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Rearranging the Domain: Spiritual Care in Multiple Dimensions

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Abstract: Clearly, chaplaincy is concerned with spirituality. But spirituality does not cover all that chaplaincy is about. In addition, there is critique on the clarity, usefulness and precision of the concept of spirituality. In order to express the richness of the profession and safeguard the particular characteristics of spirituality, this article proposes a new arrangement of chaplaincy's domain: meaning and worldviews, including existential, ethical, spiritual and aesthetic dimensions. The model is considered with regard to two criteria: does the definition do justice to the plural, rich and various experiences of spirituality and meaning, including non-Christian and secular experiences? And does the definition help to communicate chaplaincy and its particular characteristics to other professions? The definition of the Dutch Association of Spiritual Caregivers is presented and reflected upon from a philosophical view. Finally, the definition is tested for its usefulness through application in some case studies.

Keywords: chaplaincy, spiritual care, spirituality, domain, meaning, Kierkegaard, aesthetics

Samenvatting (Nederlands): Geestelijke verzorging gaat over spiritualiteit, maar het begrip spiritualiteit dekt niet alles wat aan de orde is in geestelijke verzorging. Daarvoor mist het de nodige conceptuele helderheid, toepasbaarheid en precisie. Dit artikel wil recht doen aan de rijkdom van het beroep en tegelijk het eigene van 'spiritualiteit' behouden. Daarom stelt het een nieuwe omschrijving en ordening voor van het domein van geestelijke verzorging: zingeving en levensbeschouwing, bestaande uit de existentiële, ethische, spirituele en esthetische dimensies. Twee vragen dienen als criteria bij dit model: doet deze definitie van geestelijke verzorging recht aan de meervoudige, rijke en verschillende ervaringen van spiritualiteit en zingeving, inclusief niet-christelijke en seculiere ervaringen? En helpt deze definitie om over geestelijke verzorging en haar onderscheiden kenmerken te communiceren met andere professionals? De auteurs presenteren de definitie van de Vereniging van Geestelijk VerZorgers en reflecteren hierop vanuit een filosofisch perspectief. Tot slot wordt de definitie getoetst op de bruikbaarheid door hem toe te passen op enkele casestudy's.

Slutelwoorden: geestelijke verzorging; ongebonden; spirituele competentie; spiritualiteit; professionalisering; Nederland

Introduction: Painting the Picture

Chaplains are word painters. They sensitively look for words that express the colours and tints of the situations in which people find themselves, words that fit the aesthetic taste of the persons to whom they are relating, that provide nuance for ethical sensitivities, that express the dark shades of spiritual struggle and the light of hope, that have sufficient intensity for the existential experiences that chaplains encounter and sufficient lucidity for effective communication with other professionals.

On a more general reflective level, chaplains also use words to colour in the domain of chaplaincy care itself, to describe the profession. Gradually, in many countries a discourse of “spirituality” and “spiritual care” is replacing the more traditional discourse of “religion” and “(clinical) pastoral care” (Schuhmann & Damen, 2018; Smeets, 2006; Zock, 2008b). The success of the discourse of spiritual care is exemplified by the fact that the term is sometimes adopted in non-English-speaking regions without translation, as in the German spirituality and healthcare journal *Spiritual Care. Zeitschrift für Spiritualität in den Gesundheitsberufen*. Certainly, the impact of describing the field in terms of spirituality and spiritual care can hardly be underestimated. With roots in the WHO definition of palliative care (WHO, 2010), with its ability to unite parties in consensus definitions (Nolan, Saltmarsh & Leget, 2011; Puchalski et al, 2009), with the ever-expanding amount of research and literature in the field of chaplaincy, but even more in other disciplines, it seems to have proved its value.

Despite broad acceptance and numerous attempts at definition and consensus, “spirituality” remains a conceptually unclear, if not contested term (e.g. Salander, 2006, 2012; Walton, 2012). There are several issues. First, the term “spirituality” migrated from a term used for specific religious practices to a term used in a generic or even universalist manner (Kruizinga, 2017). Then the claim that “spirituality”, in contrast to “religion”, refers to a universal dimension of human existence (Swinton, 2001; Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005) is a product of strategic reframing, although it is not evident in and of itself, nor is it a view shared by all. The suggestion that spirituality is universal and, thus, every person is spiritual even seems to presuppose a certain Christian anthropology in which spirituality is the inner core of every human being. Often, spirituality is translated into models using the metaphor of personal, inner depth (Smit, 2013, 2015; Weiher, 2011), which could consequently isolate or individualize issues of spirituality (McClure, 2010).

The language of spirituality is an attempt to move beyond the “limits” of a religious description and relevance of chaplaincy, but it in effect also shifts the problem, as it seems to create a new bifurcation of spiritual and non-spiritual people or experiences, which in fact are more fluid (Abby, 2011; Hay & Hunt, 2000; Streib & Hood, 2016). Many people, especially in the Netherlands, do not regard themselves as spiritual (Bernts & Berghuijs, 2016). In other words, universalizing spirituality may be problematic and, according to Bregman, it may even deprive the notion of spirituality of its distinct flavour (Bregman, 2014). Walton (2012) argues that spirituality is often understood in terms of “connection”, and is less used to indicate experiences of disturbance or alterity. Spirituality is often given a dominant

twist, whereas chaplaincy is also about the senselessness, the absurd and the human deficit.

There are also questions about the practicalities of the term “spirituality”. Koenig has questioned whether the term is fit for clinical (research) usage. A particular problem is the inclusion of characteristics of mental health and well-being in definitions of spirituality (Koenig, 2008). Peery (2009) has argued that spiritual care is part of what chaplains do, but as a term it does not adequately provide a discourse for the whole of what they do, such as ethical deliberation, aesthetic practices, or for practices based specifically on religion and worldviews. In addition, the discourse of spirituality, understood in a universalistic sense, is not specific enough. Approaches to spiritual care often emphasize the chaplain as specialist, but consider spiritual care a task for other professionals as well (Best et al., 2020).⁶ The distinction serves to share responsibility, but it does not foster a clear definition of what chaplains do and what their field of expertise is.

Swinton and Pattison (2010) argue that despite, or even because of its vagueness, the term “spirituality” still remains useful. We agree that the term can be helpful to address “deficits and absences within healthcare provision and initiating positive change” (Swinton & Pattison, 2010, p. 233). In addition, they rightly argue that spirituality can be a meaningful concept for patients. However, the context in which Swinton and Pattison discuss the term “spirituality” is different, namely, the context of nursing, where spirituality is embedded in palliative care and can also serve as term of resistance. We do not propose to abandon the language of spirituality, but when used as a concept to address deficit, “spirituality” is insufficient for describing the domain of chaplaincy.

In sum, using “spirituality” as the description of chaplaincy’s domain is too vague to foster cooperation between healthcare professionals, too general to indicate the particularity of the spiritual and too narrow to express the richness of chaplaincy. The Professional Standard of the Dutch Association of Spiritual Caregivers (Vereniging van Geestelijk Verzorgers, VGVZ) rearranged the definition of chaplaincy. It defines two foci of chaplaincy, meaning and worldviews, including the existential, ethical, aesthetic and spiritual dimensions, thereby relating the spiritual more explicitly to the transcendent. In this article, we will reflect on this definition with regard to chaplaincy’s domain and a pluralizing and secularizing context.

6. At the moment of submission of this article, the website of the European Association of Palliative Care to which we wanted to refer was under revision. We therefore refer to the white paper in the reference provided.

The question that guides the article is: *how can the definition of chaplaincy in the Dutch Professional Standard be evaluated with regard to the domain of chaplaincy, a pluralizing context and its communicability with other professionals?* First, we detail some challenges to be met when talking about chaplaincy's domain in today's society. Second, we pay attention to the framework that has found expression in the Dutch Professional Standard. Third, we reflect on the "logic" of the framework from a philosophical perspective. Finally, we assess the usefulness and persuasiveness of the Dutch framework. We write from a Dutch perspective, but we nevertheless think this framework is useful for other contexts.

Reframing: Challenges

The quest for new language such as "spirituality" to define chaplaincy's domain has evolved in the context of Western societies that have developed, in the past decades, from predominantly Christian societies into plural and secularizing societies. Although religion has certainly not evaporated from society (Davie, 2015; van de Donk, 2006), its role has changed. Just as society has changed, the formerly exclusive religious practice of chaplaincy has also developed over time. Whereas individual chaplains adapted their professional practice to meet the needs of the postmodern individual, reflections on the domain and nature of chaplaincy lag behind. In various countries, chaplaincy associations try to formulate the nature and added value of their profession in language that convinces other parties involved of the value of chaplaincy (Cadge, 2019; Schilderman, 2007). Interdisciplinary research on chaplaincy and related subjects have reinforced the quest for a shared language.

Two objectives play a role. First, there is the need for language that connects and includes various experiences of religion, spirituality and meaning. In particular, doing justice to a non-Christian or secular "spirituality" is important with regard to contemporary Western societies. As a consequence, there is an inclination to look for a "universal". Second, the new language needs to possess the quality of being easy to communicate with other disciplines, in a way that is both open to sharing the field with other care givers and yet able to indicate the specific expertise of chaplains.

There is also a concern that has to do with the plurality but, above all, with the richness of the variety of terms used to indicate what is going on in chaplaincy care: existential issues, spirituality, morality, ethics, life questions, (end of) life issues, religion, worldviews, (search for) meaning, purpose, faith, etc. A description of the domain of chaplaincy should not reduce that richness but express it. There is no single term, no one discourse

that summarizes or symbolizes the whole. The discourse of ethics has its particularities that cannot be fully expressed by the discourse of spirituality, or religion. There are aesthetic and sensory dimensions that are seldom mentioned in formal descriptions of chaplaincy care, but which play a major role in ritual and in accompaniment processes. In order to address these challenges, we want to repaint the picture, not by using different colours, but by reframing or rearranging the key terms.

Dutch Professional Standard: Double Focus

Zock (2008a) has indicated that Dutch chaplaincy developed primarily in response to secularization, in contrast to chaplaincy in the United States, which developed mostly against the background of changes in healthcare. Therefore, it will be interesting to consider the definition of chaplaincy in the Dutch Professional Standard.

For the 2015 Professional Standard of the VGVZ (Association of Spiritual Caregivers, 2016), a double focus was adopted: meaning and worldviews, for which four dimensions are distinguished: (a) the existential, (b) the spiritual, (c) the ethical, and (d) the aesthetic. The definition of chaplaincy care in the Professional Standard is, in (official) translation:

Spiritual care⁷ is professional support, guidance and consultancy regarding meaning and world views. There are four dimensions to the notions of “meaning and world views”.

- (a) The *existential* dimension, pertaining to a person’s existence as it is experienced in everyday reality and with its (contingent) experiences of horror, and wonder, and all things between.
- (b) The *spiritual* dimension, pertaining to transcendental meaning and experience.
- (c) The *ethical* dimension, pertaining to values, standards and responsible conduct.
- (d) The *aesthetic* dimension, pertaining to constitutive experiences of natural and cultural beauty (Association of Spiritual Caregivers, 2016, p. 10).

The foci of meaning [zingeving] and worldview [levensbeschouwing, literally “life view”] require some attention to translation. The first focus refers to the attribution and experience of meaning in life. It is a common term in Dutch, used generically in the way many contemporary and generic definitions of “spirituality” function in the English language. The second term can

7. The ambiguous use of “spiritual” in the term “spiritual care” [geestelijke verzorging] and “spiritual dimension” [spirituele dimensie] is a translation problem.

be translated as worldview, or philosophy of life, or even belief system, and is generally used to refer to both religious and non-religious worldviews.

The focus on processes of meaning provides chaplaincy care not only with a broad anthropological basis, but also with a strategic focus. Asking or exploring what an event, situation or relationship means for someone (or how it confounds meaning) is generally a starting point for response and care. Besides reflecting theological and philosophical hermeneutical traditions and pastoral approaches (Gerkin, 1984), the focus on human existence as a search for meaning has found resonance in (social) psychological studies (Baumeister, 1991; Park, 2010, 2013).⁸ Of special note is the work of Frankl (2008 [1946]), who puts the search for meaning at the heart of human existence. Frankl placed the search for meaning as such as central to human life. Interestingly, Frankl understands humankind as a *homo quaerens* (the searching human), but he makes no claim upon a particular system of meaning or belief. This approach lends exigency to the search for meaning, while recognizing the contingency and incompleteness of any particular appropriation of meaning. It is probably not without reason that many definitions of spirituality, for instance that of Puchalski and associates (2009), point primarily to meaning as an important underlying concern of spirituality.

The second focus on worldviews includes religions, humanistic worldviews and philosophies of life, in a broad sense. It not only indicates, or allows for, identification with a particular tradition, but it also points to the fields of training for chaplaincy (theological, religious, spiritual, philosophical, etc.) and to the actual resources with which chaplains work: rituals, (religious) practices, holy texts, reflective, philosophical and meditative literature, explicit beliefs and convictions. In fact, the two foci of meaning and worldviews can be considered as an ellipse. Meaning does not exist in general, but it is often nurtured by or related to particular worldviews and traditions. Worldview thus refers to official religious or humanist traditions, but also, as has become more common, to bricolage or assemblages of different worldviews as a frame for the attributed meaning.

Whereas the focus on meaning establishes an anthropological, hermeneutical basis for chaplaincy to which others can be welcomed, the focus on worldviews identifies the specific expertise of the chaplain. This expertise does not only consist of “objective” knowledge, but also of first-person knowledge and even representation.

8. The chaplain Littooi has employed the framework of Park in rehabilitation care (Littooi, 2019).

“Meaning system” and “world view” are related concepts that cover various aspects of the search for meaning and religious practice: formal and informal, passive and active, communal and individual [everyday and extraordinary], related to both process and content. (Association of Spiritual Caregivers, 2016)

It is important to note that when the model was presented, there was some resistance to the framework. Protestant and Catholic Christian sectors of the professional association regretted the absence of any explicit reference to faith in the core definition, although faith and belief are named elsewhere. It was felt that “faith”, more than any other term, was a recognizable expression of the content of chaplaincy care for the majority of those who make use of chaplaincy care. The term “faith” has specific religious connotations, but it is also used in a generic sense (Fowler, 1981) and in an inter-religious sense, as in the terms “multi-faith or inter-faith chaplaincy” and “interfaith dialogue”.

However, the composers of the model felt that a new framework should reflect the situation that, in Dutch society, religion has moved into a minority situation (Bernts & Berghuijs, 2016). The new definition is thus an attempt to provide a framework that can accommodate religious and secular worldviews, formal and informal searches for meaning, and still allows for identification with a specific conviction of faith or worldview.

Multiple Dimensions

In order to differentiate and enrich the picture of the domain of chaplaincy, four dimensions that play a role in the discernment of meaning in religions and worldviews are denoted: existential, spiritual, ethical and aesthetic. There is no pretence that these dimensions provide an exhaustive description – the domain is too rich for that – but they do indicate primary fields of focus. The *existential* dimension is of a specific sort, referring very basically to (the experience of) the human condition in both its limitations and possibilities, its everydayness and contingency. Meaning is sought and/or found within the fullness of life, its wonders, its horrors, its daily character and structure, often expressed in life questions such as, “Who am I?”, “Why is this happening to me?”, etc. The quest for meaning sometimes leads to a satisfactory resolution, sometimes to an experience of absurdity, but perhaps also acceptance. Thus, the search for meaning always finds itself between its fulfillment and the lack thereof.

The other three dimensions indicate more explicitly fields of human meaning and endeavour. The choice was made to relate the *spiritual* dimension explicitly to the transcendent, although no assertion is included on the

metaphysical or ontological status of the transcendent. The term is used phenomenologically, as a reference to or openness towards that which is experienced as being more than common, usual or everyday. It does not only refer to vertical, metaphysical transcendence, but includes “horizontal transcendence” (Kunneman, 2006), indicating the experience of meaning in which an “exterior” perspective or perception is experienced beyond one’s own horizon. These perspectives can be religious or philosophical, but they may also belong to the sphere of the paranormal and the supernatural (Körver, 2013).

The *ethical* dimension refers to norms and values and customs that play a role in a life of responsibility. In moral counselling and ethical deliberation, the ethical dimension is explicitly a focus of chaplaincy care, but it is also constantly present in the choices and decisions that people make, in the ways people relate and are treated, in the value-laden practices of care. Ethics, and spirituality, are not just an aspect of healthcare, but they are concerned with the very reasons why we provide care for each other in the ways we do, with human dignity and the nature of care relations, with the motivations and inspirations of professionals.

Of particular interest is the *aesthetic* dimension, because it is seldom explicitly named in descriptions of chaplaincy or spiritual care. Whereas in the Dutch Professional Standard, the initial concern expressed by the aesthetic was with “aesthetic experiences” in nature, culture and religion that are fundamental for people, we see now that it also includes the physical and sensory experiences that affect human beings, in their lives, but also in the context of healthcare institutions. The aesthetic is not only about “perfect beauty”, but more basically refers to notions of corporeality, senses, being touched and ugliness (Meyer, 2009). One of the less explored areas of (chaplaincy) care is, for instance, how people experience their own bodies, not just the physical changes due to illness or injury, but their bodies as such, their sexuality and intimacy, their expressiveness in clothes and cosmetics, and role activities. Just as important is the question of how the physical environs of a healthcare building or institution affect human beings. These aesthetic influences affect people’s perceptions of their situation and their identity and resilience.

Reflection: Rationale

Having briefly presented the four dimensions, we can now ask, what rationale is there for arranging the dimensions in this way? We will now reflect on the distinction from its inner logic and from philosophical exterior perspectives. Earlier, we indicated the challenges the framework had to meet.

The twofold focus and fourfold distinction do justice to the richness of the profession and acknowledge the variety of religious, secular and humanist perspectives. In addition, we think it important that a description of the domain fosters interdisciplinary collaboration between professions with different frames of understanding. Although both spirituality and meaning are general terms and need explanation, the double focus, complemented by the four dimensions, makes it more tangible for other professionals to understand what chaplaincy is about. Moreover, the framework emphasizes the distinctive contribution (i.e. worldviews) of chaplains with regard to other social professions, which is crystallized by the fourfold distinction. Yet, we point out that, for us, there is no logically binding argument for this arrangement. The field is too diverse and the terms too fluid for any framework to possess universal and self-evident logic that can be externally validated. We can, however, do two things.

The first is to reflect on the framework from a philosophical perspective, by referring to approximate parallels that suggested the arrangement. Secondly, as we will do later, we can illustrate briefly how the various dimensions could be helpful in understanding chaplaincy practice. To do so, we will pay attention to the Dutch Case Studies Project (Walton & Körver, 2017), where the distinction in four dimensions proves to be helpful. In other words, the rearrangement proposed here is a kind of framework that proves itself primarily in its inner logic and its ability to accommodate data from the field of chaplaincy.

Philosophical Perspectives

Research on spirituality, and the language used, are usually related to medical paradigms and Anglo-Saxon perspectives, while the Dutch definition draws more on continental thought. To be more specific, the existentialist and hermeneutic tradition plays a role. We believe this is of no hindrance for the applicability outside this tradition. However, we think it is helpful for understanding the definition to indicate the general philosophical context from which the definition originates. Then we will more specifically reflect on terms that distinguish the four dimensions with the aid of a specific philosopher, Kierkegaard.

First, chaplaincy itself is largely based on a hermeneutic understanding of human beings, which in the Netherlands has especially been influenced by the French philosopher Paul Ricœur. Ricœur connected the hermeneutics of language to that of meaning (Ganzevoort & Visser, 2007) and religion (Huijzer, 2017). This hermeneutic tradition is grounded in the existentialist presumption that human beings find themselves in life which is given (or

into which they have been thrown, as Heidegger argues) and consequently try to find meaning. Based on this existential *human condition*, traditionally meaning can be found in the classical philosophical trivium which inspired the definition of chaplaincy – the true, the good and the beautiful – as transcendentials of human existence. The true could, but need not necessarily, refer to (transcendent) truth claims, but might also be understood in terms of truthfulness or ultimate concern (that which matters most) (Tillich, 1953). That is in line with our comments on both the exigency and the contingency of the search for (spiritual) meaning.

A second (approximate) parallel can be found in the work of the “existential” philosopher Kierkegaard. At first glance, the arrangement of the aesthetic, ethical and spiritual on top of the existential seems to resemble the Kierkegaardian distinction between the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious (Kierkegaard, 1988)⁹ (which he related to the perspective of human “spirit”), representing three life orientations with regard to human existence that cannot be reduced to each other (Vos, 2015). The model was indeed inspired by his thinking. Here, we take a closer look at Kierkegaard’s distinction, in order to reflect on the relationship between the different dimensions of meaning and worldviews.

First, closer reading of Kierkegaard leads to the insight that, although the same terms are used, there are conceptual distinctions. For Kierkegaard the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious are not so much various dimensions of meaning, but should be regarded as ways of living or life spheres (Barrett, 2019; Vos, 2010). As such, human beings live primarily in one of the spheres, whereas the Dutch model presupposes that all dimensions can play a role in a situation at the same time. This leads to the question of how the different dimensions are related to each other. In the reception of Kierkegaard’s work, the idea of the spheres as different stages of life has been influential (Vos, 2010), implying an incremental development from the aesthetic to the ethical to the religious (and eventually to Christianity). Kierkegaard scholars, however, are critical about this reception. Carlsson (2019) points to ethical and religious dimensions in Kierkegaard’s aesthetic

9. Relating our concepts to those of Kierkegaard, it seems that we reserve the “spiritual” exclusively for the religious, which is not our intention. What is interesting about Kierkegaard’s distinction, however, is that he supposes a qualitative gap between the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious, indicating their irreducibility. Without adopting this hierarchical normativity, it helps us to distinguish the spiritual dimension as one in which “otherness” is experienced, along with connection. Using spirituality as the overarching concept to express the domain of chaplaincy risks neglecting the extraordinary, disrupting and “other” that can be experienced. Kierkegaard’s distinction of these irreducible spheres prevents us from mentioning everything spiritual.

life sphere, Rudd (2019) clarifies that Kierkegaard also addresses aesthetic value in terms of what is pleasing to the senses, and Compajen and Vos (2019) demonstrate that, according to Kierkegaard, the ethical as such is not higher than the aesthetic, but only living ethically in an existential situation. Although Kierkegaard uses the idea of stages, he does not apply it univocally and unambiguously. As Vos notes, “the development in the *œuvre* is not a gradual ascension to the highest stage, but an ongoing deepening of the existential subject” (Vos, 2010, p. 4); rather, the aesthetic and the ethical “return” as various existential dimensions in Kierkegaard’s religious understanding of the self. At least, the polyphone way he approaches the existential in his *œuvre* as a whole demonstrates that he tries to do justice to various dimensions of human existence without reducing them to each other (Barrett, 2019).

The notions of the aesthetic, ethical and religious may refer to a different substance in either context. Yet, Kierkegaard’s idea of the irreducible spheres of life that deepen the existential, each in their own irreducible way, fits the Dutch model. Moreover, this understanding sheds light on the relationship between meaning and worldviews, on the one hand, and its connection to the four dimensions on the other. Kierkegaard distrusts universal knowledge and pleads for an existential approach to the world. He would probably be suspicious about definitions of spirituality that pretend to be universal as well. The strength of the presented model is that it offers a fourfold distinction to both the more formal structure of meaning and the substantial structure of worldviews. In other words, the existential, spiritual, ethical and aesthetic are not manifested in a neutral, universal way, but are always intrinsically connected to people’s convictions and beliefs, be it related to a tradition or not (e.g. Barrett, 2019). Finally, Kierkegaard understands human existence as deeply marked by tensions and dichotomies, such as necessity and freedom, suffering and happiness, despair and hope, anxiety and faith, finitude and infinity. Searching for meaning can be seen as relating oneself in a particular way to the tensions that are part of one’s own existence. The dynamic and open nature of this conception of the existential makes Kierkegaard a relevant inspiration for the further development of the Dutch model.

Just as Frankl emphasized the search for meaning without making a particular claim on meaning, so we propose a framework with various dimensions in the acknowledgment that critical questions can be asked about the specific descriptions of the four dimensions and their connection to each other. Inasmuch as our descriptions of the dimensions are not the same as those of Kierkegaard, and our framework leaves open the question of their relative significance, our reference to Kierkegaard is in fact more formal

than substantial, and is open to criticism on content. That the framework is influenced by Kierkegaard is, however, the case.

In sum, Kierkegaard's thinking makes us hesitant with regard to a concept with universal pretensions, and avoids this pitfall by speaking of different irreducible spheres or dimensions. Still, we will leave the questions of normativity or hierarchy of the various dimensions unanswered. For a descriptive and unifying model, we do not consider such a normativity to be helpful, but we can imagine that chaplains from various backgrounds can value the distinguished dimensions in various ways.

Application

If the proof of the pudding is in the eating, then it should be asked how a new "recipe" for chaplaincy care works in practice. The ingredients are the same, and our suggestion is not that the framework proposes changes with regard to what chaplaincy is about or its actual workings. The hope is that it does provide a slightly new perspective that can be helpful in positioning and developing the practice. One of the most obvious positive responses to the new arrangement was with regard to explication of the aesthetic dimension. Many chaplains were aware of the significance of aesthetic, physical and sensory experiences for their clients, and many of them worked consciously with aesthetic forms of ritual, poetry, music, visual art and the like.¹⁰ Naming the aesthetic was a recognition of that.

In the Dutch Case Studies Project, we have recognized another way in which the framework is helpful (Walton & Körver, 2017). Through each evaluation of a case study in the research communities, an analysis is made of the existential, spiritual, ethical and aesthetic aspects of the case. An example is a case study about "Jeroen", a man in his thirties, who was not a believer, although he had had some evangelical Christian religious affiliation. One of the reasons for his non-belief in God was the loss of his father at an early age. Jeroen was homeless. He suffered a severe accident and lay for a time by the roadside. He later related, rather matter of factly, to the chaplain that while lying there, he had seen his deceased father standing across the field looking at him. That *spiritual* experience provided the opportunity to talk about his troubled relationship with his deceased father. From an *ethical*, contextual pastoral standpoint (based on the systems theories of Boszormenyi-Nagy (1987) and his emphasis on the "ethical"), Jeroen's

10. It comes as no surprise that many aesthetic forms are used by chaplains. Both Freud and Lacan emphasize that human desire never attains fulfilment (De Kesel, 2019). Arts and aesthetics express and cherish this desire, even more when life touches us, and we want to express in metaphors what we cannot put into words (Olsman et al., 2014).

feelings of (dis)loyalty and (dis)entitlement became clear. Talking helped him to establish a new relationship with those feelings.

Another example is that of “Marianne”, a woman in her sixties with terminal cancer. Marianne had no particular faith or worldview affiliation. Her life had been devoted to and coloured by art, music and culture. The loss of control that came with illness and the changes in her body caused her to be restless. The chaplain responded to her background in art and culture by using art reproductions and poetry in his counselling, in ways that gave expression to her fears and loneliness. Also helpful to Marianne was the introduction of the term “riddle of *existence*” to confront her difficulty in coming to terms with her nearing death. By restoring her “*aesthetic*” connection to her life, the interventions enabled Marianne to find rest and acceptance. She said of the chaplain’s visits that they were like “a walk through fields of heather”, “a gift”.

These two illustrations are no more than indications of how the dimensions can open up different perspectives on a case. The various dimensions are clearly complementary, not reductionistic or exhaustive. In actuality, they function as a kind of assessment tool.

Conclusions

In this article, we have considered the central position of spirituality in defining the domain of chaplaincy. Due to the difficulties of the concept with regard to universality and precision, we have presented the Dutch framework as an alternative in which spirituality is arranged differently. The Dutch double focus on meaning and worldview meets the challenges of doing justice to various religious and non-religious experiences, of being communicable to other professions, and of elucidating the characteristic nature of chaplaincy. The four irreducible dimensions, furthermore, include the richness of chaplaincy’s domain and make it possible to discern them in practice. Reflections on the basis of Kierkegaard’s work revealed that the Dutch framework is more formal than substantive, and raises questions with regard to priority of the dimensions. Although these questions remain largely unanswered, we consider the framework to be a plausible alternative for the spirituality paradigm. Even more than that, in applying the framework to understanding case studies from the Dutch Case Studies Project, it has proved to be both useful and innovative.

The present article is clearly written from the Dutch perspective. Nevertheless, we believe that it is also applicable in other contexts, as it provides a way to include the growing group of people without religious affiliations within the definition of the profession, thereby also linking religious and

humanist chaplaincy. Moreover, the definition does more justice to the wide variety of chaplaincy's practices across the world (ethical, existential, etc.), opening up possibilities for interdisciplinary cooperation.

So will the Dutch model resolve the issues around the domain of chaplaincy? There are also disadvantages to the model. In palliative care (research), spirituality has become a concept with authority and is included in many guidelines. To reinforce the profession, it could be a strategic move to join the discourse. Perhaps chaplaincy should do so, but only as part of what the profession is about. Obviously, the proposed model is not the only valid option, but we offer it as a promising alternative for chaplaincy to understand its profession, and to position itself in an increasingly pluralistic world.

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