

Formation of Millennial Missionary Catechists According to the Philosophical Ideas of Ernst Cassirer

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Article History

Received: 1 Jan 2023

Revised: 15 Jan 2023

Accepted: 21 Jan 2023

Published: 1 Feb 2023

Keywords:

globalization
challenges; millennial
catechist; symbolic
education

Abstract: In today's digitalized and globalized world, the formation of missionary millennial catechists is increasingly crucial for addressing complex moral and spiritual challenges. Ernst Cassirer's philosophy provides profound insights into the role of symbols in shaping human identity and perception, offering valuable perspectives for shaping millennial catechists effectively. Millennials contend with the pervasive impact of social media and globalization, which present obstacles to the development of their moral and spiritual identities. The need to cultivate millennial catechists capable of understanding human values, justice, and empathy becomes more pressing in this intricate environment. This study employs a literature-based approach, analyzing Cassirer's works alongside relevant literature on catechist formation, moral philosophy, and millennial generation development. This method enables a thorough examination of Cassirer's theories on symbols and moral values and their relevance to millennial catechist formation. The findings emphasize that embracing Cassirer's concepts can establish a robust foundation for shaping missionary millennial catechists. By enhancing holistic symbolic education, promoting intercultural dialogue, and fostering effective communication skills, millennial catechists can emerge as agents of positive change, promoting peace, harmony, and progress in our increasingly complex global society. In essence, according to Ernst Cassirer's philosophy, symbols play a pivotal role in shaping human identity and perception, guiding their understanding of themselves, their environment, and their relationships with others. Recognizing the significance of symbols enables humans to develop a deeper comprehension of the world and their position within it.

INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, characterized by rapid changes across various aspects of life, the challenge of shaping individuals who are prepared to become agents of change and missionaries has become increasingly urgent. The concept of forming missionary millennial catechists, which integrates religious, cultural, and philosophical aspects, becomes highly relevant in addressing the dynamics of contemporary society. In this context, the philosophy of Ernst Cassirer offers profound insights into individual formation and their role in building a better society.

Ernst Cassirer, a German philosopher of the 20th century, is renowned for his monumental contributions to symbolic thought and cultural philosophy. His most famous work, "Philosophy of Symbolic Forms," highlights the importance of symbols in human construction of the world. His view centered on humans as "homo symbolicus" or symbolic

beings, opens the door to understanding the significance of culture, language, and symbols in shaping human identity and perception of reality.

Amidst cultural upheaval and current global challenges, the need for individuals with a deep understanding of human values, tolerance, and social responsibility becomes increasingly pressing. Millennials, who form the backbone of today's society, need to be prepared not only as information consumers but also as bearers of positive values capable of inspiring and transforming the world around them.

However, in reality, the formation of missionary millennial catechists faces several challenges. One major issue is the dominance of mass media and digital technology in shaping the mindset and behavior of young generations. Instantly accessible information often lacks deep understanding of context and underlying values. This can lead to insensitivity to the complexity of social issues and moral crises facing society today.

Furthermore, increasing ideological polarization and social tensions also hinder the formation process of missionary millennial catechists. Inability to engage in constructive dialogue and appreciate diversity of views can impede the development of inclusive attitudes and empathy essential in building human relationships.

In the face of increasingly concerning global challenges, the need for millennial generations capable of becoming agents of change and missionaries in society becomes ever more urgent. They need to be equipped with a deep understanding of human values, justice, peace, and skills to apply these values in real actions.

Ernst Cassirer's philosophy offers a solid philosophical foundation for understanding the role of humans in a world filled with symbols and culture. His concept of symbols as mediation between humans and reality, and the importance of symbolic formation in the process of individual formation, provides a strong basis for building missionary millennial catechists.

In the context of forming missionary millennial catechists according to Ernst Cassirer's philosophy, several problem formulations can be proposed:

1. How to understand the role of symbols in shaping human identity and perception according to Ernst Cassirer's thought?
2. What are the main challenges in forming millennial catechists in the digital and globalization era?
3. How can Ernst Cassirer's philosophical concepts be applied in the context of forming millennial catechists?
4. How to build intercultural dialogue and promote inclusive attitudes and empathy in the process of forming millennial catechists?

By addressing these questions, it is hoped that effective strategies and approaches can be found to shape millennial generations who are not only technologically savvy but also have strong moral sensitivity, humanity, and missionary spirit.

METHOD

Qualitative literature review is a research approach used to gain a deep understanding of a topic by analyzing various relevant literary sources. In the context of forming millennial catechists who are missionaries according to the philosophy of Ernst Cassirer, this method serves as a useful tool for examining relevant concepts from Cassirer's works and literature related to catechist formation, moral philosophy, and the characteristics of the millennial generation.

The first step in this method is to identify clear and relevant research questions related to the theme under study. These research questions serve as guidelines for searching suitable literary sources. Subsequently, researchers conduct comprehensive literature searches through various sources, including journal databases, books, articles, and online resources related to the research topic. The primary focus of the search is on Cassirer's works and literature discussing catechist formation, moral philosophy, and the characteristics of the millennial generation.

After gathering a number of sources, researchers select literature that is most relevant to the research questions and objectives. The chosen literature should provide deep insights into Cassirer's concepts and their application in forming millennial catechists.

The next step involves conducting in-depth analysis of the selected literature. Researchers identify patterns, themes, and relationships among concepts emerging from the literature. This analysis includes a deep understanding of Cassirer's perspectives on symbols, identity, moral values, and their application in the context of forming millennial catechists.

Lastly, based on the literature analysis, researchers interpret findings relevant to the research questions. Conclusions are drawn based on a deep understanding of Cassirer's concepts and their implications for forming millennial catechists. These conclusions may offer new insights or reinforce existing understandings of the topic. By employing qualitative literature review method, researchers can make valuable contributions to theory and practice in forming millennial catechists who are missionaries according to Ernst Cassirer's philosophy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The role of symbols in shaping human identity and perception, according to the philosophy of Ernst Cassirer, is central to the construction of human meaning regarding the world around them. Cassirer views humans as "homo symbolicus," meaning inherently, humans are creatures who use symbols to understand and interact with their reality. In his view, symbols are not merely passive representations of physical objects; they are mediums that connect humans to a broader reality. Symbols help humans form their identities because they allow individuals to interpret and assign meaning to their experiences.

Ernst Cassirer was born in Wrocław, Poland, on July 28, 1874. He was a German Jewish philosopher in the mid-20th century. Utilizing the Marburg neo-Kantian tradition, he developed a cultural philosophy centered on symbols found in the phenomenology of knowledge. Ernst Cassirer based his theory of symbols on the biologist Johannes von Uexküll, who wrote a book containing his critical revisions of biological principles. According to Uexküll, biology is a natural science that must be built upon empirical methods, including

observation and experimentation. Uexküll also added that he developed a chart of the biological world that was highly original and brilliant (Cassirer, 1987: 36).

There are two terminologies obtained by Ernst Cassirer from Uexküll, namely the receptor system and the effector system. Both of these systems exist in animals. Ernst Cassirer did not want to further discuss Uexküll's theory. He merely referred to the concepts and terminology to address a common issue. Uexküll's theory is highly unlikely to describe the characteristics of the human world (Cassirer, 1987: 38). While organisms only possess receptors and effectors, humans have a third relationship, namely symbols. This system distinguishes humans from other organisms, leading Cassirer to call humans "animal symbolicum" (Saputra, 2020: 58).

Symbols are used in various cultures, not only in religious thought but also in specific disciplines such as mathematics. The universal nature of symbols gives rise to a perspective that everything must have a name. Symbols serve as a gateway to understanding human culture (Saputra, 2020: 58). In his book, Ernst Cassirer reveals the reality about humans and nature.

Humans and nature are realities. This reality is captured through the senses in the form of experiences. The experiences captured consist of matter (materials) that form shape (form). Form shapes symbols, which then create culture. The forms that shape culture include language, myths, religion, art, and science (Dewi, 2009: 64).

The first form discussed by Ernst Cassirer is language. Language serves as a means of forming symbols. This is what underlies Ernst Cassirer's choice of language as a form. Language and myth are closely related. Every time we encounter humans, we encounter them as beings capable of speech and beings influenced by mystical ceremonies (Cassirer, 1987: 166). Language will always emerge from every human, especially through every conversation. Through these symbols, each person's character can be recognized because language expresses an expression (Dewi, 2009: 65). In addition to the form of language, Ernst Cassirer also discusses the background of myth forms in symbolism.

The nature and essence of myths are indeed non-theoretical. Myths reject and deny the basic categories in our thinking. The logic of myths—if there is any logic there—cannot be adjusted to all our concepts of empirical truth or scientific truth. But philosophy must not surrender to ambiguity. Philosophy must believe that the creation of myths certainly has a philosophical "meaning" that can be understood. If myths hide their meaning behind various images and symbols, then philosophy must uncover it (Cassirer, 1987: 111).

Myths will always exist in every human environment. Myths that exist in every human environment or region are truly beneficial for the people in that environment. This needs to be realized because the myths that exist have their own significance for the community in that environment or region. Myths are something that has rational meaning according to the existing reality (Dewi, 2009: 65). The third form discussed by Ernst Cassirer is about religion.

Religion remains a puzzle, not only a theoretical puzzle but also an ethical puzzle. Religion is fraught with various theoretical antinomies and ethical contradictions. Religion promises us a close relationship with nature, with others, with worldly powers, and even with

the divine itself. Religion promises a transcendental world as a prospect—a world far beyond the limits of human experience—and yet still entirely human, truly human (Cassirer, 1987: 110).

Ritual forms in the field of religion are still widely held by those who live under religion. As stated by Ernst Cassirer, religion is a puzzle, which means it shows a certain symbolism for humans, especially symbolism to achieve true human goals, namely the transcendent world. The human world cannot be separated from the religious world, and their thoughts are still directed there. The next form discussed by Ernst Cassirer is about art. He expresses his opinion about art.

Art, on the other hand, teaches us to make those objects visual, not just conceptualized or utilized. Art presents richer, livelier, and more colorful images of reality, delving deeper into the formal structure of reality (Cassirer, 1987: 258). Art can show its symbolism through objects produced by humans. Human life is also inseparable from art. Art is not just sculptures or paintings; there is also music, performing arts, drama, and others. The main element taken from art is the element of beauty within it. From this, it can be seen that behind material objects there is a meaning stored there. Art is not imitation; it is a form of creation that can be enjoyed (not abstract) (Dewi, 2009: 65).

The next form that shapes symbols is science. Ernst states that science is the last step in human mental development and can be considered the highest and most characteristic achievement in human culture (Cassirer, 1987: 315). From this, it can be understood that symbols also enter the field of science, such as mathematics, and so on.

In language, myth, religion, art, and science, humans can do nothing but build their own symbolic world—a world that allows them to understand and interpret, organize and arrange, combine and generalize their human experiences (Cassirer, 1987: 335). From these forms, it becomes increasingly apparent that human life cannot be separated from language, myth, religion, art, and science. From this, it can also be understood that human life is filled with symbols.

Cassirer asserts that symbols are not merely signs referring to concrete objects in the real world; they are ways in which humans understand and interpret the world around them. These symbols are not limited to verbal language but can also include visual symbols, behavioral symbols, or other symbols representing certain concepts or ideas. For example, religious symbols like the cross, crescent moon, or flags can hold profound meaning for individuals or groups, shaping their identities and perceptions of themselves and the world around them.

In Cassirer's philosophy, symbols not only depict reality but also shape reality itself. Humans do not just "see" the world through symbols; symbols also shape how they "understand" and "experience" the world. In other words, symbols play a critical role in shaping human perception of themselves, their environment, and interhuman relationships.

The importance of symbols in shaping human identity is also reflected in how humans convey stories and traditions from one generation to the next. For instance, in religious rituals

or cultural celebrations, the symbols used hold deep meaning for the communities involved. These symbols not only emotionally unify community members but also shape their collective identities as a group.

By understanding the role of symbols, humans can shape their perceptions of themselves, their environment, and interhuman relationships. For example, religious symbols can help individuals find meaning and purpose in their lives, while cultural symbols can shape someone's ethnic or national identity. In this way, symbols not only serve as communication tools but also form the foundation for the complex formation of human identity.

Furthermore, symbols also play a crucial role in shaping human perceptions of their reality. In certain cultures, symbols can be used to depict abstract concepts such as justice, truth, or love. By understanding and using these symbols, humans can develop a deeper understanding of the world around them and their place within it.

Moreover, symbols also facilitate communication among humans. In this context, symbols enable humans to share experiences, ideas, and values with others. For example, visual symbols like company logos or national flags can convey complex messages quickly and efficiently to a wide audience. In this way, symbols play a vital role in shaping human understanding and interhuman relationships.

The main challenge in forming millennial catechists in the era of digitalization and globalization is the dominance of social media and digital technology in shaping the mindset and behavior of the younger generation. Millennials, who have grown up in an era where digital technology and the internet are inseparable parts of daily life, are exposed to a constant influx of information. However, behind the ease of access to information lies significant challenges. High dependence on social media and digital technology often causes millennials to lose control over their time and attention. They tend to get trapped in an unfiltered content consumption cycle, which can influence their thoughts and behaviors unconsciously.

The lack of control and supervision over the content consumed by millennials on social media also raises serious issues related to misinformation and the spread of fake news. In the abundant digital media ecosystem, poorly verified information is often disseminated quickly and widely, reinforcing false beliefs and perceptions. This creates new challenges in shaping millennial catechists who can critically and objectively sift through information and have accurate understandings of social, political, and religious realities.

Furthermore, extensive exposure to unfiltered content on social media also increases the risk of negative influence on the millennial generation. They are vulnerable to social pressure to conform to trends and standards set by social media, which can lead to uncritical conformity and loss of individual identity. Overly influenced self-presentation based on what is showcased on social media can also cause a gap between the online-generated self-image and the reality they face directly.

Excessive exposure to social media also raises the risk of identity confusion among millennials. In an attempt to seek recognition and acceptance from their social environment, many millennials get caught up in unhealthy social comparison games on social media. This

can disrupt the process of healthy and stable identity formation because they tend to compare themselves to unrealistic standards and ideals displayed on social media.

In addition to the dominance of social media and digital technology, globalization also brings in various conflicting values and cultures, which can create identity and value conflicts among millennials. Millennials, who are connected to the global community through the internet, are exposed to diverse perspectives and worldviews. While this can enrich their understanding of cultural diversity, it can also confuse them in determining values and identities that are appropriate.

Changes in social dynamics also put pressure on the millennial generation's ability to develop deep and sustainable relationships. Direct human interaction tends to be replaced by digital interactions that are often shallow and meaningless. The ability to form and maintain strong interpersonal relationships becomes increasingly challenging as millennials are more inclined to spend their time in the virtual world rather than the real world.

In addressing these challenges, the formation of missionary millennial catechists requires a holistic and sustainable approach. Efforts are needed to equip millennials with critical skills necessary to sift through information, interpret reality, and maintain a strong identity amidst the dominance of social media and globalization. Additionally, an empathetic and inclusive approach is needed to help millennials overcome identity confusion and value conflicts arising from exposure to diverse cultures. With this comprehensive and sustainable approach, it is hoped that millennials can become agents of change capable of overcoming the unique challenges faced in this era of digitalization and globalization.

The concepts of philosophy by Ernst Cassirer provide a broad window for understanding the role of symbols in shaping human identity and perception and can be applied relevantly in the context of forming missionary millennial catechists. Cassirer, a German philosopher renowned for his monumental work on symbolism and cultural philosophy, provides profound insights into how humans construct their world through symbols. In his thinking, Cassirer emphasizes that symbols are not merely passive representations of physical objects but are mediums that connect humans to a broader reality. Thus, Cassirer's concepts regarding symbolism carry significant implications in the formation of missionary millennial catechists, requiring a deep understanding of moral and spiritual values.

The importance of holistic and sustainable symbolic education, as emphasized by Cassirer, is key in the formation of missionary millennial catechists. Education should not only convey information but also strengthen understanding of symbols that build the foundation of moral thinking and attitudes. In this context, an education approach focused on understanding relevant and varied symbols will help millennial catechists internalize human values, justice, and empathy better. Through the use of symbols depicting these values in various everyday life contexts, millennial catechists will be able to form a deeper understanding of moral and spiritual significance.

Moreover, the concept of human creativity in creating new symbols, as emphasized by Cassirer, provides impetus for millennial catechists to innovate in delivering moral and spiritual

messages to their generation. In a rapidly evolving world, millennial catechists need to develop the ability to express moral and spiritual values in ways that are relevant and engaging to the younger generation. By adopting a creative approach in using new and contextual symbols, millennial catechists can create space for more open and inclusive dialogue, as well as facilitate a deeper understanding of human values and spiritual truth.

However, the challenges in applying Cassirer's concepts in the formation of missionary millennial catechists cannot be overlooked. In the digital age filled with abundant information, filtering and selecting relevant and meaningful symbols can be a challenging task. Millennial catechists need to be equipped with critical skills to sift through information and filter out symbols that convey beneficial and positive messages. Additionally, they also need to learn to navigate the complexities of culture and values inherent in these symbols so they can convey moral and spiritual messages accurately and effectively.

Furthermore, in a context that is increasingly interconnected and globally integrated, millennial catechists also need to pay attention to cultural diversity and perspectives in their use of symbols. What may be meaningful in one culture or community may not have the same meaning in another culture or community. Therefore, it is important for millennial catechists to have a deep understanding of the cultural context and values inherent in the symbols they use, in order to avoid misunderstandings and unnecessary conflicts.

In conclusion, the concepts of philosophy by Ernst Cassirer can provide a strong foundation in the formation of missionary millennial catechists, emphasizing the importance of holistic and sustainable symbolic education. By understanding the role of symbols in shaping human identity and perception, millennial catechists can develop a deeper understanding of moral and spiritual values and convey these messages in ways that are relevant and engaging to the younger generation. Although the challenges in applying Cassirer's concepts cannot be ignored, with the right approach and necessary skills, millennial catechists can become effective agents of change in bringing moral and spiritual values to their generation.

Building intercultural dialogue and promoting inclusive attitudes and empathy in the process of forming millennial catechists requires a comprehensive and sustainable approach. Along with the advancements of globalization and interconnection between countries, cultural, religious, and human experiences diversity becomes an inevitable reality. In this context, it is crucial for millennials, as agents of future change, to have a profound understanding of this diversity and skills to positively interact with various cultural and religious groups. Thus, the formation of missionary millennial catechists must involve a series of comprehensive approaches capable of enriching their understanding of diversity and promoting inclusive attitudes and empathy.

One of the primary approaches to building intercultural dialogue is by introducing millennials to cultural, religious, and human experiences diversity through formal and informal education. In educational environments, inclusive curricula can include studies on diverse cultures and religions worldwide, as well as hands-on learning experiences in various communities representing this diversity. Through these experiences, millennials can develop a

deeper understanding of various cultural traditions and religious beliefs, as well as appreciate diversity as an asset that enriches humanity.

Furthermore, cultural sensitivity training is also a crucial component in the formation of inclusive and empathetic millennial catechists. This training can help millennials recognize and appreciate cultural differences, as well as learn to communicate and interact effectively with individuals from diverse backgrounds. By increasing awareness of different cultures and values, millennial catechists can build strong bridges between various groups and promote unity in diversity.

Interreligious dialogue is also an important aspect of promoting inclusive attitudes and empathy among millennials. In this increasingly interconnected world, interreligious conflicts often become sources of tension and misunderstanding between cultures. Therefore, it is important for millennials to engage in open and respectful dialogue among different religions. Through this dialogue, they can develop a deeper understanding of similarities and differences between religious beliefs and seek common ground to strengthen cooperation and tolerance among them.

Moreover, the formation of missionary millennial catechists also requires the development of effective communication skills, including active listening and understanding others' perspectives. Effective communication is key to building strong relationships and promoting mutual understanding between individuals, regardless of cultural or religious differences. By learning to listen with empathy and appreciate others' viewpoints, millennial catechists can become leaders capable of mediating conflicts and building peace in this increasingly complex and interconnected society.

With holistic and sustainable approaches like this, it is hoped that millennials can become agents of change bringing peace, harmony, and progress in this increasingly complex global society. They will be bearers of inclusive and empathetic messages capable of overcoming cultural, religious, and worldview differences, as well as building strong cooperation to achieve common goals in building a better and more peaceful world.

CONCLUSION

From this article, it can be concluded that understanding the role of symbols in shaping human identity and perception, in line with Ernst Cassirer's thinking, plays a crucial role in the process of forming missionary millennial catechists. Cassirer portrays humans as "homo symbolicus," indicating that symbols play an important role in how humans understand and interact with their reality. In the context of forming millennial catechists, this understanding highlights the importance of strengthening holistic symbolic education to enrich their understanding of moral and spiritual values.

The main challenges in forming missionary millennial catechists in the digital and globalization era include the dominance of social media, conflicting values and cultures, and changes in social dynamics emphasizing shallow digital interactions. Efforts to address these

challenges require adaptation of learning strategies and development of effective communication skills for millennial catechists.

Ernst Cassirer's philosophical concepts, such as understanding symbols and humanistic values, can be applied in the context of forming millennial catechists by strengthening symbolic education, promoting creativity in conveying moral and spiritual messages, and building inclusive understanding and empathy towards cultural and religious diversity.

To build intercultural dialogue and promote inclusive attitudes and empathy in the process of forming millennial catechists, a comprehensive approach involving the introduction of cultural diversity, cultural sensitivity training, and development of effective communication skills is required. Thus, millennial catechists can become agents of change bringing peace, harmony, and progress in this increasingly complex global society.

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