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Exploring the Worldviews of the Non-religious in Norway

Understanding the “other” and how they
understand themselves

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A Master’s Program in Science of Religion - REL4990

60 student points

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Spring 2021

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Acknowledgements

This thesis has been a journey in many ways. I have grown as a person. Started to examine books and texts with a new approach, even fiction. More importantly how to process concepts and ideas. Covid-19 did not make the journey any easier either. However, I am generally thankful it is over. It has been a ride, but I would rather get off now.

To start off, I want to thank my supervisors Dag Øistein Endsjø for what felt like eternal patience. My mind is a scattered mess. You helped me to find the right theory for thesis and it would not have been the same without it.

There are, of course, my friends and family. Listening to me vent about my problems and suggesting solutions to them. Just being there for me. Not sure how this would have been without you guys.

1.0 The Introduction

Building this thesis upon the curiosity of the “other”. The idea of the “other” has interested me for a long time. How they experience the world. It seems on the surface that being non-religious is an outsider position. I wanted to explore the understanding of non-religion within Norway in this thesis. Most of my exposure to non-religious identity had been about the experiences of non-religion in the United States of America. Where it seemed like an antagonistic position to take, shunned by their families for not being religious. However, I had not experienced nor observed this kind of culture in Norway. I wanted to explore how the non-religion expressed itself within the context of Norway. However, I also wanted to look at the diversity of non-religious identifiers. For example, the atheist is one of many identifiers, and it comes in many forms.

In the exploration, I wanted to see how they viewed the world. If they had specific experiences and values that differentiated them and if so, how did that appear? To do so, however, I needed a theory that could help me to analyze their views. Using Ninian Smart’s theory of worldview analysis with the terminology developed by Lois Lee in her book *Recognizing the Non-Religious: Reimagining the Secular* (2015) I went ahead to explore the identities and views of the non-religious in Norway.

Ninian Smarts theory is ideal for this sort of thesis for trying to examine the views and opinions of other people. His dimensions helped form questions to ask the participants, as well as looking at their answers later with these dimensions in mind. Smart was a scholar in the study of religion, however, the theory was developed to examine every kind of worldview.

The work by Lois Lee with the terminology helped comprehend the field. It is not that these terms did not exist before Lee’s book, rather she develops a way to understand them. Separating terms, for example, non-religion and the secular. The two have a connection; however, one does not prove the other. As well as there being other terms to signify non-religious. For example, irreligious, areligious, and post-religious. Lee places these terms in relation and context to one another and straightens out confusions between the different ones.

1.1 Research Questions

There are two research questions for the thesis:

1. “What are some of the worldviews of the non-religious in Norway?”
2. “How do non-religious people understand their own identities as non-religious?”

It is important to note the connection between a person's worldview and identity. How we view the world is connected to the framework we use to define ourselves. There is a focus on the specific of their understanding of being non-religious, as well as their views on other identities and non-religious phenomena.

1.2 Background

Norway offers an interesting context to work with; the Church of Norway still stands strong within the country. As of 2019, 69% of the population are members of the Church (Statistisk Sentralbyrå *b*, 2020). The discussion of these statistics will be in more detail later; however, it is significant that a larger portion of the population are members. If they are active members or not is another question. Important to note that there are recorded low levels of members taking part in church services. With the highest being during Christmas, Easter, and other holidays. There are theories that there are many non-religious within the church that for whatever reason have yet to leave the institution.

Another fact to note is that Norway is, still, primarily a Christian nation. Other religions and philosophies are growing. However the largest being other Christian branches with 53.4 % of the memberships in other religions or life stance communities (Statistisk Sentralbyrå *a*, 2020). Nonetheless, Norway has a strong presence of the non-religious organization Human-Etisk Forbund (HEF).

1.3 Division of the Chapter

Beginning the thesis with a discussion of the terms and their history. There has been a steady growth in non-religious research in the last two decades. However, before that, there was not much interest in the non-religious as a field of study. The historical discussion will be about the reasons why. As well as how early theories affected the non-religious studies of today. The change happened in the early twenty-first century. Several events took place that changed the view and interest in the non-religious. Among them are the Islamic terrorist attacks that happened during the early 2000s have had undeniable effects on discourse about religion. Which as well affected the non-religious discourse. The growth of a vocal, non-religious group was another referred to as "new atheists". According to Stephen Bullivant, there was societal changed happening that culminated interest in religious "otherness" (2012, 115-6). He claims there was a growing cynicism and distrust towards institutional religion happening, as well (2012, 116).

Going on in the second chapter to discussing theories. The primary theory for the thesis is worldview analysis that was developed by Ninian Smart. The theory uses seven dimensions to examine and understand the worldview of people or groups. Using, as well, narrative identity theory as a way to explain how these identities are constructed. Through conversation and discussion with other people, the individual develops a self.

The third chapter is about the use of qualitative research interviews within the thesis. There is also a discussion on it as a method. What ethical challenges come with the method. In this chapter, I will present the five participants as well.

The fourth chapter is the start of presenting the analysis of their identities. Discussing how they understand themselves within the non-religious framework. Going on to present and discuss their views on religion. The reason why they are both in the same chapter is that their understanding of religion and religious does say something about their identity as non-religious.

The fifth chapter is about the political and moral views that the participants expressed. It begins with a discussion on if they believe life has some sort of purpose or “meaning”. They all in different ways say it is something self-created and nothing external gives them purpose. Their political and moral views is a way to see what is and is not important in their life. Few of their opinions are unexpected within the societal norms of Norway.

In the sixth and final chapter, there is a discussion of their worldviews within each dimension. How they present their identities. Ending it with suggestions for future research. The participants have similar views on certain subjects brought up, yet they expressed them differently. They understood themselves as “other” to the religious; however, few of them had an apparent negative relationship with religion.

1.4 The Key Concept of Identity

Identity is a repeated concept several times throughout the thesis. A discussion on how it is constructed will happen in chapter three. I wanted to define how this thesis understands identity. Using the definition given by Kristen Elmore, Daphna Oyserman, and George Smith. They say:

Identities are the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is. Identities can be focused on the past - what used to be true of one, the present - what is true of one now, or the future - the person one expects or wishes to become, the person one feels obligated to try to become, or the person one fears one may become (2012, 69).

Identity is an important concept for this thesis, as part of the discussion is how the participants identify themselves and their identities within the non-religious framework. Understanding what using identity means helps in understanding in what way I perceive them when the participants discuss their identity. As well, when I discuss identity I understand it as these “traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is” (2012, 69).

2.0 Understanding How We Got here and What is Non-religion

Starting this thesis with a discussion of the term “non-religion” as an umbrella term. As well as why I am choosing it over other options. Sociologist Lois Lee suggested non-religion as the umbrella term in her book *Recognizing the Non-Religious; Reimagining the Secular* (2015). The book discusses the need for consistent terminology while discussing the religiously “other”, citing it as an issue within non-religious research (Lee 2015). Lee iterated in an interview with *Religious Studies Project* on 23 of February 2018;

One important thing that’s going on is that non-religious people have worldviews and they aren’t recognized clearly enough in the conceptual language we have, or in the academy, for example, or other places in public life. So we have the Sociology of Religion, and it’s not clear how well that makes space for the sociology of non-traditional, nonreligious worldviews, and I’m very much arguing we should do that.¹

In this chapter, I will go into more depth of the arguments for using the term, as well as why I am choosing this rather than others, as my umbrella term. Before that, however, I am going to discuss the development of the field of religious studies as it relates to non-religion. The discussion on history will jump around a little in time now and then. There is a focus on why there has not been much research on non-religion previously. After discussing the terms non-religion and non-religious, I will discuss terms that I encountered during my interviews, among these are atheist, agnostic, humanist, and heathen. Ending the chapter with a discussion on the problematic segments of the terms.

Before beginning, it a good idea to have some sort of definition of non-religion, coming back to it later in the chapter. Lee defines non-religion as “a phenomenon primarily identified in contrast to religion; a stance towards religion identified as other than religious, including but not limited to the rejection of religion (Lee 2015, 203).”

2.1 The Development in Understanding Non-religious Identity

Non-religious is an ambiguous term, but at the same time, it connotes a specific kind of group. As a category, it demonstrates an absence of certain kinds of beliefs and values. If a person identifies as non-religious this means, they do not identify either with religion or as a religious person, or both. Not identifying with a religion does not necessarily mean they do not see themselves as religious. A detailed discussion later in the chapter on what this means. However,

¹ <https://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/podcast/from-non-religion-to-unbelief-a-developing-field/>

other terms have similar definitions, as well as some might disagree with the specifics of the definition. Defining terms that all parties agree upon is a difficult task. As a field of study, it is in development, but it is not in the same state as it was almost two decades ago. Stephen Bullivant and Lois Lee claim that, at the time of their paper, it had made significant progress as a field of study (2012, 19). For example, there are organizations and institutes that support and encourage new research into non-religion. Among these is the Nonreligion and Secularity Research Network (NSRN), founded in 2008 (Bullivant and Lois 2012, 19). Their paper was nearly a decade ago, and the field has grown significantly since. Recently the NSRN, with several universities, finished a big, interdisciplinary research project regarding the diversity and scope of non-religion across the world, called *Understanding Unbelief*.² However, much of this is a recent development when taking in the history of religious studies.

Even though the growth of the field of non-religious studies is relatively recent, there have been a few early contributions through the twentieth century. The most crucial, and still relevant today, is Colin Campbell's book *Towards a Sociology of Irreligion* (1971). The book brings up several subjects that Campbell considers important for the study of people who are not religious. He wrote it hoping it would "stimulate the development of just such a tradition" (vii).

Campbell suggests that one of the reasons why the non-religious were not a research subject was because it was among the upper classes (1971, 2-3). He argues that because it was not widely spread, academics did not consider it an interesting subject (1972, 2-3). However, they viewed religion as common among people. Even if this is true, there are no sources for anyone self-identifying as an atheist before the eighteenth century (Robichaud 2013, 2). It is possible to theorize that certain scholars were non-religious. There is research that suggests that commoners were non-religious in the early modern era as well. Callum G. Brown argues that atheism was possible as far back as the 1000 (2017, 440). Dorothea Weltecke discusses that throughout the Middle Ages it was not rare that we find people that doubted and expressed nonbelief (2013, 1-3). Although she points out, the elites viewed them rather as uneducated fools than threats to society (2013, 13-14). Even if there were atheistic thoughts and ideas, does not mean there were people who actively identified an atheist. Before the eighteenth century, the term atheist was a slur used against opponents from the time of ancient Greece, throughout the medieval era (Bremmer 2006, Weltecke 2013). The people accused of being an atheist more often expressed a different kind of beliefs in God, deemed wrong by opponents, and labeled

² <https://research.kent.ac.uk/understandingunbelief/>

atheist as a way to argue against them (Weltecke 2013, 5). Bremmer traced this attitude throughout history since ancient times in Greece (Bremmer 2006, 22). During the enlightenment, scholars started to view religion and non-religion in a different way. However, Charles Darwin publicizing his theory of evolution during the nineteenth century truly changed the discussion. Not only the dialogue around science and religion but about non-religion as well. It was during this time that Marx, Weber, and Freud developed their theories. As well as the development of the theory of secularization. During the nineteenth century, Gavin Hyman states that Thomas H. Huxley created the identifier agnostic and George Jacob Holyoake started calling himself a secularist (Hyman 2006, 4). Hyman argues they both developed these new terminologies because of the negative association with the identifier atheist (2006, 4). The first known use of the word “non-religious” according to Merriam-Webster was in 1841.³ Jan Bremmer argues that the etymology of atheist comes from the word Greece *atheos* meaning “godless, without gods, godforsaken” (Bremmer 2006, 19, 22). The term, therefore, has the longest history. Perhaps it is why it is often a term that is used in conjecture with non-religious debate and academia. For example, in 2013, Oxford published a book called *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*. It has a chapter on non-religion, by Lois Lee; however, it is primarily about atheism and atheists.

Campbell argues that an additional reason why there is very little research done on non-religion during the development of religious studies is because the early researchers were themselves not religious (1972, 8-9). He argues they viewed religion as an interesting subject to understand, but they viewed that it would give way to the more “natural state” of non-religion (1972, 9). Therefore, the non-religious phenomena were not a necessary nor interesting topic to research. Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi argues in a similar vein (2007, 300). Religion had endured through many eras and researchers wanted to understand how and why. Beit-Hallahmi brings up the non-religious nature of many of the first religious academic, like Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and Max Weber (2007, 300). It was during the beginning phases of religious studies that the secularization theory developed. The secularization theories revolve around that religion would give way to science, and no longer exists. Max Weber called it a cultural disenchantment. Daniel L. Pals puts the theory as faith in the supernatural “gradually dissolve under the pressure of systematic and rationalized patterns of thought” (2015, 150). These ideas continued for several years. However, Michael Ian Borer argues that in the last few decades the secularization theories have changed (2012, 128-133). A reason is that religion has not disappeared, in some

³ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/nonreligious>

ways it has even strengthen its position in society. The western world has gone through great societal changes since the nineteenth century, for example, the plurality of people and religions. These have affected the view on religion and non-religion.

Even if the discussion on religion within academia has shifted from the Victorian era until now, it has not properly integrated non-religion before recently. Bullivant and Lee argue this did not happen before the mid-2000s (2012, 22). Another phenomenon that started around the same time is what the media dubbed “new atheism”. Helmed by, among others, biologist Richard Dawkins and his book *The God Delusion* (2006). Atheists gained a new position in the public sphere. As a subject matter, it stepped away from the isolated academic discussions and into public discourse. Sociologist Grace Davie argues for an upsurge of visible non-religion in Europe, rather than more identifying as such. She adequates it to religion becoming more visible in society and the social and political non-religious is a reaction to this (Davie 2012). Thus, the non-religious moved into the public eye, and they become interesting for social scientists and humanities as well.

Sivert Skålvoll Urstad discusses how other researchers consider Norway one of the most secularized nations (2017, 62). He also points out, in 2012, 75% of the nation were members of the Church of Norway (2017, 62). According to Statistics Norway as of 2019, this has gone down to 69% (Statistisk Sentralbyrå 2020 b). In a study done by PEW research center in 2017, 43% of the Norwegians that answered their survey said they were “religiously unaffiliated” (PEW 2017). “Religiously unaffiliated” does not necessarily mean “non-religious” as this thesis understands it. It primarily connotes a person not a member of any religious or “livssyns” institution. Urstad argues that religiously unaffiliated in Norway is the quickest growing group, similarly to the rest of the western world (2017, 74). He argues as well that in Norway “unbelief was the highest predictive factor for religious unaffiliation.” (2017, 76). There is, as well, the Norwegian *Religionsundersøkelsen* done by The International Social Survey Program in 1991, 1998, and 2008. They found growth of non-believers during those years from 10% to 18% (Botvar 2010, 15). However, it is difficult to quantify what it means for a country to be religious or secular. In the same survey, even if there is a lower percentile that has unwavering beliefs, it still shows that the larger parts of Norwegians believe in something, either it is the Christian God or some higher power (Botvar 2010, 15). Additionally, as Grace Davie argues, the Nordic has a different way of expressing their religion than other parts of Europe (Davie 2013, 77-9). She discusses the lack of hostility towards churches found in both Sweden and Norway (Davie 2013, 77-8). Arguing that, to some extent, the reason for the “way that their religious lives have evolved” is that the population is content and happy (Davie 2013, 78).

In William Einen's study conducted in 2019, he interviews five atheists living in Norway. His participants would reference sciences or use scientific terminology to discuss part of their views (Einen 2019, 122-4). This makes sense, as discussed earlier that the theory of evolution changes much of the discussion.

What is still lacking is worldwide research in the diversity and scope of lived non-religion. As mentioned, a majority of research done on non-religion has been on atheists. Partly because atheism and atheists as concepts have existed longer, agnosticism and secular as identifying terms are historically new. There is, as well, a lack of consensus within the field. The terminology for this field of study is still under development. However, without adequate research on the subject, it can be challenging to discuss it consistently. It is also difficult to research without having clear terminology.

2.2 The Apostate

There have been quite a few terms used to discuss people who do not identify themselves as non-religious. The term non-religion in this thesis is, as mentioned, an umbrella term for all kinds of unbelief. As mentioned earlier it is a way to show a sort of otherness to religion. This does not necessarily mean they have negative feelings or hatred towards religion. It is a way to show what they are not. They are not religious; they do not follow or believe in a religion.

Some of the identifying terms underneath non-religion are atheist, agnostic, humanist, and secular, to mention a few. Research has shown that even under each of these, there are diverse understandings. A group of atheists does not necessarily understand their own identity as the same. Even if the public perception of them is very similar.

2.2.1 Non-religion, Irreligion, and the Secular

As mentioned, the term non-religion is not new, with its first known use in 1841. However, Lois Lee claims it has not gotten any academic definition nor much attention as a term (2012, 131). She gives a developed definition that goes; “non-religion is therefore any phenomenon – position, perspective, or practice – that is primarily understood in relation to religion but which is not itself considered religious (2015, 32).” She uses the analogy of non-violence to clarify the use of the “non” in the term to explain the relation, yet otherness, to religion (2015, 32). Non-religion is dependent on religion to understand what it is referring to, but it has an inherent otherness to it. It limits both what it is and is not. The term has become more prevalent in the last decade. Lee claims there was a change in the discussion regarding non-religion in academia (2016, 3). In the mid-1900 there was a focus on secularism, while in the mid-2000, it included non-religion, secularity, and atheism, as well (Lee, 2016, 3). It correlates with the growth of

interest in non-religion topics that theologians Stephen Bullivant observes happening around the same time (2012, 115-20). Suggesting that there were societal changes taking place in the mid-2000 (2012, 116).

With Lee's definition, she distances the term from the secular. It does not mean they are separate, but the secular and secularism are still their kind of term. She argues that secular is a cultural and political phenomenon, secularism is the theory of the secular (2015, 204). Lastly, secularity is the state of being secular (2015, 204). Unlike non-religion, the secular does not contrast religion. Rather religion is subservient to it. This distinction is important since non-religion does not necessarily equate to a secularized country or state.

Lee also argued the advantage of using "religion" over "theism". Religion as a term is more inclusive than theism, which has Christian connotations. It is her argument against using atheism or atheist as the umbrella term. It can also be because atheist carries with it history, as mentioned. Even if society has gotten more interested in non-religion as a subject and identity, the stigma is still there.

The reason for choosing non-religion over other terms is because of its relationship with religion. Making an explicit distinction within the discussion, which is the "other" to religion.

2.2.2 Atheist

The term atheist has already been touched upon previously. Argued to stem from the ancient Greek word *atheos*. The term is contrasting to the theist, the *a-* meaning without. There are discussions on positive and negative atheists. The former referring self-identifying atheists, while the latter is every other identifier. The wording of a definition somewhat diverges. However, an atheist is in one way or another a person who does not believe in any deities or supernatural entity.

2.2.3 Agnostic

Thomas Huxley established agnostic as a term because he did not identify as an atheist, but he was not religious. Wanting a term that was in-between. Today viewed often as a more ambiguous identifier. Neither believing nor disbelieving in any deities or supernatural entity.

2.2.5 Humanist

Based upon a philosophy concerning the agency of humans and their ability for progress. Becoming associated with the secular in modern times, it emerged as a non-religious identifier. All across the world, there are several humanist organizations.

2.2.6 Heathen

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a heathen as “of or relating to people or nations that do not acknowledge the God of the Bible.” A heathen, by this definition, is anybody that is not Christian. It has associations with pagans and alternative religious practices and beliefs, as well.

2.2.7 Religion

When discussing the non-religious it is important to understand what religion is as it is a central part of the term. However, within the field of religious studies, *religion* does not have one agreed-upon definition. Sociologist Meredith B. McGuire explains that a definition “should be broad enough to include all kinds of religions but narrow enough to exclude what is similar to, yet not the same as, religion” (2002, 8). The latter would be the non-religious and secular phenomenon. Timothy Fitzgerald argues for abandoning the search for a singular definition for the term *religion* (2000). He argues that researchers should view it as a cultural phenomenon, which expresses itself in different ways (2000, 12). Defining religion within the confines of the culture the scholar is examining. However, at what point does the prevailing culture decide the definition. The issue is other religions that are different, fall outside the definition.

McGuire goes on to explain two definition strategies within sociology. The first being the substantive definitions that seek to establish religion based on categories (2002, 8-9). These categories can be intuitions and superhuman beings. Functional definitions, on the other hand, seek to describe what religion does for society or the individual (2002, 11). In attempting to define the functions religions have, they are broader than the substantive definitions.

The definition of religion is significant as it emphasizes what the non-religious groups or people do not consider themselves. If the definition bases religion around belief in a superhuman being, certain new-age groups would fall under the term non-religion. However, this is problematic because such groups may still consider themselves religious even if they do not believe in superhuman beings. As well as if defining religion as a collective function, meaning it serves to bring people and society together. Non-religious organizations like Human-Etisk Forbund (HEF) would be religious. HEF does not reject religious people from joining them; however, it primarily identifies as a non-religious organization.

There will not be a definition of religion given for this thesis. However, it is important to be conscious of how reliant non-religion is on religion. As it is a weakness of the term. It is why other researchers chose other terms. For this thesis, however, serves the purpose of clarifying the framework. The participants see themselves as an “other” to religion and the religious.

2.3 Moving Forward

This chapter has been about the history of the non-religious and a discussion on the term. As well, terms relating to the subject, for example, atheist and agnostic. It is important to note that the discussion of these terms happens within an academic framework. However, the public might base their understanding of these terms on these academic definitions. They are more fluid in real-world application and formed to fit the individual's views and values. As I will discuss in chapter 4, self-identification does not happen in a vacuum. As such, including the academic definition will still gain a certain insight into the participant's understanding of their own identities, even if they shaped the term to suit them.

The term non-religion carries with it the burden of the definition of religion. Within academia, there is debate on precisely how to define religion. Either it is too broad and non-religious phenomena fall within or it is too narrow and certain religions end up outside the definition. Another point Lois Lee argues is that religion is dependent on non-religion (2015, 25). By understanding what the "other" is, there is an insight into the borders of religion. A suggestion a few researchers proposes is to find a name that encompasses religious and non-religious studies. On one hand, because of the issues with defining religion. On the other, there is a bias in researching non-religion from a position of religious studies. Lee suggests "existential culture" (2015, 159). Thomas Coleman suggests "horizontal transcendences" (Taves 2018, 1). There is as well the term "worldviews" as suggested by Ninian Smart (Taves, 2018, 2).

3.0 A Theory of Worldviews Analysis and Identity as a Narrative

In this chapter, I will present all seven dimensions and discuss how to use them for the analysis. I will discuss the narrative identity theory as well. However, before that, the term worldview is relatively vague, yet it also refers to something specific. The word is a translation of the German word *Weltanschauung*. *The Oxford Dictionary of English* defines it as a “particular philosophy of life or conception of the world”. The definition is vague in the sense of how vast it ends up being. Sander Griffioen defines it similarly; “it signifies an inner conviction and an outlook on the world” (2012, 19). The term encapsulates the opinions and attitudes of an individual, or a group has on life. Ninian Smart uses the term as a unifying concept for different religions and ideologies (1995, 2). He argues it is necessary for his *worldview analysis*, as everyone has a worldview whether religious or not. Smart argues that people have different views on life and it is necessary to recognize this to analyze their worldview. He argues to understand the ranges of different worldviews, researchers have to use the tools he developed. Ninian Smart first introduced his *worldview analysis* in the 1969 book *The Religious Experience of Mankind*. At the time, there were six analytical dimensions, but later he developed a seventh.

For an analysis of religion or non-religion, there will be certain differences. Nonetheless, according to Smart, it is possible to analyze secular worldviews with his tools. The dimensions each have their importance for the analysis. Certain dimensions have differentiating significance for religions or ideologies. Smart argues that even though the importance of the dimensions differ in most worldviews, the elements are still in all of them (1995, 7). In part, he solves the issue by giving each dimension two names. In no particular order, the seven dimensions are *Doctrinal* or *Philosophical*, *Mythic* or *Narrative*, *Ethical* or *Legal*, *Ritual* or *Practical*, *Experiential* or *Emotional*, *Social* or *Institutional*, and last but not least the *Materiel*.

To start I will discuss the theory of worldview analysis as presented by Ninian Smart. From here moving on to how I can use Smarts dimensions on the worldviews of the non-religious. Then moving on discuss some issues with the theory, those presented by Timothy Fitzgerald, as well as the issues of phenomenology as a method. To then present the theory of identity as a narrative. Ending with a discussion of how the two theories work together for the thesis.

3.1 The Seven Dimensions by Ninian Smart

Ninian Smart’s primary focus was to develop a cross-cultural model for the analysis of worldviews. Developing the model of worldview analysis, he made a set of dimensions to understand how humans thought and expressed themselves. In creating this model, he wished

to change how religious studies examined religions and ideologies. With the dimensions, the researcher can understand all the different worldviews with the same model. The dimensions are all connected one way or another. One dimension affects how another dimension in turn expresses itself in a worldview.

Being critical of the method that Mircea Eliade used to approach religion, Ninian Smart wanted to develop a more descriptive method to view and understand religion (Rennie 1999, 63). However, he wanted to explore more than religion, hence his focus on worldviews (Smart 1973, 174). Smart argues that there was a need for a dynamic method that explains changes and differences within cultures and history. Smart argues that Eliade rejects the work of the social sciences, therefore restricting his approach to religion (1973, 183). Russell T. McCutcheon calls them possibly competing approaches (McCutcheon 1995, 415).

Smart's worldview analysis is a phenomenological method. Edmund Husserl's work is the basis of modern-day phenomenology (Flood 1999, 96-7). This means that the method attempts to describe experiences or events as they are. The researcher circumvents their own biases and preconceived understandings of the situation, so as not to distort the actual events or experiences they are researching. Achieved through a process of bracketing, reduction of essences, and empathy. Bracketing refers to when the neutral attitude that the researcher needed to have towards their subject, that existed in a sort of vacuum or "bracketed" into its own space. Reduction of essences, also known as "eidetic reduction", reduces phenomena into categories so to simplify the ability to compare and understand the subject (Flood 1999, 92-3). Lastly is empathy, needed to understand the subject, but not necessarily agree. Through bracketing, the researcher can achieve empathy with the subject according to phenomenology (Flood 1999, 93). Ninian Smart prefers to use the phrase "structured empathy" (1995, 14).

3.1.1 Experiential or Emotional

Experiences are a major building block to any worldview. Smart argues that without this dimension religion could not achieve the same status it has in society. The emotional experiences that religion creates are essential in other dimensions. As Smart puts it; "ritual without feeling is cold, doctrines without awe or compassion are dry, and myth which does not move hearers are feeble" (1998, 14).

He discusses two kinds of experiences, the numinous and the mystical, as first presented by Rudolf Otto. The former refers to outer awe-inspiring events and the latter the inner, introspective experiences (Smart 1998, 14).

Finding this dimension within non-religious phenomena, as well, internal and external, yet secular, experiences with significance. An example of an external event could be the concert of a favorite band or a sports team winning a match. Both examples have high emotions, conscious or subconscious rituals, and have a sense of community. An internal experience is a journey from religious to non-religious. A philosophical and introspective journey that fundamentally changes a person's views on the world.

3.1.2 Mythic or Narrative

Myth is not to be confused with the colloquial use of the word. It does not refer to false stories; rather it is stories that hold specific significance. For religion, it is divine or sacred stories. Smart says this dimension is "often tightly integrated into the ritual dimension (1998, 17)." The narrative is important for the construction of the rituals within a religion. The aim of traditional research into religion is about understanding myths, in part because of its central role in religion. An example of a non-religious narrative that holds importance is the theory of evolution. It is a large part of Richard Dawkins's argument against religion and being religious. As well as having defined his career as an evolutionary biologist and ethnologist (Zenk 2013, 4-5). Smart argues that "modernity is part of the myth of modern men (1973, 174)." Narratives are small, as well, being important for the individual. Their choice of narratives to focus on reveals their worldviews.

3.1.3 Doctrinal or Philosophical

Doctrines are, according to Smart, the quintessential truths, as well as the intellectual components within religion (1998, 17, 1995, 101-6). Smart argues that doctrines serve several functions within religion and many have doctrines in one form or another (1995, 91-4). However, primarily it grounds other dimensions into consistent statements for people to relate to or recite. This dimension does also refer to the philosophical parts of our worldviews. Smart uses the German philosopher Immanuel Kant and his ideas as a non-religious example (1995, 93). In a Norwegian setting, there is the Human-Etiske Forbund (HEF), who built their philosophical foundation on the humanist philosophy. Since their foundation, they have conveyed their philosophy out to the world. There is a Norwegian identifier called human-etiker.

3.1.4 Ethical or Legal

The doctrinal and narrative dimensions affect and shape this dimension; however, it is equally important the other way around (Smart 1995, 107). It is the values and moral insight of the worldview. Where the doctrinal is theoretical and intellectual, the ethical is the dimension of

the applied and idealistic. It is the dimension of what a person considers is right and wrong in any situation as dictated by their worldview. Understanding it either through their religion or their secular views, as well as through the culture they grew up in.

3.1.5 Ritual or Practical

The dimension of ritual can be explicit or implicit. Some religions emphasize on the inner experiences during a ritual. Connected to the experiential and emotional dimension, a ritual can awaken nominal or mystical experiences. Certain rituals are about creating a personal experience, while others are about recreating an experience several times. However, Smart argues that there are performative acts, within our social life that act as rituals (1995, 122). A wave or a nod to a friend or neighbor as they pass on the street is a way to show friendly feelings towards each other and reinforce the social bond between the two (1995, 122). Rituals also serve other purposes, such as rites of passage, from one stage of life to another. In Norway, HEF offer secularized versions of religious rituals, such as weddings, confirmations, and funerals.

3.1.6 Social or Institutional

The dimension of social is about community, either spoken or unspoken. Regardless of the scale of the society or group, it has a social dimension. Within societies or groups there typically is an overarching worldview. This affects how the individuals within shape their worldview. Often in line with the overarching one, however, some go against it. These people will often find their group again to share their worldview. Smart discusses how this is increasingly visible in a multicultural nation, where there are a plethora of worldviews (1995, 134). These social groups occasionally come together and create institutions so other people can know the group's worldviews. At other times, an individual acts completely detached from any group. If they do create institutions, it is to gain new members to the group. These institutions might be religious or secular. HEF is an example of a group of like-minded individuals coming together to create an institution.

3.1.7 The Materiel

Materiel dimension is the physical representation of and in the other dimensions. Such as buildings, artworks of any kind, and anything physical that has to do with any other dimension. In a ritual, it is objects used that hold significance. For example, the water used to baptize children or the diploma a person receives when they graduate school or higher education. This object can also cause an emotional reaction, which again is important to a narrative in the worldview.

3.2 “Theory in Effect is an Expression of Worldviews”

As mentioned, the theory is phenomenological. This comes with its issues as discussed by Gavin Flood in the book *Beyond Phenomenology* [1999]. Flood primarily speaks about phenomenology within the study of religion. He identifies three issues with phenomenology, which he argues restricts its possibilities. “The issue of representation and language; the issue of subjectivity and bracketing; and the issue of intersubjectivity ([1999], 99).” Flood discusses extensively the issues within the book and how his solution. However, without going into detail, summarizing them in the lack of acknowledging the context of language and history. As well as how subjective truths work in situations and settings. Reducing statements into categories to generalize individual experiences. Neither communication nor understanding comes from a vacuum. Interpretation and understanding of history come in different ways. Not only by the individual or by groups but also by the historical context that it is read. The researcher cannot truly remove themselves from their contexts either. They have preconceived notions and bias, therefore cannot view the world “in Husserl’s term, an ‘alien world’ (Flood [1999], 112).” Flood suggests a dialogical method, which focuses on being in a dialog with the subject, within the context and language ([1999]).

Phenomenology in its exact and original form has issues. However, as Flood specifies, the researcher does not exist outside of their context. He published the book over two decades ago. Successfully influencing phenomenology with a perspective from religious studies. Phenomenology is still relevant and used today. There is a focus on context and examining the subjects and their context. Students of religious studies are educated to see themselves and their background, to recognize how it affects them. Building theories upon phenomenology does as well come with some of these issues, or some of their own.

Ninian Smart argues using the dimensions to analyze secular worldviews, though initially developed to analyze the worldviews of the religious. Ann Taves argues that this openness is one of the theory’s weaknesses (2017). She points out that without clear distinction it can be challenging to see the difference between a religious and non-religious worldview. Bryan S. Rennie argues similarly, stating “it seems he cannot effectively maintain a distinction between a religious and a non-religious worldview (1994, 6).” This is not the argument of Smart’s theory. The reason why he chooses to use the word worldview is the ambiguity. The reason Smart argues is “whether we have spelled it out ourselves or not, each of us has a worldview that forms a background to the lives we lead (1995, 3).” He developed worldview analysis so that researchers could discover and understand the worldviews of any person,

regardless of their background. Smart goes on to argue that “to see how they work we must relate ideas to symbols and to practice, so that worldview analysis is not merely a matter of listing beliefs (1995, 5).” Perhaps it is reductive to “relate ideas to symbols and to practice”. However, the theory inherits this issue from phenomenology. The theory is nevertheless open to individual experiences. Which was the intention of Ninian Smart when he developed the theory. Intending to be capable of analyzing groups to the individual.

3.3 Identity as a Narrative

According to research psychologist William L. Dunlop, the term of identity can be traced to the works of Erik Erikson, from the late 50s and forward (Dunlop 2017, 1). Erikson argued that during adolescence, the individual starts developing a particular understanding of self. During the development, there is a lot of confusion about their role in society (Dunlop 2017, 1). Erikson calls this an *identity crisis* (1958). James Marcia continues the process of understanding identity by developing a kind of semi-structured interview (Dunlop 2017, 1-2). It was supposed to capture the complexities of how participants understand themselves on several topics and reflect on them (Dunlop 2017, 1-2). During the 80s, there were many theories developed concerning identity. How to form their identities and how the individual understands “self”. Among these were Psychologist Dan P. McAdams, who argued for understanding identity as a life story or a narrative.

McAdams defines narrative identity theory as “an internalized and evolving narrative which provides a person’s life with a sense of meaning, coherence, and temporal continuity” (McAdams 2017, 1). It is a theory that focuses on the narrative an individual constructs for themselves about who they are, who they were, and who they could be. Generated based on several factors; among these is the culture they grew up in and experiences they have had throughout their lives. The process is continued through the life of the individual, a never-ending construction of self. Through having new experiences, meeting people, or being subjected to new cultures and worldviews, the narrative changes. As McAdams and McLean put it, “a narrative identity builds slowly over time as people tell stories about their experiences to and with others” (McAdams and McLean 2013, 235). The people a person chooses to share their stories with are as important as new experiences. This is because “through repeated interactions with others, stories about personal experiences are processed, edited, reinterpreted, retold, and subjected to a range of social and discursive influences, as the storyteller gradually develops a broader and more integrative narrative identity” (McAdams and McLean 2013, 235).

In the context of this thesis, I will not be examining their entire narrative identity as a whole, but a particular part of it, specifically their non-religious one. As mentioned, narrative identity is dependent on the culture that they lived within and came from. A non-religious person will have a different relationship with their identity, religion, and society in different parts of the world. Just in the USA and Scandinavia, there is research that shows a different approach to religion by the non-religious. Phil Zuckerman has done extensive interviews with people from the non-religious framework in the USA and in Denmark and Sweden. He discusses how one of the major differences he found within Scandinavia and the USA, was how they lost faith (2012, 9). In Scandinavia, he heard “time after time—was that their belief in God simply withered with age, undramatically, and without much to-do” (2012, 10). While in the USA, he received quite different answers. He discusses how “for most non-religious Americans, their apostasy was quite intense. It entailed a real personal struggle. It was a dramatic, life-changing experience that they recalled as being very significant and even painful” (2012 10). The narrative his Scandinavian participants convey is different from the one in the USA. They focus on different aspects of their non-religious identities. How it shapes them and why it does. This is because of the culture and relationship the countries have with religion. The non-religious Zuckerman interviewed in the USA had a negative and hostile relationship with religion and the religious (2012, 12-14). While in Sweden and Denmark, the non-religious expressed indifference or “while certainly not religious themselves, they still tend to think that religion is OK” (2012, 12). The culture Zuckerman’s participants grew up in affected their narrative when it came to their non-religious identities and their relationship with religion.

Experiencing a new or different culture and the worldview is going to change your narrative as well. One of Zuckerman’s participants, Morten, moved from Denmark to the USA (2008, 174). While living in Denmark, Morten saw himself as religious (Zuckerman 2008, 175-6). Sometime after the initial interview, they met again in the USA. Morten had lived there for several months and “rather than strengthen or deepen his Christian faith – had caused him to seriously question it” (Zuckerman 2008, 177). Stating it was how religion was such a strong part of politics and mass media, and how different it was from what he was familiar with back in Denmark, that made him question his faith (Zuckerman 2008, 177-81). Changes do not necessarily need to be this grand, nor the experiences. Discussing opinions with friends or family can slightly adjust the narrative, as well.

Understanding identity as a narrative does limit the internal processes. However, it is practically impossible for a researcher to know what it goes on inside the head of another. It is through what they express and how that an individual can be understood. Erikson argues that

there are three fundamental questions to identity formation: “Who am I? How did I come to be? Where is my life going?” (McAdams and McLean 2013, 235).

3.4 Worldviews and Narrative Identities

The two theories have connections between them. When the individual expresses their narrative to others people, they are expressing how they view the world. As well as their worldview influencing how they shape identities. Searching for identity is as well development of a worldview. The two theories complement each other. As Smarts argues “myth thus is the food that feeds our sense of identity” (1995, 89).

Understanding identity creation as a narrative in this thesis will affect how I view their focus when questioned. Both theories rely on other people for certain actualization. Verbalization or specific acts conceptualizes the worldview and makes it real. Identity understood as a narrative relies on verbalizing their understanding of self to others. As alluded to, in the meeting with other worldviews, a person’s identity can go through change.

Worldview analysis is the primary theory for this thesis. Understanding identity as a life-story supports it through understanding the individual on another level. The researcher can comprehend the individual experience and worldviews through qualitative research interviews. In the next chapter, I will go through it as a method.

4.0 Methodology

In this chapter of the thesis, I am going to discuss the used method to collect data. The primary method chosen to collect data is scientific qualitative interviews. I chose this method as it was the best way to find answers to my thesis question. Wanting to explore the worldviews of non-religious people in Norway, I needed to interview people. To explore similarities and differences, as well as their understanding of their own identity.

In this chapter, I will start by discussing the interview as a scientific method. Moving on to how it works from the beginning phases to transcription. Then, discussing the analysis of the transcripts, how it works and different kinds of analyzes methods. In both parts, I will be discussing my own experience with the method and decisions I made along the way. Going on to discuss the ethical dilemmas with qualitative interview as a method and the challenges the researchers need to contemplate upon before, during, and after. Then discussing some personal challenges I experienced through the process. Before some finishing thoughts on the subject of my approach, I end with a presentation of my participants.

4.1 The Interview as a Scientific Method

The method of interviewing individuals is common within qualitative research, though used in quantitative studies as well. The former refers to research done on a small set of people, getting greater, more personal, and information from the subject. It has a quality to the information gathered. While the latter refers to a greater number of participants. The information gathered is used to form generalized statements through statistics or questioners. This is used within qualitative research, as well, however, usually in conjunction with interviews or some other form.

There are different varieties of an interview, as Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann discusses. They have different purposes, though it is not always easy to distinguish them in practice (2015, 4). The journalist searches for newsworthy events to report to society, the therapeutic interview wants to improve the human condition and research interviews strive to create new knowledge (Kvale and Brinkmann 2015, 4). Within qualitative scientific interviews there a variety of types of interviews, as well, with different purposes. Kvale and Brinkmann argue that it is not possible in every interview situation to follow a type of interview (2015, 186). A part of qualitative interviews is the room for spontaneity and be open for certain unplanned topics to come up. Being too fixated on a specific type of interview become a hindrance to the interview. Learning to be adaptable and understand that an interview is rarely static within one type.

Three different ways to structure interviews. One is a highly structured interview. It is possible to compare the highly structured interviews to a verbal questionnaire, with little room for side tracking. On the other spectrum, there is the unstructured interview, where the subjects can talk about whatever they wish, often without a guide. In the middle, there is the semi-structured interview. The interview has specific themes, but it is open for questions and topics to come up as well. Anna D. Bremborg asserts that it is the semi-structured that is the most common interview method (2011, 310).

Bremborg discusses how “there are different epistemological conceptions of how knowledge is actually collected - and created - in the interview situation and in subsequent interpretation (2011, 311)”. The two viewpoints she discusses are the positivistic epistemological view and postmodern constructive epistemological view (2011, 311). Kvale and Brinkmann simplify these two concepts, the latter into the “miner” and the former to the “traveler” (2015, 57). The “miner” explores and uncovers “hidden” knowledge that only the subject possesses. The researcher then “digs” through the material collected through the interview by transcribing and analyzing the material to gain important insight into the field (2015, 57). They view the interview and the data analysis as two separate parts in creating the new knowledge (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015, 58). The “traveler”, on the other hand, travels to new and unfamiliar places, speaks and walks among the natives. Bremborg arguing that they view knowledge as something that is produced, interpreted and constructed (2011, 311). Kvale and Brinkmann explain that the “traveler” views the process of interviewing and data analysis as part of the same procedure in creating new knowledge (2015, 58).

4.2 The Process - From Starting Phases to the Transcripts

It is important to sort out several things before starting to interview people. From developing an interview guide, finding participants that fit, to transcribing, to analyzing the data. At the beginning there needs to be a theme or primary question for the interview; from there develop an interview guide based on the theme, to reach an answer for the question. Bremborg compares the interview guide a tree with many branches, each large branch a main question, smaller twigs are follow-up questions and finally, the buds are new questions and themes that show up during the interview (2011, 315). My theme is about their own understanding of their identity as a non-religious person and their worldviews. This affected how the guide was developed. The guide starts with asking introductory questions, such as age, job and preferred pronoun. Bremborg argues that introductory questions are unnecessary, as the participants could feel like they are being interrogated (2011, 315). However, it seemed like a way to ease in the participants into

the interview, with uncompleted questions. It was as well a good place to ask them how they identified as a non-religious person. Aside from asking them directly how they viewed themselves and their identity, the guide brings up points about certain political and moral attitudes, as well as some questions around their social life. There are things to think about when developing and structure the questions. Bremborg presents some points on developing them, among these are to avoid long questions, questions with a yes or no answer, try to have simple, uncomplicated questions and avoid normative, provocative or confrontational questions, unless it's the purpose of the research (2011, 315). My own interview guide is somewhat more structured. I anticipated certain answers and wrote follow up questions. As well as, in case the participant had a simple yes or no, I had a question ready for them to ask to get a more thorough answer. Part of the reason why I structured it this way was in anticipation of my stress I would forget to follow up on certain interesting points. Social situations similar to an interview make me anxious. Then, sending the interview guide after finishing it to the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD) for approval. This is to make sure it follows the laws and regulations for research in Norway.

Getting approval by NSD meant I was allowed to start interviewing my informants. First, I needed to find them. There are a few ways to gather people to interview. Bremborg propose options like making an announcement, ask individuals in person or inquire from people on official membership list (2011, 314). Another method is snowball sampling, where the initial interviewee helps by bringing their friends and family, who again bring their own (Bremborg 2011, 314). All of them have their advantages and disadvantages, but, as Bremborg points out, “the main question is not who will be reached, but who will not be included (2011, 314).” Referring to how there will be people that cannot be reached or found, and being aware who they might be is more important than who you can. In my own search for informants, I wanted to have a wider range of people. I was aware that finding non-religious people could be a challenge, as a part of them are not necessarily organized. I asked in my social groups, as well as a few non-religious organizations and on a website called Reddit, which has a sub-forum for Norwegians. I was aware that certain kinds of non-religious people would be unavailable or more challenging to find. There are non-religious people who might consider themselves uninteresting to the project.

Another thing to consider is how many people to interview. According to Kvale and Brinkmann it depends on the goal of the research, though they say it can be anywhere in between 5 to 25 participants (2015, 140). Taken into consideration factors such as time and resource restraints when deciding on the number of participants. With a too small numbers, it

can become challenging to test hypothesis or generalize (Kvale and Brinkmann 2015, 140). With a large number, it can become difficult to do in-depth analysis of the interviews (Kvale and Brinkmann 2015, 140). They go on to discuss their observation in newer interviews have a lower number of participants becoming common (Kvale and Brinkmann 2015, 140). In my own thesis, taking both time and resources in consideration, I chose five participants. I selected them after careful deliberation about the theme. From superficial conversation when we initiated contact, they seemed to have a different outlook and worldviews. I will present them later in the chapter.

As I found the informants for thesis, I set up interviews. Seeing how my time was flexible, I let them choose a place and time. There are, however, certain aspects to remember when conducting interviews. Among these are equipment. Before interviewing, there needs to be a decision in how to record the interview. It is possible to do it by notes and memory, however, this method relies heavily on the researcher ability to remember correctly. Human memory has a lot of limitation, and with current technology it is quite easy to document it either with audio or audiovisual. Discussing it with the participants beforehand, so they are aware, and can back-out if they wish. There is required to have explicit permission to record them. There are a few ways to gain this, by verbally talking about it, with a recording stating permission or with a paper with all the pertinent information for them to sign. I did the latter in my own research, asking them if they had any questions after they had read it through. When using audio or audiovisual equipment, location is important, as the noise level cannot be too high or it will affect the recording. I had a professional recorder for a majority of my interviews; however, with the shift in the situation with COVID-19, I had to use other equipment. The options could have been to do interviews over the phone, or video call. Similar to the alternative to video record the participants. The advantages would be the ability to record their body language during analysis process. However, as Kvale and Brinkmann argue it is time consuming to do video analysis (2015, 206). However, the post-lockdown participant choose to do it in written format, as she did not have time to do it any other way. A disadvantage is that her answers will not come spontaneously during the interview. That interview transcribing itself is an advantage.

Another aspect to consider is the researcher own presence and behavior during the interview. Bremborg highlights the importance of being an attentive and relaxed listener (2011, 315). Assuming the interview is going to take a long time, and schedule as such, to give all participants the time needed. My longest interview was 45 minutes, however, I assumed they could take be far longer. Informing them beforehand as well so they could plan around the

interview. Making sure neither of us would suddenly rush the interview, and they could take their time answering each question. Not everybody has the capacity to do, as researcher plan his or her interviews differently. Though Aina L. Hagen and Gro S. Skorpen argues that you should not arrange more than 2 interviews a day as you run the risk of being preoccupied and it is disrespectful to the participant (2016, 91). Being polite and take your time with each question as they are given you their time and opening up to you. During interviews, many takes notes. For example, about body language or your own reflections during the interview. Some write the interview down as well, regardless of a recorder. Bremborg argues it is important if you have an interview in a place with a lot of noise (2011, 316). However, in my own interviews I chose not to. I wanted to give them my full attention, and I was concerned I would not be capable of taking good notes and be a good listener. After each interview, it is smart to write notes on the interview. This is what I chose to do. It also helps to sort out your own thoughts around the interview. On how it went, any feelings around it and if something happen during the interview (Bremborg 2011, 316).

When finished with the interview, it is time to transcribe it. The method is a meeting between the oral and written language. Kvale and Brinkmann discuss the issues with transcription both in practice and in principle (2015, 203-4). A point they bring up is how often people express themselves in differing ways verbally in oral and write form. As such, translating “oral discourse” to the “written discourse” can be a challenge without it sounding stiff or unnatural (2015, 205). Filtered through the mind of the one writing the transcript, certain things will be lost or changed. Bremborg argues that unless the researcher is performing a linguistic study, and “if you plan to work with an analysis based on the content, you could accept a ‘good enough’ version (2011, 216).” Bremborg estimates a transcription of an hour-long recording takes somewhere between 5 to 7 hours (2011, 316). Likewise, Kvale and Brinkmann estimates an hour interview takes around 5 hours, depending on the quality of the recording (2015, 207). If you want it to be as close to the original, it will take a lot longer. If, however, the researcher wants to make sure that it is correct and gets the participants points across, it is possible to send a copy of the transcript to read. This is something I chose to do. Kvale and Brinkmann also points out how if the transcriber changes the sentence too much or some words, there is the risk that the reply can be understood in a different manner then intended (2015, 210). With my own transcripts, I tried to stay close to what the participants said. While leaving out unimportant additions I said, for example, “yes” or “that's interesting”. Unless I asked a new question that came up during the interview or if I change the primary question too much, I did not transcribe what I said. Not transcribing certain filler words. Scrutinizing sentences that changed or ended

abruptly to see if they were relevant to the whole answer or dropping them. Another challenge I faced during the transcribing phase was the fact that some of the participant has dialects. This was an issue for two reasons. The first was whether to write their interviews in their dialect or in Norwegian Bokmål. I choose to go with the latter, as it made it easier for myself later when analyzing. The second was that at times, I did not understand what they meant when using expressions I was not familiar with. There was, as well, difficult to hear what they were saying because of their dialect. Part of the reasons why these were issues for me is that I have dyslexia. I wrote either what I thought they said or guessed the spelling.

4.3 Analysis

There are several ways to analyze the data compiled through the interviews. The most common, according to Kvale and Brinkmann, is coding (2015, 226). Today done by a computer analysis programs. What and how coding works varies from the method. However, coding often refers to finding one or more keywords, such as certain phrases or terms, tied to text materiel, in this case the transcripts (Kvale and Brinkmann 2015, 226-7). These than become developed into “concepts”, that combines the varying codes into some substantial and coherent (Engler 2011, 257). “Categorization” refers to a more systemic way of concept formation from the accounts (2015, 227). The “concepts”, according to Steven Engler, serves as the properties of the “categories” (2011, 257). Kvale and Brinkmann go on to note that, in theory, anything can be coded, however coding is either steered by preexisting terminology or by data (2015, 227). In the former, coding depends on existing codes, or literature on the subject, to analyze the materiel (2015, 227). While the latter depends on the data itself to create codes, interpreting the materiel through them (2015, 227). When the coding depends on preexisting literature, the process of coding will be different. As the developed “concepts” and “categories” already exists for the researcher to use.

Coding is, however, a tool of several methods for analyzing, rather than being one on its own. It can either be part of analysis technique focused on meaning or on language. Once again, it is important to allow for flexibility between the methods and not end up strictly following one. Kvale and Brinkman argue that “many analyses of interviews are conducted without following any specific analytical technique (2015, 267).” With my own analysis, I did not follow any specific technique. For example, using the hermeneutical interpretation of meaning to comprehend what the participants where communicating. In the boundaries of the individual interview, as well as between the participants interviews. In context of the prevailing research and Norway with its own culture of religious and non- religious understanding. How

the different parts affect and define each other. Kvale and Brinkman mention the search for “real meaning” is of no use (2015, 245). It is impossible for the researcher to know what a participant “really means” by their statements. Interpreting meaning from what they say. It is important to be in a conversation with the material in this way. To acknowledge during the analysis and the writing that this is the researcher interpretations of the participants verbalization.

There was, as well, focus on certain linguistic choices. For example, narratives, not guiding the participants to tell narratives, but during the analysis process, take note of when they chose to tell them. As well as how they chose to articulate themselves and words chosen. Kvale and Brinkman refers to the mixing of techniques and tools as bricolage (2015, 267). The data and understanding attained from the interview are viewed as more important than the analytical tool (2015, 267).

4.4 Research Ethics

There are several ethical issues with these methods. The researcher is the primary ethical agent during the process. It is up to the researcher to determine and confirm that the method is within the ethical guidelines. It is, however, more than that, as Kvale and Brinkmann argues (2015, 96). It is connected with the researchers own moral integrity and ability to engage on moral questions with a certain level of empathy, sensitivity and engagement. The guidelines are there to help the researcher, but it is them who much make the decisions.

The Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD), that already been mentioned, and Data Protection Authority (DPA) are two governmental companies that deal with ethical guidelines. NSD as well make sure that research adhere to the laws and regulations in Norway regarding processing and storing private information and data. What and how dealing with the data collected is an ethical conundrum that needs to be taken into consideration. Aina L. Hagen and Gro S. Skorpen discusses how Norway has its own Personal Data Act which states clearly that the participants need to be explicit, informed and voluntary (2016, 179). This is achieved through informed consent, which is why it is a central part of performing interviews as a scientific method. The participants have to be aware of how the information they share is being used. They have to know it is not mandatory for them to participate. Hagen and Skorpen mention that, as well, they will not “gain” any gifts or money from participating (2016, 179). It is an ethically difficult situation to pay the participants for their time. Either it might change how they answer to questions, because they might feel certain obligations or they try to give answers they believe the researcher is searching for. However, this does not mean this is an

absolute and should be considered for each situation. Hagen and Skorpen argue that in certain situation it can be smart to contribute to the community, rather than the individual (2016, 188). The consent must as well be explicit, as there cannot be any uncertainty that they know and approve of sharing their personal information.

Anonymizing their sensitive personal information as well. The participants need to know they can, and will be safe in sharing their opinions and views with minimal repercussions. DPA defines personal information as any information and assessments that can be linked to an individual.⁴ The possibility of using anything from small to the large details to trace who the participants are. Considering not only name, address, phone number, email address and “fødselsnummer” (a national identity number assigned at birth) as sensitive personal information. It is biometrics, IP-address and pattern of behavior as well. Considering certain details that as special categories by the law. From the participants ethnicity or race, to political, religious or philosophical views, to membership in unions, to genetic or health information, to sexual orientation or relationship. One of the primary challenges in researching worldviews and non-religious identity is exactly this line between discussing the subject matter and protecting their privacy. A way to do this is give the subjects new names, not divulge too much of their background or to restrict the access to the thesis altogether. For my own participants, I chose to give them new names, and generalize the area they were from with cardinal directions. Certain quotes were stated rather than quoted, as they gave too much identifying information.

Furthermore, the researcher needs to take into consideration the possible consequences for the participants to take part in the research. Kvale and Brinkmann argue that the researcher needs to consider the ethical principle of beneficence, meaning that the amount of harm coming to the participants must be minimal (2015, 95-6). The researcher must take not only the participants into consideration, but also the group as a whole. Asking questions if the research will subsequently be good, then harmful. Another possible consequence is the role the interviewer can end up in for the interviewee. They might share deep and personal information with the researcher, as such feeling a deep connection with them. Kvale and Brinkmann bring up the therapeutic role the researcher could end up in (2015, 96). This would be more likely to happen in a process where there are several interviews with the same person. Regardless, it is a consequence the researcher needs to be aware of.

Another ethical issue is the transcribing process. This has already been discussed; having said that, it is bears repeating the discussion with ethics in mind. When interviewing an

⁴ <https://www.datatilsynet.no/rettigheter-og-plikter/personopplysninger/>

individual, the researcher can be dealing with sensitive information, as mentioned previously. When this happens, the researcher needs to be considering when writing the transcripts if they should already be anonymizing the participants. Confidentiality is an important part of the whole process. Anonymization should therefore be a part of the consideration at the beginning. Kvale and Brinkmann assert the importance of making sure both the recording and the transcripts are secure (2015, 213). This is because the information shared by the participants is considered sensitive. However, it can be particularly sensitive, for example, a person admits to having broken the law in their youth. As well as other sensitive information that can in some from be used against them.

Kvale and Brinkmann argue that qualitative interviews are perhaps the most complex method of compiling data, as it is unpredictable in nature (2015, 107). When dealing with humans in such an intimate manner, it becomes challenging in the different way than other methods. There have been mentioned many ethical dilemmas when performing this sort of method. There are defiant rights and wrongs in doing scientific, qualitative interviews. A researcher needs to use their own discretion, as well, as the lines are to a certain degree fluctuating. New ethical questions may appear as the process is ongoing. It is during these events, that the researcher needs to use their own empathy, sensitivity and engagement with the data. Ethics are a constant throughout the process of the research. Kvale and Brinkmann argue that it is not enough to learn ethical principles to be an ethical scientific interviewer (2015, 102). According to them, a researcher learns good, practical ethical behavior through “thick ethical descriptions” in contexts, narratives, examples and community (2015, 101). As they say: “it is about learning to *see* and *judge* rather than learning to universalize or calculate (2015, 102).”

4.5 Participants

I conducted five interviews. Two were women and three were men. Ages varied from late twenties to early seventies. All lived currently in the eastern part of Norway, though not all were born in the area.

First up is Charlotte, who is a woman in her early 30s, from and living in a large town in eastern Norway. In her youth and through her teen years, she lived abroad with her parents. When she came back to Norway, she got a bachelor degree in mathematics and philosophy, and a year program of praktisk-pedagogisk utdanning (PPU). She is currently a teacher in upper secondary education.

She grew up a non-religious home. Calling her parents atheist and kind of anti-religion. She identifies as an agnostic and humanist. She is an active member of HEF and was confirmed

there when she was young. Stating it is one of the reasons why she was attracted to the organization in an adult age. As well as the worldviews they promoted and a certain scientific outlook.

After the interview with Charlotte, the interview guide went through certain changes. Either she was asked something the other were not or she was not asked certain questions.

Then there is Rory, a man in his late 20s, from a large town in southern Norway, but moved recently to a large town in eastern Norway. He works with statistics.

He does not identify with any particular identifier, not wanting to label it, stating he is human. His parents are Christians, but he does not consider his upbringing religious, though he went through confirmation in church, which he later officially left. However, he has not joined another organization afterwards. He also expresses uncertainty regarding the difference between atheist and agnostic.

Another participant is Darwin. A man in his early 70s, from Bærum, but now lives in another large town in eastern Norway. He studied architecture and recently retired from his architecture job.

He identifies as atheist, heathen, humanist, secular and the Norwegian term humanetiker. His parents were not religious and let him discover religion as a child. He is an active member of a non-religious organization, as well as an official and active member of HEF. Of the participants he expresses the strongest critiques of religion.

Then there is Thomas, a man in his 40s, who lived abroad for most of his childhood, moving back to Norway in his late teens. He now lives in a large city in eastern Norway. He works with IT, but has a Ph.D. in philosophy.

He was raised religious, but during his studies found out he did not believe anymore. He started identifying as an agnostic, until a few years ago when he found out atheist was more correct for him.

Lastly is Rachel, a woman in her late 20s, she lives in a middle-sized town in eastern Norway. She has a master's degree in science of film and television, but is currently working in the service industry.

She identifies as an atheist and an agnostic. Raised by non-religious parents and declares she did not often think of religion during her childhood. She did go through her confirmation through the HEF, but she is not a member. She relates to the British comedian Ricky Gervais, as she quoted him in the interview.

Unlike the other four, she had a written interview.

4.6 Summery

In this chapter, I discussed qualitative interviews. As well as how I applied the method to my research. Qualitative research is a way to gain insight into the thoughts and opinions expressed by an individual or a group. It has the advantage that the research gains this kind of data that would otherwise be unattainable. This does come with its own issues. For example, the researcher still cannot know what the participants mean with what they say, and there is a layer of interpretation. There are many ethical quandaries the researcher must deliberate. Dealing with humans, means they have rights, guided not only by the laws and by regulations, but by the researchers own moral compass.

Another personal hurdle was my own anxieties; however, I still wanted to interview people on their experiences and worldviews as part of non-religious framework. It was important to me for them to speak about their own understanding of the world, and to see how they understood themselves and their identities.

Qualitative interview as a method for research is a time consuming method. However, it creates a rich dataset to work with for exploration into the subject matter.

5.0 Non-religious Identities in Norway

Apart of this thesis is discovering and exploring how Norwegian non-religious understand their identity within the non-religious framework, along with how they view other kinds of non-religious identities. William Einen's master thesis focused on atheists and atheism in Norway. I wanted to expand this and look for other identities as well.

In this thesis, I understand identity as created by a narrative we tell about ourselves, primarily to other people, but ourselves as well. It is important to remember that this is only a part of the participant's greater life narrative. Even though the thesis is about discovering their worldviews, and such will touch up their greater narrative beyond their identity within the non-religious framework, it is not biographical interviews. As such, many parts of their greater narrative are not discussed, and events that the participants do not think of as relevant to the questions asked are not brought up.

To beginning with that chapter is going to discuss and show how the participants have certain flexibility. In different ways, they had a way to understand themselves or their surroundings that showed a fluid mind and understanding. Then, moving onto how they understand themselves and their identity in relation to the religious and religion. Ending the chapter with a summary and discussion of the non-religious identity.

5.1 A Degree of Fluidity

Their relationship with their non-religious identities was not necessarily stagnant or well defined. For example, Thomas began his journey from religious into the non-religious by identifying himself as an agnostic, asserting that "veldig lenge tenkte jeg at jeg var en agnostiker og aldri kommer til å bli en ateist, men nå tenker jeg at jeg er ateist." Thomas went through what Ninian Smart calls a mystical experience, which is an inner, introspective experience. Contemplating his position and went from a religious man to an agnostic to an atheist. Smart primarily discusses it in a religious way. These experiences, however, can be translated into non-religious understandings as well, which will be discussed more later in the chapter. Thomas did not consider that he could be atheist and agnostic, and for a time, he did not think he ever could be an atheist. The change happened after he read something several years ago, the details he did not seem to recall. The journey from religious to agnostic had been more gradual: "Det ble bare mer spørsmål enn svar, da forstod jeg sakte, men sikkert da kunne jeg like gjerne slutte å tro at og håpe at jeg kom til å finne svar der og så videre til noe annet." It was the lack of satisfying answers to his increasing number of questions. He positions this as his reason for not

believing anymore. He went through an introspective journey that changed how he identified a part of this own life narrative.

Thomas has not completely left his previous religious life. His parents, wife, and close friends are Christian. He still goes to a tabletop gaming event the church he went to when he was Christian holds every week. He got married in church while being agnostic, stating it was because it was more romantic. He is still a member of the Church of Norway, when asked if this was because his parents did not know he was no longer religious he stated “nei, bare latskap”. So he has made philosophical and certain social choices, he has not made an institutional choice. This choice might not be too uncommon in Norway. Darwin, who calls the Church of Norway the biggest atheist organization in Norway, “det største antall ateister befinner seg innenfor den norske kirke fordi de ikke gidder å sørge for meldt seg ut.” Thomas decision and reason to stay in the church supports Darwin’s argument. Thomas does express a full life without religion, but later state a certain longing for some parts of religion. A break from thinking about the everyday trouble to contemplate and focus on bigger things, which he argues a sermon is, and it is something he thinks non-religious organizations, like HEF, could incorporate.

As mentioned, Thomas has strong connections with his previous religious life. He has chosen not to inform his parents he is no longer religious. On one hand, he expresses minimal importance in his identity as an atheist, as he believes it says “egentlig ikke så veldig mye” about him as a person. This is similar to Rachel, who argues it does not define her as a person. However, the identifier he has chosen does come with expectations when identifying himself to others. He identifies rarely to others, “men hvis vi diskuterer religion, så har jeg tendensen.” This is something he has in common with Rory. When bringing religion up as a subject, it is at that time they experience the need to identify with some sort of non-religious identity.

On the other hand, Thomas has defended the atheist stance, as well as, if discussing his identity with his friends then “de er litt forferda, og jeg er litt forferda tilbake igjen.” So his identity is not irrelevant, even if he argues it says little about him. Thomas has gone through a long process to reach the conclusion he does not believe. In this, he has archived an introspective perspective on his stance. At the same time, he argues it does not say much about him as a person. His fluidity is found in the journey Thomas went through. His non-religious identity was not stagnant. Even though he has now found atheist fits as an indicator, he has made it fit his worldviews. As his atheist, views might not suit that of other atheists.

Darwin is relatively open about how he is identified, though being an atheist has a special significance for him. Among other reasons, he is an active member in an atheist group.

He is the oldest of the five interviewed, and he has many stories surrounding his journey and experiences as a non-religious person. It seems to have defined him since he was a child. His parents were not religious themselves. As he details; “nei, jeg er vokst opp i et hjem hvor religion ikke var et tema før jeg tok det med meg fra skolen og spurte hva i alle dager er dette.” Though Darwin does not explicitly say his parents were non-religious, often implying that they were not religious. He never speaks of any negative interaction with his parents regarding his status as not believing in God growing up. The negative interactions appear to be from his peers growing up.

Det jeg opplevde var i grunn å bli frosset ut i ungdomsmiljøet, faktisk helt til jeg var voksen, da hadde jeg markert for tydelig, det var feil, det var feil, jeg skrev stiler på skolen som var kritisk til at vi skulle være så opptatt hva en fyr med sandaler vandret rundt og sa for to tusen år siden.

It is important to note that Darwin grew up in Bærum during the 50s and 60s. The religious environment has presumably changed significantly since Darwin grew up. Though when asked if there were many religious people around him, he explained; “nei, de, veldig merkelig form, i Bærum, innflytterstrøk på 50tallet, poenget var å være riktig, og være riktig var å tro på Gud, og, uten at de trodde så veldig, så var det viktig å tro på Gud.” So, he experienced the people around him were not necessarily believers, but the performative act of believing in God was important, according to Darwin. Regardless of this being factual, Darwin experienced being excluded by his peers growing up. In retrospect, he considers it was his clear stance against religion.

The identifier atheist is a term Darwin became familiar with later in his life, during his youth he identified as a non-Christian. Among his many narratives, there was not a specific one for how he had become familiar with an atheist in particular. He does have a very passionate relationship with the identifier. On several occasions, Darwin would go back to how proud he was of being an atheist and how amazing it was to be an atheist. The only identifier he has issues with is agnostic, stating: “det er et vassent sånn, kvasi-vitenskapelig begrep fordi man ikke kan vite”. It is the ambiguity of the term he expresses issues with, asserting that we know there is no gods or devils" det fins ingen indikasjoner på at det fins annet enn at mennesker har gått rundt og lalla om det i tusener av år.”

Darwin states when asked if he goes by other identifiers than atheist that; “ja, jeg bruker andre begreper også, jeg er hedning, jeg er humanist, jeg er humanetiker, jeg er sekulær.” The term used to signify his lack of religion and unbelief is somewhat inconsequential. It is rather

the meaning and statement behind the term that seems to hold importance. Seen also when he discusses agnostic. The core seems to be that he knows there is no God or gods, therefore he has issues with agnostic, as it implies to him a possibility of the divine. The terms he does present himself with seem to solidify his lack of belief towards others for him. The term heathen is an interesting choice, however, as it does not necessarily imply a non-religious person, as discussed in chapter two. However, the way Darwin talks about the term, seems to connote primarily a non-religious person. Later in the interview, when discussing his experiences with freedom of speech he says:

Jeg har jo opplevd å kjempe for ytringsfriheten, som hedning så er det jo, da driver du hele tiden å utfordrer og ytrer deg kritisk til samfunnet rundt deg, så det å markere det er jo kjempe viktig for meg som person og for meg som hedning eller ateist, og uten ytringsfrihet kan du ikke utfordre disse religionene og andre grupperinger av skadelige holdninger og maktbruk.

He brings up “heathen” as an important identifier. This comes up much later in the interview. The identifier seems to come to mind before atheist. Seemingly holding a special place for him. The likely reason why atheist is the identifier he discussed, in the beginning, is because it was the one I delved into.

Another participant, Rory, stated he did not feel the need to “label” himself in this manner. Even expressing uncertainty of the meaning and difference between the definition of an atheist and an agnostic. When asked how he would identify himself, he says “nei, jeg er bare liksom menneske”. After some discussion he specifies “jeg har ikke noe behov for å identifisere meg med noe sånn label da, på en måte, men humanist og ateist blir vel det nærmeste på en måte. Det er agnostiker som er sånn derre 100% på at det ikke finnes noen ting.” Even though he expresses this kind of ambiguity towards his non-religious identity, Rory is not indifferent towards religion. He has clear opinions regarding the right to practice but not try to convert others: “så lenge folk holder til seg selv, på en måte, og ikke har en så sykt trang til å omvende eller dra med folk til ting de ikke ønsker, så syns jeg de skal få lov til å holde på med på akkurat det de har lyst til.” The issue with religious people trying to convert unwilling people or, what he considers, pushing their religion onto others, as a negative is a reoccurring subject. Rory did grow up in what he calls “landsby-ish”, a district in a large southern town, where taking an active choice in not believing was seen as unusual. Considering that Southern Norway is part of the Norwegian Bible belt, he has grown up in a religious environment, though he expresses not being raised religious. Asking why he thinks he never became religious, he explained; “det har

bare aldri blitt noe av det, på en måte. Ble konfirmert, men har meldt meg ut i etterkant.” Rory gives the impression to have not particularly reflected on his lack of belief growing up. However, in the way he discusses the subject, it could have been a sore point to think about, as it made him somewhat of an outsider. He talks about moving away from his hometown and “sånn som hverdagen nå føler jeg at jeg egentlig tilhører majoriteten da, at det ikke er et spesielt aktivt valg som skiller meg ut fra mengden på en måte.” He feels a community, even though it is not as clearly defined as within religious communities. Rory is not part of an official and active non-religious group, like Charlotte or Darwin. As he puts it “ikke noe sånn livssyns opplegg, det er på en måte, det er liksom, klubben min er vennene mine, på en måte, venner og familien min der er liksom medlemskapet da.” So even though he has taken an active choice in leaving the Norwegian National church, he has not sought out membership in other clearly defined non-religious organizations.

Rory has a fluidity to his identity as a non-religious person primarily because he does not consider himself to have one. He does, to a degree, relate to the group of non-religious, as he volunteered for the project. He was, however, uncertain if he was relevant for the research.

Charlotte seems to be steady in her definition as an agnostic, however, she does identify as a humanist as well. “Jeg bruker vel mest agnostiker. Men jeg er jo humanist og, men det er ikke, når folk spør, så tenker jeg mer på agnostiker enn humanist.” Humanist is an identity marker she relates to, but she does not use it when discussing her non-religious identity. She is an active member of HEF and associates with their ideology, which is presumably, why she understands herself as a humanist. Her fluidity is more presented in how much weight she puts on discussing different worldviews. “Jeg tror fordi jeg alltid har vært, er alltid interessert i folk religions, tro og livssyn så jeg spør jo og graver litt og sånt, så da er de fleste som er veldig religiøse veldig glad for å snakke med deg.” This is a topic that is brought up several times throughout the interview. Charlotte, as well, expresses issues with stagnant and absolute thinking. She seeks open discussion about worldviews in people she meets.

Her understanding of what it means to be an agnostic is that sometimes she does not know and that is fine. Stating that:

Det var en idé om at jeg vet ikke og at det er helt fint. Det er helt greit. Og at min måte å forstå verden på burde ikke endre seg markant med eller uten en guds-idé da. Det burde ikke ha noe å si for hvordan jeg oppfører meg uansett. Så, agnostiker passert veldig godt da.”

The idea of a god or not in her worldview should not define how she behaves. There is still this uncertainty in the definition of agnostic, something not known, finding this understanding in how Darwin defines agnostic. Although Darwin expresses negativity on the term, Charlotte understands the vaguer part of the definition in a positive light. This leaves her open and accepting of other people worldviews. She, on the other hand, has a negative view of being an atheist. She speaks of experiences with more negativity from atheists rather than religious people. “Det er kanskje oftere jeg har møte noen ateister som har vært litt sånn «så teit du er som ikke bare er ateist», kanskje. Men, jeg har ikke brydd meg så veldig mye.” At the same time, she expresses that it is not the specific terms she has issues with, it is what they chose to emphasize within their worldviews.

Veldig mange av begrepene er jo, jeg tenker at folk skal jo få bruke et begrep på eget livssyn sånn som de selv føler representer seg, det er jo ikke så farlig for min del. Det er jo interessant å se hva de legger vekt på. Jeg skjønner på en måte begrepet anti-religiøs, men samtidig så det føles veldig ‘pastau’, for min del. Blir så veldig sterk imot da.

Charlotte expresses these issues with strong anti-religious attitudes a few times, though often in relation to the identifier atheist. To a degree where she relates the atheist with anti-religion. This seems to be part of the reason for her not calling herself an atheist. On one hand, she does not express strong negative opinions about religion or the religious and she is married to a Christian man. On the other, she does have issues with stagnate and unchanging people, this as much religious and non-religious. It seems to be the lack of strong anti-religious sentiment, still having issues with parts religion, but an open-mindedness that is defining of her own non-religious identity.

Rachel calls herself an atheist/agnostic. This dualism is not necessarily because she considers it possible to be both at once, rather, it is uncertainty in how she defines herself. “Fordi jeg mener det ikke finnes noen gud eller høyere makter. Jeg tror på vitenskap. Samtidig er jeg litt agnostiker for jeg kan jo ikke være helt sikker på at det ikke finnes en gud.” She equates sciences with being an atheist and agnostic with the lack of certainty if there is a god. Again, there is a similar understanding of what it means to be agnostic or atheist as expressed by the other participants. Though, unlike the others, Rachel discusses it more on a basis of faith as well.

Jeg mener at gud ikke eksisterer, ikke at tro ikke eksisterer. Men det å tro på noe gjør det ikke sant - å håpe at noe er sant, gjør det ikke sant. Guds eksistens er ikke subjektiv

– enten så finnes han/henne eller ikke. Det er ikke et spørsmål om mening. Man kan ha sine egne meninger, men ikke egen fakta.

Rachel appears to be primarily an atheist, but something is holding her back from calling herself just an atheist. It is possibly the uncertainty she experiences, she cannot prove nor disprove God. As such, she identifies with agnostic as well. She talks about her friends identifying the same way she does, in that sense, she is not alone in this conflict. It seems probable that it is the stigma of the atheist that is preventing her from identifying only as an atheist. However, she later discusses this stigma. “Noen mener kanskje at ateister er arrogante. Men det mener jeg er urettferdig – vitenskap søker jo alltid etter sannhet og diskriminerer ikke.” It is in this discussion she equates being an atheist with science. When talking about how “urettferdig” it is to call atheists for arrogant, she starts talking about science. When later asked which non-religious terms she has negative opinions about, she says; “Bevegelsen scientologi. Jeg mener dette er mer en kult som utnytter sine medlemmer.” It is uncertain if either Rachel misunderstood the question or is under the impression that Scientology is a non-religious “movement”. As mentioned, Rachel answered the question via email and did not reply when asked to elaborate. Scientology refers to itself as a religion. Assuming Rachel did not misunderstand the question. It might be that the word “science” somewhat being in the word Scientology. Even though most of the participants talk about sciences in one way or another, Rachel is the only one to talk about being an atheist and sciences so entwined. Darwin discusses how “jeg er veldig stolt av at jeg er ateist og vet hvordan det egentlig skjedde.” By this, he is referring to the theory of evolution. He knows the world evolved into what it is today. Similarly, there is Charlotte, who said “jeg identifiserer meg som en realfagsperson.” Thomas refers to science when asked if people will stop being religious, “Ja, det er sånn vi er psykologisk og biologisk satt sammen, det kommer til å oppstå, på en måte, det er en del av det som er så være menneske.” William Einen had similar findings in his study into atheists in Norway (2019, 46). Rory does not bring up sciences during his interview. In this sense, he separates himself from the rest of the participants. By the history discussed in chapter two, it is not peculiar that science and the theory of evolution are deeply associated with non-religious identities. Einen discusses how he found science to be the conceptual framework for several of his participants, using it as a way to justify their position and actions (2019, 48-9). The theory of evolution became a part of the argument for there not being any supernatural entities. The movement called “new atheism”, in particular evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, uses scientific arguments against religion. By this, Rachel is not alone in her strong connection between science and atheism. This interchanging way she

discusses what it means to be an atheist to her is curious. As well as when asked what she believes is says about her as a person, she argues “jeg syntes ikke at det i det hele tatt definerer meg som person.” It could be because Rachel does not have a background, nor job, within any science-related field, or she has a distance to her identity on an externally level. It is not important to her to express her identity to others, stating “ingen spesiell grunn. Folk har ikke noe med det å gjøre.” In this way, she is different from the other participants. Rory, who does not want to label himself, states that if the discussion becomes about religion, he will make his position clear. It is possible that Rachel is not put in many positions where she experiences the need for her to express her stance. Her parents are non-religious, she is under the impression her friends identify as she does and she is not part of an active non-religious organization. It is possible that she is not experiencing conflicts with her worldviews as a non-religious person in her daily life.

That their identities are flexible, in this case, is not referring to something always changing, nor strictly a lack of stagnation. Aside from Rory and to a degree Darwin, all the participants had settled on an identifier. It is, in part, the journey they all have gone through to find their specific way to identify themselves. From how they spoke about it, they had mystical experiences rather than numinous. There was an inner exploration of their experiences and from this, they shaped their non-religious identities. This is assuming that numinous and mystical experiences can be without any divine or otherworldly deity or superhuman. Assuming it can, it will appear differently. The experiences might not be as intense. The introspective and inner experience may be more prevalent way with the non-religious, instead of awe-spring events. However, among Einen's participants, there is Alexander, who was religious during his childhood, experienced during the teen years that he was “konfrontert med evolusjonsteori av eldre kamerater som omtalte seg som ateister. Han følte at han både ble satt i en ubehagelig situasjon, samt at de hadde argumenter som virket logiske (2019, 43).” Eienen presents this as what led Alexander down the path of becoming an atheist. Therefore, the numinous experience can happen for a non-religious, though they appear to be unusual. Perhaps these experiences, for a non-religious person, are rather a removal of the divine, rather than an experience with it. This could, however, be a Scandinavian norm, rather than global. Phil Zuckerman discusses how “one major difference between non-religious Americans and non-religious Scandinavians has to do with the process of individuals' loss of faith and the experience of their overall rejection of religion (2012, 9).” Going on to state that the Scandinavian participants who discuss their loss of faith were presented as a trivial event, unlike in the USA, where it was presented as more intense (2019, 10).

None of the participants in this thesis expressed this sort of experience, with strong emotions or revelations similar to Alexander. Even though Darwin mentions the theory of evolution several times and it is undoubtedly important to him as an atheist. He does not tell of it as this big, life-altering event that happened in his life. He has narratives of when using it as an argument against kids growing up. His non-religious identity is in part because of his non-religious parents. Three out of five of the participants had non-religious parents. Charlotte talks about her parents as “både pappa og mamma er nesten anti-religion, veldig ateistiske, og også min fars foreldre er absolutt ateister.” This non-religious upbringing affects their journey of self-discovery as non-religious people. Perhaps the reason why Thomas can recount his journey much clearer than most of the other participants is because of his religious upbringing. The others seem to have an eased into their non-religious identities without too much thought into how they got there. It is not to say their identity, as a non-religious person, does not appear important to them. Charlotte gives the impression of being attached to her non-religious identity. Rory is an outlier in some ways, as mentioned, his parents are religious, but he does not have any narrative about him no longer believing. Stating that him being religious “det har bare aldri blitt noe av det, på en måte.” At the same time, his non-religious identity developed before he moved away, as he also states it was an unusual choice to make where he grew up. In addition, unlike Thomas, Rory left the Church of Norway.

5.2 In Meeting with the Religious

This subject has been discussed to a certain extent in the previous section, but in this part, there will be a deeper discussion on how they respond to religion and the religious. How it affects their understanding of their own identity. For example, Rory’s relationship with religion could have affected his lack of wanting to define himself beyond that of “jeg er bare liksom menneske.” It is not as if the religious are not human. Similarly, Darwin’s negative experiences with being ostracized by his peers at a young age may have affected his views on religion in his adult life. On the other side, Thomas argues that his personal experiences with one religion, make it easier to understand another. Stating that;

Det at jeg har vokst opp med sånn bedehus-luthersk kristendom, og når du bare ser innenfor den delen av varianten av kristendommen så er utrolig mange sånne rare forgreininger, tror det er lettere for meg å forstå når muslimer sier «men det er jo en helt annen grein, og de mener sånn og de mener sånn,» det er mye lettere for meg å se det er akkurat som når sekulære Norge bare ser på bedehus så ser det litt sånn monolittiske greier med bittelite varianter men egentlig er det mange varianter som ser

nesten helt likt ut men som er forskjellig, så jeg tror det hjelper med å forstå sånne ting da.

Both upbringing, as well as their adult experiences, shape how they understand the religious and their own non-religious identities.

Before delving further, it is important to note that the participants had or expressed experiences primarily with Christianity. If they spoke of another, it would be Islam. If others were mentioned it was either pried out or a swift mention. It is not strange that it is these two religions that they focused on. They have a lot of public attention in western media. Both in social media and news media, there are often discussions and debates about Islam or related topics. As well, according to Statistisk Sentralbyrå (SSB), Christianity and Islam are the religions with the most members in Norway. This affects the religions they consider when asked about the topic and the religions they observe.

Charlotte, for example, does not have a necessarily negative outlook on religion as a whole. As mentioned, for her it is situational.

Jeg ser ikke fælt med at eller noe vondt med at folk er religiøse, det er ikke noe negativt, har ikke noen mer negative følelser der enn de som er veldig strengt ateister for eksempel. Jeg synes det er interessant å se hvor like tanker man har og hvor likt det er, egentlig, synes ofte at grunnsteinen er veldig like uansett, så er det sånne små ting man kan diskutere ut fra forskjellige synspunkter.

In how she discusses around the subject of religion it is not strange that she “klarar ikke helt å la være å se og religion som en filosofisk retningen, egentlig.” As a result, in her meeting with religious people, she does not necessarily view the meeting as two opposing sides. For example, when two Jehovah witnesses came to her door, she expresses joy and excitement in discussing their “philosophies” and worldviews. However, when they did not show a willingness to reflect and discuss with her, she expressed frustration and disappointment. On the other hand, Charlotte brings up students wanting and willing to debate religious and ethical topics with her. Reiterating it is her Muslim students who want to discuss. She mentions one student in particular “som er veldig reflektert og har mange tanker om etikk og moral, og det har vært veldig spennende.” As mentioned beforehand, the topic of debating worldviews, whether religious or non-religious, is important to Charlotte. She remarks at one point that; “de fleste som er veldig religiøse veldig glad for å snakke med deg.”

An issue she does express is the type of Christians she experiences primarily meeting in Norway. She calls them “kultur-kristne”. A term that to her seems to be Christians who do not

reflect on their beliefs or what it means to be a Christian. The opposite category is the “personlige kristne”.

Jeg antar at en som er personlig religiøs også kan bruke tid på å tenke på det forholdet med Gud da, og hvordan det vil si for god og ondskap, og litt sånn ting som det. Men for de som er kultur religiøse eller, som kanskje ikke har tatt like aktive valg, jeg vet ikke hvor mye, hvor mye de tenker på sånt.

“Kultur-kristne” is a term that, within academia, carries with its history. For Charlotte, it connotes a certain kind of Christian that calls themselves Christian, without thinking what that encompasses. Her issues with the people she meets that she defines that way seem to their lack of reflection, in such, she cannot meet them in discussing their values and morals, especially as it relates to religion.

It is furthermore interesting how Charlotte, even though she says she cannot help but viewing religion as a philosophy, she also views argues “det er jo en måte å sette verden i system på, ikke sant?” Either she sees a certain difference in philosophy and religion or she views philosophy as a way to make order in the world.

Charlotte does express in many ways an open-minded attitude towards the religious and sees no issue with other people’s faith, similar to Rory. There has already been a discussion on Rory and his relationship with religion. He expresses that religion should be the choice of the individual and therefore should be a private matter. It up to the individual whether to be religious or not. At one point, when discussing if he has any interest in talking about religion and his non-religious identity to others, he states; “ja, jeg kan godt diskutere religion men det er bare jeg trenger ikke å bli misjonert eller omvendt da, men det skjer ikke så ofte heller.” Even though he states someone trying to convert him does not happen often, he still repeats this as problematic. Out of the five participants, he is the only one who explicitly brings it up. Charlotte, who mentioned the Jehovah’s witnesses at her door, did not express concern with conversion, even though that was their primary reason for being at her door. Rachel does state that “men det er når den troen går ut over andre at det plager meg.” This could be an indirect way of discussing conversion. In a similar disposition, Charlotte does bring up when using one own faith to force others to take certain actions. Arguing that “du kan godt din egen frihet ved hjelp av din religion, men når det begynner å gå utover andre personer da er det litt sånn det har ikke du noe rett til å velge, egentlig.” Even though they both express issues with other people forcing their beliefs or religion on others, they do not explicitly debate converting others.

Rory's other criticisms lean towards what he perceives as outdated ideas he argues still circulate within religious communities. As he puts it "noen ganger så tenker jeg litt det at man burde tatt en runde med det som skjer i hvert fall, men jeg ser jo det skjer jo også at det er en del ting, når det kommer til folks seksualitet, og sånne ting, at det blir en litt modernisering innad i de religiøse samfunnene." Sexuality seems to be an important topic to Rory, he states later in having two close friends who are part of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community. From how he speaks of his friends, they appear to have been friends for a long time, as well as Rory mentioning he recently moved into town. It is possible that he interacted with religious people in his hometown that had these outdated views and perhaps saw how it affected his friends. This could then further affected his relationship with religion. Both Rory and Darwin had many religious people surrounding them growing up, while not believing themselves. They responded differently. Rory does not feel the need to define himself, while Darwin expressed pride in his identity markers.

Rory considers "spiritualism" the core of religion. He discusses this when asked if he thinks religion will ever disappear. He argues:

Jeg tror at, det er nok lang tids horisont da, men jeg tror organisert religion er på vei vekk, men spiritualisme tror jeg aldri kommer til å forsvinne, tror folk kommer alltid til å ha behov for en eller annen connection til, om det er naturen eller noe åndelig, eller noen sånne ting, men de religionene vi kjenner i dag de kommer ikke til å vare evig.

Rory understands spiritualism as a connection to something else, something beyond oneself. Organized religion, as he calls it, is "pålagt meninger om ekteskap og om seksualitet og om skilsmisser, alt mulig sånne greier, tror det er vanskeligere å ha det som et fast konsept enn å ha spiritualismen da." He understands spiritualism as something intangible, but important, as well, even if "jeg ikke har opplevd noe særlig mye selv." For Rory, the religions we know now will disappear; however, new ones might form later.

Darwin, on the other hand, does not think humans will continue to be religious, and says "jeg syns det er mye som tyder på det." He does not go into specific detail, however, he states "jeg har et håp om at vitenskapen kommer til å seire og innsikten i verden og oss selv, skal vinne." For Darwin, it seems, science and religion are two contradictory points. Emphasizing his opinion mentioned earlier, when he discussed how "he knows how it went down". By this, he refers to the theory of evolution and implies the ones who do not know "how it went down" are the religious. Inferring that the religious do not believe in evolution.

When asked if he thinks his network would be different if he was religious, he starts by saying “kommer litt an på hva slags utgangspunkt det skulle være, hvis det er meg med mitt utgangspunkt som presses til å delta i religiøse ting, så ville det være konfliktfylt.” He then goes on to tell another narrative;

Det ville vel kanskje også vært med mitt relativt trygge utgangspunkt vært en utfordring hvor jeg kunne hatt en skjevt flir og gitt meg en sjansen til å «tror dere virkelig på det her da». Jeg gjorde jo, på realskolen, på Eikeli kommunale høgere allmennskule, så var det et oppslag ute i skolegården «trenger vi Gud?», det syns jeg var et jævlig godt spørsmål, så jeg stilt opp på det arrangementet, jeg var jo selvfølgelig eneste ateist der, jeg ble jo midtpunkt, det var festlig. Jeg vet ikke hvor morsomt han syns det var, han lederen for dette her.

In this narrative, he takes on the role of trying to question the religious of their faith and beliefs. Expressing a certain pleasure in it. In a similar vein is the narrative about the time he was at his sister's wedding.

Jeg i kirken da min søster giftet seg for annen gang, og da hadde de bestemt seg for å ha et skikkelig ritual og de hadde fått en litt sånn festlig prest til å stille opp der, men, han, denne festlige presten, han kom jo med dette her, det er jo en del av ritualet som sier at, du skal underordne deg, husker ikke akkurat hva den ordlyden er, men jeg tenkte jo at min søster skulle underordne seg han der, så satt jeg på galleriet og ropte ut «det er for drøyt!», og min ateistiske far satt ved siden og klappet.

He seems to take glee in confronting the religious. As well as it seems to be important for him to do. He expresses that religion should be in public, so that “de skal ikke gjemme seg bak rosenhekken og under steinene. Hvor faenskapen gjerne skjer i friutfoldelse.” Darwin asserts confronting religion as necessary. Not just in this delighted way. Darwin defines religion as “jeg har jo den holdninger at dette er overleveringer fra tidligere samfunn, hvor det var mange ting man ikke visste og man prøvde å finne forklaringer, og så videre, og man skapte maktstrukturer rundt det og sånne maktstrukturer fører alltid til faenskap fordi alle som får makt misbruker den makten.” For him it is than an issue of power, who has it and who does not. Going back to Einen's research, how Darwin theorizes around religion are the two ways that Einen participants do as well (2019, 55-8). As an ancient way to understand the world, but also as a power structure. His issue with abuse of power is something he brings up several times throughout the interview. Perhaps the most telling being when asked to define evil he says “hvor det å ivareta sine egne ønsker, maktfølelser, og så videre, er så sterke og empatien mangler at

noen kan oppfattes som onde”. Then asked if he believes there are in fact evil people he simply says; “ja, det tror jeg.” He is the only one out of the participants who believes this, the in-depth discussion later. However, one of his expressed problems with religion are power structures and one of the defining traits of an evil person is the need to feel in power.

Darwin expresses the more overtly negative opinions and relationship with religion of the five participants. Perhaps the more expected opinion of an atheist, however, Thomas, as mentioned, does not mind defending Christians against atheists. Stating that he thinks “det er mye litt lettvind, da, synes jeg i ateisme. Det er bare ukritisk går inn for et eller annet det irriterer meg litt.” He does, as well, defend atheists against Christians. Even though Thomas identifies as an atheist, he in many ways expresses himself differently than Darwin. This could be because of his religious background. As mentioned, Thomas is still in the same circle of friends from his religious days, his wife and parents are Christians as well. Affecting how he views religion and the religious. He says little explicitly negative about religion or the religious. When discussing his feelings around other types of non-religious identification he says; “alle begreper kan inneholde, kan bli fylt med sitt eget innhold, versjon av hvordan folk representere seg kan jeg være nokså uenig i, men selve begrepet, ja, det blir fylt på såpass mange måter at det er ganske sært at det er begrepet jeg ikke liker.” Inferring from this, as well as some of his other comments, he does not want to judge people based on the term they use. Judging them on an individual basis regardless of being religious or non-religious. This is similar to Rory and Charlotte. Rory states when asked the same question as Thomas that; “jeg synes folk skal liksom få identifisere seg som de har lyst til, hvis man har lyst til å putte en hvilken som helst label på seg selv, så får man gjøre det, synes ikke det, har ikke noen dårlig inntrykk spesielt fra noen da.” The three of them express that they do not wish to judge people based on how they identify. However, any term and category come with expectations, and whether they are capable to avoid these expectations is impossible to say.

When asked about the relevance of Thomas non-religious identity during religious rituals he states; “jeg har gått på så mye andakter og møte greier i barndommen, at liksom, jeg har hørt alt før liksom, bare tuner ut med en gang, uten å tenke på det en gang, bare sitte å se på lyset som beveger seg på veggen, eller et eller annet.” He also states; “de sier det de sier.” He expresses it with a sort of distance because he has heard it before. At the same time, not expressing any issue with it. Rory has a somewhat different view. As mentioned, Rory explicitly says he was not raised religious, but implicitly says there were many religious people around him when he grew up. By this, referring to the “landsby-ish” place he grew up, were choosing to be non-religious was unusual. Rory and Thomas do not have the same upbringing. There are

certain similarities, like being surrounded by the religious. They have chosen, within the limitations of the non-religious, to identify differently. For Rory, on the few occasions, he has been to a funeral or wedding, it depends on the priest responsible for the ceremony or ritual. Stating;

Jeg syns, noen ganger har jeg «shit nå tok de det litt sånn veldig bibelsk», noen ganger så har ikke egentlig tenk over at det har vært i kirken eller en kristen sammenheng da. Det er jo litt, sikkert, både litt an på presten eller ønsker etter de som eventuelt avdøde eller de som gifter seg, eller et eller annet sånt da. Det må man bare tåle, det er ikke noe, men.

Thomas tunes the sermons out, Rory expresses that he listens to what is said one of the few he has attended. He is aware enough to hear that what is said is either “very biblical” or benign enough that he does not sit with some sort of negative experience. It is possible that if Rory had been to as many as Thomas expresses he has been to, Rory would have had a similar relationship with sermons and ceremonies. There is, as well, Darwin, who was surrounded by religious people growing up. However, unlike Rory and Thomas, Darwin expresses traumatizing experiences in his childhood. He does not use the word when discussing being ostracized there is an apparent hurt. Verbally expressing this in how he repeats “det var feil”. These three express different kinds of experiences with religion and the religious growing up. It is therefore not strange they also have somewhat differing opinions on the subject.

Thomas does have with the majority of the participants are his beliefs that people will continue to be religious. However, he is the only one who argues “det er sånn vi er psykologisk og biologisk satt sammen, det kommer til å oppstå, på en måte, det er en del av det som er så være menneske.” Religion is not only a natural part of our psychology but our biology as well. He does not discuss too much how this relates to his non-religion, he believes it is one of the reasons he identified as agnostic. It does seem Thomas talk about not all of humanity will be religious. The argument is against atheists who argue that religion will cease to exist. Thomas believed that there would be religion and religious regardless of the opinions of people like Darwin.

Rachel, likewise, argues that religion will not disappear. Though she argues that “jeg mener folk vil alltid trenge å ha noe å tro på siden vår eksistens/verden kan være så vanskelig å forstå.” This could be understood as her seeing religion as a psychological need for some people. She does not bring up religion as part of our biology, but rather just our psychology. As well, unlike Thomas, she brings up the comfort people can find in religion. Several of Einen’s

participants expressed similar thoughts on religion (2019, 54-5). Einen argues that this way of viewing religion as a function for comfort and a coping mechanism can be traced to Ludwig Feuerbach and Sigmund Freud (2019, 54). Thomas might implicitly understand religion as a way to cope; if so, having a functional understanding of religion. He does not explicitly say it. The other participants in this study did not express explicitly the possible comfort from religion. Not asking them directly for their definition of religion. However, in some way, Darwin's focus on power structures he sees within religion can be to a certain extent the opposite understanding. He mentions how "det skjer mye gærent i de fleste kristne organisasjoner, selv om noen er snillere enn andre."

Rachel also discusses how she believes it is "helt greit" that HEF does similar rites of passages as the church does. This is because "bryllup, begravelse, konfirmasjon mener jeg er seremonier/ritualer som er viktig for oss alle å ta del i for å markere overganger i livet." Charlotte expresses similar thoughts:

Jeg tenker jo at overgangsseremonier er noe mennesker har behov for, det er en grunn til at vi har det, og at, grunnen til at vi bruker mange av de samme, som konformasjon er jo et nokså kristen begrep, men vi bruker det samme fordi det har en kulturell betydning i samfunnet vårt og jeg synes det er helt fint, egentlig, fint at man ha muligheten til å gjøre disse, markere, disse viktige stegene i livet på måte som passer mer til sitt eget livssyn da.

Rory in the same way views it as a positive. He, however, goes on to argue it a positive because or else teenagers might become Christians for the "wrong reasons".

Ja, konformasjon, der er jo, men et sitter vel kanskje litt fast i norsk kultur, og spesielt med at man skal få konformasjonspenger og sånne ting, og tror det har mye å si for en femtenåring, sånn at det, da tror jeg det er viktig at, hvis man spør en femtenåring vil du kanskje få, jeg et ikke ha man får, 15 til 30 tusen, eller noe sånt, i konformasjonspenger som femtenåring, eller vil du ikke være kristen og ikke få noen ting, så hadde alle blitt kristne, men på feil grunnlag da, så da synes jeg det er viktig å ha et alternativ til det. Personlig så vet ikke jeg om jeg kommer til å gift meg i hele mitt liv uansett, men synes det er greit at man har en alternativ ordning, for de som ønsker det da, det forhindrer jo også at man får folk som bare et positivt kristne, holdt jeg på å si, som bare er der for å få godene, da.

Both Charlotte and Rory see rites like confirmation as embedded in Norwegian culture that it is good to have non-religious options. Darwin argues that "borgerlig konfirmasjon var vel

faktisk det første som Kristian Hov var veldig opptatt av å markedsføre og det var jo en viktig del å kunne rive til seg en del av dette store landskapet.” However, when asked what he thinks about HEF adopting these rites from Christianity, Darwin becomes very defensive. Perhaps the question ought to have been formulated differently; however, Darwin is the only one who reacted this way. He starts off by arguing that “de har ikke adoptert noe ritual.” Going on to say;

Det er jo helt uten Gude snakke så innholdet er jo et humanistisk innhold. At den, at det skjer i et land som har en kristne tradisjon, det innebærer jo at man er veldig bevisst å hva man sier i forhold til det kristne, at man utelukker de delen av arrangementet som er preget av å tro på gud men ellers så er det jo naturlig at du sier en del av samme tingene, du forplikter deg og det er viktig dette her og sånne ting.

Darwin as well takes pride that “jeg er tross av alt medlem av HEF fra de fant på at de skulle ha alternativer.” It could be because of his deeply negative emotions and experiences with religion that he has a much stronger reaction than any of the other participants. Charlotte does as well express positive emotions in affiliation with HEF, but the question does not invoke such a strong response. Rory’s view that teenagers would “become” Christians to get money is an interesting argument. It could be he witnessed it as a child or heard his peers discuss this. He is the only participant who brings up this possibility or an issue.

Three out of five participants have gotten a non-religious confirmation. Charlotte is an active member of HEF, and she discusses her reason for being a member as;

Fordi jeg ble konfirmert i human-etisk forbund, så ble introdusert til det som barn og så, når jeg skulle gifte meg, så var det, til kirka ville jeg ikke, men hadde mange gode følelser om HEF så da gifta jeg meg dit også, tok det litt tid, også «hm, jeg har lyst til å påvirke verden på en positiv måte, hvordan kan jeg gjøre det, kanskje HEF er en god måte å gjøre det på» så da ble jeg aktiv der.

Rachel got a non-religious confirmation, but she is not a member of HEF. She considers them important, however, she does not expand on the topic beyond these statements.

As mentioned as well, Rory explicitly states he was confirmed in the church, but later exited. It is interesting to see how he discusses teenagers possibly go through their confirmation for the wrong reasons, without reflecting too much on his motives going through with the rite of passage. He specifies he did not grow up religious, but went through confirmation in church. It is possible it would have been too deviant in the parts he grew up. Thomas implicitly says he

confirmed in the church. He did not begin his non-religious journey before university and he is still a member of the Church of Norway.

Asking the participants if they thought the religious were morally better people than non-religious, they all said no. Darwin emphasizing; “Nei, snarere tvert imot.” Asking him to elaborate he said; “De følger regler som har uheldige konsekvenser og de følger dem, de sjekker ikke disse reglene, de er innkodet med dem, de er Gudgitt. Som for eksempel tvang til tro for barn.” The lack of reflection on their own beliefs makes Darwin view religious as less morally good people. Not history or actions. Directing his argument towards how religious in the present are deciding to not change parts of the religion he views as non-functional as the issue.

Rachel expresses a similar opinion, but milder, stating; “jeg mener det har blitt/blir gjort mye fælt i guds navn.” The religious perform immoral acts and use their religion as a reason for doing this act. Charlotte, on the other hand, starts discussing how if a religious person does something good only to expect something in return when they die, she has a difficult time viewing them as morally superior.

Nei, tror ikke egentlig det. Det er en interessant diskusjon, fordi spørsmålet er jo når er du god, ikke sant? Er du god hvis du gjør godt for å få noe igjen? Er du en god person hvis det er din motivasjon? Er at Gud kommer til å gi meg noe tilbake igjen hvis jeg er snill nå. Er det en person som er god for å være god? Så er det, jeg tenker jo at jeg komme til å få noe en igjen jeg og, jeg tenker jo at hvis jeg er snill og god så er det mer, større, sannsynlig at andre er snill og god mot meg. Så det er noe kort tids, på en måte. Selv om jeg ville sagt det at selv om jeg er snill og god mot en person som ikke er det tilbake så vill jeg fortsatt være det, selv om jeg ikke tror den personen kommer å vær snill igjen, da er det jo. Så vet jeg jo det er de som har, en, at moral kommer fra Gud på en eller annen måte.

Questioning if a person could be morally good if they are motivated by seemingly selfish intentions. She ends her discussion by mentioning that she tries to not judge the individual by these thoughts, suggesting it is an issue she has with religion as a whole.

Rory argues it has nothing to do with religion rather it is the person. “Jeg har møtt mennesker som har vært drittsekker som har vært ikke-religiøse og jeg har møtt drittsekker som har vært religiøse, så det er, både buddhister og islamer og kristne, det tror jeg er veldig individuelt.” However, he goes on to postulate whether religious are better at setting up charity work. Therefore; “gjør at det kanskje blir lettere å bli med nå man har en slags klubb som man gjør det samme med da, kan godt være at man er litt flinkere til å ta initiativ der, men det er det

jo også mange andre organisasjoner som gjør.” This is similar to Thomas, who does not explicitly say they are not morally better. Rather he says:

Tror de blir minnet på det oftere, men det kan, ifølge podkastene jeg hører på, så kan de gi mer internt i gruppa, men ikke nødvendigvis eksternt i gruppa, men samtidig, moren min, strikker sokker for å gi til misjon og nødhjelp og sånne ting hele livet, det er et eller annet sånt lekmannskristendommen i alle fall, som har gjort at de, ja, det blir samle utrolig mye penger hvert år av lavkirkelige bevegelser.

Referring to his own family to discuss the subject, showing his close, personal connection to religion and the religious. He, as well, argues for how it happens within the groups on a level of laymen. This fits with how he discusses the lack of giving and solidarity. This question indicates the similar relationship Thomas and Rory has to religion. Having been exposed to religion in a different way than the others, even if the latter did not grow up religious. Rory grew up in the Norwegian Bible belt and experiencing it being a very religious community. They have both observed that religious communities are more likely to perform charitable work than non-religious communities. Neither of them is part of active non-religious groups.

The participants have different experiences and opinions of the religious and religion, though there are intersecting understanding, as well. In many ways, the outlier is often Darwin, even from Rachel and Thomas who identify with the term atheist. This could be, as mentioned, his traumatic experiences from his youth.

5.3 Choices Made

This chapter has been about the participant’s understanding of themselves, both as an “other” to religion and their thoughts on their identities. Regardless of what they do or do not call themselves, each identity comes with certain expectations, also known as a “stereotype”. Asking Thomas if he believes humans will continue to be religious, he starts by emphasizing how his opinion puts him apart from other atheists. Recognizing how there are expectations of certain opinions out of certain identities. When choosing to call themselves atheist or agnostic or even just human, they are making choices for the perception other will have. Rachel argues it does not define her, however, if she tells people she is atheist and agnostic, people have unavoidable expectations. It could be these expectations she does not feel the need to discuss her non-religious identity with others. Similarly, it is part of who she is. Even though it does not define her exclusively, it is part of her identity. Rory goes as far as not using an identity even though he acknowledges that he does live as an atheist or agnostic in principle. As

discussed, he refers to himself as a human, however, religious people are human as well and he does recognize within himself that he is not religious. They both, in their way, seem to have a kind of aversion to the expectations that come with non-religious identities. Rory may choose to not specific his identity because he wants to avoid the expectations that come with each of them. As mentioned, he recognizes how he lives as an agnostic and humanist, but he does not feel the need to identify with other that way. On the other side of the spectrum, there is Darwin, who seems to take pride in his identity and the expectations that come with it. He expresses when asked if it is important for him to identify to others that:

Er alltid opptatt av å formidle seg selv og så få kontakt, at den andre skjønner hvem jeg er og da kommer jeg ikke bort fra det fordi jeg er såpass opptatt av det. Og jeg syns det er spennende å diskutere innholdet i det og innholdet i religion fordi, ja, det er, jeg mener jo det er veldig viktig å vite hva man slags utgangspunkt man har for å vurdere verden, man gjør.

This is similar to what Charlotte says when asked the same question; “ja, det er jeg vel, absolutt. Det er ikke noe jeg tar også, det er ikke det første jeg sier til folk, men fordi jeg syns det er interessant å diskutere livssyn og etikk og tilsvarende så kommer det jo opp.” Darwin and Charlotte seem to have a great deal in common, they both think it is important and interesting to discuss “livssyn” or worldviews and they value science. However, they both express a certain kind of negativity towards each other. Darwin rejection Charlotte’s identifier agnostic and Charlotte has negative opinions on a specific kind of atheist. It does show how malleable the non-religious identities are. The identifier is how a person presents to their surroundings and come with their expectations. Nevertheless, the individuals still shape the individual identifier to suit their views.

In these identities, there is as well a community. Rory, for example, feels he is part of an unspoken community even though he does not define his position with a clear identity marker. It is, as well, important to note how Rory discusses the place he grew up. It is a large town in southern Norway, but he still views the district he grew up in as secluded and “landsby-ish”. Stating; “jeg vokste opp i en litt sånn bydel, landsby-ish, eh, da var det litt mer spesielt.” What was special was identifying as non-religious. He speaks of this community as if it is somewhat isolated from the town. This might just be his own experience. With him not believing growing up feeling isolated. For Rory, leaving this “landby-ish” area left him feeling part of an unspoken majority. The community that these identities have seem to be capable to go beyond official organizations. Only two out of five were a member of any active non-

religious organization. These work as the shared worldviews that Smart discusses within greater groupings. As well, even in the greater non-religious worldview, which Rory talks about relating to, there are subgroups of non-religious worldviews. The five participants, one way or another relate to the greater worldview, but still have different views on their own identities and religion. An example is Thomas and Darwin, both identify as atheists, they have different views on many subjects. Thomas, as mentioned, acknowledges that his views differ from other atheists. Their differing views, but same identity marker, shows how fluid identities can be. Even though there are expectations with each identifier, there is great variations within each of them. As mentioned, the individual makes the identifier their own, perhaps choosing the identifier with the expectations in mind. Thomas began as an agnostic, perhaps relating to the doubt, but later related to the certainty in atheist. These expectations might come from somewhere. Thomas Huxley developed the term agnostic in the 19th century because he did not like the expectations that came with atheist. However, now, agnostic comes with their expectations, which might not have been the once that Huxley intended. Terms and identifiers grow and change based on the people who use them and how they choose to do this. For example, Richard Dawkins discusses how he defines agnostic (2006, 46-54). Within the discussion he presents a spectrum from a theist to an atheist, with an agnostic in-between (2006, 50-1). He discusses what he considers an agnostic atheist, as well, and how this works. He states “I am agnostic only to the extent that I am agnostic about fairies at the bottom of the garden (2006, 51).” This is again, showing how the identifiers are flexible.

Lois Lee discusses what she calls the banal forms of the non-religious (2015, 70-86). She is referring to how non-religious or non-religion goes unnoticed in the background. How unremarked the imagery that invokes non-religious ideas are compared to religious ones. An example Lee brings up is “postcards and other pictures ‘light-heartedly’ ridiculing religion” places around in homes and offices (2015, 72). There are many examples that Lee brings up to show how uncritically the non-religious material dimension exists in the everyday. From the “co-option of religious images and symbols to non-religious ends” to “the presence of books associated with non-religious cultures” (2015, 73, 75). Some of the participants might not then reflect on part of their identities because it is so ingrained in their surroundings. The community that Rory talked about exists within these banal forms. An unconscious community he observes more in the eastern town rather than in the southern town he is from.

From the five participants in this study, we can observe that there is diversity in the expression and kinds of non-religious identities in Norway. If limiting studies to only atheist or agnostic, certain non-religious identities will fall behind. An excellent example of this is Rory,

who does not self-identify with any specific identity. When discussing the interview, he was uncertain if he was relevant to the study. However, he does understand himself as a non-religious person. As mentioned, unlike Thomas, Rory left the Church of Norway. He could fall into the category of Lois Lee of “indifference”. She defines these people as someone who “sit some place between the state of being without religion and of rejecting religion (2015, 29).” However, as Lee points out, it is an ambiguous term and argues it is a phenomenon that needs to be studied more (2015, 30). They do, however, seem to be a group that is harder to find than other identifiers. They are often unaffiliated with any active non-religious group. They might not think themselves relevant if the researcher is looking for participants.

The discussion of the differing experiences of the participants. Either with the religious or with their own non-religious identities. The question of whether the non-religious can have numinous or mystical experiences was touched upon. Suggesting that perhaps for the non-religious, these experiences are rather a rejection of the supernatural or divine. An issue would be what the non-religious would be or not. For example, a football match, with heightened emotions, is in many ways a secular experience. However, can we view it as a numinous experience? Can we consider Thomas’s contemplative journey a mystical experience?

6.0 Views on Politics and Moral Values

This chapter will be about the political and moral views the participants express throughout the interview. It will start with a discussion on how they interpret any sort of “meaning”. However, the term “meaning” does have certain religious connotations, so I have chosen to put the word in quotation marks. These opinions show some of the things the participants find important in life. Going on from there to discuss their political views, both similarities, and differences. Then going on to present their moral and ethical opinions. There are no surprises in their opinions on either subject. In the end, there will be a discussion on moral ambiguity. By this, I mean if the participants express the possibility of sympathizing with another human even if they perform immoral acts. I expect that they can, however, discussing where this line goes. When do they consider an act too immoral for it to be a moral gray area? With the discussion on what they view as evil and when a person is evil.

6.1 Meaning-making for the Non-religious

Asking all the participants if they thought life had some sort of “meaning”. It is a rather large, existential question, or as Rory puts it; “Oi, det er jo, store spørsmål.” To explore and discover the extent of how they had reflected on their way of life. The question partly came from William Einen, but also Phil Zuckerman’s study of Danish and Swedish religiosity. However, it is a way to see their views on life and values.

The question does as well hold certain implications. In Einen’s thesis, he discusses the subject of separating “meaning of life” and “meaning in life” within academia when studying atheism and the atheist (2019, 97). To understand the differences when discussing the subject. This discussion can be for all non-religious groups. Three out of five within this study did not express any negative feelings when asked the question. It is possible when asked, they thought about not in a religious sense, “meaning of life”, but rather in the second way, “meaning in life”.

Something interesting is how they responded when asked. As mentioned, Rory got immediately overwhelmed, but recovered quickly and answered the question. On the other hand, Charlotte had no doubt when answering. She brought it up on a later date during the interview, in a sense affirming or adding to her statement. Rachel gives some concise, short replies. Thomas discusses the topic in relation to the reason he found out he was no longer himself as religious. Lastly, Darwin has a stronger reaction to the question. Rejecting it outright.

When asked, Darwin quickly replies “nei, livet har ikke mening” and emphasizing “har.” Going on to say “livet har ikke mening, det er helt meningsløst, livet bare er, så den

meningen den måtte ha den må du lage selv.” There is no meaning to life. At the same time, it is not meaningless. Darwin says we are capable of creating our purpose. “Ja, det kommer fra oss, og skape meningen i tilværelsen og organisere ditt –jeg- i forhold til omverden, og skjønne hva er det fornuftig å gjøre disse årene jeg har fått utdelt.” In many ways, he expresses similar sorts of opinions and feelings that the participants of Einen’s study. With his participants expressing there is no meaning to life, but not seeing life as meaningless (Einen 2019, 95-7). According to the research of David Speed, Thomas J. Coleman III, and Joseph Langston, this attitude is common among the non-religious (2018, 9-10). As mentioned, Thomas has similar attitudes towards the questions. He does not reject the question like Darwin. He views it more as part of his journey. He states “det er en av grunne til jeg ikke er kristen lenger, jeg tenker at det ikke er et svar, så gi opp å prøve å få svar, det er min versjon av ateisme eller agnostiker.” He does not see the question of meaning to his previous life as religious. In this sense, Thomas and Darwin understand the “meaning of life” as a religious question. However, he does not emphasize “et”, which can be understood as there being some kind of meaning, but there are numerous ones. Looking for that one meaning is impractical.

It is an interesting point how Thomas discusses “meaning”. It is something a person should not pursue. The singular “meaning” or purpose to life is something the person should in fact “give up” searching after. He expresses it as part of the reason why he discovered his unbelief. It appears as if it is the singular “meaning” he argues is useless to pursue. Later solidified when discussing systems of ethical thinking like utilitarianism and deontology. Thomas states:

Det er en ting jeg fant ut med å studere filosofi, jeg tenkte liksom du finner et sett, et prinsipp og så bare bygger du opp et system på det, men, altså, vi har studert etikk, ja, mange tusen år, det kommer aldri til å bli, vi kommer aldri til å finne et etisk system som sier «dette er det som er feil.»

It seems Thomas has problems with one-way thinking. Arguing that there are many ways to understand the world. Therefore, “meaning” is not a singular thing all humans strive towards, but a plethora of possibilities. This is not only a pattern he exhibits towards religion but ethics as well.

Charlotte certainly expresses those beliefs; “jeg sier at meningen med livet er, er kanskje flere ting, men, en del, for min egen del, meningen med livet er å utforske. Noe med å tilegne seg kunnskap.” Charlotte considers herself what she calls a “realfagsperson”. This statement reaffirms her previous statement in many ways. She goes on to say “kanskje en litt sånn større

mening med livet er at verden skal, du skal være en positiv innflytelse på verden rundt deg. Hvis du gjør mer godt, så er det, på en måte, bra da, da har du gjort det du skal da. Gjør godt, mening med livet.” Charlotte gives a personal drive in life, but a grander one that everyone can adhere to, as well. She formulates the second purpose in this way by using “du” and “deg”. When asked of the meaning in life, Charlotte thought first of her own, but then the purpose for everybody. Later in the interview, when asked if it was important to take care of each other, she argues that this is how you have a positive influence in the world. “Som jeg sa, en av mine meninger med livet, hvis du kan kalle det på den måten der, er jo, gjør verden bedre for de rundt, så, så ja, absolutt.”

Rachel gives three concepts that have her “meaning”, which were “familie, venner, kjærlighet.” It is interesting to note that they in some way relates to community and close emotional bonds. There is possible that Rachel creates her “meaning”, much like the others. With these three concepts, it is in theory that she sees “meaning” as created within relationships and in communities.

As mentioned, Rory was immediately overwhelmed when asked, however, he found his answer; “det er jo, kan jo si lykke, kanskje føle at man oppnår ting, har det godt i hverdagen på en måte. Og, ja, nye livet, liksom.” Much like Charlotte, Rory speaks of a “meaning” for everybody. Asking what happiness meant, he begins talking from a personal perspective as well.

Nei, det er veldig, tror, for meg personlig kommer det fra å klare å oppnå ting som man setter ut for å oppnå, det syns jeg, det gir jo en lykke, gode mennesker rundt seg og gode vennskap, det er egentlige bare de tingene der, i hvert fall når man bor i et heldig land som Norge. Slipper å fokusere på å ha nok penger og sånne ting, har oppnådd et grunn nivå da. Så er det mye av det.

When Rory talks about “god mennesker rundt deg og gode vennskap”, he sees having a community as part of some sort of purpose, in a similar way as Rachel. Though Rory may think happiness comes from community, rather than purpose coming from community. Rachel did not elaborate her response to her three concepts, so it is possible she sees it similarly, it is theorizing.

The participants have rather varying responses. Once again, Darwin has a strong, negative reaction towards something that to him has religious associations. As mentioned, he mirrors many of the opinions of Einen’s participants. Rejecting the idea of “the meaning of life”. Thomas less so, but unlike the other three, did not give a clear answer to if he saw some

personal purpose. Charlotte's greater purpose of taking care of other people does emulate Christian ideas. It is the sort of thinking found in HEF as well. On their website they discuss creating meaning in life, at the same time, the community is responsible. "Humanister mener, i motsetning til de fleste religiøse, at livet og tilværelsen ikke har noen forutbestemt mening. Vi er frie til å skape våre liv. Samtidig hviler det et ansvar for fellesskapet på hver og en av oss" (Human 2021). In certain ways, Charlotte follows this when asked the question. Beginning by discussing her personal opinions, and then a purpose for all, which is about the responsibility of the individual to take care of others.

Phil Zuckerman postulates that most people do not think or reflect on the "meaning of life" in Denmark and Sweden (2008, 73-5). He "conducted nearly 150 formal, structured, in-depth interviews" from 2005 to 2006 (Zuckerman, 2008, 3). It is not that they do not care; he proposes they rather care more about everyday issues than the large existential questions like searching for a greater meaning (Zuckerman 2008, 73-4). However, the participants in this study, do not hesitate when asked the questions. Whether this is because this is a subject they have reflected upon, or they thought of the answer when asked is difficult to say. For example, Rory does immediately react with uncertainty; nevertheless, he does come up with an answer. His immediate reaction could indicate he has not reflected on the questions too much. At the same time, his reply about happiness, and achieving it, shows he has some thoughts about any sort of "meaning" in life. His answer does not reflect Christian ideas, but rather philosophical ones. He presents them as individualistic, even if he elsewhere brings up a community as important; he does not when asked this question. Even if Thomas did not give any "meaning", he did not hesitate when asked. From his reply, it is more than likely that he has reflected on the subject. He specifically says it is a contributor to him no longer being religious. Darwin's quick reply to there being none also suggests he has given it some thought. Similarly, Einen's participants may have rejected the idea of a "meaning" to life or destiny, they still expressed that it was not meaningless (2019, 95-7).

Even though some of the participants express a "meaning", they are not existential. Referring to that they do not look for "meaning" in greater patterns in life. Most of them having what Speed, Coleman III, and Langston refer to as "endogenous meaning" (2018, 9). This is internally created "meaning" that focuses on the individual's purpose. Perhaps it is because none of the participants expresses they believe in any sort of afterlife. To summarize their answer to when asked what happens after we die or if any life after in Rachel replies "nei, kroppen vår råtner og blir en del av jorden." Charlotte discusses during the interview how religious have external motivation to act "good" or "kind" and her thoughts around it. "Så vet

jeg at det er religiøse, som jeg snakket om ista, det her med at «hvorfors velger du å være god hvis du ikke har en Gud som kan gi deg noe tilbake for det.» Og et høres ikke så veldig godt ut for meg.” For Charlotte, doing good to gain something in the afterlife does not make anyone a good person. She says “jeg må passe på at den tanken ikke blir så stor. Den kan være der, men det blir jo en veldig generell tanke som man ikke pålegger individer.” Indicating she does not consider it a positive. Needing external validation from an external being for good actions and to later gain from this. Without the possibility of rewards in the afterlife, the incentive to do good deeds comes from elsewhere, seemingly motivated by something else. It is not as if the participants express any kind of apathy towards humanity. At one point or another, they express the need to take care of one another.

To repeat what the argument Einen got from the Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss, there needs to be a separation when discussing the “meaning in life” and the “meaning of life” (2019, 97). That non-religious people still create a purpose in life is common. In Speed, Coleman III, and Langston’s findings, they argue that the non-religious often create their own “meaning” in the way the participants in this study do (2018, 9-10). “Atheists and the religiously unaffiliated are more likely to perceive meaning as a product of the self rather than a product of an external source or agent (Speed, Coleman III and Langston 2018, 9).” It is perhaps because of the focus religion has on finding “meaning” that non-religion becomes absorbed by the idea as well. It is possible that it is within human nature to want some purpose in life, even if it is internal instead of external. As outspoken atheist comedian Ricky Gervais says; “it’s a strange myth that atheists have nothing to live for. It’s the opposite. We have nothing to die for. We have everything to live for.”⁵ This sentiment is conceivable, why the non-religious seek out or reflect on “meaning”. It might not interest them on a superficial level, but asking they could pull some sort of internal purpose.

6.2 Political Understandings

Asking most of the participants a few questions about their political opinions regarding some topics, like equality and human rights. Their answers are not necessarily surprising, however, it does tell about their attitudes and understandings of society. The development of these questions was after the interview with Charlotte, so her attitudes towards most of the questions are unknown.

⁵ <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/893271-it-s-a-strange-myth-that-atheists-have-nothing-to-live>

6.2.1 Equality for Gender, Sexuality, and Animals

Even though some of the answers collected were not necessarily surprising, they still reveal a worldview. For example, when asked if they thought equality between the genders was important, they all answered yes. Further inquired about their opinions on gender equality in Norway, they gave similar answers, as well. Rachel encapsulates their opinions in; “i Norge har vi kommet veldig langt, men mye gjenstår.” Thomas articulates further:

På papiret, på mange måter, men jeg tenker sånn hjemme, meg og kona mi, er, har, opplever jeg oss nokså like, men teller man liksom hvor ofte det er jeg som vasker huset og hvor mange ganger det er kona som vasker huset, så er det ganske skjev fordelt. Så der, jeg tror på en måte at, på en måte er vi ganske likestilte, men så er det noen sånn men det er fortsatt noen sånne mønstre som sitter igjen da.

Thomas was the only one to bring his personal experiences and observations from his own home life. As well as the only one to mention “old patterns” from the past.

Darwin brings up his mom, and if says; “Det syns jeg nok ikke. Tror mammaen min ville vært veldig misfornøyd hvis jeg hadde at det jeg syns vi har oppnådd, men det ser vel bedre ut enn det gjorde da mammaen min skrev artikler i avis omkring det.” This further shows that Darwin grew up in a different kind of household back in the 50s, and possibly, how it affected him in his adult life. He goes on to say; “så regner meg også som feminist, selv om sikkert noen jenter jeg har vært sammen ville si «å, hå, jaå».”

Rory highlights even though Norway has a way to go, “men vi må heller ikke snakke om at vi har gjort det veldig godt, men ikke være fornøyd heller.” The repeated opinion is that Norway has come a long way in gender equality, but they believe that Norway can improve. This is not too odd an attitude. The public and media discuss how “well” Norway is for equality between genders.

On a similar note, none of the participants had any negative attitudes towards the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community (LGBT)⁶. To a certain degree, however, Thomas has done the least amount of reflection on his opinions on LGBT. He states when asked; “Nei, altså, ikke noen spesielt.” He admits he has not had much experience with people of the LGBT, but he thinks “det er fortsatt et stykke å gå, men de siste 20 årene har det skjedd ganske mye, ganske fort.” Even if he has not had personal experiences, he has observed the changes and noted how it has happened. It is interesting how when he is asked if people of the

⁶ Within the community, there are debates on which sexualities belong to the initialism, however, in this thesis LGBT chosen, but with the knowledge that some experience that the initialism does not represent them.

LGBT should have the same right as heterosexual couples he goes on to say; “ja. Samtidig så tror jeg vi kan ha litt sånn tålmodighet med at det er noen gamle folk som syns det gikk litt fort. Om 20 år så fins ikke de lengre.” It is conceivable he has reflected on the subject, as he does seem to have developed ideas and thoughts on several subjects. However, bringing up how much has happened within a short amount of time, as well as being patient with the older generations; he may have personally experienced with the older generations speaking or reacting with anger or negativity.

They expressed that people of the LGBT community should have the same rights as heterosexual couples, for example getting married in churches if they wish. When Darwin is challenged on this specific point, he says with a smile; “ja, hvis de på død og liv skal gjøre det de dummingene så.” Accepting their choice, but at the same time, his opinion on religion becomes apparent. However, the rights of the LGBT are quite important to him, once again bringing up science when answering. “Jo, jeg har meget positive holdninger til det. At de er litt ulikt laget på det området også, litt merkelig å tenke seg «hvorfor er det», men hvis det nå ikke er noen Gud, så er det kanskje rett og slett disse tilfeldighetens spill har gjort at noen er annerledes.” He views people of the LGBT are “made” differently than heterosexuals. It is as well interesting how he postulates the existence of God when discussing the subject. Darwin goes on to tell a narrative about how his uncle was homosexual, living with a man, and how he came to know these things as a child. Showing that Darwin as a child, growing up in the 50’s, seems to have had an unconventional childhood. He says specifically at the end of his narrative that; “så er veldig stolt over det.” Referring to his uncle. This familial connection seems to be part of the reason why LGBT is important to him. He alludes to thinking about human rights, as well, and within that is the rights of the LGBT.

The question of animal rights and if the participants believe different they are from humans were slightly different. None separated themselves from the norm. Rachel says; “jeg mener dyr er medskapninger som fortjener et godt liv, hensyn og respekt. De er ikke bare her for å bli utnyttet.” She does not deepen how she implements these thoughts into her life. Rory has similar opinions but adds additional thoughts on how it affects him.

Gjør jo det, man blir jo veldig påvirket om dagen til å synes det. Jeg spiser ikke så mye kjøtt og har en del, men har liksom en sånn, i hodet har man sånn klassifisering av hvilken kategori dyrene kommer inn i da, på en måte da, har lettere med å spise kylling enn jeg har med å spise ku. Av en eller annen grunn.

He expresses feeling pressure to eat less meat, and he implements it in his life. However, he admits to having classified the animals in his head. When asked if these are personal categories, he replies; “ja, så fisk syns jeg er veldig enkelt da.” Uncertain as to why he has this. When discussing it he immediately seemed to be a little uncomfortable. It is possible it made him feel morally wrong to categorize animal in who was easiest to eat. This view is more common within religious worldviews. Rory grew up in a religious community and could have picked up this sort of classification.

Rory expresses that he has implemented changes in his diet, because of this pressure. Thomas, on the other hand, specifies he will not become a vegetarian. He goes on to argue that “skal ikke plage dyrene, de er jo bruksdyr, vi skal jo gi dem et bra liv som mulig, men jeg tenker det; dyr er et dyr. Hvis det er en eller annen katt eller sånt som har vondt i foten så tar du ham bak låven også skyter du ham og så får du en ny.” From how he discusses, he believes animals to be different from humans. However, there seems to be a moral obligation that humans have towards animals. In these, he expresses a different kind of opinion than the others. He does not express how or why he thinks that humans and animals are different. This view might come from his religious upbringing or developed during his years studying philosophy. It is possible that it developed from both, as well. He had the sentiments but refined them during his studies.

Darwin discusses the differences, or lack thereof, within a scientific approach.

Det er ikke store forskjellen, jeg tror at bevissthet finnes på ulike nivåer, fra de minste, bitte små kryp, som har utviklet evnene til å reagere på omgivelsene for å ivareta forplantingen, tenkte jeg senest på sånt, på det sølvkreet som kryper rundt, de vet hvordan de må forholde seg til verden og det er vel det som er bevissthet.

He discusses how every species has consciousness and has evolved abilities to survive their environment. As mentioned, Darwin has expressed strong feelings for the theory of evolution. How he discusses this subject shows how he has implemented the theory into his worldviews.

In some ways, Rory, Rachel, and Thomas all express a moral and philosophical outlook about differences between humans and animals. However, Thomas expressed there were differences, while Rachel did not. Rory’s choice seems to come from an outside pressure rather than any of his reflection on the subject. Nonetheless, there is a degree of morality, he experiences that society tells him to eat less meat and to care about the welfare of animals. He incorporates this into his life. Thomas likewise expresses a moral obligation towards animals, even if they are not equal. Rory and Thomas in their views of classification show the effects of having grown up in religious communities, in different ways. The classification they both

discuss is common in religion. Darwin, on the other hand, discusses it from an evolutionary standpoint. Seen when he discusses degrees of consciousness and the need to reproduce. As a result, even though Darwin agrees with Rory and Rachel, he still stands out, as he is the only one to discuss the subject differently.

The participants have, as mentioned, similar and, to a certain degree, expected views. In many of their answers allude to their background. How they grew up and affected their understandings of equality.

6.2.2 Human Rights

The participants were asked what they considered to be important human rights. Asking Thomas, he starts by saying; “vanskelig å spørre en filosof om det. Nei, trosfrihet, ytringsfrihet med måte.” When challenged on freedom of religion being more important than freedom of speech he goes on; “det henger jo litt sammen da, det blir vanskelig å ha, egentlig er det mest religionsfrihet.” Noting how he says “ytringsfrihet med måte”, meaning there is a limit to the speech Thomas thinks there should be. We did not go into the details of what he intended by this precisely. He is probably referring to hate speech. When asking Charlotte about her thoughts on the religious freedom set against freedom of speech, she does express those kinds of thoughts. She starts by stating that people should be critical of religion, however:

Jeg vet jo det at fordi religioner som er en del av minoritetsgrupper som da kan få mer hets av andre grupper og, så er det, den omsorgen da man må passe på da, man må si ifra når noen ting ikke riktig, men at man også må være klar over at grupper som kan få, har fått hets fra før av som ikke er helt berettiget, å ha en balanse og komme med den forståelsen.

Charlotte argues that there needs to be an understanding, because minorities already experience hostility and hate speech. She does emphasise; “jeg er ikke noen moral relativist, liksom, jeg mener det er gode ting som er gode og ting onde som er onde.” There are somewhat conflicting views. Her starting with “tenker at det er lov å være religionskritisk, det burde man være og, man burde alltid se på hvordan ting er for å se om det burde være sånn, er det sånn fordi det er sånn eller fordi det burde være sånn og kan vi endre det i så fall.” At the same time, expressing how there is need for understanding. Then Charlotte goes back to stressing how criticized religion is appropriate by asserting how she is not a moral relativist. She goes on to say “Jeg liker menneskerettighetene, jeg kjenner menneskerettighetene er greie, hvis en religion går imot menneskerettighetene så blir det litt sånn, «okay, vent litt, her føles det ikke helt greit» liksom.”

As mentioned previously, how she has an issue with religion infringing on other people's freedom. An opinion she shares with Rory and Rachel.

When asking Rory, he once more fumbles around for an answer. However, this time it takes him more time to find one. He stresses about not knowing the human rights from memory. Starting off by saying; "det er jo det vi har vært inne på, like rettigheter til alle, jeg syns det er viktig med, hva skal man si? Gjensidig respekt blant folk på tvers av nasjonalitet, etnisitet og legning og alt mulig, hva mer er det som er menneskerettigheter?" After some back and forth, and assurances that the question is about what he understands as a human right. Rory goes on to say "at man har rett på en god barndom, og man har rett på å bli tatt vare på av et eller annet greier da, og sånne ting, ja, at egentlig, at alle burde være flinkere til å ta vare på hverandre generelt. Jeg vet ikke om alle de var menneskerettighetene som var fastlåst for «hag»." Adding later as well that "frihet til å velge og frihet til å gjøre som har lyst til, det er kanskje egentlig nummer en når jeg tenker meg om." When asked, Rory's reaction in all probability come from needing to list the three of the most important human rights. Giving the question to the participants with the intended to make them think about what they consider important, as well as, come up with more than one. To restate what Rory said, to him the most important human right is the right to choose. However, he covers many different kinds of rights that he considers human rights. The right to choose does cover both the rights of LGBT, but religious freedom as well. The primary one that Rory does not cover is the right to free speech. However, he does stress about being unsure about the different kinds of human rights there are and simply could have not thought about it.

Rachel states the most important human rights for her are; "Personligfrihet, yringsfrihet, stemmerett, rettssikkerhet." She does not explain why she considers these the most important ones. Some of the rights may come from her membership in the Palestinian Committee, which she states is an important membership for her. Personal freedom, also known as civil freedom, is a very wide freedom. It does cover rule of law and the right to vote. Rachel mentions both, it is possible she did not contemplate that. She does not define what she means by personal freedom, so she might understand freedom differently.

Darwin starts by saying that he reads a great deal about human rights, but goes on to say some that are important to him. "Jeg vil kanskje si barnerettigheter, rettigheter til å vokse opp fritt og kunne danne seg sine egne oppfatninger er kjempeviktig og kvinners rettigheter har vi allerede snakket om og så er det yringsfrihet, veldig, veldig viktig." With him putting such importance on freedom of speech and having expressed being a vocal atheist, I question if he

had experienced any personal breaches of his speech. Having already quoted his statement, but to repeat it in this context:

Jeg har jo opplevd å kjempe for ytringsfriheten, som hedning så er det jo, da driver du hele tiden å utfordrer og ytrer deg kritisk til samfunnet rundt deg, så det å markere det er jo kjempe viktig for meg som person og for meg som hedning eller ateist, og uten ytringsfrihet kan du ikke utfordre disse religionene og andre grupperinger av skadelige holdninger og maktbruk.

He does not come with a narrative of anything specific; he speaks more in general terms. Either there is no specific time that came to mind, or he has not experienced any particular silencing personally. Earlier in the interview, when asked if he has experienced any negativity in expressing his identity, Darwin states; “nei, det kan jeg ikke si. Jeg ble pent behandlet, jobbet i det offentlige og alle visste at jeg var en hedning og at jeg tok noen telefoner av og til som ikke hørte hjemme i, nei, jeg har ikke opplevd noe sånt.” Darwin may be speaking more from observations on the world than personal experience when he discusses violations of freedom of speech.

A majority of the participants mentions freedom of speech, placing some sort of importance on it. As mentioned, the only one who does not is Rory, who does seem to have not reflected much on the subject of human rights. He was, however, familiar enough to find certain rights he considers basic and good human rights. Many of the rights he does discuss are in broad terms. To try to summarize the rights he does bring up the right to equality, gender, race, or sexuality, the right to be respected as a person regardless of background, and the right to choose. The latter being the most important to him as well as the last one he remembers.

Even if Thomas believes freedom of speech has a limit, he still specifically brings it up as important freedom to have. He as well understands freedom of religion as the possibility of choosing religion away. For example, Darwin does not bring up this point, even if he perhaps believes it is important. He does argue that a child with good education can make their own choices and form their own opinions. However, he does not bring up either the right to choose or freedom of religion. Darwin and Rory are the two ones who bring up children explicitly. Rory even adds the right to be taken care “av et eller annet greier da.” Most likely, he is referring to the welfare state in some form.

Thomas is the only one who brings up freedom of religion. Charlotte discussed it specifically because I was asking her about her thoughts on the dichotomy of freedom of religion and freedom of speech. Speculating on why none of the others brought it up. It is

possible that the others did not think about religious freedom as well refers to the freedom to choose religion away. For example, Darwin expresses how “silly” he thinks the religious are and dangerous he finds religion, it is strange he does not bring it up. He may believe that if children are educated, they will not be religious.

6.3 Ethics and Morals

Asking the participants about their opinions about moral and ethical questions, both about them personally and general questions, to see how they view the greater moral questions. This is to understand how they view the world from a moral perspective. Asking some of them what they consider important and good values, as well as, what they find to be the worst values in humans.

6.3.1 Virtues and Vices

Virtues are good and important values, positive traits within human being. The four out of five participants were asked which ones they valued the most. Darwin said; “det er jo evnen til å forstå, evnene til medfølelse, jeg påstår ikke at jeg er rikelig utstyrt med det selv, men må prøve på det, for det kan bringe videre også i samspill med andre og samspill med andre er jo viktig.” The ones he considers the worst have somewhat been discussed, but to bring it up again in this context. Darwin says; “det verste er jo når man helt mangler evnen til innlevelse og utøver makt, det er det verste. Det skjer jo i ikke liten grad nettopp i religiøse miljøer og de som har størst behov for å utøve makt blir ofte sterke personer som får posisjoner i systemet og det er jo skummelt.” Even though religion was not the discussion, he brings it up. It might be because we had discussed religion previously or it might be such a strongly held belief that when asked about humans’ worst vices, he thinks about religion and the religious.

Rory mentions respect as something important both when discussing good values and human rights.

Nei det er jo, hva skal man si, en generell godhet, at man opplever at man ønsker andre mennesker godt og at, ja, det er jo mer, jeg trives jo godt rundt mennesker som er trygge på seg selv, men det er jo ikke nødvendig for å være godt menneske, men, men godhet generelt, er egentlig bare at du har respekt for andre menneske rundt deg og at du, at man egentlig prøver å være god da, på alle mulig måter.

There is the focus on being good. When discussing the negative traits, he speaks in some general terms as well.

Ja, nei, det er vel, hva skal man si? Veldig sånn, hvis man er sånn veldig bedrevitende og har en sånn trang til å få andre til å mene det samme som deg selv, eller hvis man er

generelt bare en shitty person, liksom, aldri sier noe fint om andre, aldri prøver å hjelpe andre, så er man litt sånn, ja, det er ikke noe man trenger å ha i livet sitt, hvis man ikke.

Again, he brings up making others believe what they believe. This is in the same tone as when he discusses religious people who try to convert others against their will.

Rachel has similar focus as Rory; she thinks that “solidaritet, rettferdighet, omsorg, kjærlighet, toleranse, respekt, tillit,” are important values in humans. Love is, as well, something she argues gives some sort of “meaning” to her life. Some values she considers the worst in humans are opposing to her virtues, which are “intolerant, smålig.” It is interesting how she could think of three times as many virtues than vices. Some of her virtues are similar to her human rights, like justice.

Again, Thomas finds the question large, like about human rights, and when asked about “meaning of life”, he brings up his journey away from religion as part of the answer.

Nei, det er nesten et umulig spørsmål, for det er, liksom, alle verdier med måte, på en måte. Kan si ærlighet, ærlig mot seg selv, det vil jeg si, det tror jeg er veldig viktig for meg, det er i hvert fall sånn jeg forteller at jeg sluttet å være kristen, at jeg måtte være ærlig mot meg selv, men det blir jo litt floksete det.

He finds there to be many good values but ends up finding one that was central and important to him in his life. However, when asking Thomas about what he believes are the worst values in humans, he goes in a different direction.

Det er med at solidariteten kan ofte streke seg ganske kort da, sånn som 200 år siden kunne du ha lest i en eller annen avis at det var en uhygge et eller annen plass, så kunne du funnet ut at du skulle gi litt av pengene jeg har tjent denne måneden og så kunne det gå et halvt år før du hadde kjøpt et eller annet til den båten kommet frem til de som trengte maten, men i dag så kan du gi penger (knipser) og så er det fremme på fjorten eller to dager senere, men så allikevel, så bryr vi oss ikke hva som skjer på andre siden av vannet.

When discussing some of the important values, he discusses honesty, but especially towards oneself. On the other hand, he believes that people can do more to help other people.

If the participants have common important virtues and vices, they formulate their opinions about them differently. For example Rory, Rachel, and Thomas. They bring up solidarity. Rachel brings it up as a good value in humans. Rory says a person lacks good values if they do not ever try to help other people or say nice things about them. Thomas finds that society and

the individual lack solidarity. Especially if they cannot see it, he argues it is much easier now than two centuries ago, to help people financially. Rachel and Darwin explicitly argue for being sympathetic and understanding to other people. While Rory implicitly says it when he discusses the value of being an all-around good person.

6.3.2 Are You Morally a Good Person?

Asking the participants if they considered themselves morally good people. Formulated this way to have them specify how they view themselves from a moral perspective. Wanting to guide their thoughts towards themselves as moral agents, rather than any general sense of someone good.

None of the participants said they did not. However, some of them did not say explicitly yes. For example, Thomas said “jeg tror jeg er helt gjennomsnittlig, tror ikke, jeg har ingen grunn til å tro at jeg er mer moralsk enn andre.” Comparing himself to every other person in a way none of the others do. It is in some way neither yes nor no. This might be his philosophy education. His education is exemplified perhaps further in how he discusses what makes an action right or wrong. Thomas says:

Hvis det ikke er et unntak for deg selv, litt sånn vri på Immanuel Kant, kan dette være en universell regel? Hvis jeg tror «nei, her er det egentlig 60 grensa, men jeg kan kjøre i 80, fordi jeg er en så flink sjåfør», da lager du et unntak deg selv, det er en tommelfinger regel på at da er det ikke bra, da er det noe galt.

Thomas argues for a universal rule, though not in the traditional Kantian way, as when asked his opinion on Kant’s philosophy he states; “nei, altså, skrev en oppgave om det og fant ut «nei, Kant var ikke for meg».” Neither does Thomas consider utilitarianism a better option for a system of ethics. Somewhat already been discussed on his views on “meaning”, but it bears repeating:

Det er en ting jeg fant ut med å studere filosofi, jeg tenkte liksom du finner et sett, et prinsipp og så bare bygger du opp et system på det, men, altså, vi har studert etikk, ja, mange tusen år, det kommer aldri til å bli, vi kommer aldri til å finne et etisk system som sier «dette er det som er feil.»

Thomas does not believe in a singular ethical system, as mentioned previously, and showing this, as well, in how he discusses “meaning” in life.

Asking Thomas if he believes that if something is legal makes it morally right; he starts by saying no. However, his focus when arguing is different from the others. He says; “Det er,

for eksempel, er ikke påtvunget å gi penger til folk som mangler penger, men mener det er moralsk påbud likevel og jeg mener det er veldig bra at det som er lovlig og det som er moralsk er to forskjellige ting.” Unlike the other participants, Thomas focuses more on how there are morally rights actions that are not in any legislation. Considering how he views the legal and moral separation, going to asking him whether he thought that what was morally right controlled what was legal. Once again he says no and elaborates; “i et sekulært samfunn så må det være mye mer innskrenka hva som er lovlig og ulovlig, hva som er moralsk påbudt av den enkleste.” Emphasizing the separation between what is moral and legal. How he specifies within a secular society, considering it would be different within a religious society.

Charlotte does not have the same level of a degree in philosophy as Thomas, though she expresses the importance of philosophy to her views. She has a more positive view of her moral stance. Stating that “ja, det gjør jeg. Selvfølgelig så betyr ikke det at man klarer å være moralsk hele tiden, men jeg prøver og vurderer situasjonen og tankene mine og prøver så godt jeg kan å gjøre moralsk riktig valg og så si unnskyld hvis jeg ikke får det til.” Once more, she emphasizes how important contemplating and reflecting on her actions and behavior are to Charlotte. Asking her if she believes that because something is legal means it is morally correct, she says the following:

Nei. Ikke det. Det, ofte kan det være en grei pekepinn over moralitet, men du må alltid ta egne valg innafør, ja, lovene kan være et sånt ramme mønster, men ikke nødvendigvis at må holde den innenfor eller utenfor, er litt sånn, men cirka der men gjør vurdering.

Charlotte does acknowledge that she is not always acting morally correct; this is similar to how Rachel speaks about herself. “Ja, som regel. Det er viktig for meg å ta vare på de rundt meg.” She does, however, again show how important community is to her, as she expresses that acting as a morally good person means taking care of the people around her.

Darwin likewise expresses this sort of social need in what it means to be a morally good person.

Vil jo gjerne være det da, og får veldig dårlig samvittighet når jeg skjønner at «nå var jeg kanskje ikke helt heldig», det like jeg ikke, jeg er eger to please. Vil jo gjerne bli likt, vil jo være en sosial person og bli likt, er viktig, om det er fordi jeg har så enorm empati eller om det rett og slett er det at hvis jeg ikke blir likt så har jeg ikke det bra, så det er best å gjøre så man blir likt.

Darwin, unlike Rachel, discusses it in the context of a social setting. Admitting the perception of being morally good affect his well-being. When asked what makes an action morally right, Darwin answers; “Det er, du er nødt til å prøve å tenke igjennom konsekvenser av handlinger og vurdere hva er konsekvensene, er de gode, er de positive for personene, for samfunnet, for det å, ja.” It is not that these answers do not fit one another; however, the former is more about Darwin as an individual, while the latter is a broad-spectrum response. The latter is not neglecting the community and its needs. It is that the former steers more towards doing good deeds because of how it affects the individual in a social setting.

The focus on consequences of one action being central to the moral dilemmas appears to be part of his worldview. Asking Darwin if something is morally right if it is a law, he replies “nei, det er det ikke, det er ikke alle lover som er like gode, men vi har vel kommet lengre i Norge enn mange andre steder med å utforme et lovverket slik at det skal være moralsk bra.” Then asking what type of moral Norway bases its laws on, he says; “ja, altså at konsekvensene er gode for et godt liv mellom og samliv mellom mennesker og grupper.” For Darwin, community and consequences of one action seem to be key to how he perceives what is morally right and wrong.

Rory conveys in a way hesitation regarding his moral standing. “Prøver, ikke alltid jeg klarer, men jeg har god venner rundt meg hvor vi kan snakke om det meste og, det er aldri flaut å mene noe eller noe annet.” His friends are important to him; he has talked previously about living with some of his closest friends at present. He elaborates on his discussion with friends; “jeg har mange sparre partnere som jeg kan snakke med om sånne ting og på den måten kanskje, skjønne at her tenker jeg kanskje litt feil eller her kan jeg tenke på en litt annen måte, så jeg får muligheten til det og lære av det.” He expresses the importance of his friends to how he forms his worldviews. Revealing again how Rory values community. However, this shows how he incorporates this into his life.

When asking Rory what makes something morally right he discusses it in a societal and general approach. “Det er jo litt sånn hva vi som samfunn har bestemt at man skal ha rett på som et menneske og sånne ting og frarøve noen de mulighetene eller å på en måte systematisk prøve å ødelegge for et annet menneske er jo noe jeg syns er moralsk galt da.” At this point, Rory has already discussed what he considered human rights. Which were among other things; equal rights, a good childhood and to be taken care of “av et eller annet greier da”, similar to the welfare state. In his answer, Rory, as well, mentions what he believes makes something morally wrong. Perhaps not odd, as he speaks of what makes something morally right in a legal

approach, as well. Asking Rory to elaborate on how society comes to these conclusions on what is right and wrong, he says:

Det er nok litt, altså, personlig erfaringer fra folk som har levd, som lever, at man opplever, har opplevd oppgjennom hvordan man ikke ønsker å ha samfunnet, hvordan man ikke ønsker å ha hverdagen, og da setter fast sitt regelverk og noen rammer som da kan hjelpe folk til å ha det i fremtiden og fra og med nå da

He speaks again about it from a legal standpoint, asking him if he believes that because something is the law he believes it to be morally correct. He says no and goes on to say:

Det kan jo være en gammeldags regler, sånn at det, man har hatt forskjellige perspektiv og forskjellige tidsaldere man lever i som gjør at ting har vært riktig da eller det kanskje bare har vært en enkel løsning en gang i tiden som nødvendigvis ikke betyr at det riktig i dag og burde bli tatt opp, mener jeg.

Like when Rory discussed his opinions that there were certain old fashion opinions and views within the Christians. Here he repeats the sentiment, but on a much larger and societal scale. While he might be thinking of the old fashion Christians, as well, he is referring to people's experiences on a grander scale and how people from the laws and governments. In a way, he is also hopeful to change laws in the future. He ends the discussion by arguing for revisiting these how these old, outdated laws.

Notably, both of the women said yes, however with an understanding of how they were not always. The men either an ambiguity to their imitate response or, like Thomas, said neither. It is not that fwomen necessarily that the women believe themselves morally superior. Going back to how Thomas discusses his moral standing, he does not say he is not a morally good person. His answer reflects that he immediately thought when asked if he was morally superior to most people. Thomas is the only one who does not express an added uncertainty. The others perceived that they wanted to be morally good, but acknowledged that they were not always. Thomas does encapsulate this to a degree with his reply, but he expresses this in a different way than any of the other participants.

It is notable how Thomas, as well, does not believe in a singular system of ethics or "meaning". However, when asked what makes actions right and wrong, he does give a universal rule. A singular rule that people can refer to make morally correct actions.

Many of the participants related somehow moral actions and their moral agency to the social contract. In particular, Darwin, who discusses how acting in a morally correct way affects him. Implying that if one does not act morally correct, they would not get to enjoy the social

aspect of the community. Going on to elaborate how, as a moral agent, an individual needs to evaluate the consequences of their actions. In a concise and similar sense, Rachel specifies that “det er viktig for meg å ta vare på de rundt meg.” Drawing a parallel between being morally right with taking care of her community. It has been discussed the apparent importance Rachel expresses towards her community. This way of discussing her moral goodness, once more, shows how it is important to Rachel.

6.4 Capacity for Moral Ambiguity

The participants have made it clear about their views on moral issues considering themselves and others. Some people would imply that the non-religious are nihilistic and moral relativists. However, this is not true for these participants. How they discuss the virtues and vices of humans, we can see how they view human rights. They seem to have clear ideas about right and wrong, but it is interesting to discuss their views on the moral grays as a concluding discussion.

To start, the precipitants all argue for the importance of taking care of one another. The majority just states yes, without discussing much, some, however, goes into some detail. For example, Charlotte repeats her “meaning” to life, stating; “Ja, veldig. Noe av det viktigste. Som jeg sa, en av mine meninger med livet, hvis du kan kalle det på den måten der, er jo, gjør verden bedre for de rundt, så, så ja, absolutt.” Thomas, on the other hand, goes to ask a question about responsibility. “Nei, det er jo viktig det, spørsmålet er hvor langt ut er ditt ansvar?” This goes back to when Thomas discusses the lack of solidarity in humanity. However, asking him how far he believes the individual’s responsibility reaches and society takes over, Thomas answers “nei, jeg syns, det er et helt umulig spørsmål.” Even though he argues for people to take care of each other more, he has difficulty seeing a certain solution. Admitting he finds it too big of a question.

This does show that on a conscious level the participants have sympathy for other people. For many of them, it is not something to argue or justify. That they have a conscious understanding of the importance of taking care of one another opens up the possibility of moral ambiguity. This does not mean this compassion is always there in actions. They can say it is important, but in the real world, when acting, that can be skewed or forgotten.

Several of the participants brought up the importance of honesty in one form or another. Thomas discusses it as an important value, specifying that for him, the importance of being honest with yourself. However, when asked if it is ever acceptable to lie, he says; “ja, ja, ofte.” Asking him for examples, he goes on to respond:

Nei, hvor lenge folk, en lege spør lenge du har igjen å leve, for noen burde du ikke si det, må du si det, burde du si det. Det er veldig individuelt, det kommer an på hvilket perspektiv du tar da, hvis du tar akkurat den situasjonen eller tenker du at hvis du lyver akkurat nå så hjelper du dem med å slippe å tenke på dem i dag, kanskje de har lyst til å vite det på 5 år sikt men ikke på 10 år sikt, det kommer an på situasjonen.

Interestingly, Thomas's example uses a doctor lying to a patient about dying. However, the general outlook in his answer is that judging lying needs to happen on an individual basis. He argues judging a person based on whom they are lying to and why they choose to do it. His response does not go into details about why it is morally good for a doctor to lie in this manner; primarily it is to shield the patient from psychological pain. It is possible that when asked for an example, Thomas grasped for the first thing he could think about at the moment. On the other hand, he could very much believe that a doctor should lie to their patient if they know the patient will die in ten years.

The argument of judging lying dependently on the situation is similar to how Charlotte discusses the situation. She starts by saying "ja, gjør jo det," meaning it is acceptable to lie at times. He goes on to try to remember a system of ethics "Er ikke en ... hva heter det igjen? Dydsetikker ...? Er ikke dyder, det er ... empiriske, imperativt, kategoriske imperativet, het, Kant. Ene venninna mi er det herre her veldig sånn, sånn. Men jeg er ikke det." This need to recall the identifier to a system of ethics shows how important both philosophy and a category to identify herself is to Charlotte. Having issues with remembering which system of ethics she is trying to recall, she moves on to say:

Altså, alt er jo, du må se ut fra situasjonen, ikke sant. Og hva er en løgn. Hvis du sier noen som ikke er sant i det hele tatt, så vil jeg kanskje tenkt det at «finn heller noe som er sant, men kanskje ikke hele sannheten». For det er en sånn. Jeg tenker okay, hvis du, hvis du har, hvis du skal fortell et barn at hunden dems er død, så trenger du ikke å komme med alle de forferdelige detaljene om hvordan det skjedde, men du burde jo fortelle sannheten allikevel, men det liksom, hvilken del av sannheten er her.

As mentioned, this understanding of lying is similar to Thomas's view. Basing the evaluation of a lie on the situation in which it happens. However, her example of a situation to evaluate for lying or not gave the impression of not necessarily a lie. Asking her if she thought not telling the child of the details of their pets death was a lie, Charlotte answered:

Det er da spørsmålet. Ja, det er jo da, da er spørsmålet er det en løgn, eller det da, noen ville jo si det, hvis det ikke er hele sannheten så er det en løgn. Jeg vet ikke, jeg vil jo

prøve å si så mye sant som overhode mulig, samtidig så vet jeg det at mans egen oppfattelse er også subjektiv, ikke sant, så det er liksom hvilken del av den subjektiviteten å fokusere på, ja. Ja. Ønsker jo å snakke sant, men ja, vil jo ikke si at det alltid er riktig å gjøre det, for jeg har jo ikke opplevd situasjoner enda.

None of the other participants broached the topic of the truth is subjective. It could be that Thomas implied it in his reply. Arguing the necessity of evaluating every situation on its own and truth being subjective is not synonymous with each other. Charlotte mentioning that truth is subjective does align with her previous expressed worldviews. She actively debates her views of the world and life with other people. Experiencing both negative and positive assessments. When challenging her views actively in the way she does, she is more likely to experience other people's subjective truths.

Rachel, as well, expresses the importance of honesty in the people she meets. Observed, as well, in how she values trust. When discussing the morality of lying, Rachel starts by saying; "ja, i det mellommenneskelige mener jeg det kan være greit - for å skåne." Even though she values trust, she sees how in certain social situations it is necessary to lie. She argues a topic the other does not explicitly mention:

Innenfor politikken mener jeg det er umoralsk når man lyver for å vinne en debatt eller ikke kommer med all fakta på bordet for å fortrenge virkeligheten. Hvis politikere alltid lyver for oss, er ikke konsekvensene at vi tror på de løgnene men heller at ingen lenger tror på noe som helst. Donald Trump er et godt eksempel.

Rachel is the one who brings up politicians when discussing lying, as well as the current political climate in the USA. She does not allude to how this is in Norway. She mentions specifically that she considers the act of a politician lying for amoral.

Darwin argues for the importance of being honest by saying: "det er ganske viktig, er du ikke ærlig så får du ikke muligheten til å kontrollere hva du faktisk mener og gjør." It could allude to politicians, as well. However, it is a statement aimed more at the collective, rather than any specific group. Interestingly, discussing if it is acceptable to lie, Darwin says; "det kan nok være fornuftig i noen sammenhenger og hensiktsmessig også å skjule sannheten, det tror jeg, det kan være en god gjerning i noen tilfeller, men ikke som noen leveregel." For Darwin, it is important to be honest, because it is the best way to control what you say and do. On the other hand, he still acknowledges that it is appropriate to lie and it can be a good deed, as well.

Rory, when discussing honesty and its importance to him, he goes on to discuss how dishonesty affects relationships.

Å, veldig, i hvert fall, jeg kan forstå at folk har enkle hvite løgner her og der og sånne ting, men, hvis man gjennomskuer en person som en løgner, som driver med det så er ikke det et mennesker man har lyst til å henge mye med, man vet aldri hvor man har det menneske, man vet, man blir jo egentlig ikke, man blir jo kjent på et grunnlag om ærlighet, på en måte da, som menneske og når man oppdager denne personen har drevet å løyet så er det jo mye som kanskje plutselig blir revet bort og har man ikke blitt kjent på den samme måten som man hadde trodd og da er det vanskelig å forholde seg til denne personen da.

Without honesty, Rory argues he cannot know the people he meets. He is the only one of the participants who discuss honesty in this manner. Although the others mention the social contract, they usually do it during the discussion of the acceptability of lying. In his response, he mentions how “white lies” are acceptable, he then elaborates with examples after being asked about his opinions on lying.

Jeg tror det kan være helt greit å, på en måte, altså sånn denne t-skjorten koster 200 kroner istedenfor 300 kroner hvis man liksom skal snakke med sin partner eller et eller annet sånt da, men en sånn liten hvit løgn, «oi så finn du var på håret» og så ser det helt forferdelig ut og sånne ting, men.

After he stated strong negative opinion about lying during the question about honesty, at the same time expressing an understanding of the need for smaller, social lies. Going on asking if it is the “big lies” that are the issue. He replied “ja, så bare litt sånn, det er jo kanskje egentlig ikke greit det heller, men en sånn flukt rute da, med sånne små hvite løgner syns jeg kan være okay.”

All the participants express negatively towards lies, they also do not view the act of lying in a vacuum. Morally speaking, they argue that telling a lie to spare another person of emotional distress is acceptable. To uphold a community and social contract with a “white lie” is morally good. Most of the participants do value honesty in themselves and the people around them. This slight contradiction is in all probability commonplace. As a result, they have expressed the ability to see that a lie can be a gray area within. However, primarily it is acceptable to lie to uphold community.

This understanding of a lie is something most people can probably agree on; however, stealing is another kind of act. Societies consider stealing immoral in one form or another. None of the participants argued that stealing was a morally good deed. However, in varying degrees, they could see the possibility of stealing not being an immoral act. Showing a willingness to

imagine how something being immoral, does not always mean it is bad. Rachel argues; “i bunn og grunn mener jeg at det er galt. Men det komme litt an på hvem man stjeler fra. Jeg har ikke så store problemer med folk som stjeler fra de rike. Hvis noen for eksempel stjal fra Jeff Bezos hadde jeg ikke syntes synd på han. Han stjeler allerede fra de som jobber for han.” By this argument, Robin Hood is a morally good character. What the myth of Robin Hood and Rachel answer is about is redistribution of wealth. It is as well a focus on the construct of society and capitalism. Another note, Rachel does say would not pity Jeff Bezos, not that the thief is in the moral right. However, none of the others discusses stealing in this way. They express the possibility of constructing a theoretical situation in their mind where stealing to be morally right. As Darwin puts it after asking if he could; “joda, det kan sikkert konstrueres situasjoner hvor det å ta fra andre kan være akseptabelt, men jeg er ikke så mye oppe i slike sitasjoner at jeg har brydd meg, men sånn rent teoretisk kan jeg absolutt tenke meg at kan være riktig fordi følgene av å ikke gjøre de vil være verre.” Likewise, asking Charlotte this question, she does not hesitate to see the possibility. She says:

Ja, det vil jeg også si, absolutt. For å overleve liksom, det er jo på grunn av kapitalisme og tilsvarende så, ja. Reglene er ikke tatt helt riktig betatt, altså, ja, de er ikke nødvendigvis helt moralske regler vi har, eller moralsk oppdeling av goder, ville tenk det at man, det er veldig sjeldent det er rett.

Arguing that circumstances push people to do wrong actions. Charlotte specifies capitalism as something that could cause people to act immorally. It is possibly similar for Rory when he argues:

For meg selv så vil det ikke vært det, men jeg kan se, men det er jo situasjoner, selvfølgelig, hvor man ikke har noen annen utvei og kanskje har ikke blitt fortalt at man har en andre muligheter, for eksempel, det er mange ting som går over, som forskjellige, som å kunne overlever, fø familiene sin, eller, på en måte, sånne ting da, som ligger over at man knabber et brød fra en butikk for eksempel.

He does not specifically say capitalism, but there are clear economic circumstances for stealing to be morally acceptable. The majority of the participants who answered this question argue it takes monetary reasons for stealing to be acceptable. Rachel does argue it in a different way than Charlotte and Rory. They focused more on the general picture and the one who steals. Rachel, on the other hand, focuses on the possible victim and it depends on their status. Darwin is less interested in discussing the subject, at first stating “nei, det har jeg lite sansen for” when asked. He does as well bring up possible consequences of the action; “sånn rent teoretisk kan

jeg absolutt tenke meg at kan være riktig fordi følgene av å ikke gjøre de vil være verre.” This fits with his ideas on what makes something morally good or bad.

No one presents stealing as a positive, in many ways, speaking about it as a last resort. Rory and Charlotte express sympathy for people who have ended up in that situation where it is necessary. They are expressing the capacity for moral ambiguity even in questions that they consider morally wrong.

The question about slavery, on the other hand, the participants all had issues seeing a situation where it was not morally wrong. If they did try, it was elaborate and made them uncomfortable. This is not a strange reaction. No one considers it morally right to own a slave in modern European society. Asking the question primarily to see their reaction and if they could imagine an actual situation. As well as leading into the question of modern slavery. A relevant topic, that yielded interesting results.

Charlotte does consider it for a longer period if she can think of some case where it would be morally good to have a slave. After some pondering, she said; “nei. Det tror jeg ikke as. Jeg bare prøver å sette, å lage noen sånne, ja, rare sitasjoner, ja, okay, men hvis man har sånne rare ting som hvis du ikke tar personen som slave så kommer personen til å bli drept liksom.” She nervously laughs a few times. Darwin laughs a little as well, however, says “nei, det kan jeg ikke tenke meg, verken, det er jo lett å tenke på erotikk, i den retningen, niks, niks, det skal fra hjerte og underlivet.” Asking than if Darwin believes there is no more slavery in our time. Once again, says no, going on to say; “det fins nok i mange former. Det gjør det. Ikke så mye her i landet, men varianter av uttrykkelse, det fins. Det kan nok finnes eksempler på samliv som ligner på slaveri også i Norge, kjenner ikke til så mange av dem.” Even though Darwin has little personal experiences with slavery, he acknowledges it exists. Notably how he does not explicitly mention the religious, Darwin has brought up the religious unaided previously. It is possible he implicitly refers to them when talking about types of cohabitation, though that is conjecture.

Thomas says; “hvis jeg tenker lenge nok kan jeg sikkert komme på et tilfelle, men nei.” Much like Charlotte, he argues if he tried, he could almost certainly think of some situations, however, on a greater scale, he cannot think of slavery being morally acceptable. Asking him if he believes slavery still exists, he affirmably says; “varianter, eller, direkte slaveri eksiterer helt sikkert i noen plasser, mer sånn indirekte det eksiterer definitivt.” He does not define the difference between the two.

Rory states after asking him if he could think of any situation that he could own a slave; “nei. Det verken syns jeg eller tørr jeg å svare noe annet på.” As if he is, in part, concerned

about the societal consequences of saying anything else than no. Similar to how he answered about the rights of animals and eating meat. Expressing an external pressure to say no. Asking Rory about modern slavery, he goes on to talk about what he recently learned there was in Norway.

Nei, vet du hva, jeg har sett mye på den her, jeg vet ikke om du har sett den TV2 serien, Norge bak fasaden, som kom ut i høst, som har vært nå, og der avdekka de blant annet ganske mye slaveri her i Norge, så, var jo noen illusjon om at det var avskaffa her i Norge i hvert fall, men det er jo ikke det heller tydeligvis. Langt ifra tror jeg svaret egentlig er.

This is interesting, considering how Rory previously discussed how lucky he considered himself to live in Norway and how freedom was part of the Norwegian spirit. This is either because he sees he does not have to worry about certain things regarding obtaining happiness or the need for specific kinds of “meanings”. There is a security to be born in Norway, like the welfare state and strong unions. When discussing slavery, he points out that there is slavery even in Norway. Rory expresses a sort of surprise that this happens even in a country he believes himself lucky to live in. Although, when discussing human rights, Rory states; “ja, og frihet da, frihet til å velge og frihet til å gjøre som har lyst til, det er kanskje, det er kanskje egentlig nummer en nå jeg tenker meg om. Ja, det er jo litt sånn i norsk folkesjel med frihet og sånn.” This question does come before the discussion about slavery; it is possible he forgot until asking him specifically about it. However, this is an interesting contradiction in his worldviews. The documentary has made an impression, but not enough for it to change his views on the Norwegian spirit.

Asking Rachel, she expresses there are no situations where she could see owning a slave as morally correct. Perhaps not too odd, when discussing her views on modern slavery, Rachel says:

Ja, moderne slaveri eksisterer. Menneskehandel og smugling. Mennesker blir utnyttet i blant annet tvangsarbeid, prostitusjon, krig. Mennesker blir utnyttet i deres mest sårbare situasjoner. Man mister sine grunnleggende menneskerettigheter. Flyktninger og migranter er særlig utsatt, fordi de befinner seg i en sårbar situasjon. Tvangsekteskap, utnyttelse av arbeidere (overarbeid/underbetaling).

Rachel seems to be the most politically minded of the participants. Several of her answers allude to political events, however, primarily not in Norway.

As mentioned, the question of owning a slave never considered morally right. In the Western world, slavery is considered an immoral act, so their reaction is expected. When discussing modern slavery, they were all aware in their way of its existence. None of the participants thought about how this affected their daily life. As in the clothes they wear, the food they eat, or the technology they use. As mentioned, Rory discussed how he had seen a documentary about slavery in Norway. A country he had previously discussed as fundamentally free. This dissonance is expected. Every participant did stress the importance of the social aspect of life or community. No one accepts slavery of the participants; however, unless it is happening in front of them, it was not thought of too hard. It is not that they do not care. They argue it exists and where someone can find it. The moral ambiguity is more in their lack of introspection on how modern slavery affects their daily lives. Stressing that this is in all likelihood common.

Lastly, some do purposefully commit immoral acts. Those who go against the norms or laws, enslave other people. Individuals who are evil. Considered one of the issues for religion, referred to on occasion as the “problem of evil”. How can there be anything divine, like God, if evil exists and cruel actions towards good people happened. Wanting to see how the participants reacted towards defining what it means to be evil. As well, if they thought humans can be truly evil. If they can sympathize or express some sort of ambiguity towards what they saw as evil. On that, then asking if they can perceive it as a good to execute these individuals.

Rachel defines evil as “når man bevisst påfører andre smerte, skade, ødeleggelse.” She does not go on to answer if people can be fundamentally evil. It is a conscious choice to do a certain act, and these acts are evil. She does however argue that it is wrong to execute evil people.

Jeg mener dødsstraff er nedverdiggende og umenneskelig. Noen mener dødsstraff er avskrekkende, en påstand som har flere ganger blitt avkreftet. Jeg mener dødsstraff ikke er mer effektiv når det kommer til å begrense kriminalitet. Jeg mener det også er diskriminerende, når flertallet av de som blir henrettet tilhører en etnisk eller religiøs minoritet eller er fattig. Dette er også en gruppe mennesker som ikke har like god tilgang til juridisk hjelp.

There is no capital punishment in Norway. More than likely, Rachel is referring to the USA when she discusses the disproved theories regarding the death penalty.

Thomas on the other hand argues that: “det finnes ikke onde folk, det finnes ikke gode folk, det finnes onde handlinger.” Asking what makes a person do evil actions, he says; “tror

det er mangel på selvkontroll i situasjonen.” He argues that some people might deserve execution, but his issues with capital punishment are something else.

Nei, altså, det fins jo folk som bare, som sikkert fortjener å bli henrettet, men en ting er om noen fortjener å bli henrettet, er det noen som fortjener å dø fordi de har gjort noe fælt, en annen ting er skal staten gjøre det, det er to forskjellige ting, så syns det er mye lettere å si det er folk som fortjener å dø, men at det skal være en eller annen komite med noen som skal bestemme den og den skal gjøre det, det er jeg veldig skeptisk til.

He is not skeptical of the actual execution; it is more the people who decide. He sees a clear distinction between the two issues.

Darwin believes defining evil is a discussion of psychiatry rather than anything else. He states “Ja, det, du beveger over på sånn psykiatri, egentlig. Manglene på evne til medfølelse. Det fins jo psykiatriske tilfeller som, hvor det å ivareta sine egne ønsker, maktfølelser, osv., er så sterke og empatien mangler at noen kan oppfattes som onde.” He has previously stated the importance of compassion for others. This quote has been discussed about his opinions on religion. He brings up “maktfølelser” during the discussion about his issues with the religious. This is again just conjecture, as he does not state it. Asking if people can truly be evil, Darwin says; “ja, det tror jeg.” Asked if he believes people are born that way, or developed, he answers; “Det er jo lett å tenk seg at man vil diskutere Anders Behring Breivik, for eksempel, og hans handlinger er i hvert fall noe av det mest groteske, ond man kunne tenke seg og det er ingenting som tyder på at han har endret oppfatning og innsett at hans handlinger er onde.” Seemingly, arguing that some people are born evil. This is an opinion many of the others do not share. It is perhaps not too strange that Darwin has fewer issues with the death penalty. He refers to a movie he had seen many years ago that got him thinking; “jeg husker jeg stile meg selv det spørsmålet da jeg så en film for mange år siden, en amerikansk film.” Going on to say that; “jeg syns det er et vanskelig spørsmål, fordi du kan godt se for deg at henrettelses myndighetene begår ganske grove overtak og det best er kanskje likevel er å sørge for en effektiv forvaring. Så jeg er nok fortsatt ikke for henrettelse som prinsipp.” He expresses similar issues with the idea of corporal punishment as Thomas does.

Asking Rory, he once more because overwhelmed with the idea of defining evil. He goes on to answer; “ond? Oi, eh, nei, det er jo det er på en måte å få en glede ut av å påføre andre smerter og vanskeligheter da, at du har det godt når andre har det vondt.” People, according to Rory, are not born evil it is rather that “jeg tror det er mennesker som har blitt

utsatt for mye vondskap selv og sitter med en så dyp sjalusi at de oppleves som onde ja, fra utenfor, så at man da, ja, et ønske om at andre skal ha det sånn som de har hatt det tidligere selv, ja.” Asking for elaboration, Rory goes on to say:

Det fins sikkert det og, det finnes sikkert folk som, jeg vet ikke, har blitt oppdratt til å være onde, holdt jeg på å si, jeg vet ikke, alt man opplever i barndommen som er greit, hvis man er født inn i familiene hvor det er greit å, man kan piske tjenerne sin og man kan holde på, så blir det da en vane, men tror ikke folk bare tenker en dag (knips) «nå skal jeg bli ond», på en måte.

Acknowledging that there is a development, not something born. As he says, raised to believe evil actions are good. Rory is, as well, the participant with the most hopeful view regarding the rehabilitation of evil people. Stating that “jeg synes det er viktig å både lære, altså studere de, hvorfor har du endt opp som du har gjort, også det å gi dem hjelp da, det kunne være de kan klare å snu det å bli et godt menneske” He hopes that it is possible, but admits that “jeg har ikke noen bevis enten eller, hvilken som helst vei, men håper jo det er mulig.”

Finally, there is Charlotte, who expresses many of the same thoughts and opinions regarding evil and how to define it.

Ja, det er jo vanskelig å svare på det. Jeg tenker at, mange personer kan gjøre onde ting, så er spørsmålet når er det går over fra at man gjør onde ting til at man er ond selv. Jeg tenker at hvis du begår handlinger som med vilje skader andre, og, asså fortsetter å gjøre det, om du vet at det skader andre, da begynner du nok å bli en ond person, da er det litt sånn, selv om kanskje føler sympati, men hvis du fortsetter å velge å gjør de onde tingen, ja, så kommer ikke, så er det. Jeg tror du kan tenke mange onde ting og ikke føle empati men likevel velge å gjøre gode ting og da er du ikke en ond person.

For Charlotte, being evil is a choice. However, people are not necessarily truly evil. There are layers when she discusses evil. Evil is choosing to make certain actions, then without considering how these acts affect others.

Tror ikke egentlig det, men det er et vanskelig spørsmål for det er jo, det går jo litt innad på liksom hvem er det hvis, eh. Tror nok det er onde mennesker, det er folk som holder på med sex trafficking og skader barn med vilje og alt sånne ting som det, da begynner du, da er du absolutt innenfor ondets begrepet, tenker jeg, men utenom det, tror jeg det handler, mye, ofte mye mer om *ignorant* (engelsk) som på norsk er ... på norsk, det har en litt annen betydning, ehm, bare kunnskapsløs da. Litt annen flavour.

For Charlotte, most people are not evil, their acts that can be seen as evil comes from a place of ignorance. They have not sought out to understand parts of the world they live in, for whatever reason. This fits with Charlotte's worldview. She often mentions the importance of learning and exploring other people's worldviews.

The participants do have similar answers. Some more than others. Rory appears to be more optimistic than the other regarding rehabilitation, while Thomas and Darwin agree on why corporal punishment should not be done. Not because it is morally wrong, but because they cannot trust a board or committee to make good choices. Some of the participants seem to believe someone is born evil, while others argue it is nurture.

The participants in different ways show how they can view morality in ambiguous ways. Often it comes back to the community and the ability for sympathy. Forgiving immoral acts because they can sympathize with the other person. For example, stealing if the person is in a situation where they do not have any other choice, usually because they have financial issues. There are as well certain issues that have far less ambiguity, like slavery. Neither of these is surprising responses from the participants. It is, however, interesting that the motivation is community for many of their political and moral views. Humans are fundamentally social animals, so the focus on the social aspects is predictable. It does show, however, that these non-religious people still need to be part of the group.

7.0 The Seven Dimensions of Non-religion

The research questions for this thesis what are the worldviews of the non-religious in Norway. In addition, how does the non-religious understand their own identities as non-religious? The final chapter will be a discussion on these questions. Looking back at the interviews, there are several questions I wished that I followed up at the moment. There are, as well, certain questions I realized I should have had in the interview guide. Qualitative research interviews are an art form and it takes time to learn and perfect them. I would have preferred more participants, as well. However, transcribing and analyzing the interviews was time-consuming. The participants had fascinating answers and varied in ways I did not anticipate.

This thesis has been an exploration of these five participants' worldviews. With five participants, however, it is impossible to make generalized statements about the non-religious worldview in Norway. However, using their accounts and opinions to indicate certain worldviews. Discussing what it possibly says about the diversity of non-religious identities.

The discussion in this thesis has been on several topics to gain insight into their views. Mentioning the seven worldview dimensions in many discussions. As they are part of their everyday life. Ninian Smart developed the theory so that it could easily interpret parts of our worldviews regardless of religious convictions. This concluding chapter is going to be a discussion on each dimension as the participants express their worldviews. There will be repeating points or quotes from previous chapters. This time in the context of a dimension.

7.1 The Experiential or Emotional Dimension

It is interesting how few of the participants had strong emotions around their non-religious awakening. However, as discussed previously, it seems common in the Scandinavian setting. As Phil Zukerman discusses with his participants from Sweden or Denmark who had believed in their youth had slowly stopped believing as they got older (2019, 9). Even though there presumably are people who have had strong experiences or emotions around becoming non-religious among Christians in Norway. This, however, might be partly because of where the participants live. In an article by Stefan Fisher-Høyrem and David Herbert, they discuss the difficulty of being the “other” to Evangelical Christianity in Kristiansand (2019). Interviewing Muslims, ex- and non-religious people who all had similar negative and outsider experiences (2019, 5-12). People from communities or cities where identifying non-religious is seen as a negative will affect their relationship with their identity and with religion. However, Fisher-Høyrem and Herbert found that these groups rather “developed largely non-confrontational

tactics for negotiating and coming to terms with their predicament, seeking to establish on- and offline safe spaces in order to build a stronger group cohesion and identity (2019, 14).”

This does not mean that the participants do not express strong experiences or emotions during the interview. Darwin is a good example. He reacted to questions such as about “meaning” in life and about HEF’s use of typically religious rituals and ceremonies. He had these immediate reactions during the interview. There was as well sadness in retelling the exclusion he experienced by his peers during his youth.

Perhaps the issue with this dimension in a non-religious is how Smart discusses it using the heightened emotion and experiences gained through religious rituals. Discussing the ideas of Rudolf Otto and the *numinous* experiences, which are deeply associated with religion. Finding perhaps the *mystical* experiences in the non-religious phenomenon. Smart discusses the experiences as a “pure consciousness” and relating it to Buddhism and Hinduism (1995, 61). Assuming we can translate these categories to non-religious experiences, Thomas’s inner journey is an example of a non-religious mystical experience. Rather than them having strong experiences with religion or the divine, it is about their experiences losing or not having these “otherworldly” experiences. Part of the issue with suggesting this is that Smart relates these experiences with rituals and the way rituals are trying to recreate these initial experiences (1995, 58-9). For the non-religious these experiences then perhaps become part of a more casual ritual, for example, a retelling of how they became non-religious. Turning it into a narrative told to others, sharing experiences, to recreate the initial experiences. A narrative is equally important to a ritual as the experiences, as it is an important part of constructing it. For Smart, all the dimensions overlap in this way.

7.2 The Mythic or Narrative Dimension

A narrative is important. For this thesis, understanding it as how we create our identities. However, history is a powerful, our own personal history or world history. Using it as a tool to define ourselves or to create stories about ourselves. All the participants, in one way or another, had narratives or stories about themselves. Smart discusses that we, on one hand, romanticize history and create myths around it (1995, 75). On the other, we focus on the truth, regardless of the facts (Smart 1995, 75). Through romanticizing history, non-religion develops its own mythology. For example, modern scholars arguing that philosophers of the enlightenment were atheists or non-believers, even if there is no evidence of these philosophers self-identifying. These modern scholars are interpreting their writing and assigning them identifiers. Constructing people that modern, self-identifying non-religious people can refer to or relate to

into a mythological figure. They are mythological because others are creating narratives around these people through interpreting history or their writing, with no other evidence.

Smart argues that “myths often contain a set of symbols, that is to say beings and actions with a meaning beyond themselves (1995, 78).” The essential non-religious narrative is the theory of evolution. In some ways, Charles Darwin has gained a status beyond that of a normal man and is remembered for his theory. With this theory as a narrative, it can help define the non-religious person’s views. Several of the participants referred to science in some way, explicitly Darwin, Charlotte, and Rachel. Darwin tells a story about a picture book about the theory of evolution and the history of the planet that he received as a child and the impact it had on him. Rachel discusses how atheists have a bad reputation and then goes on to talk about how science works. Charlotte using the argument that as a “realfagsperson” it puts her in a specific position. Science, however, does not define Thomas and Rory as clearly as it does the others. Thomas touches only on science when discussing if humans will keep on being religious. Therefore, even though science is important for some non-religious people, it is not for all the participants in this study. However, a narrative they both share is religion. Rory does state that he does not consider his upbringing religious, but alluding to later that the community he grew up in was religious. He had a Christian confirmation as well. Rory grew up in a bigger city in southern Norway, and as Fisher-Høyrem and Herbert found, in Kristiansand it was challenging to be open about their non-religious identity. It could be that he experienced this as well in his own hometown. Perhaps why he expresses a greater community in the city he lives in now. Thomas, on the other hand, has the narrative of leaving his religion. During Thoma’s discussion of his own identity, he says “*tror nok sånn som jeg oppfatter ting nå, farger mye av det som egentlig skjedde, tolker alt i et nytt lys når det kommer senere i livet.*” He acknowledges how he views his own narrative about the past in light of the present. This is interesting, as this is how we build up our identity. We interpret the past from our current self. Even if Darwin had experiences with religious people during his youth, he frames it differently. Presenting his narrative regarding religion as part of the reason why he is non-religious and his negative emotions towards religion and the religious.

Narratives are not always these grand, defining accounts or myths. Many smaller narratives make up our identities as well. It reveals events or acts we either value or believes are important. It can reveal self-doubt or confidence. Several of the participants at one point during the interview told a narrative of some kind. Charlotte, for example, told about her experiences in the classroom with her students wanting to debate worldviews. This, as mentioned, fits well into her greater worldview because she values willingness to discuss.

Another story she tells is about the Jehovah's Witnesses who came to her door. They were eager to tell her about their worldviews, but not to discuss it with her as she tried to challenge them. Likewise, Darwin emphasizing his negative relationship with religion through all of these narratives during the interview.

Through the narrative, the individual can place himself or herself within a certain framework. They can understand themselves filtered through these stories, which are either personal or historical. Through telling these narratives to other people, they construct their identity. The sort of perception they want other people to have of them.

7.3 The Doctrinal and Philosophical Dimension

The doctrinal dimension is the grounding of the narrative dimension. Forming the narrative into a substantial reference point for the person to refer to when making decisions. This is why it is as well the philosophical dimension. An example of turning a narrative into philosophy is the theory of evolution. For some of the participant's sciences was a distinct part of their narrative. Represented with Darwin, Rachel, and Charlotte. Darwin specifically discussed the theory of evolution. A book from his childhood was about the evolutionary history of the world which helped him to define himself in his youth. He states:

Og så fikk jeg spørsmål da fra mine medelever som synes jeg var rar «hva tror du på da?», da sa jeg «jeg tror på naturen», da hadde jeg akkurat fått en fantastisk bok av min farfar, en bok med masse bilder i, en stor tykk bok, jeg tror fortsatt jeg kan over 20 forskjellige dinosaurer, som fortalte hele historien, hele evolusjons læren, som jeg jo veldig opptatt av, synes det er fryktelig spennende.

Later in the interview, talking about how he enjoys still learning about evolution and science. Associating in part science and being atheist, an opinion he shares with Rachel. However, she does it differently. Starting with saying it is not right to call atheists arrogant because it is not how science functions. Both Rachel and Darwin identify with being an atheist, however the former also identifies as agnostic. Charlotte, on the other hand, identifies exclusively as agnostic. Nonetheless, she expresses a deep relationship with science. Having taken a bachelor in "real fag" and at one point saying "kanskje litt avspilling av det at jeg identifiserer meg som en real fagsperson." As mentioned, Thomas mentions it only in passing when discussing if humans will keep on being religious. He does not remember either the specifics of what made him identify with atheist rather than agnostic, it is possible it was a scientist argument or a philosophical one. Rory does not touch on the subject, except if we include his categorization of animals. However, it is more likely that these categories derive from a different place.

Charlotte is also an active member of HEF. This organization bases itself on humanism, a philosophical stance. In ways, Charlotte seems to have unified their ideals into her own views. As mentioned in chapter five, she seems to have integrated their way of creating “meaning” in life into her own understanding. Whether this was conscious or not is impossible to say. Darwin is a member of HEF as well. However, Rory and Rachel are not part of any institution like HEF. In the same way, Thomas is still a member of the Church of Norway. However, even if he grew up with Christian doctrines, and it probably affects his views to an extent, he has rejected their dogmas. Thomas has a Ph.D. in philosophy, which is how he determined he was no longer religious. His studies presumably had other effects on his views as well. He often expressed somewhat other views than the rest of the participants. He had shorter replies and seemed comfortable in his views. The other participants were at ease, as well, perhaps aside from Rory. Thomas, on the other hand, had an upfront aspect to his responses.

The participants have ethical guiding principles, though some more explicitly than others. Perhaps the inexplicit nature makes it more difficult to discover and define this part of the non-religious. William Einen participates expressed a scientific narrative to define their non-religious framework (2019, 122). However, he discusses that there seems to be a missing conceptual framework for the non-religious to reference (2019, 127). The religious have a more straightforward reference point. Thomas argues there are no singular truths. Implying it is the reason he identifies as non-religious. There is not one “meaning” in life and there is not a singular correct ethical theory to guide humanity. Religion might have that, however, the non-religious do not need to have this to live a good and moral life. Even if there are not obvious philosophical principles, does not mean the individual non-religious person does not have principles they rely on to make choices. This dimension is not necessarily as distinct within non-religion as it is within religion. As apparent by the participants.

Smart argues that this dimension is part of making a community (1995, 94-5). It is through publicly affirming the doctrine or philosophy that a group display unity or an individual demonstrates their membership. With the participants, we can see how they affirm their group belonging, at the same time just how varied it is a group. For example, Darwin and Thomas, express certain group belonging with one another. The primary group membership, other than living in Norway, that they share is that they are both atheists. They did not express any other particular mutual philosophies. In this dimension, Darwin had more in common with Charlotte. They identify differently and cannot imagine identifying as the other. At the same time, they are both members of HEF and passionate about science.

In the end, the participants have “essential truths” for them to follow and reference. Whether these come from an institution or any sort of –ism. Developing a view on how to make good decisions and where these rules come from. To a degree, in a society, there have to be certain agreements for these to exist. There are subgroups within the societal philosophies. Nonetheless, they can refer back to the norms of the society they reside in to build a framework. To either work with or against.

7.4 The Ethical and Legal Dimension

Smart states that the ethical dimension is affected by the narrative and the philosophical dimensions (1998, 18). However, it affects them as well. The basing the principles that guide a person’s decisions when acting on their philosophy and their important, defining narratives. Basing which narratives a person considers is important on what is ethically correct. Observing this nuance in Darwin. A defending narrative for him is the theory of evolution. Grounding his narrative into his views on science as it affects his philosophical principle. This again affects how he discusses certain ethical dilemmas. When discussing the rights of animals, he brings up how everything has evolved to the point of consciousness it is today.

Smart states; “morality is affected by our picture of an ideal human being” (1995, 108). We can observe this in how the participants discuss themselves as moral agents. Even if they say they consider themselves good, they admit it is not always. Acknowledging that they do not live up to the ideal human they have constructed in their head.

The dimension does as well refers to ethical theories and moral principles. All the participants expressed some kind of clear guidance for their moral actions. Some more explicitly. For example, Darwin, during the political and moral discussion, often brought up consequences. Asking him which set of ethical guiding principles legislation should relate to, he specifically says; “altså at konsekvensene er gode for et godt liv mellom og samliv mellom mennesker og grupper.” How Darwin expresses himself, he seems to follow the principle of consequentialism. He never says the word, however, he repeatedly argues for using consequences to direct action. However, none of the other participants communicates their principles this distinctly. Thomas discusses how neither consequentialism nor deontology is principles he follows, as he does not believe in a singular code of ethics. He does formulate a principle to see if your actions are morally right or wrong. Admitting he based it on the works of Immanuel Kant. He states; “hvis det ikke er et unntak for deg selv, litt sånn vri på Immanuel Kant, kan dette være en universell regel?” In some ways, he argues that there are universal rules. At the same time, he argues that there is not quintessential ethical truth. It is interesting

how his answer relates to community and the social. Not making exceptions for ourselves when making choices.

The idea that Thomas introduces of there is no one correct ethical principle or theory is more likely what we find among people. For example, Charlotte discusses ethics and uses names for different theories, however, she never identifies with one herself. She says she does not follow deontology and she does not discuss the consequences of actions. She does have moral principles. She tries to be as honest as possible, acknowledging that she cannot always be completely honest.

Rory and Rachel did not have any discussion on ethical theories. However, they both have moral guidelines for themselves even if they do not explicitly say as much. Rory argues that what makes something morally right or wrong is the society we live inside; this is interesting, as it alludes to the community. It implies there is an ethical principle they all share. Rachel, as well, has an underlying principle of taking care of other people when she discusses morals or politics. However, this is in all probability because humans are social animals. Nevertheless, observing it in the participants exhibits how it is as important it is among the non-religious. How the creation of community happens for the non-religious.

Another way to observe this dimension in worldview is their values. Asking the participants about values, referred to as virtues and vices, wanting to find out their opinion on the worst values. In one form or another, their values were about community. Even though Thomas said honesty with yourself is an important value, he said he found the lack of solidarity between humans to be the worst. Darwin argues for compassion being a virtue and lack of empathy being a vice. Many of their answers came back to social cohesion. If possible, act a certain way and valuing certain traits. This makes it simpler to coexist with other people.

7.5 The Ritual and Practical Dimension

As discussed in chapter three, the ritual dimension has specific connections to the emotional dimension. Attempting to reenact the experience in a ritual. In certain ways, this is not possible within non-religious phenomena. However, the non-religious can seek to recreate a narrative and the emotions surrounding this in a ritualistic fashion. For example, telling other people their stories of realization of their lack of religious belief. Thomas, however, did not give the impression that he had those kinds of attachments to his narrative. Darwin had narratives about his own non-religious identity as a child. He had a specific story about a schoolteacher. Going on to tell:

Gud hadde jeg ikke noe forhold til og det var faktisk såpass sterkt at jeg rakte tunge til frøken nå jeg ble tvunget til å foldene hendene. Hun ble veldig rød i ansiktet, jeg hadde ikke beregnet at hun skulle se det, men da mammaen min litt senere kom og fortalte lærerinnen at jeg ikke syns noe om dette her og jeg helst ville slippe og at vi var ikke kristne, så jeg trengte ikke å delta i denne undervisningen, så hun sa at det hadde hun forstått.

The way Darwin told this story, as well as some of the others, suggests he had told them before. His narrative of science and theory of evolution is a topic he seems to discuss regularly, in particular with other atheists. Stating; “det er jo en del mennesker, vet, ikke minst, blant ateistene som er innmari stolte over sin tro på evolusjonen.” Charlotte has a sort of ritual in discussing worldviews with her students after class. She frames it as an important activity, and it is something she enjoys. It is as well where she reaffirms her own views and values.

The easiest way of finding rituals among the non-religious is looking towards HEF and their adaption of rites of passage. Darwin, Charlotte, and Rachel had confirmations through HEF, while Rory and Thomas had Christian confirmations. Darwin and Charlotte speak quite affectionately about their experiences within HEF. Darwin says; “jeg har jo selv blitt borgerlig konfirmert og jeg har jo slektninger som har blitt borgerlig konfirmert og vært i konformasjoner. Syns det er fine ting, fine ritualer, veldig ordentlig.” Charlotte tells of the effects it had on her:

Jeg ble konfirmert i Human-Etisk Forbund, så ble introdusert til det som barn og så, når jeg skulle gifte meg, så var det, til kirka ville jeg ikke, men hadde mange gode følelser om Human-Etisk Forbund så da gifta jeg meg dit også, tok det litt tid, også «hm, jeg har lyst til å påvirke verden på en positiv måte, hvordan kan jeg gjøre det, kanskje Human-Etisk Forbund er en god måte å gjøre det på» så da ble jeg aktiv der.

Her confirmation holds an important role in her life. Finding the institution that married her and became part of her non-religious identity because of the ritual. Rachel, on the other hand, who also confirmed in HEF, is not a member of the organization. Suggesting not every non-religious person in Norway gains these connections afterward. It is as well worth noting this is as well a narrative for Charlotte.

As Smart argues, a ritual does not necessarily have to be a grand event. There are the performative acts in our daily lives (1995, 122). Smart says; “as we have seen, rituals help create and preserve categories. One category of the most fundamental importance in the world is the category of *person*” (1995, 133). Through performative acts, one person acknowledges

another person's existence and value. Whether it is a simple nod, walking past each other, or giving a gift to someone.

A ritual no matter what form it takes is important for social cohesion. Many institutions rely on rituals to hold some sort of unity. Even secular institutions have performative acts. Expectations of colleagues or managers when it comes to how to act or gestures. This as well depends on the cultural or institutional norms the person originate.

7.6 The Social and Institutional Dimension

The discussion of this dimension of social and institution has appeared several times throughout the thesis. We are social animals; it is not strange finding this dimension. The sense of community is there, even if it is not in an institution. For example, when Rory talks about feeling like a part of the majority. Two out of five participants are part of an active non-religious institution, Darwin and Charlotte. While two out of five are part of the growing group of religiously unaffiliated, Rory and Rachel. Finally, there is Thomas who is still part of the Church of Norway. The social grouping that the participants are a part of is not all institutional. They are all part of the non-religious grouping. They are as well part of the greater social group living in Norway. All these groups affect their worldviews. For example, Thomas has not left his religious groups, stating he still has the same friend group and his wife is religious. He still goes to the church he was a member of to play tabletop board games. This affecting how he encounters new topics and the discussion around them. He still has a strong religious influence on his views. He does imply he meets with other non-religious people. Nonetheless, when asking about his social life, he brings up his religious friends and family.

Even though the participants are all part of the non-religious group, does not mean we can assume they all have the same opinions. Much like with the religious. There is a plethora of worldviews, which is why we often find subgroupings. For example, the atheist is such a subgroup; however, there is diversity within this group as well. The three people who identify with the atheist identifier. They do not agree on every subject or they come at it from a different angle. Building these different groups on the other dimensions. The groups agree on a certain level of worldviews. As discussed previously, Charlotte and Darwin have a lot in common in their worldviews. However, they do diverge as well. They disagree on the validity of agnostic as an identifier. Charlotte often tries to be understanding of the individual religious person, even if she questions the act of doing good deeds to receive rewards in the afterlife. Darwin for the most part rejects the idea of religion, being the only one to argue that religion will eventually disappear.

Rory does not have a specific non-religious grouping he identifies with; however, he still experiences a sense of community with other non-religious people. This is, as well, interesting as he later admits he recently moved to the larger eastern town in Norway. Discussing how his current network is not optimal yet, “men merker at det kommer seg hele tiden.” Asking him if he thought it would be different if he was in a religious group he says:

Det kan godt være, men jeg kunne også være flinkere til å oppsøke sosiale settinger sånn generelt, men jeg har ikke sånt sterk, jeg har et par nære venner her i Oslo og så føler jeg meg trygg nok til å bygge på det og det tar den tiden det tar.

Friends are a social grouping, as they require a similar worldview. Rachel discusses how she has not experienced too much negative attitude towards her identity because it “kan ha noe å gjøre med at folk jeg ofte omringer meg med også er ateister/agnostikere.” She experiences that her social group has similar worldviews as her.

This dimension is community as a category. It is as well, reliant on the other dimensions. If a person becomes a member of HEF, they agree on the philosophical and ethical principles they advocate. They approve and understand the institution’s narrative. Perhaps they have taken part in rituals HEF perform. The person experiences some sort of emotion to join the institution. Charlotte expresses something like this. There are the greater social categories as well, for example non-religious. Within this category, there are diverging paths. Fundamentally, the participants all understand themselves as a “other” to religion. They are part of an unspoken social dimension.

7.7 The Material Dimension

There was a discussion in the fifth chapter about the material dimension inside the non-religion phenomena. The material dimension is a physical representation of the worldviews. Understanding non-religious material as something that in one way or another has an “otherness” to religion. A book would be either about non-religious identities or against religion. For example, Richard Dawkins’s book *God Delusion* (2006), which is about both is these themes. Steven Bullivant argues that *The Da Vinci Code* (2003) by Dan Brown is an anti-religious book (2012, 116). There is as well non-religious appeal, decorations, or jewelry. None of the participants discussed any sort of material directly. This is, most likely because in Norway there is a lot of background non-religious material. None of the participants wore or spoke of any specific material non-religious material.

As mentioned, non-religious material is in many forms. For example, it is conceivable that Charlotte and Darwin have an enamel pin, or something of that nature, from HEF. There are as well the diplomas they receive for their education. It is as well possible that several of the participants have read a book, seen a movie, or played a video game with non-religious themes. However, the material dimension, much like performative acts within non-religion, is an observable part of their worldview. Not properly captured in this thesis.

Smart considers buildings part of the material dimension. An example is the offices of HEF is an expression of non-religion material in a structure. Understanding certain educational and government buildings, however, they are more secular. They are not adherently not religious. They do still hold importance within certain non-religious narratives. Darwin argues for the education of children as a human right and uses science as a framework for his identity. In a country such as Norway, with a particular way to relate to religion and non-religion, the material dimension falls in the background. Religious buildings are, as well, more explicit in character than non-religious structures. Regardless, the material dimension is important. It is the physical presentation of the non-religious phenomenon. A method to communicate their position and worldviews to their surroundings. Whether a conscious choice or not.

7.8 Non-religious Identities

Within this thesis, there has been a diverse amount of non-religious identities even though there were five participants. They understand themselves within the non-religious framework, but in different ways. As discussed, even if they identify similarly, does not mean they understand themselves the same way. Thomas and Darwin have different views on several topics and different approaches to them. Moreover, they do not put the same kind of importance on their identifier. In many ways, Darwin is more proud of his identifier. For Thomas, it was a way to define his new worldviews. Primarily identifying as an atheist to others if religion comes up in discussions. Many of the other participants express similarly, so it may be just typical of people in Norway. Rachel is stating she does not believe it is anybody else's business how she identifies. On the other hand, both Charlotte and Darwin want to seek out to discuss worldviews and because of that are more prone to tell people their identifier.

During the discussion of their worldviews, there are several differences and similarities in how they view themselves and others. As mentioned, the similarity between Charlotte and Darwin, but they understand each other's identifiers in a negative light. Even if Charlotte states it is mostly militant atheists she has issues with, it is the only identifier she expresses any issues against. None of the others expresses any negativity towards a specific identifier. Arguing it is

more the individual. This could be because it is how they wish to be viewed or that they have not reflected on what other's identifiers really are in practice.

They express a type of fluidity in their identity, as well. Either in their range, like Darwin, or in their journey, like Thomas. How Rachel sees herself as both agnostic and atheist. There is as well the changeability in the identifiers. The technical definitions of these identities exist and affect how the participants view them. This does not mean that they understand themselves the same way. Thomas sees how he might be an outlier when he discusses if humans will keep being religious. There are the expectations he has on being an atheist, however, he still relates to it. It shows how these identities work differently in lived non-religion. They are open to interpretation. Charlotte is fluid because she is willing to open up about her own views and have them challenged by other people. Opening up the possibility of changing her identifier in the future, even though she expresses how little interest in it now.

Changes in identities happen in meeting other narratives. All the participants were willing to discuss their worldviews for this study. To a degree, they are all willing to discuss their identity and views. Being willing to discuss their views opens an individual to change in their narrative.

7.9 The Worldviews of the Non-religious in the Study

Within the worldviews of the participants in this study, we can see certain similarities and differences. It has been interesting to see the diversity just within these five people. Emphasizing how research in lived non-religion is important. However, when looking for literature for this thesis, there was not much on the agnostic identity. Making it more challenging to discuss the agnostic identity. I am wondering how common Charlotte's views and opinions are as an agnostic. After all, Charlotte and Darwin have many similarities in their worldviews but identify differently. Yet Darwin has a negative opinion of agnostics. Lived non-religion does not fit into the framework, much like lived religion.

Expecting their worldviews when it came to ethics and politics, as people living in Norway. However, it displays how important community to them. As a subject, it needs to be delved into deeper. Gaining an understanding of how they shape and form their social groups, beyond institutions. This can be a challenging subject, few of the participants thought of many specific groups they were a part of the outside of non-religion ones. This could be because of their own expectations when coming to the interview. They do all have groups, either friends or hobbies. After prying, Rory mentions surfing. Asking for important group membership, Rachel mentions the Palestine Committee of Norway.

A regret I do have is that there are no non-religious people from other ethnicities or nationalities in this study. Their experiences as a non-religious person might yield different answers. The onset of their worldviews is different. There are as well the experiences of non-religious who are in Norway seeking asylum because of their “otherness” to religion. As varied the participants wherein their views, they were affected by their Norwegian upbringing in some sense. When Grace Davie argues that Norway has a different relationship with religion, it affects how the non-religious from Norway, view religion as well.

In all of the dimensions, the least beneficial for this study was the material dimension. Primarily, as mentioned, observing it every day rather than in an interview setting. Echoing the argument of Lois Lee, there needs to be further research into non-religious material (2015, 81). The taken-for-granted and implicit nature of non-religion in Norway makes the material aspects fall in the background. In the future, no doubt doing a lot of interesting research into the non-religious material.

Emphasizing not only the diversity of different non-religious identities that live in Norway. Finding as well that within each identity there are different worldviews. Even if they have fundamentally similar views, they still had their own moral principles and opinions on different issues. In one way or another, social cohesion was important for their worldviews. Expecting as much, however, in many ways it is defined or steered their narratives was an interesting observation. Because an individual is not religious, does not mean they do not seek out group belonging.

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Attachment 1

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

”De ikke-religiøse i Norge”?

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å finne ut av hvordan du identifiserer deg som en ikke-religiøs person i Norge. Hvordan du ser deg og din identitet i forhold til samfunnet og til religion. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Dette forskningsprosjektet er til en masteroppgave i religionsvitenskap ved universitet i Oslo.

Det eksiterer flere forskjellige måter å identifisere seg som ikke-religiøs, blant annet; ateist, agnostiker, humanist, sekulær og antiteister. Dette forskningsprosjektet innebærer å klargjøre og fordype hva slags holdninger og forståelser som ikke-religiøse har i Norge. Dette vil si i forhold til hvilken selvforståelse du har om din egen ikke-religiøse identitet. Også til samfunnet, moral, og religion i Norge. Poenget er og intervjuet flere forskjellige ikke-religiøse for å skape en større forståelse av de som ikke ser på seg selv som religiøs eller troende. Det er ingen gale meninger, fordi det som jeg er ute etter er dine meninger og tolkninger til spørsmålene.

Jeg ønsker å finne ut av hvor viktig din ikke-religiøse identitet er for deg. Hvordan du tenker andre ser på deg som en ikke-religiøs person. Hvilke holdninger du har til blant annet religion og visse menneskerettigheter. Og hvilke moralske meninger du holder på visse temaer.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Instituttet for kulturstudier og orientalske språk (IKOS) ved Universitet i Oslo er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Vi har kommet i kontakt igjennom at jeg spurte forskjellige ikke-religiøse organisasjoner eller igjennom reddit.com, om noen var interesserte i å bli intervjuet. Dette har jeg gjort for å prøve å få så vidt utvalg som mulig. Jeg ønsker og intervjuet deg fordi du anser deg selv som en ikke-religiøs person og ønsker å høre dine meninger, hvordan du identifiserer deg og hvorfor, i tillegg til andre temaer, som religion og moral. Ingenting som blir sagt er galt. Jeg er interessert i å kunne høre fra flere ikke-religiøse er villig. Jeg håper på å snakke med rundt 6-8 stykker.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet mitt vil det innebære et intervju på som vil ta mellom 60-90 minutter. Spørsmålene vil handle om din ikke-religiøse identitet, din forståelse av ditt nærmiljø og hva slags holdninger du har til alt. Det vil også være et fokus på din forståelse av religion og av organisasjoner, både religiøse og ikke-religiøse. Det kommer til å komme spørsmål om holdninger du har til visse politiske temaer som LHBT, kjønn og andre rettighet. Til slutt vil det bli noe spørsmål rundt moral, hvor vi kommer inn på hvordan du forstår moral og etikk. Det er ingen gale svar fordi dette handler om deg og dine tolkinger. Intervjuet vil bli tatt opp på båndopptaker, får så å bli transkribert.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykke tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg. Hvis du velger å delta, vil alle opplysninger om deg vil bli anonymisert. Hvis du trekker deg blir de med en gang slettet og ødelagt.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrevet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket. Du vil bli anonymisert og enkeltpersoner vil ikke være gjenkjennelige. Det vil bare være meg som vil ha tilgang til materialet og vil behandle det. For å forsikre dette kommer dette skrevet til å bli oppbevart i et låstskap på IKOS, samt båndopptaker. Transkripsjon vil bli gjort på en PC eid av Universitetet i Oslo, som er bak et låst rom hvor du trenger kode for å komme inn.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes 1. juni, men mulighet for utsettelse til 1. desember. Ved avslutning av prosjektet vil all informasjon slettes. Den anonymiserte dataen kan bli brukt for å skrive artikler om tema senere, men ingen personopplysninger skal beholdes.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- få slettet personopplysninger om deg,

- få utlevert en kopi av dine personopplysninger (dataportabilitet), og
- å sende klage til personvernombudet eller Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra IKOS ved Universitetet i Oslo har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Alida Kristiansen, på e-post (abkrist@uio.no) eller telefon: 971 88 828
- Veileder; Dag Øistein Endsjø, på e-post (d.o.endsjo@ikos.uio.no) eller telefon: 22 85 49 18
- Vårt personvernombud: Roger Markgraf-Bye, på e-post (personvernombud@uio.no)
- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS, på e-post (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Alida B. E. Kristiansen

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet «The None-Religious in Norway» og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

- å delta i intervju

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet, ca. 1. juli 2020

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Attachment 2

Intervjuguide

Introduksjon

1. Fortelle kort om deg selv;
 1. Alder og kjønnsidentifikasjon
 2. Bakgrunn (hjemby, utdanning, jobb)
 3. Vokst opp religiøst -
 1. Hvis ja; hvilken religion?
 1. Skjedde det noe spesielt som gjorde at du sluttet å tro?
 2. Hvis nei; hvorfor ikke/kan du utdype?
 1. Tenkte du noe på religion når du vokste opp?
 4. Hvilke religioner har du hatt erfaring med, både i barndommen og nå?
Forskjellig?

Selv-identifisering og selvforståelse

1. Identifiser du deg med et spesifikt ikke-religiøst begrep?
 1. Hvis ja; Hvilket ikke-religiøst begrep identifiserer du deg som (eller annet)? Du kan velge flere hvis du føler det er riktig (ateist, agnostiker, sekulær, humanist, fritenker, rasjonalist, ikke-troende, marxist).
 2. Hvis nei; er det en grunn?
2. Hvordan kom du fram til at du var [*begrep her*]?
 1. Hvorfor appellerte akkurat denne/disse til deg? Skjedde det noe spesielt?
 2. Har du opplevd noe negativitet om å identifisere som [*begrep her*]?

1. Hvis ja; hva fokuseres på?
2. Hvis nei; hvorfor tenker du at du ikke har?
3. Hva tenker du [*begrep her*] sier om deg som person?
4. Er det viktig for deg å uttrykke identiteten din til andre?
 1. Hvis ja; hvorfor?
 2. Hvis nei; hvorfor ikke?
5. Hva tenker du om de andre begrepene?
 1. Har du tidligere vurdert andre begreper for å identifisere deg selv?
 2. Er det noen av dem du har negative meninger om?
6. Hva gjør at livet har mening?
 1. Hva skjer etter døden? Tror du det er noe liv etter døden?
7. Tenker du at du kan leve et fullstendig liv uten religion?

Det sosiale/fellesskapet

1. Er du en del av den norske kirke?
 1. Hvis ja; hvorfor har du ikke meldt deg ut?
 2. Hvis nei; er du en del av en annen organisasjon?
 1. Hvis ja; hvilke og hvorfor den/disse?
 2. Hvis nei; hvorfor ikke?
 3. Andre medlemskap som er viktig for deg?
 1. Er du del av en hobby gruppe? (rollespill, gaming, strikking)
 1. Tenker du på om de andre i gruppen er religiøse eller ikke? Hvis noen var, ville du brydd deg?
2. Har du vært del av religiøse ritualer (bryllup, begravelse, konfirmasjon)?
 1. Hvis ja; hva syns du om dem?

1. Tenkte du på at du var [*begrep her*] under ritualet/seremonien?
 2. Følte du det var relevant at du var [*begrep her*]?
2. Hvis nei (**også til ja**); Har du vært en del av de sekulære versjonene? (HEF eller sivile)
1. Syns du det er riktig av sekulære institusjoner som HEF å adoptere religiøse ritualer?
 2. Tenkte du på at du var [*begrep her*] under ritualet/seremonien?
 3. Følte du det var relevant at du var [*begrep her*]?
3. Føler du at du går glipp av noe siden du ikke er med i et religiøst fellesskap?
 4. Tenker du at har du et bra nettverk?
 1. Tror du nettverket ditt ville vært andreledes hvis du var en del av en religion?

Politiske holdninger

1. Hva slags tanker og holdninger har du til religion?
 1. Tenker du religion hører til i det offentlige? Eller i det private?
 2. Tenker du at mennesker kommer til å slutte å være religiøse? At religion kommer til å forsvinne?
2. Anser du likestilling mellom kjønnene som viktig? Er det noe vi har oppnådd i Norge?
 1. Hva slags tanker har du om dyrs rettigheter? Er det en forskjell mellom dyr og menneske? Hvis ja; villig til å gå inn i mer detalj?
3. Hva slags forhold og meninger har du om LHBT(LGBTQ)?
 1. Burde de ha de samme rettigheter som heterofile? (blant annet; adoptere eller gifte seg i kirken om de ønsker)
4. Hvilke verdier syns du er viktigst hos mennesker?
 1. Hvorfor disse?
 2. Hvilke syns du er verst?

5. Kan du gi meg en liste på de tre viktigste menneskerettighetene?
 1. Hvorfor akkurat disse?

Moralske holdninger

1. Anser du deg selv som en moralsk god person? Fordi?
2. Tror du at religiøse gjør mer gode gjerninger enn ikke-religiøse?
 1. Hvorfor/ ikke?
3. Hva gjør at noe er moralsk rett eller galt?
4. Fordi noe er lovlig, betyr det at det er moralsk riktig? Utdyp?
5. Hvor mye verdsetter du ærlighet hos deg selv og de du møter?
6. Kan det noen gang være greit å lyve? For eksempel?
7. Kan det noen gang være greit å stjele? Hvorfor?
8. Er det viktig at vi tar vare på hverandre?
9. Kunne du tenke deg en situasjon hvor det å ha en slave er greit?
 1. Mener du at slaveri er totalt avskaffet i verden? Eksiterer det fortsatt?
10. Hvordan ville du definert det å være ond?
 1. Tenker du at et annet menneske kan virkelige være ondt?
 1. I så fall, er det moralsk feil å henrette et ondt menneske?