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## Universe, Pluriverse and a Blue Ocean: Reflective Analogies and Philosophical Considerations for Decolonising Education—A View from the Netherlands

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### Introduction

A while ago Marlon Lee Moncrieffe an educational scholar expressed the world like being a pluriverse environment. This instead of being a worldly universe. He compared Mother Earth as comprising of a diversity of stars; as a part of an unfathomable pluriverse. Have these stars the same names, or do these names and their meanings differ depending on our worldly biases, cultures, and the teachings from our ancestries? What is the value of differentiation in perspectives and meaning we give to the

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same cosmos that we share? Planets in a named western solar system can offer a universal sense of knowing without much question in the order of things. But what are the unexplored possibilities with knowing when aiming to see further beyond the given system? What are the possibilities of ‘pluriversality with all its internal diversity’? (Mignolo, 2018, p. ix). These are questions that relate to my reflections on decolonising curriculum knowledge, within international business studies at Wittenborg University of Applied Sciences (Wittenborg), established in 1987 in the Netherlands, an institute to which I am associated. My cross-cultural teaching experiences here support my various analogical reflections in this chapter with decolonising curriculum knowledge.

Historically, due to European colonialisation (Wiesner-Hanks, 2018) global leadership in educational policy has been framed epistemologically by the hegemony of Western-centric knowledge (Silova et al., 2017). Assimilation of colonised peoples to the universality in western thought processes including the erasure of their ancestral ways of seeing and knowing is exposed by magnification of decolonial lenses (see for example Mignolo, 2018; Wa Thiong’o, 1986). Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s (2015) concept of the ‘*coloniality of knowledge*’ provides a robust framework from which to tease epistemological issues, politics of knowledge generation, as well as questions of who generates which knowledge and for what purpose’ (p. 490). He argues for ‘ontological pluralism as a reality’ needing ‘ecologies of knowledges to understand’ (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 492).

I see that practical attention is required to achieve what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) implies as ‘something good’. This will be addressed in this chapter. Firstly, via introduction of a unique cross-cultural ‘boutique university’ from the Netherlands. From the start in 1987, a mixture of world-philosophies are present, and although the business studies are framed in origin by Western-European business studies parameters, the context at Wittenborg differs, a lot. More than 1000 students, from 100 countries, and almost 180 staff-members from 52 countries enable a unique and interesting mix of cross-cultural learning and development. The university’s mission is ‘Better Yourself, Better Our World’, with the Key Values of Internationalisation, Diversity and Ethics ([www.wittenborg.eu/vision-mission-pillars](http://www.wittenborg.eu/vision-mission-pillars), 2021).

In this chapter, what I see as developing a pluriformity of knowledge is addressed through three connecting perspectives, and three less recognised needs. These perspectives are: (1) Learning from each other; (2) Assisting development of the other; (3) Connecting virtues of ethical leadership. Whereas the less recognised needs are: (1) ‘Ledig Gemüete’, (2) ‘Syncretic method’, and (3) ‘Comprehensive analogies’. These perspectives and needs come together in a practical and to be applied approach—a how. Whereas, in reference to Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s statement: (2015, p. 492) ‘decoloniality accepts the fact of ontological pluralism as a reality that needs ecologies of knowledges to understand’, the applied approach, is focal too. Thus, when Western-European scholars are presented in this chapter, they are for the purposes adding to the mix of ontological pluralism i.e., multiple ways of seeing and being, and multiple ways of knowing through a pluriverse of epistemologies.

I share a series of analogical narrative reflections in this chapter for storying an understanding of my experiences of cross-cultural teaching and learning with students and teachers at Wittenborg. I set this scene as the ‘Charming School’ with educators and students taking an educational fieldtrip that transforms the reality of their teaching and learning pursuits. The pivotal moments of seeing and coming to know the value of decolonial practice are built by notions of self-development ‘*Bildung*’ (Taylor, 2017); the ‘Professional Learning Community’ (Hord & Sommers, 2008; Verbiest, 2011, 2012); through the meaning-oriented reflection model i.e., ‘*De Lift*’ (‘*The Escalator*’) by Korthagen (2014, 2017) and by seeing the virtues of Ethical Leadership (Dahlsgaard et al., 2005). This leads to ‘Blue Ocean’ thinking (Whittington et al., 2019, p. 85), stimulating potential and possibly unrecognised latent educators’ needs. I see this as process in relation to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1986, p. 108) and the notion of ‘regenerative reconnection’ to the unfathomable depths of the pluriverse, of knowledge, of being.

**Reflective Analogy**

*The reader, an educator, hovers in a helicopter above the countryside. He or she, sees three dynamic, but small rivers meander towards a little village. On the cross-roads of the blue rivers' geographical connection the Charming School is situated. One river continues and ends up in a blue ocean. It is almost surreal, it seems like a mirage. Is it?*

*Differing children originating from the surrounding areas walk along paths, through woods, heathland, or past the rivers to their Charming School. Here, day-to-day activities take place. In this school, a team of dedicated educators is active.*

## Developing a Pluriformity of Knowledge in the Charming School

These educators, these professionals want to work together as a team and learn from each other. They are there to assist their learners with their self-development, or 'Bildung' (Taylor, 2017) on the background their differing traditions, in other words 'worldviews' that formed them to whom they are, are present. Present in a sense, like Dahlsgaard et al. (2005) noted, of covering comparable virtues, but differing worldviews' origins. These traditions, appear affected by the hegemony of Western-centric knowledge (Silova et al., 2017). Interestingly, and perhaps somewhat unconsciously, their traditions and virtues appear comparable (Chun, 2005; Dahlsgaard et al., 2005; Louw, 2019). This is to be regarded an asset; an untapped source of riches that must become more known among educators. Stimulation of awareness, increasing consciousness, other manners of learning, as well as thinking, feeling, wanting, and doing are needed. The educators' drive is leading, supporting, and forming their learners towards a common objective to realise 'something good' (Woldring, 2016). Aiming for 'something good' to me is a like an elementary behaviour, a virtue, towards assisting self-development.

### Reflective Analogy

*In itself everything there in the Charming School is to be able to succeed: professionalism, community, reflection, transformation, thrill, traditions, virtues, and objectives are all set. In fact, all aspects to be successful are in place. But something is missing. The educators' conventional approach at the school does not seem to be complete. In the school a curious situation takes place. It is as if one common denominator, like a one-and-only paradigm is in the lead. All educators appear to fit their learners into this one standard. But both educators and learners originate from different ancestries. They use the same language, but they do not really understand each other. Or even worse, are not allowed to think or act in another manner than the Western-centric epistemology, linked to 'Enlightenment'. The latter criticised by e.g., Comenius, in the seventeenth century (Woldring, 2016) and in the twentieth century by Horkheimer and Adorno (1947/2007) and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986, p. 65): 'the world of Ptolemy was being replaced by the world of Copernicus and Galileo. A tension is present, but not felt by everyone. Interesting, strange, and, perhaps, sad. Unconsciousness of needs present has to be made conscious. But how? That is the objective of the field-trip. But first we have to address three connecting perspectives to achieve our mutual ground. These three perspectives are: (1) Learning from each other, (2) Assisting development of the other, and (3) Connecting virtues of ethical leadership. In the following paragraphs these are described and connected, by means of practical ideas, for instance based on behavioural influencing. The field trip ends with recommendations and a conclusion. But before that the 'blue ocean' will play its important role. Hopefully, in the story of this pluriverse fieldtrip the sun will never set.*

## Three Connecting Perspectives

The descriptions of the following three perspectives: (1) Learning from each other; (2) Assisting development of the other; (3) Connecting virtues of ethical leadership, are not meant as an introduction on underlying knowledge. The objective is to provide next to common ground, food for thought. Being consciously aware can be of assistance towards

the further developing of selves. Next to this, these paragraphs may provide input on how to use the perspectives within one own's professional environment and/or others for whom one is responsible, e.g., your learners.

## Educators Learning from Each Other

I see educators learning from each other as based on a number of interacting principles. Educators at the same time being learners themselves behave like a 'Professional Learning Community' (PLC) (Hord & Sommers, 2008; Verbiest, 2011, 2012). According to Hord and Sommers (2008, p. 8), the components of a PLC consist of five components:

1. Shared beliefs, values, and visions
2. Shared and supportive leadership
3. Collective learning and its application
4. Supportive conditions
5. Shared personal practice

From another perspective, Verbiest (2012, pp. 19–21) describes an obligatory interface of three capacities to achieve a successful PLC:

1. Personal capacity
2. Interpersonal capacity
3. Organisational capacity

The first two, each consist of two dimensions, while the last one contains three conditions, all interacting to support achieving a successful PLC.

- Personal capacity
  - Dimension 1: Active, reflective, and critical (re)construction of meaning.

- Dimension 2: Use actual understandings from science and from practice.
- Interpersonal capacity
  - Dimension 1 covers: Shared values and vision on learning and the educator's role.
  - Dimension 2 covers: Collective learning of shared practices.
- Organisational capacity deals with three supporting conditions:
  - Condition 1: Resources, structures, and systems.
  - Condition 2: Culture based on respect, trust, and care, as well as a critical research and improvement.
  - Condition 3: Encouraging and shared leadership.

## How Do Educators Achieve Being and Remaining a PLC?

Literature on change management describes a number of approaches, for instance by means of using phases (Burke, 2018, pp. 179–180). Verbiest (2012, pp. 58–62) advises another approach. The three capacities and underlying dimensions are developed by a path consisting of three key-concepts: (1) 'broadening', (2) 'deepening' and (3) 'anchoring'. 'Broadening' relates to an increase of the number of professionals, as well as/or increased organisational support on (inter)personal capacities (Verbiest, 2012, p. 58). 'Deepening' relates to regarding education as a team's collective effort and responsibility and related activities, e.g., connecting learners' learning and results, and underlying intellectual ideas like learning, education, and nurturing (Verbiest, 2012, p. 58). 'Anchoring' relates to describing the PLC's learning path, e.g., educators' professionalisation, educational institute's vision and policies, systematic analysis, and team members structural participation in policy development (Verbiest, 2012, pp. 58–59). Verbiest (2012, p. 61) stipulates presence of a non-phase-oriented change management approach, where from the beginning anchoring both broadening and deepening is vital. He advises to concentrate on the practical possibilities of the notions of

the key-concepts, capacities, and dimensions. This can be regarded as a holistic and synergetic approach. Concentration on analysis of where are we now (the 'Ist') and what do we want to achieve (the 'Soll'). In this manner a decision-taking analytical model, next to an implementation model, are provided.

### **Reflective Analogy**

*In the Charming School, near the river some of the educators do realise a change may have to take place. The question to them, is What to do next? They wonder whether they manage this all alone. They even ask themselves if an alternative path should be walked. And if alternatives are there, what alternative, or combination of alternatives that should be. In a way they feel a bit trapped in one common approach of thinking. Perhaps that is part of the answer towards a more promising direction. Not just 'thinking', only.*

Within their learning, educators, based on the concept of PLC, are to be interested in the ideas of their peers, and intend to reflect on views, and meanings behind, expressed. Subsequently, meaning-oriented reflective learning among each other is key. The meaning-oriented reflection model 'De Lift' ('The Escalator') by Korthagen (2014, 2017) based on a back and forth connecting of 'thinking' to 'feeling', and only then 'wanting' and 'doing' is applicable. Applicable both towards past activities and future actions, can be of assistance. The model is used within the educational sector, however, perhaps hardly within other studies' curricula. Team members are aware that a gradual and/or even fast mode of learning assists them in developing towards another level of knowing and doing as well. Their change, their transformation, by means of learning-by-reflection is eminent (Biggs & Tang, 2011).



**Reflective Analogy**

*The Charming School educators start to realise that there is more than thinking alone. Another aspect of being must be taken into consideration. The factor of 'feeling' plays an important role, before they become aware of perhaps more adequate scenarios of doing.*

The stimulated and supported active reflective-learning behaviour leads towards mastery of learning. Educators appear self-motivated, they are 'thrilled' (Hattie & Donoghue, 2016). More than, 'deep acquiring' knowledge, they aim for 'deep consolidating' of knowing and doing. Thus, to develop individual and collective understanding, while concentrating on the detection of similarities and of differences. Results of this analytical process are used within and for educators' new situation(s). They want to make sense of what they achieve by means of 'transfer-learning'. This both being an intellectual-fundamental and applied-practical effective combination. By doing so motivational 'thrill' gradually results in an executional 'thrill', among each other as educators, and within their learners. Their learners, or pupils, those they want to assist in their self-development.

## Assisting Development of the Other

**Reflective Analogy**

*One of the educators in the Charming School has been acting in a more constructivist mode for the past decades. His phlegmatic approach with which he assists his pupils, to some of them provides less structure. They miss something to support their learning, their self-development. What may be lacking?*

An approach is that educators are there to assist their learners with their self-development, or *Bildung* (Taylor, [cr](#)). While pedagogics is related to, the German word of, *Erziehung*, i.e., education, *Bildung* is

related to assisted self-development. The idea of development by self is connected to actions by self. The influence of educators is, from a pedagogic perspective, influential and assists development. Addressing this relation and differences contributes to educators' thoughts on *Bildung* and their assistance to self-development. The concept of *Bildung* is not new. As a concept, the German scholar Von Humboldt described this social constructive pedagogic approach in the late eighteenth century (Von Humboldt, 1986). In his thoughts Von Humboldt connects one own's nature to rational educational development (Von Humboldt, 1785–1795). In other words, connecting *emotio* and *ratio* appears key, as manifold arts and approaches are applicable. *Emotio* is related to emotion and is the demonstrable inner body movement or excitement (Visser, 2018, p. 19). This including the spiritual more mysterious effects and reflection, of a world 'only knowable through ritual, magic and divination' (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986, p. 65). *Ratio* is related to rationality. This covers making decisions based on clear thought and reason. The ancient correlation between *emotio* and *ratio* has been put under pressure due to the seventeenth-century European paradigm of 'Enlightenment'. Enlightenment is an intellectual and cultural movement in late seventeenth-century Europe and the wider world that used rational and critical thinking to debate issues such as political sovereignty, religious tolerance, gender roles, and racial difference (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986; Wiesner-Hanks et al., 2018). Based on this philosophical movement, rationality can grow to an exercise of power, evolving towards suppression of mankind (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1947/2007) and in 'a God of profit and loss' (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986, p. 65).

In the geographical area of the origin of Enlightenment, in the years prior to, the movement really started to develop tensions where one may reflect upon as trying to prevent progress towards what we nowadays address as Eurocentric philosophical framing. Unfortunately, the epistemological balance tipped to colonisation. In 1642 Comenius and Descartes discussed their philosophical ideas (Woldring, 2016, pp. 173–174). Where Comenius applies a pansophic, or comprehensive paradigm, Descartes encourages a strict rational activity 'to promote the general welfare of all people' (Descartes in Woldring, 2016, p. 174).

The latter ‘to promote the general welfare of all people’ being Comenius’ objective too. To Comenius ‘Pansophia’: ‘from all the sub-sciences, a universal science of knowledge must ultimately emerge’, Comenius in Woldring, 2016, p. 79). Where *pan* is all or comprehensive, and *sophia* is wisdom. This implies, an a priori connecting everything to everything (Meyer, in Goris et al., 2016, p. 3), therefore, *ratio* and *emotio* too. Comenius’ main work *De rerum homanorum emendatione consultatio catholica* (General reflection on the improvement of human conditions), was overshadowed by the Enlightenment, and has been lost for over three hundred years. Only in 1935 these were retrieved and published in 1966. In Comenius’ pansophia three instruments are present to realise something good. ‘Something good’ is anything that can help improve the world or improve humanity in all situations. These instruments are senses, reason and biblical, i.e., spiritual revelation.

However, as the seventeenth-century European Enlightenment ideology spread across the globe, particularly and developed overseas (Wiesner-Hanks et al., 2018, p. 551), this tradition, and with it the ‘hegemony of Western-centric knowledge’ became imbedded in formerly European colonised communities, reconfiguring their worlds to a way of thinking through the dominant Eurocentric epistemology (Silova et al., 2017). One could conclude that the notion of a dominant Eurocentric science of knowledge appears narcissistic (see Moncrieffe, 2020). In fact, Comenius already in the seventeenth century foresaw a more holistic cooperation among world-philosophies, instead of just one dominant epistemology. The pluriverse of world-philosophies had to be involved to develop the other and create ‘something good’.

### **Reflective Analogy**

*Within the Charming School educators started to realise that their origins were not exactly the same. They realised that perhaps they could make use of their differences and create a more attractive learning environment. At the same time, by giving this some extra reflection, using thinking, and feeling, they noticed similarities in their acting. What to make out of these parallels?*

## Connecting Virtues of Ethical Leadership

Interestingly, and perhaps somewhat unconsciously virtues (Table 12.1) and traditions espoused in the diversity of world cultures are comparable by their congruency (Chun, 2005; Dahlsgaard et al., 2005; Louw, 2019). Being aware of these similarities can be of assistance for developing virtues, without positioning one dominant philosophy (ontological standpoint) as most important.

Virtues are in relation to existence, and contrast disorder. This as everything in the world is ordered, is caused, and has an effect. A virtue has its limits; therefore, a person must constrain to and master virtues. Regarded from a philosophical perspective, a virtue is more than existence, as it descends from higher power, according to Plato: ‘the Good’, in Christian belief: God. A virtue is a ‘concatenation’, a series of ideas that are connected, and is more than commonplace, is rich and assists in practical life. Although, due to character traits and environment, execution varies from person to person, however, can be learned (Guardini, 1963).

**Table 12.1** Core virtues

Virtue	Description
Courage	Emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal; examples include bravery, perseverance, and authenticity (honesty)
Justice	Civic strengths that underlie healthy community life; examples include fairness, leadership, and citizenship or teamwork
Humanity	Interpersonal strengths that involve ‘tending and befriending’ others (Taylor et al., 2000); examples include love and kindness
Temperance	Strengths that protect against excess; examples include forgiveness, humility, prudence, and self-control
Wisdom	Cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge; examples include creativity, curiosity, judgement, and perspective (providing counsel to others)
Transcendence	Strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and thereby provide meaning; examples include gratitude, hope, and spirituality

Source Dahlsgaard et al. (2005, p. 205)

### Reflective Analogy

*The Charming School educators realised that what connected them was on a somewhat deeper level of ideas. While reflecting, some of them addressed, next to thinking and feeling, the importance of being inspired and the importance to them of higher indefinable power (e.g., Okri, 1991/2016, pp. viii–x). To some of the colleagues this was not only new, but even peculiar. They, at first, more or less revolted. Nevertheless, and step by step they started to realise that learning with and from each other required being open to others' views. In fact, the question was asked: "How does your 'being inspired' show in your day-to-day life?" That was not easy to explain, but this was given a try. It led to a becoming aware. Being inspired next to what you felt and thought. The three-fold base of awareness made them realise what they wanted, and... What to do (Meeuwesen, 2022).*

According to Dahlsgaard et al. (2005) eight world-philosophies share six core virtues (See Table 12.2). Whereas, based on Chun (2005) the so-called 'virtue ethical character scale (VECS)' consists of six dimensions of organisational virtues (Integrity, Empathy, Warmth, Courage, Conscientiousness and Zeal) and associated virtue character traits (Chun, 2005, p. 281). Comenius, already prior to Enlightenment (1623, 1657, pp. 217–220) and in Woldring (2016, pp. 51–52) urges mankind to acquire moral virtues and these be part of attitude, in order to achieve a future society of justice and peace, achieving 'something good' (Woldring, 2016, p. 17).

Regarding 'ethical leadership' the definition by Shakeel et al. (2020) is used:

Ethical leadership is the implicit and explicit pursuit of desired ethical behaviour for self and followers through efforts governed by rules and principles that advocate learning motivation, healthy optimism, and clarity of purpose to uphold the values of empowerment, service to others, concern for human rights, change for betterment and fulfilling duty towards society, future generations, environment, and its sustainability.

While reading the definition it implicitly is to be noticed how connections can be made to virtues.

**Table 12.2** Convergence of virtues

Tradition	Courage	Justice	Humanity	Temperance	Wisdom	Transcendence
Confucianism		E	E	T	E	T
Taoism		E	E	E	E	T
Buddhism		E	E	E	T	E
Hinduism	E	E	E	E	E	E
Athenian philos- ophy	E	E	E	E	E	T
Christianity	E	E	E	E	E	E
Judaism	E	E	E	E	E	E
Islam	E	E	E	E	E	E

Note E = explicitly named; T = thematically implied

Source Dahlsgaard et al. (2005, p. 211).

Connecting virtues, world-societies, and ethical leadership within the pluriverse of cross-cultural ontologies and perspectives according to Comenius (in Woldring, 2014, pp. 96–101), Hatley (2019), Maldonado-Torres (2007), Mignolo and Walsh (2018) need to be touched upon. Maldonado-Torres addresses ‘interventions at the levels of power, knowledge, and being through varied actions of decolonisation and desgener-acción’ (2007, p. 262). He explains that ‘Decolonisation’ and ‘des-gener-acción’ are the active products of decolonial love and justice. They aim to restore the logics of the gift through a decolonial politics of receptive generosity.” (2007, p. 261). Towards this being an educators’ task appears eminent. However, this task starts with being aware, by thinking, feeling, being inspired, and willing, and subsequently doing ‘something good’.

### **Reflective Analogy**

*The Charming School was buzzing with positive energy. The educators more and more realised they appeared on the brink of some important steps. These steps needed warm colour towards the direction to go; colours to open up more than the mindset only. Based on their warm reflections they realised they were to take these steps together, while making use of each other’s backgrounds.*

## Blue Ocean

Assisting self-development (*Bildung*) of learners, including educators, is among others related to insights into the importance of *emotio* and *ratio*. Didactic interventions and PLCs have to concentrate on both ‘feeling’ and ‘thinking’. Execution is to be stimulated from an empty and maximally receptive ‘emptied mind’ (*Ledic Gemuëte*, Meister Eckhart, thirteenth century, in Visser, 2018). The ‘emptied mind’ can be regarded a first ‘Blue Ocean’ (Whittington et al., 2019, p. 85). A ‘Blue Ocean’ is a business economics term related to innovation on ‘value’. Technically, it is a new market space where competition is minimised, is sought after and useful for identifying potential spaces of needs in the environment. These environments show little competition, i.e., attention, new critical success factors and especially previously unrecognised customer needs too (Whittington et al., 2019, p. 85). We now concentrate on these previously unrecognised customer needs, related to educators’ needs. A second ‘Blue Ocean’ concept is Comenius’ syncretic applied practice (early seventeenth century) based on his pansophical, or comprehensive applied scientific approach. The latter in itself being a third ‘Blue Ocean’. These three concepts are described to provide information and stimulate potential and possibly unrecognised latent educators’ needs. By doing so to further grow into their vocation. By doing so, having attention to new epistemologies. This for instance can be achieved by looking at other worldviews and bridging differences. Koehn suggests:

...thinking and to arrive at common, good practices, an outcome especially to be desired in this era of global business practice. These practices do not need to be imposed hegemonically by one party on the other, but rather can grow organically out of the shared heritage of virtue ethics (2013, p. 714)

Thus, acting in line with varied actions of decolonisation and ‘desgener-acción’, as stressed by Maldonado-Torres (2007) and Ngūgĩ wa Thiong’o (1986, p. 108) ‘call for the regenerative reconnection’, to create ‘something good’.

## Blue Ocean—1. ‘Ledic Gemüete’

Neo-Aristotelian insights from MacIntyre (2020) and thoughts from, among others, Huijgen (2019) support the thirteenth-century concept of Meister Eckharts ‘emptied mind’. The term ‘*gemüete*’ or ‘mind’/‘mood’ covers more than thinking and feeling. The term primarily comprises an affective dimension. Although connected to mental abilities, there appears an additional setting. To Eckhardt ‘*gemüete*’ is a total of soul forces of the inner spiritual human being (Visser, 2018, p. 24). An additional aspect is the ‘emptiness of the mind’ (‘*ledig gemüete*’). Like going out of oneself. This appears like having exited from oneself. This is not what Eckhardt meant. He addressed an active reflection, towards achieving an inner transformation (Visser, 2018, p. 25). The active reflection is based on one’s own deliberate will. Basically, a letting go of oneself. One no longer is confused or connected to anything, while being free of images and associated passions. An opening up to the will of a higher spiritual influence is possible—according to Eckhardt: the will of God (Visser, 2018, p. 26). There is more. As stated, will or thinking and affection or feeling are both present. The immediate influence of a higher power is in itself not new for the thirteenth and/or the twenty-first centuries. Although, only from the sixteenth century the word ‘mood’ developed towards its current sensation-oriented meaning (Visser, 2006, p. 693). Both Plato and Socrates spoke about comparable helpful higher forces, and tools, to e.g., develop virtues (Visser, 2018, p. 28). Visser (2018, p. 29) concludes that state of mind is affective, as well as draws attention to the original being of the affective.

While being in a meaningful reflection, as an activity taking place within a professional learning community, one ought to deliberately open up oneself towards the others, the peers, without being prejudiced by one owns epistemological bias. Aiming for the ‘emptied mind’ assists an ‘open mind’ towards learning from others’ experiences, ideas, knowledge, and biases. Ultimately, the underlying ‘thrill’ can result in ‘deep acquiring’ and ‘deep consolidating’ (Hattie & Donoghue, 2016), assisting the PLC creating something good.



## Blue Ocean—2. ‘Syncritic Method’

Comenius offers, an additional method to fundamental and applied sciences. This method he developed in advance of Enlightenment turned into like a standard, the Eurocentric paradigm. Comenius’ method comprises of Analytical method, Synthetic method, and Syncritic method (Comparative method) (Woldring in Goris et al., 2016; Woldring, 2016). Where ‘Analysis’ takes a phenomenon apart to its smallest detail ‘Synthesis’ reconstructs parts towards each other. Subsequently, ‘Syncritic’ to compare phenomena to detect potential correlations. The syncritic method by means of practical acting appears to realise specific improvements of mankind. Improvement of mankind can be connected to worldviews’ common virtues and developing ethical leadership. Woldring (in Goris et al., 2016, p. 23) concludes ‘Comenius’ syncritic method does not produce but may instead generate hypotheses that should be investigated by empirical research’. The syncritic method may contribute towards ethical leadership development, and to the ‘Agenda of Peace’ (United Nations, 1992 in Goris et al., 2016). Here-with, Comenius’ syncritic model appears actual.

Making practical use of the syncritic model can be achieved by comparing phenomena among sciences, and in detecting correlations. An example is connecting schools of thought originating from different sciences like a school of economics with a school of theology. Currently Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands, has an Institute for Theology connected to Erasmus School of Economics (Erasmusmagazine, 2019). As Van Geest stated:

The idea behind interdisciplinary collaboration between theologians and economists is that we can help each other by asking each other questions inspired by our own discipline. This will help us get a different perspective on one of our objects of research – human beings – which will give us a more realistic perspective. (Erasmusmagazine, 2019)

In educational practice comparable approaches are possible, e.g., by making use of other sciences like anthropology, economics, psychology,

sociology, etc., within day-to-day practice like learning from each other. In this fusion, creating new possible ways of seeing and knowing.

### Blue Ocean—3. 'Comprehensive Analogies'

To assist and increase understanding of Comenius syncretic or comparative method, Woldring (2016, pp. 137–140) introduces a philosophical theory by Dooyeweerd (1953–1958). This theory analyses all kinds of entities (e.g., things, flora, creatures, phenomena, etc.) using differentiating modal aspects, e.g., arithmetic, physical, psychic, moral, religious, etc., from reality. These modal aspects are regarded circles of law, while having their own legality or standard. Dooyeweerd is interested in reality of variety, as well as mutual connectedness. His philosophy elaborates by means of theory of analogies. The theory of Dooyeweerd can be compared to Comenius. For instance, within education introductory aspects are related to individualism, pedagogic, psychic, etc. Also, analogies in anticipation of modal aspects are present, e.g., lingual, social, economic, moral, belief, etc. By analysing modal aspects, Dooyeweerd examines a diversity of phenomena, events, and processes. Thereafter, he seeks for analogies between the modal aspects on preliminary and consequential factors. He, in contrast to Comenius, did not search for analogies among sciences. Woldring, however, stipulates this search for modal aspects among sciences an interesting approach, as this may broaden insights (Woldring, 2016, p. 140). A comparable advice is provided and stressed upon by Ngūgĩ wa Thiong'o: 'How people perceive themselves affects how they look at their culture, at their politics and at the social production of wealth, at their entire relationship to nature and to other things'. (1986, p. 16).

An approach to practically making use of the connection of the comparative method and actual epistemological thoughts, like e.g., Enlightenment, and/or world-philosophies within a PLC means being open to all schools of thought, thus requiring 'emptied mind' (*ledic gemüete*). This new sense of a pluriversity in possibilities of new knowledge making creates challenge within meaningful reflection, as the

default understanding of the new learner may be biased by the conditioning of learnt principles. These can be overcome. Next to having an 'emptied mind' the willingness to compare potential correlations maybe helpful. Ngūgī wa Thiong'o (1986, p. 100) sees this as a study the own culture for symmetry with comparative societies. The search for modal aspects and comparing these by using a common language, may create a mutual deeper understanding. Thinking over Comenius theory of analogies in relation to thinking along modal aspects of comparable virtues as present within the pluriveristy of world-philosophies and epistemology, could be of interest to achieve analogies. As a result, by assisting peer-review, as well as assisting self-development of learners, improving professional relations, and achieving 'something good'.

### **Reflective Analogy**

*The professional learning community of the Charming School gradually not only became more aware of each other's backgrounds. This is a result of their opening up of thinking, feeling, and listening to the divine voices. At the same time, while comparing colleagues' ideas, they developed new educational directions. Why? They saw parallels within their differing experiences, that were beneficial towards their learners. Their practical skills, curiosity, willingness, and skilful educating gradually changed towards achieving professional emotions, the 'thrill' (Hattie & Donoghue, 2016, p. 9).*

## **Associating Perspectives and Needs**

The needs expressed within the 'Blue Ocean' stimulate and generate renewed thinking about the importance of an 'emptied mind': 'thinking' and 'feeling'; 'syncritic': interdisciplinary cooperation and 'Comprehensiveness': using a comprehensive common language within PLCs. The three perspectives: Learning from each other; Assisting development of the other, and Connecting virtues of ethical leadership, were not meant as an introduction on underlying knowledge. The objective was to provide, next to common ground, food for thought on how to learn with,

from and to each other. It is recommended to further think over these three perspectives and the three 'needs' within inter-collegial peer-review, as part of creating and being a PLC.

The pluriverse of world-philosophies and its related and common virtues supporting ethical leadership, are recommended to be involved to assist to develop oneself and the other. These recommendations are connected to ancient and actual insights. For instance, realising assistance of self-development of both educators and learners' virtuous behaviour requires both to achieve learning outcomes, while based on common denominators, though not related to one epistemology. It is, therefore, recommended to make use of the 'emptied mind' and to be open, affective, towards other schools of thought.

## Binding and Bonding

Decolonising the curriculum by challenging the 'hegemony of Western-centric knowledge', as well as epistemology related to Enlightenment, needs a binding of emptied minds. A bonding professional thrill, to together achieve a 'deep consolidation' of three angles of 1. 'being inspired', 2. 'thinking', and 3. 'feeling' Bringing these into 'being aware', preceding 'wanting' and 'doing' (Meeuwsen, 2022), is key. Stimulating virtuous behaviour, while making use of common denominators, described from world-philosophies of comparable virtues assists the development of educators, learners, and future leadership. Meaningful-oriented reflecting within a PLC is an important transformative tool. This while, at the same time, an active decolonisation of curricula is executed. As De Sousa Santos (2007, p. 53) states: 'The struggle for global social justice must, therefore, be a struggle for global cognitive justice as well'. All together now, leading towards 'Something good'.

### Reflective Analogy

Once a while, the Charming School's professional learning community takes a climate-friendly green train, for their pluriverse field trip to the blue ocean. Next to meaningful learning from each other, addressing the now more conscious needs, enjoying a 'gezellige'<sup>1</sup> company and having fun together, stimulates their educational thrill. Global social justice, all together now, leading towards 'Something good'.

The weather is nice, the environment is more than cool, and the sun...? Never sets.

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<sup>1</sup> **Gezellig**: Dutch for cosy, enjoyable, intimate, pleasant, welcoming, etc.

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