



# The worldview of the pilgrim and the foundation of a confessional and narrative philosophy of education

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In this article, we explore the worldview of the pilgrim and how it relates to the drama of human existence. The worldview of the pilgrim is the starting point in our explorations of the postmodern conundrum and interrelated subjects such as epistemology, ethics, religious symbolism, hospitality and practical life strategies from a narrative and confessional perspective. These elaborations will serve the ultimate goal of this article, which is to contribute to the philosophy of education (including educators and educationists) and consequently to equip individuals with skills and substantial knowledge that would allow them to understand, define and pursue their own life goals as well as to participate with integrity in their community as full-fledged, responsible citizens.

**Keywords:** work of narrative; philosophy of education; narrative landscape; epistemology of the pilgrim; vulnerable hospitality.

## Viewing the world of the pilgrim in three steps

In order to explore the worldview of the pilgrim and how it relates to what has been mentioned in the abstract of this article, we will pursue the following trajectory:

1. Firstly, a distinction will be made between two varieties of postmodernity based on the insights gained from a theological movement called radical orthodoxy (RO) (refer to footnote 1 for a brief introduction). Radical orthodoxy is inspired, *inter alia*, by (pre-modern) patristic theology and by postmodern philosophy, suggesting Christian alternatives to nihilistic dilemmas, while still positively engaging and integrating postmodern sensibilities.
2. Secondly, a narrative approach will be proposed in terms of the worldview of the pilgrim, as a suitable metaphorical way of conceiving of spirituality and the drama of human existence in a postmodern age where theoretical certainties have been questioned and where they might even have lost (at least) some credibility.
3. Thirdly, the metaphor of the pilgrim will be used to provide different points of entry to subjects such as epistemology, ethics, religious symbolism, hospitality and practical life strategies. It is believed that readers might experience this as providing them with helpful signposts along their own journeys into a postmodern world.

## Radical orthodoxy and two varieties of modernity: Justifying a Christian narrative approach

Radical orthodoxy (cf. Loughlin 1996; Milbank 1999, 2003, 2013) claims that there are essentially two varieties of postmodernity, namely, a nihilistic and a religious<sup>1</sup> one. Milbank intentionally argued in favour of a Christian style of postmodernity. He was of the opinion that it could make use of postmodern insights in order to re-describe the world through narration and to link it up with the symbolic realism of ancient Christianity.

According to RO, religious postmodernism is a postmodernism of unending hope. It imagines the possibility of harmonious difference and peace. This theme is, however, not restricted to Christianity alone. It also runs through the latest work of religious scholars from, *inter alia*, the main Abrahamic religions. They all share the idea that postmodernity's emphasis on narrative could

1. On the one hand, radical orthodoxy (RO) is a theological movement that speaks in the idiom of contemporary continental thought, engaging in theological reflection in the language of French phenomenology and critical theory. On the other hand, it has taken such thought in a polemical sense, seeking to demonstrate the paucity of postmodern nihilism and then to recover an alternative Christian vision by returning to decidedly pre-modern sources (without wanting simply to recover pre-modernity). Radical orthodoxy's critique, therefore, does not aim at addressing all kinds of postmodernism. What RO does, is to confront postmodern nihilism specifically with a Christian alternative. This approach is how we believe these two versions of postmodernity could best be understood.

represent an important starting point for reconceptualising the place and role of a religious postmodern approach to any future philosophical account of education. In particular, it is the place and role that narratives and, more specifically, confessional narratives could play as pedagogical devices in religious, as well as in educational contexts which has recently captured the attention of scholars in, for example, Judaism (cf. Gerrard 2012; Haase 2008; Tzoref 2018), Christianity (cf. Atkins 2016; Beaver 2017; Nutt 2017; Price 2018) and Islam (cf. Andaya 2006; Khan 2016).

Based on Loughlin's premise (1996) that the rise of postmodernity is intrinsically linked both to modernity and to the pre-modern Christian vision of the world, in particular, we have attempted in a previous article (Braun & Potgieter 2019) to justify and present the basic tenets of, specifically, a (Christian) confessional and narrative approach to the philosophy of education in a postmodern context. We pointed out that postmodernity's incredulity towards meta-narratives re-opened the world towards its pre-rational foundations by means of the rediscovery of the primacy of narrative. We also asserted that any philosophy of education implies a basic understanding of the historical present and the past in order to situate itself in the world (including in the scholarly community of educators and educationists). Consequently, our exploration of the work of narrative has shown that a particularly Christian narrative approach to the philosophy of education offers a viable alternative to postmodern nihilism. More specifically, this is the case because postmodern approaches of master narratives are told against the Void and ultimately lead to nothing (Jameson<sup>2</sup> 1991:44). A Christian approach to narrative on the other hand places human beings and history within the all-comprehensive drama of God's created, fallen and redeemed world (Loughlin 1996:8).

## A dramatic approach for re-imagining the world

The background provided above suggests that a Christian narrative approach is essentially dramatic. In terms of the work of narrative it can be said that it is the individual's responsibility to bring forth a synthesis, a plot, which brings together scattered events, goals, chances and causes into the whole of a complete story (Ricoeur 1984a:IX–X). Narrative is therefore the work of the individual's productive imagination and it builds on a person's pre-theoretical worldview. A narrative approach overcomes modern rationalism by rejecting the subordination of reality to theoretical constructions and suggesting that theoretical frameworks always depend on a pre-theoretical worldview. Consequently, based on Ricoeur's work, we have affirmed that narrative has the power to re-configure our temporal experience (Ricoeur 1988:265) so that we can re-imagine the world (Ricoeur 1984:181–182) based on a spiritual vision. The Christian life (as the story of the Church) can be narrated as

2. We are both educationists and in this article we deliberately make use of what we consider to be seminal or primary scholarly sources.

the continuation of the story of Jesus in the life of his followers. As a result, the Gospel narrative(s) enables individuals to re-imagine their lives in the world in union with the triune God (Milbank 1990:227).

This vision allows individuals to re-configure their lives according to God's vision for the Church, which symbolically represents the new humanity in Jesus Christ.

## Setting out the narrative landscape of the pilgrim

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims<sup>3</sup> on the earth (Heb 11:13).

For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come (Heb 13:14).

## The epistemology of the pilgrim

According to the Christian worldview, the archetype of the pilgrim is the perfect circumscription of the limited human condition with regard to knowledge. Pilgrims have no permanent city on earth and this means, symbolically speaking, that although humans explore and expand their territory, building cultures and setting up 'walls' to protect themselves from unexplored threats (i.e. dragons), they are called by God to keep on the move. To keep on the move in terms of knowledge means that one should not expect to find theoretical certainty on earth and that our modes of being and models of interpretation should be constantly transformed before God.

In this article, we intend to show how the archetype of the pilgrim offers interesting insights for the philosophy of education by suggesting relevant modes of acting and orienting oneself in our highly complex world (including strategies of coping with reality) that we still do not really understand. This, in turn, will be linked up with the narrative model of confessional philosophy of education that we have been working on.

## The pilgrim, God and postmodernism

While western postmodernists have come to similar conclusions with regard to human limitations, pointing out the shortcomings of the progress narrative of modernity, the postmodern inclination towards nihilism leads to irremediable relativism and chaos (Loughlin 1996:21; Milbank 1990:227–228). In an ultimate sense, postmodern nihilism fosters chaos with no remedy, individual micro-narratives with no definitive purpose and existential drama without hope but the hope of the subject that is now missing (Habermas 1987:160). The intellectual conundrum underlying

3. The use of the concept of the pilgrim implies a metaphorical use and is not a literal translation from the Greek. In terms of the narrative configuration elaborated in this article, the concept of the pilgrim brings concepts such as the 'stranger', the 'other' and the 'foreigner' together into the intended archetypal configuration.

all of this is how can human beings orient themselves in a nihilistically conceived world?

One of the main characteristics of postmodernism is its denial of ontic universals and its adherence to the linguistic turn, which lead to an interpretation of reality and the human lifeworld as merely being socially constructed (Strauss 2009:73). Postmodernism tends towards a self-refutable philosophy of difference, on the ground level, for it denies the validity of universal narratives while, at the same time, imposing its own narrative. Postmodern philosophy has therefore been facing pertinent criticism because of the performative contradictions that it keeps producing (Habermas 1987:210). The Christian pilgrim agrees with postmodernists in the sense that one should not think of one's theoretical frameworks as being trustworthy representations of reality per se. Instead, one should think of them as mere provisional frameworks that enable human beings to cope with reality.

In order to update constantly his or her modes of being in the world (including models of interpretation), the pilgrim directs his or her being towards God, who symbolically represents the highest possible good, purpose-provider, sustainer and outcome guarantor of all things. Consequently, he or she avoids postmodernist performative contradictions because, on the one hand, he or she acknowledges that human knowledge and strategies should be constantly updated, while on the other hand, he or she can still rely on the universality of the Christian narrative or through participation in the life of God, from whom he or she derives a sense of direction and purpose for his or her being-in-the-world.

### The journey of the pilgrim in symbolic terms

The pilgrim can be seen as an individual who mediates between heaven and earth (Pageou 2018:46), order (culture) and chaos (nature) (Eliade 1978:60–86; Peterson 1999:27). This implies that he or she does not have an enduring or permanent city on earth. The main purpose of the city is the creation of culture, which is a fragile attempt of human beings at establishing order and protecting it from chaos apart from God (cf. the Tower of Babel). The pilgrim deems this undertaking to represent the utopian dream of attaining heaven on earth. The relationship between culture (order), nature (chaos) and the individual's journey is what primordially constitutes human existence, aptly captured in the widespread Xinyang symbol (Jung [1956]1976:375) and conceptualised in the Christian ground motive of creation, fall and redemption (Dooyeweerd 2012:127–128). The pilgrim therefore dwells on the liminal point of conscious awareness between order and chaos and is oriented by faith in God towards the Promised Land. This orientation does not imply that the pilgrim will not also dwell in the city and make use of cultural resources in order to make a living for himself or herself and hence to survive. Instead, it implies that the latter are merely provisional tools to be used during his or her spiritual journey to the Promised Land. In other words, being

created in the image of God, individuals are called upon to transcend both culture and nature, while at the same time making use of their resources. For the pilgrim, thresholding is never an 'either-or'. Instead, it seems to be a continuous act of beyonding 'either', as well as transcending 'or'.

Archotypically speaking, it is Christ who is the perfect model to be imitated and embodied by the individual on his or her beyonding and transcending journey to the heavenly city. As the ultimate archetype, Christ guides the pilgrim through existential sufferings and transformations which he or she has to undergo to reach his or her ultimate destiny.<sup>4</sup>

### The ethics of hospitality and the pilgrim

As stated by Derrida (2001):

Insofar as it has to do with the ethos, that is, the residence, one's home, the familiar place of dwelling, and inasmuch as it is a manner of *Dasein* (i.e. of being present there), the manner in which we relate to ourselves and to others, to others as our own or as foreigners, ethics equals vulnerable (and not ritualised) hospitality. (pp. 16–17)

Ontically speaking, hospitality is not an object, per se, which can be measured and studied. Instead, it is an occurrence that brings the pilgrim-as-host and the Other as stranger and guest together to (Fewell 2016):

[... E]xplore an unknown experience of pushing their identities together – so close that one identity cannot be named (pilgrim-as-host or the Other as stranger and guest) unless the other identity already exists. (p. 347)

One can only identify as a pilgrim-as-host, if the Other, in the form of a stranger-as-guest, exists.

Standing on the liminal threshold between the known and the unknown, between order and chaos, the ethics of the

4. In temporal existence, 'ultimate destiny' can be conceived in terms of the fulfilment of one's potential so that he or she can truly live an authentic life (i.e. Heidegger's 'eigentliche Existenz'). In a (pre-modern) traditional sense, the imitation of Christ or the embodiment of biblical archetypes has little to do with theoretical or dogmatic understanding because the literal meaning is the lowest and furthest from the divine. Language is insufficient and the divine is incomprehensible, per se, so that it can only be approached through the 'via mystica'. The patristic 'method' symbolically moves from the literal meaning to the analogical, then to the moral and to the analogical. Narratively speaking, as a method it is a path of contemplation where rational understanding is the lowest and the spiritual vision is regarded as the highest, with 'God' only being approachable through participation (not theoretically). Within such a symbolic framework, dogma is simply an attempt to delineate limits (unlike many types of protestant theology where there is devotion to dogma) whereas the actual mystical experience has to do with a journey of contemplation which depends on participation and never ends in temporal existence. In postmodern paradigms, some might argue, there is no such thing as 'the ultimate'. This would, however, be a simplistic conclusion because 'the ultimate' merely stands for a limiting concept ('Grenzbegriff'), such as 'the Void's nothingness' (Jameson 1991:44) or even Derrida's often misunderstood and erroneously translated claim that language is the limit in his famous 'there is no outside-text' (1976:158). Moreover, postmodernist viewpoints (i.e. there are many) that presuppose the modern ideal of emancipation from the divine can easily be contested in terms of the postmodern aspiration to overcome modern rationality. What is fundamentally at stake is the postmodern insight that the structure of reality per se cannot be accessed or understood theoretically and that any human attempt of doing so will never result in anything else than a human model of interpretation. In other words, the true nature of reality remains a mystery. Conversely, the (Christian) postmodern alternative referred to in this article presupposes the mentioned postmodern sensibilities but instead of ending in nihilism, it offers a return to the pre-modern (Christian) symbolic worldview (see, e.g., Boersma's 2009 *Nouvelle Theologie and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery*) where the divine (from a Christian pre-modern perspective) is sought and believed without losing its mysterious character. In this sense, the suggested Christian postmodern alternative leads to a return to a symbolic worldview with its emphasis on a multiplicity of possible meanings and of reason's and language's incapability of providing the last word on anything. A postmodern response does therefore not necessarily have to end up in nihilism and postmodernity does not exclusively refer to French phenomenology, but to a much broader philosophical and cultural context.



pilgrim can be circumscribed by means of vulnerable hospitality. As illustrated in John 13:1–11, in the New Testament, authentic (or vulnerable) hospitality should not only be about the pursuit and expression of benevolence and charity per se. Instead, vulnerable hospitality can only be activated when both the pilgrim-as-host and the Other as stranger and guest understand that they are invited to switch places (both physically and mentally)<sup>5</sup> and be willing to resign oneself to the other (Fewell 2016:347). Precisely because it is Jesus Christ who is the perfect model to be imitated and embodied by the individual on his or her beyonding and transcending journey to the heavenly city, vulnerable hospitality therefore refers, essentially, to a primordial, original, preparatory, liminal, shared and ineffable genesis point that is located at the centre of every great religion (in this case Christianity), namely a (Kearney 2011):

[S]ilent, speechless openness to a message that transcends all of us: a surplus of meaning that exceeds all our different beliefs, and a metaphysical, mystical ground of what is most fundamental in each religion and which is not easily translatable into language but rather borders on a common profound, revered silence. (p. 179)

From Krüger's (2018:6) recent paradigm-shifting work, in which he contributes to the current multilogue of human discourses about the ultimate meaning of things, we can infer that every occurrence of authentic, vulnerable hospitality can be understood as a 'signpost to silence': the journey of every soul 'to the furthest, most inclusive horizon, the domain of an all-transcending, enlightening silent awareness, which underlies the religious and metaphysical urge of humankind in its finest forms'. Every occurrence of authentic, vulnerable hospitality – even if it might include traces of traditional and ritualised pursuits and expressions of benevolence and charity (regardless of what Derrida [2003:16] might have had to say about it) – should preferably be understood as, at their most sublime, not final, planned little individual destinies or even as unplanned stoppages on the journey of the soul. Instead, they should be understood as clear, negotiable signposts towards a horizon of all-transcending, enlightening, silent awareness of what it ultimately means to live a life that is, in all respects, a testament of the fundamental principle of natality-until-mortality: 'I, for the sake of *you* and only then, *you* – should you so decide – for the sake of *me*'.

Having no enduring or permanent city, but seeking one to come, the pilgrim is, after all, himself or herself a stranger on earth. He or she does not derive his or her religious identity from his or her natural origin or his or her culture although he or she integrates that culture's 'resources' and strives towards the Promised Land, which can only be attained by grace through a spiritual journey that does not end with temporal existence. The pilgrim can therefore be considered a suitable archetype to be embodied by individuals in the postmodern age, who seek to have active communion with

5.Fewell (2016:347) explains that in John 13:1–11, Jesus, the guest in this particular world, ventures into an unknown space (dinner) and takes the role of the host in order to experience the hosts, now turned guests (disciples).

the Other as stranger and guest. In contrast to those who seek to preserve their group identity and culture,<sup>6</sup> the pilgrim strives for constant transformation and exploration of unknown territory. He or she knows that there are no 'city walls' on earth which can protect him or her from chaos and no earthly city which is sophisticated enough to encompass all the possibilities of self-actualisation. A basic premise of the pilgrim's mode of being has to do with his or her willingness to explore the unknown which manifests itself in countless liminal points of conscious awareness, for without this continued openness there can neither be authentic (vulnerable) hospitality nor authentic encounters with the Other.

The ethics of vulnerable hospitality consequently form part of the pilgrim's identity, for being a stranger himself or herself, he or she identifies with the Other as Stranger and guest and can easily integrate the experience of having communion with strangers (including the experience of switching roles between the host and the guest) as a part of his or her journey towards the Promised Land.

## How to orient oneself and act in a world that we still do not understand

Up to this point in this article, we have attempted to introduce briefly the narrative landscape of the pilgrim.

Simplifying to an extreme, one could say that this narrative configuration is characterised by at least the following four basic features: (1) an immanent scepticism regarding the nature of the world per se, (2) the self's transcendent orientation and participation in the divine (theosis), (3) linguistic and cultural pragmatism rooted in an ancient symbolic worldview and (4) a mythological approach to the journey of life which includes the ethics of vulnerable hospitality in inter-subjective relationships.

In the following section, we intend to elaborate on a couple of practical life strategies derived from the above-mentioned basic features of the pilgrim's mode of being. To accomplish this, we refer mainly to the work of Nassim Nicholas Taleb (2007, 2012), for it is our belief that these strategies could be transformed into powerful pedagogic tools for educators with which they can pass on relevant knowledge, skills and demands of propriety to their educands (as members and representatives of the next generation).

## Trial and error

Trial and error simply means to keep trying constantly. The fact that people might experience difficulties with trial and error does not make this particular strategy less necessary in real-life contexts (Taleb 2007:204).

Humans are surrounded by mysterious events and happenings and although they try to remain safe, they cannot avoid encountering unpredictable events and situations.

6.Every human being (including Christians) is in danger of overemphasizing group identity at the cost of authentic individuation.

A typical case in point is the story of the patriarch Abraham. God's revelation to Abraham that he and his seed would inherit the Promised Land (Gn 12) did not keep Abraham safe from misunderstandings and hardships along the way, including, for instance, waiting several decades for a heir to be born, the quasi-sacrifice of his son Isaac and the fact that at the end of the day Abraham himself did not inherit the Promised Land (in the physical sense that he might have expected). The latter illustrates the primordial human striving for the 'Promised Land' as a symbol of the desired future. The same rationale applies to the rest of the biblical stories. God's promises inspire us towards the good and orient us in this world. Faith inspires action by offering a sense of direction and orientation in the world, but it does not prevent human beings from suffering. Consequently, the fact that suffering is part of existence should not prevent us from acting. Furthermore, acting in a world that we still do not really understand, as limited creatures, presupposes that we have to keep on moving and trying, constantly adjusting our strategies and learning to use new tools that we might discover and learn how to use along the way.

## Optionality

Somehow complementary to trial and error, another strategy which could be employed to obtain some sense of order in our complex and unpredictable lifeworld, is optionality. It presupposes an attitude of openness towards change and the unknown, as the ability to switch from a course of action in order to benefit from uncertainty (Taleb 2012:160). Essentially, it means that our chances of success increase when we remain open to multiple options so that even if some particular option might fail (and it most probably will) we still have an alternative trajectory of action to pursue. A very practical example of optionality in daily life has to do with our social network and the multiple possibilities of inter-subjective encounters that it enables. While catching up with good (known) friends might sometimes be the best option to regulate<sup>7</sup> our emotions after a stressful week, going to a party and encountering (unknown) strangers might offer greater opportunities of learning or getting into something new. This is, however, only one of many possible examples. The bottom line is that the exploration of unknown territory is part of a person's developing process.<sup>8</sup>

If we take Taleb's (2007:XXVII) premise to be true that black swans (i.e. highly improbable events) have the greatest impact in our lives, we should not strive to gain mastery of our lifeworld in terms of the modern ideal of control, as if we could avoid the unexpected. Instead, we should rather stack the proverbial deck so that we might profit from unpredictable events. In terms of the mythological language presented in

7.Although this might sound as a modernist, controlling language, it simply refers to the same dynamic of finding some sense of order when dealing with the multiple facets and challenges of life which are experienced as chaos. It would be modernist to believe that any human established order can be definite.

8.This point might and, indeed, can be contested by reference to introversion as a personality trait. We are aware of possible difficulties, but this point nonetheless relates to the codified mythological pattern of leaving one's comfort zone and exploring unknown territory in order to grow (e.g. unknown territory beyond the walls of the city, dragons as fears residing outside the city's explored territory, etc.)

the beginning of this article, optionality implies the pilgrim's attitude of exploring the world beyond the borders of known territory and the conviction that the Promised Land is not to be found in cultures established by human hands, but that the Kingdom of God is within us (Lk 17:21).

Symbolically speaking, the strategy of optionality suggests that humans are capable of slaying multiple dragons<sup>9</sup> in order to succeed in a complex and rapidly changing world. The dragon, just like the snake in the Garden of Eden (Gn 3), is a symbol of change. Change represents a threat to any paradisiacal state of consciousness, for it has the power to throw our lives into chaos and expose the vulnerability of our mortal state. This explains why optionality works under the premise that the best way to counter change and to avoid total chaos<sup>10</sup> is by embracing contingent possibilities and by orienting oneself properly in the world which we cannot control. In other words, our goal should be that of the pilgrim, namely, the heavenly city. This does not mean that we should neglect our worldly duties. Instead, our worldly duties are necessary and important means to an eternal end.<sup>11</sup> The more options we have, the higher the probability would be of finding a meaningful course of action.

Most importantly, this transcendent orientation inspires responsible action and behaviour in such a way that by striving to master one's own life, we become progressively more effectively equipped to counter its sufferings positively.

## Transforming from fragile to antifragile

Another idea proposed by Taleb is that one of our goals should be to become antifragile: 'everything antifragile has to have more upside than downside and hence benefits from volatility, error and stressors ...' (Taleb 2012:11). He claims that antifragility goes beyond resilience because the resilient person, although resisting shocks, essentially remains unchanged, while the antifragile person continues to develop. As a property, antifragility seems to form the backbone of everything that endured over time: culture, ideas, revolutions, political systems, technological innovation, cultural and economic success, corporate survival, the rise of cities, legal systems, etc. (Taleb 2012:16). From a symbolic perspective, all these mentioned phenomena evolved from formative activities, consisting of human beings applying strategies to cope with unknown realities. Basically then, this underlines the fact that action takes precedence over thinking in the

9.Although this mythological language is not biblical, it is not strange to the Christian tradition (e.g. St. George).

10.The emphasis is on 'total' chaos and not on chaos, *per se*. Symbolically speaking, total chaos would be something like for example Jonah not being able to get out of the belly of the fish, or St. George being killed by the dragon.

11.This does seem to beg the question: 'does the heavenly city and the eternal stand in contrast to being open, receptive and adaptable?' From a symbolic point of view, not necessarily, because the heavenly city is simply a metaphor for the humanly 'incomprehensible' desired future. Being receptive and open refers to temporal existence while the eternal and ultimate refers to a faith intuition, an ideal which we cannot truly understand but rather only 'hope' for. It is for this reason that the analogical sense of scripture refers to 'hope' and does not go beyond it (cf. De Lubac 1999–2000, *Medieval exegesis: The four senses of Scripture*).

order of being – our thinking being inclined towards narrative fallacy and confirmation bias (Kahneman 2011:81).

In mythological terms, we develop our thinking according to our vision of the Promised Land, and not the other way round. This is why the antifragile always survives the tests of time. Taleb (2012:17) suggests using a simple test of asymmetry to detect antifragility, namely, that anything that has more upsides than downsides as a result of random events is antifragile. The inverse would be fragile. While one might dispute Taleb's reliance on Seneca's stoicism as a way to circumvent the vulnerability of human existence, the strategy of antifragility is convincingly highly practical. Take human relationships as an example. Those relationships which endure tragedies and existential difficulties, supporting the various transformations that the self has to undergo in order to advance in the spiritual journey, become antifragile relationships. Fragile relationships, on the other hand, become obstacles of self-actualisation, weakening people and preventing them from moving on.

Another interesting feature of antifragility is that it evolves in macro and micro events of human history (including personal narratives), underlining the fundamental relationship between order and chaos, culture and nature and the individual's responsibility to rise up and take up his or her cross (imitatio Christi), to bear the sufferings of life voluntarily and to direct his or her innermost self towards the good to become a shining light in the world. In this regard, antifragility both encourages and incentivises the pilgrim's act of liminal leaping into the unknown. In other words, to become antifragile means to become stronger in the midst of trials and chaos.

## Conclusions – Four implications for philosophy of education

### Education with respect to the limits of knowledge and responsibility

Just as the pilgrim has 'no permanent city on earth', it is important that educators teach the epistemological standard that human knowledge can never be definite, final or finite. Educands should be taught that their modes of being and models of interpretation should be constantly revised and transformed. The drama of life entails the fact that the world and human beings are constantly subjected to change and unpredictable events. As limited creatures, human beings do not really understand the nature of the world, being forced to rely on faith and a spiritual vision that guides them in and along their life journey. Human beings are all too familiar with drama 'from the complications, tensions, catastrophes, and reconciliations which characterise our lives as individuals and in interaction with others' (Balthasar 1998–1999:17).

This acknowledgement of the limitations and dramatic nature of human existence can lead to a chaotic relativism though. The fact that theoretical frameworks do not provide accurate representations of reality as such does not, however, necessarily lead to the belief that certainty is unattainable.

Instead, theoretical frameworks should be seen as provisional tools that enable human beings to cope with reality. By teaching that theoretical models are tools, educands can therefore learn that they should remain open to new knowledge in order to update their modes of being when necessary.

By taking a religious starting point and by embodying the archetype of the pilgrim, it is possible for human beings to direct their being towards a transcendent purpose. This, in turn, enables them to orient themselves in the world in a way that always aims at the highest possible good, so that they can always move forward in their lives and grow despite the difficulties and challenges of life. It can therefore be stated that a religious approach serves the deepest purpose of education, namely, to bring non-adults to responsible action so that they can participate with integrity in the life of their community as full-fledged, well-rounded, responsible citizens. So far, we have mainly presented a Christian approach. We, however, believe that other religions or even non-religious people could benefit from it as well. The reason is that we refer to symbolic patterns that have been culturally present for ages and therefore are not only codified in the literature but also represent culturally established patterns of behaviour (including deviant or reaffirming tendencies with regard to tradition). This could, therefore, just as easily apply to educands who are being educated without religion.

### Education with respect to responsibility and the basic dimensions of nature, culture and individuality

It is of paramount importance that educands learn about the basic relationship between culture (order), nature (chaos) and individuality because failure to do so would probably prevent educands from becoming independent, well-rounded, responsible citizens who can, will and want to act and behave with integrity. This is the case because culture is subjected to change at the macro-level and needs to be open to updates – just like the individual – on a micro-level. In narrative terms, on a micro-level it is the responsibility of the individual to bring forth 'a synthesis, a plot, which brings together scattered events, goals, chances and causes into the whole of a complete story' (Ricoeur 1984:IX–X).

Culture, on the other hand, develops on the macro-level as a result of the interaction between individuals with each other and their surrounding world. As the individual participates in the development of culture, while at the same time transcending it because of his or her individual responsibility, his or her individuality can therefore not be reduced to culture. In other words, one must distinguish between (collective) culture and (individual) responsibility and acknowledge the distinctive normativity of each. Within this context, nature can be seen as the 'raw material' of the potentialities that are to be actualised by means of human being's responsible actions.

Our narrative approach implies that human beings discover their individuality by means of a spiritual vision



that transcends both culture and nature, namely, the drama of God's communicative action in Jesus Christ which takes place in dynamic interaction with his creation (Vanhoozer 2005:38). As limited and contextually situated creatures, human beings are nevertheless participants of culture and nature. In order to become 'themselves' and consciously begin their spiritual journey, human beings need to obtain self-knowledge, which is a process that involves distinguishing between culture, nature and the transcending of the self (individuality).

That said, it is a central task of education to engage educands in the process of their individuation (as self-actualisation) so that they can ultimately reach the goal of becoming independent, well-rounded, responsible adult citizens who can, will and want to act and behave with integrity.

### **Dialogical pedagogy and the ethics of hospitality**

Pedagogy is a dynamic occurrence (mainly in the form of planned and organised teaching and learning activities) and it always takes a particular course, because the educator (adult) and the educand (child) are actively engaged in characteristic activities that are known as pedagogic activities. As all pedagogic acts are essentially goal-directed (i.e. aimed towards the ultimate adulthood of the child), the educator can, amongst others, be also seen as a spiritual mentor preparing his or her educands for their journey to the 'Promised Land'.

The dialogical character of pedagogic activities is such that it equips educands by activating their productive imagination through (dia-logos = through the logos or word) 'simulations' of possible situations, threats and opportunities to be found along the way as well as shared actual experience(s). Just like the work of narrative allows its audience to relive the story in order to inspire responsible action, goal-directed pedagogic activities aim at familiarising the educands over time, gradually and step-by-step, with the existential landscape that they will have to explore and cope with in their future. A primordial feature of this existential landscape is the cosmic tension between order and chaos and the role that the individual has to play as a mediator between the two. Although human beings are acting and suffering subjects in specific cultural and natural settings, they are also mediators because human order and culture are constantly subjected to change while human beings participate in the formative process of culture's actualisation. Essentially then, the responsibility of human beings seems to imply the ability to respond to existence's chaos with the creation of provisional structures of order (be it on a micro- or on a macro-level). The individual nevertheless tries to transcend this tension, and this is the meaning of spirituality which we have been stressing in this article. The acknowledgment that the spiritual life is a pilgrimage where individuals constantly linger on the liminal threshold between the known and the unknown, as strangers who have 'no permanent city', is intrinsically linked to the ethics of (vulnerable) hospitality,

which should ideally form a central curricular component of all Citizenship Education programmes at present.

To teach about the archetype of the pilgrim and hospitality in our days seems more than appropriate, because on the one hand, it enables people from different cultures to interact on the basis of their spiritual unity as strangers (i.e. pilgrims) on earth. On the other hand, this spiritual unity fosters the individual's integration and positive participation in a world where the borders between different cultures have completely shifted and different forms of life and spirituality intersect daily in a wide variety of captivating and innovative ways. Teaching vulnerable hospitality and spiritual pilgrimage therefore implies opening up the educands' hearts towards difference and encouraging communion with strangers for the sake of cultural and self-transformation.

The reasons why this particular subject has been ignored for so long seem to have to do with the cultural optimism, tribalism and the homogeneity of modernity in its erroneous belief that a definite (world) order would eventually be established via progress and technology. Our lifeworld has, however, changed drastically because of the pluriculturalism that is continually being caused by globalisation, glocalisation and the technological revolution and which compels human beings in general to face the fact that human culture (order) is constantly subjected to change (chaos), having to adapt their strategies constantly in order to navigate it.

### **Religious pedagogics and practical life-management**

The fact that we live in a world that is drastically changing in an unprecedented way (e.g. mobility, information technologies, digitalisation, etc.) places an incredible burden on educators, who face the need of becoming 'sages' themselves in order to fulfil their task of mentoring their educands in their pursuits of discovering, managing and mastering life. A very sophisticated skillset is needed in order to navigate properly in an unpredictable world of (maybe) infinite possibilities and we should be honest about our ignorance regarding what the future might realistically be capable of delivering. It appeared to us to be most reasonable, therefore, to draw on practical life strategies which can become part of educators' toolsets and assist them in their goal-directed pedagogic activities.

Coupled with a narrative (religious) orientation that is open towards the future and the unknown, 'trial and error', 'optionality' and 'antifragility' are three such strategies that could enable individuals to adequately cope with the uncertainties of life and even to profit from them by voluntarily undergoing the necessary self-transformations in order to maximise one's chances of success (whatever that means is to be individually discovered) and to advance meaningfully in the journey of life. It should be clear that these strategies are dynamic and demand individual responsibility, for we should not expect a static system that guarantees a predictable outcome in a rapidly changing world.

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The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

## Authors' contributions

Conceptualisation and initial theorisation were carried out by the co-author (G.J.B.). Methodology, references to education and several re-written drafts of the original version of the article are the work of the corresponding author (F.J.P.). References to confession and narrative were conceptualised by G.J.B. Both authors contributed equally to this article.

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## Data availability statement

Data can be available upon request from the co-author G.J.B., as all data and interpretive notes form part of the research that he had conducted towards his PhD thesis in Philosophy of Education at North-West University in Potchefstroom, South Africa.

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The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

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