I was a student, I got to know Facebook and uploaded my first photos to social media. Johanna Haberer, a theolo-

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6 Cf. Ricœur, Paul (1990): Soi-même comme un autre, Paris, 138.

gian, describes this usage behavior very aptly in the following wording (translation: M.M.):

> We were so busy learning to use these new technologies that we didn't think about what they would do to us. With our lives, with our language, with the way we inform ourselves and how we communicate. What they do to our secrets and our knowledge. In short: what they would do with our souls.[7]

Whereas I used to post thoughtlessly and diligently collect likes, I now view the use of social media increasingly critically, especially in combination with certain personality traits. This is how I arrive at an attitude—on a personal and educational level—that is neither exclusively media-optimistic nor media-pessimistic. On the one hand, I recognize the potential that digital media and, above all, social media hold, primarily in terms of identity-constructing processes, but also in terms of methodological diversity in the classroom. On the other hand, however, I also recognize the social and personal dangers of their use on an individual, pedagogical, and scientific level.

The pedagogical work of a teacher in general and of a religion teacher in particular consists in preparing students for social life. The teacher's task is to accompany young people a little on their journey through life and to aim to turn them into responsible and critical citizens. In a culture of digitality, this also means finding their way in virtual worlds and being able to reflect on their use. Developing a critical attitude requires background knowledge. Therefore, competent use of digital media also means understanding how digital media work and what they contain. Added to this is design competence. This involves being able to use digital media to present content. Only by acquiring these four areas of competence, which the educationalist Dieter Baacke combined in the concept of media competence, can we assume an independent and responsible use of digital media.[8]

Since the beginning of the Net 2.0, we are no longer just consumers, but above all producers of media content. Considering the reach and thus also the power of digital media, each individual prosumer (composed of "producer" and "consumer") bears a social responsibility. From an ethical

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7 Haberer, Johanna (2019): Leben in der Anderswelt. Ein spiritueller Ratgeber durch das Netz, Freiburg/Br., 36.

8 Cf. Baacke, Dieter (1996): Medienkompetenz – Begrifflichkeit und sozialer Wandel, in: Rein, Antje von (ed.): Medienpädagogik – Grundlagen, Ansätze, Perspektiven, Weinheim, 112–124.

point of view, every user can contribute to a democratic, transparent, just and equal interpersonal communication. This combination is known to some, but is not sufficiently considered in many social problems.

When I speak about *media* or *digital media* in the following, I mean not only the carrier but also the application. This differentiation is important because digitization is often viewed solely in terms of its technological development. A purely technical view of digital media therefore falls short of the important cultural processes that arise in the course of digitization. Especially from the perspective of religious education, the social practices and meaning-producing and meaning-changing processes are of great interest. Following Felix Stalder, I therefore use the term *digitality* to focus on the social and cultural consequences of digitalization.[9]

2. The Appeal of Social Media

What makes the Internet so powerful is, on the one hand, its ubiquity. Young people in particular always carry their smartphones close to their bodies, ready to hand. It seems to belong to the body, like an extension of it. If we forget it at home before a day of work or school, we experience a feeling of nakedness. Something is missing, making us incomplete. If we carry it with us, we don't just glance at the screen when a message is announced by the vibration or a sound. We tap it again and again to see if something has arrived—without our noticing. On the train, waiting for the bus or at the supermarket checkout, but not exclusively in these moments of waiting, we reflexively pull it out of our pants or coat pocket. It's also indispensable when we're eating in a restaurant with friends, on vacation, walking in the woods, or spending a cozy evening at home. Even at school, it seems to be an insurmountable challenge for students not to use their smartphones. In this context, the psychologist Christian Montag speaks of the *smartphone reflex* and the addiction potential that lies behind smartphone applications. According to Montag, repeatedly looking at the smartphone has nothing to do with the technology itself, but much more with the design elements of the social media apps that lead us to an addiction. We are afraid of missing out, which is also described as FOMO ("fear of missing out"). On one hand, constant availability leads, on the other

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9 Cf. Stalder, Felix (2017): Kultur der Digitalität, Berlin.

hand, to the feeling that we always need to know what is happening around us. We feel the pressure to constantly stay informed about this. What is in our immediate environment and happening around us seems, from this perspective, to be insufficient. The personalized newsfeed as well as scrolling without end are just two elements that contribute to users losing the sense of time and space (for a moment) and staying online longer and longer.[10] How can students re-learn distance in such a seductive context? In view of current and future developments, can educators still plausibly explain this psychological and also socially questionable situation to future generations?

It is not only user behavior that raises questions. Educational science must also focus on the classification of the content consumed. One of the reasons for the success of the Internet is the fact that media users no longer just consume content, but also produce it. Everyone can put content online and thus make it available to others. This has not only led to the fact that people have possibilities of expression with a huge range, i.e. to a democratization of the possibilities of expression, but also that some of them earn their money with so-called content. Influencers, who share their lives with other users via social media, have a great influence on what young people think, like and, above all, buy. This happens primarily through the personal that the influencers adress to the young people. They appear authentic because the user has the feeling that he or she is participating in the lives of these people. From an educational point of view, the role of influencers is of great importance. Consulting the profiles of influencers can be understood as informal learning from a biography. Digital media in general and social media in particular offer learning opportunities, even if they are not explicitly recognized as such. The influence of influencers on their followers is great. This results in conscious and also unconscious imitation effects, which could also be observed during the dominance of the television medium.[11] Back then, it was heroes like Pippi Longstocking or Wicky who impressed children. Now it is so-called peer role models that offer identification potential. Maya Götz assumes

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10 Cf. Montag, Christian (2018): Homo Digitalis. Smartphones, soziale Netzwerke und das Gehirn, Wiesbaden, 81–95.

11 Cf. Pirker, Viera (2021): ‚Influencing‘ – Ein Modell Religionspädagogisch Reflektierten Handelns?, in: International Journal of Practical Theology 25 (2021/1), 40–57, here 45–48.

that children and young people identify with a hero primarily through a recognizable self-image and shared values.[12]

To better understand the media usage behavior of young people, it is worth taking a look at the JIM study. It is conducted annually by the Media Education Research Association South-West. The KIM and JIM studies have been providing reliable and representative data on the media usage of children and adolescents in Germany since 2000. Some interesting developments can be observed from the last published study: Almost all (94 percent) young people have a smartphone. According to their self-assessment, they were online for an average of 241 minutes a day in 2021. The most important apps are WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and Snapchat. They not only allow you to stay in touch with friends, but are also entertaining. Looking at pictures and videos relieves boredom.[13]

3. The Image as a prioritized Means of Communication in virtual Worlds

Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat and the like function primarily through images, which are often supplemented by short messages or captions. For this reason, social media are analyzed here under the heading of *image worlds*, since the image is the main means of communication.

From a semiotic perspective, images differ fundamentally from written language. An image is perceived directly and in its entirety. We take less distance in this process of perception. This is probably due in part to the fact that language must be deciphered "like laundry on a line"[14]. The image theorist William J.T. Mitchell raises the question "What do pictures want?" in order to emphasize the liveliness and the life of their own that we automatically ascribe to images.[15]

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12 Cf. Götz, Maya (2019): Die Medienheld_innen der Kindheit. TV-Figuren und ihre Rolle in der Identitätsarbeit, in: Communicatio Socialis 52 (2019/3), 317–328, here 318–321.

13 Cf. Feierabend, Sabine et al. (2021): JIM-Studie 2021. Jugend, Information, Medien: Basisuntersuchung zum Medienumgang 12- bis 19-Jähriger in Deutschland, Stuttgart: https://www.mpfs.de/fileadmin/files/Studien/JIM/2021/JIM-Studie_2021_barrierefre i.pdf (April 30, 2025).

14 Langer, Susanne K. (1965): Philosophie auf neuem Wege. Das Symbol im Denken, im Ritus und in der Kunst, Frankfurt/M., 103.

15 Cf. Mitchell, William J.T. (2008): Das Leben der Bilder. Eine Theorie der visuellen Kultur, München.

This is also the reason why images appeal to us primarily on an emotional level: they function according to a presentational logic and thus also hold ready a variety of interpretive offers.

Because of these aspects, we attribute a high degree of credibility to images and hardly ever question the represented realities. The biblical prohibition of images also warns against this danger that comes from the image: Do not confuse what is represented with what is representative. A picture remains just a picture of and can reflect neither a person nor a situation in its entirety.

What can religious education provide that might protect against falling into this danger? One of the tasks of religious education can be to practice a deeper perception of images. The religious educator Günter Lange, who spent a lifetime of research on the didactics of images in religious education, describes this as "visual patience". This deepened, slowed-down perception (called in German: "Sehgeduld"), which contrasts with rapid consumption, enables a critical examination of the medium.[16]

4. The question of identity

Empirical studies prove that what we read, see and experience on social media really does something to us. Indeed, correlations can be demonstrated between the mental health of children and young people and the use of social media. The effects are both negative and positive. This depends not least on how the users use social media. For passive users, the use of social media tends to arouse feelings of envy and therefore has a negative impact on their own well-being. The situation is different for people who actively use social media: In these cases, using the apps helps to increase social capital and supports the users sense of inclusion.[17]

In a pluralized, globalized, and individualized society, identity can no longer be understood against the background of a stable and fixed concept as Erik Homburger Erikson developed it in the 1960s. Identity is now understood as the ability to maintain sameness and continuity even though

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16 Cf. Lange, Günter (1983): Die Sehgeduld stärken, in: Kunst und Kirche 46 (1983/2), 73–77.

17 Cf. Pirker, Viera (2018): Social Media und psychische Gesundheit. Am Beispiel der Identitätskonstruktion auf Instagram, in: Communicatio Socialis 51 (2018/4), 467–480, here 470.

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destiny changes.[18] The psychoanalyst, who became known primarily for his stage model of psychosocial development, was influenced by the project of modernity and thus still assumed linear courses of development. After successfully passing through the stage model, the human being had formed an inner, stable core.

Heiner Keupp developed a new, more contemporary model of identity construction. He describes identity as a social construction process that is negotiated between the *subjective inside* and the *social outside*. From this context of the dual character of identity, the human need for recognition and thus resonance can also be understood. Keupp speaks of a fluid society that distances itself from all stable and rigid ones. The "de-traditionalization" leads to the fact that identity becomes the life task of each individual. The term "patchwork identity" used by Keupp tries to do justice to the dynamic character of everyday identity work.[19]

The use of the smartphone and popular social media portals demand the creation of a profile that revolves around the question "Who am I?" and offers users the possibility of a positive biographical narrative of themselves.[20] From another perspective, this self-presentation also implies "working on the self" at the same time. Thus, the possibilities to dispose of the body as well as the self can also have an unsettling effect.[21]

The various self-portrayals of young people are often viewed and evaluated in a one-sided way. Some authors describe the online behavior of young people as *moral decay* and fail to recognize "that in the process young people are reduced to objectified playthings of a neoliberally motivated, self-promotion-oriented adult world [...]"[22] (translation: M.M.). These self-representations are first and foremost social practices. Understanding

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18 Cf. Erikson, Erik Homburger (1971): Einsicht und Verantwortung. Die Rolle des Ethischen in der Psychoanalyse, Frankfurt/M., 87.

19 Cf. Keupp, Heiner (2009): Riskanter werdende Chancen des Heranwachsens in einer grenzenlosen Welt. Fachtagung „Alles Risiko? Herausforderung jugendliches Risikoverhalten", Linz, 12p.

20 Cf. Pirker (see above, note 17), 476.

21 Cf. Schär, Clarissa (2019): Subjekte photographieren. Eine subjekt(-ivierungs)- und körperleibtheoretische Perspektivierung jugendlicher Selbstdarstellungen in digitalen sozialen Netzwerken, in: Rode, Daniel/Stern, Martin (ed.): Self-Tracking, Selfies, Tinder und Co. Konstellationen von Körper, Medien und Selbst in der Gegenwart, Bielefeld, 183–203, here 188.

22 Ibid., 184.

them as such means tracing them in the interplay between humans and their environment.[23]

The sociologist Andreas Reckwitz recognizes here a structuring change of the social: In late modernity, what is special and unique is valorized, and no longer the general, as was the case in modern times. Digital technology makes it possible to focus on what is special. This begins with the creation of a profile, which serves to express one's specialness and non-exchangeability. According to Reckwitz, the consequence of these forms of representation is that the subject coincides with his performance, resulting in a "performative authenticity". It is almost a compulsion to perform oneself as a unique subject.[24]

This urge for performance can be demonstrated, among other things, by the special genre of images and practice of the selfie. They are often associated with the self-portraits of art history, but basically they are united only by the fact that the person depicted and the person depicting are the same person. An elementary characteristic of the selfie is that it is or can be disseminated via digital networking. For this reason, selfies are primarily classified as means of communication, because selfies convey a message. In addition, the interplay of social media and identity processes can be shown in selfies: Are they only forms of expression of a narcissistic generation? Isn't there more to it than that? Media and cultural pessimists would answer this question in the affirmative. But selfies conceal important, sometimes even existential motivations. That's why I'm arguing at this point for a differentiated perception of the medium. Kathrin S. Kürzinger highlights the following aspects of identity work in selfie practice[25]:

– Young people can take on and try out different social roles. On social media, we encounter primarily gender-specific portrayals: Boys appear strong and masculine, women more delicate.
– They can emphasize what is important to them, e.g. pets or hobbies, and hide what they don't want to show to the outside world: Friendships, family, body...
– Through their own representation, they assign themselves a grouping or legitimize friendship or love relationships.

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23 Cf. ibid.
24 Cf. Reckwitz, Andreas (2017): Die Gesellschaft der Singularitäten: Zum Strukturandel der Moderne, Berlin, 244–247.
25 Cf. Kürzinger, Kathrin S. (2016): „So bin ich – bin ich so?". Identität und Spiegelungen des Selbst in Selfies und Selbstporträts, in: Gojny, Tanja et al. (ed.): Selfie – I like it. Anthropologische und ethische Implikationen digitaler Selbstinszenierung, Stuttgart, 117–136, here 117–131.

– Through this way of testing identity designs, the understanding of authenticity changes: "putting oneself in the scene" is the condition for being visible. Thus, authenticity is no longer primarily associated with genuineness and naturalness, but is rather approximated to the concept of *authentication.*

Identity is a process that depends not only on the subjective internal perspective, but also on the internalized external perspective.

Psychologist Martin Altmeyer deals with the natural human desire to be seen. He assumes that the presence and forms of presentation in virtual worlds are not due to forms of self-love, but to a search for resonance. Humans are dependent on social feedback from the beginning of their lives. Already shortly after birth, the infant needs a reaction from its mother to reassure itself of its self. This need is externalized in virtual worlds. Social media makes it particularly visible that people need this social feedback, even if the need itself should be presented to users as inconspicuously as possible.[26]

Selfies, but also other pictorial (and linguistic) forms of representation, are about *telling oneself*, which, following Ricœur and his concept of narrative identity, leads to understanding the world and acting in it. Perception becomes narrative experience. In today's age of pluralized lifestyles, it is increasingly difficult to find a balance between individual choices and external constraints. Telling oneself helps to find a continuity in choices, that is, to find an inner unity despite external changes.

What can religious education teach in relation to narrative identity processes that take place in, with, and through social media? In religious education, not only is religion taught, but the relationship of individuals to existential questions is presented and reflected upon. The German educational researcher Jürgen Baumert has called this "problems of constitutive rationality". As a religion teacher, it is important to take the life world of young people seriously and to make existential questions recognizable in it.[27]

The identity research approach by Keupp, the identity narratives by, the sociological question of authenticity by Reckwitz, and the reflection on

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26 Cf. Altmeyer, Martin (2016): Auf der Suche nach Resonanz. Wie sich das Seelenleben in der digitalen Moderne verändert, Göttingen/Bristol.

27 Cf. Kropac, Ulrich (2013): Unterschiedliche Modi der Weltbegegnung. Eine bildungstheoretische Einordnung, in: Kontakt. Informationen zum Religionsunterricht im Bistum Augsburg 6 (2013), 11–13.

selfie use have shown that our actions, and thus our being, in virtual worlds touch many areas that concern us as humans. Digitalization profoundly influences human existence and raises existential questions that also involve religious and ethical dimensions. Religious education must address these challenges, as religion provides answers to fundamental life questions and can offer guidance in the digital world. Education, in this context, should not only teach digital skills but also foster a critical and reflective attitude towards the impacts of digitalization. It is important to understand digital spaces as fields where religious values such as justice, responsibility, and humanity play a role.

5. Religious Education as a Place of Reflection

Following these social as well as media and religious education considerations, religious education offers a space in which young people can engage in reflection on their virtual experiences and thus find a self-responsible positioning in dealing with the digital world of life.

The following arguments make the theological perspective appear as a valuable contribution to the discussion of virtual worlds and their impact on societal life and the individual. Theological reflections raise questions about the relationship between humans, God, and creation, adding a deeper spiritual and ethical dimension to the analysis of virtual worlds. They inquire about how virtual worlds challenge human understanding of freedom, responsibility, and the good life, and how they fit into the larger picture of a divine order. Theology traditionally deals with questions of truth and reality in the divine sense. It could explore how virtual worlds challenge the traditional understanding of *reality* and how the religious worldview might address the *artificiality* and potential illusions of virtual worlds.

Theological perspectives could address deeper questions about human identity that go beyond the social construct. They inquire about the soul, the spirit, and the relationship with God in a digital space, and how these questions can influence a person's spiritual development.

If we take seriously the insights we have gathered, religious education can be a place...

– Where the question of reality is brought into focus. In a world in which real and virtual experiences are increasingly difficult to distinguish from one another, it is important to reflect on them and keep them apart.

The real world should still integrate the virtual rather than the other way around. Otherwise, we will be subordinating ourselves primarily to the economic interests of large tech companies that need our data to further the (economic) progress of their companies.

– Where (narrative) identity processes or the confrontation with them are expressed and accompanied. The dualistic view of identity is not only difficult against a philosophical-religious pedagogical background, but it is also not evident for students to reconcile virtual and non-virtual experiences.

– The background structures and functionalities of the media and virtual worlds are addressed so that students can develop a critical relationship to them.

– Where students learn to use media constructively and to practice dealing with them.

The Christian religion needs media to convey its message and is, by its very nature, medial. Jesus as mediator between divine and earthly reality is the core of the Christian message. In addition, at most of the cornerstones of Christian history, medial turning points have also taken place. Thus, the emergence of the biblical narratives belongs together with the emergence of Scripture. The Reformation goes hand in hand with the printing of books, and the denominations have developed along the question of images.

– Where different narratives are experimented with, e.g. ethical, historical, ecclesiastical, etc. This is why it is so important to practice a variety of narratives, since today's society is in danger of falling into a black-and-white way of thinking, especially due to the way it is shaped by the media. Thomas Bauer, an Islamic scholar, emphasizes that the monotheistic religions in particular have the potential to teach tolerance of ambiguity. This is the ability to tolerate different, sometimes even opposing views. Monotheistic religions promote this on different levels and, for example, by the very fact that they believe in an existence that remains completely different and, on this basis, precisely indescribable.[28]

– On which resilience is practiced.[29] Resilience appears again and again as a concept in psychological, but also educational contexts. Religious education, which places the human being with his or her needs at the center,

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28 Cf. Bauer, Thomas (2018): Die Vereindeutigung der Welt. Über den Verlust an Mehrdeutigkeit und Vielfalt, Ditzingen, 31–40.

29 Cf. Pirker (see above, note 17), 477p.

offers the opportunity to reflect on this humanity and to strengthen them in terms of their being accepted.

– Where the limits of progress are also reflected. Progress at any price, as history has shown us in several places, turns against people. In religion classes, students can reflect together on the ethical principles of virtual worlds.

– Where the place, power and role of the media are put into perspective. It is the task of religious education to teach students not to let themselves be taken over by virtual worlds. In this context, the theologian Bernd Trocholepczy speaks of "ambivalence didactics", which focuses on not falling prey to the momentum of technology.[30] Haberer speaks of "practicing the art of emancipation from the dependence of devices" and even goes a step further by saying that we should demand transparency and confront the manipulators.[31]

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30 Cf. Trocholepzcy, Bernd (2012): Religionsunterricht und Medienkunde im Horizont einer Ambivalenzdidaktik. Aspekte der Gottesrede für die digitale Generation, in: Englert, Rudolf (ed.): Gott googeln? Multimedia und Religion, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 153–163.

31 Cf. Haberer (see above, note 7), 123.

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