

Education for a post-secular society

Inter-worldview dialogue and citizenship education

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SUMMARY

In Flanders, two recent developments in two public educational networks combine the inter-worldview competences of the independent worldview school subjects and the citizenship competences defined by the government. Since this strengthens the position of the worldview subjects in school and incorporates the political dimension into a shared curriculum, both developments can best be described as post-secular. In this article we defend these developments against present-day arguments for the further privatization of religion and the de jure or de facto abolishment of the independent worldview school subjects. We first describe both developments, then define what we mean by post-secular, and conclude with a short outline of what we think would be a good approach and support for both developments.

I. TWO DEVELOPMENTS IN TWO FLEMISH PUBLIC EDUCATIONAL NETWORKS

1. Inter-worldview Dialogue in the GO! network

In Flemish schools, students have 2 mandatory hours per week of *Levensbeschouwing* (Worldview Education, segregated and taught according to the worldview)¹, which are the responsibility of the *Erkende Instanties en Vereniging van de Levensbeschouwelijke Vakken* (Recognized Body and Association of Worldview Subjects; RB&AWS)². Facilitated by the coalition agreement of the Flemish government, the RB&AWS and the public GO! network formulated a Cooperation Protocol (2020)³ to use 1 of the 2 mandatory hours in the 3rd grade of

¹ Article 24 of the Belgian Constitution states that schools run by the public authorities offer, until the end of compulsory education, the choice between the teaching of one of the recognized religions and non-denominational ethics teaching. One can choose between the following religions: Islam (20.8% of Flemish secondary student population), Orthodox Catholic (0.7%), Anglican (0.005%), Catholic (25.08%), Protestant (1.9%), Jewish (0.05%), and Non-confessional Ethics (49.45%). (% from 2016-2017, A. DEJAEGHERE, *Levensbeschouwelijk onderwijs in Vlaanderen: geschiedenis, organisatie en recente ontwikkelingen*, in K. DENYS – F. VAN CAMP (eds.), *Levensbeschouwelijke vakken. Nieuwe doelen, nieuwe middelen?*, Brussel, Politeia, 2018, p.37) One can also choose to be exempt (about 0.8% of student population). In the largest of the free/private educational networks (Catholic, 66% of total Flemish student population) there is but the one mandatory Catholic religion.

² The RB&AWS are the independent official government partner responsible for the curricula, inspection, and teachers of the worldview subjects.

³ This internal document is on the moment I'm writing still a provisional document.

secondary education⁴ for *Interlevensbeschouwelijke Dialoog* (Inter-worldview Dialogue) wherein inter-worldview competences and citizenship competences are to be combined.

a) Inter-worldview competences and citizenship competences

The inter-worldview competences were developed by the RB&AWS as a response to the suggestion in the government agreement of 2009 of developing a worldview unity subject⁵. The competences (24 in total) are organized in 3 groups:

- A. I and my worldview (e.g., the student discovers and articulates the worldview characteristics of his developing identity; the student deals with the internal diversity of his worldview with respect and openness)
- B. I, my worldview, and the worldview of the other (e.g., the student discovers and articulates similarities and differences between worldviews; the student respects the existence of worldviews)
- C. I, my worldview, and society (e.g., the student discovers and articulates the role of worldviews for himself and for society; the student practices inter-worldview dialogue and inter-worldview coexistence as a necessary skill for living in a multi-worldview society).

The worldview subjects incorporated these competences in their curricula and already work together on that basis for 6 hours per year. A later (2016) Commitment Statement of both the RB&AWS and the public *GO!* network states that projects that develop these competences can contribute to cross-curricular competences and cross-curricular initiatives⁶.

The citizenship competences are part of the new official 16 key competences to modernize secondary education in Flanders (over the previous two and coming two schoolyears) and are grouped in 7 'building blocks' which organize the learning line over the years of secondary education⁷:

⁴ Secondary education in Belgium consists of three grades: first grade (first and second year, 12-14-year-olds), second grade (third and fourth year, 14-16-year-olds), third grade (fifth and sixth year, 16-18-year-olds). There is also a possibility to follow a seventh (specialization) year.

⁵ See M. VAN STIPHOUT, *Contextualiteit en maatschappelijk belang van de levensbeschouwelijke vakken in Vlaanderen*, in: C. VAN KERCKHOVE – K. DE MAEGD – F. STAPPAERTS – P. DALKIRAN – J. VAN POUCKE (red.), *Hebben ze zin? Levensbeschouwelijke vakken in het onderwijs*, Antwerpen: Garant, pp.19-21.

⁶ <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/sites/default/files/atoms/files/01-28-engagementsverklaring-interlevensbeschouwelijke-dialoog.pdf>. At the time the cross-curricular competences (including several 'around society') were mandatory but there were no prescribed results to be achieved. They would be transformed and included in the later key competences that do require evaluation. (The translation of the mentioned inter-worldview and citizenship competences in this paragraph is my own.)

⁷ For a quick overview of the content of these blocks, see <https://www.kwalificatiesencurriculum.be/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Sleutelco>

1. Articulating the dynamic and layers of (your own) identities
2. Dealing with diversity and cooperation
3. Entering a dialogue with each other informed and reasoned
4. Actively participating in society, considering the rights and obligations of everyone under the rule of law
5. Critically approaching the mutual influence between social domains and developments and their impact on (global) society and the individual
6. Interpreting democratic decision-making at local, national, and international levels
7. Framing democratic principles and democratic culture within the modern rule of law

The government doesn't decide anymore which competences belong to which subjects and leaves this to the networks and/or schools⁸.

b) Vision statement

The Vision Text of the advisory Commission Learning Line Inter-worldview Dialogue⁹ defines the relation and the added value of inter-worldview dialogue to citizenship as follows: "World-views include meaning, subjects and perspectives which are developed within the I-Self and I-World relations, and therefore cannot be limited to a competence-driven pedagogy and have a wider domain than citizenship. Yet, these extra relations and the specific nature of inter-worldview dialogue can support the development of citizenship competences in a 'worldview manner': via the exchange between dynamic and lived frames of meaning, propagated by several communities of solidarity. This way Inter-worldview Dialogue can be seen as an instrument to connect and tap into social capital, which helps to improve the quality of education and/or learning results"¹⁰.

[mpetentie%20Burgerschap.pdf](#). A complete list can be consulted via <https://onderwijsdoelen.be>.

⁸ The GO! network already constructed Active Citizenship as a new subject that is being implemented and that can incorporate some or all these competences. The Commission Learning Line Active Citizenship constructed the learning line of this subject around 9 clusters grouped in 3 competences: philosophizing, valuation, sustainable living together. Most members of this commission were Non-confessional Ethics teachers. To avoid the impression of making an attack on the content of the worldview school subjects, which have always (the one more than the other) included subjects like these, one can think of civic courses as the work of sophists and the worldview courses as the work of philosophical schools. The sophists are teachers in how to perform as a citizen and/or politician (one focusses on the how, not, or less on the what) whereas from the philosophical school students can learn from a mature example of what the 'what' can be, so to speak. Provided they don't have to share the 2 hours per week Worldview Education and an efficient cooperation is facilitated, having both civic and worldview subjects in the curriculum doesn't need to be a bad thing at all.

⁹ This text is on the moment I'm writing still a provisional document.

¹⁰ Belonging to a community of solidarity (such as religious communities) is a possible source of educational support. However, "It is not enough to have a strong bond between members of the same local community. That's just the unifying social

Next to this added value to citizenship education the text underscores the extra justification in curbing “unwanted polarization” (extremist polarization, to be distinguished from democratic political polarization). This curbing can be understood from the role of the co-teaching teachers as “role model for constructive dialogue between very diverse people”, paying the necessary attention to internal diversity, input from other worldviews, secularization, and the fact that religious strife is often the result of deeper socioeconomic, cultural, or political fractures. Inter-worldview Dialogue will therefore also be about themes where possible fractures are not between worldviews.

As to a general method the Vision Text suggests a 3-step approach whereby students first get a grip on the theme from the perspective of their own worldview, then enter a dialogue or interact with the students of the other worldview subjects, to finally reflect on how the encounter enriched their own view¹¹.

c) Cooperation

The already mentioned Cooperation Protocol states that the *GO!* network considers inter-worldview dialogue to be an important part of the key competence citizenship and a contribution to its own pedagogical project.

The Cooperation Protocol also stipulates that the curriculum will be the result of cooperation between the *GO!* network and the RB&AWS and that although Inter-worldview Dialogue is still a part of the two hours Worldview Education, also the government’s inspection has the authority to inspect its achievement of the citizenship competences.

2. Inter-worldview competences as part of a cross-curricular approach to citizenship (and other cross-curricular) competences in the Antwerp urban educational network¹²

In 2021 the Antwerp urban network and the RB&AWS composed a Frame of Agreements¹³ to include the worldview subjects (via their inter-worldview competences) in a cross-curricular approach to the citizenship competences (and other competences that can be

capital (within a community). Robert Putnam (...) shows there is also bridging social capital (between different communities). One also has to make connections with other communities and the wider society”. (O. AGIRDAG, *Onderwijs in een gekleurde samenleving*, Berchem, EPO, 2020, p.112, my translation.)

¹¹ This corresponds quite well with the suggested approach in D. POLLEFEYT, *Hoe vormgeven aan “interlevensbeschouwelijke dialoog” tussen de levensbeschouwelijke vakken in het gemeenschapsonderwijs?*, 2019,

<https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2019/10/17/allemaal-dialogescholen/>, which was brought to my attention after the 2020-21 proceedings of this commission. My thanks to Nel Vandenbroeck for pointing me to this opinion piece.

¹² The Antwerp urban network is part of the larger subsidized official network *Onderwijs van Steden en Gemeenten* (Education of Cities and Townships). The Antwerp part has 21 secondary schools.

¹³ This document can be found via <https://rikz.be/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/afsprakenkader-interlevensbeschouwelijke-samenwerking-eindtermen.pdf>.

approached in a cross-curricular way) in all grades of secondary education. Next to parts of the social-relational and cultural awareness competences, the worldview subjects will work on (parts of) the citizenship building blocks 1, 2, 3, 7 and possibly 5.

Regarding 5 the Frame of Agreement states that “It can never be the goal to make worldview teachers responsible for the ‘scientific’ discovery of sustainability (...)”. Although the expectation that worldview teachers know and master the listed competences is part of the mutual engagements, this can reasonably be said for other parts of the citizenship competences too, and points to the need of collaboration between several school subjects to work in depth on the citizenship competences. That is also one of the reasons the urban network has opted for a cross-curricular approach. To organize this approach the network uses the WELT program for team teaching (on which more in part III of this article).

In this approach the worldview subjects can initiate, practice, and evaluate citizenship competences, but never solely (not individually nor collectively). The evaluation must always be co-evaluation with the school team – which is possible thanks to a jury system in the WELT program. And when worldview subjects have worked on key competences the general inspection has the authority to check documents and materials.

II. POST-SECULAR

In the present-day cultural-political climate these two developments are not what one would expect. Where Islamic political acts or wearing a headscarf in government service are frequently met with reproaches of violating the separation of church and state, these developments bring worldviews and politics closer together. And whereas some groups, political parties and opinion makers want to get rid of the worldview school subjects or want to make them fully optional and/or replace them with a neutral or official and mandatory subject, these developments only strengthen the position of these school subjects. So, do they violate the separation between politics and religion? And why wouldn’t installing an official subject be better?

1. Aren’t politics and religion supposed to remain separate?

a) Separation of church and state

The separation of church and state or politics and religion doesn’t mean religious politics is or should be impossible. It means that the operation of both domains has become differentiated. They have separate rules of functioning or are independent. One of the main opponents of the independent worldview subjects in public schools, Patrick Loobuyck, formulates this quite clearly: “Politics (the state, MS) can involve itself with religion as long as the internal logic of those religions is respected, and it maintains equal distance from the different worldviews. Politics must involve itself with religion when religious groups don’t coexist peacefully or when people are

involuntary violated in the exercise of their individual rights. Conversely, religions and worldviews can involve themselves with politics (the political process, MS) if they acknowledge the internal logic of the political process in a parliamentary, constitutional, democratic rule of law (...)”¹⁴. From this follows that connecting independent worldview subjects to official citizenship competences through a process of alignment (each based on its own operation and with its own powers, as I tried to show in part I) isn’t contrary to the separation of church and state.

b) A learning process for a post-secular society

These developments however do run counter the ideas that all religion and religious groups shall eventually disappear or must disappear completely or should be private, which is why they are best thought of as post-secular - a term I take from Jürgen Habermas¹⁵. The post-secular society still is a society where there is a separation of church and state but where one also keeps a mutual and reciprocal learning process going for religious and secular people that counters segregation and polarization along worldview lines. To still have a meaningful future in society and especially a place in education, religions must learn to accept and support the religious freedom of others, the values of the democratic constitutional state, and be compatible with established science. Secular people must do the same, differentiate between common sense informed by science on the one hand and reductionist and scientistic worldviews on the other hand, and open up to the expressiveness of religious languages¹⁶.

The inter-worldview competences show that the worldviews represented by the RB&AWS (at least their educational executives) agree with the first part (accept and support the religious freedom of others) of what Habermas asks from religions. And the (provisional) Cooperation Protocol with the *GO!* network and the Frame of Agreements with the Antwerp network show that also the second part (the values of the democratic state) and third part (be compatible with science) can be said to have been agreed upon, since they are included in the citizenship competences¹⁷. Although they are no guarantee that

¹⁴ P. LOOBUYCK, *De seculiere samenleving*, Antwerpen, Hautekiet, 2013, p.122, my translation.

¹⁵ J. HABERMAS, *Geloven en weten*, Amsterdam, Boom, 2009, pp.130-168.

¹⁶ This reading of Habermas doesn’t include his claims that secular people should be agnostic about religious truths (J. HABERMAS, *ibid.*, p.155) and that religious arguments must be translated into secular language before they reach parliament (*ibid.*, p.162). Both claims seem to me too limiting on both (secular and religious) sides. “Secular people must do the same” I added, for definitely not all secular people accept religious freedom and the values of the democratic state, let alone have a worldview that is compatible with established science. Also “and especially a place in education” I added, for one can reasonably argue that the listed requirements to have a meaningful future have a stronger hold in education than in society at large – see also footnote 17 below – which is one of the reasons education is the most important place to stimulate this process (the other reason being that it reaches the most people).

¹⁷ The Flemish Education decree XXIII (2013) already introduced the assessment of the curricula of the worldview subjects against the international and constitutional human and children’s rights and the achievement of official competences. “The

this mutual and reciprocal process will succeed, both developments show how education can help set the stage for a post-secular society.

c) On the sense of a post-secular inter-worldview dialogue

Loobuyck thinks religions might realize the first two parts of the process but probably not the third: “But the secular demand to be fully reconciled with science may be a mission impossible”¹⁸, since it implies not only no creationism and no intelligent design but also no miracles (construed as factual claims) that go against established science. But just like for scientific research traditions, one cannot preclude a religious tradition will successfully change the nature or configuration of its core beliefs or elements when it thinks it has to.

It could even very well be that most difficulties will have to be overcome on the secular end where several myths about religion and reductionist worldviews can block a meaningful dialogue. In his *Religie herzien* (Religion reviewed), a summary of the contemporary scientific consensus on religion as a social phenomenon, Jonas Slaats debunks the popular myths about religion¹⁹. In short: religion does not equal dogmatism or the belief in one or more gods, religions are not always hierarchical and easy to distinguish, nor does religion always contrast with mysticism, spirituality, and science, nor is it always dangerous or does it easily turn into violence because of its irrational truth claims, nor is a secular society completely different from (and much better than) a religious one. The many examples he gives “are, definitely taken as a whole, not some exceptions that prove the rule, but really put the rule into question”²⁰.

Just like *Religie voor atheïsten* (Religion for atheists) by Alain de Botton²¹, Slaats’s book probably won’t receive a warm welcome in certain atheist or secularist circles, but Loobuyck more or less agrees with these theses²². Still, he pays far more attention to the part of the mutual learning process religion has to go through than to the difficulties on the other end. He seems to agree with Habermas that religion can still hold important values for today’s world: “(one) cannot rule out that certain religions carry within them lots of deeply human and moral meaning”²³, but that’s all he agrees on for the secular parts. Even Habermas’ request to distinguish between common sense informed by science and reductionist worldviews sounds too negative, since “One doesn’t have to be a follower of the indeed somewhat outdated idea that religion is the plug for the gaps that science still

curricula cannot entail a rejection of the scientific knowledge covered in other subjects”. (A. DEJAEGER, 2018, p.31) However, the decree wasn’t clear on who is responsible for this. (*Ibid.*) The (provisional) GO! - RB&AWS Cooperation Protocol and the Antwerp-RB&AWS Frame of Agreements now allow for the general (government) inspection to assess the achievement of the (relevant) citizenship competences by the worldview subjects.

¹⁸ P. LOOBUYCK, 2013, p.218, my translation.

¹⁹ J. SLAATS, *Religie herzien*, Antwerpen, Davidsfonds/Standaard Uitgeverij, 2020.

²⁰ J. SLAATS, *ibid.*, p.9, my translation.

²¹ A. DE BOTTON, *Religie voor atheïsten. Een heidense gebruikersgids*, Amsterdam, Atlas, 2011.

²² P. LOOBUYCK, 2013, especially pp.231-234.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.160, my translation.

leaves, to feel that the rise of the scientific and therefore materialistic view of man and the world brings the relation between belief and science into focus. If the whole world functions without design according to immutable laws and evolves partly based on blind chance, then there won't be room for a free will, a soul or a God who cares about us"²⁴.

Yet it is only when one recognizes the other as a person capable of free thoughts and decisions that a participant's perspective is possible²⁵. Loobuyck seems to agree with the thrust of the work of Victor Lamme, Jan Verplaetse and others²⁶ who based on (doubtful) experimental results or philosophical reasoning conclude that there is no free will. But as Herman Kolk has shown, one can also simply take free will for real and scientifically or materialistically explain how it is possible²⁷. Maybe then the Christian belief that we were made in God's image will not sound so irrational a reason to argue for the free speech of others.

2. Wouldn't it be better to replace the worldview subjects with one neutral subject?

Patrick Loobuyck is right when he writes that going through this learning process "is first of all the task and the responsibility of religion itself. It is religion itself that must initiate an internal dynamic to this end (...) The liberal government can stimulate liberalization and the secularization dynamic, for example through education and training. But because of the separation of church and state it can enforce or force little in this regard"²⁸. It would therefore, considering both educational developments, be a step back (and definitely be premature) to try and do what Loobuyck still proposes and insert a mandatory (official/state) subject on worldview, ethics, citizenship, and philosophy (LEF) in all educational networks, stop state financing of the worldview school subjects and (in the public networks) make them optional at most²⁹. One could make the case that without Loobuyck and others spreading their ideas in the media it wouldn't have happened, but both post-secular developments have come about thanks to an alignment process and not by a (unilateral) government decree.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.218, my translation.

²⁵ "The scientific belief in a science that one day will not enrich but replace the personal sense of self with an objectifying description of the self isn't science but bad philosophy." J. HABERMAS, 2009, p.136, my translation.

²⁶ V. LAMME, *De vrije wil bestaat niet*, Amsterdam, Bert Bakker, 2011; J. VERPLAETSE, *Zonder vrije wil*, Amsterdam, Nieuwezijds, 2010.

²⁷ H. KOLK, *Vrije wil is geen illusie*, Amsterdam, Bert Bakker, 2012.

²⁸ P. LOOBUYCK, 2013, p.169, my translation.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.184-188. Loobuyck still argued for this proposal in 2019, in an interview for the magazine *Aktief* (2019/2). I replied in the same magazine (2019/3) with an article in which I countered the central arguments for his proposal and concluded that is outdated (see M. SAEY, *De brugfuncties van de levensbeschouwelijke vakken*, in: *Aktief*, 2019/2, also available via <https://www.masereelfonds.be/mark-saey-de-brugfuncties-van-de-levensbeschouwelijke-vakken/>). In the present article I focus on how the educational developments I took as my theme go beyond and are a better option than LEF.

The worldview subjects actually perform 4 bridging functions in school. Towards the students they are a place of safety and clarification of their walks of life. Towards each other, every time they collaborate, they show how worldview differences don't have to be obstacles to live peacefully together. Ahmed Azzouz, inspector of the worldview subject Islamic Religion, formulates these first two functions very clear: "Students with an Islamic background feel the fact that they receive the subject of Islam at school as a recognition of their culture and faith. The fact that Islam is taught at school by a teacher who approaches and teaches the subject from an inner perspective is extremely important to the students (...) When they see their teacher communicating and collaborating with teachers of other worldview subjects, they learn that culture or religion should not be an obstacle to working and living together with people of other faiths"³⁰. Towards the communities outside the school (from which they also draw in social capital) they are a crucial factor in modernizing worldview elements that could otherwise, mainly because of inequality and racism, lead to extremism. And finally, they're also the subjects that build the most bridges towards the other school subjects every time they launch a social project³¹.

III. APPROACH AND SUPPORT

It's not the purpose of this article to present an overview of the many didactical possibilities for an inter-worldview dialogue³². But I will conclude with some ideas for a 3-step approach to an inter-worldview dialogue built in a WELT project on the ecological crisis, to touch on some important points concerning method and support for both post-secular educational developments.

1. WELT

When combining inter-worldview competences with citizenship competences the quality of the dialogue will depend heavily on the teacher's training and the possibilities to draw in relevant knowledge to the process, since the topics will often stretch out over several if not most domains of knowledge³³. One way to support this can be found

³⁰ A. AZZOUZ, *Wat is de bijdrage van de levensbeschouwelijke vakken aan het onderwijs en waarom zijn ze belangrijk?*, in: C. VAN KERCKHOVE e.a. (red.), 2019, p.110.

³¹ For these 4 functions of the worldview subjects, see M. SAEY, 2019 (footnote 29 above).

³² In Flanders, the *Nascholingsinstituut Levensbeschouwelijke Vakken* now *ILCOSvzw* published an inspiration guide for worldview teachers to spread some ideas based on good practices (*Inspiratiegids voor projecten die interlevensbeschouwelijke competenties nastreven in het officieel en het vrij niet-confessioneel SO*, Gent, 2017). This was published before the introduction of the citizenship competences and the examples don't have the 3-step structure of the method proposed in the (provisional) Vision Text for Inter-worldview Dialogue in the 3rd grade of the *GO!* network, but they can still spark ideas.

³³ One can compare this to the way training and present relevant knowledge improve (in fact are needed for) the quality of the well-known dialogues in the programs for philosophy for children. See e.g. W. POPPELMONDE – D. WYFFELS, *Klassevol filosoferen*, Mechelen, Plantyn, 2016, p.36.

on the network and school levels, by facilitating and applying the program World Education Learning for Tomorrow (WELT).

The Antwerp network uses WELT for its program on active citizenship and team teaching on key competences that can best be realized in a cross-curricular way³⁴. At base WELT is an integral method for project work on (world)citizenship education: it combines all the main school factors that influence citizenship and strengthens integral learning³⁵. Thanks to its structure the co-teaching team quasi automatically works on all the citizenship (and other cross-curricular) competences. Working on a WELT project means working on a local problem with a global dimension that divides society. It does this with as many school subjects as possible connecting their own competences to the issue and the cross-curricular competences by collectively helping students make an informed political opinion about the issue³⁶. And this for 10% of the time in a schoolyear (be it in the form of a couple of project weeks, project month(s), or spread out over most of the school year).

Since the Frame of Agreements between the RB&AWS and the Antwerp urban network states that for the scientific parts of citizenship competence 5 one needs the input of the science subjects, let's take a WELT project for last year students that does that as an example³⁷.

WELT project Ecomodernism or system change?			
Planning	Knowledge	Doing	Jury

³⁴ See J. LAUWERS – M. SAEY, *Handleiding vakdoorbrekend projectwerk in het secundair onderwijs. Transversaal werken aan actief burgerschap*, Stedelijk Onderwijs Antwerpen en AP Hogeschool, 2021.

³⁵ The main school factors that influence citizenship are the curriculum, the attitudes of role models (school personnel), participation, school policy and equality. WELT is not designed to replace the classic school curriculum with separate subjects and direct instruction. It is explicitly developed to support the learning process in it. See M. Saey, *Jongeren worden wereldburgers*, Gent, Academia Press, 2014, pp.18-31.

³⁶ Each subject executing a part according to a step-by-step plan (under planning in the table of the example below). Phase 4 avoids a scientific and/or populist take on the subject, phase 5 guarantees the project's democratic character.

³⁷ As already mentioned in I.2. one can reasonably argue that the need for input coming from the alpha or beta sciences applies to other competences too. For brevity I present the example at the concept level and more or less just translate the presentation of this project in the manual for the Antwerp network (J. LAUWERS – M. SAEY, 2021, pp.41-42). For a somewhat more extended description per phase, see <http://weltcenter.org/hjs-intro1/>. The Antwerp manual contains 18 WELT project concepts (6 examples for each grade) of which some are developed to the level of lesson plans and have already been executed (for an example on racism for the first grade, also with a inter-worldview part, see <http://weltcenter.org/kassablanka/>). Some (like the one that follows in the text) were also the subject of the practical research project *Youth City Hall* for AP University College (M. SAEY, *Het jeugdstadhuis*, 2020, <https://www.ap.be/project/het-jeugdstadhuis>).

<i>Problem</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Start happening - Start service learning and research competence (RC) 	Youth For Climate Reflections
<i>Analysis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The crisis in geo-ecological perspective - Fusion technology and the Belgian energy mix - Climate change in statistics - Limits to growth - Modernization and the world-system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - News item 'We are the climate' vs. 'Eco-modernist Manifest' - Excursion: Fusion show Antwerp University - Translation: Decoupling debunked - Translation: Le mur écologique - Art project 	Evaluation per subject Reflections
<i>Values & Alternative solutions</i>	- Commodification and alienation³⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Try-out expo and info-moment - Support RC - Debate 	Evaluation peers, parents, partner organizations, teachers Reflections
<i>Opinions of others</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Political parties on the crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Political debate	General repetition test
<i>Standpoint</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Submitting RC - Expo Youth City Hall 	Evaluation neighborhood, organizations, teachers, other schools

The content in short. Building on what students already know about the climate crisis, this project goes beyond the classic sustainability project and repoliticises the struggle for the future: can we overcome the wider ecological crisis with further modernization and a greener market-economy, or do we need a real system change? After a general introduction and a talk by an activist group, the students dive into the literature and study summaries of the most recent scientific reports in various language and science subjects. In doing so, they learn to understand the ecological crisis as a political-economic issue with world-systems thinking. Linked to their research competence or integrated test, they engage in service learning at citizens' initiatives and civil society organizations in the city. Supported by artists, they also create works of art that

³⁸ In bold are the parts for the worldview school subjects, see III.2.

symbolize what they have learned in the cooperating subjects for an exhibition that they organize themselves. The question of the crisis of our civilization also prompts an inter-worldview reflection on the present global condition and possible futures which culminates in a political debate with young politicians of ecomodernist and just transition inclination. At the end the students present their results at a Youth City Hall moment before the jury of the extended school.

2. Inter-worldview dialogue in the example

The structure of the inter-worldview dialogue in this example has two chapters (the first one with a variant), each with the 3-step approach already described in I.1.2³⁹.

a) “Commodification and alienation”

In the first part of the first chapter students learn about and/or research the (different views on the) relation between man and nature in the history of their/the worldview(s) of their school subject. Sparked by well-selected short passages from the works of writers they already came across or heard about during their project, they search for answers to the questions how the history of their worldview relates to the alienation of man from nature⁴⁰ or to the commodification of everything⁴¹, or how it might hold promising ideas to view man and nature in a different light. In the second, dialogical part, after but a short consultation in group, the students of the same worldview subject first give their idea of what the relationship between man and nature looks like in one or more of the other worldviews present. Then the ideas are answered by the students of the other worldview subjects, after which further dialogue can follow. In the third part the students reflect on how this process has influenced their opinion on their own and the other worldviews and what this implies for their view on inter-worldview dialogue to help find answers to our civilizational crisis.

Variant. After reading parts of chapter 6 from the book *Less is more* by the London School of Economics professor Jason Hickel (on the connections between ecology and animism)⁴² the students look for similarities and differences between the worldview(s) of their worldview subject on the one hand and forms of (modern)

³⁹ Among the relevant inter-worldview competences are the ones cited in I.1.1., the most relevant citizenship competences are part of the building blocks 1, 2,3, and 5; group formations are dependent on the total number of students; chapter 1: 4 class times of 50 min., chapter 2: 5 class times of 50 min. (depending on total number of students). Phase 3 of this project should take about a month (2 class times/week) to complete.

⁴⁰ Passages from e.g., N. KLEIN, *No time. Verander nu voor het klimaat alles verandert*, Breda, De Geus, 2014, chapter 5. Or chapter 6 in J. HICKEL, *Less is more*, London, Penguin, 2020 (published in Dutch as *Minder is meer*, Berchem, EPO, 2021).

⁴¹ Passages from e.g., A. KENIS – M. LIEVENS, *De mythe van de groene economie*, Berchem, EPO, 2016, chapter 3.

⁴² See footnote 40 above.

animism/shamanism on the other. For the second part the students prepare questions for a dialogue with an invited expert. Afterwards, part three, the students formulate their opinion on the relevance of (modern) animism/shamanism to find answers to the ecological crisis and reflect on why and how the dialogue has or has not influenced their own worldview.

b) "Debate"

In the first part of the second chapter, the students read opinion pieces selected from newspapers and websites on one of the three following propositions: a) School strikes for climate shouldn't be allowed, b) Ecomodernism is the best answer to the ecological crisis, c) Nuclear power is a necessary part of the solution. In the second part they first will work together with one or more students from other worldview subjects on both pro and contra arguments for each of these propositions. Then the debate competition with assigned propositions and positions will take place. The most important part of this chapter is when the last debates on each proposition are taken as the subject of a dialogue starting with the answers of the last contestants to the question how much they agreed with their assigned position and if that has anything to do with their worldview. In the third part the students reflect on the relation between their worldview and their (at his time) preferred 'grand narrative' to solve the ecological crisis and how to democratically campaign for it.

3. Integral learning

One can try and have this dialogue outside the set-up of a WELT project, but it is no doubt clear that even for last year students it would lose depth and purpose. It's only because of the coherent set-up in the previous phases and parts that students will really (try to) understand concepts like commodification or opinion pieces that use words like ecomodernism, degrowth, eco-socialism and eco-realism⁴³. Teachers of worldview subjects should have some knowledge of these topics if they are to combine both sets of competences, but one cannot reasonably expect them to be scientist, political scientist, sociologist, economist, anthropologist, and activists in one.

But thanks to the alignment of the RB&AWS and the Antwerp network the worldview subjects can play an essential role in the WELT program. Situated mostly in phase 3 of the step-by-step plan the worldview subjects take the learning process to the point where knowledge becomes integrated. Using their expressive languages in a dialogical process partly built to support the values of the democratic

⁴³ Not even half of Flemish last year students in secondary education are interested in social and political topics and about the same percentage says they feel competent as citizens. Especially (poor performance on) actively participating and problem focused learning are among the main (school) factors that cause this. These factors operate on a scale larger than the curriculum of a single school subject. For an overview of national and international test results and a diagnosis, see M. SAEY, *Burgerschap in Vlaamse secundair onderwijs*, 2020, <http://www.civiclab.be/burgerschap-in-vlaamse-secundaire-onderwijs/>.

constitutional state, they show students how the content they learned in the several cooperating subjects can be placed or configured in dynamic and lived frames of meaning. When this has been successfully practiced the following WELT phase will prove to be very lively and fruitful.

4. About this type of inter-worldview dialogue

The 3-step approach in both educational developments respects the inner perspective of the worldview school subjects thanks to the presence of the co-teaching teachers who teach 'from within'. And thanks to its structure this type of dialogue also combines aspects of 'teaching about' and 'learning from'⁴⁴ and intertwines the inter-worldview competences and the first three building blocks of the citizenship competences: In the first part the students enrich their understanding of their own/the worldview of their school subject while respect for intra diversity helps to avoid essentialist readings or stimulates a historical understanding of identity. The second part builds on this and induces mutual learning and perspective change to arrive at an informed dialogue. And the third part focusses on the participant's autonomy or freedom by means of his reflection on both the dialogue and the effects it had on his worldview.

Including other building blocks of the citizenship competences will depend on the chosen topics. Executed in a WELT project the dialogue will not only be substantively supported by other school subjects, but it will also pay attention to social fractures and power dynamics, some of which also co-determine worldview relations.

5. Support

In this early stage implementing WELT in schools still needs support. That's why the teacher training program at AP University College Antwerp is making some changes. Secondary schools can (already for two years) send in a request for the preparation of one or more WELT projects. In what is to become the first WELT Designlab the last year students learn to prepare WELT projects to the level of the individual lesson plans in interdisciplinary teams. Projects that make it to practice in schools are published on the website/hub of the WELT Center. And to spread the program and institutional innovation there is, starting this year, a WELT training program for professionals with an introduction based on the 40min. documentary *Youth City Hall* about

⁴⁴ In this respect it resembles the approach in Catholic Religion as formulated by D. Pollefeyt and H. Van Renterghem: not simply a comparative study of worldviews that leaves out the internal dynamics and inner perspectives of worldviews, not simply catechesis that doesn't leave enough room for the student's freedom of thought, and not an approach that pays no attention to what traditions can teach (see D. POLLEFEYT – H. VAN RENTERGHEM H., *Leerplan rooms-katholieke godsdienst: de ontdekking van de binnenkant*, in: C. Van Kerckhove e.a. (red.), 2019, p.60). A thorough comparison is beyond the scope of this article, but the fact that in both our developments several worldview teachers are always present seems to be a significant difference to the situation in the Catholic network.

the above example⁴⁵. As to the inter-worldview dialogue AP University College last year did a first test with a collaboration between the training programs for the worldview school subjects Islam and Non-confessional Ethics to produce 3-step dialogues for WELT projects with their last year students. We are very interested to upgrade these projects with training programs of other university colleges and universities.

CONCLUSION

In this article we introduced two very recent educational developments that combine inter-worldview competences and citizenship competences. They are best described as post-secular understood along the lines developed by Habermas (with some alterations) and are intended to further the mutual and reciprocal learning process of both religious and secular people to help counter extremism and polarization along worldview lines. Thanks to an alignment of the *Erkende Instanties en Vereniging van de Levensbeschouwelijke Vakken* and the educational networks *GO!* and *Stedelijk Onderwijs Antwerpen*, these developments show how neutral or official alternatives to the worldview school subjects and their inter-worldview dialogue are outdated or premature. To produce the best kind of inter-worldview dialogues one can at school and network levels adopt the WELT program for (world)citizenship education. To help schools implement WELT projects and work on the necessary competences of upcoming teachers, AP University College is building a WELT Designlab and is ready to share its knowhow with individual professionals, university colleges and universities willing to collaborate on (world)citizenship education for a post-secular society.

⁴⁵ M. SAEY, [Youth City Hall](#), Educational Documentary, MaakiProduction, 2021. The filmed project was executed by the teachers and last year students of Lyceum Waterbaan, one of the schools of the Antwerp urban network.