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Revell, L., Christopher, K. Worldviews and diversity: freedom of expression and teaching about the mosque. *j. relig. educ.* 69, 297–310 (2021). https://doi.org/10.1007/s40839-021-00151-9

World Views and Diversity: freedom of expression and teaching about the mosque

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Introduction

The ability to encourage pupils to engage with diversity is crucial for RE teachers who believe that the capacity to negotiate difference with integrity and openness is key to living well in a modern liberal society. This article is not about the need to address diversity in Religious Education, that argument has been made thoroughly from a number of perspectives (Barnes, 2014 Jackson, 2004). The focus of this article is the relationship between the *way* we engage with diversity, that is a plurality of often opposing views, ways of living and community living. We argue that the dominant paradigm within RE, the World Religions model, works to minimise difference through the presentation of essentialised constructs of religiosity. We contrast the World Religions approach to a liberal educational model which encompasses difference as part of a deep engagement with knowledge itself. Using examples from lessons available from a widely used teachers' web site in the UK on the Mosque we show how the World Religions approach ignores or downplays the significance of historical, cultural, social and theological differences between beliefs and thus serves to discourage exploration of issues that may be controversial or offensive. After a consideration of the educational benefits of a liberal approach to learning, we show how, using the example of teaching about the mosque, a Worldviews approach, can facilitate a focus on difference and the individual, that upholds liberal educational promise for a multidisciplinary understanding of religion and belief. Throughout the article we draw on examples of work designed to create resources for teaching Islam through a world religions approach funded by Culham St Gabriel.

A commitment to diversity has always posed challenges for RE teachers. How should they respond to pupils whose faith prompts them to reject difference; what happens when diversity itself becomes a contested subject; is it possible or even desirable to include views that reject difference in the RE classroom? These questions are particularly relevant for teachers at a time when religion is often conceived as toxic, and teachers are concerned about addressing controversial issues and potentially causing offence. We explore the ways in which discussions about diversity and difference are often 'shut down' not just through the dominance of particular approaches to religiosity in RE but through the broader construction of the curriculum and knowledge. It is important for teachers to be able to raise controversial and marginal issues in the classroom and we suggest that a Worldviews approach to secular and religious beliefs could potentially offer a way for teachers to support pupils engage with difficult and potentially inflammatory ideas.

In this paper we argue that for powerful educational reasons the school curriculum must engage with diversity in new and more challenging ways. At a superficial level human diversity is celebrated in Religious Education, however, within RE there is a strong tendency

to essentialise and simplify diverse points of view and ways of living, whether presenting the dominant form of a religion as the universal form, or ignoring diversity altogether, presenting belief, commitment and identity as devoid of any context, not rooted in any place, not expressed through any language. We illustrate this tendency to minimise difference and essentialise with reference to the mosque in teaching resources and we draw on John Stuart Mill's classic framing of a liberal public space where diverse views are perceived as a source of shared strength. We also make use of Bernstein's analysis that some areas of knowledge are thinkable and mundane, while others are unthinkable and excluded (Bernstein, 2000, 1977) through the way the curriculum constructs some knowledge as legitimate and excludes others. We propose that a liberal intellectual space in the classroom must be a place where active engagement with difference is encouraged and supported and where the unthinkable is welcomed. We propose that approaching difference through a Worldviews perspective creates such a pedagogical space.

Writing almost two centuries after Locke's call for tolerance and an end to the bloodshed between Catholics and Protestants, Mill championed almost complete liberty of opinion, practice and association (Locke, 1689; Mill, 1859). While Locke called for difference to be endured for the sake of peace, Mill promoted diversity as positive both for society and individuals; the good to the individual who can flourish, and the good for society when powerful ideas are tested. A healthy and productive society must support debate in its public spaces. In proposing that, '[t]he truth of an opinion is part of its utility' (Mill 1991, 27) Mill argues that all claims to truth, or rightness, must be challenged, for the 'truth' to be useful and reliable. In educational terms we argue that the classroom must be a place where differences of opinion and diversity of ideas can be explored and made sense of.

The intellectual humility demanded by Mill's vision underpins liberal education. Liberal learning contains within it the potential to critically engage with what is learned so students can make active sense of the knowledge on offer. The notion of engaging with plurality in this way has wider implications for the curriculum. A curriculum that excludes dissent and which does not permit teachers and pupils to embrace what Bernstein called the 'unthinkable' is, in educational terms, incomplete. Unthinkable knowledge, knowledge that is yet to be thought, is powerful because it has the potential to challenge the social distribution of power and the sanctioned knowledge of the curriculum (Bernstein, 2000).

Bernstein argued that knowledge passes through several fields, the last of which is the site of learning itself, the classroom. Through these different fields knowledge is transformed, and the rules and codes of society are reproduced, filtered and mediated through policy, pedagogy and school cultures. He argues that that there are essentially two classes of knowledge. The first class of knowledge is mundane, this is knowledge that is permitted through the curriculum and which is therefore possible. (Singh, 2002) The second category of knowledge is esoteric, that is knowledge that is impossible, unknowable and unthinkable. Mundane knowledge is structurally horizontal, it is segmented into particular social contexts and is context specific and not easily transferred. Esoteric knowledge as vertical because it transcends the usual compartmentalised nature of society, its abstracted and specialised/disciplinary nature means that it retains the possibility of drawing on different meanings (Singh, 2002). More importantly for Bernstein is that esoteric knowledge is situated at the edge of the thinkable in education and that this gap, between the mundane

and the esoteric is where the potential for alternative possibilities and challenge to power and status resides (Bernstein, 2000). In this way what we may know, what we may teach and learn, the thinkable is both sanctioned and regulated.

Taken together, these arguments by Mill and Bernstein suggest that RE as part of a liberal curriculum must leave pupils able to engage with difference and to think independently. To develop this capacity pupils must encounter wide and rich thinking within the domain of knowledge. We combine these principles and show how Worldviews thinking allows pupils to think the unthinkable, and how the current paradigm, the World Religions approach, limits the scope and nature of pupil engagement with beliefs and allows only learning that is mundane and safe.

Context - Diversity and freedom of expression in RE

In 2020 an RE teacher in a secondary school in the north of England showed a picture to his class of the Prophet Muhammed taken from the French Satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo. The lesson was on the nature of blasphemy and the images were presented as part of a discussion on the meaning of blasphemy and the reasons why some communities find certain ideas and images offensive. The lesson caused offence and provoked protests from parents who demanded that the teacher be sacked. The teacher was immediately suspended and later reinstated after a tribunal found that although the lesson did cause offence, his intention was not to cause offence. The inquiry concluded that images of Muhammed should not be displayed in the classroom and recommend that the teacher be reinstated (O'Neil, 2021). The furore caused by this one RE teacher provoked wider discussions about freedom of speech and education (Adams and Wolfe-Robinson, 2021). At a local level the leadership within the school responded to the controversy with caution. A student teacher was reprimanded after telling a tutor that he would 'not hesitate' to use similar images in a lesson on blasphemy (Turner, 2021) and two further teachers were later suspended. In contrast, Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury in an interview with the Italian newspaper *la Repubblica* where he was asked to comment on the events at Batley Grammar School, told reporters that 'we have to hold onto freedom of speech' and stated that 'I'm much more towards the US end of the spectrum on freedom of speech ….I think we have to be open to hearing things we really dislike' (Church Times, 2021).

In many ways the controversy at Batley Grammar School is a microcosm of the challenges faced by RE teachers as they attempt to navigate the complexities of classrooms where personal views and beliefs are likely to clash. The polarised response to the teacher's lesson illustrates how difficult it is for teachers to steer a path between the expectation that they show respect to deeply held beliefs and the reality that some views will cause offence to others. A statement in response to the death threats received by the teacher at Batley Grammar school summed up this tension. A spokesperson for the Department for Education acknowledged the challenge faced by schools to balance the 'need to promote respect and tolerance between people' with the fact that schools are 'free to include a full range of issues, ideas and materials in their curriculum, including where they are challenging or controversial, subject to their obligations to ensure political balance' (TES, 2021).

The content of many RE lessons means that dealing with controversial issues is always a possibility but current political and social contexts exacerbate these tensions. An awareness of the 'cancel culture', the emergence of 'hate speech', a hypersensitivity to issues around identity and the restrictions on speech generated by a securitised environment in education (Collini, 2010, Durodie, 2016, Gearon, 2016) mean that classrooms as well as lecture theatres are likely to be at risk from a pressure to avoid topics rather than explore and make sense of them (Rata, 2012). Mill's argument that we are unable to think well unless we are able to access all the arguments is pertinent here (Macleod, 2021). Pupils must learn to manage and make sense of painful topics for their development as thinkers and as members of a diverse society. The process of bringing together a plurality of views and different epistemologies is educational in itself because 'facts and arguments, to produce any effect on the mind, must be brought before it'. (Mill, 2005, 30). To avoid controversies or difficult questions is to remain in the realm of what Bernstein called the mundane or the thinkable. Such an approach might guarantee that no one is ever offended but it is also an approach where pupils are denied the opportunities to learn how to navigate difference and to learn from conflict.

Diversity and Liberal Education

We live in an increasingly religious and culturally diverse society and specialists in RE have long acknowledged that their subject plays a special role in preparing pupils to live in this changing world. In their review of the contemporary religious and cultural landscape of Britain Woodhead and Clark went so far as to claim that we are 'living through the single biggest change in the religious and cultural landscape of Britain for centuries' and that Britain is diverse in new ways (Woodhead and Clarke, 2018, 4).

This claim alone could be considered reason enough to argue for an education that engages with diversity, but this rationale, while logical, takes a rather technical approach to education and reduces a commitment to diversity as function. Biesta notes that the question of what constitutes good education almost seems to have disappeared from discussions about education and that discussions on what is needed are often replaced by other questions around quality and effectiveness. Echoing Bietsa's call to focus on why we do things guided by a normative principle of what constitutes good education (Bietsa, 2010) we argue there are two more convincing reasons why engaging pupils with a curriculum that permits pupils to explore and ask questions that are as diverse as possible is desirable.

The first as described by the historian Michael Howard, is that a commitment to liberal education demands an equal commitment to the belief in the power of human reason and human action to change the world for the better (Howard, 2011). This is a definition of liberal education that has a lineage in the work of Dewy, Newman and Mill and places an emphasis on the development of autonomy and the capacity for young people to make informed choices about the world in which they live. Exposure to beliefs and behaviours that are different and classrooms that are spaces which permit and even encourages questioning is not only an integral part of a liberal education but one of its highest ideals (Pike, 2019). Without different options there can be no real choice and without the capacity and opportunity to make choices then there is no real autonomy. In *On Liberty* Mill describes two types of tyranny; political tyranny and the 'tyranny of the majority'. Even in a

politically liberal, non-tyrannic, state, society can still exercise tyranny over itself through the perpetuation of customs and traditions that remain uncriticised and unchallenged. Both forms of tyranny are more likely when the population is unused to engaging with criticism. However, the value of a public space where diverse views can interact, including views which challenge powerful ideologies, is that individuals and society as a whole can make well-informed decisions.

The arguments proposed by Mill in favour of autonomy and freedom are well rehearsed but there is a further reason for supporting an approach to diversity that encourages difficult questions. A liberal educational approach, driven by the goal of understanding, can encompass interrogation of the words, structures, assumptions and values underpinning the discipline itself if it furthers understanding. Michael Luntley presents the 'liberal agenda' as a critical lens through which to view the 'traditional agenda', that is, 'the transmission of values and belief' (Luntley, 2011: p. 38). In this sense, the liberal element of education is a lot more than acquiring knowledge and developing rational intellectual skills. It is also 'the critical scrutiny' of our inherited knowledge, and 'the requirement that pupils be brought to have a critical care for their inheritance' (p. 38). In this sense acknowledging and negotiating the real differences between our views of the world is a gateway to the development of critical voices. A liberal education that is open to the full complexity and challenge of diversity contains within it the potential to venture into the unthinkable, to question received wisdoms in order to understand the world better.

World Religions as a Paradigm Shift

RE has engaged with and conceptualised diversity in different ways throughout its history (Barnes, 2012) and in one sense the evolution of RE since the first critiques of confessional approach to religion in schools is also a story of its engagement with diversity (Jackson, 2004). The familiar narrative in the history of RE is that the collaboration between the churches and the State following the second world war culminated in legislation and a range of measures that sought to exclude other voices, preserve and shore up the Christian character of the nation and amounted to what some have referred to as 'State sponsored Christianisation' (Freathy and Parker, 2013, 224).

The World Religions approach was in its time innovative and even 'radical' (Grimmitt, 2000: p. 30). We briefly consider how social changes led to the new paradigm of World Religions in Religious Education, in order to propose why it is time for a new paradigm, as society shifts once again. The World Religions approach can be seen as a solution to an earlier form of Religious Education that seemed unable to meet the demands of the late 20th Century by those inside the profession. The shift away from bible-based Christian instruction towards the World Religions approach happened organically, driven from within the RE teaching community and informed by an awareness of increasing secularisation and diversity within Britain (Jackson, 1990). Harold Loukes's 1961 investigation on behalf of the Christian Institute into the 'present state of religious education in the secondary modern school' (Loukes, 1961: p. 9) reported teenagers disengaged, finding 'their lessons on the bible childish and irrelevant' (p. 150). Edwin Cox notes in his 1966 *Changing Aims in Religious Education* a declining appetite in teachers of RE for Christian 'evangelism' (Cox 1966: p. 3) and a 'growing feeling among those actively engaged in teaching that religious education of

this type is just 'not on'' (p. 4). Cox suggests that is not that religion or religious questions are irrelevant to students' lives, but that the level of debate offered in RE is 'too unsophisticated a solution', meaning that 'religious instruction is at present little help to them' (p. 47). It was RE teachers themselves, mostly ordained or committed Christians, who felt their way towards a new paradigm of Religious Education that met the educational and social needs of the late 20th Century (Copley, 2008).

Ninian Smart's 1966 lectures and subsequent work on phenomenological religious studies lit the spark that was already glowing. Smart characterised the last years of Christian confessionalism in schools as the result of 'confused thinking, the conflict of interests, emotional obtuseness' (Smart, 1968: p. 103). The World Religions approach was understood as the solution, the educational changes a response to social developments. Revisiting Cox, Loukes and Smart show us a similar situation then as now; a sense of a gap or lack of capacity in Religious Education and a desire to reshape the subject in response to changing times.

Looking at the World Religions approach now it is apparent that it focused on internal beliefs and practices at the expense of diversity, history, culture, geography, politics and economics. A significant body of academic discussion that critiques this approach as essentialising religiosity (Masuzawa, 2005, Jackson, 2004) and frequently mispresents religious communities in the image of Christianity (Searle-Chatterjee, 2000, Segal, 2007). It is a model that mirrors what Smith et al describe as a 'contemporary cultural discourse in which religion is reified and ascribed with essential goodness' (Smith et al, 2018) so that religious behaviour which falls outside this model is labelled 'bad'. Other critiques note that far from presenting a neutral approach to religion, the world religions approach remakes all religious experiences and communities in the image of an idealised notion of what religions should be (Barnes, 2014).

The tendency to promote sameness and marginalise difference is clearly evident in teaching resources. An investigation into current teaching resources about the mosque showing the impact of following the world religions approach on what is learnt, and, significantly, what is not learnt. A search on the first 100 teaching resources on the well-used British website, the Times Educational Supplement (TES) was carried out. This is supported by the Times newspaper and has for many years been the main database for British teachers to search for jobs and teaching resources. Teachers all over Britain share their teaching resources via the TES website, available to download for free or a few pounds. These pages are constantly added to and the resources on offer represent current practice.

Starting with the general teaching resources website www.tes.com/teaching-resources, we entered the search term 'mosque'. A large majority of the first 100 resources have been created for lower Secondary, with a smaller number created for upper Primary and upper Secondary. Strikingly, the information is of an almost identical level of detail and complexity whatever the age range of pupils.

Of 100 resources 71 follow a similar pattern, encapsulating the same learning objectives: to identify the 'key features' of a mosque, to be able to explain their purpose and to explain why these are important to Muslims. Some learning objectives make connections between

features of the mosque and worship, prayer or community life. A further learning outcome is to explain how Muslims 'show respect' in the mosque, via practices such as *wudu* (ritual washing) and removing shoes. When it comes to the mosque's 'key features', these are universally presented as the domed roof, the minaret, the *mihrab* (direction of Makkah), *minbar* (platform for the speaker or Imam), the prayer hall, shoe rack and washing area. Explanations for these features are also identical; the domed roof represents the heavens and kept mosques cool in the ancient Middle East, the minaret is where the *muezzin* would stand to make the *adhan* (call to prayer), Muslims pray towards Makkah and the *mihrab* orients them. 23 resources involve labelling a floor plan of a mosque or creating a model using a net. The information given to explain these features is simple and brief, it is ahistorical, culturally anonymous and presented in a matter-of-fact way.

Many images of actual mosques are given, such as the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, the Jama Masjid in Delhi or the al-Fateh Grand Mosque in Bahrain. These are almost never identified by name or region, nor is any contextualising information given, such as the main Islamic tradition practiced in the mosque, its history or current community. Three lessons include images of named mosques around the UK: the Iman Centre in Conway, North Wales, the Masjid e-Umar in Waltham Forest, East London and the Shah Jahan Mosque in Woking, Surrey. However the information used in these lessons is abstract, simple and general, and extremely similar to the other lessons. Two lessons acknowledge this universalising tendency, alluding to a 'typical mosque' or a 'traditional mosque'. All others simply use the phrase 'the mosque'.

Three lessons from the search ask questions which require some philosophical, cultural or historical information to answer, in addition to the familiar content. Specifically, why a special place is required to worship an omnipotent God, whether the increased demand for mosques in Britain could promote social cohesion, and whether Islam is breaking its own principles of equality in forbidding women to lead prayers in the mosque. A further two lessons include contextual information, one on the Fazl Mosque in London, built in 1924, and another detailing the local mosque's aid efforts after devastating floods in Carlisle. One lesson out of the 100 is rooted in a time and place and presents complex and diverse viewpoints in response to a concrete question. This is a lesson exploring polarised responses in New York to plans for a Sufi interfaith centre to be erected two blocks from Ground Zero. However, this lesson has been created by a History teacher for the History curriculum, not RE.

What is clear to see from these resources is the assumption that the religions, singly and comparatively, have common characteristics. A World Religions approach to the mosque identifies the key features and their function. The assumption underlying this approach is that all mosques have common characteristics and Muslims everywhere share a common relationship with the mosque. A further assumption is that all Muslims believe very similar things and that Muslims everywhere practice their religion in very similar way. In the World Religions approach the mosque is presented as possessing common characteristics, wherever in the world it is found. The street, town, region, language, culture and geography of the mosque is rarely, if ever, considered, as if it doesn't matter, and thus becomes unthinkable.

Religion and Worldviews

A crisis in English Religious Education promoted the national body for RE, the Religious Education Council, to sponsor a comprehensive report on the future of the subject. A Commission on Religious Education was formed. After a year of public consultation the Commission on Religious Education's (CoRE) Report was published in September 2018 (REC, 2018). The CoRE Report made 11 recommendations based on the problems identified in the review. The most controversial of these recommendations is that the subject be renamed 'Religion and Worldviews'. The suggestion that the name be changed provoked a flurry of objections. Professor of Philosophy at the University of Birmingham, Michael Hand, called the suggestion 'eye catching and headline grabbing' (Hand, 2018) while others argued that the concept was flawed, muddled and lacking in coherence (Schweitzer, 2019, Barnes, 2021).

The CoRE's proposals, are, by its own admission, potentially revolutionary and if they were implemented would require a change to UK law. The call to change the name of the subject to include worldviews both broadens the body of beliefs and practices that may be considered as part of lessons in RE and dislodges Christianity from its privileged position in the RE curriculum. The inclusion of worldviews means that ways of understanding the world that are secular, more individual and personal or which are informed by organised religion but are experienced culturally may be considered. A worldview is defined in the report as a holistic concept, it is not just about beliefs but also about the ways individuals experience and respond to the world. A consideration of worldviews would mean examining a person's views, their identity, commitments and the way they understand their place in the world.

Critics of the proposal focus on the concept itself and the possible impact on pupil learning. There is a suspicion that the introduction of worldviews could reduce the amount of time dedicated to teaching about institutionalised religion at a time when the time spent on religions is already constrained and when so much of the curriculum is already dedicated to secular concerns and subject matters (Barnes, 2020). There is also a concern that the change would result in more time allocated to outlooks, such as secularism or atheism, that do not in fact constitute a worldview (Hand, 2018). A further critique of worldviews as it is described in the CoRE report is that there is a focus on encouraging pupils to understand the worldview of others and that this is essentially a passive process where the meaning making of pupils is absent (Hannam and Biesta, 2019).

Some of these observations are accurate. It is true that the criteria which determines whether a view can be considered a worldview, or more specifically a worldview that should be discussed in schools, is not explicit. This raises the question of whether it is acceptable to accord space on the curriculum to undemocratic worldviews such as fundamentalism, ethnocentrism and racism (Schweitzer, 2019). It would also be the case that if the limited time that most schools allocate to the teaching of religion was shared with secular and individual world views the time spent on traditional religions would be less. It is also true that the definition of worldviews sometimes appears to be deliberately vague. In its description of the phrase the report constantly uses words and expressions that seem a designed to temper and moderate a precise formulation. For example, the report states that

in relation to a person's world view, it 'may or may not refer to institutional or communal religious or non-religious perspectives, or a person's world view 'may or may not draw from one or many institutional world views', a person's world view is 'likely' to influence their behaviour and it 'may be more or less systematic' (CoRE, 2018, 30).

However, these criticisms of world views, especially in the context of diversity seem to miss the point. The CoRE authors place a great emphasis on the fact that their review of RE is motivated by a concern that the subject is under threat. They seek to craft a subject that is more relevant to young people who are mostly unfamiliar with organised religion and where society is characterised by diverse religious communities. These changes are important not because the authors rightly detect that the subject needs to reflect current developments in the nature of religiosity in society but also because religiosity and the nature of belief is constantly evolving. Worldviews as a concept itself is also changing. It was originally used in RE by Ninian Smart in the Schools Council Report of 1971 in relation to the World Religions approach. In recent years worldviews has been increasing used as a hypernym or primary concept internationally in RE-related research and scholarly work (Everington, 2018, Freathy and John, 2020) but while it remains an elusive concept this should not necessarily be understood as a problem for educators. Freathy and Short point out that while the term is imprecise, it is no more imprecise than the term religion (Freathy and John, 2020). In his response to critiques of the CoRE report, one of the authors, Trevor Cooling acknowledges that they could have defined the term more tightly (Cooling, 2021) but there are also advantages to the concept's definitional ambiguity. The dynamic and fluid nature of the term, the fact that CoRE rejects the notion that worldviews are necessarily propositional means that specialists in universities and teachers can use world views as a dialogical space rather than a framework to develop and explore their lessons. The ambiguity of the term may mean that different definitions are used between practitioners but it also provides opportunities for educators to experiment and evolve the way they approach the teaching of worldviews.

Worldviews – starting with the individual and the multidisciplinary

Our interpretation of worldviews privileges two of the factors identified in the CoRE report, that teaching must be multidisciplinary and the understanding that everyone has a worldview. The approach to worldviews as it is presented in the CoRE report and in discussions that have followed its publication situate a commitment to this new paradigm as a response to increasing diversity and the need to prepare young people to live in that world (Cooling, 2020). CoRE's recommended 9- point National Entitlement aims to lay the basis for a new and 'richer version of the subject' that is based on a nuanced 'multidisciplinary approach' as well as the explicit academic study of religions and worldviews (Freathy and John, 2019, REC, 2018). Worldviews' maybe loosely defined, but it seems to describe in usage a critical, contextual, connected curriculum. The focus on a multidisciplary context is important because it also points towards a multidisciplinary analysis of religion, belief, community, identity, power, change and belonging. If we are to utilise a multidisciplinary approach to understanding religion and worldviews, we are moving into the forms of knowledge and the potential to move towards the discursive spaces defined Bernstein where the most searching and challenging questions can be asked.

A curriculum whose prime aim is the expansion of knowledge and understanding can employ intellectual tools and insights from several disciplines. This approach can also protect the curriculum from a tendency to present religion as unproblematically positive. Paul Hirst's 'forms of knowledge' thesis, developed most fully in his 1974 paper *'Liberal Education and the Nature of Knowledge'* presents knowledge as suitably viewed in distinct forms, each pertaining to a particular dimension of what it is to know and to think, a search for understanding based on the nature of the thing being understood. These are the disciplines. Liberal education, in RS Peters' well-used phrase, is an 'initiation' (Peters, 1965) into the intellectual disciplines for the sake of knowledge. The underlying aim in employing the disciplinary lenses is understanding. The current World Religions approach is partial because only one dimension of religion is offered for consideration; the internal and doctrinal, in contrast a worldviews approach starts with what religion may be, proposing that religious education, or religion and worldviews education, is the method whereby religion and beliefs can be understood, to contribute to the long-term and general aim of intellectual autonomy. Pupils might be inspired, appalled, irritated or delighted by what they learn, but these are side effects, not the main aim. Because religion and worldviews are multidimensional, several disciplines can be employed to investigate religion in its many forms and rich disciplinary knowledge is utilised to support pupils move towards Bernstein's unthinkable spaces.

Worldviews as it is described in the CoRE report starts with the principle that everyone has a worldview. The idea that everyone has a worldview can be interpreted in different ways. It could provide the gateway to learning that is introspective, existential and contemplative and there have been voices that support a form of RE which encourages pupils to consider their own beliefs or spiritual development. In his reflections on the CoRE report statement that personal world views are significant Cooling agrees with the criticism levelled by Hannan and Biesta, that understanding is not enough, the encounter with worldviews must also be transformative (Hannan and Biesta, 2018 and Cooling, 2020). However, our understanding of the way the worldviews characterises the individual is that it assumes that the process of understanding assumes agency and therefore the possibility of action and will.

Our focus on the individual acknowledges the importance of reflection and understanding but in the context of an education that is committed to engaging with diversity through multidisciplinary lenses understanding is transformative. Individuals are never abstract, we are all situated in history and a culture, in a time and place. How we respond to this context makes us unique, but it also means we share with others, on some level that history and that culture. When we make decisions or reflect on our own world views, we are de facto engaging with the views and experiences of others because in a plural society, no choice can be taken in isolation. In *The Human Condition*, the political philopsher and theorist Hannah Arendt argues that plurality is an integral part of the modern human condition, so that to act or to believe is always plural because it cannot be done in isolation, it must always be against or with others (Arendt,2017). In the same way starting with the individual, and the recognition that everyone has a worldview is to situate the induvial in a social context. No one can understand their own worldview without also understanding how their views relate to others. That process of understanding either connection or difference (or possibly both) is transformative because it situates the individual in the world and establishes them not

just as an individual but as an individual in a myriad of cultural, spiritual and historical relationships.

A Worldviews approach to the Mosque

We have seen examples of abstraction, simplicity, essentialism and a lack of curiosity in the World Religions approach to teaching about the mosque in the previous section. To take a Worldviews approach to the mosque is to ask different questions from the outset. When exploring a Worldviews approach with teachers we use the example of a specific mosque, in a time and place. One of the authors has strong links with the mosque in Gillingham, Kent where she has brought hundreds of student teachers over the years. This mosque has been an integral part of the way that student teachers learn about a local Muslim community. The students can start with the people who attend the mosque, not an abstract idea of a mosque, but an actual mosque. To start with people is to ask about the people in the mosque: who are they, where are they, what do they say? The majority of this mosque population is 1st, 2nd and 3rd generation Pakistani-heritage Sunni Muslim. The older generation tend to be more liberal, the younger generation are often more conservative in their faith, but also more likely to be vocal against racism and confident in their British Muslim identity. To start with people is not to assume that we, the onlooker, knows what Muslims think about their mosque, it is to ask and listen and engage with their influences, pressures and hopes to make sense of what they say, in their particular context.

As we present it, the Worldviews approach starts with the individual. The individual is rooted in a time and place, thinks in a language, and belongs to a community and region which has been shaped by power, culture and history. We therefore propose that topics on the curriculum need to start somewhere, rather than nowhere. We can leave Gillingham behind and travel to Egypt in the 1970s for another example. This is the case study of the Egyptian Women's Mosque Movement, sometimes called the Piety movement or the da'wa movement. The Worldviews approach allows pupils to encounter belief, belonging, culture and identity through any community on earth, and, significantly, draw out wider meaning. In this fascinating case study Egyptian women wanted to educate themselves as North African, Muslim women in response to social shifts and their own self-awareness. This was a movement lead by women, for women and was part of an Islamic revival in the Middle East in the 1970s that formed part of a reaction to increasing Westernization and secularization of the region. Women met in groups of between 10 and 500 in mosques across Egypt to discuss how Islamic principles could be better applied to their lives in ways that are social and practical. These groups were not concerned with transforming Egyptian society but in changing their lives, this was a movement that started with the individual. They talked to other women about how their lives are changed but they were not involved in campaigning or lobbying for change (Lewis, 2005). Although the groups were often very different in social make-up, they shared an interest in making Islam a practical and lived part of their lives, addressing questions such as how to cultivate virtues of shyness, modesty and humanity a part of their everyday lives (Mahmood, 2001).

We feature this fascinating period in our lower Secondary lessons, allowing students to engage with questions about gender, piety and tradition, as the women of the Mosque Movement did. A variety of academic lenses and ideological perspectives are used to

examine the Movement so that no one interpretation of events and worldviews is presented as representative of Islam. In these lessons the mosque features not as an abstracted building but as a site of lived experience that is located in a particular society at a particular time. The people that use the mosque are not abstracted Muslims but women reacting and acting within an environment that is specific to them. The aim of the lessons is not to enable pupils to gain an understanding of how an essentialised Muslim might feel or act in a mosque but to learn how these particular Muslims at a particular time interpreted Islamic teachings for their own lives. Adopting a Worldviews approach where the individual is central, we were able to focus on the experiences and conditions that motivated Egyptian women involved in the Piety Movement. Through listening and working to understand the voices of the women pupils are able to engage with a lived Islam that is both personal and rooted in a specific historical political and cultural context.

Implicit within this approach are lessons that move into the realm of what is currently unthinkable. The current teaching resources found on the TES website show us not just what is being thought about, but what dimensions of human experience are invisible, and cannot be thought about. Following the Worldviews approach pupils are expected not just to learn about but to actively listen and understand what motivates the women of Egypt involved in the Mosque Movement. In doing so pupils will consider what it means to be a Muslim woman and the possibility that there many different types of Muslim woman. Pupils will also address questions of gender and politics in relation to the religiosity at the heart of the Piety Movement. Through starting the unit with the worldviews of the women in the Mosque Movement the authentic voices of North African, Muslim women which would usually be marginalized or simply silent take centre-stage, not as add-ons, but as the main topic for exploration.

The discursive space identified by Bernstein where questions and knowledge that challenge dominant narratives are allowed to flourish are realized in the way the worldviews of the women of Egypt disrupt traditional narratives of femininity, gender equality, stereotypes about Muslim communities and broader questions of the legacy of colonialism in the Middle East. Students engage with many dimensions of thought, such as the relationship between feminism and an interpretation of Islam as they learn about the women's struggles to be more pious, more modest and more submissive. Where the unit asks pupils to discuss, interrogate and reflect on the nature and possibility of an Islamic feminism and the relationship between western feminisms and the views of the women in the Mosque movement pupils are participating in education that is active rather than passive (Mulcahy, 2018). Just as importantly, the privileging of worldviews that are often dismissed or unacknowledged shifts the focus of the curriculum to lives and activities that would normally be considered trivial or even mundane (Martin, 2002).

The questions and lesson aims for this unit are likely to be unsettling for some. Young people who are Western and secular may struggle to understand worldviews that appear regressive, problematic or illiberal. Members of faith groups or denominations may disagree with the authenticity or legitimacy of the worldviews articulated by the women in the Mosque Movement but the aim of the lesson is not to encourage empathy but for pupils to understand that however alien or unfamiliar, worldviews are a part of the diverse world in which they live. The aim of the lesson is the development of pupil awareness that living in a

liberal and democratic society means they must learn to debate and deliberate, however unsettled they are.

Conclusion

We have argued that educating pupils to live well in a culturally and religiously plural society means that they must learn to navigate difference and that will often mean encountering views and behaviors they find offensive and unsettling. The World Religions approach tends to encourage lessons where difference, diversity and areas of controversy are avoided, and we propose that the suggested new paradigm of Religion and Worldviews permits a multidisciplinary and critical understanding that resonates with a deep liberal tradition of learning. We promote a liberal educational model as an approach which contains within it not just a broad and general understanding of types of knowledge and types of thinking, but the capacity to critique and challenge if necessary to make better sense of what is learnt. Our understanding of worldviews is one which starts with the individual, situated in specific hsitotcal and cultural contexts. This is an approach that is enriched and made more rigorous through the examination of worldviews through multidisciplinary lens so that pupils are brought into contact with debates between individual worldviews but also debates within and between disciplines as well.

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