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Review Article
Suite: Book Symposium on John Tillson's *Children, Religion and the Ethics of Influence*

Noncognitive religious influence and initiation in Tillson's *Children, Religion and the Ethics of Influence*

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ABSTRACT

In *Children, Religion and the Ethics of Influence*, John Tillson sets out a clear and convincing case for the view that children ought not to be initiated into religious faith by their parents or others with the relevant 'extra-parental responsibilities'. However, by predicating his thesis on an understanding of illegitimate religious influence that largely equates initiation into faith with the inculcation of a distinctive type of propositional content, I contend that Tillson misses some of the potential harms such initiation may engender. Here I briefly explain why this is a problem before suggesting three ways he might respond to the criticism.

KEYWORDS: religious initiation, indoctrination, autonomy, influence, rationality, conditioning

INTRODUCTION

In his thought-provoking book, *Children, Religion and the Ethics of Influence* (2019), John Tillson sets out a clear and convincing case for the view that children ought not to be initiated into religious faith by their parents or others with the relevant 'extra-parental responsibilities'. Although religious beliefs are momentous and might not be adopted or understood without educational intervention, they are not 'well enough justified to make denial irrational' (Tillson 2019: 6) and so may only be taught nondirectively.

But whilst Tillson clearly recognizes there is more to religious influence than the transmission of propositions, his analysis suggests these additional noncognitive aspects of an agent's 'malleable internal conditions' (p. 52) primarily matter to the

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extent they facilitate (or stymie) rationality, particularly rational belief. In other words, (religious) influence that targets behaviours, habits, urges, desires, or other pro-attitudes seems permissible insofar as it leaves a child's rational faculties otherwise intact.

By predicating his thesis on an understanding of illegitimate religious influence that largely equates initiation into faith with the inculcation of a distinctive type of propositional content,[1] I contend that Tillson misses some of the potential harms such initiation may engender. Here I briefly explain why this is a problem before suggesting three ways he might respond to the criticism.

BELIEF, INDOCTRINATION AND TRACKING THE TRUTH

Tillson argues for compulsory Religious Education (RE). However, the RE he advocates is 'nonconfessional' (see also Hand 2004).[2] Children 'have the right to an education enabling them to make rational judgements about the truth and falsity of religious propositions' (Tillson 2019: 178), but, because 'failing to believe in and submit to a superbeing is not (always) irrational, and neither is a belief in and submission to a superbeing (always) irrational' (p. 166)[3], faith-based instruction that seeks to inculcate a particular position on these issues should be avoided. In this regard, Tillson's position mirrors Michael Hand's argument that religious instruction is necessarily indoctrinatory (Hand 2003); it produces an 'illicit breach between conviction on the one hand, and the assessment of evidence on the other' (Callan and Arena 2009: 110).

Interestingly, particularly given the similarity of their accounts, Tillson appears less concerned about whether religious initiation is indoctrinatory than Hand or others who argue directive religious instruction is morally indefensible (see Siegel 2004; Wareham 2018). Instead, he largely sidesteps disputes about indoctrination (see, e.g., Copp 2016; Taylor 2016; Merry 2018; Wareham 2019; Dahlbeck 2021; Zembylas 2021; Lewin 2022), emphasizing that the moral wrongness of teaching as true something that is not known to be true (or is unsupported by rationally decisive evidence) inheres in the fact that 'tracking the truth' is both intrinsically and extrinsically valuable and frustrated by false impressions' (Tillson 2019: 105).[4] But, despite avoiding these ongoing debates, by grounding his argument in an understanding of religion as a predominantly belief-centric phenomenon, Tillson still risks drawing some of the same criticisms as indoctrination-based analyses of religious initiation; primarily, that he fails to take proper account of the noncognitive aspects of religious faith.

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[1] Namely, belief in superbeings who have rightful dominion over us (Tillson 2019: 119).

[2] By 'confessional religious education' I mean religious education that involves teaching the tenets of a particular faith as true. By contrast, 'nonconfessional religious education' (often simply 'religious education') involves teaching about various religious and nonreligious world-views in an objective manner. In what follows, I use the terms 'confessional religious education', 'directive religious education', and 'religious instruction' interchangeably.

[3] As Hand (2003) might put it, there is no 'rationally decisive evidence' in favour of the truth or falsity of religious propositions.

[4] Of course, those espousing concerns about indoctrination also tend to think the practice is problematic because the barrier it erects between beliefs and evidence makes it less likely those beliefs are true or able to track the truth in the event the evidence changes (see Callan and Arena 2009: 115 and Wareham 2018: 84–6).

A protracted discussion of the nature of religion is beyond the scope of this article. However, to see evidence that belief represents just one aspect of religious initiation, one need only consider how some religious organizations characterize their educational missions. They variously aim to 'educate the whole person', address 'emotional and affective learning', (Catholic Education Service 2022) or nurture 'life in all its fullness' (Church of England Education Office 2016). This signifies a purpose that extends far beyond the cognitive and involves the explicit (and implicit) cultivation of an array of attitudes, values, behaviours, habits, and practices. Despite this, it is reasonable to contend that entirely noncognitive accounts of religion also miss their mark (see Hand 2003: 93–4). Although religious faith is not a *uniquely* propositional phenomenon, it clearly involves some distinctive beliefs which are in principle verifiable.[5]

On this basis, an adequate theory of the ethics of religious initiation will need to give due regard to the cognitive and noncognitive elements of influence. An account that focusses solely or predominantly on belief transmission, is apt to miss the habits, pro-attitudes, and behaviours that contribute to being inducted into a faith and thus set the parameters of the purpose and impact of religious influence too narrowly. It is to the question of whether Tillson is guilty of this charge that I now turn.

FORMS OF INFLUENCE

Tillson is cognisant that influence—religious or otherwise—can take a variety of forms. He considers a range of these, including behavioural 'nudges' (Thaler and Sunstein 2009), what he calls 're-socialization' (which involves 'conforming with or mimicking others' (Tillson 2019: 81)), and 'identification' (where an individual 'accepts influence because he wants to establish or maintain a self-defining relationship to another person or group' (Kelman 1958)).

When setting out his own theory of ethical influence, Tillson also lists five distinct respects in which agents can be 'formatively influenced'. This covers a variety of cognitive and noncognitive dispositions and capacities, including physical and mental abilities, concepts, and the propositions one understands, as well as one's cognitive and affective attitudes towards them (Tillson 2019: 101).

As Tillson notes, affective attitudes can be directed towards 'propositions and other objects'. This calls to mind an example offered in explanation of the distinction between indoctrination (a belief-centric phenomenon) and conditioning (which pertains to behaviour or feeling) by John Wilson (see also Green 1972).

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[5] Indeed, even those who maintain religious initiation is not primarily about transmitting propositional content, but is instead better described as an attempt to cultivate a special kind of 'relation with another subject' (Alexander 2009: 39), also acknowledge such relations are unintelligible without a belief that the subject who is encountered (God) exists (or might exist).

He describes an individual who has been conditioned to feel repulsion about masturbation despite asserting he knows 'it is perfectly all right to do it'. (Wilson 1972: 17–18). For Tillson, a process of attitude formation is justified according to whether it is *rational* to have such an attitude (or irrational not to have it): 'people are better off the more rational they are' (Tillson 2019: 163) and this applies equally to their beliefs and their pro-attitudes:

> Where having or failing to have a certain attitude makes a significant difference to students' lives, it ought to be addressed by curricula. Where failing to have the attitude is irrational, this failure ought to be remedied; where having the attitude is irrational, that attitude ought to be discouraged; and where neither having nor failing to have the attitude is irrational, that attitude ought to be introduced and discussed without encouragement or discouragement. (Tillson 2019: 102)

If an individual's attitude of disgust is rooted in the view that masturbation is repulsive because it is morally objectionable—either explicitly (because that individual has also been taught to *believe* this is the case) or implicitly (because the person who cultivated the attitude in that individual was motivated by such a belief and wished to secure behaviour and pro-attitudes consistent with it)—then we may rightly be suspicious of the formative influence that gave rise to it. At the very least, religious arguments against sexual activity outside of (traditional heterosexual) marriage are not rationally decisive (it would not be irrational to dispute or discount them); they may even be rationally indefensible (Hand 2007). For this reason, even in the absence of a supporting belief (e.g. that God will punish acts of masturbation), Tillson's theory articulates a framework by which to assess the moral legitimacy of some instances of formation that fall short of indoctrination and, instead, target the affective dispositions of children.

Similarly, given Tillson thinks reason may be practical as well as theoretical (Tillson 2019: 102), it seems reasonable to assume he also thinks some actions, behaviours, and habits can rightly be described as more rational than others. By extension then, educators should only promote those habits it would be irrational not to have, demote those habits it would be irrational to have, and merely float those habits where rationality does not compel us in either direction.

The problem with Tillson's position is not that he fails to understand that behaviours,[6] habits, and pro-attitudes play a part in formation, or that they may arise in morally illegitimate ways. Instead, it is that he appears to think morally impermissible noncognitive religious formation is generally reducible to the epistemic status of the beliefs that motivate or underpin it and, when this is not the case, we can

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[6] At this juncture, it is worth noting Tillson explicitly excludes 'behavioural influences' from his theory of influence because 'our behaviour does not count among those things in virtue of which we do what we do; it just is what we do'. (Tillson 2019: 65). However, behavioural influences—as Tillson acknowledges when he notes 'sustained conditioning through incentives and disincentives may affect formative influence' (p. 51)—often provide coherent and valuable explanations for the origin and shape of our inner worlds and sometimes we do things because we have always done them (out of habit). Since the book is an exercise in assessing permissible educational interventions that shape children, Tillson's division between formative influences, on the one hand, and behavioural influences, on the other, may therefore be somewhat unsustainable in practice.

determine the legitimacy of attempts to influence children on the basis of the broader rationality of the 'malleable internal conditions' it seeks to impose. In my view, this misses an important part of the picture. Namely, that however they develop, interference with the ability of our behaviours, habits, and pro-attitudes to 'track the truth'—to be rational—does not exhaust the harms (religious) influence might engender. Such influence will also be problematic when it blocks, reduces or otherwise interferes with an individual's capacity for autonomy. Although this capacity is likely to be more effective when it is developed together with rationality, it is distinct from it and, therefore, requires different (and potentially more demanding) developmental conditions.

AUTONOMY AND NONCOGNITIVE INFLUENCE

One reason Tillson may have overlooked the role of autonomy in determining the moral status of formative influence is because he holds a somewhat underdeveloped view of the concept.[7] Tillson equates autonomy with 'doing what one thinks is best or believing what one would estimate to be true' (p. 113). By contrast, to the extent one defers to someone else in respect to what is best and/or true, one is heteronomous (p. 113). This suggests that to be autonomous one must be strongly independently minded and unwilling to submit to the views or instructions of others. But since rationality dictates there will be occasions where it is better to follow the advice of an expert than decide for ourselves what is best (taking medical advice from a qualified doctor, for example), Tillson appears to think, on such occasions, it is preferable to be heteronomously rational than autonomously irrational (see also Hand 2006).

Whilst I agree submission to expert opinion will often be the right course of action, such submission is not, by definition, heteronomous. The view that the autonomous person is characterized by a propensity to shun all external advice and influence in favour of following their own (perhaps ill-informed) convictions may display a particularly wrong-headed version of autonomy, but it does not adequately capture what it means to be autonomous. This is because it is based on a content-specific understanding of the concept; one that posits there is 'a particular set of things one must do in order to be autonomous' (Colburn 2010: 54). Here, that set of things involves acting solely by my own lights even if it is demonstrably irrational to do so. However, this substantive conception of autonomy[8] stands in stark contrast to a more expansive (and more plausible) view proposed by Ben Colburn. This conceives of autonomy as 'an ideal of people deciding for themselves what defines a valuable life and living their lives in accordance with that decision'

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[7] In the context of the book, Tillson actually says relatively little about autonomy. Indeed, the concept only warrants four entries in the index compared to more than thirty for 'reason' and 'rationality' of various kinds.

[8] Ben Colburn calls these content specific conceptions 'autarchy' (Colburn 2010: 54), although such conceptions more commonly see autonomy as necessarily involving critical self-questioning rather than the wrong-headed advice-ignoring we see in Tillson or Hand's account.

(p. 21). This content-neutral conception sees autonomy as a second order value for which 'some conditions are specified, but there is an ineliminable variable which stands for an individual living the sort of life that [she] deems valuable' (p. 54). The conditions specified are *endorsement*—on reflection the individual takes their beliefs, pro-attitudes, etc. to be valuable—and *independence*—this reflection is 'free from factors undermining her independence' (p. 25). Although it is difficult to provide a definitive list of these factors, they include influence that takes place 'behind the back' of the agent (such as manipulation or indoctrination), as well as straightforward coercion.[9]

Under this conception, autonomy is a global phenomenon—it is whole lives that are autonomous rather than the individual choices or actions that comprise those lives. For this reason, the patient who desires to live a healthy life can autonomously submit to the course of treatment provided by a medical professional, and the sports person who desires to win an Olympic medal can autonomously follow the training plan set out by their coach. As I have argued elsewhere:

> The autonomy of some individuals [may] be instantiated through an inclination to act in a 'headstrong and self-reliant' manner which makes them 'difficult to govern and to work with', (Hand 2006: 539) but the value could be equally evident in a person who is happy to follow the advice and instructions of those in a position to guide her. (Wareham 2018: 117)

Of course, Tillson may respond that, even if one *can* autonomously follow expert advice and guidance, since autonomy does not appear to be able to guarantee rational beliefs, pro-attitudes, or behaviours, it is still necessarily subordinate to rationality in the context of education. First and foremost, we need children to subscribe to reason—indeed, because children are not yet fully developed or capable of taking responsibility for their lives, we can (and should) violate their wills in order to ensure they act in accordance with reason.[10] Does this not amount to a legitimate violation of their autonomy?

The undeveloped nature of children certainly means paternalistic interventions in their lives are warranted in a manner that would be entirely unjustifiable in our interactions with most adults. In this regard, I wholeheartedly agree with Tillson that, where it would be obviously irrational not to hold a particular belief, educators have a right (indeed a duty) to promote that belief. The same must also hold for pro-attitudes and habits that it would be similarly irrational not to have. However, formation predicated on the inculcation of rationality need not amount to a violation of autonomy. Recall that autonomy is an ideal pertaining to 'people deciding for themselves what is a valuable life and living their lives in accordance with that decision' (Colburn 2010: 19). All things considered, a child who is incapable of submitting their thoughts and actions to reason is going to find it difficult to (1) reliably determine what they take to be valuable or (2) act in ways that are likely to enable them to build a life evincing those values. Autonomy requires 'skills of agency' which include 'the ability to recognize options, make choices, seek information if it is needed to make those choices, and act on the basis of those choices' (p. 95) and is further enhanced by 'skills of introspection' such as the capacity to discern what one likes, how one feels, and who one is (Wareham 2018: 156).

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[9] Note that, from Colburn's perspective, reflection need not actually take place for an individual to be autonomous. However, it must be a live possibility.

[10] Tillson says something to this effect when he asserts that 'incompetent choosers' have 'rights to actions which prevent them coming to harm, but no right to self-determination' (Tillson 2019: 39).

Although they are not reducible to reason, all of these capacities will be enhanced by submission to it. So, whilst the child is incapable of shouldering responsibility for their life choices, educators are justified in steering children towards the beliefs, pro-attitudes, and habits that are least likely to be rejected by reasonable adults and most likely to contribute to their later ability to take responsibility for the direction of their lives. As Matthew Clayton puts it, 'children should be treated in accordance with norms that will command their retrospective consent or at least will not retrospectively be rejected' (Clayton 2006: 355).

From the foregoing discussion, it seems reasonable to conclude that morally legitimate formation will not only need to avoid violations of rationality but also violations of (future) autonomy. Given the close relationship between rationality and the skills of agency and introspection that make the development of autonomy more likely, it might be tempting to think that, by sticking to Tillson's formula, rational educators can simultaneously avoid infringing the autonomy of children. All they need do is promote, float, or demote a belief, pro-attitude, or behaviour according to whether or not it is (ir)rational to believe, feel, or act that way. However, especially with respect to noncognitive formation, this is not necessarily the case.

NONCOGNITIVE RELIGIOUS INFLUENCE AND THE THREAT TO AUTONOMY

To understand how religious influence that seems permissible according to Tillson's theory might nevertheless undermine the development of autonomy, consider the issue of collective worship. This is a compulsory activity for schools in all four nations of the UK. Despite legal opt-outs,[11] very few pupils are actually withdrawn from worship,[12] so it represents a robust, real-life example of religious influence that affects millions of children every day.

Tillson maintains compulsory worship constitutes illegitimate influence because the practice presupposes belief in religious propositions it would not be irrational to deny (Tillson 2019: 179). This is often the case. Indeed, government guidance on collective worship in England explicitly states ‘it should be concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power’ (DfE 1994: para. 57).[13] Since it would make little sense to revere or venerate a being one does not believe exists, this guidance clearly seeks to cultivate such a belief.

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[11] Parents may withdraw their children from these sessions and, in England and Wales, sixth-form pupils may withdraw themselves (School Standards and Framework Act 1998: § 71).

[12] The UK Government does not keep statistics on the number of pupils withdrawn from worship. However, polling of parents commissioned by Humanists UK suggests that most (65 per cent) are not even aware of the worship law, so it seems unlikely that they would be aware of the associated right to opt out of the practice (Humanists UK 2021). What is more, even if parents (and sixth-form pupils) know their legal rights in this regard, withdrawal can be a difficult and ostracizing process, with pupils left to sit in empty classrooms, apart from their peers, often without anything of educational worth to do (see, e.g., Humanists UK 2019).

However, not all advocates of collective worship see it in these terms. Some argue worship is an important part of the school day not because it is a vehicle by which to inculcate children into (usually Christian[14]) religious beliefs, but because it is only through regular and active participation in such practices that children can really come to understand faith. They argue ‘it is impossible to develop an adequate understanding of religion in *abstracto*’ (McLaughlin 1984: 82). In this view, understanding religion is similar to viewing a stained-glass window—one has to step inside the church to fully appreciate its beauty (Yinger 1970: 2). To put it another way, participation in worship is not, as Tillson would have it, a form of promoting a particular belief or belief system, but instead a way of floating it. This need not interfere with the rational faculties and, therefore, leaves each child free to accept or reject the faith they have been offered.[15]

Similarly, those who defend compulsory worship in schools without a religious character often invoke the idea that this is not worship in the conventional sense of enforced prayer, but ‘worth-ship’—‘reflecting upon things of ultimate worth or value’ (Cheetham 2000: 77) or the ‘celebration and veneration of shared values, the response to what is seen to be of ultimate concern’ (Slee 1990: 5).

Because of the belief-centric nature of Tillson’s account, when worship is conceived in the ways outlined above, we are forced to conclude the practice constitutes a morally permissible form of religious influence. However, it seems to me there is still something intuitively amiss with compulsory school worship. What might that be?

One response could be that any appeals to something other than the truth of or commitment to beliefs in religious propositions are disingenuous. However, they describe what they are doing, educators who compel children to engage in worship (or ‘worth-ship’) or otherwise explore religion ‘from the inside’ are, in fact, out to inculcate belief. At the very least, they are attempting to make it significantly more likely that some beliefs are favoured over others without the requisite epistemic justification for skewing the game in their favour. From this perspective, those laying claim to nonindoctrinatory forms of religious initiation are either lying or mistaken. They are also already accounted for in Tillson’s framework.

But, whilst some claims to indoctrination-free, rationality-protecting forms of religious formation will be disingenuous, and others will misunderstand what it means to float rather than promote a particular world-view, it is wrong to maintain this is true in all cases. Elsewhere, I have couched this in terms of 'priming pedagogies'—religiously distinctive ways of teaching which may involve initiating children into the practices of a religious way of life[16] but stop short of transmitting belief in the truth of religious propositions[17] (Wareham 2018: 237). And, as we have seen, this type of formative influence may include the inculcation of habits of prayer and ritual that appear to be more about participation than belief. It might also involve the cultivation of affective attitudes designed to promote community bonding and belonging. Imagine, for example, a Catholic school which, alongside teaching the Church's perspective that homosexuality is wrong,[18] explicitly tells pupils non-Catholics think differently, that gay people may *legally* marry, and that pupils are free to believe what they find most persuasive on this issue. If this school nevertheless places a strong emphasis on developing a feeling of belonging to the Catholic community—on conscripting children into the Church's 'cultural liturgy' (Smith 2013, cited in Cooling et al. 2016: 160–1)—this underlying attachment could make it more likely that, even in the absence of any compulsion to *believe* the Church's teachings, pupils develop feelings of aversion to homosexuality because of what being homosexual is likely to mean for continued membership of their community.

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[13] The wording of the guidance for schools in Wales is exactly the same (Welsh Office Education Department 1994, para. 57).

[14] In England and Wales, the law stipulates that worship should be ‘wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character’ (School Standards and Framework Act 1998: Schedule 20).

[15] The Church of England’s most recent guidance on conducting collective worship seems to view the practice in this way, stating that worship in one of its schools should ‘offer the opportunity, without compulsion, to all pupils and adults to grow spiritually through experiences of prayer, stillness, worship and reflection’ (Church of England Education Office 2021: 3).

What is more, even if this aversion does not cohere with any wider religious beliefs, it would not be an irrational affective attitude to have. It tracks the truth that the community may ostracize gay people (or those who show support for them). Although the rationality of any individual subject to this education will have been preserved, there does seem to be a problem with the formation they have received; a problem Tillson's framework is not fully equipped to deal with. This lies in the fact the individual's autonomy has been curtailed. Because they have been brought up to feel like they can only ever belong to one religious community, certain ways of life (or attitudes towards them) are unconscionable.

Of course, no one will have entirely unfettered life choices. Human beings are necessarily situated and limited. Nevertheless, when education or upbringing makes a child's future decisions a vehicle for a comprehensive world-view rather than the authentic expression of their own convictions, it not only prevents their shouldering proper responsibility for the direction their life takes, but is an affront to their dignity.

Like early beliefs, early habits and pro-attitudes may exhibit a high degree of 'stickiness' (Gardner 1988: 95). However, the moral legitimacy of these forms of influence cannot rest entirely on the extent to which they infringe upon the critical faculties (rationality) of the children they seek to shape. Instead, it must also inhere in the extent to which teaching using these methods is likely to violate autonomy; the ability to independently decide what makes a valuable life and do what is necessary to live in accordance with that decision. It is not impossible that children who participate in activities like regular compulsory worship autonomously decide to reject (or accept) worship as a worthwhile part of their adult lives,[19] but because we cannot reasonably expect that, in adulthood, such children will retrospectively endorse this treatment, it should be avoided.

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[16] What Smith and Smith, following Pierre Bordieu, call a religious 'habitus'—that is, 'an orientation and understanding of the world that is absorbed and shaped at the level of practice' (Smith and Smith 2011: 10).

[17] Examples include Cooling et al.'s 'What If Learning' (Cooling et al., 2016), Sean Whittle's theory of Catholic education (Whittle 2015) and, although it does not suggest a particular method for teaching, potentially Michael Hand's proposal of a *curriculum* shaped by distinctively religious concerns (Hand 2012).

[18] Although many Catholics are accepting of LGBT people, the Catechism of the Catholic Church condemns homosexual acts as 'acts of grave depravity' and calls same-sex orientation 'objectively disordered' (Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith 1976: § VIII).

CONCLUSION

Tillson's theory of formative influence provides a useful and largely accurate framework for determining how we may legitimately seek to shape children with respect to religion. However, since much religious initiation involves unthinking habituation that is not necessarily focussed on or concerned with the transmission of belief, it is not equipped to adequately explain why religious influence that does not interfere with a child's rationality might still be morally impermissible. In my view, this is because it fails to take proper account of the role of autonomy, which may still be violated by religious formation which leaves the critical faculties otherwise intact.

In response to this criticism, Tillson has three options: first, bite the bullet; retain a narrow account of initiation that maintains religious influence is only illegitimate to the extent it interferes with children's rational truth-tracking faculties. On this basis, religious conditioning that is not predicated on the inculcation of religious belief (or obviously irrational behaviours, habits, or pro-attitudes) can be tolerated as a legitimate form of influence. Second, maintain that religious influence is only illegitimate to the extent it interferes with rational faculties, but emphasize that some (faith-based) habits and pro-attitudes are more likely to stymie these faculties than others and should therefore be avoided. Finally, adopt a broader view of illegitimate (religious) influence as influence which infringes not only rationality but also autonomy, and preclude initiation which does either.

In my view, Tillson should adopt the third option. Initiation which interferes with rationality is egregious because it traps children in a 'cognitive straitjacket' (Siegel 1990: 88) from which it is difficult to escape. However, autonomy frustrating initiation may be just as harmful. There are many good lives an individual might lead, lives that may legitimately involve submitting oneself to the tenets of a faith. Nonetheless, if this is not done freely, something of intrinsic worth is lost; namely the ability to be 'substantively responsible' for the direction one's life takes (see Scanlon 2000: 248–9). Since this is a key component of human dignity, any theory of morally legitimate influence that does not adequately account for the development of autonomy, including Tillson's otherwise excellent contribution, is incomplete.

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[19] There is empirical evidence to suggest that, even in childhood, pupils learn to exercise their agency in ways that subvert the meanings assigned to religious activities by adults. For example, by rewording prayers or even using collective worship time to organize Pokémon cards (Shillitoe and Strhan 2020: 629).

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