

Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector

Written Submission

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Introduction

The purpose of this submission is address the numerous issues relating to primary education in Ireland. It will discuss:

1. The Historical Context of Education in Ireland;
2. What Education Should Be and What it is Not;
3. Informed Consent;
4. Why There is No Need for Different Types of School – All Children are the Same;
5. Why religion must not be taught in schools, especially primary schools;
6. Why does the State Permit and Sponsor the Mind-Control of Our Children?

A conclusion, enumerating the steps that I believe are essential to providing our children with a fully inclusive, secular, fact-based education and which protects the rights of teachers to teach without using mind-control techniques to indoctrinate children as young as 4, is also included.

The Historical Context

This is, possibly, a question that is rarely, if ever, asked in government circles. Our Constitution, written by Eamon de Valera (an American of Cuban/Irish descent) and Archbishop John Charles McQuaid (an ultramontanist) and – as was revealed when the 1937 Foreign Affairs papers were released – which was sent by de Valera to the head of a foreign state – Pope Pius XI – for approval,¹ abdicates the State’s responsibility to provide education to our children by using the words, in Article 42.4: “The State shall provide *for* free primary education” rather than “The State *shall provide* free primary education”. Doubtless this was a requirement of Archbishop McQuaid to ensure that indoctrination of the very young by the Roman Catholic Church would proceed unhindered.

But, in spite of Article 42.1 of the Constitution listing the provision of “religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education”, in that order, as the priorities of education, in the real world, the priorities of education, indeed, the very purpose of education is to enable individuals to reach their full potential as human beings, individually and as members of a society.

What Education Should Be and What it is Not

One definition of education is: “bringing up or training, as of a child: instruction: strengthening of the powers of body or mind: culture”²; another is: “the act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and generally of preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life”³.

What education is not is the limitation on a child’s thinking processes by teaching him or her that irrational, superstitious and supernatural theories are absolute fact.

Informed Consent

In society in general, we work on the principle of informed consent. Clearly, a child does not need to give informed consent to be taught how to count, how to add up numbers, how to read, how to write, how the bombardment of an atom of Uranium-235 by a neutron produces Krypton-92 and Barium-142 along with energy and 2 neutrons to continue a nuclear fission chain reaction.

Clearly, a 4- to 6-year-old child is far too young to be able to understand nuclear physics and this is a subject that is properly left until leaving certificate – when the child is capable of reasoning, understanding the difference between fact and theory and questioning what they are being taught.

Why There is No Need for Different Types of School – All Children are the Same

When a child is born, it is not “A Roman Catholic”, “A Muslim”, “A Jew”, “A Rastafari”, or “A Pagan”. All that can be said of a child, in relation to religious belief or non-belief, is that the child is the son or daughter of parents who are adherents of a religion, are agnostic or are atheist. There is not, and nor can there possibly be, any empirical evidence whatsoever that any child can be a member of any religion or have any supernatural belief or faith without that child having been indoctrinated to so believe.

So, at birth, all children are identical in respect to religious belief and faith... they don't have any. What changes that situation is adults who think that indoctrinating children with theories about:

- a man flying to a heaven on a winged horse;
- a man being crucified, dying (after only three hours) and coming back to life again;
- fear of death because you have “sinned” and will be “punished” for “eternity”;
- an all-seeing, all-knowing being watching and hearing every single thing you do; etc., etc., etc.

And the reason adults inflict these theories onto the minds of, now very confused, children is that exactly the same thing happened to them.

Education is not about differences, it is about the truth being the truth, a fact being a fact and fantasy being kept well away from reality.

There is frequent mention of “diversity”, “beliefs”, “traditions”, etc., in the forum's brief. It appears peculiar that matters such as these should play any part whatsoever in a child's actual education. Is there a culture that claims $2 + 2 = 5$, rather than the more popularly accepted 4? Is there a belief system that says that, in the English language, a noun is a word used to describe an action or that gerunds do not end in “-ing”? Is there a tradition that has it every action does not, in fact, have an equal and opposite reaction? Even if such bizarre concepts did exist, surely it is the duty of the State to protect children from such arrant nonsense and not permit it to be taught to very young children as fact.

Final proof, if proof were really needed, is the **fact** there are innumerable religions on the planet, each one claiming to be the **one, true religion**. It is blindingly obvious that, since the stances taken by different religions are, well, different, **they cannot all be fact**. It is, therefore, logical to assume that none of them are fact and, therefore, not suitable material to be taught as fact to anyone, especially to children as young as 4 years old.

Why religion must not be taught in schools, especially primary schools

Of course, we wouldn't allow children as young as 4 or 5 to be told, categorically, that something that has absolutely no empirical evidence of its truth is not only true but that it **must** be believed and even though there is not a shred of proof of its existence, you **must** have faith in it; would we?

Well, of course we do. That privilege is reserved for religion. There is nothing else in school curricula that even approaches such a breathtaking ignorance of children's right to freedom of thought.

We do not have schools for the children of supporters of specific political parties that indoctrinate 4- to 6-year-old children with the thoughts of those parties and teach them that all other parties are wrong and inferior. We do not have schools that separate children based on genetic or DNA differences and teach them that they are the only *true* race and all others are false or inferior. We do not separate children based on their blood group, hair colour, eye colour or foot size and then tell them – indoctrinate them for life – with the idea that *their* blood group/hair colour/eye colour/foot size is the only true blood group/hair colour/eye colour/foot size and all other blood groups/hair colours/eye colours/foot sizes are false. But we persist with this irrational notion that we should permit the separation of children, at the age of 4, and allow them to be indoctrinated, and to have mind-control techniques used on them, to force them to believe that the particular supernatural, invisible, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient being that their parents were indoctrinated into believing in, is the *only true* supernatural, invisible, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient being and that all other supernatural, invisible, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient beings are *false* supernatural, invisible, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient beings and the people who follow those supernatural, invisible, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient beings will be subjected to eternal damnation and suffering in a place called hell unless they convert to believe in the *only true* supernatural, invisible, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient being.

Does that **really** make sense? Can that **really** be the basis upon which we start our Nation's children's journey of education? Is it **really** the right thing to do to deliberately – and with State acquiescence and financial sponsorship – start the process of indoctrinating children with the notion that they are different and superior to all other children because *their* supernatural, invisible, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient being is the *only true* supernatural, invisible, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient being and that the other children must be mistrusted because they are wrong and will burn in hell? And all this starting off at the age of 4?

Because the existence of a supreme being has never been proven, the idea of any religion was, and remains, simply a belief, a myth, a superstition and unproven. Of course, religions tell you that is the “mystery” of religion and that their god will never reveal itself because you must have “faith” but we are talking about the indoctrination of 4- to 6-year-old children here. A theory is a proposition to be proved. For a theory to be proved, it must be subjected to the scientific method. The scientific method is:

1. **Use your experience:** Consider the problem and try to make sense of it. Look for previous explanations. If this is a new problem to you, then move to step 2.
2. **Form a conjecture:** When nothing else is yet known, try to state an explanation, to someone else, or to your notebook.
3. **Deduce a prediction from that explanation:** If you assume 2 is true, what consequences follow?

4. **Test:** Look for the opposite of each consequence in order to disprove 2. It is a logical error to seek 3 directly as proof of 2. This error is called affirming the consequent.

In effect, for a theory to be accepted, experiments must be peer reviewed and repeatable. And it needs to be stated, loud and clear, that it not logically feasible to prove a negative and it is not scientifically possible to prove a negative. It is for those proposing a hypothesis such as there being a single, invisible, supernatural, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient being that created the universe as, of course, it is described in the Bible which, as we all know, is the direct word of God to prove that hypothesis.

As scientific investigation has shown, God was absolutely correct in describing His own creation. This in spite of the fact that He seems to have plagiarised the ca. 17thC. BCE Enûma Eliš – which, in itself is odd – it’s almost as though someone preceded God!

Science has now proven that, as God described it:

- The earth is a flat disc, and not an oblate spheroid⁴;
- The earth has a solid roof and is absolutely not surrounded by a vacuum called “space” that is also occupied by other celestial objects⁵;
- The disc that is the earth is both surrounded by and sitting on water and, again, is absolutely not an oblate spheroid surrounded by a vacuum called “space” that is also occupied by other celestial objects.⁶

Of course, the above is clearly nonsense – but that is “what is written” as “the word of God” and so **must** be accepted as the literal word of God by all Christians.

And then there’s the scientifically proven fact of evolution by natural selection. Originally itself a theory, by its being subjected to rigorous, peer reviewed scientific method, it has now been conclusively shown to be fact. Any scientific, rational attempt to disprove the theory has failed, in every respect, to disprove it and, as time goes on, and new fossilised species are discovered, the strength of the theory increases. Meanwhile, the monotheistic God theory, after 5,000 years, still has not a shred of evidence in its favour.⁷

After this process, is our State going to be ridiculed again by us having to hear that famous quote of Christopher Hitchens ringing in our ears: “Forgotten were the elementary rules of logic, that extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence and that what can be asserted without evidence can also be dismissed without evidence”⁸?

It is not the place of educators or, indeed, **anyone** to be instructing very young, deeply impressionable children in a theory as though it were scientifically proven fact. It is most certainly not the place of the State to be condoning and funding such abuse of the minds of children.

Religion breeds hatred and bigotry. How can we, as rational, thinking beings, supposedly at the pinnacle of intelligence on this planet, stand by whilst children are force-fed, using mind-control techniques, the concept that irrational, blind faith is a good thing – just because they’ve been told to believe it is so; as opposed to being taught the importance, the vital importance, of rational analysis of evidence, and the scientific method, to guide the intelligent human mind in its decision making process of whether to believe or disbelieve any hypothesis?

It is not only Islam that has created fanatical murderers. Christianity has succeeded in being responsible for the creation of those who murder anyone they feel is involved in abortion in the United States. So warped is society by religion, in South Dakota new legislation was proposed, as recently as February this year, to permit the defence of justifiable homicide in cases where anyone attempting to abort a foetus was murdered.⁹

In Ireland, I have personally witnessed hate-filled, venomous and vitriolic verbal assaults on women, transgender people and homosexual and lesbian people. These foul and abusive attacks on fellow human beings do not happen because, one morning, the offenders woke up and a personal, original thought that women should be second-class citizens with no personal control over their own bodies; that individuals – probably with genetic (chromosomal) irregularities and/or incorrectly formed genitalia – who have to live with the deeply damaging psychological problems, are mentally ill and need Jesus to “save” them, rather than operations to give them the life they so desperately seek; that gay people are evil sinners¹⁰ and by “praying to Jesus” they, also, will be cured.

Why does the State Permit and Sponsor the Mind-Control of Our Children?

The question must be put, then, why does the State pay for 4- to 6-year-old children – and older – to have recognised brainwashing and mind-control techniques used against them to force them to believe the unproven theory of religion?

No one can possibly attain their full potential when they have been subjected to illegal and harmful

- c. proudly and openly declare our Nation's guiding principle to be one of enlightenment, progress through science and the pursuit of freedom from superstition and irrationality;
- d. include an article requiring the State to provide (as opposed to "provide for") primary education;
3. The State takes over ownership and control of all primary schools;
4. Religion, religious symbols, any apparel or other objects that distinguish one child from another on the basis of religion and any use of any religious teachings to "explain" natural, scientific, or any other matters, are banned from all primary schools;
5. The matter of ethics, morals and social responsibility shall be taught against the factual background of evolution by natural selection and associated with the pre-religion requirement that homo sapiens, in common with many other species – primates or otherwise – evolved to a state that required us to be sociable and generally "good" to each other in order to survive as a society. (It would also be extremely useful to teach the need to comply with the laws of the State for the mutual good of all but that's another day's work.);
6. Evolution by natural selection will be taught, as the fact that it is, alongside the fact of gravity, the fact of the earth being an oblate spheroid, the fact that the universe is between 3 to 5 billion years old – and science is narrowing that gap all the time, the fact that DNA research, fossil research and rapid inter-breeding research has proven beyond any rational doubt whatsoever that evolution by natural selection is a fact;
7. A poll is to be taken of the parents of all the children in the State under the age of 5 to ask for their preference between their children being taught through the Irish language or the English language. The results of the poll will indicate the number of places required to be provided in each area for each language. In the event initial difficulties with the accommodation of children whose parents' wishes are difficult to follow, the majority will rule, in the event of a 'tie', Irish, being the first language of the State, must prevail;
8. Teachers will be required not to teach or mention religion inside school in any manner whatsoever;
9. No one will be permitted to enter school premises to teach, preach or advertise any religion or faith.

I have enclosed a copy of a set of DVDs of Channel 4 documentaries featuring Prof. Richard Dawkins. These are as follows:

Root Of All Evil?: Nine months before the release of his million-copy bestseller *The God Delusion*, Richard Dawkins had the world buzzing with his television documentary *Root of All Evil?* The 2-hour program highlights the dangers of faith and religion in the 21st century, and asks people of reason to say "Enough is enough!"

The Genius Of Charles Darwin: Dawkins on Darwin celebrates the 150th anniversary of the publication of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and shows how evidence supporting the theory of evolution has been accumulated by scientists ever since Darwin's stunning discovery. In addition to explaining Darwin's ideas, Dawkins also shows how the intellectual journey undertaken by Darwin led inevitably to an atheistic world view. For, once nature could be explained by the theory of evolution, it simply wasn't necessary to continue with the idea that God was responsible for all Creation.

The Enemies Of Reason: Richard Dawkins looks at how health has become a battleground between reason and superstition. A third of us now spend a total of over 1.6 billion a year on superstitious alternative remedies, but 80% of them have never been subjected to properly conducted trials.

I respectfully request that the members of the forum spend the time necessary to view these DVDs, especially *Root of All Evil?* This deals with, amongst other things; the irrationality of those visiting

Lourdes for a cure (of the over 200,000,000 visitors to Lourdes, only 67 claimed “miracles” have occurred [0.0000335% - in mathematical terms, “zero”.]); the absurd stance of believers against the fact of evolution by natural selection (they point blank refuse even to investigate the overwhelming evidence in favour); the hatred that exists in Jerusalem between people who have been brought up in school to believe different fairy stories from their contemporaries and; the deeply harmful effects of secular education.

We have before us a once in a lifetime opportunity to take a massive step towards removing myth, superstition and supernaturalism from the curricula of Irish schools and replacing it with a solidly science based, fact based, rational, ethical and secular education where all children – who are equal at birth – remain as equal as the State can keep them.

We speak of a “Smart Economy”. If we continue to blinker our children, if we continue to erect a psychological barrier to reason and science in our youth at the earliest possible opportunity, if we continue to indoctrinate our children to believe the fantasy that is religion... then we consign our future to the irrationality, superstition and supernaturalism of the past and “smart” will never be an adjective possible of being applied to our Nation, let alone our economy.

For the sake of a peaceful society, for the sake of a future of uninhibited opportunities and, most of all, for the sake of our children, please do not let this chance to rip ourselves free of the ignorance of the Middle Ages slip through our fingers.

And Finally...

Anyone who really and truly believes in, and has faith in, a single, invisible, supernatural, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient being that created the universe, must, deep-down, absolutely **know** that their version of this being is *so* all-powerful He doesn't need their help to make His message heard to anyone that He wishes to hear it. So why bother with sectarian schools or religious teaching at all?

Suggested Further Reading

Darwin, C., *On the Origin of Species: By Means of Natural Selection or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, 1859, Pub. Various, out of copyright.

Dawkins, R., *The God Delusion*, 2007, Pub. Black Swan; New ed. with additions

Harris, S., *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*, 2006, Free Press; New ed.

Hitchens, C., *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*, 2008, Atlantic Books

Moncrieff, S., *God: A User's Guide*, 2006, Poolbeg Press

¹ http://www.difp.ie/publication-reviews/difp_irishtimes_25Nov06.pdf

² Chambers English Dictionary

³ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/education>

⁴ He who sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, the inhabitants of which are like grasshoppers, stretches out the heavens like a cloth, spreads them out like a tent to live in. [Isaiah 40:22]

Thus says Yahweh, your redeemer, he who formed you in the womb: I, Yahweh, have made all things, I alone spread out the heavens. When I hammered the earth into shape, who was with me? I, who foil the omens of soothsayers and make fools of diviners, who confound sages turning their knowledge into folly, who confirm the word of my servant and make the plans of my envoys succeed; who say to Jerusalem, 'You will be inhabited,' and to the towns of Judah, 'You will be rebuilt and I shall restore the ruins of Jerusalem'; who say to the ocean, 'Dry up! I shall make your rivers run dry'; who say to Cyrus, 'My shepherd.' He will perform my entire will by saying to Jerusalem, 'You will be rebuilt,' and to the Temple, 'You will be refounded.' [Isaiah 44:24-28]

God called the dry land 'earth' and the mass of waters 'seas', and God saw that it was good. [Genesis 1:10]

God made the two great lights: the greater light to govern the day, the smaller light to govern the night, and the stars. God set them in the vault of heaven to shine on the earth, to govern the day and the night and to divide light from darkness. God saw that it was good. [Genesis 1:16-18]

He made the great lights, for his faithful love endures for ever. The sun to rule the day, for his faithful love endures for ever. Moon and stars to rule the night, for his faithful love endures for ever. [Psalms 136:7-9]

'Yahweh created me [wisdom], first-fruits of his fashioning, before the oldest of his works. From everlasting, I was firmly set, from the beginning, before the earth came into being. The deep was not, when I was born, nor were the springs with their abounding waters. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, I came to birth; before he had made the earth, the countryside, and the first elements of the world. When he fixed the heavens firm, I was there, when he drew a circle on the surface of the deep, when he thickened the clouds above, when the sources of the deep began to swell, when he assigned the sea its boundaries – and the waters will not encroach on the shore – when he traced the foundations of the earth, I was beside the master craftsman, delighting him day after day, ever at play in his presence, at play everywhere on his earth, delighting to be with the children of men...' [The Proverbs 8:22-31]

⁵ Isaiah 40:22 (again), see endnote 4, above.

God said, 'Let there be a vault through the middle of the waters to divide the waters in two.' And so it was. God made the vault, and it divided the waters under the vault from the waters above the vault. God called the vault 'heaven'. Evening came and morning came: the second day. [Genesis 1:6-8]

[T]he entire array of heaven will fall apart. The heavens will be rolled up like a scroll and all their array will fade away, as fade the leaves falling from the vine, as fade those falling from the fig tree. [Isaiah 34:4]

The pillars of the heavens tremble, awe-struck at his threats. [Job 26:11]

Then the earth quaked and rocked, the heavens' foundations shuddered, they quaked at his blazing anger. [2 Samuel 22:8]

⁶ See endnotes 4 and 5, above.

⁷ This assumes that monotheism was introduced after Zoroaster's pre-historic little think about all the gods around at the time and, of course, the obligatory – and again strangely unwitnessed – direct contact with only one of them.

⁸ Hitchens, C., *Mommie Dearest*, Slate, 20th October 2003, <http://www.slate.com/id/2090083/>

⁹ “*South Dakota Shelves Bill Aimed at Defending Unborn*”, New York Times, 16th February 2011 ()

¹⁰ One of the most oft quoted verses of the Bible that condemns homosexuality is Leviticus 20:13 – “The man who has intercourse with a man in the same way as with a woman: they have done a hateful thing together; they will be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads”. What has always intrigued me – and still does – about those who base their irrational and despicable hatred of gays on that verse is:

- do they eat bacon sandwiches? (Leviticus 11:4-8; pig meat is “unclean”.)
- do they eat lobster, crab or prawns? (Leviticus 11:10; shellfish are “detestable” or “an abomination”, i.e., eating them is exactly the same as homosexuality as defined in Leviticus 18:22.)
- have they ever argued with their parents? (Leviticus 20:9; such people – including children, presumably – are to be murdered but, given that we have no death penalty and they must die, perhaps they should commit suicide. Another interesting point about Leviticus 20:9 is that it is only four verses before 20:13 and therefore just has to be accepted as equally valid.); and finally, and most relevant to farmers of faith who condemn homosexuality;
- do they cross-breed cattle, do they ever sow more than one type of grain in the same field and, finally and probably most importantly, do they wear cotton/polyester mix shirts? (Leviticus 19:19; “You will keep my laws. You will not mate your cattle with those of another kind; you will not sow two kinds of grain in your field; you will not wear a garment made from two kinds of fabric”.)