CHAPTER THREE

IDEOLOGIES AND INCLUSION

The secular principle, as a guiding compass, can steady the rudder of education’s purpose. But there are other influential ideas that may act as ‘masts’ and ‘sails.’ In recent years, education has been shaped by the relatively new notion of ‘social inclusion.’ This idea has an important role to play in developing secular religions and ethics in public schooling. Secular R&E, as outlined in Chapter 1 combines learning ‘about’ and ‘from’ religions and ethics in a plural, neutral and critical manner.

A socially inclusive world values diversity. It is one in which “We are not dreaming of a world where everyone is like us” but where “difference is our most important renewable resource.” Social inclusion is worth examining here because it adds a specific, operational dimension to the governance notions inherent in the secular principle. While ‘secular’ derives power from the institutional structures of the state, the term ‘inclusion’ reaches at once, further back into the abstract, into the ideologies of education, and also further out, into the nitty-gritty of particular democratic and educational processes. For this reason, it is important to explore the function of ideology as it relates to education in general. This examination provides useful terms for describing ideological differences which affect how religious diversity is managed, enabled or discouraged and how social inclusion as a policy platform might be enacted in school religion programs.

Three ‘Flavours’ of Ideology—Conservative, Liberal, Critical

From any point on an ideological spectrum, education is a mechanism for social engineering. It can be used well or poorly. Approaches to implementation can sometimes be a matter of personal political taste. Jenks, Lee and Kanpol distinguished three ideologies of education which have particular application to cultural studies and teaching about religions: “conservative,”

---

“liberal” and “critical.”\textsuperscript{2} These terms outline ideologies of education which align with notions of exclusion and inclusion. Clarification of these terms is helpful in examining the rhetoric for (and resistance to) secular R&E in public schools internationally.

\textit{Conservative—Classical Liberalism}

There is difficulty with the breadth of meaning implied in the term ‘liberal.’ In some contexts it may invert to its opposite. For example: “what in Europe is or used to be called ‘liberal’ is, in the USA today ... called ‘conservative,’ while in recent times the term ‘liberal’ has been used there to describe what in Europe would be called socialism.”\textsuperscript{3} The terms classical liberal and modern liberal also describe these differences. In Australia, the Liberal party is the conservative party but ‘small-L liberal’ designates a political progressive. Hayek pointed out that “none of the political parties which use the designation ‘liberal’ now adhere to the liberal principles of the nineteenth century.” Indeed, a nineteenth-century classical liberal is now a neoliberal and a cultural conservative.\textsuperscript{4} The important thing to remember in this confusion is that ‘liberal’ can be used by both conservatives and progressives.

A conservative ideology favours cultural homogeneity, or monoculturalism. The stance assumes that the conditions for justice exist in a competitive market and that the aim of schooling is to “assimilate students into the mainstream culture and its attending values, mores, and norms.”\textsuperscript{5} In some western democracies (England, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Germany), historically this has meant teaching non-denominational Christianity in state schooling. More recently, in the context of some Christian religious instruction, this ideology has partnered with religious fundamentalism and resulted in reductionist versions of the Christian tradition. Rather than focusing on Mosaic law (beginning with the ten commandments) as ethical edicts, or on the teachings of Jesus as a type of Greek, Platonic philosophy regarding the transcendent;\textsuperscript{6} some conservative Christian RI teaches Bible stories as historical fact. This extremist ideology tends to view the

\textsuperscript{5} Gray, (1998), 90.