

**RE AS LIBERAL EDUCATION:
A PROPOSAL FOR A
CRITICAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

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I, Katherine Beatrice Christopher confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own.
Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated
in the thesis.

Abstract

This research examines the claims that Religious Education (RE) will both contribute to social justice and enable an understanding of religion and belief. The nature of problems and inconsistencies with the aims of RE are identified and a proposal for a single, clear aim of the subject is made. The proposal is supported by arguments from the field of analytic philosophy of education. A new model of RE is proposed, following the aim of understanding, justified by liberal educational principles.

The dual aims of RE; both personal and intellectual, are shown to be competing and incompatible, limiting the educational scope of the subject. It is argued that the subject, although presented as non-confessional, is in fact a liberal form of confessionalism. The influence of the community cohesion agenda is shown to further limit RE's educational scope. It is argued that both liberal confessional and community cohesion aims are non-educational.

A single aim of understanding is proposed, presented as an aim suitable for teachers and students in an educational setting. It is proposed that multiple analyses of religion and worldviews, to reflect the multiple dimensions of religion and worldviews, are employed, based in disciplinary thinking. Teaching and learning materials drawn directly from the classroom are given as examples of how theoretical insights from critical race, multicultural and political philosophical thinking might be taught.

Philosophical and ethical problems with aspects of liberal education and analytic philosophy of education are addressed, such as abstraction and neutralism. A liberal educational approach is justified ultimately for the clarity of aims it affords for the practical endeavour of teaching.

Impact statement

The proposals found in this thesis have a potentially far-reaching impact on the RE curriculum in England and Wales. I work widely with teachers, schools and initial teacher trainees. At all times my work is informed by these research findings, whether designing teaching materials for small children or engaged in philosophical discussions as to the purpose of the subject.

Between 2014 and 2019 I worked for a national RE services provider. In this capacity I have produced countless articles for a national magazine, teaching and learning resources, contributed to Agreed Syllabuses for Local Authorities, designed and delivered RE-days for Primary and Secondary schools, conducted teacher training, led local RE networks, both Primary and Secondary and been party to national-level discussions about RE policy and practice.

Since 2019 I have worked as an independent RE consultant. I direct a Subject Knowledge Enhancement course for new and serving teachers, work on a national website offering practical support for teachers, have contributed chapters to three books and presented a practical example of my work at an academic conference, underpinned with the theoretical analysis found in this thesis. I continue to work with Local Authorities and Multi Academy Trusts offering training, creating resources and designing curricula.

In these various connections with teachers and pupils I bring my research insights to bear on whatever I do. I plan to work in this capacity for many more years, creating teaching materials, training serving and initial teachers and engaging in conversations about the nature and purpose of the subject at individual, local and national levels.

Therefore the impact of this research is not inconsiderable. Because I am able to articulate and make visible the substantive educational, political and ethical values that underpin my practical proposals, a level of conversation at the scholarly and general, as opposed to the personal and particular, is possible. This research has enabled me to categorise types of thinking offered in RE teaching and bring this insight to teachers, such as the aims of a resource or the dimension of religion being explored. The research has led me to design practical examples to share with teachers, and many of the examples in the thesis have been used in training for years.

The true benefit of this research is in giving me a language to speak. The subject of RE is at a point of existential indecision; some within the small and passionate RE community see this point as a crisis and betrayal, others see it as an opportunity to flourish in new and exciting ways. My research has enabled me to grasp and recognise the pressures and forces at work, to

articulate both a justified solution to current problems and to place my proposal on a continuum within the wider ecosystem of RE. My research enables me to join in and further the conversation.

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Introduction

Religious Education (RE), it is claimed, can contribute to social justice and help children and teenagers understand the world. This research challenges both these claims. From an interest in how far schooling can contribute to a social justice agenda my scope has widened to include the capacity of national RE guidance to engender RE curricula enabling a multi-dimensional understanding of religion and worldviews.

I have taught RE in Secondary schools since 2003 and worked as an RE adviser since 2014. My first school was a large comprehensive in West London. I taught children from all over the planet, from the very rich to the very poor, who brought an explosion of linguistic, cultural and ethnic diversity into the school. I taught children from affluent homes who had aspirations of Oxbridge, children who had fled war-torn countries with nothing, who navigated criminal gangs every morning and attended meetings with social services or the Home Office to translate official documents for their parents. All teachers at the school were engaged, through their subject areas, in supporting and nurturing an extensive range of needs and capacities. All students (and teachers) were engaged in trying to make sense of their lives within a tangled and complicated web of relationships in a fast-moving, demanding city.

My subject, Religious Education, offers a potted account of the key beliefs and practices of six major world religions, how these beliefs are expressed today, and religious and philosophical answers to questions of meaning. In my West London school it very naturally became a subject about the beliefs and people of the world, which I explored with the children of the world. Many of my charges had weathered more stress and instability than most of the adults in the building ever would, through violence and human rights abuses overseas, or through poverty and exclusion in London. As I found my feet as a professional teacher I learnt more and more about the daily strains and joys of my students' lives, their hopes and aspirations. In these early years of my career my knowledge and understanding grew not just of diverse religions but of the young people I taught and how their unique ways of seeing, derived from unique histories and experiences, related to the lesson content.

It was this experience of my students, rather than the subject of RE, that piqued my interest in issues of race and racism in the classroom. I simply wanted to understand why and how the world constructed my poorer, non-white, non-Christian students to have significantly reduced opportunities compared to their white, middle-class peers. The assumption both inside and

outside RE, then and now, is that an education in diversity, in this case religious diversity, will reduce social inequality. I have tested this assumption for the simple reason that it did not seem true. Teaching my students about Islamic prayer or Hindu *karma* did not seem able to have any impact on the way their lives and identities were structured both inside and outside school. Possibly a lesson a week of RE made a dent in prejudiced views encountered in the media or at home, or gave them a moment of pride when their tradition was the subject of study, but that alone would not make the world outside school fairer or change their position of disadvantage. RE is a subject of the curriculum about which claims are made which go beyond the scope of the classroom. Throughout the following chapters, I pull several strands together drawn from theories of RE as well as political philosophy, antiracism and critical multiculturalism to view the current state of the RE curriculum and the claims made about RE's capacity.

As I explored such avenues as critical multiculturalism and antiracism in education, in order to understand the complex territory of my students' experiences, myself as a white, middle class teacher and the wider structures of school and society, I began to see my subject, RE, with increasingly critical eyes. In comparing my students' finely textured experiences of both exclusion and belonging I began to see RE's claims that learning abstract points of doctrine would improve social justice as remote, to say the least. The London my students and I occupied, a world of constantly shifting allegiances, outrages, sources of joy and sites of pain seemed to be a different planet to the world of the RE textbook; a world of unproblematic adherence to religious tenets where people fit neatly into boxes labelled 'Hindu' or 'Christian', and people who didn't fit, or who had no boxes, didn't trouble the curriculum. How did a subject about the world become so detached from the world?

Aims of RE

Although my own research began with issues of inequality in education, this thesis begins with aims. An understanding that RE's aims cannot be met leads me to apply analytic philosophy of education to religious education. Philosophy of education is concerned with justifications for what is being done in the name of education and why. I ask what is being done in the name of religious education and why.

An investigation into the various shaping pressures and factors currently informing learning in RE shows the subject to be burdened with dual learning aims which I argue are competing and incompatible. This is a practical rather than a conceptual incompatibility, it didn't have to be

this way, but the near total control of the faiths over the curriculum has meant contextual and multidimensional analyses of religion and belief are almost entirely absent. Learning outcomes for RE found in national guidance claim pupils will gain a critical understanding of religion and belief as well as appreciate the benefits of faith traditions. I argue that the subject cannot do both and is currently weakened by this incoherence in aims.

RE (or Religious Instruction) was not imagined as an academic subject at its inception in 1944, but as Christian moral nurture in schools. As society changed rapidly those within the RE world embraced wider philosophical and ethical outlooks and began to explore the non-Christian faiths. The resulting phenomenological approach to world religions is presented as non-confessional and academic, however I argue that it is in fact a liberal form of confessionalism in that all faiths are placed beyond critical comment and the benefit of all is assumed.

In showing how confessional interests and incompatible aims limit the scope of understanding offered in RE curricula, I propose a liberal educational approach to RE which places knowledge and understanding at the centre of the curriculum and draws on a wide range of sources to meet this core aim, including critical views where necessary. In contrast confessional RE is shown to be non-educational in presenting a narrow, uncritical account of religious doctrines, avoiding contextual or historical dimensions of religion and offering little analysis of diversity or dissent within religion. I describe confessional RE as non-educational in the process of demonstrating that understanding is not the primary aim.

RE as liberal education, as I articulate and defend it, makes no extrinsic claims as to students' changed values or attitudes, only intrinsic claims as to what students will understand as a result of learning. While I acknowledge this distinction breaks down easily, I preserve intrinsic aims as a practical measure to protect the RE curriculum from non-educational influences, in other words, influences where understanding of religion and belief is not the primary aim. As students of liberal educational RE gain an increasingly sophisticated understanding of religion and belief, drawing on wider historical, political or critical viewpoints, extrinsic outcomes are highly likely and not unwelcome, but not sought. I maintain that the primary, intrinsic aim of understanding underpins RE as liberal education.

My reshaped aim for RE is understanding, using disciplinary insights to explore religion and belief in multiple dimensions. Religion inspires individuals, but it is also a form of power, woven through culture, planet-shaping as well as a source of comfort and meaning. Religion is myth; stories which hold communities together. Religion raises philosophical questions as well as offering particular answers; it raises ethical questions as well as offering particular ethical

answers. I argue that the two aims for RE presently visible in RE curricula, the personal and the academic, are incompatible. While this is not a necessary incompatibility, the almost total influence of the faiths in shaping the content and learning pathways of the RE curriculum means no context is ever given, so no critical enquiry can take place. There is nothing to enquire into. This is the basis for my proposal of a single, clear aim; currently neither are being met.

Religion and Worldviews

What should religious education be in the 21st Century, what is it for? Confusion over the purpose of RE and a curriculum that does not do justice to the plural, interconnected and messy world of religion and belief have been repeatedly noted in recent times. In 2015 Adam Dinham and Martha Shaw addressed questions around the purpose of RE in schools and the subject's capacity to meet its various aims, noting 'growing criticisms of the policy muddle' and the need for an 'urgent conversation' (Dinham and Shaw, 2015: p. 2). Two recommendations of Dinham and Shaw are echoed in 2018 with the report of the Commission on RE (CoRE), that a 'National Framework' should be established to provide consistency with regards to 'i) the purpose, ii) content and iii) the structures of teaching and learning' (p. 1) and that the RE curriculum 'should reflect the real religious landscape' (p. 1).

Similar concerns can be seen in Charles Clarke and Linda Woodhead's 2015 report; a lack of consistently high quality RE across the country, legal structures which do not support consistency and an RE curriculum which does not reflect the messy, multiple terrain of contemporary religion and belief. In July 2018 Clark and Woodhead's report was revised, their conclusions regarding the need for a 'new settlement' strengthened and a renewed call issued for a radical overhaul of the purpose and execution of a 21st Century curriculum for religion and belief (Clark and Woodhead, 2018).

The Commission on RE's "National Plan; The Way Forward" represents a radical proposal; a reshaping of the curriculum to enable the systematic and coherent exploration of religion and worldviews in multiple dimensions (CoRE 2018). The CoRE report recommends renaming the subject 'religion and worldviews' to widen the scope of study and denote a new identity, justified by the multiple dimensions of religion and belief. A worldview, belonging, identity and culture are relevant to all people, not just religious people. Religion and worldviews have a history, shaped by political and economic pressures, they are a form of institutional power, expressed through culture as well as acting on culture. Yet the abstraction or privileging of

religious beliefs in RE, I argue, does not allow students to grasp religion and worldviews in their multiple dimensions.

My research began long before the Commission on RE came into being but my conclusions echo the Commission's recommendations. I use the term 'RE' when discussing the subject as it currently stands, and 'religion and worldviews' when describing a vision for the future. My work offers a justification for why the subject needs to change and sets out a proposal for how this could be done.

I refer to RE policy and the curriculum as they apply to England and Wales, but as my own experience is of teaching in England, my arguments apply directly to RE in England. However, my research would be of benefit to teachers of other subjects and in other regions, as my findings speak to all educators of all children. My own experience has been in the Secondary phase. Although my insights apply to Primary as well as Secondary, I assume a level of student knowledge and ability as befits this phase, which the Primary reader may have to adjust for.

Original Contribution

What makes this thesis original? I do not make claims as to what RE as liberal education will achieve beyond greater understanding. I do not claim for personal, social or ethical outcomes in students, only the intellectual outcomes of increased understanding. My proposal addressed the problems identified with the subject by making claims that can be met, as opposed to claims that cannot be met. In discussion with many in the RE world this seems to be the most eye-catching, or problematic, area of my proposal, and therefore I can conclude the most original.

According to Pádraig Hogan (1995) one would have to go back to Socrates to find a Western education system which does not impose an *a priori* view on students. Therefore this work is original in making no wider extrinsic claims for social relations, liberal democracy or the future workforce in the literature on RE, only for an increased understanding of religion and worldviews in their multiple dimensions. There is certainly a radical simplicity about my proposal. This is pragmatic as much as philosophical; a simple and clear aim allows teachers to know, in any given moment, what they are doing and why. School teaching is a hectic, messy and at times uncomfortable business. My clear, single aim is offered to teachers to help them articulate their role and aim. Philosophy of education is concerned with justification and throughout my work all arguments and suggestions are justified in educational terms.

I challenge expectations that students will either form a positive opinion of religion or benefit personally from religious teachings in the RE classroom, proposing RE's primary learning aim being to gain an increasingly sophisticated understanding of religion and belief, drawn from multiple disciplines. My refusal to promote a positive view of religion or to aim to draw personal benefit from religious teachings stems from my deep unease in witnessing years of confessional practices in RE, which my research has enabled me to see are non-educational and often dishonest. I therefore raise a challenge to all educators to consider by what right we seek to influence our students; for their future autonomy or for our personal preferences?

I have drawn on analyses from critical multiculturalism, antiracism and political philosophy, as well as philosophy of education, to provide a wider framing of religion and worldviews. This to my knowledge has not been done before. Multidisciplinary analyses of religion and worldviews are gaining traction in the RE world and to this new field I offer explorations of self and community, belonging and identity, exclusion and diversity to frame and enrich understanding of religion and worldviews.

Embracing a critical outlook, particularly critical whiteness, where necessary for understanding is an original approach within the literature on RE. I have never encountered a view which problematizes and reveals hidden power structures in national guidance, RE syllabuses or textbooks. Critical views are apparent in theory, such as in Lynn Revell's work on teaching about Islam in RE (2012), but I have yet to encounter critical analyses in a classroom setting and they are certainly not the norm.

My proposal of a liberal educational model is not just a reflection of my own preference but is made precisely to redress the incoherence and unachievable aims at the heart of current RE practice. I present non-educational influences on the RE curriculum which limit rather than enhance understanding and argue that in adopting a liberal educational approach, the RE curriculum could be protected from such non-educational influences as well as set an aim which can be met. In this model the freedom to investigate, challenge and draw conclusions takes priority over presenting religion in a positive light. In this process students' values or attitudes may well change and grow, but this is not a stated aim, liberating the teacher from seeking a particular conclusion.

A curriculum whose prime aim is the expansion of knowledge and understanding can employ many intellectual tools and disciplinary insights in order to deepen understanding of religion and worldviews. Various disciplines pertinent to understanding religion and worldviews are presented as tools to achieve the aim of understanding.

The analytic philosophy of education project is ultimately concerned with what is being done in the name of education and why. A liberal educational RE, driven by the goal of understanding, can assess its own efficacy in educational terms. In articulating a clear, single aim for religion and worldviews, and the methods by which I intend to achieve this aim, I am able to justify the decisions and principles of the model, as well as invite critique, and to be measured against a stated aim, the aim of understanding,

Chapter outline

In Chapter 1 I set out the pieces of a jigsaw which form RE in England and Wales as it currently stands, particularly the subject's dual aims of personal growth and critical enquiry. I argue that the dual aims allow incoherence and confusion in the curriculum. A series of historical pressures, or even historical accidents, led to this point; it did not have to be this way, but time and long habit have embedded incompatible aims deeply into the RE curriculum. I argue that the resulting inconsistency has diminished and distorted the curriculum; pupils are fed a confusing diet of personal morality, official doctrine standing as a proxy for the beliefs of billions of individuals and a sense that positivity towards religion should be an outcome of learning.

I argue that this inconsistency in aims stems from that fact that only a single dimension of 'religion' is considered; the inner and doctrinal. I show how this partial and abstract presentation of 'religion' results in a partial and limited horizon of understanding in the RE curriculum.

In Chapter 2 I use the previous analysis to theorise a reshaped aim for the RE curriculum, or the religion and worldviews curriculum, based on liberal educational principles. I propose that what 'religion' is, in multiple dimensions, should be the starting point of a study of religion and worldviews. In this chapter I contrast a liberal confessional approach to RE with a liberal educational approach which draws on the academic disciplines to offer a widely contextual view of religion and belief, encompassing its multiple dimensions. Such a model addresses the problems identified in Chapter 1; an incomplete and misleading picture of religion. Following a liberal educational model is to follow one clear aim of understanding rather than personal growth or positivity towards religion. I justify the proposal of one, clear aim using arguments from the field of analytic philosophy of education.

Chapter 3 address another significant pressure on the RE curriculum; the claim that learning can contribute to the community cohesion agenda. As I argue, neither liberal confessionalism nor the community cohesion agenda prioritise understanding as a central aim. The aims of community cohesion in RE are not to furnish students with a good understanding of discrimination but to affirm positive views of diversity. Considering the impact of the community cohesion agenda on RE offers an illuminating study of how a non-educational agenda shapes the curriculum. As I show, the unreliable conclusions and untested assumptions of the community cohesion agenda are adopted uncritically into the RE curriculum, and reproduced.

Building on my main proposal that RE, or religion and worldviews, realigns along liberal educational lines with understanding as the primary aim, I suggest what wider theoretical analyses could support the RE curriculum in order to develop students' increasingly rich and sophisticated understanding.

Chapter 4 further develops my practical contribution to curriculum design, underpinned with the argument that a study of religion and worldviews should be shaped by the nature of religion and worldviews. In this chapter I show how the insights gleaned from critical race and multicultural thinking, as well as political philosophy, can be utilised in the classroom to furnish a greater understanding of culture, community and identity, exclusion and the exercise of power. In this chapter I present several teaching examples drawn from disciplinary thinking to add texture, depth and complexity to a study of people, community, belonging and believing, to contribute to a multidisciplinary study of religion and worldviews.

In Chapter 5 I focus on the service to understanding a critical view offers, as well as address some concerns with bringing a critical view into the classroom. I propose that a critical view, whether of gender, whiteness, Christianity or other forms of power, reveals hidden realities which make aspects of human societies intelligible. I consider the particular insights offered by critical race thinking and suggest how these insights could nourish an understanding of culture and community, power and domination. I show an example of uncritical RE and consider how far a critical angle already exists in RE pedagogies and approaches. A critical view is proposed as a necessary dimension to understanding in RE as liberal education.

In the final chapter, Chapter 6, I address objections that could be made to a religion and worldviews curriculum following a liberal educational model, and in doing so further develop and articulate my proposal. A liberal educational model contains within it the capacity for justification of what is done in the name of education. The incoherence at the heart of current RE curriculum design can be seen as an incoherence of aims, derived, as I have argued, through the tussle of competing and incompatible aims. Therefore one clear, educational aim provides both a standard by which to measure what is done in the name of education, and renders non-educational aims visible.

Objections to a liberal educational model drawn from analytic philosophy of education are objections to abstraction and neutralism which hide human differences, abstracts the idea of a human to a rationalistic male and fail to articulate and defend substantive value commitments. This is problematic for a subject seeking to understand humans. I consider how these problems

can be mitigated so a liberal educational approach to religion and worldviews can evolve, through engagement with such challenges, and grow in educational utility.

Chapter 1

'A Strange Social Practice'

Introduction

That religion plays a significant part in shaping the 21st Century world is not in doubt, but what 'religion' constitutes is wide and complex. Religious adherence in Britain is associated with personal and community identity, part of a package of increasing linguistic, cultural and ethnic diversity from the last half of the 20th Century to the present. If religious adherence has become a way to identify people in a diverse country, white British church attendance has declined dramatically. Woodhead and Catto cite data showing church attendance has nearly halved since 1979 from 11.7% in 1979 to 6.3% in 2005 (Woodhead and Catto, 2012: p. 5, citing Brierly 2006: 12.2.1). However the 2011 census reports that although those identifying as Christian in Britain has fallen from 71.7% in 2001 to 59.3% in 2011, Christians are still the largest identified religious group in Britain, with Muslims, the second, comprising 4.8% and those claiming no faith making up 25.1% of the population (Office for National Statistics, 2011). Some commentators have voiced concern over a sense of unprecedented religious illiteracy in society. For example Baroness Sayeeda Warsi notes how 'a sloppy kind of religious illiteracy' in the media and public life perpetuates stereotypes that cause damage to real people, very often Muslims (Warsi, Cabinet Office, January 2011). Aaqil Ahmed, head of religion at the BBC, has suggested that a 'chronic lack of religious literacy' is exacerbating tension between liberal Anglican views of social and sexual ethics and the more traditional views of incoming African Pentecostal and Eastern European Catholic churches (Ahmed, BBC blogs, March 2016). However RE lessons have offered children basic but reliable religious literacies for around 30 years, and in this respect British school children are more religiously literate in non-Christian religions than they have ever been.

Today, as always, faith has geopolitical as well as personal dimensions and implications. Religion continues to be a tool wielded to maintain or abuse power, it continues to be a source of courage and inspiration to individuals in adverse situations. The secular West may see religion in compartmentalised, reductive terms, but in the majority world faith and religious practice sustains and defines billions of lives. Many of the world's sites of conflict appear to

follow religious fault lines, but on close analysis religion is often a way of delineating groups competing for power or scarce resources. Religion seems to be a thing humans do.

The word 'religion' encompasses several dimensions of human experience and can be viewed from various angles. From an external view, such as a sociological view, 'religion' can be seen as fulfilling the most basic human needs; belonging, meaning, companionship, guidance and hope. Seen from an internal point of view, that of a religious adherent, 'religion' is a sacred means to a sacred reality. While it seems clear that studies of religion and belief, ethics and philosophy, community, diversity and identity, continue to be an important part of the school curriculum, what 'religion' is remains largely undefined and unexplored in the current RE curriculum. A new national plan for RE, found in the report of the Commission on RE (Commission on RE, September 2018) proposes that 'Religious Education' expand to become 'Religion and Worldviews' studies on the basis that belief, belonging, commitment and identity are not the sole preserves of named religions but are an integral part of what it is to be human. In this proposal 'religion' is understood as a thing of many dimensions with many contexts, all of which can be explored to yield a rich and complex understanding of religion and worldviews, whether associated with an institutional religion, a political or ethical stance, or a more amorphous by-product of being human.

An anecdotal example illustrates the benefit of understanding religion in various dimensions. One bright morning, on a Birmingham train bound for the University, the entire carriage was subjected to a loud and energetic conversation between two young men. I listened first with irritation then increasing interest to their discussion; a point of theology concerning the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem. To judge by their familiarity with Christian and Jewish sources, the Gospels and the Mishnah, I guessed one was a scholar of Christian theology and the other a scholar of Jewish theology. It began to dawn on me that both, coming from their own theological viewpoints, had never considered that the other also traced its modern form to this seismic event. In my position as onlooker, I could see a huge jigsaw piece that connected the two worlds which after all occupied the same time, space and context. They got off at the University, arguing happily. It struck me as a remarkable example of trying to make sense of a religion based on its own self-understanding, without any context that could put the self-understanding on a wider historical, cultural and geopolitical continuum.

Religion is multidimensional. However on RE curricula religion has only been understood in one dimension, the inner, most often expressed as doctrine, seen in a positive light, its universal benefit assumed. How did it come to this? In this chapter I offer pieces of a jigsaw puzzle which come together to form RE in England and Wales in its current form. I present

Religious Education as representing a narrow and partial dimension of religion, which leads me to argue in the second chapter for a religious education or religion and worldviews studies, built around the multiple dimensions of religion and belief. I show how RE's dual aims, personal growth and critical enquiry, lead to incoherence and confusion in curriculum aims. By tracing the history of RE to uncover the roots of the subject's dual aims, I can show how a series of historical pressures led to this point. The resulting inconsistency has diminished and distorted the curriculum; pupils are left with a confusing mixture of personal morality, academic theology and philosophy and a pervading sense that they should emerge from the curriculum somehow feeling well-disposed to religious people.

I argue that this inconsistency in aims stems from that fact that only a single dimension of 'religion' is considered; the inner and doctrinal. I show how this partial and abstract dimension of 'religion' results in a partial and limited horizon of understanding in the RE curriculum. Religion is not viewed as something with histories or contexts and subject to enquiry, meaning the claim of critical enquiry is not met because there is nothing to critique and analyse.

This analysis leads to my argument, developed in Chapter 2, that what 'religion' is, in multiple dimensions, should be the starting point of religious education, or religion and worldviews studies.

a) Legislation

As well as a broad and balanced curriculum which supports pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development, the law states that '[a]ll state schools are also required to make provision for a daily act of collective worship and must teach religious education to pupils at every key stage' (DfE, National Curriculum, December 2014: p. 5). These so called 'religious clauses', a daily act of collective worship and religious education in the curriculum, reflect the concerns and hopes for state education in 1944, with the passing of the Education Act 1944, and have been upheld in successive legal cycles to the present day. I will begin with the legislation governing religious education, and consider what view of 'religion' can be seen in the legislation.

The 1944 Education Reform Act, or Butler Act after the Conservative MP who presided over its birth, set out to offer an academic education to all children, although with hindsight at the expense of 'widespread technical instruction the nation so badly needed' (Green, 2000: p. 148). The prioritising of an academic, as opposed to a technical, education, was driven by the senior civil servant representing the interests of secondary education on the Board of

Education, Griffiths G. Williams. The educational driver was academic excellence, which required selection. Williams was the 'most important' of three men who were the 'principle authors' of the 1944 Act, according to R.G. Wallace (Wallace, 1981: p. 283). Williams wanted to retain selection on academic terms and accepted that 'the social upheaval of the War' required the end of 'patently social selection- fee-paying and the admission of wealthy but academically inadequate pupils to grammar schools' (Wallace, 1981: p. 285). Two other civil servants contributed, representing Elementary (which was to become Primary) and technical, or vocational, education, but Williams was 'the most influential' (Wallace, p. 284). Significantly, the 1944 legislation made an academic education available to all but RE was *not* imagined as part of this academic diet, offering instead an opportunity for pupils' spiritual and moral growth. In the intervening years however RE has been presented increasingly as another subject of the academic curriculum, assessed according to academic knowledge and skills such as recall, analysis and evaluation, even though the 2014 curriculum still places RE with non-academic aspects of schooling such as collective worship and sex education, outside the national curriculum. In his history of sixty years of teaching religious education, Terence Copley aligns RE's 'problems about its nature and identity' from 1944 to the present with those of the church (Copley 2008: p. 11). Copley thus acknowledges with more clarity than most that RE, or Religious Instruction (RI) as it was known, originated as education in and initiation into Christianity. Copley argues that as the church 'moved away from the challenge of the Gospel or what Otto called the Mysterium' and offered instead a 'cheap grace' (p. 11), a 'vision of a religiously inspired education system... faded away, to be replaced by no particular vision at all' (p. 35), and 'RI became a classroom subject among other classroom subjects' (p. 35). However RE's anomalies mean it does not sit easily as an academic subject of the curriculum. Parents may withdraw their children from RE even though, as Copley notes, multifaith RE is presented as both of academic and moral benefit to all pupils (Copley 2010: p. 44). Although parents do not have to give a reason for withdrawal, yet another anomaly, the justification for the clause is derived from RE as faith nurture, an offer that anyone might decline in the interests of religious freedom. Philip Barnes describes RE's position in the curriculum as 'ambiguous' (Barnes, 2014: p. 13). However on Copley's view RE's original purpose was clear, it was Christian education. John White supports Copley's assessment of the explicitly Christian nature of RE in 1944, but contends that democracy, the opposite of Nazi totalitarianism, was as closely associated with Christianity as ethics and culture and also justified its inclusion in the school curriculum (White 2004: p. 152-3). In summary, the view of 'religion' visible in the 1944 legislation, seen in the 'religious clauses', is of something of personal benefit to pupils rather

than a solely academic subject. It is culture, tradition and morality. It is not 'religion' generally, but Christianity.

b) Local Determinism

There is no national curriculum for RE because, as noted above, the subject was not imagined in academic terms but as faith nurture. All over the country the local RE syllabus is reviewed and developed every 5 years by an Agreed Syllabus Conference, convened by the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education, or SACRE. At present this is made up of representatives of the Church of England, the Protestant Free Churches and Catholic Church, other religious groups represented in the area, and local councillors, representatives of the teaching unions and school leaders. Although RE's compulsory nature is prescribed by central government, *what* children learn is established locally in this manner, with GCSE and A' Level specifications effectively comprising the Key stage 3 and 4 curricula. National guidance, produced since 1994, has greatly influenced SACREs around the country although it is not statutory. While it is desirable for specialist religious educators to be present, SACREs are not inoperative without one, provided a representative of either a school or teaching union is present. In fact the Commission on RE (CoRE) has identified the make-up of SACREs as limiting and has recommended they enlarge to include academics and those with expertise in religion and worldviews outside the faiths, such as from local museums and galleries (CoRE, 2018: pp. 16 and 56). The current composition of SACREs again reflects a view of 'religion' as owned by the faiths.

In comparison to all other subjects of the curriculum, the contents of which are centrally determined, Locally Agreed Syllabuses created by SACREs make RE highly anomalous. This anomaly also stems from 1944. As Wallace notes, the 'under-financed church schools were a barrier to general progress' (Wallace, 1981: p. 289). Butler himself did not want to see an improved education system if it meant losing church schools, so he attempted to 'draw Church and state together in pursuit of a Christian education' (Green, 2000: p. 163). Barnes cites Ken Jones' summary that the church exchanged 'influence for cash' (Barnes, 2014: p. 55, citing Ken Jones 2003: p. 18), referring to the church schools effectively handing control to the state, in return for state funding. Thus the Act directed state funding to church schools in order to preserve a thoroughly Christian education. However divisions across the denominations muddied the waters; Nonconformists rejected any state funding of 'denominational schooling', while the Church of England desired both state funding and full autonomy (Wallace, p. 289).

Catholics also objected to state-funded Protestant schools, but ‘Roman Catholic opposition was of little consequence in the commons, once Anglicans (mainly on the Conservative benches) and Nonconformists (mainly on the Labour and Liberal benches) were in agreement’ (Wallace, p. 290). The notion of SACREs was a solution. Each denomination was to contribute to the local RE agreed syllabus, and ‘unreserved’, or Christians not defined strictly by denomination, often on a voluntary basis, would teach it (Green, p. 161). Over the years, as regions of Britain became more diverse, the idea of Christian denominations on SACRE expanded to include representatives of the non-Christian faiths. The clauses of the 1988 Act relating to RE are largely the result of tensions between Christians on the political right, who desired to retain and fulfil the 1944 aim of Christian education, and the centralising tendencies of Thatcher’s government which, although right wing, was still seen as a secular body with no natural authority over religious education (Copley, 2008: p. 137-138). Local determinism was retained in amendments to the 1988 Act (Amendments 93 and 94) meaning Local Authorities were henceforth required to support a SACRE (Copley, 2008: p. 143). It was the compulsory nature of SACREs which meant Christianity and other religions must be represented at local level, thus locally determined, multifaith RE became, in effect, compulsory.

c) Christian Confessionalism

The Christian nature of religious education in 1944 was no accident. In Green’s words, RE was ‘a measure of avowedly Christian stewardship: advanced by a Christian minister, passed by a Christian parliament, directed towards the goal of creating a truly Christian population’ (Green, 2000: p. 149), and not just a Christian act, but a ‘Protestant act’ (Green, p. 150). Academic expectations were not set because Religious Instruction was to nurture children into Christianity rather than offer academic theology and religious studies (Green, p. 161). The religious clauses; an act of daily worship and religious education in the curriculum, were not sticking points in the 1940s (Green, p. 162¹). Barnes notes that ‘when religious education was made a statutory requirement the only serious objections raised were by those who questioned if it was necessary to make compulsory what was in most schools already accepted practice’ (Barnes, 2014: p. 56, citing Butler 1971: p. 99). Barnes also notes that ‘the Act did not specify which religion was to be taught and what type of worship was to be conducted in schools’ but reference to speeches in parliament make it safe to ‘assume’ the religion is Christianity (Barnes, 2014: p. 56 citing Leeson, 1947: p. 194).

¹ Citing Trinity College Cambridge/ Butler Papers, G15/84, Butler: ‘Political diary’, 9 Sept. 1943

The fact that the religion was not even named reflects the deep normality of Christianity in Britain at the time. Robert Jackson describes 1944 Religious Instruction as a transmitter of culture as well as Christian knowledge (Jackson, 2005). Terence Copley argues that British society felt more cohesive in the 1940s and support for universal Christian nurture in schools was widespread (Copley, 2010). This is borne out by Green's analysis of public responses to the Butler Act. Butler set out to preserve Christian education for its moral and spiritual benefits, despite the poor quality of education offered by many church schools. Church schools had suffered since the 1870 and 1902 Education Acts which set increasingly nationalised standards on what had been basic education offered to the children of the parish. Many expected the church schools to simply die out, but public support for a moral and spiritual dimension to state schooling made Butler's compromise possible (Green, 2000: p. 152). Religious education and collective worship became part of every school, whether church or state-funded. According to Barnes this compromise 'effectively established a confessional form of religious education in... schools funded in part or whole by the state', based on the fact that the majority of 'agreed syllabuses produced between 1944 and the late 1960s assumed the truth of Christianity and presumed that the aim of religious education was to nurture Christian faith' (Barnes, 2014: p. 57, citing Loosemore, 1993: p. 83). As Barnes notes, each SACRE came to this conclusion independently as there was no directive from central government.

Agreed Syllabuses updated in light of the 1944 Act illuminate this assumption as Copley shows. For example, Middlesex County's 1948 Syllabus, previously updated in 1929, opens with the claims that 'the primary function of Christian religious teaching is to show the way in which Christianity offers the right relationship between God and man', and goes on to suggest that education generally should offer a training in 'Christian citizenship' (Copley, 2008: p. 33, citing Middlesex County Council, 1948: p. 1). Copley suggests that such statements are not simply 'indoctrinatory' (p. 34), but that overt Christian values were imagined to resonate with subtle Christian and *Western* underpinnings to the life of the whole school, such as, following John White's argument, a commitment to democratic values. Christianity was a dominant strand of the warp and weft of European culture. Copley shows a more explicitly Christian theological justification in Cambridgeshire's Agreed Syllabus, setting education specifically 'within the cultural history of the Western world' (Copley, p. 34, citing Cambridgeshire Education Committee, 1951: p. 25), part of a fallen humanity's reinstatement with God through growth, understanding and improvement. Copley compares these explicit aims with the aims of the 1988 Act, 'deficient of all such reasoning' (p. 34), in arguing that as no educational aims are 'value-neutral' (p. 34) any public articulation and discussion of aims is to be welcomed. I make

a similar argument in the following chapter, proposing that explicit aims provide a standard which illuminates any distorting influence of competing aims on the curriculum and can be periodically assessed for coherence and suitability.

However by the 1960s a universal appetite for bible-based Christian instruction could no longer be assumed. Two volumes shed light on this period. Harold Loukes, who taught Education at Oxford, was a member of a board of Diocesan, professional and academic advisers conducting research on behalf of the Institute of Christian Education 'to investigate the present state of religious education in the secondary modern school' (Loukes, 1961: p. 9). Loukes finds teenagers disengaged from the Christian teachings and communities which have shaped Britain for centuries, but also, possessing the intellectual maturity to 'generalize' and 'sustain a line of thought... they find their lessons on the bible childish and irrelevant' (p. 150). Loukes concludes that teenagers could more usefully explore, in the words of Robert Jackson, 'relationships, responsibilities and the problems of evil and death... in the context of a liberal and secularized Christianity' (Jackson, 2005: p. 5). In Loukes is an early acknowledgement that Christian moral insights are only of use to the next generation if they are able to speak to their concerns and circumstances.

Edwin Cox, a lecturer in Religious Education at the Institute of Education, 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 finds among students of RE a desire to engage with questions such as about purpose and evil, but the sense that the full scope of such topics is not explored in RE. It 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). Cox allows that Britain is changing, becoming more secular, individualistic and diverse, reflected in students' assertions that 'each person's belief can be genuine only if based in his own experience' and 'no ready-made scheme of belief can help them' (p. 47). Cox is another early proponent of the notion that the RE curriculum must change with society if Christianity's insights are to speak to new generations.

In a series of lectures given in 1966, the influential scholar of religious studies Ninian Smart charged RE in schools with 'an over-intellectualist approach to religion as though it is a matter of doctrines and Biblical revelation' limiting both 'a rich appreciation of the whole development of Christendom after the early centuries' as well as exploration of 'the sociology

of religion', 'Marxism or Humanism' and 'the role of religion in a contemporary culture' (Smart, 1968: p. 103). The result is 'confused thinking, the conflict of interests, emotional obtuseness' (p. 103). Smart's phenomenological model of RE is based around the notion that all religions, as well as non-religious worldviews, can be understood with reference to six connecting dimensions, describing the inner beliefs and experiences, outward manifestations and community aspects of religion (Smart, 1968). The appropriate step forward from Christian confessionalism is offered in Smart's thesis as comparative religious studies following a phenomenological model, where the teacher adopts a stance of neutrality to the various religions' truth claims and explores its doctrine and practices on its own terms. As Barnes notes the phrase 'phenomenological religious education' had been replaced by the phrase 'multi-faith religious education' by the 1980s, although the 'underlying assumptions, beliefs and values of phenomenology' remained essentially unchanged (Barnes, 2014: p. 102), that is a stance of neutrality and an assumption of a commonality of religions.

However these organic, grassroots shifts away from Christian confessionalism within RE were met with fierce resistance in the House of Lords over the stages of the 1988 Act by those on the political right who were Christians but not religious educators, otherwise known as 'the Tribe' (Copley, 2008: p. 140). As Copley notes, 'it came as a surprise to many RE professionals to find their role being debated and defined by people largely outside RE and education altogether' (Copley, 2008: p. 137). The Tribe 'were concerned to assert the Judaeo-Christian base of national culture and hence RE' (p. 140), seeing no reason to abandon the original aims of the subject. Debates turned around such questions as whether teachers of Christian education could be non-Christians, whether they should be Christians but also trained teachers and how much curriculum time should be allocated to the non-Christian faiths. For example, the Cox Amendment (no. 28), after Baroness Caroline Cox, a key member of the Tribe, requires the RE curriculum to offer around double the teaching time on Christianity than other faiths. Copley describes 'relief and even pleasure' in the RE world that the 1988 Act 'had not been hijacked by the Christian right' for evangelistic purposes and 'undone decades of work in RE' (Copley, 2008: p. 146). It seems that the shift towards multifaith RE had been tacitly supported within the profession, often by practising Christian teachers, but the values underpinning this move had not been publicly articulated and defended. As Lynn Revell notes, a 'world religions approach to education only became a possibility once the reality of Christian education had died' (Revell, 2012: p. 16). Those within RE seem to have accepted that Christian education was no longer a realistic possibility but those outside did not share this understanding. There are two views of 'religion' visible here: religion as Christianity and of cultural, moral or spiritual

benefit to all children, and religion as occurring in different forms, but still of general moral or intellectual benefit to students. This destabilising conflict has reduced RE both in ethical and educational terms as I shall develop. For example the right of withdrawal and a positivity towards religion, dimensions of RE as explicit Christian nurture which were retained in a supposedly comparative, non-confessional analysis of religion, undermine RE's ability to meet educational aims today. Freedom of worship required the right of withdrawal from confessional Christian RE, but in a supposedly academic subject it is an anomaly, as Copley states, 'it should apply to all subjects or none', and its presence 'confirmed the legacy that there was still something evangelistic or proselytizing about RE' (Copley, 2008: p. 148). The respect with which the Tribe wanted Christianity to be treated is applied to the other faiths, meaning RE also shoulders expectations of tolerance and mutual respect and in national guidance critical scrutiny of religious norms and truth claims is avoided. In fact, the recent Commission's Report is unable to argue for the end of withdrawal, much to the chagrin of some in the RE community, until all religion and worldviews can demonstrably and reliably claim to be 'objective, critical and pluralistic' (CoRE, 2018: p. 66).

Grimmitt (2000) describes approaches to RE which assume religious moral and philosophical teachings can be of benefit to pupils as 'theological' and 'implicit' (Grimmitt, 2000: p. 26). Although the 'implicit' benefit of religious teachings is a vestige of Christian confessionalism, it has been upheld in multifaith form, not overtly but in the assumption that any religious teaching can guide and nourish any young person as they grow. This development has also led to concerns being raised, for example by Michael Hand, that religion is 'sanitised' and only 'the more benign and congenial aspects' of religion are presented in RE (Hand, 2006: p. 13). Grimmitt's description of this assumption as 'liberal', or even 'radical' (p. 30) makes sense when one considers that it began with Christian RE teachers, often members of the clergy. Barnes suggests that liberal theological RE is an attempt by such Christian religious educators, for example John Hull, to realise Enlightenment liberal values, where the subject is used to promote religious tolerance, freedom and diversity. Hull, the late professor of Religious Education at Birmingham University, championed a form of liberal theological RE whose 'unchallenged dominance' from the 1990s is only now, according to Barnes, coming to an end (Barnes, 2014: p. 128). Although Hull's liberal theological model differs from Smart's phenomenological model, both claim non-confessionalism and both 'trace their intellectual commitments and values to the Enlightenment critique of religion and to the emergence of liberal Protestantism in the nineteenth century' (Barnes, 2014: p. 140). In fact Barnes argues that both are confessional. Hull's liberal model does not seek the essence of religion, as does

Smart's phenomenology, but both share a view of religion as driven by 'a common spiritual dynamic' and perceive a redemptive capacity in all religions (Barnes, p. 140). As well as the view that the spiritual realities studied are 'intellectually credible' (p. 113), both models render religious truth beyond comment, for Smart because of the ultimate ineffability of religious realities and for Hull because of the private nature of religious faith. Barnes presents phenomenology and liberal theology as modern confessional forms of RE based on their *a priori* commitment to the credibility of religious belief, the deliberate lack of critical scrutiny and the assumption that studying religious moral teachings will be of personal benefit to pupils. I accept Barnes's analysis in deeming these models confessional and show over the thesis how 'religion' is presented in a doctrinal, uncritical form and the political dimensions of religion are ignored.

d) Multifaith RE

I have used Barnes' analysis to identify an underlying view in multifaith RE, both phenomenological and liberal, that all religions are an attempt to articulate an ultimate reality, meaning modes of religious expression can be legitimately compared to others and all are of positive worth to adherents and learners in RE alike. This view of religion means a focus on doctrinal beliefs in RE, divorced from the socio-political contexts which shaped their development. Religious concepts are presented as internal to the religion, or as internal to easily recognisable institutional forms of the religion, independent of external drivers, and belief as a private matter. In post-Enlightenment Europe the appropriate public response to private religious commitment is neutrality. Multifaith RE treats all religions selected for study in the same way; with interest towards external manifestations of belief and doctrine and respect towards inner truth claims.

Grimmitt describes phenomenological, 'explicit' approaches to RE as attempts to understand a religion through initiation into its modes of thought, its 'detailed phenomena' and to grasp how the religion understands itself, while remaining neutral to its truth claims (Grimmitt, 2000: p. 28). This is in contrast to Grimmitt's description of the 'theological', 'implicit' approaches noted above. Most modern pedagogies, according to Grimmitt, are phenomenological, but all are attempts to reconcile the basic models, the implicit and the explicit, or the use religious teachings can have in pupils' own 'search for meaning', balanced with an understanding of the external manifestations of religion (Grimmitt, 2000: p. 28).

In contrast to Barnes, Grimmitt, does not describe phenomenology as confessional, appearing to view the detailed subject matter proposed by Smart as evidence of non-confessionalism. With Garth Read in the 1970s, Grimmitt developed a phenomenological approach to RE at Westhill College, part of the University of Birmingham (Grimmitt and Read, 1977, Grimmitt 1987). This model, as Grimmitt explains, supports phenomenology's intellectual rigour while offering, through opportunities for reflection and personal development, more than 'narrowly prescribed education outcomes of a strictly phenomenological approach' (Grimmitt, 2000: p. 38). The basic aim is to 'promote pupils' personal development through the study of religion' (p. 35).

As I have noted above the phenomenological approach to RE had been quietly developing in classrooms since the 1970s, but came under fire around the formulation of the 1988 Education Act, leading to a wrangle between proponents of multifaith RE and 'the interests of the radical right in politics and some forms of conservative Christianity', or 'the Tribe' (Jackson, 2005: p. 22). At that time an analysis such as Barnes's that phenomenology represents a modern, liberal form of confessionalism was not offered, and claims of multifaith RE's non-confessionalism were taken at face value by the Tribe. An example of personal, but not educational, objections to multifaith RE is found in a pamphlet by a teacher and headteacher active in the Church of England, John Burn and Colin Hart, with a preface by Baroness Caroline Cox, of the Cox amendment (Burn and Hart, 1988). The authors perceive the growing interest in non-Christian religions and the subsequent shift away from overt Christian nurture as a wilful dereliction of duty. Baroness Cox warns that 'we are in danger of selling our spiritual birthright for a mess of secular pottage' (1988: p. 4), calling the shift the 'ultimate betrayal' (p. 5). The authors cite Douglas Hurd, the Conservative Home Secretary, who, in a speech to the General Synod of the Church of England, complained of young offenders, "'It is as if, for them, neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament had been written.'" (p. 8, quoted in *The Times*, 11th Feb 1988), implying that some knowledge of the Bible could have prevented their criminal actions. The authors echo this sense of impending moral collapse, all due, in their eyes, to the shift to multifaith RE. Labour MP Robert Kilroy-Silk describes this 'fashionable but meaningless multi-faith creed... [as] an artificially created mongrel' (p. 9, *The Times*, 8th April 1988).

e) Tensions in RE Curriculum Aims

The tensions arising from this period reflect two ways of seeing 'religion', and therefore two approaches to religious education; a 'conservative confessional' view and a 'liberal confessional' view. A conservative confessional view perceives 'religion' as essentially Christianity, as the moral and metaphysical underpinning of British culture and society. On this view religious education is concerned largely with Christian theology and ethics. A liberal confessional view sees religion as manifest in multiple forms, but places religious doctrine and truth claims beyond critical scrutiny. The tensions in the years leading up to 1988 are between a conservative confessional RE and a liberal confessional RE. I take the term 'liberal confessional' from Barnes (2014) and Wright (2003), although Wright himself cites Cooling (1994) in using this phrase². Revell comments that in light of 19th Century Britain's rock-solid certainty of Christian superiority, power and truth, the journey to multifaith RE is nothing short of 'astounding' (Revell, 2012: p. 8). A conservative confessional approach to RE resists multifaith studies because of a view that, in Britain at any rate, 'religion' can only be 'Christianity'. The multifaith view of religious education espoused by Smart, Grimmitt and Hull was presented as non-confessional but is described as 'liberal confessional' by Barnes and Wright because the inner truth of Christianity and all other faiths are not questioned, nor are institutional forms of religion subjected to critical scrutiny. Smart, Grimmitt and Hull extend the respect which conservative confessionalism shows to Christianity to five other world religions. I use the phrase liberal confessional RE, with thanks to Barnes and Wright, also taking into account Grimmitt's comment that this was indeed a liberal move from a largely Christian workforce, and Barnes's account of the roots of Hull and Smart's conceptions of religion lying in post-Enlightenment liberal Protestantism. In the next chapter I contrast liberal *confessional* RE with liberal *educational* RE. As I have shown, liberal confessional RE presents the six world religions as essentially credible, their spiritual dynamics rendered private and internal. The teacher must adopt a stance of neutrality towards religious claims and practices. However I present an alternative in the following chapter; RE as liberal education, where the subject of religion is analysed using a range of disciplines in order to understand its diverse forms and influence rather than to benefit personally from its wisdom and theology. As I argue, the lack of such analysis in confessional RE makes a multidimensional understanding of religion and belief impossible.

² Write cites Cooling, T. (1994) *Critical Realism: an Introduction to Roy Bhaskar's Philosophy*, Verso, London, pp. 7-72

This tension has not gone away. The cracks have been smoothed by time and habit, but they are there. As I will show in this chapter, the tension is visible whenever the aims or purposes of RE are espoused. *Two* aims are routinely offered; the personal and the intellectual, but their different educational requirements are not acknowledged or addressed. All subjects bear the tension between educating for immediate knowledge and educating the future person to function in the world, for example, the 'Purpose of Study' in the Science national curriculum states that a 'high-quality science education provides the foundations for understanding the world through the specific disciplines of biology, chemistry and physics. Science has changed our lives and is vital to the world's future prosperity, and all pupils should be taught essential aspects of the knowledge, methods, processes and uses of science' (DfE, National Curriculum, May 2015). Children should study History because a 'high-quality history education will help pupils gain a coherent knowledge and understanding of Britain's past and that of the wider world. It should inspire pupils' curiosity to know more about the past' (DfE, National Curriculum, September 2013). Even in a deliberately knowledge-based curriculum, as the 2013 National Curriculum is designed to be, there is still some sense of the growing person and the world they will inhabit. As Loukes noted in 1961, all subjects contain something of the tension between the immediate knowledge-based and the wider social aims of education. However, in RE this tension appears much more marked because of its confessional origins. The overall aim of History and Science, according to the National curriculum, is to introduce school students to the modes of analysis and methodology of these disciplines. Students in History are proto-historians and in Science proto-scientists; they serve History or Science as much as the subjects contribute to their future selves. However confessional RE does not set out to create proto-theologians, but proto-Christians. While I make a deliberately flippant comment, still this is the logical outcome of initiating pupils into the doctrine and inner reality of a religion, rather than the intellectual disciplines of theology, philosophy, history and relevant social sciences. Although RE now claims to be an intellectual subject of the curriculum, I will argue that its strong confessional roots do not permit a disinterested study of religion.

I have presented a straightforward historical account to trace how Christian confessionalism became multifaith RE, however a philosophical analysis is offered by Michael Hand (2006) considering whether non-confessional RE in non-faith schools is even logically possible. Hand considers arguments that religious knowledge is unique as a type of knowledge, reducible ultimately to its own criteria for truth, and therefore to examine religious knowledge in non-faith schools, the stated aim of non-confessional RE, is not possible without first accepting at some level of the truth of such claims. Hand concludes that non-confessional RE is logically

possible because religious knowledge is not logically unique and can be accessed and understood using common conceptual and linguistic structures, and therefore can be understood from a position of non-faith. However philosophical interrogations of RE's stated aims such as Hand's, or John White's (2004) which I refer to below, are not found in national guidance for RE, despite offering crucial insights regarding the RE curriculum's coherence and capacity.

As I have noted, RE has no national curriculum, but with the reshaping of the National Curriculum in 2012-13, the Religious Education Council funded a review to stay in line with national changes; the 2013 *Review of Religious Education in England*. As a result of wide consultation within RE and a consideration of how other subjects presented themselves the *RE Review* set out the skills and knowledge that students should master in RE. Like the *National Framework* (QCA, 2004) and the *Non-Statutory Guidance* (DCSF, 2010) before it, the *RE Review* is a non-statutory guidance document for teachers of RE. According to the Review the subject earns its place in the school curriculum by 'provoking challenging questions about meaning and purpose in life, beliefs about God, ultimate reality, issues of right and wrong and what it means to be human.' (Religious Education Council (REC), 2013: p. 14). Students will 'develop increasing understanding of wide areas of RE subject knowledge' in conjunction with the skills of investigation in 'varied... approaches and disciplines', reflection and expression of their own responses in an 'increasingly' 'informed, rational and insightful way' (REC, 2013: p. 13). However we also find that 'Every child and young person who goes to school is entitled to an experience of religious education (RE) that is both academically challenging and personally inspiring.' (p. 7).

I will argue that these two aims; the 'academically challenging' and the 'personally inspiring' are incompatible. This is a practical rather than a conceptual incompatibility, as I shall suggest, drawn from competing understandings of what 'religion' is. John White objects to RE's compulsory presence in the curriculum on the basis of aims, arguing that the original intentions for the subject are not found in 'current regulations' but are now expressed vaguely as 'moral/ ethical values' (White, 2004: p. 157). White suggests that the subject cannot claim to provide moral education in any serious way compared to the huge influence of a child's home life, the whole school and wider society on moral development. Moreover the philosophical problems with morality explored solely or largely through religious teachings; the problem of truthful and generous atheists, whether obeying divine commands is in fact moral, as encapsulated in Plato's *Euthyphro*, and the overwhelming evidence of religious bigotry and chauvinism demonstrate that 'morality does not have to be based on religion, either

motivationally or epistemologically' (White, p. 160), therefore as the moral understanding developed in RE is partial and misleading the subject's status should be re-assessed. The subject cannot claim to develop pupils morally while it offers only a partial analysis of questions of morality, according to White.

A concern regarding the capacity of RE to meet its own aims is raised in successive Ofsted reports. The Religious Education Council's *A Review of Religious Education in England* (REC, 2013) notes that 'successive Ofsted reports' reveal 'a low base in terms of standards and quality of provision in schools' (REC, 2013: p. 30). Strikingly, in 2010 Ofsted 'reported that achievement and teaching in RE were not good enough in six in ten primary and in half the secondary schools inspected.' (REC, 2013: p. 30, citing Ofsted, 2010, 'Transforming Religious Education'). What is meant by teaching that is 'not good enough'? Inspectors reported poor subject knowledge and only a vague understanding of excellence in RE, classwork offering little or no challenge and an overemphasis on preparation for public exams at the expense of meaningful learning experiences. These reports seem to describe the end result of a subject whose aims are unclear, or incompatible, or where the actual curriculum cannot support the intended curriculum.

RE's lack of academic rigour, is also addressed in a multi-layered analysis of contemporary RE called *Does RE Work?* (Conroy *et al*, 2013), drawing on findings from a variety of disciplines; ethnographic data from 24 British secondary schools, an international conference of religious educators, policy and textbook analyses and analysis of pupil attitudes and teacher confidence. The investigation yields a rich picture of RE and shows it to be 'extraordinarily complex' (Conroy *et al*, 2013: p. 9). In its legal, educational and social standing it is different to any other subject, it is hugely inconsistent, even across neighbouring schools, and yet very little is known about it. RE should be understood, in the words of the authors, as 'a strange social practice' (p. 37).

In this multi-faceted excavation RE is found to be a subject whose original cultural and religious prestige has all but disappeared, and what remains is, in the estimation of the researchers, woolly, superficial and anodyne. Conroy *et al* do not find the transcendent realities described by the religions and the spiritual systems which have evolved to bring humans into contact with those realms adequately addressed in the classroom. Religious commitments to particular ultimate realities have been reduced to a series of ethical positions, often inaccurate or misrepresentative. Whereas the confessionalism Barnes identifies serves to limit academic criticality, Conroy *et al* find the transcendent truth claims of religion reduced or avoided, seeming to have no place in a rationalistic learning environment. Either way, both analyses

reflect the negative impact on the classroom of unclear or incompatible aims. As I noted, this incompatibility has resulted in practice which offers a one-dimensional view of religion when the ethical and philosophical questions religion itself raises are not explored. In the hands of faith insiders who do not seem to raise these questions themselves, the RE curriculum has remained an uncritical, apolitical exercise.

In a discussion about the 'strangeness' (Conroy *et al*, 2013: p. 46) of RE, Conroy *et al* discuss how this strangeness is not 'a function of arguments about pedagogies' (p. 46), but seemingly a function of RE's extreme vulnerability to teachers' own views or understanding of the subject matter. The authors found many teachers with any or no faith background, teaching in all types of schools, putting their own spin on whatever faith they teach; either a confessional spin reflecting their own beliefs, or just a plain divergence from 'the official explanations' of that faith's 'theological and doctrinal claims' (p. 46). They also found a tendency to reduce the 'complex manifestations' of the faith to something 'formulaic, superficial and anodyne' (p. 47). This strangeness seems also to be a function of unclear aims. In fact, the authors found two heads of RE in two 'adjacent' (p. 36) British state schools who articulated different aims and intentions for the subject they taught as well as different relations between education and Christianity.

f) RE and Human Development

I have presented the internal tension created in RE where different understandings of what 'religion' is jostle for space in the curriculum. I have presented the RE world's shift in the late 1960s towards phenomenological, multifaith RE and shown how this prompted a conservative Christian backlash which has not been resolved. This stems from the conservative confessional view of religion as true, Christian and of universal benefit. Over the years various approaches to teaching and learning in RE have developed, drawn from particular views of religion, education and religious education. One such pedagogy is based on Michael Grimmitt's hugely influential volume *RE and Human Development* (1987), which informed, in Mark Chater's words, 'the majority of English RE' (Chater and Erricker, 2013: p. 53) from 1994 to 2013, as I show.

As I mentioned above Grimmitt's 1973 work with Read promoted a phenomenological approach to RE. However by 1987 Grimmitt questioned the use of phenomenology in RE while retaining the desire for children to benefit personally from exploring religious wisdom and morality. He says, 'expecting children and young people to exhibit a sustained willingness to

explore religion 'from the point of view of those who are religious' is unrealistic if, at the same time, such exploration does not also meet their own needs and relate to their own experiences and interests (Grimmitt, 1987: p. 209). In this volume Grimmitt offers another step in RE, a pedagogy which has become known as the Human Development model, which can be understood as a combining of RE's two dimensions; the 'academically challenging' and the 'personally inspiring'. By juxtaposing two views of what knowledge is, Grimmitt elucidates two views of what education is, before offering a vision of what religious education should be. If knowledge is 'objectively existent, external to the knower' (p. 15) whose unique logical structures are available to be mastered by the learner, then education comprises the process of this mastery. If, however, knowledge is an ever-fluctuating thing humans create when they make meaning of their world, and what children know is equal to that which they don't yet know, then education is a conversation between meaning-making agents in a shared context. Grimmitt suggests that we can learn something valuable from both approaches; the discipline and humility required to enter into learning, but in a context where learners engage with what they learn, use it to make their own meaning and in the process shape it anew. Education for Grimmitt is a process of humanisation; we humans are born with an enormous capacity to know and learn. Chater summarises this model as the meeting point of 'two major reference points' for pupils; the 'the life-world of the learner and the life-world of the religion' (Chater, 2013: p. 53).

In this influential pedagogy Grimmitt argues for religious education's role in the humanising of the child in formal schooling, not because humans are made in the image of God or any other theological justification, but because learning itself is a humanising process. Grimmitt presents religious education as an essentially 'secular' enterprise and religious educators' '*first-order activity*' is education rather than the transmission of religious truths (p. 258). Despite a claim to be educationally secular, Grimmitt's pedagogy in effect brings the Christian hope for spiritual growth into a secular space, reflecting a view of religion as of benefit and beyond comment. Another pedagogy derived from phenomenology, associated with David Hay, is the Experiential approach (Hay *et al*, 1990). Hay's team, after Alister Hardy's 1965 and 1966 work³ which suggests the widespread nature of religious or spiritual experiences, developed methods of tapping into pupils' own inner selves, their sources of inspiration and depths of emotional experience, to suggest a universal human capacity for spirituality. Experiential RE methods aim

³ Citing Hardy, A (1965) *The Living Stream: A Restatement of Evolution Theory ad its Relation to the Spirit of Man*, Collins, London and Hardy, A (1966) *The Divine Flame: An Essay Towards a Natural History of Religion*, Collins, London

to illuminate both the spiritual experience and pupils' own lives and selves. The experiential method is driven by a view of religion as possessing an inner, hidden core, beyond language and 'public phenomena' such as 'churches, temples, synagogues, festivals, gatherings for worship, doctrinal and creedal statements', and which are able to be uncovered in RE (Hay *et al*, 1990: p. 10). Both these pedagogies of RE place religious truths beyond comment, as do Hull (1992) and Smart (1968). Histories of dissent and change within religion, ethical missteps, questions raised about religion or the socio-political contexts in which religious movements developed are utterly invisible, reflecting a view of religion as beyond comment, beyond context and beyond criticality. Phenomenological RE simply ignores religion's dimension as an exercise in authority, presenting it as something hidden to be discovered. Because of the lack of criticality towards religious truth claims and religion's role in nation-building and conflict, I find Barnes' argument that all phenomenology is confessional persuasive.

Barnes (2014) argues that Grimmitt, Hull and Hay present phenomenology as non-confessional due to the detailed information given about each religious tradition, when in fact this method avoids any critical examination of religion as a power form and as a truth claim. Revell suggests that it is precisely *because* phenomenological RE's 'uncritical nature' has 'illegitimated' a critical approach to religion, that it has been attractive to both 'liberal Protestant educators' and 'a conservative establishment' (Revell, 2012: p. 17). Barnes' analysis has revealed the confessional undercurrent in modern phenomenological, multifaith RE. Two other useful analyses by Clive Erricker and Mark Chater shed further light on phenomenology in RE (Chater and Erricker, 2013). According to Erricker, Ninian Smart sought to read differences in culture and faith as contributors to an overarching humanity, and to enable an understanding of human beings that went beyond a located culture and set of norms. Smart was, Erricker claims, 'voicing a hope rather than a reality' (Erricker, 2013 p: 60) when he looked at the potential for a religion rather than its actual manifestation. While Smart's work has been valuable in moving the subject beyond Christian absolutism, it is not a critical view, and thus it has allowed confessionalism to continue in a liberal form. Erricker, argues that the 'descriptive approaches' (p. 59) of phenomenology have meant a creeping relativism and a dampening of the fullest capacity for critique and exploration. An attempt to portray religious and cultural traditions in a positive light suggests that 'religious systems are inherently positive' (p. 68) or 'liberal and benign' (p. 59). Mark Chater argues that RE's underlying commitment to a vague notion of tolerance means that *all* views, beliefs and practices are treated with respect, simply because they exist. Chater argues that RE's Christian past and multifaith present have never been reconciled and RE has been frozen in an uneasy truce, the tension merely 'papered over'

(Chater, 2013: p. 55). The result is that critical thinking is poorly served, limited by a desire for pupils to appreciate the value of the religion.

Barnes' substantial critique of phenomenology shows its proponents' claims of non-confessionalism to be unjustified. Although 'formally' phenomenology yields an RE which is 'inclusive, neutral and 'objective'', Barnes argues that 'informally the truth of religion is assumed' (Barnes, 2014: p. 100). Like Erricker, Barnes sees the threat of relativism in phenomenological RE, arguing that when teachers show pupils religion through an 'insider' view, it means that 'everything that is experienced in religion is valid and true' (p. 101). In phenomenology religious belief, truth and experiences are rendered beyond critical comment, 'religious knowledge is deeply personal, divorced from history and non-political; and also essentially good' (p. 81). Barnes uses a later Wittgensteinian presentation of language as a set of symbols, publicly understood, that shape inner consciousness, as a way to retrieve religious language and bring it into the realm of analysis (p. 114- 116). Religious language, understood as a construct using the same symbols and concepts of all other types of language, is able to be deconstructed and analysed as any other language form. Hand (2006) presents the use of a Wittgensteinian linguistic analysis to determine the nature of religious knowledge itself, which I explore in more detail in the following chapter. As Barnes argues, 'there is no privileged domain of introspective knowledge. Private experience is a function of public discourse, intrinsically dependent on the latter' (p. 115). Barnes reflects a view of religion as a thing of the world, with contexts, histories and subject to critical analysis, additional and valid dimensions to explore.

g) Dual Attainment Targets

Grimmitt's Human Development pedagogy has decisively shaped RE. Since 1994 national guidance documents for teaching RE have been published every decade. The first of these, the School's Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) Model Syllabus, designed as guidance for the 151 SACREs, was based entirely on Grimmitt's vision. The Model Syllabuses were a collaborative effort achieved through consultation with RE practitioners and academics, many of whom also represented a faith (Baumfield, 1994). Three models were explored in the process of this consultation, all three using two attainment targets, formally described as Attainment Target 1: Learning *about* Religion and Attainment Target 2: Learning *from* Religion, and informally known as AT1 and AT2, a direct reflection of Human Development aims, meaning a direct reflection of Grimmitt's view of religion. By 2004 the SCAA had become the Curriculum and Qualifications Authority (QCA) and when it published the next set of model

syllabuses, the *National Framework* (QCA, 2004), the dual attainment targets were upheld. Lat Blaylock, in defence of the two attainment targets, unique to RE, argues that they are 'congruent with Grimmitt's intention and concern to prevent RE degenerating into a curriculum area where the accumulation of facts about religions takes most of the limited time available.' (Blaylock, 2009: p. 12). This comment encapsulates the various attempts made in RE to communicate the specialness of religion, its spiritual, ultimate dimension, beyond rational enquiry, or even rational knowledge. The idea that knowledge will cause the subject to 'degenerate' demonstrates a sense that cognitive knowledge on its own is not sufficient for understanding, but that the student must connect emotionally or spiritually with religious teachings and concepts, as if they were an insider to the particular faith. This approach is underpinned by an assumption that this connection is possible and desirable for every pupil. The dual attainment targets, AT1 and AT2, remained as part of RE until the Review of 2013. Despite their official demise, this dual approach to RE still exists in the minds and lessons of a great many RE teachers. For example, Wandsworth SACRE's 2017 Agreed Syllabus upholds the two attainment targets (Wandsworth, 2017).

As Mark Chater notes the dual attainment targets have been 'enshrined in the 2004 framework' (Chater, 2013: p: 53, referring to QCA, 2004) and in the 'successor' to the 2004 Framework, the 2008 *Programme of Study* for Religious Education, now expressed using the '8-level scale of assessment', or levels (p. 53, referring to QCA, 2008). Chater describes the influence of the dual attainment targets as a 'hegemony' due to 'its widespread use in nearly all local agreed Syllabuses, exam specifications and textbooks.' (p. 53)

The Introduction to the 2004 Framework is written by then Secretary of State for Education and Skills Charles Clarke and CEO of the QCA Ken Boston, reflecting but not acknowledging dual, and incompatible, aims of RE; personal development and good understanding. According to this Introduction the aim of the framework is to 'set out a system that places value on the ethos and morals that religious education can establish, independent of any faith, and to promote high levels of consistency in teaching and learning' (QCA, 2004: p. 3). Here not only the two aims of RE, but an unsatisfactory blending of the two are visible; the aim to value 'the ethos and morals' of religion is different to, and not necessarily complementary to, a high standard of teaching and learning. Religion is presented both as a thing to inspire, beyond rational scrutiny, and also as a thing to be deconstructed and critically analysed. The dual attainment targets, expressed together, are incompatible. Only one dimension of religion is presented; a positive 'insider' view, understood through doctrine, upon which critical inquiry

has little purchase. Exploration of a single dimension of religion means a clear gap between the actual and the intended curriculum.

i) Attainment Target 1

Attainment Target 1 (AT1) involves phenomenological learning on a variety of levels; specific faith traditions, outward manifestations and expressions of belief, the impact of beliefs and doctrine on individuals and groups, the benefits gained from belonging to faith communities and an occasional comparison of religious truth claims. From AT1 it is intended that students will gain a sense of religion as a category, in specific forms, and the experiences of religious adherents. However as I shall show what is intended is not achieved as only a partial view of religion is given. I will give a few examples to gain a sense of AT1 through national guidance, before moving on to AT2.

Model 1 of the 1994 SCAA Model Syllabus focuses on ‘the knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a member of a faith community’ whereas Model 2 explores how ‘the teachings of religion... relate to shared human experience’ (SCAA, Religious Education Model Syllabuses, Model 1, 1994: p. 3). It is expected that teachers will explore topics from both models. Both are assessed using AT1 and AT2. The Christianity component of Model 1 Christianity from Reception to Key Stage 4 (age 4- 16) comprises the church calendar, beliefs about God and Jesus, Jesus’ teachings, the resurrection, biblical stories reflecting Christian beliefs, biblical stories reflecting Christian values, the church building, worship, festivals, rituals and practices and how Christians apply Jesus’ teachings to the contemporary world. For example, at Key Stage 1 (age 5-7), it is suggested that pupils learn the following:

‘Christmas

The celebration of Jesus’ birth, which shows he is special for Christians

Stories about the birth of Jesus, illustrating the idea that God is a loving parent

Symbols of Christmas, eg crib’ (Model 1, p. 12)

Attainment Target 1 is applied in order to check what pupils have learnt *about* religion;

‘Pupils could

Encounter Christmas celebrations, and share experiences of celebrations they enjoy

Look at/ handle artefacts, and ask about their meaning, eg crib

Listen and respond to stories about the birth of Jesus' (Model 1, p. 13)

Following AT1 pupils will learn about Christianity through encountering the stories and teachings that Christians themselves would encounter in a faith context, as well as understanding the meanings behind practices and artefacts in the lives of Christians. This is an insider position. AT1, supposedly 'learning about', contains no context or criticality. There is space for diversity in Christian expression and practice, such as diverse Christmas practices around the world, but this is not specified. Pupils will gain a general understanding of Christmas from the point of view of a Christian.

Model 2 involves themes for each religion, such as the Buddha, Buddhist teaching and the Buddhist community in the Buddhism component, God, Torah and the People and the Land in the Judaism component, and *Tawhid* (oneness of Allah), *Iman* (faith), *Ibadah* (worship/ belief in action) and *Akhlaq* (character and moral conduct) in the Islam component (SCAA, 1994, Model 2: p. 10-11). However the religions remain separate and the Model 2 themes also present religion from the view of a faith insider. More general ways to meet the Attainment Targets are given which could apply to all of the content, such as at Key Stage 2 (ages 7-11), Attainment Target I, Learning About Religion, could be met if pupils,

'Investigate what is involved in being a member of a specific religious community

Talk to a number of religious community leaders about their training and work

Find out how people express their beliefs through symbols, stories and language' (Model 2: p. 27)

In Model 2, as in Model 1, pupils learn from an insider's view with no requirement to consider historical or geopolitical contexts of religion, while assuming the benefit of the religion in question. Again 'learning about' contains no context or criticality. This could be offered through exploring dimensions of religion other than the inner and doctrinal, such as histories or socio-political influences. It could be offered, but is not.

AT1 in the 2004 *National Framework* is described as 'enquiry into, and investigation of, the nature of religion, its beliefs, teachings and ways of life, sources, practices and forms of expression' (QCA, 2004: p. 11). Following the national assessment levels by now in place, Level 3 at AT1 means pupils can 'use a developing religious vocabulary to describe some key features of religions, recognising similarities and differences. They make links between beliefs and sources, including religious stories and sacred texts. They begin to identify the impact religion has on believers' lives (QCA, 2004: p. 36). AT 1 at Level 6 means that pupils can 'use religious

and philosophical vocabulary to give informed accounts of religions and beliefs, explaining the reasons for diversity within and between them. They explain why the impact of religions and beliefs on individuals, communities and societies varies.’ (QCA, 2004: p. 37). The 2004 syllabus has carried over from 1994 an insider view of religion, a lack of context and history and the assumption that belonging to a religion is an uncontroversially positive experience. It could have been otherwise through engaging pupils in a wide-ranging study of cultural, political or historical analyses of religion and belief, but this consideration of religion’s multiple dimensions has not been developed.

ii) Attainment Target 2

I turn to AT2, Learning *from* Religion in the national guidance. Model 1 of the 1994 SCAA Model Syllabus, suggests that Key stage 1 pupils can learn *from* Christianity if given the opportunity to,

‘Talk about how the Christmas stories relate to experiences and feelings in their own lives, eg the birth of a baby, vulnerability, being loved and protected, giving and receiving.’ (Model 1: p. 13).

In Model 2 pupils could learn *from* the religion in question if they,

‘Consider what is meant by commitment to a community with shared values

Identify and discuss groups and communities to which they belong

Make a collage to express what they value in the world’ (Model 2: p. 27)

Pupils will learn *from* their RE lessons that religion offers support and answers to human emotional needs; being vulnerable, needing to belong, valuing things in the world and so on. The connections are rather circular between pupils’ own emotional terrain and emotional nurture within a religious community. AT2 lacks a theoretical dimension, such as might be found in psychology or sociology with regards to communities and groups, belonging and the various functions of religion in society. AT2 connects individual pupils with individual religious experience.

AT2 in the 2004 *National Framework* ‘is concerned with developing pupils’ reflection on and response to their own and others’ experiences in the light of their learning about religion’ (QCA, 2004: p. 11). At Level 3 pupils ‘identify what influences them, making links between aspects of their own and others’ experiences. They ask important questions about religion and beliefs, making links between their own and others’ responses. They make links between

values and commitment and their own values and behaviour' (QCA, 2004: p. 36). At Level 6 pupils 'express insights into their own and others' views on questions of identity and belonging, meaning, purpose and truth. They consider the challenges of belonging to a religion in the contemporary world, focusing on values and commitments' (QCA, 2004: p. 37). Again, learning *from* religion involves connecting pupils' own moral and emotional landscape to similar religious teachings. It is a circular view, not drawing on sociology or psychology to gain a wider view of human emotional needs, their development and variation. Pupils' own emotional needs are affirmed and the ability of religion to meet those needs is assumed. Although such framings could be offered, they are not. The exercise remains acontextual and acritical. For example, belonging in religion is presented as separate or different to other human forms of belonging, religion is not placed on more broadly human continuum. Religion abstracted in this way means there is little or no purchase for critical investigation, implying through the curriculum that there is nothing to interrogate or critique when it comes to religion and belief.

h) Post-Dual Outcomes

The 2013 Non-Statutory Curriculum Framework for RE abandoned the use of two attainment targets in an effort to remain aligned to a changing national curriculum focused more strongly on knowledge than skills. During the REC's review of RE, as part of creating the 2013 Curriculum Framework, the majority decision among those consulted was to lose the dual attainment targets based on their limiting impact on RE's scope and level of demand. However I come into regular contact with teachers who value RE much more for its connection to children's values and morality than for its potential as an academic subject, and who still regret the demise of AT2. RE's current 'purpose' is expressed as 'provoking challenging questions about meaning and purpose in life, beliefs about God, ultimate reality, issues of right and wrong and what it means to be human' (REC, National Curriculum Framework, 2013: p. 14). In fact, AT1 and AT2 have not gone away, the following line of the 'purpose of study' claims that students of RE 'learn about and from religions and worldviews' (p. 14). The current criteria for assessing success in RE are broken into three aims:

'A. Know about and understand a range of religions and worldviews' (p. 14)

'B. Express ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religions and worldviews' (p. 14)

'C. Gain and deploy the skills needed to engage seriously with religions or worldviews' (p. 15)

Aim B is an echo of AT2, although there is potential here to offer a more balanced view of the impact of religion.

What does this look like in the classroom? *RE Today* is probably England's foremost RE services provider, a third-sector body funded by grants as well as the sale of teaching materials and consultancy. Such teaching materials give a good idea as to how teachers might bring syllabus requirements such as the above to life in the classroom. In a book to support the teaching of Hinduism at Primary level, comprising information for the teacher, teaching suggestions, information sheets and worksheets, these descriptions are given to align classroom work, attainment targets and assessment levels:

'[Level] 3

- **Identify and describe** some symbols in a murti of Durga the goddess
- **Identify correctly** some of the meanings of the murti and its symbols
Describe some objects that might symbolise myself, and notice similarities and differences between these and the symbols of Durga the goddess' (Moss, *Opening Up Hinduism*, 2010: p. 14)

In a guide to teaching Buddhism at Secondary level, these descriptions are given to align the classroom work to attainment targets and levels:

'Level 5

- Use Buddhist words to explain Buddhist teachings on meditation and its importance in the lives of Buddhists [AT1]
- Explain my own view of spiritual practices, relating my ideas to Buddhist practices of meditation [AT2]

Level 6

- Give an informed account of different ways in which Buddhists practice meditation [AT1]
- Express my insight into the values of meditation, for Buddhists and non-Buddhists, showing my understanding of at least two different viewpoints [AT2]' (Pett, *Questions: Buddhists*, 2012: p. 11)

As in the national guidance (QCA, 2004, 2008), AT1 involves an inner view of religious beliefs and practices, the sort of thing a religious insider might learn within the community, with no

demand for context or history. AT2 asks for a response drawn from what students already know and think rather than after utilising a historical or contextual framing of the belief or practice in question. Both Primary and Secondary classroom work follows the same pattern of exploring doctrine and practice from an insider's point of view and making links with students' own ideas and experiences. RE Today has produced two 'Model Agreed Syllabuses', significant pieces of work to bring the themes and content of syllabuses which meet the dual learning outcomes into line with 2013 Framework outcomes. These practical syllabuses are on offer to SACREs. The Model Syllabuses retain the same positive view of religion, lack of criticality, history and context as the syllabuses they replace. The RE Today syllabuses represent an example of an acontextual and acritical exploration of religion, in turn reflecting a view of religious belief and belonging as beyond comment or investigation.

I have spent some time on the RE curriculum's journey to the present in order to understand the forces at work and why the curriculum takes the form it does. In one important respect, the flavour of what children learn and do in RE from 1994 to the present has not changed. The focus is on doctrinal beliefs and the processes undergone within a religious community to enable members to learn from and reflect on these doctrinal beliefs. Teachers of RE start with the beliefs and outlook of a religion, and illustrate the beliefs through stories, artefacts, rituals and other external indicators. Students are given space to reflect and evaluate, but from a position of friendliness, having been invited into the religion's inner world. Another approach would be to start from a point in history; the geo-political pressures in which Middle Eastern monotheism arose, or the breaking away of Buddhism then the Sikh Khalsa from mainstream Indian spiritual systems, themselves described as 'Hinduism' by the British Raj. These sorts of contextual explorations of current day belief systems have, to my knowledge, never been required by local or national guidance. However religion has a history, and could be looked at through a historical lens. An example from Copley shows how a confessional bent limits RE's educational capacity. Copley notes that RE syllabuses created immediately after 1944 not only avoided the Christian 'roots of anti-semitism', but in fact allowed an 'omission' of the Holocaust altogether portraying Judaism as 'an almost extinct prologue to Christianity' (Copley, 2008: p. 37). Farid Panjwani (2005) critiques RE syllabuses' representations of Islam as 'monolithic' (p. 378), 'literalist' (p. 381) and devoid of historical analysis. They are unable to bring to life for pupils the 'creative and dialectic' (p. 382) engagement of Muslims all over the globe with traditions and sources of authority, in response to geopolitical pressures and in deep connection with other faiths and worldviews.

Although pupils interviewed as part of the *Does RE Work?* study seem to value RE most highly, and enjoy it most, for what it brings to the critical faculties, Conroy *et al* question whether the critical faculties are really being engaged at all. Due to a culture of 'bland, civic virtue' (Conroy, 2013: p. 119) where 'open-mindedness and tolerance' are 'ends in themselves' (p. 119) there is no serious engagement with critical views. The authors wonder if this is less about the 'contraction of religion and religious sensibilities' (p. 91) from education generally in a secular age, and more about the seeking of 'an educational consensus' which is really a 'manufactured unanimity' (p. 91). The more unpalatable dimensions of religion, such as intellectually dubious sources of authority or theological justifications for abuses of authority are not addressed, so, the authors conclude, critical thinking cannot be claimed.

i) Central Control

During the government of Margaret Thatcher (1979- 1990) the school curriculum fell under central government control with the National Curriculum. Although RE remains outside the National Curriculum, government authority over teachers' professionalism has affected RE teachers as much as teachers of any subject. Another factor of Thatcher's Conservative government was the deliberate limiting of education's capacity to be a force for left-leaning social change. The national curriculum, part of the 1988 Education Reform Act, was made up of traditional subjects, which meant, in Jackson's words, 'marginalising fields held to be controversial, such as political, multicultural and antiracist education' (Jackson, 2005: p. 7). Terence Copley notes that in 1988 the Conservative government began a process of wresting education policy and theory away from "'professionals' ('producer capture' in Conservative Party jargon at the time) and left-wingers who were dictating 'progressive' teaching methods'. (Copley, 2010: p. 37), such as multicultural, political and antiracist education.

The increasing control of government over education meant the 1988 Education Reform Act and the National Curriculum. The bill was 'pushed through' quickly, according to Copley, with opposition, including from within Tory ranks, still unanswered (Copley, 2010: p. 43). Copley contrasts the 'high quality of the education debates in the House of Commons in 1943' with 'the paltriness of the intellectual thinking behind the Education Reform Act (1988)' (Copley, 2010: p. 43.) However, control did not occur overnight. Although Kenneth Baker, then Secretary of State for Education, gave his office 170 new powers over education, according to Paddy Ashdown (cited in Copley, 2010: p. 44), many educational decisions were still left up to the professionals, at least by contemporary standards. Two decades of multifaith RE, in the

hands of teachers inclined to the moral and spiritual, had suggested a connection between learning about Britain's minority faiths and less mistrustful attitudes towards Britain's minority people. In 1988 learning aims were both an awareness of Britain's 'Christian heritage' (Copley, 2010: p. 44), as well as an 'awareness of pluralism and of a multicultural society' (p. 44). Despite the protest from the Christian right, the 1988 legislation affirmed RE as a multifaith endeavour, as I have noted, widening to include the non-Christian faiths.

Conroy *et al* note the increasingly widely held view that centralisation and the pursuit and publishing of exam results has 'a distorting effect on learning' (Conroy *et al*, 2013: p. 126). In what Conroy *et al* term 'the inexorable rise of the culture of performativity' (p. 221), RE is badly affected. In the scramble for ever better results in public exams and the pressure to meet universal teaching and learning standards, the depth at which religious concepts can be explored is greatly reduced. Conroy *et al* describe detachment from the foundational theological concepts in teachers and examiners, where, due to 'a culture mostly indifferent or hostile to the serious educated contemplation of major religious concepts', teachers seek 'ingenious vehicles of communication which will authenticate the concepts for younger audiences mostly detached from the doctrinal backdrop which lent these ideas meaning in the first place' (p. 100). Teachers use clips from current films to acclimatise pupils to theological concepts, chosen for a superficial connection. For example I have encountered the film 'Groundhog Day' used to illuminate reincarnation in Buddhism and Captain Kirk's risky attempt to rescue Spock in a *Star Trek* film compared to Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son at God's request. Quite apart from the questionable accuracy of such comparisons, the underlying theology is not then explored and deconstructed in either of these examples. Ultimately Conroy *et al* describe a peculiar, even doomed, attempt to explore ancient notions of truth, goodness and reality, using modern, rationalistic methods, without first mastering the foundational knowledge that underpins these ancient ideas. The culture of performativity is external to RE, but the simplistic curriculums are internal to RE. Taken together they greatly limit RE's capacity as an educational subject. What is claimed is not what is achieved at the level of curriculum resources because only one view of religion is offered, as a thing without context and beyond comment.

j) Current Settlement

Michael Grimmitt's final thoughts on the state of RE before retiring, as he notes in the preface to his 2010 volume, on 30th September 2010, are not positive. The focus of his 2010 volume is

RE's 'credibility as a vehicle for contributing to inter religious and intercultural understanding' (Grimmitt, 2010: p. 262). I will pick up on this thread in the third chapter, but now consider Grimmitt's assessment of the RE curricula as designed by SACREs across the country, I might note, following national guidance that he played a huge part in shaping. That RE curricula are still determined by bodies who do not need to be subject specialists or educators is the sharpest point of controversy on Grimmitt's analysis.

Grimmitt argues that allowing faith representatives to decide the local RE syllabus has not been educationally appropriate. RE in these hands has not 'embraced description, interpretation, critical analysis and evaluation', but remained 'an uncritical confessional activity' (Grimmitt, 2010: p. 266). Grimmitt suggests that 'what faith communities wish to see taught about in RE are those beliefs which they regard as being central to their faith' (p. 270), whether or not this represents 'a proper basis for deciding upon the religious content that all pupils should study in RE' (p. 27). Grimmitt finds such curricula avoid 'understanding how religious beliefs and practices impact upon and contribute to the controversial nature of many social and moral issues' (p. 271). In Grimmitt's words; 'What is at stake here is whether RE teachers should, because of a tradition's opposition, for example, to any form of academic criticism of what it regards as authoritative, such as its scriptures, its tenets of faith, or the special authority invested in a religious leader, etc, revert in their teaching of that faith to an approach which is uncritically instructional, even confessional?' (p. 271). A view of religion as uncontroversially positive and of benefit has dominated the RE curriculum. No other dimension of religion is considered.

Grimmitt also queries the 'preponderance of time' (p. 261) given over to Christianity in the subsequent SCAA model syllabuses (SCAA, 1994) and the *National Framework* (QCA, 2004). As Grimmitt asks, 'where is the integrity in a process which safeguards Christianity from being understood only superficially by pupils at the expense of allowing other faiths to be only superficially understood?' (p. 268). This particular tenet of the RE curriculum dates back to the 1988 wrangle, and the ground that 'a small but influential group of conservative Christians' (p. 266) refused to give. In making this point Grimmitt also questions the ability of the subject to contribute to social change on a platform which is in itself unequal, which I consider in subsequent chapters. I might add that Conroy *et al's* *Does RE Work?* project shows Christianity is often superficially understood as much as other faiths and criticality is lacking across the breadth of the RE curriculum.

Charles Clarke and Linda Woodhead's recent report into RE's settlement has made recommendations for the end of local determinism, based on the 'anomalous' nature of many

different RE curricula, created by many SACREs who 'do not find it easy to engage with the whole of the local educational community, let alone national expertise in religion and education' (Clarke and Woodhead, 2015: p. 37). They state that 'the time has come to accept that such syllabuses are no longer the best means to provide a consistent quality of Religious Education throughout the country' (p. 37). A 'nationally agreed syllabus and programmes of work' for RE are recommended, but in an effort to maintain 'a healthy partnership between religion and the state' (p. 38), the national curriculum for RE should seek input from a National SACRE, which 'should include relevant experts on religion and education' to represent the variety of beliefs and stances in the UK (p. 37). These experts 'should be independent and not act as delegates' (p. 37), and in fact could guard against 'the state or any particular government narrowing the focus of RE or changing its aims without agreement' (p. 38).

Conclusion

In this thesis I scrutinise claims made about the RE curriculum. I suggest in this first chapter that RE's dual aims; intellectual development and personal growth, are competing and incompatible. I have traced the subject's confessional roots and huge loss of 'confessional prestige', to use a phrase of Conroy's, as British society changed rapidly (Conroy *et al*, 2013: p. 85). Although the RE curriculum today is presented as an intellectual subject I argue that although there is much detail required with regards to religious belief and practice, it is of an inner, doctrinal sort, devoid of any historical, contextual or critical analysis. I argue that as modern phenomenological RE has simply rendered religious experience and belief beyond comment, what is presented is in fact a multifaith, liberal form of confessional RE.

RE's move to encompass many faiths was driven by shifts internal to the subject, often led by RE teachers and lecturers who were Christian by personal faith but educators by profession, who wished RE to reflect changing times. Resistance to this shift away from Christian nurture came from Christians on the right of the political spectrum *outside* RE, who were not engaged in religious education and perceived the shift as a threat to Christian dominance. Thus the attempt within the subject to detach faith nurture from an academic subject was resisted by those outside who conflated educational with confessional RE. With hindsight the cracks from this struggle are still visible, as Chater says, 'papered over', and still unresolved. The current curriculum is a confusing mixture of competing aims, a reluctance to critique religions and information about faith and belief detached from historical or geopolitical moorings. Faith insider views still dominate the curriculum so an RE teacher is constantly engaged in a

confessional exercise, presenting what each faith looks like from the inside, and avoiding any critical analysis.

I briefly alluded to a different approach to RE that could allow a fuller understanding of religion in other forms than the doctrinal, such as a phenomenon with various histories, as a form of power and with much internal dissent and variation. This is RE as liberal education, which I introduce in the next chapter. I propose that RE designed along a liberal educational model would meet educational aims which at the moment are not met.

Chapter 2

Liberal Education

Introduction

As demonstrated in Chapter 1, RE was not imagined as a critical intellectual subject at its outset, but was to provide Christian stewardship in schools. Since the demise of overtly Christian confessional RE the subject's stated aims are to develop critical thinking skills and to contribute to personal growth. I argued that RE's dual aims are competing and incompatible because a single, positive and doctrinal dimension of religion is offered, meaning a critical analysis is not possible because there is nothing to critique. In this second chapter I develop a proposal which sidesteps the tension in aims by adopting a liberal educational model with the stated aim of understanding, not initiation into the benefits of religion.

Despite claims that the current English curriculum for RE is non-confessional, I have argued, using Barnes and Wright, that in fact it presents a liberal form of confessionalism. Although modern RE is multifaith, the respect which was originally shown to Christianity is now extended to the six world faiths studied; all are assumed to be beneficial and credible and none are subjected to critical scrutiny. I have utilised Barnes' analysis (2014), as well as Revell (2012), to suggest that phenomenological, multifaith RE is driven by an underlying liberal Protestantism appreciative of the spiritual reality underlying all faith systems. It is 'liberal' in that a Christian redemptive value is endowed on five other faiths, it is 'confessional' because the benefit of all faiths is assumed. In this chapter I contrast this liberal form of *confessional* RE with an approach to teaching and learning which draws on the academic disciplines, and whose aim is understanding rather than personal growth or positivity towards religion. My proposal is based on the liberal *educational* model which has come out of analytic philosophy of education, as I shall present.

I do not propose an alternative model that I happen to prefer myself but is another form of confessionalism. My use of a liberal learning model is precisely to redress the problems I identified in Chapter 1; the incomplete and misleading picture of religion offered at present. I have argued that this is partly due to competing aims which lead to a lack of clarity in outcomes, but also that the close involvement of faith groups and the lack of central scrutiny

permits religion to be viewed through an internal, doctrinal lens only. I propose a more widely contextual view of religion and belief, encompassing its multiple dimensions. I also address critiques of the liberal educational model, such as abstraction and neutralism, and propose that they themselves become part of the approach to learning, to attempt to protect the curriculum from any form of bias.

In subsequent chapters I consider examples of non-educational influences on the RE curriculum which limit rather than enhance understanding. Of relevance here is my argument that, in adopting a liberal educational approach, the RE curriculum could be somewhat protected from short-term or poorly-designed, often non-educational, agenda which reduce its educational scope. By 'non-educational' I mean curricula and lesson design where students' understanding is not the core aim. As I show in following chapters, the community cohesion agenda, whose aims RE is believed to promote, does not aim to broaden young peoples' understanding of discrimination and diversity, and therefore is non-educational. Thus I propose an approach to RE which establishes knowledge and understanding as the core aim and draws on several disciplinary methods to meet this aim. If the RE curriculum is explicitly committed to understanding matters of religion and worldviews, practitioners can judge external influences according to these criteria and can be both more confident and more discerning in dealing with non-educational influences. This frames religion as a thing of multiple dimensions; of histories, contexts, shaped by dissent and diversity and as a power form itself.

There are two senses in which British state schooling is 'liberal'; in its values and in its approach to education. The values which inspired the creation of the welfare state in post-war Britain and led to the Butler Act of 1944 are the political liberal values of fairness and equality. However the state school educational model is 'liberal' in a different sense, it is the ideal of intellectual autonomy, the liberation of the mind.

The values underpinning liberal education are intellectual as opposed to social or practical. This is to say they are drawn from different but not disconnected sources. Liberal education draws on the ancient Greek conception of liberating the mind, whereas the political liberal values came to be articulated in Europe and America in the 19th Century. John White notes that among the pre-1900 political thinkers who addressed education, thinkers such as Adam Smith, Rousseau, Kant, Schiller, Herbart, Humboldt, JS Mill, Nietzsche, Dewey and Russell, there runs through these disparate works a common conviction that education must take place in a free society, in other words, intellectual liberty will be best achieved in a context of social and ideological liberty (White, 2003: p. 96). Thus these two sources of inspiration are

complimentary. The connection between the political liberal values and the intellectual is strengthened in my proposal for RE as liberal education as I present all education as political, being a series of deliberate choices between competing values. Thus my vision of liberal educational RE draws together intellectual and political autonomy for the overall aim of understanding, and in describing confessional RE as anti-liberal I object on both educational and political grounds.

In fact John White and Pádraig Hogan question the idea that education can be deemed non-political in revealing the Christian roots of Western education. John White argues that a Calvinist desire to reinstate humanity after the Fall with the knowledge of God has been a driver for liberal education in England and Scotland (White, 2011). Hogan shows how from Plato onwards, Western education has not allowed education itself, conceptualised as the freedom to challenge sources of authority and draw autonomous conclusions, to have 'sovereignty' (Hogan, 1995: p. 15). Since Plato and through centuries of church dominance, Hogan argues that Western education has taken a 'custodial' approach to knowledge and understanding, concerned primarily that students accept a metaphysical outlook and their place within it, whether Plato's world of the Forms and primacy of mind or Augustine's fallen, corrupted humanity in hope of underserved salvation. As I shall present in more detail in this chapter, the prime goal of liberal education is intellectual autonomy, understood as the capacity to identify errors or inconsistencies from within the academic disciplines, and utilise a growing understanding to improve modes of thought and challenge assumptions. At present intellectual autonomy is not an achievable aim of RE, based on the solely doctrinal, ahistorical and uncritical view of religion I have presented. White and Hogan's historical analyses show that an *a priori* view, such as Platonic or Christian metaphysics, can limit the development of autonomy in students if it curtails their freedom to articulate an alternative.

I propose the idea of pupils' intellectual autonomy as an aim of RE as a useful guiding principle. Whether autonomy is really a possible or desirable aim, when children must be educated in a language, a culture and by people who will necessarily shape them is an argument I don't pursue for its own sake. The idea of autonomy is of course problematic; how far is autonomy possible or desirable for beings who know themselves through culture and through others? I propose autonomy as a pragmatic principle for teachers. Teaching is a practical endeavour. Every day is peppered with unexpected questions, situations and issues that need immediate resolution. Teachers need to be able to think on their feet. The principle that a key aim of education, including religious education, is to develop pupils' autonomy can provide a quick standard, a shortcut to a longer defence, to guide teachers in a moment of complexity, when a

decision is needed. The principle of pupils' autonomy can clearly separate the educational from the non-educational and allow teachers to ask questions such as; will pupils' understanding be enhanced or occluded by this approach? Is this information distracting or necessary to understanding? Are pupils being offered a balanced set of views on which to draw their own conclusion? Is there a context that would frame the subject matter to enable engagement? Developing autonomy helps teachers see their role clearly and know what they are doing. They are not defending the faiths, persuading pupils of the value of religion or answering for centuries of religious abuse. They are teaching their charges about religion and worldviews and will employ several tools, some critical, in order to do this. This also changes the relationship of the teacher to what is being taught. The teacher does not have to account for or defend elements of religion. Her aim is to help her pupils understand with increasing sophistication the world of religion and belief, its influences and impact on individuals and the planet. In changing the position of the teacher to the content explored, the position of the pupil is also changed; they can ask any questions they like or draw any conclusions they like to enable and manifest their growing understanding. Students' attitudes may well change or be challenged, but this is not the goal, it is a side effect. To expect a warmer view towards diverse others, respect or appreciation of religious teaching is a 'custodial' aim, to use Hogan's phrase (Hogan, 1995).

This pragmatic employment of the principle of autonomy does not assume students are not already autonomous thinkers or do not come to the classroom with commitments and opinions of their own, or indeed, that developing autonomy is unproblematic in itself if it raises uncomfortable questions for pupils. The practical utility of such a principle is its simplicity. A single word signifies a broader attitude towards knowledge and understanding, the purpose of education and the role of the teacher. Whatever students' own prior commitments or knowledge the classroom is a space of definition, explanation, questioning, investigation and analysis, for the overall purpose of understanding. Individual teachers might tread carefully with regards to certain topics in certain classrooms while working within a framework where the overall aim of religion and worldviews is growing understanding.

Peters discusses the difference between indoctrination and teaching in *Ethics and Education* (1966), asking if indoctrination can be a criterion for education. Peters does not see indoctrination in a general way as merely 'conditioning' (p. 41), but with regard to moral education he argues that indoctrination is not educational. Indoctrination is not the same as conditioning which 'has no connection with beliefs' (p. 42), but is a reaction that can be learned, such as to 'avoid dogs' (p. 41). In a general way indoctrination implies doctrines,

beliefs, which must be 'understood and assented to' (p. 41), in order for education to be taking place. As long as the learner is free to question or reject such beliefs, education can contain indoctrination, however without understanding and assent, even in 'an embryonic way' (p. 42), indoctrination cannot be a criterion of education. With regards to specifically moral education, which Peters notes is 'a very important aspect of education' (p. 202), he is more definite. A teacher might hold moral positions of her own and share 'the reasons on which such positions are based', but only in so far as her pupils will be able to 'face squarely the question 'What ought I to do?'' in their own lives, not to 'convert' pupils to the teachers' own view (p. 202). Graham Haydon suggests that teachers' own moral agency should be acknowledged when considering the value dynamics of the classroom (Haydon 1997). Teachers are ('still') regarded as 'moral guides and exemplars' as well as 'skilled technicians' (Haydon, 1997: p. 5), meaning teachers are not merely transmitters and pupils passive recipients of inert values (p. 121). Defining indoctrination as 'any process which leaves people accepting certain ideas which they are incapable of subjecting to rational assessment' (p. 121), Haydon notes that an exploration of a value-laden subject need not be indoctrination if it can be explored fully, with some 'measure of understanding' and 'a degree of rationality' (p. 135). This is pertinent to RE where moral questions and principles are constantly explored and debated. Peters' distinction between indoctrination and education means that an *a priori* view could certainly be brought to the classroom to be explored, such as the Christian view of humanity as fallen, but for understanding, not for assent. To use Hogan's phrase, the freedom to deconstruct and interrogate all authoritative views should have 'sovereignty' (Hogan, 1995: p. 15).

Thus I propose for RE as liberal education that free debate with the aim of greater understanding should be sovereign. This is not to claim that the sovereignty of understanding is non-political or neutral, or that the banner of 'liberal education' will make it any easier for pupils or teachers to experience deeply-held beliefs being deconstructed and challenged. In some cases the uncomfortable space between asserting one's own moral convictions and tolerating others' opposing convictions could be the subject of debate in itself, and teachers will have to use their judgment. RE as liberal education cannot claim neutrality or promote one worldview, including a liberal worldview, over another, but is driven by the sovereignty of exploration and debate.

Another tension occurs between the claims of liberal education's primarily *intrinsic* value and the clear *extrinsic* value of a good liberal education. Liberal education is classically conceived of as having intrinsic value where to be educated is a good in itself. I have noted John White's comment that modern liberal education can be conceptualised as political because it requires

free thought in a free state, but I would suggest that all education, confessional or liberal, as a series of deliberate choices, is political. This speaks to a distinction between education for a purpose, and education for its own sake which, as I shall present, is a fault line running through visions of liberal education. In this chapter, in juxtaposing the intrinsic value of education as a good in itself with the instrumental value of education, the question is raised about RE. Is it only to be for understanding? Is it also to be for wider social, ethical or instrumental outcomes? I have thus far rejected the instrumental aims of RE as personal growth on the grounds that seeking a particular conclusion is not educational in that it is not concerned with students' understanding, but students' assent to particular moral attitudes. I have shown in Chapter 1 the bland diet of ideal religious teachings, inspirational people and uncontested doctrine on offer in RE. I argue that this is not educational, or fully educational, because it does not offer a full picture of all the things religion is in the world or its intersections with power, politics and human variation. As this thesis develops I propose the use of the disciplines to enrich and enliven the curriculum, thus RE as liberal education will be a multidisciplinary endeavour.

Does my argument imply liberal RE should be stripped of all extrinsic goods resulting from teaching and learning in the subject? It does not because RE is about people, culture, belief and identity, and there is much in this wide subject area to inspire, excite or violently disagree with. I propose that the only *claims* that can be made for RE are what students will know and understand; a radically simple educational proposal making no claims to changed values or opinions. I propose that RE practitioners aim to deepen students' understanding of religion and belief, using autonomy as a guiding principle, because it is practically feasible and within educational aims. As I have argued, the stated ethical and personal outcomes of RE are not able to be met; they are either impractical in the time available or impossible given the content of the curriculum. For this reason I propose that any personal, ethical or political development of the process of educating for understanding will be a side-effect, a welcome side-effect perhaps, but not the aim. Moreover I question by what *right* an educator sets out to change a student's mind. Therapists must be in therapy themselves in order to engage intimately with and potentially alter another person's outlook. Teachers have no required equivalent moral or values therapy to endow them with the professional and moral right to alter a pupils' outlook. My radical educational stance stems from a moral objection to confessional RE as well as a practical one.

A question arises however. How far is the teacher, in embodying a liberal intellectual stance, promoting a particular attitude that some students find might find uncomfortable or even

coercive? This is of course a likely eventuality, one that many RE teachers will recognize. To deconstruct the myth and mystery of a tradition won't feel comfortable for some students, as for some adults. A distinction here by Harry Brighouse (Brighouse, 1998, 2000) is helpful. Framed within a wider concern with justice in schooling, Brighouse distinguishes between 'autonomy-promoting' (Brighouse, 2000: p. 80) and 'autonomy-facilitating' (p. 65) approaches; the former an unjust, because illiberal, imposition of a liberal view on all children, and the latter an offer of what skills and techniques could be employed to deconstruct an idea or truth claim, now or in the future. Brighouse's solution balances two potentially competing visions of justice in education and schooling, both of which he seems to support: parents' rights to raise their children in their own worldview, and a child's future right to make their own decisions (Brighouse, 1998: p. 162-3, 2000: p. 5-6). As I mention later in the thesis, I do not follow liberal philosophers of education such as Eamonn Callan and Meira Levinson in claiming that the state should promote autonomy and democracy through schooling, for me this would be another form of confessionalism. However Brighouse's distinction between the blanket imposition of autonomy and the option of autonomous thinking offers a further texture to the principle of autonomy in practice.

If a certain mode of analysis causes discomfort or anger to an extent that detracts from, rather than enhances, understanding, the teacher could avoid introducing it to the class, or explore in an oblique manner. This is not to jettison the overall aim, but to acknowledge the deeply interpersonal nature of teaching and learning, where feelings of trust and safety contribute to understanding as much as appropriate learning content. A teacher might introduce some well-chosen context or criticality just once or twice in a term, planning to explore and reflect at a pace that suits the class. This might be repeated over time, in a manner that does not cause upset, but nevertheless meets the overall aim of understanding. In my own teaching career and when working with teachers this is a common occurrence. I return to the idea of discomfort and the emotional terrain of teaching with Megan Boler's 'pedagogy of discomfort' later in the thesis. At this point I can state that the process of learning shouldn't feel abusive, because the resulting understanding might be distorted, and to force students to challenge their own commitments is as non-educational as to expect a positive view of religion to result from learning. In Brighouse's terms, only an 'autonomy-facilitating' approach both upholds liberal educational concerns and honours student's rights to reject a liberal analysis.

It is not that all subjects likely to be explored in religion and worldviews studies do not have extrinsic value, it is that teachers should only anticipate what students will understand at the end of the lesson, not the moral or personal impact. They cannot set out to persuade students

of the wisdom of a religious teaching or respect for a religious figure, only to help them understand the meaning, history and wider implications of a teaching or a figure. Teachers might introduce certain contextual or critical views with care if they could cause upset. Teachers who are wary of ideas that challenge certain worldviews can be equally wary of expectations of respect. To aim for a positive view of a religious teaching or figure becomes, in the words of Hogan, 'custodial', and learning becomes 'acquiescence' (Hogan, 1995: p. 53). For this reason I uphold John White's view that all education is political, and do not separate the political liberal value of ideological autonomy from the educational liberal value of intellectual autonomy.

The intrinsic- extrinsic tension is at the heart of liberal education work. For example, I noted above the different roots of state-provided liberal education as a result of the post-war social settlement, and the notion of education as liberating for the mind, inspired by an Ancient Greek ideal. The prime values driving the former are equality and fairness, while the latter is intellectual autonomy. However this distinction breaks down when Charles Bailey states that there are 'powerful moral reasons' in extending 'an involvement in liberal education' to all (Bailey, 1984: p. 28). I discuss Bailey's argument in more detail below but for now offer this as an example of how quickly the intrinsic- extrinsic distinction breaks down. As Bailey notes the liberal educational ideal of intellectual autonomy is by no means disconnected from the political and social values behind mass state schooling. I have presented modern liberal education as political but this requires qualification: I take the act of designing education as inherently political, as I have shown in chapter 1. Can I claim that my curriculum choices will have an impact on pupils' political outlooks? Yes, in that the choices that create the curriculum are political. Can I claim what *conclusions* pupils will draw for themselves? No, for two reasons. Firstly that I cannot know how a unique human will receive a unit of information, only what they need to know to understand it. Secondly, because to seek a foregone conclusion is illiberal in a political and educational sense. Therefore my choices in creating the curriculum may be political and I can acknowledge that my pupils are subject to the choices I have made, but I can only assert what they will have learned after this set of lessons (and defend my choices), not the intellectual or personal impact of the learning. This will be pertinent to my arguments regarding RE and community cohesion in the following chapter.

The following two sections set out what about liberal education could be of benefit to the RE curriculum, beginning with the philosophical movement which spawned modern liberal education.

a) Analytic Philosophy of Education

While there has always been a concern with education in the world's great ethical systems as well as individual philosophers; in Plato and Aristotle, Confucianism and Buddhism, Judaism and Islam, Locke and Mill, I take for my starting point in the modern age a formative period spanning the 1950s-70s in which Analytic Philosophy of Education as developed by Richard Peters and Paul Hirst, (as well as Robert Dearden and others, who I regrettably present here as commentators only) brought great clarity, and in the process, attention, to education and its purpose.

Richard Peters argues that from the 1950s public and academic attention fell on education in a way it had not done before, noting in 1965,

'A novel feature of the 1960s has been the extent to which education has become a subject for public debate and theoretical speculation. Previously it had been something that was prized or taken for granted by those few who had it, but not widely discussed.' (Peters, 1965: p. 55)

By the time Peters' influential *Education as Initiation* was published in 1963, the discipline of philosophy of education was fully established in the English speaking world, not least due to the establishment of teacher education in higher education institutions and the need to establish academic foundations. As McCulloch notes, four disciplines of education; philosophy, history, psychology and sociology, grew to particular prominence in Britain and the USA (McCulloch, 2002). Paul Hirst, reflecting on this period, comments that with the establishment of a Chair in Philosophy of Education at the Institute of Education in 1947, 'the university world and the world of educational studies in general was for the first time in Britain, and indeed arguably the world, giving public expression and recognition to the importance of the sustained, coherent and systematic philosophical study of educational beliefs and practices' (Hirst, 1998: p. 1).

Peters' philosophical influence was the British post-war conceptual model of close linguistic analysis, termed 'ordinary language' philosophy. John White describes this as a method of 'concentrating on key concepts in the field- e.g. the notions of knowledge, moral obligation, God, causality, law, the state, mind and other mental concepts- with the intention of breaking them down into their component elements and thus revealing their interconnections with other related concepts' (White, 2001: p. 119). Bailey cites Hirst in proposing that part of the justification of liberal education is 'related to the very conception of justification itself' (Bailey, 1984: p. 28). Hirst himself describes this as demanding an analysis 'of what we are choosing between and reasons for the choice we make' (Hirst, 1986: p. 20). Underpinning analytic

philosophy of education is the question of what is being done in the name of education and how it is to be judged. To ask this question of religious education is to ask what is being done in the name of religious education and how it is to be judged. As outlined in Chapter 1, the religious education curriculum is partial because only one dimension of religion is offered for consideration. Therefore a reasonable place to start with a reshaped model of RE would be to ask what is religion, and what therefore religious education, or religion and worldviews studies, should be.

Others in the UK focussed on elements of education such as 'play, indoctrination, training, growth and socialisation, Peters specialized in analysing the concept of education itself' (White, 2001: p. 119). Blake *et al* note that this approach 'sought to bring a new rigour to its subject' and to 'attack careless thinking' (Blake *et al*, 2003: p. 2). In the past students had experienced a 'rather woolly version of educational theory' (p. 2). Hirst, Peters and others in this field sought 'a coherent and systematic rationalization of educational beliefs and practices. And this was to be achieved by importing the rigour and the supposed ideological neutrality of linguistic and analytic methods in philosophy proper' (p. 2). Peters' 1966 work *Ethics and Education* aimed to gain clarity over concepts in order to defend or adapt their use. John White gives an example; 'In issues to do with school punishment, for instance, we need to get clear about what punishment involves on the way to asking whether there are good grounds for *punishing* people, and if so, what they are' (White, 2010: p. 138). This sort of analysis applied to the RE curriculum means an excavation of what is being taught and why. Peters applies analytic philosophy of education and defines 'education', stating that rote learning and indoctrination are not education. Education 'implies the transmission of what is worth-while', it 'must involve knowledge and understanding and some kind of cognitive perspective' as well as 'wittingness and voluntariness' (Peters, 1966: p. 45). Bailey accepts Peters' statement that to educate someone is to aim to improve them in some way, or at least not to demean them. In fact Bailey suggests that this might be the '*only* point of any substance that can be made conceptually about the idea of educating' (Bailey 1984: p. 15).

Paul Hirst utilised analytic philosophy to underpin and clarify meaning in educational studies at Oxford, moving to teach philosophy of education at the Institute of Education in 1959.

McLaughlin notes that, 'Hirst's primarily epistemological concerns at the time combined with Peters' work on rational moral judgments and the nature and justification of democratic social principles to create a distinctive, powerful overall general position in philosophy of education (known in certain quarters as 'the London Line') which laid the foundations for the development of the subject and which set its framework and agenda for many years'

(McLaughlin, 2001: p. 195). Graham Haydon, in a volume marking fifty years of the philosophy of education, notes that Hirst's ideas, especially from his 1965 paper, have been 'taken up and used in curriculum planning in British schools and in the thinking of the schools inspectorate' (Haydon, 1998: p. xii). Hirst's 'forms of knowledge' thesis, developed most fully in his 1965 paper '*Liberal Education and the Nature of Knowledge*' is, according to McLaughlin, 'arguably the most discussed and debated paper in analytic philosophy of education' (McLaughlin, 2001: p. 195). Hirst presents knowledge as suitably viewed in distinct forms, each pertaining to a particular dimension of what it is to know and to think, drawn from particular ways to search for a particular set of truths, and ultimately only reducible to themselves. Hirst does not advocate a direct relationship between the forms of knowledge and the school curriculum, although his work has influenced curriculum design. The forms of knowledge thesis stems from Hirst's view of humans as essentially rational, an assumption open to critique of sweeping generalisation, as I shall discuss below.

However there is something in the forms of knowledge thesis that could protect the RE curriculum. I have shown how incompatible aims and the power grabs of competing outlooks have left the RE curriculum limited both ethically and educationally. A curriculum whose prime aim is the expansion of knowledge and understanding can employ many intellectual tools and insights from several disciplines, such as history, psychology, sociology, theology, philosophy and ethics, in order to deepen pupils' understanding of religion and worldviews. This approach could protect the curriculum from a tendency to present religion as unproblematically positive, an aim which will not be easily supported by employing the disciplines in order to build an increasingly rich and sophisticated understanding. The relevant academic disciplines are therefore presented as tools to achieve the aim of understanding in religion and worldviews. If understanding is the aim, the curriculum could be protected from confessional influences.

As John White states, Peters and Hirst were not merely defending their own preferences but seeking justification for what elements of thought and practice should furnish education and why (White, 2010). A good example of such justification is found in Michael Hand's exploration as to whether non-confessional RE is logically possible, noted in the previous chapter (Hand, 2006). Hand considers firstly Hirst's suggestion that RE in non-faith schools *must* be non-confessional as religion's truth claims are not able to be substantiated (Hirst, 1965b), and secondly a later argument where Hirst 'withdraws' this 'persuasive... endorsement' of non-confessional RE (Hand, 2006: p. 4) after coming to see religious knowledge as only coherent from a position of faith (Hirst, 1973b). Without going into these interesting arguments, their existence, as well as Michael Hand's own analysis of RE's coherence, shows that the

assumptions behind aims for RE can and should be scrutinised. The analytic philosophy of education project is ultimately concerned with what is being done in the name of education and why. The various topics and analyses employed in liberal educational RE are justified with reference to the prime driver of understanding. Of course there will be variation depending on teachers' own interests and specialisms, but the basic expectation that teachers will employ analyses drawn from the disciplines to widen students' understanding of religion and belief, as well as critically assess wider aims from time to time, offers a clarity of methodology and outcome which, as I have shown, does not at this point exist.

The educational model associated with analytic philosophy of education is liberal education.

b) Liberal Education

i) Knowledge and Understanding

Liberal education, in Peters' well-used phrase, is an 'initiation' (Peters, 1964) into the intellectual disciplines for the sake of knowledge. I have noted the Greek roots of this conception as opposed to modern political liberalism. I have argued that curriculum design is a series of choices leading to a desired aim, whether intellectual autonomy, a lifelong love of learning or obedience to a dominant ideology. I am therefore relaxed about the politically liberal encroaching on the educationally liberal, and will not attempt to preserve liberal education's detachment from the political dimension of education. Richard Pring offers a useful account of the main features of a liberal education. The curriculum, based in the academic disciplines, is guided by what pupils need to become initiated into the 'forms of knowledge', as I have noted above (Hirst, 1965). The pursuit of knowledge and understanding is for its own sake, rather than an economic or transactional outcome. The process is a hard and long one, and requires 'a time and place set apart... separated from the world of business and usefulness' (Pring, 1993: p. 55).

Liberal education is driven by a view of what knowledge is, and encompasses what it is to be educated, what it is to think, and what should be learned and why. This is expressed in Hirst's forms of knowledge thesis. Hirst's original position was that the 'core' of an education must involve 'initiation into the forms of knowledge as characterised by their distinctive, internal, logical features' (Hirst, 1993: p. 187). In introducing this thesis Hirst describes 'liberal education' as '*not*' a 'vocational', 'exclusively scientific' or 'specialist' education 'in any sense' (Hirst, 1974: p. 30, author's emphasis). Liberal education, also known, for this reason, as 'general education', is presented as 'wider' and 'more worthwhile' (Hirst, 1974: p. 30), because

these forms are 'ways of understanding experience' and are 'publicly specifiable' (Hirst, 1974: p. 38). They allow the full scope of thinking about being human in the world, drawing on prior theorising, the 'public criteria' offering the best chance that 'the true is distinguishable from the false, the good from the bad, the right from the wrong' (Hirst, 1974: p. 43). Liberal education itself as a methodology is open to scrutiny, to be interrogated according to how far stated aims are met. It is clear even in this early paper that Hirst presents the intellectual scope of a liberal education to encompass 'aspects of power, natural as well as social and political' or 'a practical project of design and building', but also not to be the totality of what children learn, stating 'liberal education as is here being understood is only one part of the education a person ought to have, for it omits quite deliberately for instance specialist education, physical education and character training' (Hirst, 1974: p. 51).

I argued in Chapter 1 that the potential of the RE curriculum to further students' understanding is greatly limited by the conflicting aims of critical enquiry into religion and appreciation of religion, the result of a limited understanding of religion on offer. In this chapter I suggest that an explicit commitment to knowledge and understanding should take precedence over appreciating the value of religion, which befits an educational arena such as a state school in a liberal state and because it is an aim that can be met. After considering the gap between the intended and actual curriculum in Chapter 1, where stated aims are not met because the content of the curriculum is too narrow, this would be to set an aim the subject can meet. In overtly stating a liberal educational aim of understanding it would be more obvious when this aim is under threat from a confessional or non-educational agenda. The difference is in the breadth of study; as I have shown, a confessional tendency narrows the curriculum to doctrine and ideal teachings and avoids contextualising analyses of religion, such as historical or psychological. Employing what Hirst calls the 'public criteria' of the disciplines to widen the scope of the RE curriculum could protect against confessional pressures, and thus my proposal for RE includes deliberate multidisciplinary study. Such public criteria provide a standard against which to judge a curriculum by suggesting what modes of thinking or types of information unlock understanding. If learning about the trans-Atlantic slave trade is necessary in order to understand the history and theology of America's black Pentecostal churches, it is not relevant if teachers or members of the local SACRE find the implications for white Protestantism unsettling. The aim is understanding, not PR for Protestantism, and educational aims dictate that it must be taught. However, the reluctance of a teacher to enter into this uncomfortable space is significant and has been addressed in antiracist work in education and critical pedagogy. I explore this in more detail in a later chapter, however the conclusion drawn

is firstly, that this discomfort must not justify the avoidance of such topics and, secondly, that it is in entering into this difficult terrain with students that learning at a deeper level can take place.

Why should knowledge and understanding dominate liberal education? Pring cites Michael Oakeshott's description of liberal education as a conversation between the generations (Pring, 1993: p. 53, citing Oakeshott, 1971). Knowledge is the key, it unlocks the past and future, enabling critical understanding and the potential for intelligent evolution. Oakeshott's vision is not of education for usefulness, it is for the development of knowledge for the sake of knowledge, despite any extrinsic benefits individuals and society might accrue. Pring also notes Anthony O'Hear's support of this ideal of autonomy in liberal education (O'Hear, 1987), where he argues that the curriculum should be delivered by those who have themselves undergone the long initiation and are best placed to elucidate and excavate a particular discipline. For this reason, O'Hear also rejects notions of 'utility and relevance in education' (Pring, 1993: p. 54). The overarching vision of the 'liberal ideal' for education, to use a phrase of Pring's, is of the development of mind for its own sake, of the autonomy of the institution and of the not-for-usefulness of the outcome. The aim of such a vision of education is to protect growing understanding from short-term or anti-educational inclinations of governments, those in authority or those with vested interests, for the sake of the understanding itself. The knowledge gained might be unpopular or challenging, it might reveal abuse and corruption, but it must not be hidden.

ii) Intrinsic/ Extrinsic

Peters proposes that liberal education has intrinsic worth and 'can have no ends beyond itself. Its value derives from principles and standards implicit in it. To be educated is not to have arrived at a destination; it is to travel with a different view.' (Peters, 1965: p. 67). To be educated is to be transformed, it is to have been apprenticed into a life of the mind which constantly informs experience and perception. How far this transformative notion of education can be said to be of intrinsic, rather than extrinsic, value is a question I tackle in this section. Hirst, commenting on Peters' view of mind in *Ethics and Education* (Hirst, 1986: p. 19), outlines the distinction between what activities are worthwhile and what are not, based on the primacy of mind in the growing person. Peters discusses the possibility that this is because they 'maintain interest and provide distinctive pleasures' (Hirst, 1986: p. 20), but, along with Hirst

and Bailey as I have noted, concludes that the fundamental understandings gained through a general liberal education allow pupils and teachers to define and defend what they are doing. Ruth Jonathan, in summarising Bailey's work, describes his case for an education system which serves to 'equip the young to cope with the modern world' and also to 'understand, to appreciate and to develop further the cultural and social environment they inherit' (Jonathan, 1985: p. 304). Thus liberal education is justified according to its benefit to the individual and indirectly, society. Jonathan agrees with Bailey that any attempt to change another person through education must be justified ultimately according to the benefits to the person being educated, however such an intrinsic justification of liberal education seems to have a final justification in its worth for the individual and society. I explore this idea below.

Peters justifies the primacy of intellectual development in the young person as the enabler and foundation of all other aspects of life. It appears that the extrinsic worth of an education underlies such justifications for its intrinsic value; it expands perception, provides the basis of years of pleasure and supports appropriate decision-making. However, despite liberal education's clear extrinsic worth, the process of education itself must be protected from non-educational interests by its intrinsic, not-for-usefulness status. Hirst asserts that the development of mind is paramount, for the sake of reason, which is 'necessarily' the mind's 'greatest good' (Hirst, 1972: p. 392). This is presented as an intrinsic justification of liberal education because it satisfies the paramount need of the mind; the development of reason is for the mind's own sake. However I propose that the intrinsic/ extrinsic distinction does not stand. In doing so I do not go as far as to defend a solely intrinsic justification for RE as liberal education, but offer a pragmatic justification for prioritising a liberal form of religious education in schools on the grounds that a clear educational justification protects the curriculum from non-educational pressures. The aim of understanding is a single, clear aim that teachers can set about meeting.

I do not propose a justification of pupils' autonomy as a moral status. All education is political and all teachers will shape their pupils to some degree, as Brighouse notes, 'adults do not arrive in soc as fully formed autonomous individuals; at best they become autonomous through a process of education and upbringing' (Brighouse, 2000: p. 2). In fact I propose autonomy as a practical principle, a banner to march under, to clearly separate the educational from the not. Teachers can see their role clearly and know what they are doing; they are not defending the faiths, persuading pupils of the value of religion or explaining away evidence of religious abuse. They are teaching religion and worldviews studies and will employ several intellectual tools, some critical, in order to do this. The goal of pupils' future autonomy is a

guiding vision to justify analyses which unlock understanding, however uncomfortable that might be for the teacher, SACRE member or curriculum designer. As I outline in a later chapter any emotional distress, or for that matter, excitement, can itself be part of the learning and should not be a basis for avoiding information which illuminates. However this is not to say that teachers always *should* lead a class to deconstruct or demystify, or to challenge pupils at the very core of their being. This would be, in Brighouse's distinction of 'autonomy-promoting' and 'autonomy-facilitating' approaches, illiberal and therefore unjust. The idea of autonomy offers a general principle that can be defended educationally if its use is appropriate, establishing clearly the aims of the subject and the teacher's role in meeting these aims.

Hirst offers three justifications of liberal education from the Greek ideal of liberating the mind. Namely, liberal education is 'based on what is true and not on uncertain opinions', it develops the mind itself in the process, and the combination of seeking the truth while exercising the rational faculties 'is essential' to an understanding of how to live (Hirst, 1972: p. 392). Hirst declares that all the forms of knowledge are concerned with a rigorous testing of self and reality. Dearden offers a further justification of the intrinsic value of liberal education. The intellectual and moral autonomy gained through this rigorous testing of self and reality offers 'authenticity', and more, 'the satisfaction of exercising this kind of agency' as well as the 'dignity which it is felt to accord to the agent' (Dearden, 1972: p. 462). Taken together, Hirst and Dearden's justifications for the intrinsic value of liberal education rest on an acceptance that authenticity and rationality are of primarily intrinsic value to the learner rather than extrinsic value to the economy or society. I have already noted Bailey's justification of liberal education that bleeds into the instrumental and more can be said here.

For Bailey liberal education predicts a wide or general future utility, as opposed to vocational education's narrow or specific future utility (Bailey, 1984: p. 18). Liberal education offers a set of 'fundamental' understandings which have a wide or a 'general' set of 'applications' (p. 19). While Hirst's celebration of intellectual emancipation as a result of liberal education is expressed as a cerebral liberation, Bailey offers a more socially contextualised justification. He suggests that a general liberal education offers young people options beyond the circumstances of their birth. In drawing on a shared store of knowledge and wisdom the individual can make reasoned, deliberate choices, and is freed from 'tyranny of the present and the particular' (p. 22). In the present, one can only react, but 'by knowledge and reason one can come increasingly to understand the forces acting upon one both inside the psyche and outside in the social framework and thereby make one independent of them' (p. 22). Thus Bailey defends quite comfortably a '*general and fundamental utility*' of liberal education (p. 28,

author's emphasis). In this sense liberal education's fundamental utility is in initiation into rules, principles, arguments, pressures and events that account for the workings of the present and make it intelligible. Bailey suggests the 'general utility of a liberal education is not sought or intended but is rather a logically necessary consequence', in much more elegant words than mine, it is a side effect rather than the main aim (p. 29). Where does this leave the assertion of liberal education's primarily intrinsic value? Although Bailey challenges the intrinsic- extrinsic distinction he offers a way forwards that I will take and use for liberal educational RE. In prioritising the intrinsic good of the development of reason and the furtherance of understanding, the curriculum, any curriculum, is protected from short-term, non-educational or vested influences. That there will be consequential extrinsic goods does not mean that the main aim cannot be the intrinsic good of a widening and deepening understanding for its own sake. Thus to return to this dichotomy and what it means for RE, I propose to uphold the prime justification of religion and worldviews following liberal educational lines as understanding, and offer extrinsic outcomes, such as changed political or ethical attitudes, to be a possible but unsought consequence. The aim of understanding protects the curriculum from external influences which can occlude or limit understanding. This is not to claim that my proposal of a liberal form of religion and worldviews is non-political or neutral where other approaches are confessional. However a liberal approach, driven by the goal of understanding, can encompass interrogation of the words, structures, assumptions and values underpinning this educational model itself as part of learning if this in itself furthers understanding. As part of a growing understanding of religion the non-neutral apparatus of religious education itself could be explored, such as a tendency to present religions in separate boxes labelled 'Hinduism', 'Sikhism', or 'Islam', or the appropriateness of the very attempt to study notions of the sacred in a humdrum, mundane space, after break and before French. Furthermore, I propose a liberal approach will be multidisciplinary and therefore the understanding gained will be multidisciplinary understanding.

John White also questions the intrinsic- extrinsic distinction, asking why Peters 'favours' intrinsic aims for education (White, 2011: p. 212). White presents Peters and Hirst's 'most celebrated' (p. 3) justifications; that by pursuing truth in the forms of knowledge both teacher and learner must also seek justification for their choices, reasoning and conclusions. However White does not find the point resolved, arguing that an intrinsic appreciation of *all* the disciplines is hard to achieve and impossible to assure. Students may pass their exams but who is to say they have gained an intrinsic appreciation of all subjects of the curriculum? Therefore White describes the prioritising of intrinsic over extrinsic aims of education as 'radically

problematic' (p. 4). The overriding argument for prioritising intrinsic values seems to be for the value of autonomy in the learner. For example Patricia White, in exploring the role of education in socialising the next generation, argues that socialization does not mean 'blind conformity in moral matters' (Patricia White, 1972: p. 129).

Michael Luntley presents Peters' promotion of 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). On this view, the liberal element of education is a lot more than acquiring knowledge and developing rational intellectual skills. It is 'the critical scrutiny' of our inherited knowledge, and 'the requirement that pupils be brought to have a critical care for their inheritance' (p. 38). According to Luntley, Peters promotes rationality and intellectual autonomy for more than just 'logic chopping' (p. 38), he promotes it in order that the next generation take adequate care of their legacy, which involves both a thorough understanding of the history, aims and mistakes of what has gone before, but also the best hope of evolution in a productive and indeed, ethical, direction. Luntley's argument means that the initiation espoused by Peters is for active stewardship and the liberal ideal is the best way to produce a critically-aware upcoming generation. My desire is to see a religion and worldviews curriculum which pushes thought forwards through a clear understanding of the past and present, rather than holding it back through the avoidance of critical subject matter and the desire for respect rather than understanding. However, to use a phrase of Bailey's, Luntley does seem to be describing a 'general utility' in noting the benefits to future societies of such a critically-aware generation.

To conclude this discussion I can say that there is certainly a general utility in liberal education that cannot be easily separated in practice from its intrinsic value. However I uphold the intrinsic value of a liberal educational approach, as Peters seems to have done, to protect religion and worldviews from non-educational influences. Only intrinsic aims can be proposed because teachers cannot say definitively to what purpose the learning will be put or any changes in attitude that might result.

c) Critiques of liberal education

i) Abstraction

As I mentioned above, Hirst's view of all humans as essentially rational can be critiqued as too sweeping a claim. I also noted discussions by John White and Padraig Hogan that Western education rests on the *a priori* assessment of human nature and destiny found in Christian

metaphysics. In this section I address critiques of liberal education in order to understand and avoid pitfalls and problems of RE as liberal education.

A critique of abstraction is levelled not just at Hirst and Peters and Analytic Philosophy of Education but philosophy generally. Charles Mills who I present in more detail later critiques the complete invisibility of white cultural, political and economic dominance in modern liberal political philosophy. This hegemony is invisible in philosophical considerations of power forms, when it in fact dominates and shapes the whole planet. If philosophy generally is criticised for not paying adequate attention to humanity's texture, how far does this apply to analytic philosophy of education and liberal education, and what then are the implications of this model for RE, a subject concerned with people, ideology and culture?

Jane Roland Martin, a feminist philosopher of education who, according to an Encyclopaedia of feminist theories, first 'introduced' philosophy of education and feminist theory to each other (Laird, 2000: p. 317), looks to debates in the US around a liberal education curriculum going back to the late 1970s (Martin, 1994). Roland Martin cites Richard Rorty's 1979 work *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* where he argues, in Roland Martin's words, '[k]nowledge is not and can never be a mirror reflection of reality' (Martin, 1994: p. 213), nor is our knowledge a 'unified and justified whole' (p. 214). Rather knowledge is partial and created. Roland Martin notes that thinkers in other fields 'had already been criticizing knowledge for being inaccurate and incomplete - in its representation of blacks, women, the poor, for example' (p. 214). Roland Martin's own significant contribution is to expose a 'hidden curriculum of gender embedded in the ideal of the educated person and in basic concepts of teaching, schooling and education itself' (Laird, 2000: p. 317). The 'ideal' is a direct response to Peters' vision of an educated 'man' and other thinkers such as Hirst within the liberal analytic tradition (Peters, 1970). In contemplating resistance to Rorty's thesis, Roland Martin cites defenders of the status quo, such as Allan Bloom and E.D. Hirsch who fear disintegration, incoherence and anarchy (Martin, 1994: pp. 214-215, citing Bloom 1987 and Hirsch 1987). To Roland Martin the expression of their fears, and the popular response, 'tapped into the profound and largely unarticulated fear that this white man's culture is falling apart' (p. 215), its 'intellectual purity' threatened (p. 225). Abstraction of white, male, middle-class, Protestant concerns to the level of the universal hides deep power imbalances as well as other experiences of being human.

Although Roland Martin renames Peters' 'educated man' an 'educated person' (Martin, 1981) she suggests that this does not begin to right the gendered imbalance in Peters and Hirst's thinking. Combining Peters' ideal of an educated person with an initiation into Hirst's forms of

knowledge, Roland Martin argues that this person will display the intellectual traits associated with maleness and will gain expertise in intellectual disciplines which utterly ignore the female experience. She argues that this critique is not 'a surface challenge to the disciplines' (Martin 1981: p. 101), which can be adjusted with the addition of art and literature created by women or histories of women, but the inherent maleness of both the forms of knowledge and the ideal of a rational, autonomous, productive decision-maker. Roland Martin briefly documents major studies showing the invisibility of women in history, psychology and the arts. Moreover, Roland Martin aligns Peters' 'educated man' with the productive, public realm associated in prevailing culture with maleness, noteworthy for its lack of 'feelings and emotions' or any other 'empathetic, or supportive, or nurturant' aspects of personality (p. 101). In 1981 Roland Martin argues that the ideal of liberal education is stereotypically male, sending the tacit message that women need not apply. Has early 21st Century culture embraced the more empathic or nurturing, and embodied, aspects of being human and come to celebrate them as much as the cerebral and rational, or turned a decisive critical gaze on knowledge itself as a construct reflecting the concerns and experiences of the powerful? Any answer will be complex and contentious, but the point I can take from Roland Martin's work is that liberal education under Hirst and Peters in the 1970s permitted hidden power imbalances. Gender differences were abstracted, leaving only the outline of a male person, and hidden gender imbalances in the disciplines were not acknowledged. Therefore with the benefit of decades of critical feminist and masculinities work in philosophy and education I can say that any power imbalance must not be hidden and unwittingly drive both an ideal of a student and the curriculum itself. Religion and worldviews as 21st Century liberal education must involve a revealing of such hidden power imbalances as part of learning to understand the world.

The problems with abstraction can be illustrated in a 2003 chapter by John White and Eamonn Callan. Philosophy of education has been, according to White, a 'critical enterprise' considering both the liberal philosophies which lead to schools of educational thought, as well as its own 'liberal pedigree' in critical terms (Callan and White, 2003: p. 95). White discusses how appropriate the prioritising of autonomy is within political conceptions of liberalism. In doing so he covers the various angles of this argument, without once referring to how *possible* it even is for people to live entirely self-directed lives. However antiracist and critical multiculturalist research in education show how constraints placed on the exercise of full autonomy are created by social and political norms, and are possibly less affected by whether an education system has at its root a liberal view of the human or a communitarian one.

The charge of abstraction is a charge of not seeing, or not acknowledging, human realities. Paul Hirst (1986) and Megan Laverty (2011) both argue that although Peters is often criticised for being rather abstract, his method of linguistic analysis in fact reflects the world back to the philosopher. Hirst reminds us that Peters champions the linguistic analytic approach due to a desire for conceptual clarity rather than an avoidance of the 'real' world, arguing that 'it is surely not only unsympathetic, but seriously misleading to critically assess his analytical work as if it were undertaken independently of its value for educational issues' (Hirst, 1986: p. 12). Peters sought the essence of 'education'; a foundational understanding that could be applied universally. In the early period of his work he asserted that philosophers of education could be useful in 'illuminating contemporary educational ideas' (Hirst, 1986: p. 9). As time passed, he grew to see that universal philosophical concepts of education would need further work when applied to practice. As Hirst notes, Peters 'became more and more sceptical about any search for universal notions, recognizing increasingly the influence of the social context on all conceptual schemes' (p. 11). David Cooper, former chair of the Philosophy of Education Society, suggests that Peters' work was not 'mummified' in the 1960s (Cooper, 1986: p. 3), because Peters considers not only the conceptual underpinnings of language about education but also its meaning in usage. For example in Peters' 1970 paper referred to above, Peters discusses whether the word 'education' can be used for both its classical sense of child-rearing or upbringing and its post-industrial revolution sense of a more specific knowledge-based or technical training (Peters, 1970: p. 11), and concludes that language is a tool to be used and the meanings of words can and do change over time. Peters draws out the interesting distinctions within uses of the word, such as between education and training, and between the process of schooling and the ideal of an educated person, and does not become mired in etymology (p. 11). This serves as a good example of Peters' ability to reflect the world back to the reader, peppered with pertinent questions of meaning. However it also serves as a good example of the level of abstraction. In Peters' time antiracist thinkers were painting education as an arena both for struggle and the reproduction of inequalities, as I shall present in later chapters, but the different experiences of school and education for different children and their different communities is not Peters' focus; it is linguistic and analytic philosophy applied to matters of education. How far does this connect with my radical claim to not transform pupils at all, but to simply increase understanding? Peters' work can be charged with abstraction, of a conceptual analysis that does not reflect realities. The solution then is thinking about education, from philosophy of education to teacher's CPD, that seeks to describe diverse realities and answer concrete questions. In proposing a radically educational model of RE, or

religion and worldviews, I am questioning a teacher's assumed right, capacity and ability to transform children's attitudes with a curriculum that is partial, sometimes misleading, and abstracted. Thus abstraction is part of a problematic curriculum, but even with a curriculum that allows for human variation and texture, my moral objection would still stand.

As I have argued above, although Hirst and Peters' separation of liberal education's intrinsic and extrinsic good breaks down easily, the distinction serves to protect the theorising of education from external, possibly non-educational pressures. This applies as well to bias and influence *within* liberal education. Hogan offers an account of widespread objection among Oxford and Cambridge dons to the new University of London, founded in the 1830s by an 'alliance of radicals, utilitarians and non-conformists' (Hogan, 1995: p. 95), on the grounds that 'it would be contrary to the laws of England to incorporate any university which did not conform to the doctrines, disciplines and worship of the Church of England' (p. 96). This illuminating case study serves to highlight the need for protection from illiberal influences on education within as without. As I have noted above, I do not claim liberal educational RE as non-political, but rather the political choices that make up a process of education can become part of the analysis in liberal learning. Hogan's example illustrates the point that education is never politically neutral, and exploring this in itself should become part of the educational process. As the liberal analytic tradition is concerned with the foundational justification of what is done in the name of education, a resistance to justification by solely external criteria is essential.

Peters makes an occasional acknowledgement of the political and competitive dimension to gaining an education, but this is not his, or Hirst's, focus. For example in 1966 Peters notes that education is 'an avenue to power and prestige', possibly 'the chief mode of social ascent', and thus the fair distribution of education is 'one of the most explosive issues in the modern world' (Peters, 1966: p. 131). Hirst suggests that throughout Peters' work he acknowledges the 'dependence of concepts on the social context in which they arise and operate' (Hirst, 1986: p. 13), and thus, in his analytic task, Peters is also necessarily wedded to his, and our, particular social context. Megan Laverty makes a similar point about both Hirst and Peters, stating that '[t]hey clarify the distinctions that our words were developed to designate by seeing *'through the words'* to the structure or rules *'underlying how we speak'* (Laverty, 2011: p. 27, citing Peters and Hirst, 1970). Peters' search for conceptual clarity supports clarity of understanding of what *this* time and place understands by, for example, 'justice'. John White states that both Hirst and Peters were engaged in justifying educational processes based on clarity of aims (White, 2010). Laverty's defence of Hirst and Peters' abstraction is based on the argument that

Peters is rooted in one reality; his one, but his work illuminates the underlying conceptual structures rather than socio-political outcomes of such a reality. Hirst however does admit that in practice, Peters' 'elucidation of educational concepts has paid only very limited attention to the social contexts in which they operate' (Hirst, 1986: pp. 15-16). For Hirst, this occurs because Peters seeks to go beyond his particular context and to make wider sense of aspects of education, both for understanding and for justification, and this does lead to a level of abstraction ultimately unable to support analysis of the very textured and specific issues of educational practice.

It seems the charge of philosophical abstraction can be levelled at Peters, but not moral indifference. However the lack of attention paid to human realities, for example the maleness of the curriculum and the difference it makes to the pupil whether they are male or female means analytic justifications of liberal education must take into account these realities. I would like to contribute to this ongoing work. This is Jane Roland Martin's argument, as well as the philosopher Charles Mills who I present in a later chapter. Peters is concerned with the impact of theoretical conclusions on practical educational matters and does not take a step towards what those educational matters mean for the social fabric. In order to be a very good model of *education*, the liberal education project must be judged by its own internal standards. Peters states his desire that all children are offered the chance to benefit from such an education, in a relationship of trust and mutual respect with their teachers, and goes no further. Hogan argues something similar in championing the Socratic approach to learning 'as a pursuit in itself' (Hogan, 1995: p. 9), long since eclipsed by a series of education systems which all 'serve the interests and do the bidding' of the dominant ideology (p. 11), whether Platonic, Christian or Marxist.

I have shown expectations that the RE curriculum will benefit children personally and engender respect for diverse religious beliefs, however there seems to be no demonstration of *how* it may do this or justification as to why it *should*. In aligning my vision of RE with analytic philosophy of education, like Peters, I can only strictly claim what information and analyses, as a result of my planning and teaching, my students will know and understand. I cannot make claims as to any impact my lesson could have on their personal or moral values because this is not something I have control of, nor am able to measure, nor have justified *why* I should expect to change their personal or moral values. I have suggested that being guided by the disciplines could afford a measure of protection from outside influences such as government or the faiths, and the intellectual values will necessarily be developed, such as to base a conclusion on evidence, or to address faulty reasoning. In the following chapters I offer some

suggestions as to how exactly insights from sociology and political philosophy could enlarge explorations of belief, belonging, fairness and difference. I also use Charles Mills' philosophy of race as well as critical multicultural and antiracist insights to show what a critically aware religion and worldviews curriculum might look like. John White asks of Peters' project, '[w]hy start with academic disciplines and seek justifications of them? Logically, curriculum planning has to start with aims, not with vehicles whereby aims might be realised' (White, 2011: p. 120). My analysis begins with what religion is and from there arrives at what religious education should be. Religion is multidimensional therefore an exploration of religion must be multidimensional, or multidisciplinary. I propose to draw on the disciplines as an alternative to the narrow, doctrinal and reductive curricula offered by SACREs and the exam boards. Thinkers within the disciplines are subject to the forces I have lauded in this chapter; critical scrutiny, reference to public criteria and participation in the 'conversation between the generations'. Martin is one thinker who critiques the inherent male bias in Hirst and Peters' work, but this is still within the tradition of liberal education; a tradition that arguably, or ideally, involves ongoing critique and evolution. Following White I will start with the aim of understanding and utilise insights from the disciplines to help achieve this aim, including work which may be critical of the discipline itself, such as that offered by Roland Martin.

However the charge of abstraction is a serious one, and RE as liberal education must embrace an exploration of human realities, including the exercise of power, in order to enhance understanding. I propose that as *part of* a growing understanding of religion and belief, religion as a form of political power, as a set of behaviour norms and as the victory of one view over another is offered. I will still make no claims as to the impact of this information on students' attitudes or outlooks, but that exploring religion in terms of power and dominance as well as personal inspiration will enlarge their knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.

ii) Neutralism and Liberal Values

Phenomenological RE claims a stance of neutrality which I have argued masks liberal confessionalism. Whether one accepts my critique of multifaith RE as confessional or not, neutrality is certainly problematic for what Clive Erricker calls the 'descriptive approaches' (Chater and Erricker, 2013: p. 64), or phenomenology in RE. Erricker argues that the critical faculties are dampened when employing the descriptive approaches because religion is presented as benign and dissent within religion is ignored. Phillip Barnes argues that religious

belief and experiences are rendered beyond critical comment in phenomenological RE, presented as 'deeply personal, divorced from history and non-political; and also essentially good' (Barnes, 2014: p. 81). Both, as well as Lynn Revell (2012), ascribe this to an underlying liberal Protestantism, meaning the political liberal values of tolerance and diversity rather than the intellectual autonomy of liberal education. Both argue that phenomenological RE's claims of neutrality mask a substantive commitment to the liberal political values, and therefore phenomenological RE is not neutral. Moreover, thinkers such as Roland Martin argue that a neutral theory of education which ignores human realities in fact masks relationships of power. Whether an invisible liberal Protestant ethic does drive neutralism in phenomenological RE, Erricker and Barnes both highlight the educationally limiting effect of neutrality which permits a partial or distorted view of religion, because political choices underpin the curriculum but are not made explicit. Blake *et al* argue that a limiting neutralism is at play in analytic philosophy of education (Blake *et al*, 2003). Although the liberal education espoused by Hirst and Peters was envisioned as 'an education for citizens of a liberal democracy' (Blake *et al*, 2003: p. 5), this is not always clear from their writing. The values of rationality and intellectual autonomy are not defended or justified although they are not neutral or beyond comment. Blake *et al* suggest that the analytic tradition's Kantian vision of the rational individual came under fire in the 1960s and 70s from communitarian and Aristotelian thinkers at the same time as liberal education's role in shoring up social privilege was revealed through multicultural work in education (p. 6). Moreover, when liberal education came under sustained attack by the emerging New Right in the 1980s its undefended substantive values were thrown into opposition with those of 'economic liberalism' (p. 6). Blake *et al* note how the 'ambiguity' between liberalism's 'political and economic forms' (p. 6) was thrown into sharp relief in this period, and the incompatibility between the political values of fairness and equality with the neoliberal economic values of competitive individualism became clear.

Cuypers and Martin (2011) argue that Peters rejected the neoliberal tendencies in education he witnessed during his career; the shift from the intellectual, political and institutional autonomy of schools and universities of the 1960s and 70s, to, with Thatcherism throughout the 1980s, 'the rising influence of managerial conceptions of educational administration and bureaucratic control' (Cuypers and Martin, 2011: p. 1). The response of much of the academic community of liberal philosophy of education was to resist certain tendencies, among them an instrumentalised view of education, the conceptualisation of stakeholders as consumers of education and a reductive valuing of education in economic terms only.

What I can take from this critique is that any values driving an educational agenda must be openly declared. Cuypers and Martin report that the reaction in philosophy of education was to resist the neoliberal, then called neoconservative or New Right, shift towards a market view of education. However as the more communistic values of the post-war liberal education project, in comparison to the economic values of the New Right, had not been explicitly articulated or defended, and had in fact been assumed to be in no need of justification, it was harder to pinpoint how the social liberal values were being undermined by a neoliberal shift. The Thatcher government fully upheld the right of every child to an education, provided by the state, and on the surface nothing had changed.

However, Jonathan and Bridges argue that liberal tenets underpin not only 'the social expansion of liberal education from the mid-twentieth century', the community-spirited expansion of the welfare state, and 'the liberal philosophy of education that developed at that time for its analysis', but also 'the competitive individualism which legitimates a quasi-market in education', in other words, the seed of a neoliberal view of education was contained within social liberal principles, unseen (Bridges and Jonathan, 2003: p. 126⁴). How is this claim supported? Bridges argues that it comes down to neutralism. Hirst, Peters and others working on educational justifications did not defend their usage of 'highly politically contestable principles such as "justice", "liberty", "equality" and so forth as suited to apolitical analysis', which suited the 'liberal neutralism of the day' (Bridges, 2003: p. 138). Jonathan argues that because of the dominance of this liberal neutralism the substantive values of equality and fairness underpinning the British post-war education settlement were never openly acknowledged or defended. It was not presented as an ethical project but an educational one, and the political values were masked by neutralism. I have argued above that liberal education, including RE as liberal education, can claim educational aims in order to protect itself from external influences, but have acknowledged that all aims of education are political. This warning from Bridges and Jonathan underlines my claim that educational aims are political, in that they are the result of choices between competing values and processes, and thus the political nature of an educational project must be made explicit. The values and decisions underpinning RE as liberal education must be subject to scrutiny as part of the educational project, both in teacher training and, where appropriate, in the classroom. I have noted examples above whereby pupils might consider the naming of religions as a non-neutral process. To go behind the immediate curriculum and uncover the reasoning behind what is

⁴ I refer to a chapter in which David Bridges and Ruth Jonathan author two separate sections. Although they share the reference, they are separate authors of two sections within the chapter.

taught is not to abandon liberal education as an approach, but to strengthen it. Roland Martin is a good example of someone working within the liberal analytic tradition seeking to enlarge the scope of the project, without rejecting it outright, to explore how far a male-centric view dominates and distorts a curriculum. I do the same for RE as liberal education as this thesis develops, considering how far critical insights from a range of disciplines could enhance and deepen the potential of the RE curriculum to offer knowledge and understanding of religion and worldviews.

I return to Bridges and Jonathan's thesis that the liberal education project contained within it the seeds of neoliberalism. They argue that the benefits of state-provided education, even in the community-spirited post-war settlement, were imagined in individualist terms, in that individuals would benefit. Liberal neutralism concealed the unjustified assumption that the individuals whose future options had been enlarged by this generous state provision would subsequently be of benefit to society as a whole. Jonathan describes this as 'neoliberal normative priorities' or 'trickle-down' economics (Jonathan, 2003: p. 139), evoking the widespread capitalist assumption that as individuals become richer, their wealth will naturally flow to the benefit of others. The unacknowledged trickle-down assumption at the heart of the liberal education project has, according to Bridges, created a contradictory system. Communistic social values are expected to be realised through the endowing on individuals of a 'positional' good (Bridges, 2003: p. 131), such as a good education, which provides benefit to one individual in a competitive economy. Although an individual in receipt of a good education *may* put their resulting social and financial capital to good public service, they just as easily may not. Therefore it cannot be assumed that an individual good will benefit society as a whole.

Moreover Bridges shows the basic neoliberal assumption that parental choice and competition between schools leads to better educational provision is both practically and logically problematic, reflecting neoliberalism's form of neutralism; the unjustified trust placed in markets. Practically, parents in an education market can only see how to secure their own child's local 'positional advantage' (Bridges, 2003: p. 131). The end logic of seeking a positional advantage is the *advantage* of educational inequality provided one's own child receives a good education. Furthermore, Bridges argues, the application of market principles to education, quite apart from not being able to improve overall education provision, warps education itself. Education is not just a system for imparting technical knowledge relevant to the jobs market; it is about dialogue with the past and present and hope for the future. If viewed as purely for

utility, 'education becomes a commodity and schools production lines', and the 'essentially moral and humanistic' relationships within education are ignored (p. 132).

I will conclude this discussion with the understanding that, as Jonathan claims, liberal education contains within it certain individualist values which enable a neoliberal outlook. In other respects however the neoliberal trend has warped essential characteristics of a liberal education. The relationship between student and teacher has been changed with an increase in external, economically-driven control, with a decrease in autonomy of teachers and school leaders and with an ever more insistent demand for outcomes, utility and measurability. For liberal education to be intellectually liberating whoever is in charge of the curriculum and criteria for success in education must desire this to happen. This shows me that a liberal educational approach to religion and worldviews requires the articulation and defence of underlying values of both the content of the curriculum and the overall aims and outcomes. As I have suggested so far, increased knowledge and understanding is my bench mark, providing the main reasons for planning and teaching decisions. In openly stating my educational commitments it is much easier for me to know that a different type of RE won't quite do what I want it to do. It is also easier for other teachers to decide whether what I offer is what they want. And, crucially, when government agenda come along it is easier for me to assess their value according to my criteria. I have shown RE's incompatible aims and in the next chapter I will show how learning in RE has been aligned to social aims that cannot be met in the community cohesion agenda. A clear articulation and defence of values and aims would make such contradictions and problems visible.

d) Neoliberal education policy

While pointing out that the move from analytic philosophy of education to analytic liberal education in Britain wasn't as 'tidy' as is sometimes presented, Paul Standish notes nevertheless that analytic philosophy of education of the 'London School' was 'highly influential and important' (Standish, 2007: p. 164) and education theory and policy was 'understood to involve approaches drawn from the disciplines' (Standish, 2007: p. 169). However times have changed. As I show throughout this thesis, theory is rarely utilised at any depth in the service of the RE curriculum, yet a wealth of research and understanding could enrich and nourish it. However, despite my desire to develop religion and worldviews along liberal educational lines, the approach itself is no simple panacea, as this section suggests.

A problem, as Richard Aldrich notes, is that societies or governments can readily *not* think about what is taught in schools and why (Aldrich, 1998) and a lack of theorising about education can lead to poor educational outcomes. Aldrich presents Locke's *Some thoughts Concerning Education*, written between 1684 and 1687, proposing the combining of physical, moral, intellectual and social excellence through education, to yield not just a knowledgeable and practical, but a virtuous, generation (Aldrich, 1998: pp. 136-137). Taking Locke's well-justified conception of education to involve the mind, morals and body, Aldrich compares government thinking which preceded the 1988 National Curriculum, as well as, under a new government, the thinking behind proposed revisions to this curriculum. He finds a 'lack of clarity' (Aldrich, 1998: p. 129) as to how the 'spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development' of children will be achieved in 'precise relationship' to the subjects of the National Curriculum (Aldrich, p. 129, referring to Education Reform Act, 1988: Chapter 40, Part I, p 1). This lack is 'further compounded' by the then Conservative government's redefining of the aims of education along economic lines 'without reference to a redefinition of the curriculum itself' (Aldrich, 1998: p. 129), and even further by the subsequent New Labour government's 'new educational aims and goals' as presented in 1997, again without reference to the unchanged National Curriculum (p. 130). Here Aldrich calls into question the success of meeting educational aims without also considering what is to be taught, why and how. Aldrich juxtaposes a vision of a justified and holistic education system, which he takes from Locke, with governments who express a wish to meet these lofty aims while seeming to spend no time in exploring how this might be done. The existence alone of clear thinking on education is not enough if it is not required or employed by policy-makers.

1979 saw the beginning of the marketization of education and the central control of curriculum and assessment in schools with the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher. In teacher education, the educational disciplines 'were taught in a dry, abstract and overly theoretical way' (Standish, 2007: p. 161), and this tendency, Standish argues, was 'exploited' by those in the Conservative government who 'sought to make educational provision and the behaviour of teachers more amenable to the state' (p. 161). I spent some time in Chapter 1 showing how central government control combined with the dominance of the faiths on SACREs means RE remains 'an uncritical confessional activity' (Grimmitt, 2010: p. 266). Aldrich (1998) argues that the 1988 National Curriculum was a 'backward-looking, subject-based curriculum', in which the 'professional insights of teachers, academics and inspectors in the 1970s and 1980s had been jettisoned' (Aldrich, 1998: p. 132). He compares the 1988 Curriculum to the 1904 'Secondary School Regulations' (p. 132) and finds no

noteworthy difference. Today's National Curriculum is to all extents and purposes identical (DfE, 2014, National Curriculum, DfE). In the 1988 Curriculum the main justification for education is economic growth (Aldrich, 1998: p. 131). There is no sense of developing children as critically aware adults or preparing them for a rapidly-changing future. The curriculum is based on forms of knowledge, but narrowly, ignoring the wider ethical and social aims of schooling. As Aldrich notes, the wider moral defence of a common curriculum is that all children can benefit from access to what is seen as the best of knowledge, not just the children of the elite. However, Aldrich, as well as other philosophers such as John White (John White, 1990), present the National Curriculum as narrow and conservative, vague with regards to aims, and unclear as to how such aims are to be achieved.

I have presented critiques of high levels of abstraction and neutralism in liberal education theory because they reveal important lines of thinking. Such critiques should be seen as *part of* liberal education's evolution; improving its capacity to pursue clarity and offer understanding, to be acknowledged when working towards the liberal educational ideal. However, continued centralised control of education and the 2014 rehash of a narrow, conservative curriculum means critiques within philosophy of education are as unlikely as they have ever been to have an impact on education policy. Furthermore, alongside this centralised control, which Bridges describes as a 'quasi-Stalinist' economy (Bridges, 2003: p. 129), is an increasingly fragmented school system where Free Schools and Academies are detached from Local Authorities. This particularly affects RE syllabuses which remain the responsibility of SACREs, even as SACREs lose contact with more schools every year as they leave Local Authority control. According to a government data site, 'Get Information About Schools', there are at present 13,005 locally maintained schools, both Primary and Secondary, 579 Free Schools and 8,395 Academies. Thus as of October 2019 more than a third of schools are outside Local Authority control (Gov.UK, <https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/>).

Conclusion

I have noted Charles Bailey's justification for liberal education as offering freedom 'from the tyranny of the immediate present' (Bailey, 1984: p. 13). Education liberates when individuals can draw on stored reserves of knowledge and wisdom enabling them to master problems with insight into the forces and pressures underlying them. Although this is a justification for liberal education through its 'general utility', Bailey suggests that this 'is not sought or intended but is rather a logically necessary consequence' (Bailey, 1984: p. 29), it is a side-effect

of an education for understanding. I propose such educational aims for RE, while also acknowledging an unintended consequence of altering the maturing individual's ethical, political or emotional outlook. This is a pragmatic justification for the intrinsic aims of liberal education taking priority over the extrinsic, as I accept that the intrinsic- extrinsic distinction breaks down easily. However, such a justification offers protection from non-educational interests, as well as provides a standard by which to see non-educational pressures. By non-educational I mean aims for the curriculum which do not prioritise students' enhanced knowledge and understanding of religion and worldviews. In Chapter 1 I have presented a history of confessional influences on RE which avoid critical scrutiny. In the next chapter I show how the next phase of the subject was influenced by another non-educational agenda; community cohesion.

After presenting a picture of the current state of RE in Chapter 1, I argued that the subject is both educationally and ethically limited by an unacknowledged confessionalism. In this chapter I have proposed that the subject adopt a liberal educational approach. I have suggested the disciplines could be put to use in furthering pupils' knowledge and understanding, but have accepted critiques from thinkers such as Roland Martin of inherent bias. Therefore any bias or power imbalance within theoretical work utilised to enrich the religion and worldviews curriculum must become part of the analysis rather than remain hidden. On one level theory could be used to enhance what is learned, such as a feminist critique applied to the gradual male take-over of early Christianity, or the application of in-group and out-group sociological work to caste in Hindu and Sikh culture, despite idealised presentations of equality among castes, especially in Sikh theology. These examples offer a view of religion referencing criteria external to the faith's own presentations, permitting a wider view. On another level, when employing, for example, an historical analysis, students could be made aware of bias and imbalance within history itself, such as bias towards the male experience. When using an historical analysis to understand a key event such as the Reformation, the curriculum would bring women and girls into the picture of medieval European life, as well as reflecting on history's male bias. As this chapter has shown, simply employing the disciplines is not enough, the teacher must at some level enter into the development of the discipline, as scholars within it do, in order to test its insights, scope and capacity. I have mentioned the disciplines of history, psychology, sociology and philosophy. In subsequent chapters I explore what sociological and philosophical work on the self and community could offer to a religion and worldviews curriculum. I propose the disciplines offer the 'public criteria' noted by Hirst, and thus protect the curriculum from confessional influences.

I have proposed knowledge and understanding as the drivers of a religion and worldviews curriculum following a liberal educational approach. I have suggested that an overt justification of the educational imperative and intellectual values the model is based on both protects practitioners from the influence of vested interests or non-educational agenda and brings teachers and students into a public conversation about religion and belief, drawing on diverse fields to support understanding. This sidesteps the tension of RE's dual aims, outlined in Chapter 1, by choosing one aim over another; the critical intellectual over the personal.

Chapter 3

Contextual RE

Introduction

I spent some time in Chapter 1 on the jigsaw pieces which have left the RE curriculum with incompatible and competing aims; personal inspiration and critical thinking. In Chapter 2, I set out my proposal that the RE curriculum should adopt a liberal educational model to develop students' increasingly sophisticated, multidisciplinary understanding of religion and worldviews, and abandon attempts to engender appreciation of religious teachings. I presented RE's journey from Christian confessionalism to multifaith phenomenology and argued that RE's latest incarnation is in fact liberal confessionalism, using Barnes and Wright. This is RE's 'phase one' and in this chapter I consider 'phase two'; the association of the RE curriculum with non-Christian, non-white people through New Labour's community cohesion agenda. RE came under the sway of this agenda after a bruising and destabilising tussle over how far the subject should embrace faiths other than Christianity, as I have shown. Both the tussle and the influence of the community cohesion agenda are milestones in the history of the subject. The subject's justification in its first phase was a Christian underpinning to education. In this chapter I explore justifications of RE in the subject's second phase, its capacity to contribute to the community cohesion agenda.

Neither of these agenda prioritise understanding as a central aim, but rather the expression of certain attitudes and commitments. I have argued that to seek a particular outcome in terms of attitudes or beliefs is not educational and have proposed a liberal educational model which prioritises understanding as an alternative, justified on educational grounds. As I will suggest, the aims of community cohesion in policy are not primarily educational; they are not to furnish students with a good understanding of the roots and types of prejudice and discrimination in Britain, but to affirm positive views of diversity, while avoiding negative views of the political establishment and institutions. An analysis of the impact of the community cohesion agenda on RE both shows the most recent period of RE's history, as well as offers an example of how a non-educational agenda shaped the curriculum. As I show, the unreliable conclusions and

untested assumptions of the community cohesion agenda are adopted uncritically into the RE curriculum, and reproduced.

I suggest a multidisciplinary approach allows students to explore religion in its multiple dimensions. In this chapter and the next I take steps towards showing what wider theoretical analyses could support a religion and worldviews curriculum in order to grow understanding; philosophical and multicultural explorations of the self and community. I offer these theoretical framings as examples of what thinking teachers could utilise to enhance understanding.

The unreliable foundations of the community cohesion agenda are made visible through critiques from the field of critical multiculturalism, which, taken in sum, show that different groups, whether cultural or religious, cannot be understood in the absence of wider contexts, whether social, political, historical or geographical. I take this overall critique and use it to argue that any group; religious, cultural or ideological, cannot be understood in the absence of context. Critical multiculturalism is concerned to arrive at an understanding of how exclusion and alienation operates in society in order to disrupt or overcome its various forms. For my purposes, the rich and textured understandings of people, places and communities afforded by wider contextual analyses provides an educational justification for a contextualised study of religion and worldviews.

A critical view of exclusion and alienation in critical multiculturalism has helped me see the background structures and forces allowing social inequality, whereas community cohesion thinking obscures it through avoiding a contextual view. I consider how far wider contexts of self, community, belief and identity, offered through sociology and philosophy could be of use in the classroom, allowing teachers to frame information about religion and worldviews.

Diversity and community, belonging and identity, prejudice and discrimination are subjects of the RE curriculum as associated concepts of religion and worldviews, and able to frame and extend thinking in religion and worldviews. The community cohesion agenda is non-educational, but in this chapter I show what sociological and philosophical insights could help teachers enhance rather than obstruct understanding. After a consideration of why community cohesion's claims are unable to be met within the curriculum, I put the theoretical insights to the test and find much that could enrich and nourish a religion and worldviews curriculum whose primary aim is understanding.

The New Labour government (1997- 2010), bookended by two Conservative governments, attempted to utilise schooling to achieve community cohesion aims; a diverse nation united by

shared values. Due to RE's perceived potential to support this aim through teaching both about diverse groups and reinforcing the government's desired message of equality and tolerance, attention fell on the subject. The New Labour government was, in Grimmitt's view, 'a major factor in bringing about changes in values and attitudes which have also had an impact upon religious and moral matters' (Grimmitt, 2010: p. 12), through policies aiming to increase social mobility and decrease discrimination. Schools were drawn into the community cohesion agenda, and RE, as well as Citizenship, was seen as able to meet these aims. However as I show, community cohesion aims are unlikely to be met using New Labour's own approach. The information I use to construct this argument is found in multicultural, critical multicultural and antiracist analyses, all of which have been available for decades. It seems that those within the RE world accepted community cohesion aims for the subject without employing any critical scrutiny of whether this was possible or desirable.

Michael Grimmitt notes that religion finds itself in a 'new context' in the late 20th and early 21st century, increasingly 'politicised' and globalised, publicly rejected by New Atheists such as Richard Dawkins and associated in the Western media with violence and otherness (Grimmitt, 2010: p. 10). However between 1944 and the present, the RE curriculum has not widened to encompass religion's geopolitical dimensions, maintaining an almost total focus on how religious adherents negotiate doctrine, as I have shown. I have argued thus far that attempts to initiate pupils into religious mindsets means wider contextual framings of religion and belief are avoided. In this chapter I show how the community cohesion agenda has further limited the subject's educational scope by seeking expressions of positivity towards religious diversity and further avoiding contextual and political analyses of both religion and prejudice and discrimination.

a) Community Cohesion's Unreliable Conclusions

The community cohesion agenda is a New Labour-era mechanism aiming to achieve warmer social relations through interpersonal contact with members of different cultural or religious groups. After the 2001 riots in Oldham, Bradford, Leeds and Burnley where tensions between the police, young men of Asian, largely Pakistani descent, and young, white, working-class men, broke down into violence, the phrase 'community cohesion' came into widespread usage. A Community Cohesion Review Team (CCRT), led by Ted Cattle, reported environments of complete segregation between groups involved in the disturbances; in housing, schooling, employment, places of worship, language, leisure and sources of support. (Cattle, 2001). The

CCRT concluded that social separation increased alienation between groups and entrenched disadvantage. New Labour made community cohesion a statutory responsibility and RE was seen as able to make a contribution to this agenda through a curriculum focused on diverse religious groups or, in the new phrasing, 'communities'. I explore the roots and concerns of the community cohesion agenda in order to understand the ways it has shaped RE.

Firstly, Cattle's conclusion that community segregation is the *cause* of the riots is not clearly justified. As I will show, two agenda-setting reports produced before the 2001 riots, the MacPherson Report, or the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry (1999) and the Parekh Report (2000), show how disadvantage and alienation stem as much from economic and institutional forces at a national scale as from mistrust between people at the individual level. In Cattle's work, poor social relations as a result of separation are presented as the cause of conflict but the antagonism and mistrust found in both white and Asian communities could equally be presented as the *result* of segregation caused by housing policy, schooling, employment practices and other forces larger than the individual and group. For example Cattle's 2001 report states that 'community cohesion fundamentally depends on people and their values' and that the roots of affairs in 2001 are due to 'the failure to communicate and agree a set of clear values that can govern behaviour...[at] both the national and local levels', this failure being further 'compounded by the lack of an honest and robust debate, as people 'tiptoe around' the sensitive issues of race, religion and culture' (Cattle, 2001: p. 18). However, although the report states that the breakdown of social values is more important than 'systems, processes and institutions' (p. 18), the next two chapters then detail the systems, processes and institutions which maintain separation and exclusion, namely; political and community leadership and institutions, the relationships between local government and communities, regeneration funding allocation, the impact on geographical separation and schools of housing policy, faith schools, facilities for young people, policing, poor employment opportunities and some media outlets' stoking of racial tensions among their poor, white readership. It appears rather that Cattle describes various structural aspects of entrenched disadvantage, not the values or attitudes amongst individuals and groups towards diversity. Cattle notes that for youngsters of 'Pakistani origin' (p. 39), Islamophobia is 'part of their daily experience' (p. 40), drawing the conclusion that Islamophobia leads to their exclusion. However a detailed account of how poor housing, poor education and poor employment opportunities adversely affect Pakistani Muslim neighbourhoods, combined with a press which portrays such neighbourhoods in wholly negative terms and far right groups inflaming white fears, shows the multi-layered geographical, social and institutional factors that cause

separation. Therefore Islamophobia seems more like the *result* in majority white communities than the *cause* in Pakistani-heritage communities of their exclusion from mainstream society. The evidence presented in Cattle's report could equally be used to argue that housing, policing and employment decisions keep groups apart and negative perceptions of each other, such as Islamophobia, are a result of this. In other words, Cattle's conclusion that poor social relations is the problem therefore warmer social relations must be the solution, is not the only conclusion that could be drawn from the data given. An alternative is the need to understand and address how large-scale institutional and structural decisions maintain exclusion and separation and feed negative perceptions of other groups. The foundations of the community cohesion agenda, an attempt to work towards warmer social relations rather than structural or economic equality, is not a foregone conclusion.

i) Pre-riots Reports

Two reports published before the riots, the MacPherson Report (1999) and the Parekh Report (2000) reveal the construction and maintenance in white culture of racial and cultural disadvantage. These documents show how disadvantage and alienation stem as much from economic and institutional forces at a national scale, as from mistrust and ignorance between people at the individual level. After the riots three reports shaped the community cohesion agenda; Cattle's 2001 and follow-up 2004 reports, as well as the Denham 2001 and Ouseley 2001 reports. An argument by Joyce Miller, which I explore here, is that the post-riot reports focus entirely on antagonistic relations at the personal level and simply ignore economic and political exclusion on a national scale. Miller in 2010 calls Cattle's analysis of the roots of social exclusion 'seriously contested' (Miller, 2010: p. 237) as it makes no mention of socioeconomic inequality and marginalisation. This line of inquiry further undermines the claims made within RE that it can and should promote community cohesion aims in the classroom.

The Macpherson report into the murder of Stephen Lawrence (1999), which brought the phrase 'institutional racism' into widespread usage, states unequivocally that police failures surrounding Stephen's murder stemmed from racist attitudes within the police and society, fed by a 'sub-culture of obsessive violence, fuelled by racist prejudice and hatred against black people' (MacPherson, 1999: p. 22). The murder of a young man was not taken seriously because he was black.

In detailing police attitudes and behaviour the MacPherson report lays bare societal and institutional racism where individuals reproduce or maintain macro-level structures of

domination. The report makes visible, for example, the treatment of Stephen's parents, who 'were patronised and side-lined' (MacPherson, 1999: p. 32), and the police's 'canteen culture', which reflects 'negative views and assumptions about black people' (p. 46). The MacPherson report represents a significant public acknowledgment of racist assumptions not only underlying, but stemming from, white-dominated society and institutions.

The Parekh report of 2000 on the 'Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain' shares Macpherson's desire for a more equal country but paints a different picture of life in Britain. Established by the Runnymede Trust, an 'independent think-tank devoted to the cause of promoting racial justice in Britain' (Parekh Report, 2000: p. iii), the Report sees a 'fundamental need' for society, institutions and legislation to balance two different but complementary elements at all times; 'to treat people equally and with due respect for difference' (p. xvii). As Britain is 'both a liberal and a multicultural society' (p. ix), individuals or groups may have 'conflicting requirements' (p. ix), which is the crux of Parekh's argument. Because different groups have 'differing needs', different treatment might increase rather than decrease fairness, or as Parekh would have it, 'equal treatment requires full account to be taken of their differences' (p. ix).

The bulk of the Report details ways in which Britain's institutions and norms allow inequality, such as through resistance in the police to tackling a racist culture, and an almost complete lack of monitoring of outcomes by ethnicity in schools, despite black and Gypsy and Traveller students' clear underachievement. This data forms the backbone of Parekh's argument that treating all groups as if they possess the same freedoms and capacities leads to injustice when group-based discrimination is overlooked. Despite the underlying insistence, a feature throughout the report, that acknowledging difference and allowing different treatment can promote equality, the detailed reasons for inequality given reflect the same sort of structural and institutional complacency, even blindness, described in the Lawrence Inquiry. The Report calls for consciousness of difference, an accommodation of cultural or religious needs, yet describes white-dominated institutions that actively, if unconsciously, limit non-white, non-Christian peoples' life chances.

In contrast to Parekh's difference-consciousness, there is no call in Macpherson for black British communities to be treated differently based on their cultural or religious needs, just to receive the same treatment as white communities. Macpherson focuses the gaze on the institutions and laws created by the white world rather than the cultural requirements of minority groups. Parekh acknowledges the need for equality under the law but combines this

with attention to cultural and religious differences, leading to a positive view of diversity. In the Parekh Report cohesion is imagined as the result of a public space which can cope with difference, described as a 'common sense of belonging and a shared identity' (Parekh Report, 2000: p. ix). Macpherson shows how attitudes which dehumanise, in this case, black British people, live in the collective minds and behaviours of white-dominated institutions and are unconsciously enacted at the interpersonal, community and institutional levels. Parekh encourages all Britons to be interested in their neighbours, to become friends, and create a new Britain comprised of white and non-white, Christian and non-Christian, European and non-European people.

These documents, conceived of and published before the riots of 2001, reflect two different ways of seeing racial discrimination; through cultural difference and through socio-political agency. A focus on cultural difference, as exemplified in the Parekh report, requires openness to differences in human culture, outlook and lifestyle, a pleasure taken in human diversity. A socio-political focus, found in the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, reveals the structural and institutional architecture of exclusion, reproduced at the interpersonal level. These different approaches overlap but they focus on different things; people's inner lives, and their external contexts.

ii) Post-Riots reports

Joyce Miller contends that in the post-riots analysis the national gaze pulled back from a direct acknowledgment of institutional racism and focused instead on relations at the interpersonal level. Cattle's 2001 report details local and national structures and processes which entrench exclusion and disadvantage but concludes that shared values and agreed behaviour norms will ameliorate conflict and tension. There is no justification as to how far fear, mistrust and prejudice are the result, rather than the cause, of structures and processes which keep groups apart. Cattle's final report was published in 2004. From the Introduction we can see a strong focus on the interpersonal;

'Three years ago it was noted that... "parallel lives" had developed. This meant that the ignorance about each other's communities had been turned into fear, and even demonization. The result was intolerance, discrimination and, in extreme cases, violence. Our subsequent work has been founded on the principle of breaking down those barriers and fostering understanding and respect' (Cattle, 2004: p. 7).

I have shown institutional and economic contexts under scrutiny in two major pre-riots documents. However Cantle's 2004 report offers no detailed analysis of such contexts, focussing overwhelmingly on interpersonal behaviour in public spaces, claiming that a 'common vision' where 'diversity' of 'backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued' will lead to 'strong and positive relationships' across divides' (Cantle, 2004: p. 57). There is no reference to the wider context of peoples' lives. Furthermore this report notes that the 'statutory duty to 'promote good race relations'... will be effectively discharged through the community cohesion agenda and will be regarded, to all intents and purposes, as 'synonymous' (p. 57), meaning all 'race relations' policy sits under community cohesion expectations. The result of this move is that the growing understanding of how institutional and economic policy enable exclusion gained before the riots will be explored through an inner, individual, interpersonal analysis which does not consider the institutional and political forms of power active beyond the personal and communal. Other reports around the time of the riots, such as the Ousely Report (2001) and the Denham Report (2001), like Cantle, detail factors ranging from global economics and national policy which entrench and exacerbate exclusion, yet focus their solutions overwhelmingly at the level of social interaction which, by their own admission, is only a part of the solution. As the theoretical work from sociology and philosophy shows, the combination of place, stability, cohesion, change and diversity is hugely complex, yet New Labour community cohesion policy overlooks this complexity entirely. This is hugely important as community cohesion has become RE's 'phase two'. As Revell suggests, community cohesion's impact on RE has been 'profound' as 'the language and ideas associated with community cohesion quickly became the norm' (Revell, 2012: p. 66-67). Thus RE's phase two, its association with the community cohesion agenda, is informed by partial and unreliable understanding of social relations from the outset.

Community cohesion is a direct reaction to the 2001 riots as I have shown, but the wider discourse surrounding community cohesion, the riots and the general direction of British society is drawn from multicultural thinking.

Some commentators blamed multiculturalism for the riots, such as then head of the Commission for Racial Equality Trevor Phillips in stating that 'multiculturalism had left Britain 'sleepwalking to segregation' through its one-sided focus on difference' (Thomas, 2011: p. 2, citing Phillips' speech to the Manchester Council for Community Relations, 22nd September 2005). Revell declares the Cantle Report (2001) to be the most visible example of the 'discrediting of multiculturalism', presenting 'integration as the legitimate approach to issues of ethnicity and race' (Revell, 2012: p 35). Ali Rattansi responds to Phillips's much quoted

comment by citing research by ‘urban geographers, demographers and sociologists at British universities’ (Rattansi, 2011: p. 76) who find no evidence of ghettos or segregation. Moreover Rattansi argues that pre-riots British multiculturalism was a ‘pragmatic, top-down’ construct, ‘with little genuine public debate or involvement from the majority or the minorities’, in other words, multiculturalism wasn’t a demand made by diverse communities (Rattansi, 2011: pp. 30-31). In fact, as Rattansi shows, immigrant, largely Muslim, communities in the rioting towns were firmly kept away from full participation in British life by white-dominated structures and attitudes, rather than their desire to live culturally separate lives. Rattansi notes how multiculturalism was presented by New Labour as the cause of the riots and the post-riots reports used for an ‘assault on multiculturalism’ (p. 69). However, as Rattansi shows, the reports themselves do not identify community separation as a causal factor to the riots, but poverty after the collapse of industries, as well as institutional and personal racism directed at non-white communities, fanned by the far right and inflamed by the media. The reports themselves, on Rattansi’s analysis, seem to ‘regret’ an ‘almost complete absence of multiculturalism’ (p. 73). For example the Bradford Race Review Team ‘explicitly criticized the National Curriculum’ (p. 73) for containing no multicultural education at all and the Oldham Report seems to celebrate, rather than blame, diversity in the area. Therefore while those on the ground after the riots felt the absence of multiculturalism, understood as equality between different cultural groups, those looking on presented the *permission* that minority groups were given in expressing cultural difference, to be the cause of civil disobedience and destruction, once again demonstrating the extremely shaky ground community cohesion stands on.

b) Community Cohesion and RE

i) Government Guidance

New Labour’s advice to schools also focuses entirely on the interpersonal and ignores the structural. The DCFS *Guidance on the Duty to Promote Community Cohesion in Schools* (2007) offers better interpersonal relationships as a solution, seemingly as a direct response to fear of poor relations between groups. However the more detailed and contextualised *Our Shared Future* Report does not point solely to the interpersonal. For example, *Our Shared Future* notes that the Communities and Local Government’s Citizenship surveys of 2003 and 2005 have reported that ‘80% of people in England and Wales perceived that people of different backgrounds got on well in their areas’ (Department for Communities and Local Government, *Our Shared Future*, 2007: p. 20). In addition, a Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) survey

of 2006, showed that '79% of people agreed or strongly agreed that people of different backgrounds got on well in their local areas' (p. 21). *Our Shared Future* then maps regional feelings of cohesion, concluding that 'some areas around the M62 corridor and around the Wash' experience cohesion as a challenge, 'but a fairly even spread elsewhere' (p. 22). However the DCFS *Guidance* presents conflicting data, citing the results of a MORI poll as 'barriers to community cohesion', where '18% of people surveyed identified immigration/migrants as the main issue facing Britain today' and '14% of people surveyed who said they were not proud of their area, the main reasons were crime (55%), a feeling of lack of community spirit (43%) and concern about poor facilities (29%)' (DCFS, *Guidance on the Duty to Promote Community Cohesion in Schools*, 2007: p. 5). The contradictory findings in *Our Shared Future* are not included in the DCSF *Guidance*, nor are there details on the 82% of people who do not see immigration as the main issue facing Britain or the 86% of people who are proud of their area. However, these MORI results then form the basis of the DCFS proposals regarding schools' duty to promote community cohesion.

Although *Our Shared Future* suggests that diversity itself should not be problematized, this occurs in the *Guidance* nevertheless. The *Guidance* calls for 'a society in which the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued; a society in which similar life opportunities are available to all' (DCSF, *Guidance*, 2007: p. 4). Not because Britain is a society in which similar life opportunities are not available to all, but because all children will grow up to 'live and work in a country which is diverse in terms of cultures, religions or beliefs, ethnicities and social backgrounds' (p. 2), in other words, because diverse communities do not know enough about each other, rather than because certain groups are subject to alienation and exclusion. The community cohesion agenda is partial and unreliable, ignoring sites of domination and exclusion and focussing entirely on visible personal attitudes. As I show in later chapters the multitude of problems with multicultural and community cohesion policy are invisible in the government literature. The philosopher Mary Healy notes a more general 'ambiguity' in the use of terms such as 'cohesion' across Europe and North America, suggesting UK government policy is not alone in presenting a 'thinly conceived', and thus unreliable, vision of social cohesion (Healy, 2013: p. 2). The agenda was adopted uncritically in RE meaning the next phase for the subject is also partial and unreliable. The community cohesion agenda is as non-educational, according to my analysis above, as Christian confessionalism.

ii) RE Curriculum

Both the RE curriculum and the community cohesion agenda claim to contribute to social justice. However, as I have shown above, although key national reports before 2001 set out in detail how compounded institutional, policy and economic disadvantage lead to social exclusion, community cohesion policy and guidance focusses overwhelmingly on the interpersonal as a cause and solution for such exclusion for reasons that are not defended.

What of RE?

While the statutory obligation to community cohesion no longer exists, the ideas are still very much present in RE, as Revell has noted. In its multifaith, secular guise, and with strong undercurrents of moral and spiritual growth, RE appeared to be a likely educational toe-hold for the new community cohesion agenda, and this sense has not left RE. The capacity of the RE curriculum to support this agenda has been driven by the assumption that learning about diverse religious beliefs will engender positive relations between different cultural or religious groups outside school. What evidence is there that exploring different religious identities can further a community relations agenda? In this section I present what passes for evidence at a Westminster hearing set up to enquire into RE's contribution to community relations, before contrasting it with more contextual theoretical work and suggest that assumptions about RE's capacity in this respect remain largely untested within the subject and in policy. Apart from repeating the claim that RE in itself promotes good community relations, RE syllabuses and curricula themselves did not change as a result of the statutory duty. In fact Robert Jackson *et al*, in reporting for the DCSF on materials used in the teaching of world religions, both from textbooks and websites, note that '[t]he promotion of community cohesion is rarely addressed explicitly in RE materials but is dependent on teachers drawing out community cohesion messages from the content of the RE lesson' (DCSF Research Report no. RR197, 2010: p. 10). To apply a liberal educational question to the issues highlighted by the community cohesion agenda would be to ask; what is prejudice? What is discrimination? It would be to follow where these questions lead. This has not happened, as I show.

RE uncritically accepts and repeats the assumption that an education in religious diversity will improve social relations. An All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for RE, which supports RE at Westminster, sat for three sessions to hear how RE contributes towards community cohesion, between December 2013 and March 2014. The then chair of the APPG, Stephen Lloyd MP, in his introduction to the summary report, describes '[g]ood community relations' as a society where different people can 'live together harmoniously' even though 'they may disagree over

some of their fundamental religious beliefs or worldviews' (*RE and Good Community Relations*, All Party Parliamentary Group on RE, 2014: p. 1). The work of this hearing is to connect Lloyd's vision of a diverse and harmonious society with RE in school. I consider the quality of evidence given over the hearings and argue that it does not amount to a demonstration of RE's connection to social harmony, although valuable questions are raised at these hearings.

Long-standing representatives of Lancashire, Birmingham and Hampshire SACREs each present their RE syllabuses and the work of their SACREs as contributions to community cohesion (Religious Education Council (REC), Hearing 2, 2014). The adviser to Lancashire SACRE offers her impression that over the years SACRE's work in schools and the community has enabled positive moments of connections and learning across religious and cultural divides, however this is not based on any qualitative analysis. This is not to say that her impression is without value, but it is not tested. In fact those representing Birmingham and Hampshire SACREs do not offer evidence that RE can contribute to community relations at all, rather, they focus on how their Agreed Syllabuses capture the true essence of RE, based on their view of what religion is. Birmingham SACRE's Agreed Syllabus aims to draw pupils into an understanding of religion that does justice to the inner truth of religion, and is of personal benefit to pupils' own moral growth. Non-religious worldviews are excluded (at the time of writing this omission is under review). No link is offered between Birmingham's Agreed Syllabus and improved community relations. Hampshire's adviser claims that by triangulating 'evidence consisting of the GCSE results and teacher responses together with the findings of our own reports' that the application of the Agreed Syllabus in RE 'raises education outcomes for all children' (REC, Hearing 2, 2014: p. 10). These reports appear to show how far teachers use the Hampshire pedagogy, not how far the pedagogy contributes to community cohesion. The assumption underlying all three testimonials is that an RE syllabus designed to offer a certain view of religion, combined with various religious groups collaborating at a local level, allows both social connections and intellectual and moral growth conducive to warmer community relations. However in the complete absence of any evidence or argument it remains an untested assumption.

A teacher and representative of a London Shi'a Muslim school group gives texture to the assumption that learning about people from different religions will lead to warmer social relations. In describing a learning ethos committed to plurality of Islamic thought and practice, she claims that teaching Shi'a children about Sunni Islam with positivity and openness can ameliorate deteriorating relationships between Sunni and Shi'a worldwide. Attractive, and indeed moving, though this presentation is, her claims are not subjected to scrutiny of any kind

and therefore do not amount to evidence. Similar ideas are explored in the context of Northern Ireland across Catholic and Protestant communities, but again no qualitative analysis is sought, despite the existence of data on attempts to improve relations among young people across the Catholic- Protestant divide in Northern Ireland (for example, McKeown, Stringer and Cairns 2015; McKeown, Cairns and Stringer and Rae, 2012). Across all three hearings the assumption that learning about others improves social relations is not tested.

As I have shown from work prior to the 2001 riots, the problem of social separation is not solely due to ideological conflict or exclusion but the lack of access to reliable employment, decent housing and good schools that keeps certain groups marginalised. As the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry shows, social exclusion is not solely due to mistrust and ignorance but profound economic and political disempowerment. The summary APPG report alludes to this in a section entitled 'Remaining Questions', asking, '[h]ow far does RE address issues of socio-economic inequality? How important is this in developing social cohesion?' (APPG on RE, 2014: p. 4). However the majority of measures suggested in the summary whereby RE contributes to community cohesion are focused on learning about others' views and adopting a positive stance towards diversity. Joyce Miller, who chaired the hearings and authored an additional longer and more reflective report, asks whether RE is looking at a full enough picture to understand, and then act to change, community separation, noting for example that there exists a 'lack of focus on social and income inequality' (Miller, 2014: p. 1). With reference to Islamophobia Miller queries whether learning about Islam and Muslims can seriously address a societal climate of Islamophobia, calling this a 'naïve and simplifying view' (Miller, 2014: p. 10). With reference to the claim that RE 'qualifications' (p. 5) contribute to community relations by enlarging young peoples' future options, Miller cites Adam Dinham's question, namely, why all subjects then don't have the responsibility to contribute to community cohesion, asking what 'cohesion, or security, or diversity' have particularly to do with religion, so that RE should bear an extraordinary burden of community cohesion (p. 6, citing Adam Dinham's evidence). Miller asks these important questions in her longer report, but the hearings themselves take no steps towards addressing them.

Philip Barnes finds a 'paucity of evidence and research' to test RE's underlying assumptions and states that '[f]orty years after its introduction in Britain we do not know if there is a positive correlation between multi-faith religious education and respect for others' (Barnes, 2014: p. 19). For Barnes this lack of information is 'surprising' 'given that the contribution of religious education to challenging religious intolerance is one of the reasons originally advanced in favour of multi-faith religious education' (p. 19). A year after Barnes's comment

Janet Orchard considers RE's capacity to 'promote good community relations' (Orchard, 2015: p. 39) through 'improved religious and cultural understanding' (p. 40). Orchard raises several significant problems with the success of the enterprise itself as well as its negative impact on RE. In arguing that a breakdown in social relations cannot be 'reduced to religious causes alone' (p. 43) and 'the term "community" has socio-political as well as religious and/ or cultural meaning' (p. 6) she echoes Dinham's query as to why RE can be expected to solve such a complex, political and multi-faceted problem. With regards to RE itself Orchard suggests that bearing wider social-political aims has a detrimental impact on its capacity as a subject of the curriculum, citing Conroy *et al's* concern that 'RE has tried to do too much' (Orchard, 2015: p. 43, Conroy *et al*, 2014) and that unclear or over-complicated aims 'places the subject in a seriously vulnerable position' (Orchard, 2015: p. 42).

Orchard's 2015 paper takes a bird's eye view of the potential capacity of RE to contribute to community relations. What would count as empirical information able to demonstrate this positive correlation? The *British Journal of Religious Education* (BJRE) carries empirical and philosophical work concerning RE with a strongly global flavour. For example, Tim McCowan's 2016 assessment of whether a state-wide programme of inter-faith education in Melbourne, Australia, enables more knowledgeable and positive and less prejudicial attitudes towards those from different religious groups (McCowan, 2016). The interfaith programme itself is based on a view of 'interreligious learning' from Hermans (2003) and Robert Jackson's 2004 presentation of how young people learn through dialogue (Jackson, 2004), and in 2016 has been taken by approximately 250 Year 10 and 11 students from 23 schools in Melbourne. McCowan's methodology compares several rounds of interviews with 84 young people from Roman Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Islamic non-faith schools to the theory underpinning the programme. McCowan identifies an increased positivity towards other faiths and members of other faiths through this process. Here then is one small-scale study representing an attempt to assess the impact of learning about other groups on young peoples' attitudes towards those groups. This paper presents not just the thinking behind the interfaith programme, but the theoretical underpinnings and research methodology in assessing the success of the programme, none of which are present in the Westminster hearings.

Systematic attempts to discover whether contact with and learning about another group reduces prejudice can be found in social psychology in a field loosely termed intergroup contact or contact theory, whose focus is on 'intergroup relations and interaction between people within a social context' (Pettigrew *et al*, 2011: p. 272). Orchard considers RE's capacity to improve social relations in her 2015 paper and has continued to explore this capacity,

working with social psychologists and RE practitioners (Williams, McKeown, Orchard and Wright, 2018). However Sally Elton-Chalcraft, in a study of how far children's attitudes towards diversity are constructed by the school curriculum, warns that to simply 'mix children up in a multi-ethnic school' will not in itself reduce prejudice and discrimination if the hidden and implicit assumptions in the curriculum are not addressed (Elton-Chalcraft, 2009: 82). Pettigrew and Tropp's 2008 meta-analysis of 515 individual studies demonstrates statistically that contact between groups improves social relations in three ways; in that knowledge of the 'outgroup' is improved, anxiety and fear with regards to members of the 'outgroup' is reduced and empathy is enhanced (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2008: p. 922). In a later paper Pettigrew, Tropp *et al* revisit literature going back to the 1940s, showing how a 'modest' hypothesis by Allport that the presence of certain factors in social relations reduce prejudice, has become 'a full-blown theory of considerable complexity' (Pettigrew, Tropp *et al*, 2011: p. 272, citing Allport, 1954). After Detroit's 1943 race riots, social psychologists began to examine conditions surrounding both violence and conflict as well as friendship and cooperation between groups perceived to be different, such as black and white Americans. Research focused on such conditions as public housing policy, exposure to other groups through employment and the significance of gender. Allport's 1954 *The Nature of Prejudice* hypothesised that not all types of intergroup contact reduces prejudice, but when the groups are of similar status, are working towards shared aims, when there is cooperation between groups and when larger social elements such as 'authorities, law or custom' endorse positive contact and cooperation, a reduction in prejudice occurs (Tropp *et al*, 2011: p. 273, citing Allport, 1954). As Tropp *et al* note in 2011, this field is now large and diverse. Although I am not able to spend any more time on these interesting findings, I offer them to highlight the extremely weak justification of claims that learning about others improves social relations on display at the APPG hearing. I have argued that community cohesion is not an educational agenda, it seems it is a rather weak social justice agenda as well.

However empirical work does not always support the hypothesis that exposure to religious or cultural diversity engenders more positive attitudes, as Elton-Chalcraft (2009) suggests. Audrey Bryan's 2012 argument that Ireland's 'formal education system reinforces, rather than challenges, popular theories of racism' (Bryan, 2012: p. 603) is tested with reference to 'in-depth and small group interviews' with 35 students aged 12-16, and a critical analysis of 20 textbooks produced for this age range covering English, History, RE, Geography and Civic, Social and Political Education (pp. 605-606). Bryan finds the textbooks are 'saturated with racialized discourses which individualise and deny racism, falsely attribute racism to cultural

difference and reify “race” (p. 601). The textbooks present racism as a failure of individual imagination and ignore ‘the social and systematic nature of racism’ and ‘the structured nature of white advantage’ (p. 607). Pupils, Bryan observes, ‘typically attributed racism in society to individual ignorance, a lack of appreciation or awareness of other cultures, or as a natural response to perceived or inherent difference’ (p. 607). The textbooks ‘reify’ (p. 600) race by assuming it as a plausible way of categorising humans, without considering that the notion of race itself may be an unsound construct. Solutions given in textbooks, along the lines that people of different races should be nice to one another, assume that the problem is interpersonal and that there are innate differences between people to be overcome. A suggestion that due to a small Jewish population Ireland is untroubled by anti-Semitism is shown to be dishonest and misleading; the small numbers of Jews in Ireland is the direct result of the post-war government’s disinclination to accommodate them, including 100 ‘orphaned Jewish children’, survivors of Bergen Belsen (pp. 616-617). Bryan argues that textbooks do not allow the intellectual stances possible to understand racism, such as how white-dominated institutions perpetuate racist notions, meaning that the individualised and uncritical views found in the textbooks are echoed in her interviews with children. I conduct my own analysis of RE textbooks in a further chapter and find something similar in English RE. Daniel Moulin, in conducting 54 ‘qualitative interviews’ (Moulin, 2015: p. 489) with 99 Jewish, Muslim and Christian young people, reports that some perceived their religious traditions to be distorted, inaccurately or unfairly represented in some lessons. Moulin’s main focus is the formation of religious identities and he does not give any specific examples of this perception, however his comment underlines the point that learning in RE can reinforce prejudiced thinking as well as disrupt it. Research such as this calls seriously into question the idea that RE can contribute to warmer social relations, yet this is a question rarely asked within RE. The claim is rarely put to the test.

I have noted Miller’s dismissal of the idea that learning about Muslims can ameliorate Islamophobia as ‘naïve and simplifying’. Revell draws together research tracing the process by which Muslims in Britain are constructed as ‘others’ and Islam as terminally incompatible with the West. She suggests the community cohesion agenda, if seen as directed solely at Britain’s Muslims, is revealed as a desire for a ‘distinct, apparently cohesive and vibrant community with its own values’ (Revell, 2012: p. 36) to integrate into white British society. Ultimately signifiers of British Islam ‘are all understood to be not merely cultural differences but differences in values’ (p. 37), reflecting the othering of Islam and Muslims. Citing Panjwani’s (2005) ‘devastating’ analysis of textbooks which present Islam and Muslims as ‘ahistorical,

culturally homogenous and religiously monolithic' (Revell, 2012: p. 44), Revell suggests that RE in its current form offers nothing more than a superficial understanding of Islam, and moreover, that community cohesion expectations in their current form, focused on Muslims themselves rather than a context in which Muslim values are constructed as inherently alien to British values, offers nothing but empty rhetoric. A critical and contextual analysis such as this has no presence at the Westminster hearings.

Data gathered between 2009 and 2011 by the Young Peoples' Attitudes to Religious Diversity Project, part of wider research into religion and society, is analysed by Leslie Francis *et al.* Their analysis seeks a connection between learning about religious diversity in the form it is presented at GCSE, and young people's attitudes towards diversity (Francis *et al.*, 2016). The researchers choose a representative mix of religious and non-religious schools and apply an analytic tool capable of triangulating students' attitudes towards diversity, students' basic personality type (from a choice of four), students' own religious commitments and beliefs and the religious traditions studied in RE. Results are rich and barely analysed in this short paper, offering results such as 'belief in God exerts the largest positive effect on attitude towards religious diversity' (p. 10) and 'taking religious education as an examination subject exerts a small (but statistically significant) effect' (p. 10). The authors state that this study builds on 'the provocative and challenging work of Jim Conroy' (p. 11). Conroy *et al.* (2013) make two points with regards to the subject matter of this paper, firstly that the RE curriculum, in an effort to justify its existence, bears multiculturalist or antiracist aims that do not support development in RE, and secondly that there appears to be 'no self-evident correlation in the literature between "knowing about" other people's unfamiliar religious beliefs and practices and the embrace of antiracist or multicultural values' (Conroy, 2013: p. 104). Thus Francis *et al.* provide something like evidence in the basic statistical connections offered, although they are not unpacked at all in this paper.

I have presented some empirical and theoretical work on the impact of encountering diversity on social attitudes, simply to make the point that it exists but it is not habitually or even sporadically referred to in Agreed Syllabuses, textbooks or RE policy in schools or at government level. What scholars find does not seem to filter to the level of the classroom and it is clear that those involved in shaping and creating classroom RE do not test assumptions about the impact the RE curriculum can have on social and moral development.

iii) Community Cohesion in Pupils' RE Work

In this section I will explore what knowledge, skills and capacities pupils acquire and develop as a result of a community cohesion focus in the classroom. I can offer this analysis through access to a unique and valuable resource; a nationwide spread of students' work in response to one idea. I am able to suggest what is taught by looking at the outcome in students' work.

In the summer of 2014 I had the opportunity to judge a national RE art prize. This annual prize has been consistently popular for more than two decades, attracting thousands of entries from schools in England, Wales and further afield. Each year 5 themes are given covering religious, ethical and social topics such as life after death, the soul, places of worship, 'the good life', happiness, love and marriage, etc. Students write a few words, a sentence or a paragraph, depending on their age and ability, to accompany the artwork. The teacher sends the 10 best pieces for judging. I was given the ethical theme to judge, which in 2014 was 'The Golden Rule', and sat in a small room sifting through the many entries for two days. Accompanying guidance suggests teachers present the idea of a 'Golden Rule'; a universal moral rule, and explore examples of universal moral rules in religious and ethical traditions.

I looked at every picture and read every single word. As I looked and read, I realised what a unique resource these pieces of work represented; as a snapshot of what is deemed good RE in the schools which take part. Between 2012 and 2018 a mean average of 87 Primary schools and 110 Secondary schools have entered, the vast majority of which are state-funded. Of both Primary and Secondary phases 65 are church schools, whether Roman Catholic (RC) or Church of England (CE). While this is a self-selecting group, the range of private, state-funded, church-funded, Primary and Secondary phase schools is broad and covers England and Wales. Every year entries are also made from international schools or special schools. Further details are given in Table I (page 100). Due to the locally determined nature of the RE curriculum as well as the increasing numbers of academies who do not have to use the local RE syllabus at all⁵, it is extremely difficult to know what schools up and down the country are teaching over a year. One might locate an agreed syllabus for a Local Authority, yet there is no guarantee that schools are following it closely, if at all. Yet in judging this art prize I was able to analyse how Primary, Secondary and SEND school teachers from Cumbria to Cornwall approach the same subject, what content they teach and what they think the best pieces of work are, offering a glimpse of pupils' work across England, Wales and more widely on a common theme strongly

⁵ Academies must teach RE according to the terms of their funding agreement but do not have to use their local Agreed Syllabus. They may use it if they wish, or commission an RE curriculum of their own.

related to issues of social cohesion. As I sat with these many pieces of work I began to detect a strikingly uniform approach; the use of a few images and symbols and common parameters of thought about the subject from children across the age ranges, in all school types, all over the country. Teachers have picked the 10 pictures they think are the best, and they are remarkably similar. This is interesting in itself. The uniformity tells me that input from classroom teachers is extremely similar, as well as media and cultural influences on students themselves. What follows is a series of representative images and text by students, then my analysis.

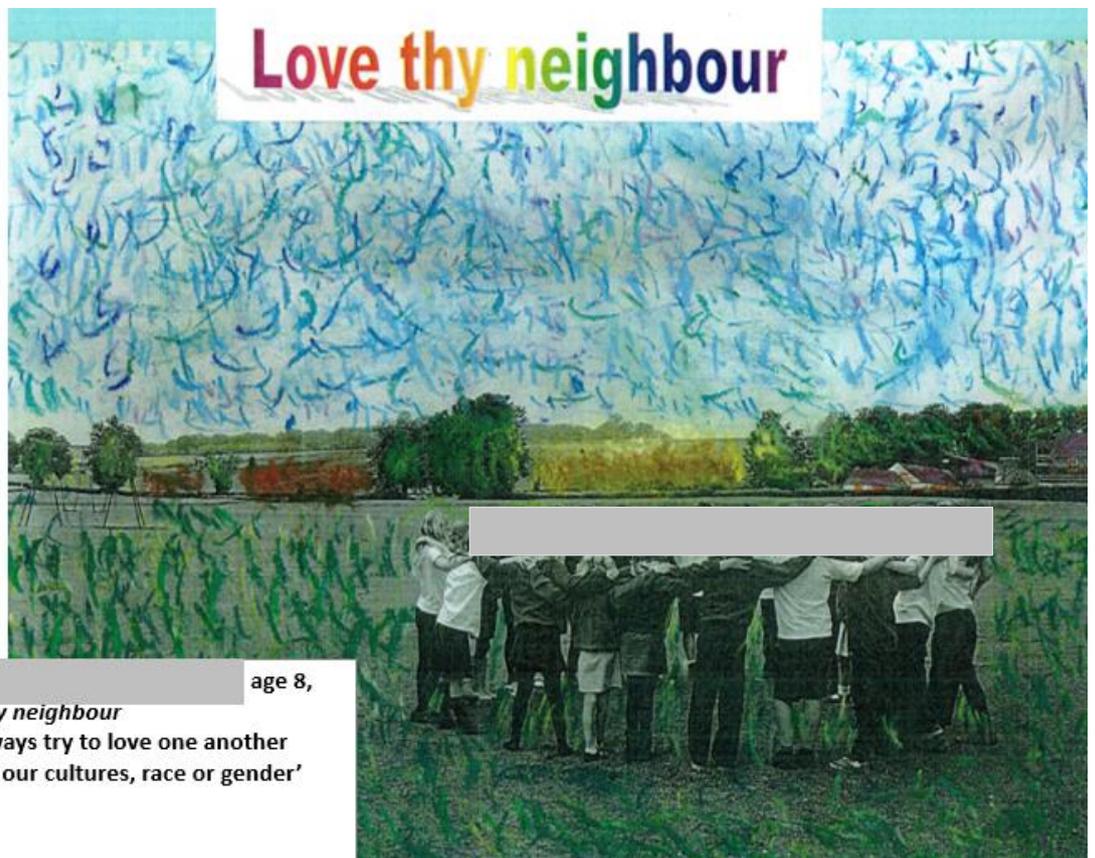
Table I

Entries to RE art competition

YEAR	PRIMARY	SECONDARY	CHURCH SCHOOLS (Primary & Secondary)	OTHER SCHOOLS
2012	50	87	36	Home school 1 SEND school 1
2013	123	133	99	Cyprus 1 Medical Unit 1 SEND schools 4
2014	95	106	75	Indonesia 6 SEND schools 4
2015	105	133	67	SEND school 1 India 1 Indonesia 3
2016	77	89	56	Indonesia 6 Australia 2
2017	69	113	58	Indonesia 1 Jersey 2 Guernsey 2



age 9, *The only thing that matters is who you are inside*
'My work shows that different coloured skin does not matter. What matters is who you are, not on the outside, but on the inside. I put God as having different colours of skin in my picture because my opinion is that God is a piece of everyone in the world.'



age 8,
Love thy neighbour
'We always try to love one another despite our cultures, race or gender'



age 8,
Love
'My RE artwork is like a sum. It shows that if you add all the religious symbols together they all equal love... I think my work connects to religion because all religions teach us about love.'



age 10, Jesus 'is both black and white to show it doesn't matter what colour skin you have'





age 11, *Respect,*
 'this picture is all
 about respecting
 other people no
 matter what their
 religion, skin colour
 or gender.'



We're all the same



age 11,
We're all the Same,
 '...everybody should be
 treated the same way as
 you would want to be
 treated- no matter what
 colour skin they have,
 different colour hair to
 you or wear glasses.'

Treat others how you want to be treated.

Page 12, Equality in Individuality

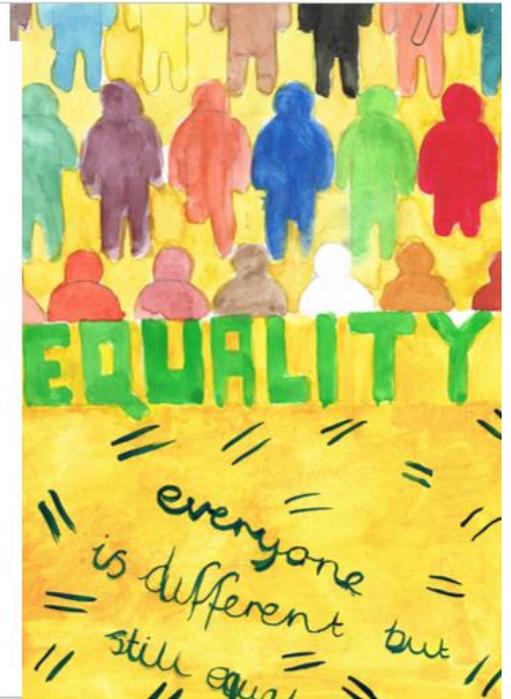
My work, I feel, shows a lot of common issues from the modern day, for example racism and bullying. I used a copy of the same person because it shows that everyone is the same inside and then I painted everyone in different colours to show that everyone looks different, because of their race, their sex, their personality and that everyone has a different opinion from anyone else. I also painted some people without arms or legs, as 15% of us are disabled, yet they are also the same on the inside.

I feel that these issues are extremely important and should be sorted out quickly because you cannot get through life judging people on what they look like. An inspiring quote from Shami Chakrabarti, from Liberty, "You are everyone's equal and no-one is superior" illustrates this point.

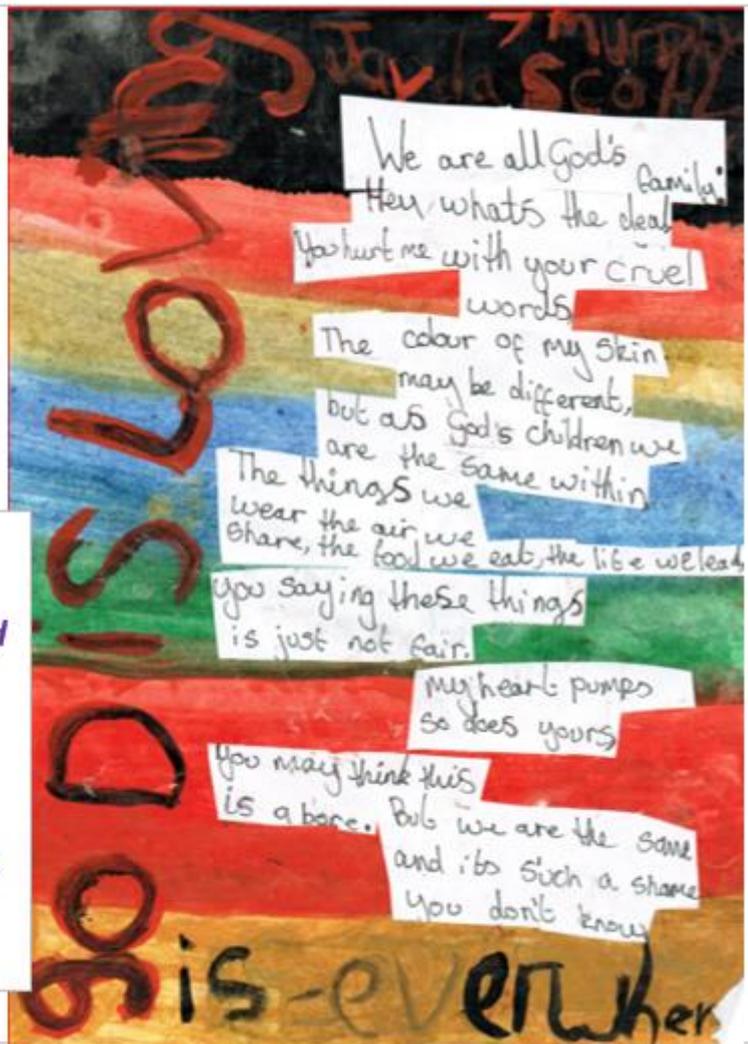
Nelson Mandela inspired me because he treated everyone equally from when he was in prison on Robben Island to when he was President of South Africa. Another act of equality was the one of Rosa Parks, she refused to stand for a white man because she got on the bus first. I feel that these acts showed confidence in the individual's own views, not letting other people think for them. I believe that these people weren't trying to be heroes, they were just trying to do what they felt was right.

I feel that the Jewish golden rule best represents my painting: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour." I think this shows that what white people did to black people in America and South Africa was wrong. Would they have liked to be put in prison and made to work just because of their race and beliefs?

I feel extremely strongly about these issues. The good thing is that they are starting to be fixed, for example, women can now vote in Afghanistan and in South Africa everyone has an equal vote and there is no longer any segregation. It takes time though, world and country leaders need to continuously promote this thinking and education is the key to fixing the problem.



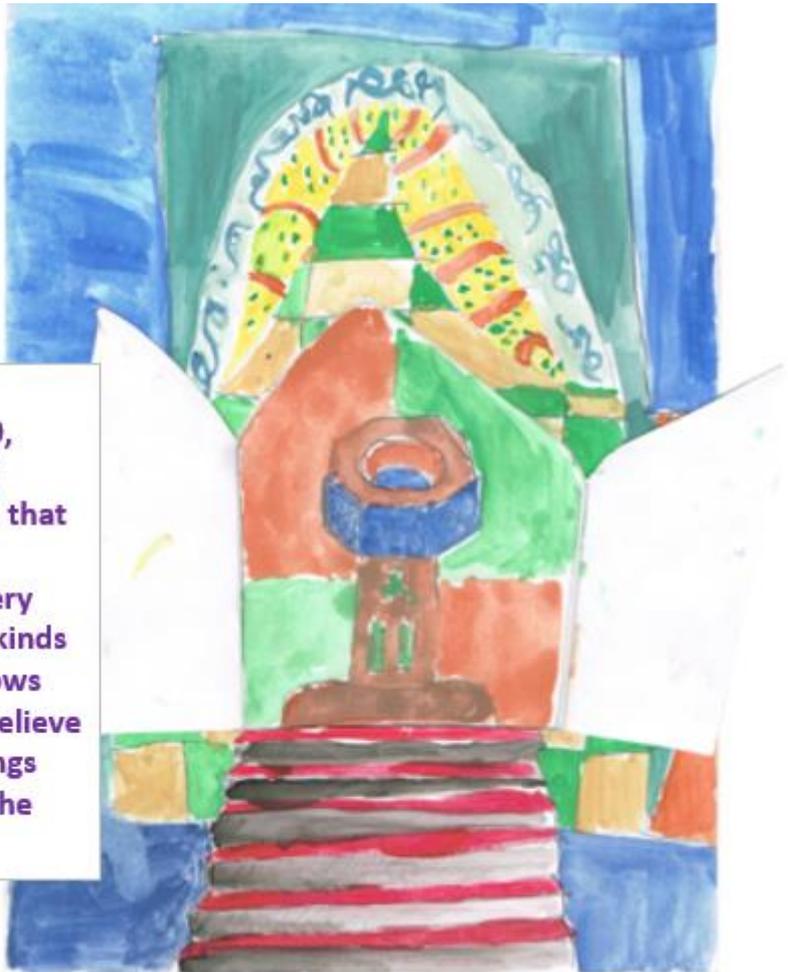
, 12 years,
God is Loving, God is Everywhere, '...The colour of my skin may be different but as God's children we are the same within...'



13, '4 people that are coloured and they create a heart with their hands around the world. This art work is spiritual because the people are friends and aren't racist to each other'



10, *Doors of Belief,* '...It also shows that mosques and churches are very different in all kinds of ways... it shows that you may believe in different things but we are all the same.'





age 8, '...to show that where ever you are in the world you should always love everyone'



, age 10, 'We are not all the same religions but still we should respect religions'



**[redacted], age 10,
Everyone
Smiles in the
Same Way, 'It
shows that if
you are a
different
person from a
different
religion you
still smile the
same way'**



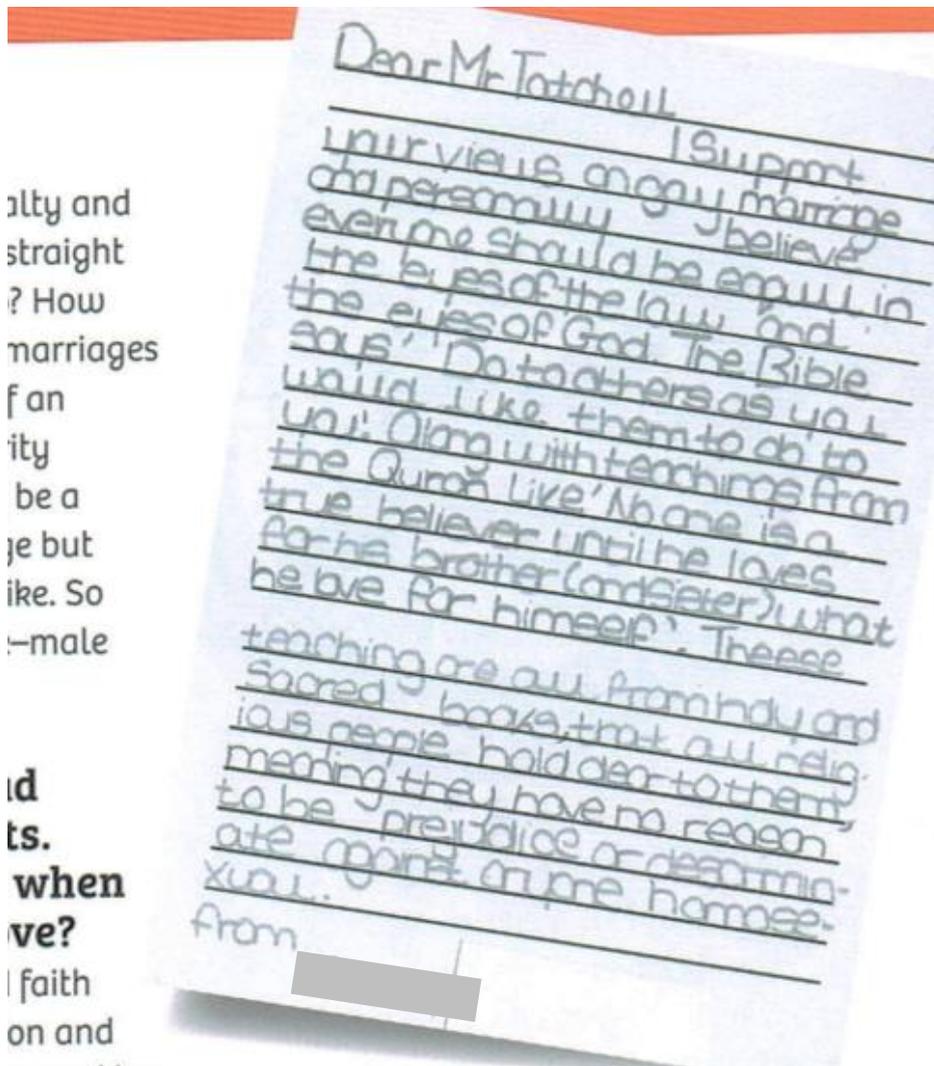
One recurring set of images symbolises the possibility of friendship across perceived divides, represented by hearts, two clasped hands or a planet earth. Explanations are given such as, 'Jesus is both black and white to show it doesn't matter what colour skin you have' (boy, age 10), 'this picture is all about respecting other people no matter what their religion, skin colour or gender.' (boy, age 11) and '...everybody should be treated the same way as you would want to be treated- no matter what colour skin they have, different colour hair to you or wear glasses' (boy, age 11). Reading these responses as a teacher I judge that after presenting the idea of a universal moral rule, teachers ask their pupils to reflect on what *they* think a universal moral rule should be. The pupils' overwhelming response is that a good moral rule would be to act so as to overcome inequality and discord based on cultural, ethnic or religious differences. It seems that teachers celebrate their pupils' hope and idealism but do not provide contextual or historical explanations for why different skin tones or religious affiliations result in social exclusion, or indeed problematize the notion of race and inherent difference at all. Only one

piece reflects some historical context, where a young women of 12 notes Mandela's imprisonment, a quote by Shami Chakrabarti and Rosa Parks' protest. Having read every single entry in this category, I can state that hers was the only piece of work which reflects even a passing familiarity with the forms, histories and actualities of discrimination. This suggests to me as a teacher that wider contextual information is not offered, or that pupils do not deem it relevant to the task in hand. If it were to be offered, it would be present in at least some pupils' work. Following my analysis of an emphasis on personal values over large-scale economic and political measures found in the community cohesion documentation, I would suggest that this set of RE work is a prime example of the prioritising of values over knowledge, of the interpersonal over a systematic understanding of how and why social exclusion is reproduced. A liberal educational approach would be to drill down into the roots and types of exclusion; racial, religious, gendered, and so on, in order to understand it as a human phenomenon. Where religious individuals and institutions either reproduce or disrupt exclusion this could be part of the study, but it requires placing religion against a wider framework. This also resonates with Revell's (2012) concern that Islamic beliefs are taught in the absence of the political and cultural contexts of Muslims' lives. These pupils' expressions of hope and solidarity are pleasing, but without evidence of substantial understanding of the causes of social inequality in their work it is impossible to know as a teacher the texture of their ideas; what exactly about inequality are they problematising, on what basis do they support equality, and what sort of equality, and what solutions or ideas do they offer, supported by what evidence?

The time and space taken up with positivity towards religious diversity or religious teachings might otherwise be given to acquiring more substantial knowledge. Consider an 8-year old girl's artwork which is described as 'like a sum. It shows that if you add all the religious symbols together they all equal love... I think my work connects to religion because all religions teach us about love.' I can detect through this pupils' work, at age 8, echoes of the values at play in her RE lessons; religions teach about love, therefore religions can make the world a more loving place. However, a cursory glance at the news shows a much more complex relationship between religious teachings of love, stability, peace and equality in the world. The 21st century's explosive and seemingly intractable ideological conflicts have various religious dimensions, but this may not be something her teacher feels is suitable for 8-year old pupils. At some point in their education I would want pupils to be able to explore *why* love takes a backseat to other human emotions in situations of conflict, drawing on geopolitical as well as psychosocial analyses. Decontextualised religious values alone are not the last word on the

matter. This 8 year-old girl expresses positive values which are celebrated by her teacher who enters her for a national competition, but her knowledge and understanding has arguably not been developed by this process. The sentiment is admirable, but it is not clear whether any substantive learning has taken place.

It might be unsurprising that a child of 8 is not taught about the world's religious and ideological conflicts. However, decontextualized, value-driven expressions such as this are found across all age ranges as I have noted. Below is an example of a similar expression of decontextualized values from a 12-year-old pupil. The termly magazine for RE teachers, *RE Today*, invited teachers to send in their pupils' responses to an interview with Peter Tatchell about same-sex marriage and homophobia. In the following edition a young woman's, chosen from hundreds of similar letters, was published:



'Dear Mr Tatchell, I support your views on gay marriage and personally believe everyone should be equal in the eyes of the law and the eyes of God. The Bible says, 'Do to others as you would like them to do to you.' Along with teachings from the Qur'an like 'No one is a true believer until he loves for his brother (and sister) what he loves for himself.' These teachings are all from holy and sacred books, that all religious people hold dear to them, meaning they have no reason to be prejudice or discriminate against anyone homosexual. From,

In this example the prioritising of interpersonal values at the expense of correct information is again clear to see. The student's expression of values has been celebrated and her misplaced understanding of what these texts mean is not seen as problematic. Neither of the passages she refers to are made in reference to homosexuality. Jewish, Christian and Muslim societies have strongly rejected homosexuality as an acceptable form of human love, some continue to do so. There are a handful of references to sexuality in these religious texts, but the two cited are not among them. This student's letter reflects a blurring of ideal religious teachings and existing forms of discrimination that neither her teacher nor the editor of the magazine find problematic.

What would an alternative approach involve? As I have noted, a liberal educational approach would be to uncover prejudice itself in order to understand its shape and history. Below are two teaching information sheets I have made for GCSE to allow students to explore issues of sexuality with regards to Christian teachings. Initially small groups read and discuss just one square of information, using it to answer the critical question at the top of the sheet. Then new groups are formed, comprising of four students who have each discussed a different piece of information. These groups then share what they have learned and come to a joint answer to the question drawing on the four pieces of information. Finally each group presents their justified answer to the class. This is a basic technique which could involve more or less challenging information, lead into a written task or a debate, and so on. The aim is not to express personal values or acquire an appreciation of religious teachings, but to consider different Christian (and Jewish) attitudes towards sexuality. The task aims to further understanding of an issue, drawing on differing worldviews to show complexity. A task such as this could represent RE as liberal education where understanding as an aim is prioritised over appreciation of religion or the expression of values the teacher happens to agree with.

Does Christianity Forbid Homosexuality?

<p>1: Authoritative Anglican View</p> <p>1) Sexual intercourse is an act of love which should only occur within marriage, all Christians should endeavour to be morally good, including in terms of sexual morality; 'homosexual genital acts... fall short of this ideal'. (Motion passed by General Synod on 1.11.87, https://www.churchofengland.org/our-views/marriage,-family-and-sexuality-issues/human-sexuality/homosexuality.aspx)</p> <p>2) Marriage between a man and a woman is the 'proper context' for sexual relations. A 'homophile' orientation cannot be accepted by the church as 'a parallel and alternative form of human sexuality'. However, those who feel their sexuality is not negotiable should be welcomed by the church none the less. (Issues in Human Sexuality, CHP, 1991, 1.3.19-20)</p>	<p>2: Progressive Christian view</p> <p>Gene Robinson is the world's first openly gay Anglican bishop. In a 2009 talk at Greenbelt, the liberal Christian festival, he explored the word 'abomination' from Leviticus, used to describe homosexuality. He argued that the phrase 'abomination' and the prohibition against homosexual relations (for men), are part of the Jews' ancient 'holiness code', an attempt by the Jews to separate themselves from local practices seen in other tribes, such as idol-worship or sex with temple prostitutes. As God's chosen people, they wanted to show they were different from other tribes. Robinson argues that laws such as not wearing different cloths next to each other or not planting different kinds of seeds together are not inherently wrong, they are about the ancient Jews showing God they would keep their covenant with him. The kosher food laws are also part of this code.</p> <p>Robinson argues that a Christian (or Jew) who does not keep the holiness code, does not have to view homosexual relations as unclean. (Gene Robinson, 'Homosexuality: what the bible says and why it matters', Greenbelt, 2009)</p>
<p>3: Catholic View</p> <p>The Catholic Church does not support homosexual marriage or sexual relationships because the purpose of sex is for procreation, and therefore marriage must only unite a man and a woman. This teaching is based on Natural Law, developed by Thomas Aquinas in the 13th Century. Natural Law teaches that humans can see God's wishes in the natural world. Children are created in heterosexual relationships, therefore according to Natural Law sexual relationships should be heterosexual in order to produce children. Homosexual sex is a rejection of God's gift of children.</p> <p>Catholic teaching distinguishes between homosexual <i>desire</i> and homosexual <i>sexual activity</i>. Desire is a disorder, as it goes against the natural order, but it is not sinful in itself. Homosexual sexual activity is a moral disorder as a moral law has been broken, therefore it is sinful. ('Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons' http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_1_9861001_homosexual-persons_en.html 'Chastity and homosexuality' in <i>Catechism of the Catholic Church - Article 6: The sixth commandment, Vatican, 1951.</i>)</p>	<p>4: Diversity within Anglicanism</p> <p>Despite the authoritative Anglican view that homosexual sex is immoral, there are many diverse views within the global Anglican Communion. There is a difference between ordained Anglicans, such as priests and bishops, and lay members of the church (ordinary members). Gay priests and bishops remain celibate, even if they have a partner, but do not preach that lay members should be celibate, and some priests will bless same-sex marriages. There is debate within the Anglican Communion, but individual priests have a degree of freedom as they are answerable to their church community as much as to the Anglican Synod. Many communities in the UK do not find homosexuality problematic, and find church rejection of homosexuality alienating.</p> <p>However Anglican churches from the Global South (less developed countries) take a much harder line on homosexuality and are troubled by widespread acceptance in the North (more developed countries). This issue causes serious problems in the global Anglican community.</p> <p>Although members of Anglican Church can differ in some moral outlooks but still be considered united in faith, some question how far members can differ and still belong to a united church. Northern social changes, such as the increasing normality of same sex couples and women's authority, put the global Anglican Communion under significant stress.</p>

Does the Bible Forbid Homosexuality?

Genesis 18-19: The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

In Genesis 18, God is considering destroying the city of Sodom and Gomorrah, because the men in the city are immoral and drunk. God confides this to Abraham, who strikes a bargain; if 50 good men can be found, will God spare the city? God agrees.

In Genesis 19 two angels pay a visit to the city disguised as travellers. A man called Lot meets them in the marketplace and courteously offers them food and a bed for the night. He is a good man but even he is infected with the vice of the city.

At nightfall the men of the city surround Lot's house, demanding he give up the two travellers to their lusts. Realising that the men mean to rape his guests, Lot offers his virgin daughters instead. The men become furious and threaten to rape Lot himself, but the angels strike them blind, and lead Lot and his family away to safety.

Abraham bargains God down until God agrees the city will be spared if ten good men can be found. However, the angels' experiences prove there is no one worth saving. Lot and his family reach safety in a nearby town, and God destroys Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and lightning. This city has become a metaphor for homosexual vice.

<p><u>1: To 'know'</u> According to some scholars the story is about sexual violence- the men of Sodom want to rape the guests- the use of the word 'know' means 'have sex with'. This is based on the Hebrew word used by the crowd when they demand the guests be brought outside. The word in Hebrew is 'yada', which is associated with sexual knowledge of someone. (Ancient Hebrew Research Center biblical Hebrew e-magazine, July 2006, Issue 029)</p> <p>Other scholars argue that when the crowd demands to 'know' the guests, they simply want to interrogate them. It is not a threat of sexual violence. This is based on a more widely used translation of the word 'know' throughout the Jewish bible.</p> <p>(Jack Bartlet Rogers, <i>Jesus, the bible and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church</i>, 2006, p. 139)</p>	<p><u>2: Gene Robinson</u> Gene Robinson argues that the story is not about homosexuality at all but about the code of hospitality. In the harsh terrain of the ancient Middle East, the duty to offer strangers water, food or shelter was almost a sacred duty, as it could mean the difference between life and death. Robinson describes Sodom as a 'gated community'. They were rich and well-fed and did not want to share their riches with others. The threat of rape in the story is part of the rejection of responsibilities for a guest. As Robinson points out, no one in the story argues that rape, homosexual or heterosexual, is a good thing. It is a story about a city that broke the laws of hospitality. (Gene Robinson, 'Homosexuality: what the bible says and why it matters', Greenbelt, 2009)</p>
<p><u>3: Laws of Hospitality</u> The Jewish scholar, Jay Michaelson, connects the violence of the men of Sodom to their violation of the laws of hospitality. He argues that, "Homosexual rape is the way in which they violate hospitality—not the essence of their transgression. Reading the story of Sodom as being about homosexuality is like reading the story of an ax murderer as being about an ax." (Michaelson, Jay (2011). <i>God Vs. Gay? The Religious Case for Equality</i>. Boston: Beacon Press. pp. 68–69)</p>	<p><u>4: In other books of the bible</u> Sodom's 'sin' is described as selfishness and greed: 'Now this was the sin of Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore I did away with them as you have seen' Ezekiel 16:49-50</p> <p>Jesus implies that the problem with Sodom was its rejection of goodness more widely: 'If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.' Matt 10: 14-15</p>

Conclusion

Having shown the confessional influences on the RE curriculum, whether conservative or liberal, this chapter shows another non-educational agenda and its influence on the curriculum. RE has been justified for its contribution to personal transformation, and with the community cohesion agenda it is justified for its contribution to a tolerant society. However critical multiculturalism and antiracism shows community cohesion to be built on unreliable foundations to say the least, omitting if not actively avoiding contextual and structural analyses which would reveal the sites and causes of discrimination.

Through these revealing analyses I can see how a wider context to belief and belonging, diversity and exclusion can nourish and enrich understanding in religion and worldviews. Religious belief is also presented as without history, dissent or diversity, yet a contextual framing of, as in this chapter, the self and community, places key aspects of religion and worldviews onto a wider framing to make them intelligible and connect them to the world.

Critical multicultural and antiracist work has shown me the value of context to frame abstract ideas such as belief, adding texture and depth, framing and revealing the nature of the subject to be understood. In the following chapter I offer several more examples of a contextual framing of aspect of a standard RE curriculum, drawing on multidisciplinary insights.

Chapter 4

Multidisciplinary RE

Introduction

Using a liberal educational model I have proposed that how religion is to be explored and investigated in the classroom should be shaped by the nature of religion and belief itself. Religion is multidimensional, therefore religious education should be multidimensional, or multidisciplinary. What we call 'religion' encompasses power, culture, identity and meaning, therefore insights pertaining to these dimensions of human experience in sociology and philosophy could nourish a religion and worldviews curriculum in arriving at a wide and contextual understanding of what it is to belong and to believe, to take an ethical stance or to be committed to a variety of principles. Following on from my analysis of community cohesion's impact on RE, I have argued that in order to understand prejudice and discrimination as well as belonging and commitment, the place to start is with what these things are. I have started to consider wider theoretical framings and now do so in more detail. This chapter illustrates well my particular contribution to a religion and worldviews curriculum design where the idea of multidisciplinary studies is gaining traction. I am able to glean insights from critical race and multicultural thinking where they furnish a greater understanding of culture, community and identity as well as exclusion and the exercise of power. In this chapter I present practical teaching examples drawn from these insights.

Within critical multiculturalism Ali Rattansi (2011) critiques multicultural education in policy as too simplistic to achieve social justice outcomes. While my claims for religion and worldviews are intrinsic, educational claims only, critiques such as Rattansi's are useful for understanding. If multicultural policy will not yield a more just society, it is unlikely to yield a good understanding of social injustice and exclusion.

Through my investigations into critical multiculturalism and antiracism, I am able to contrast a simplistic view of culture, identity and diversity found in education policy with a much more nuanced understanding offered in theoretical explorations of self and community, such as a comparison of individuality and belonging, or the intersections between culture and religion. In policy multicultural rhetoric seems to act as a sticking plaster, affirming the value of diversity

without looking too closely at the root causes of inequality. In contrast, theoretical analyses reveal sites of injustice and prejudice, and in so doing enable them to be understood.

In this chapter I connect theoretical insights and suggest teaching examples, offering a wider framing and a richer understanding of religion and worldviews. None of the suggested teaching examples are unusual; they occur on most syllabuses. What is new is the wider framing to set the information about religion and worldviews in context, and the disciplines I draw from. As far as I know critical multiculturalism, antiracism and political philosophy have not been mined for what light they can shine on the human condition to be utilised in a religion and worldviews curriculum.

As noted in the introduction to the thesis, I began my research into multicultural and antiracist thinking through a need to understand my West London teenagers better. Through gaining successive insights into the forms and maintenance of social inequality, and through this an enlarging understanding of culture, belonging, exclusion and power, I began to realise that the RE curriculum did not offer an adequate understanding of the texture and contexts of human life, including belief and belonging, community and commitment. Through these bodies of work I am able to provide wider framing analyses of religion and worldviews, to support my proposal of a single aim of understanding. I use the contextual and multidisciplinary insights offered by these fields as tools for understanding, as the following discussion demonstrates.

Although the Cattle report presents social relations as key, the conception of a cohesive community is drawn from Forest and Kearns' (2000) more complex description of 'what might constitute a cohesive society', combining types of social relationships, levels of economic equality, the physical environment and such factors as the age, wealth or health of residents (Cattle, 2001: p. 14, Forest and Kearns, 2000: p. 2128). Forest and Kearns, social scientists in the fields of policy studies and urban studies respectively, present conceptions of neighbourhood in light of contemporary concerns regarding 'a new crisis of social cohesion' (p. 2125), noting that the connection between place, community and the health of wider society in sociology date as far back as the 'rampant urbanisation' of the early 20th Century (p. 2125). With new urban, industrialised environments, fears surrounded the loosening of 'traditional ties of community', understood as 'shared space, close kinship links, shared religious and moral values', allowing a 'social order' characterised by 'anonymity, individualism and competition' (p. 2125). In the late 20th Century, the authors suggest, sociology arrived at 'another peak of interest in issues of neighbourhood and community' (p. 2126). Late 20th Century concerns were driven by fears surrounding urban poverty, combined with new modes of social contact made possible through social media, but the question remains the same; are 'locally based identities

and social networks still important' in an understanding of the human self and community? (p. 2126). Cattle, in identifying a lack of contact between groups as the problem, then offers more contact between groups as the solution, based on the assumption that shared values and positive relations will grow from contact. While Forest and Kearns' descriptive work on cohesive societies shows that such societies do contain some shared social or moral values, this is not to say that reverse engineering shared values is straightforward, or even possible, as Cattle seems to assume.

However to shine a light on diversity and community, the ways in which the neighbourhood has changed over the 20th Century are interesting; shifting gender roles and the impact of globalisation have forced adaptation, even though the routines of daily life offer continual opportunities for socialising and support, providing the 'ongoing 'repair' work' needed to adapt to changing contexts (Forest and Kearns, 2000: p. 2127, citing Turner, 1991: p. 18). There are many ways of seeing community and these affect what is seen; for example, poor neighbourhoods are seen in a context of poverty and wealthier neighbourhoods are seen as a commodity, highlighting how residents' context can affect perceptions of the physical place. In poorer areas the quality of 'neighbouring' as opposed to the 'neighbourhood' (p. 2130) is important, where social interaction offers support, even if the area is 'decaying and unattractive' (p. 2130). This single distinction between 'neighbouring' and 'neighbourhood' serves to raise a further set of questions with regards to place, stability and cohesion. Other such distinctions found in research into neighbourhood explore such things as the age and health of the residents, the depth and type of social ties, from a greeting in the street, to involved friendship or kinship, the levels of rented or owned properties and whether it is a suburban or city environment. Forest and Kearns' review of the literature suggests that contemporary fears surrounding urban, poor neighbourhoods are focused 'exclusively on disadvantaged and poor neighbourhoods' (p. 2141), while the authors themselves raise concerns with the threats posed to social cohesion of 'gated' communities for the very wealthy. This rich and diverse research shows how complex describing and predicting community cohesion is, and therefore how complex it is as a goal to achieve. None of the reports into community cohesion, including Cattle 2001 where Forest and Kearns' influence is cited, explore how far they avoid falling into the sorts of traps noted in this paper, or indeed acknowledge that such traps exist. Cattle himself could be charged with viewing the non-white, urban poor with something akin to moral panic. While the whiff of moral panic is not acknowledged in Cattle, it could be explored in religion and worldviews in relation to wealth and poverty, as I suggest in the example below.

Over decades of research, Forest and Kearns show how anxiety regarding the unravelling of a previously tight-knit social fabric corresponds to periods of rapid social and economic change. Anxiety regarding the affect social change has on community is also found in the major political philosophical distinction between liberalism and communitarianism, which could also be of use in religion and worldviews.

As Forest and Kearns consider the fear of weakening social ties from a sociological perspective, Michael Walzer explores the same fears from a political philosophical perspective, considering the notion and value of community in what he calls a 'communitarian correction' of the liberal view of the self and society (Walzer, 1990a: p. 15). The fear voiced about certain forms of political liberalism, particularly that developed by John Rawls, is that it downplays the role and value of community. Political liberalism, critics charge, posits a self 'liberated from connection, without common values, binding ties, customs or traditions' (p. 8). Walzer presents the four main ways liberalism's 'Four Mobilities' (p. 11) are seen to threaten social stability; mobility in geographical 'residence' weakens 'the sense of place', 'social mobility' means children 'seem likely to tell different stories than their parents did', increasing freedom to divorce and remarry creates complicated and unstable new families and declining 'loyalty' to political parties 'makes for a volatile electorate and hence for institutional instability' (pp. 11-12). Walzer queries whether these liberal freedoms really detach us from each other and the ties that bind, arguing that disagreements as to how far we should be free and how far we are situated still occur in 'mutually comprehensible ways' (p. 13). Like Forest and Kearns, Walzer allows that society is changing, but maintains that the survival of friendly interaction, support networks and binding commitments permit ongoing connection and conversation. Change might be unsettling or confusing for some in the neighbourhood but it does not necessarily lead to social segregation and alienation, because humans continue to communicate, cooperate and coexist, even across new social or ethical boundaries. For Walzer place, self and community maintain their stability in a liberal world. As Elizabeth Bounds notes, his communitarianism correction is 'an attempt to demonstrate that in the midst of mobility and conflict, some sort of moral and political community can be forged.' (Bounds, 1994: p. 355).

Walzer identifies and separates the *fear* of social fragmentation in the face of change from actual social fragmentation. Forest and Kearns note something similar in the ways poor, urban neighbourhoods are portrayed. Both Walzer and Forest and Kearns suggest that change, poverty and fragmentation need not mean the collapse of society because interaction and support seem to continue in new or changing forms. This could be an interesting angle to think about community and diversity in religion and worldviews. The richness of these bodies of work is

simply not present in the policy which has influenced RE, or in local and national RE curricula where religious beliefs are presented in a vacuum, detached from the history, culture and community they are rooted in. Many of the questions raised would nourish both teacher education and classroom discussion about the community, as I suggest in this chapter. Perhaps it is to be expected that government policy will feel glib and selective compared to academic theory, but the same should not be true of a supposedly critical intellectual subject of the curriculum.

Forest and Kearns' work raises two questions which could add texture to conversations about wealth and poverty in the classroom. This is a common topic from Key stage 2 to GCSE, generally covering religious teachings around society's vulnerable, religious practice, such as *zakat*, and religious charities such as Islamic Aid, Cafod, Khalsa Aid, and so on. Firstly Forest and Kearns raise a question as to the morality of wealth segregation, and secondly how far the real problem of the urban poor is the moral panic they raise in richer society. Both these questions could be explored in class, as I show below.

TEACHING EXAMPLE

Topic area: wealth and poverty

Age: KS3- 4

A: Gated Communities

- 1) Consider Biblical and Gospel teachings relating to the treatment of others, such as:
If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and are unable to support themselves among you, help them as you would a foreigner and stranger, so they can continue to live among you. (Leviticus 25: 35)
"How hard it is for rich people to enter the Kingdom of God! It is much harder for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle." (Luke 18: 24-25)
'Love your neighbour as yourself. (Mark 12:30)
- 2) Look at Christian charities, such as Christian Aid or Christians Against Poverty.
- 3) Display the Christian Aid slogan, 'we believe in life before death'. Ask groups to explain what Jewish and Gospel teaching seem to mean when expressed as charitable work.
- 4) Show an image of a modern gated development in a city.
Enquiry question: 'Should a Christian live in a gated community?'

B: Moral Panic

- Watch Stormzy's 'Shut Up' or 'Big for your Boots' on YouTube (check the video first). Ask pupils to list all the emotion words they detect in the song. How many words describe negative and how many positive emotions? Discuss what sort of person they think Stormzy is (don't shut down negative comments, you will reflect on them later)
- Show Stormzy singing 'Blinded by Your Grace Pt 2' in Westfield. Ask the class to list emotion words they detect as they listen. Compare to the emotion words listed from 'Shut Up' or 'Big for your Boots'. Are pupils surprised the same person can make such different songs? Compare songs; what is similar and what is different?
- Ask the class if they made certain judgments because Stormzy is urban, black, and singing in a takeaway chicken shop? Would it be different if he was in an environment suggesting money and power, such as if he was white, wearing a suit and standing in a smart office or a beautiful old building? Define 'stereotype' (associations based on someone's outward appearance).

In this chapter I set out practical suggestions as to how the various contextual insights gained from critical multiculturalism and antiracism could nourish and enrich a religion and worldviews curriculum. These are analyses which are rarely, if ever, utilized to offer a wider and richer framing of religion and belief. The preceding chapter offered a critique of claims that learning in RE could support community cohesion aims on the basis that community cohesion policy avoids a contextual analysis which illuminates the roots and maintenance of social exclusion. In this chapter I further develop the proposal that framing aspects of religion and belief in wider analytical contexts, such as philosophical or sociological, enhances understanding.

I have used the word 'context' for around three years when exploring how the RE curriculum could evolve with teachers. I have found it to be a non-threatening and clear way to gently critique the current abstracted, apolitical nature of learning on offer, and to show how a small amount of wider context can make subject matter intelligible. I show how the familiar information about religion can be taught, such as *haji* or the 5 K's, framed in a way that gives students something to grasp onto.

Below I present some new and some tried and tested teaching examples based on wider sociological and political philosophical framings of belonging, diversity and justice.

a) Gender

An example of a critique of multicultural policy is Susan Moller Okin's essay 'Is multiculturalism bad for women?' The article begins with a compelling case study illustrating how the multicultural protection of cultural norms in Paris in the 1980s trapped an estimated 200,000 families in polygamous situations (Okin, 1999: p. 11). The women, when interviewed 'years later' by 'reporters', in the absence of any political 'opposition', viewed the practice as 'barely tolerable in their African countries of origin' and 'an unbearable imposition' in France (p. 11). Okin argues that the protection of minority cultural or religious-based practices in a liberal state often perpetuate norms and practices which 'substantially limit the capacities of women and girls of that culture to live with human dignity equal to that of boys and men, and live as freely chosen lives as they can' (p. 13). This has been possible because the minority cultures are viewed as 'monoliths' (p. 13) from the Western liberal viewpoint, and all differences, including the differential positions of women and men, are simply not seen. This critique by Okin implies a lack of genuine interest in how far minority groups can flourish in multicultural society, where the guide of 'culture' means that non-Western women and girls can be demeaned and limited in ways that would be considered intolerable for Western women and girls. No RE syllabus I have ever come across acknowledges the danger that cultural relativism can permit and reproduce unequal norms regarding the treatment of individuals.

Religion is almost never explored as a form of power in RE. Critical gender analyses rarely make an appearance in RE curricula, despite religious justifications for women's oppression being such a visible dimension of human societies. The subordination of women is dealt with in a rather neutral fashion, if at all. For example in the GCSE Relationships theme, which addresses the role of women, gendered wedding traditions are presented as neutral aspects of a marriage ceremony. Feminist critiques however show wedding traditions are far from neutral and in fact their non-neutrality, specifically their affirmation of women's ownership by men, are the key to understanding the importance of marriage as a social institution. Such a view offers a richer understanding of religion as a form of power as much as a set of sacramental rites. If religious ethics affirming the equality of men and women are not matched by cultural realities, such as the ownership of women by men visible in many marriage traditions, religion's role in promoting this inequality must be an object of study alongside the sacramental rites.

The non-neutrality of marriage, in my example found in Western Christian wedding traditions, is passed off as beneath comment in textbooks and exam questions, which is in itself a highly political position. Looking at wedding traditions through a feminist lens as part of a study of

religious principles relating to sex, gender and the family offers more than one dimension of understanding when exploring the purpose and nature of marriage. To look through a feminist lens would be an example of a liberal educational approach drawing attention to a form of power, in this case male power over women, in order to deepen understanding. The aim is not to create feminists or to undermine religious rites, but to consider one view of the purpose of a white wedding dress, a father 'giving away' a daughter and a new wife adopting her husband's name and losing her own. Students might find a feminist angle enlightening or upsetting, some might find the implications for religion troubling, others might welcome an opportunity to engage a critical view. Revealing power forms is risky because it can cause upset, but if the aim of understanding is met through such a revealing, it can be defended. The aim is not to promote a feminist or any other view of marriage, but to explore different views of this social institution, in order to deepen understanding. However as I have noted in previous chapters, even if the revealing can be justified in educational terms, it might not be appropriate for the class in question and a teacher will still need to be guided by her own knowledge and understanding of the class. If a feminist analysis is offered, the entire class is free to reject feminist conclusions once they have understood the argument. An example suggests how this could be done.

TEACHING EXAMPLE

Topic area: Relationships theme at GCSE, Christianity paper

Age: Key stage 4

- 1) Split the class into 4 or 8 groups, give each group one or two aspects of a Christian wedding to discuss. Such as:

white wedding dress, wives traditionally take husband's name, husbands do not traditionally wear a ring, wife wears ring, the wife is given away by her father, wife wears a veil, bridesmaids, wives promise to 'obey' in traditional vows.

- 2) Ask groups to discuss what their examples symbolise at a wedding, or what message they give. Listen to suggestions.
- 3) Read this quote by Clare Chambers:

Symbolically, the white wedding asserts that women's ultimate dream and purpose is to marry, and remains replete with sexist imagery: the white dress denoting the

bride's virginity (and emphasising the importance of her appearance); the minister telling the husband "you may now kiss the bride" (rather than the bride herself giving permission, or indeed initiating or at least equally participating in the act of kissing); the reception at which, traditionally, all the speeches are given by men; the wife surrendering her own name and taking her husband's. (E, Chambers, Clare (September 1, 2005). "[Recognizing Marriage as a Symbolic Institution](#)". *allacademic.com*.)

- 4) What is Chambers saying about marriage traditions? Ask groups to discuss for two minutes. Listen to answers
- 5) Compare the male experience to the female. What difference does it make? Do students think the difference is significant, or superficial?
- 6) Discussion question: *'is marriage outdated?'*

b) Political History

Clemitshaw and Osler have both drawn attention to the tendency to historical dishonesty in curricula designed to promote a political agenda rather than to deepen understanding. Clemitshaw (2008), comparing Citizenship curricula from different countries, finds an historical context is 'to a great extent absent in English Citizenship' (p. 136), describing this as a 'repression of history' (p. 136) and an 'air-brushing of historical experience' (p. 144). The curriculum lacks all sorts of histories, such as of women's suffrage, of immigrants from the former colonies and Ireland and periods of economic depression or political upheaval which have shaped the nation and which would offer a rich and textured understanding of the peoples of Britain today. Clemitshaw argues that this 'historical blindness' means citizenship itself is defined in 'ways which do not resonate with the complex identities that exist in the country's communities' (p. 146).

Osler (2010, 2012) connects New Labour's social agenda, characterized by a desire for shared values, or commitment to 'British' values, to school curricula. She shows that the invisibility of the structural nature of exclusion in such agenda is mirrored in school curricula. For example Gordon Brown describes the 'enduring ideas which shape our view of ourselves and our communities' rather than 'ethnicity' or 'race' (Osler, 2012: p. 59, citing Brown, 14th January 2006), assuming that 'participation and civic engagement will grow from feelings of patriotism' (p. 58). However Osler notes the absence in any speeches of more contextualized reasons for

social exclusion, resulting in policy that shows no 'real understanding of structural racism or its impact in undermining efforts to promote unity and integration' (p. 58). Osler considers a scheme of work on the slave trade offered on the Citizenship curriculum; 'identity and diversity: living together in the UK' (DfES, 2007b: p. 49), where large chunks of British colonial history are glossed over or white British anti-slavery activists lauded at the expense of black American resistance movements. Osler argues that in 'seeking to harness history to serve the purposes of citizenship learning', the government '*distorts* history', in trying to 'present one "shared story"' (p. 50).

Clemmitshaw and Osler's analyses suggest that historical honesty and context are necessary to enable an understanding of both diverse groups and the contemporary world. Historical gloss, or dishonesty, is not a sufficient basis for bringing diverse groups together through a shared story, and for educational purposes it limits understanding of the past and present.

This is particularly visible in the influence of the British Values agenda on school curricula, including, if not especially, RE. The roots of British Values lie in New Labour's presentation of a country united by shared values. Osler (2010) tracks Tony Blair and Gordon Brown's speeches in office to follow a 'developing political discourse on patriotism, citizenship and multiculturalism' (p. 48) between New Labour's election in 1997, in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 (2001) and 7/7 (2005), and Britain's part in the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, to support the view that diversity policy and discourse is driven by a fear of 'home-grown' Islamic terrorism. I have mentioned Revell's argument that the desire for 'common values' signifies, at its heart, an anxiety about Muslims, whose beliefs and values 'are held to be alien to everything British' (Revell, 2012: p. 36).

Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron took up the idea of British Values, first mooted by Blair and Brown, in declaring 'state multiculturalism' a failure in its 'passive tolerance' of illiberal cultural practices, calling for a 'more active, muscular liberalism' (BBC News, 5th Feb 2011). In this speech, given at a security conference in Munich, Cameron echoed the same liberal values invoked by Blair and Brown. Since September 2014 'democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs' have been called 'Fundamental British Values' and schools have a duty to 'actively promote' them (DfE, Nov 2014: p. 5). This duty has been upheld in the recently updated Ofsted Framework. Ofsted's School Inspection Handbook (Ofsted 2019) outlines 4 deciding factors inspectors will use when making an overall judgment about a school. One of these factors,

'personal development', considers how far the school helps pupils in 'developing their understanding of fundamental British values' (Ofsted, 2019: p. 11).

Osler notes how as the community cohesion agenda was placed within a wider security agenda; education had become counter-terrorism. Moulin uses the phrase 'post- 9/11 RE' (Moulin, 2012: p. 168) to show how the teaching of Islam within RE has become justified in 'instrumentalist terms, equated with the social cohesion, and worse, counterterrorism agendas' (p. 169). However Revell critiques Islam's *misrepresentation* on the curriculum while the relationship between political Islam and the white, Christian West remains undisturbed. In critiquing the foundations of community cohesion in chapter 3 I noted Rattansi's claim that multiculturalism itself is (erroneously) seen as a causal factor to the 2001 riots, and community cohesion, 'supposedly the opposite of multiculturalism' (Rattansi, 2011: p. 30), developed as a result. Cameron's government presented multiculturalism as a threat to the liberal state. Promoting British Values, according to government guidance (DfE, Nov 2013) involves schools and teachers standing up for the liberal values outlined above in the face of other views, specifically, Muslim pupils' expression of 'Islamic values'. A national shared story, presented as the solution, is impossible without historical and contextual honesty as I have suggested using arguments above.

The example below means teachers can meet their statutory responsibilities to explore issues surrounding the so-called British values, while offering a rich and historically aware opportunity for students to debate and explore, rather than uncritically promote, the idea of British Values. In this example the roots of religious tolerance in Europe are the subject of study. This allows teachers to place religious tolerance, the roots of political or social tolerance in Europe, on a historical footing as befits an educational rather than confessional goal.

TEACHING EXAMPLE

Topic area: history of religious tolerance in Europe, to explore one of the British Values; tolerance.

Age: KS3-4

1) Display these quotations:

A: *La nôtre [religion] est sans contredit la plus ridicule, la plus absurde, et la plus sanguinaire qui ait jamais infecté le monde.*

"[Christianity] is assuredly the most ridiculous, the most absurd and the most bloody religion

which has ever infected this world.” (Voltaire, in a letter to Frederick II, King of Prussia, dated 5th Jan 1767)

B: *‘Now, I appeal to the consciences of those me who persecute, wound, torture, and kill other men on the excuse of ‘religion’, whether they do this in a spirit of friendship and kindness.’ (John Locke, A Letter Concerning Toleration, 1689)*

- 2) What do the class guess they refer to? Gather initial impressions
- 3) Show an image of Luther and Henry VIII, and an image denoting the Catholic Church, such as St Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican. Can anyone make a connection between the quotations above and these images?
- 4) Teach that Luther, objecting to certain Catholic practices in the early 1500s, created a new church, the Protestant church. Henry VIII wished to leave the Catholic church and created the church of England, which is Protestant. Europe then experienced an extremely bloody and violent period where Catholic and Protestant groups persecuted, executed and tortured each other; the European Wars of Religion.
- 5) Show a picture of the ‘The St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre’ by Francois Dubois, or play a clip from the film *Elizabeth*, where Protestants are burned, to illustrate the violence.
- 6) Return to the quotations in light of this learning. Do the class understand them better? Do they have sympathy for Locke and Voltaire’s view of Christianity?
- 7) Teach that Locke’s letter advocated *tolerating* other Christian groups, which is, putting up with them without killing them. He argued that only God knows the truth and humans cannot know if their church is correct. All we can do is put up with other ways of being Christian we find disagreeable.
- 8) Define ‘tolerance’. Discuss in groups the things students have to tolerate in their own lives.
- 9) Discuss: *is tolerance the price of freedom of belief?*

c) Philosophy

I have made use of critical multicultural analysis showing multicultural policy to be simplistic, partial and at times dishonest. If religion and worldviews is to go beyond the superficial claims of multiculturalism, that learning about others will lead to a more harmonious society, how could a curriculum engender understanding of self and community? There is much philosophical thinking about what it is to be human that could enrich understanding in religion and world views. These sorts of questions could be used to frame the more usual elements to

the RE curriculum; key beliefs, founders and leaders, inspirational people, festivals and other practices. In this section I give three examples, drawn from philosophical discussions of self and community.

Within political philosophy communitarianism and liberalism represent distinct views of the self; whether best understood as a unit of one, or as irreducible from its cultural context, although, as I noted briefly with reference to Michael Walzer's work in Chapter 2, there is often overlap. As John White notes, 'at stake' in this debate 'are rival understandings of what makes human lives and the societies in which they unfold both good and just' (White, 2003: p. 96). Justice and the good life from a liberal perspective demands 'the freedom of individuals to lead lives of their own' (p. 96). However the liberal view of the self is often criticized for imposing one view of the good life on all humans. In his 1971 *magnum opus* John Rawls presents all humans as moral, rational and autonomous decision-makers (Rawls, 1971). Rawls seeks to go beyond human particularities, especially accidental particularities, and describe a system of justice which affirms all humans' fundamental equality. Communitarian objections to Rawls's construction of justice question his universally imposed view of the human as rational. For example Michael Sandel notes that in prioritising moral rightness over pleasure or the satisfaction of desires Rawls imposes sweeping assumptions of what makes a good life (Sandel, 1998: p. 17). Below I will consider how these ideas can assist the exploration of self and community in the RE classroom.

Although Rawls embeds justice as the basis of society and fairness as its highest aim, Sandel challenges Rawls' underlying presentation of the self on communitarian grounds, questioning why it should be so that 'the principles of justice ... do not depend for their justification on any particular conception of the good life' (Sandel, 1998: p. x), or an individual's 'capacity to choose... is located in a self which must be prior to the ends it chooses' (p. 19). Sandel asks how desires and preferences, including for notions such as justice, originate in an 'abstract consciousness' (p. 21), a self which Rawls presents as 'radically disembodied' or 'purely formal' (p. 23), or, in Sandel's well-known phrase, an 'unencumbered self' (Sandel, 1984).

The unencumbered self is, in Sandel's words, 'a self understood as prior to and independent of purposes and ends' (1984: p. 86). Sandel points out that this self 'is denied ... the possibility of membership in any community bound in ties antecedent to choice' because this is to place 'the self *itself* at stake' (p. 86). Because the unencumbered Rawlsian self is prior to choices, membership and belonging, any belonging that serves to 'engage the identity as well as the interests' (p. 86) of the unencumbered self is impossible. On this basis Sandel rejects Rawls's

construction of the self, and with it, a construction of justice detached from human context. Rawls's theory of justice is an attempt to move beyond the dominance of the particular and to perceive oneself and others no longer 'through attributes I *have*' but the 'person I *am*', (Sandel, 1984: p. 89). Ultimately Sandel rejects this on the grounds that we are not detachable from our 'aims and attachments' (p. 90), because they are what make us, they are more than accidental or 'natural duties' (p. 90) we all share. In fact Sandel describes this person without any ties, commitment or influences as 'a person wholly without character, without moral depth' (p. 90).

Walzer straddles a liberal and communitarian view of the self, in presenting humans as both rooted in cultural or religious foundations but able to evolve and adapt to meet changing social norms. In his 1983 *Spheres of Justice*, Walzer presents a 'radically particularist' (Walzer, 1983: p. xiv) vision of justice which is 'relevant to the social world in which it was developed' but 'not relevant, or not necessarily, to all social worlds' (p. xiv). Unlike Rawls's abstracted descriptions of universal human traits, Walzer explores 'contemporary and historical examples' of 'distributions' in order to think about how and what we 'share, divide and exchange' (p. xiv), reflecting his view that justice is 'a human construction' (p. 5), 'the inevitable product of historical and cultural particularism' (p. 6) and therefore can take more than one form (p. 5).

For the RE curriculum this ongoing debate is highly relevant. In national RE guidance and teaching resources religious affiliation is presented as unproblematic. The acceptance of beliefs and norms is presented as straightforward and the forms of control that exist within any community, religion included, are completely omitted from analysis. In Europe institutional Christianity has been the major environmental pressure of the evolution of liberal individualism. Furthermore, European individualism is deeply Protestant, founded on a view of the individual before God. Not only is liberal individualism a phenomenon and context of European Christianity, it has shaped all the people of Europe and the West, of whatever faith or none, and has become a global context. The living debate in political theory about how far humans need to belong and how far they need to be free is surely reflected in Western religious communities in various forms. The debate between individualism and the contribution of communal life to individual flourishing would add texture and depth to an exploration of the impact of religion in individuals' and groups' lives. The examples below allow students to consider the juxtaposition of belonging and individuality through a modern case study and a Reformation-era example.

TEACHING EXAMPLE

Topic area: belief and identity/ Christianity/ non-religious beliefs

Age: KS2-4

- 1) Teach about Gretta Vosper using this Guardian article. Find a picture of Vosper online, print the article for each group. Read as a class before working in groups.

Article summary:

Gretta Vosper is a Canadian minister who describes herself as an atheist because she does not believe in 'a theistic, supernatural being called God'. The United Church of Canada wants her to step down as leader of her church but her parish strongly support her. She argues that being brave, loving and generous is far more important than believing or not believing in a God.

REF: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/24/atheist-pastor-canada-gretta-vosper-united-church-canada>

- 2) Display these questions. Groups highlight the information they will use in the text and discuss their answers.
 - What is missing from Vosper's church?
 - What is Vosper's mission?
 - What do people seem to like about Vosper's church?
 - What are criticisms against her?
- 3) Suggested enquiry question: '*what is church for?*'

TEACHING EXAMPLE

Topic area: history of Western Protestant individualism

Age: KS2-4

These activities use the Character Cards below; four responses to Luther's translation of the New Testament into German.

- 1) Give each pupil in a group of four one card each
- 2) Set up a washing line in the classroom. Write 'Luther's new church' on a piece of paper and attach to one end of the line, and 'traditional Church' at the other. Ask pupils to discuss in groups how far each character supports Luther and how far they support the traditional Church. Students hang their character cards on the washing line depending on where they think they go, and explain their answers.
- 3) Conduct a 'hotseat' activity, where individuals sit in front of the class and answer questions as their character.

Tell the class you want to find out why these characters are either interested in Luther's Bible or wish to stay with the traditional Church.

Invite pupils to think of questions which reveal the characters' reasons, such as what they gain or what they are scared of.

Character Card 1	Character Card 2
<p>FATHER ALBERT – PRIEST</p> <p>It is about mystery. It is about connecting the people with God. It's not a recipe book or a map, we're not meant to understand every word.</p> <p>It is about entering into the sacred space, made holy for God, joining in the ancient ritual to seek a connection with God.</p> <p>The Church knows best, the Church should be trusted. The pope is the representative of St Peter on Earth. Who are we to reject anything that comes from God?</p> <p>People need the guidance and nurture of the Church – that is what we are here for.</p>	<p>HERR BERTOLF – THE TOWN BAKER</p> <p>I can't read. I don't need to and I don't want to. Leave that to the priests and scholars. I sustain the neighbourhood with my bread. I am the person they all come to every day to keep body and soul together.</p> <p>Just as they all come to the priest every Sunday to pay attention to their souls, they come to me every morning to satisfy their hunger for bread.</p> <p>I provide my nourishment and the Church provides my soul's nourishment. I trust the Church. She has baptised all my children and buried my poor wife and parents.</p> <p>The Church knows what she is doing. I would never rock the boat. I would never gamble with my soul.</p>

Character Card 3	Character Card 4
<p data-bbox="416 241 919 275">HERR KRISTOFF – A COURT LAWYER</p> <p data-bbox="416 297 919 499">I haven't told my colleagues in the courts but a secret package arrived for me last night. It is the Gospels in ordinary German. Although I am trained in Latin, and as a court lawyer I read and write a tolerable Latin, I was curious.</p> <p data-bbox="416 544 919 656">I am not sure this is the right thing to do – to go against centuries of tradition and guidance feels a bit risky.</p> <p data-bbox="416 701 919 768">This is why I am keeping it quiet. I hope Luther knows what he is doing.</p> <p data-bbox="416 801 919 835">Interesting times.</p> <p data-bbox="416 869 919 936">Apparently I can read this book without a priest, and understand it for myself.</p> <p data-bbox="416 981 919 1048">I can also see what the Church does that is in the Bible and what isn't.</p> <p data-bbox="416 1093 919 1160">I am not sure if I trust myself to make these judgements, but I am interested all the same.</p> <p data-bbox="416 1193 919 1395">As a lawyer I manage the law for my clients, I don't give them the books and let them get on with it. Maybe I shouldn't be stepping onto the Church's territory and expertise like this, however, I am just interested ...</p>	<p data-bbox="927 241 1420 275">FRAU JOHANNES – HOMEMAKER</p> <p data-bbox="927 297 1420 365">I only attended school for four years before my father took me out to work around the house.</p> <p data-bbox="927 387 1420 454">Now I am married with children I will never learn to read any better.</p> <p data-bbox="927 499 1420 701">Our neighbour showed us his New Testament in German. My husband was in ecstasy. He regrets never standing up to his father and continuing his studies. He would have loved to study theology and philosophy.</p> <p data-bbox="927 745 1420 947">When he heard the first German words he shouted aloud in wonder. To be honest I was trembling as well. To understand! To not need a priest to stand between me and the words of God.</p> <p data-bbox="927 992 1420 1059">My husband wants us to order a copy of our own!</p> <p data-bbox="927 1093 1420 1294">To be able to access that holy text ourselves, to think and discuss around our own table. Not to have it controlled and parcelled out by the priests but to be in the presence of the Lord ourselves.</p> <p data-bbox="927 1328 1420 1395">To read to our own children the words of our own Bible. It is truly a miracle.</p>

The next example is drawn from conversations in political philosophy around change and continuity. Religion, as Western society, is constituted of an ancient set of norms and ideologies and is kept alive by unique individuals and evolving communities. Over the decades thinkers in this field have picked ways forwards. John White suggests that liberalism does not reject all social context, but demands a critical reflection on context and culture (White, 2003: p. 99). Walzer also presents the liberal view not as a rejection of the social self, but as 'a self capable of reflecting critically on the values that have governed its socialization' (Walzer, 1990: p. 21). Walzer goes on to argue that the important question, for 'political theory' at least, 'is not the constitution of the self' but the 'connection of constituted selves' and thus liberalism 'is best understood as a theory of relationship' (p. 21). Such conclusions could fruitfully be

explored in RE through theologies which pull away from the religious establishment, or change the religious mainstream, as I show below.

As noted above Walzer (1990a) suggests that even in a changing world there are still connections to be found in place, self and community. Bounds (1994), searching for religious and ethical analysis in Walzer’s body of work, finds in his balance of communitarian and liberal views of the self a presentation of morality as stemming from a shared culture below the level of the state in groups such as religion. Bounds suggests that Walzer’s presentation of group-based moral systems coexisting in balance under the neutral liberal state, where ‘religion can serve as a moral resource for public life’ (p. 366) is under-theorised, although ‘appealing’ (p. 355). Bounds finds a lack of attention to power and cultural hegemony in Walzer’s presentation of religion and culture, as well as a lack of analysis of the ways religious morality is a ‘two-edged sword, ‘based as much as *exclusion* of the ‘unlike’ as it is on inclusion’ (p. 368). Here Bounds raises a question largely invisible in national RE guidance although highly relevant to a study of religion; how the internal and external boundaries in the way religions define themselves shift over time. The example below invites consideration of how change happens in religion or culture and what impact change can have.

TEACHING EXAMPLE

Topic area: religious practices/ Judaism

Age: KS2-4

- 1) Display an image of **Judith Kaplan at the 70th anniversary of the first Bat Mitzvah.**

The image is housed in the Jewish Women’s Archive, there are several versions online.

Give groups 3 minutes to come up with 3 questions about the image.

- 2) Cut the information below into cards and give a set to each group:

Judith’s father was a rabbi, he performed her <i>bat mitzvah</i> .	‘ <i>bar mitzvah</i> ’ is when a boy comes of age in Judaism	Judith Kaplan’s <i>bat mitzvah</i> was conducted in New York in 1922.
Ceremonies for girls were conducted at	The young person reads from the Torah	Judith’s <i>bat mitzvah</i> was the first one to be conducted in public.

home, but never in public.	in front of the congregation.	
'bar mitzvah' means 'son of the commandments'	'Bat' means 'daughter' in Hebrew.	'Commandments' refers to Jewish law, given by God to show how to live.

- 3) Ask groups to choose three cards, and use them to explain why this event is so important in Jewish history
- 4) Ask groups to predict how this was received in the Orthodox community.
- 5) Not all New York Jews supported Judith's Bat Mitzvah. Write the 4 statements below into 4 speech bubbles and display. Ask groups to identify TWO reasons why Judith's Bat Mitzvah was seen as a bad idea, and TWO reasons why it was seen as a good idea.

A woman's sphere of influence is the home, so it is right and fitting that a young woman should be welcomed into adulthood in the home.	Religions need to change with the times. Traditions adapt without destroying the religion. The belief has not changed, just the way of showing it has changed.
Women have more of a role in public life in modern times so it is correct for women to be more involved in public religious ceremonies.	Jewish women and girls have always been 'daughters of the commandments'. A new ceremony is not necessary.

- 6) Introduce the idea that religion can be understood as a combination of beliefs, practices and community or tradition; how groups see the world, what they do, and who they do it with.
- 7) Discuss: 'did Rabbi Kaplan break religious beliefs, practices or tradition?'

d) Group Identity

Amartya Sen develops a view of the self as multiple, with multiple allegiances, as a response to presentations of the self as immutable and monolithic. Each strand of a human identity can 'enrich our bonds' and 'take us beyond our self-centred lives', but the recognition of the value of the various webs which sustain us must also include the recognition that belonging 'can firmly exclude many people' (Sen, 2006: p. 2). Sen warns that 'belligerent' (p. 2) voices demand

loyalty to a single aspect of identity, pushing for a 'bellicose identity' (p. 4) which is excluding and divisive as well as sustaining, recalling his own childhood impression of Partition, and the 'speed with which the broad human beings of January were suddenly transformed into the ruthless Hindus and fierce Muslims of July' (p. 2).

Sen brings identity debates to the level of named, rather than abstracted, forms of identity and the sites of conflict, drawing his warning from the particular rather than the universal, although his argument is universally applicable; to allow messiness and plurality in our conception of human identity. Sen mentions in passing many familiar faultlines, such as between Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda and Congo, or Muslims and Serbs in Yugoslavia. He focuses attention on Samuel Huntington's so-called 'clash of civilizations' thesis (Sen p. 40 ff, citing Huntington, 1996) where religious groups, particularly Christianity and Islam, are demarcated and reduced, as if such a thing were possible, to one identity, and an identity that excludes or does not tolerate, others. As I have noted above, the flipside of belonging is others' exclusion, despite religion's claims of inclusivity. How far does religious love and acceptance extend to those in other denominations, religions or those who have rejected religion altogether? How far are religious doctrines the triumph of one view and the repression of others? How far are religious or cultural faultlines exploited by those in power for gain? These are angles of analysis that could be woven into a study of religious truth claims, in order to examine a religion's boundaries as well as its interior.

The idea of inclusivism, pluralism and exclusivism is present on some GCSE specifications and is not unheard of in RE curricula. However Sen's analysis reinforces the idea that the boundaries of religious entities are as worthy a subject for study as the inner world of doctrine and practice, and should be a more deliberate mode of thinking. The exclusivist nature of the core Christian teaching, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.' (John 14: 6, New International Version) could be compared to the inherently plural nature of Hinduism, through the various paths pertaining to each deity.

Sen's warning of reductive identities and the liberal-communitarian conclusion that an individual self can find belonging within a group while retaining critical awareness of practices within the group, both offer interesting avenues of enquiry in the classroom. The global Anglican Church's deep and visible divisions regarding women's authority is a good example of religion in a wider social and political context.

TEACHING EXAMPLE

Topic area: Women Bishops/ gender

Age: KS3-4

- 1) Starter: display these quotations by then Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams:

'the church is 'not intelligible to wider society'

'the church is 'willfully blind'

REF: BBC News, 21st November 2012: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-20433152>

Ask the class to suggest what he was talking about [the initial failure to adopt women bishops in 2012]

- 2) Watch this video clip of Libby Lane, the first female bishop (ordained, after a second vote, in 2014): <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-30510137> .
- 3) As they watch, students list THREE reasons Lane seems to want to be a bishop. Share with the group. How far do the class feel Lane is a threat to Christian tradition, or a positive addition.

This would be an example of religion and worldviews following liberal educational principles, where the teacher does more than take basic doctrinal positions at face value, but places belief, opinion, change and dissent on a larger continuum. Religious behaviour and belief should not be exempt from these current and valuable analyses. Explorations of religion's inner doctrines can go hand in hand with exploration of religion as a source of power and influence in the world to furnish a richer analysis of the phenomenon of religion and belief.

Below I present insights drawn from critiques of multicultural thinking to show questions about culture and society which could furnish rich seams of understanding in a religion and worldviews curriculum.

e) Culture, power and Inequality

What is the relationship between belief, belonging, culture and religion? Multicultural theory has some insights to offer, although it is itself critiqued as simplistic, as I will show. Competing views of culture and power, such as can be found in discussions around multicultural and critical multicultural thinking, offer rich seams of exploration for the classroom, raising questions about the nature of culture, cultural connectedness and overlap, the demands of cultural diversity and the unequal status of diverse cultures. Where simplistic multicultural thinking is problematized by thinkers in the field of critical multiculturalism or antiracism, I gain insight into where the critical gaze might fall, in a small way, in the classroom. Ali Rattansi (2011) critiques multicultural education policy as too simplistic a view of culture, identity and diversity to yield a useful understanding. This can be compared with a much more nuanced understanding offered in theoretical explorations of self and community, such as I have presented in political philosophy, as well as feminist and antiracist excavations of power in culture. In policy multiculturalism seems to act as a sticking plaster, affirming the value of diversity without looking too closely at the root causes of inequality, as can be seen in community cohesion rhetoric. In contrast, theoretical analyses reveal sites of injustice and prejudice, and in so doing, draw the attention to faultlines or competing sites of power which could be explored in the classroom, as well as raising interesting questions about the nature and complexity of human communities.

In these final examples I suggest setting religious practices in wider cultural contexts to root them in times and places, and to look at, rather than avoid, damaging norms such as Islamophobia, as part of an understanding of culture, religion and power.

i) Culture and Religion

In multicultural theory culture is presented as the foundation of each human life. For example Parekh's 2000 (2nd edition 2006) *Rethinking Multiculturalism* draws together an analysis of centuries of economic and identity struggles to yield a broad and deep multicultural vision. For Parekh, modern multiculturalism is the result of multiple minority groups' struggles for political and economic agency. Parekh perceives a multicultural society as supporting what he calls 'communal diversity' (Parekh, 2000: p. 4), where diverse groups live side by side, pursuing their own ways of life while fully engaged in majority society. For Parekh other forms of cultural diversity, such as a more religious life than the mainstream, or a stance of moral

opposition to the mainstream, do not qualify as multiculturalism, but normal diversity within human societies, whereas communal diversity is new and deliberate because for most of human history the majority view has simply dominated. Both particular and shared cultures are ongoing endeavours, constantly created and recreated, because culture is the lens through which all humans view the world. There is no human without culture. Culture is bound up with economic and physical capabilities, with relations to institutions and laws, with geography, knowledge of the past and future and awareness of alternatives. Thus Parekh presents multiculturalism, which takes culture and community seriously, as a rightful challenge to a political outlook which seeks to describe all humans in the same terms. In terms of the liberal-communitarian debate, Parekh is inclined to fit the liberal outlook *inside* an overriding multiculturalism, representing one view among many. As a short example below shows, to consider where religion ends and culture begins offers an opening into a richer form of thinking about religious practices and customs.

Rattansi has problematized multicultural thinking as essentialising and reductive (Rattansi, 1992, 2011), for example arguing in 1992 that diverse and changing minority contexts are not found in multicultural theory; 'the highly complex, contextually variable and economically and politically influenced drawing and redrawing of boundaries that takes place in encounters within the minority communities and in relation to white groups' (Rattansi, 1992: p. 39). I have suggested a tendency in RE to essentialise, or at least to reduce religious affiliation to simplistic terms, and critiques such as Rattansi's show that multiculturalism is not unproblematic as a method of understanding human diversity. However, whereas much of the depth and detail of theorizing about the individual and group presented through political theory above is absent from RE, Parekh's foundational argument, that culture, belief and difference matters, is very much a feature of RE. The courtesy with which Christianity is treated in RE has been extended to other faiths and worldviews, and although uncritical and Christian-centric, there is a general willingness to engage with diverse ways of seeing.

Whether and how a distinction can be made between religion and culture and the impact of both on human self-understanding is a good place to start this thinking, which can become more complex, critical and sophisticated over time, as subsequent examples in this section show. This short example aptly sums up the connections and overlap between culture and religion.

TEACHING EXAMPLE

Topic area: religious practices/ Sikhi

Age: KS2-3

- 1) Display an image of a Sikh *chauri*. Better still, bring one to class for pupils to touch and handle.

Can the class suggest what it is?

- 2) Learn about the use of the *chauri* in Gurdwaras in relation to the Guru Granth Sahib using the notes below (cut up or hand out as they are);

Sikhi originated in the 1500s in the Punjab region of Northern India. Its founder, Nanak, was born a Hindu.	In India important or rich people would have someone to fan them to keep them cool.
The <i>chauri</i> is used to fan the guru Granth Sahib (Sikh holy book) as a mark of respect.	In Gurdwaras in the UK the Guru Granth Sahib is placed on a platform and fanned with a <i>chauri</i> today.

- 3) Discuss whether the *chauri* is religious or cultural.

ii) Recognition

Charles Taylor's 'politics of recognition' calls for a positivity towards culture, based on his analysis of 'strands in contemporary politics' which all seem to 'turn on the need, sometimes the demand, for *recognition*' (Taylor, 1992: p. 25). Recognition is defined by Taylor as 'a person's understanding of who they are, of their fundamental defining characteristics as a human being', which is accepted positively by the world they interact with (p. 25). Recognition is crucial because of '*misrecognition*' or '*nonrecognition*', where 'a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being' (p. 25).

Nancy Fraser suggests that 'neo-Hegelian philosophers' such as Taylor have enabled something of a 'renaissance' of Hegel's 'phenomenology of consciousness' in articulating the politics of

recognition (Fraser, 2003: p. 10). Hegel's thesis, that it is in seeing others as 'subjects' (p. 10) in their own right, that we may see our own subjectivity and truly know ourselves, in its current form means the other must be seen as who they are, not assimilated or subsumed by more powerful modes of being. It is a call for a 'difference-friendly world' (p. 7), in Fraser's words.

In presenting the politics of recognition as having come to overpower the earlier 'politics of redistribution', Fraser sets out two understandings of why there is injustice as two visions for righting the balance. Redistributive models, such as those designed by Rawls and Dworkin in the 'late 20th Century liberal tradition' (Fraser, 20003: p. 10) offer 'sophisticated theories of distributive justice' (p. 10). These conceptions see injustice as 'rooted in the economic structures of society' and thus solutions require 'economic restructuring' (p. 13) in law, employment, pay, housing, and so on. Conversely the politics of recognition sees injustice in 'cultural' terms, such as 'cultural domination' or 'nonrecognition' (p. 13) where demeaning, undignified characteristics are imposed upon groups. The solution is 'cultural or symbolic change', such as positivity, friendship and listening (p. 13).

Although the two forms seem to be at odds, Fraser argues they are both essential for a rich understanding of injustice, and a solution for justice. She calls for a conception of justice where the full 'complexity' (p. 48) of these two dimensions forms the basis for an integrated model, encompassing history and context, identity and class, 'shifts in social structure and political culture' (p. 48) to explore and guard against both 'maldistribution' and 'misrecognition' (p. 48). For a religion and worldviews curriculum these long-running debates mean two different understandings of injustice could be brought to the classroom to be explored, applied to today's world and discussed. Whether justice means material security or existential recognition, or, on Fraser's view, a combination of both, is a debate that could be had, drawing on current issues and examples as well as ethical framings of both economic and cultural exclusion.

Other multicultural work, notably that of Will Kymlicka, acknowledges minority groups' struggle for recognition. I have presented New Labour's multicultural rhetoric as a sticking plaster, applied to hide disparities in power and agency, in comparison to multicultural theoretical work depicting multiculturalism as the *result* of these struggles. Kymlicka, like Parekh, presents the evolution of multiculturalism as the history of various struggles of groups whose basic citizenship does not endow equality (Kymlicka, 2002). Kymlicka depicts multiculturalism as a constant reshaping and reaffirming of a shared, if dominated, public space, forged through powerful parties' efforts at nation building and weaker parties'

demands for recognition. Although the idea of a 'single common culture' (Kymlicka, 2002: p. 329) rarely means a truly collaborative and diverse multi-culture, but a majority-dominated culture, minority groups continue their struggle.

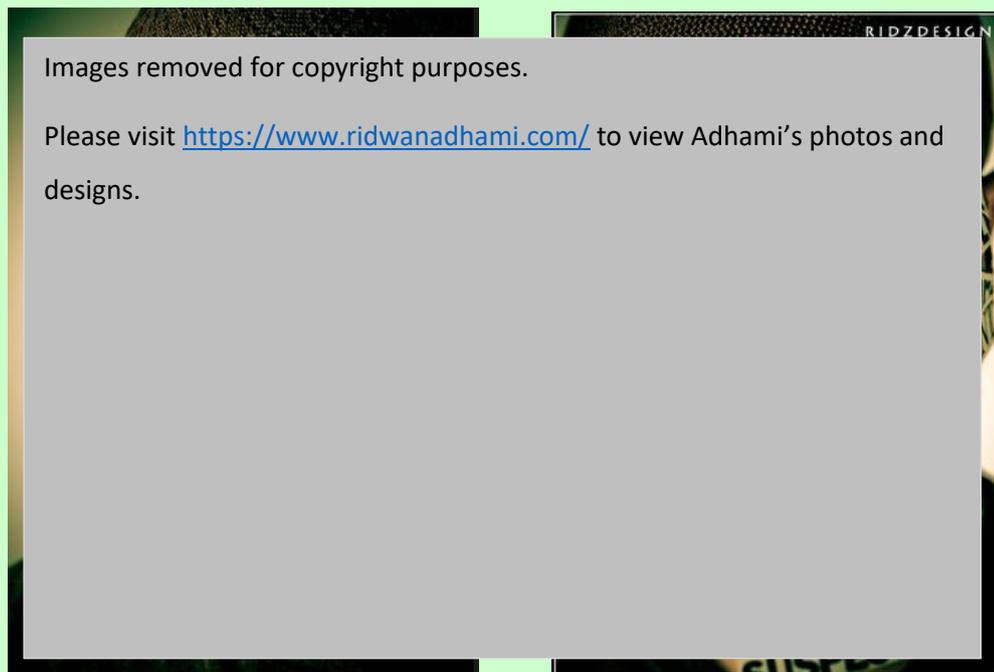
This short and powerful example shows how the use of art and contemporary cultural forms can open up conversations among students, once a demeaning norm, such as Islamophobia, has been made visible.

TEACHING EXAMPLE

Topic area: prejudice and discrimination/ Islamophobia

Age: KS3-4

Look at the art of Ridwan Adhami. What are these pictures saying?



iii) Citizenship

Exploring non-Western religious groups in RE should require acknowledgment that they operate in relation to a white, Western, Christian, liberal world rather than a neutral backdrop. Multiculturalism derived from the liberalism-communitarianism debate has explored the need for group rights, balanced with a widespread willingness to adopt liberal norms and forego group rights. Kymlicka supports Joseph Raz's 'liberal culturalist' view (Raz 1994: p. 339) which

acknowledges the liberal state as not a neutral backdrop but a hard-won struggle for freedom from tradition, where a fine balance is required to enable cultural difference without permitting illiberal norms. The liberal culturalist view is closest to New Labour's multiculturalism, where positivity towards cultural diversity is tempered by a profound commitment to political liberalism and the ever-present tendency to present diversity in 'them and us' terms. Exploring non-Western religious groups in RE should require acknowledgment that they operate in relation to a white, Western, Christian, liberal world rather than a neutral backdrop. Tarik Modood's multicultural work is based around such an acknowledgment (Modood, 2013). Modood focuses on the demands multiculturalism makes on white, Christian, European cultures, fully appreciative of the deep transformation necessary in the white world for previously colonized subjects to be viewed as equal citizens. Modood thus presents this as 'a new political idea, a new '-ism'' (p. 6).

Modood's view of multiculturalism is specific to Western Europe where significant cultural and ethnic diversity is largely the result of post-war immigration from former colonies. Such specific histories could enrich classroom conversations on multiculturalism and diversity. I was fascinated myself to discover recently, on researching this topic for a unit of work, the difference between Sikh and Buddhist immigration to Britain. A budding Sikh Empire was toppled by the British and subsumed into the territories of the Raj. The last Sikh Maharajah was installed in a castle in Scotland and died in Paris, visiting his homeland only once, and briefly, in his lifetime. After the horrors of Partition Sikhs (along with Muslims and Hindus) arrived in Britain in desperate need of stability and despite meeting hostility and antagonism, British Sikhi has become something of a success story. Buddhism, stamped out in India before the British arrived but flourishing in Himalaya, South East Asia and the Far East, was feted in Britain by parties keen to learn from Buddhist wisdom and practice. Of course the history and context of Islam and Christianity from the Crusades to immigration after Partition would be equally valuable in offering a rich and diverse understanding of Muslims in Britain. As Modood offers a specific multiculturalism for Britain's history and context in Western Europe, students of RE could consider specific histories of communities in Britain to offer an understanding of the non-Christian faiths as peoples with a history as well as members of global religions. Such views offer rich and contextual understanding of religious and cultural groups within Britain as well as reveal Britain as a context in itself with a powerful culture incomers must navigate. As I have shown community cohesion and multiculturalism in policy avoid any critical view of the state or an uncovering of power imbalances. In contrast multicultural and critical multicultural theory political philosophy is capable of both revealing dominant norms and critiquing

multiculturalism itself for reproducing such norms. An example below explores the mass-scale geopolitical pressures that brought Sikh groups to the UK. After learning about these forces, students could then explore more standard RE fayre; the 5 K's, becoming *amritdhari*, the Gurdwara, and so on, with a sense of the history and roots of British Sikhi.

TEACHING EXAMPLE

Topic area: roots of Sikhi in the UK

Age: KS3-4

- a) Way in: Display images of Sikhs in Britain from Google images. Find some surprising ones. Suggested search terms: Southall Sikhs, Sikh festivals Britain, Sikh langar homeless, Sikh police officers, Sikh soldiers. Show a varied and interesting picture of Sikhi in Britain.
- b) Gather what the class know about **where** Sikhi came from originally and **why** Sikhs came to live in Britain.
- c) First Sikh in Britain: display an image of **Maharaja Duleep Singh**, the first Sikh to come to Britain in 1854. Do the class know what 'Maharaja' means? It means 'great ruler' or 'great king' in Sanskrit. Why was an Indian king living in Victorian Britain? The 'India Office' rented castles for the Maharaja in Scotland, Yorkshire and Elveden. What was the India Office? To answer this question the class will learn a bit about the British invasion of India, the Sikh Empire and the Anglo-Sikh wars. Use the information cards below to create a timeline.
- d) First arrange the dates in chronological order. Then attach cards to dates, and a narrative will emerge.
- e) Using the cards, ask groups to give three separate reasons why Sikhs came to Britain [Maharaja Singh: exiled when Britain took control of Sikh Empire, as workers in the 1950s, to escape violence of Partition in the 1950s). Colour-code the timeline.

Further information on Indian Partition and Sikh immigration:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/sikhism/history/britishsikhism.shtml>

Further information on British rule over India:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/clips/zjy7pv4>

- f) As a homework, ask the class to find out numbers and areas of Sikh populations in the UK from the most recent census or most recent **British Sikh Report**.

What are the Roots of Sikhs in the UK?

When Sikh warrior Ranjit Singh captured Lahore from the Mughal (Muslim) powers in 1799, the Sikh Empire was born.	The Sikh Empire lasted from 1799 until its defeat to the British in the Second Anglo-Sikh war in 1849	The Sikh Empire was based around Punjab in India, and stretched to present day Pakistan, Tibet and Afghanistan.	A descendent of Guru Nanak crowned Ranjit Singh as Maharaja in Punjab in 1801.
1799	1849	1757	1843
1845-1846	1848-1849	1947	1950s
The British invaded and captured Mumbai in 1757. The city came under the control of the British East India Company.	The East India company took Indian goods, sold them and retained the profits. Their power was maintained by armed militia.	At the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh the East India company established a base miles from the Sikh Empire's borders.	In 1843 the East India Company took control of a province on the Sikh borders.
In 1845 the East India Company invaded Sikh Punjab, The Sikhs fought back. The First Anglo-Sikh war lasted until 1846.	At the end of the First Anglo-Sikh War the British had gained control of some Sikh territory.	The Sikh Empire was defeated by the British in the Second Anglo-Sikh war of 1848-1849 and came fully under British control.	Maharaja Duleep Singh was exiled to Britain at the age of 15. He was only allowed to return to India twice more in his lifetime in two short, heavily-controlled trips.
The British controlled India in total from 1757 to 1947. India gained independence in 1947.	After World War 2 Britain asked its former colonies to send workers to help re-build Britain's towns and cities.	Many Sikhs moved to Britain in the 1950s to escape violence and displacement which had begun in 1947 with the British exit and Partition of India and Pakistan.	Although people from India had been asked to come to Britain as workers, many Sikhs could not get jobs unless they removed their beard and turban. They faced racism and rejection.
After decades of British rule, Indian people came to see themselves as citizens of the British Empire.	At the end of British rule and the beginning of Indian Independence, the new country of Pakistan was created to provide Indian Muslims with their own country.	Between 200,000 and 500,000 people were killed during Partition, and some 14 million Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims were displaced from their homes.	Partition meant that the Punjab was split into India and Pakistan; the Sikh Empire had become two separate countries.

iv) Racism

As I mentioned above, Ali Rattansi critiques multicultural thinking itself as uncritical and reductive, and in doing so offers insight as to how presentations of cultural and religious diversity can either maintain or reveal unequal norms. Rattansi argues firstly that multiculturalism confirms a racial distinction between white and non-white in the majority white Western nations, and secondly that this racial divide permits those 'others', the non-white, non-Christian, often poorer groups, to carry the responsibility for their own exclusion. Rattansi calls these processes firstly racialization (Rattansi, 2011: p. 9) and secondly 'culturalization' (p. 115), as I discuss below.

On what basis does Rattansi claim that multicultural policy in Europe (as well as Canada and Australia) 'was *racialized* from its inception' (Rattansi, 2011: p. 9, author's emphasis)? He argues that non-white incomers to Britain are seen as '*racially* distinct from the majority white populations' (p. 9, author's emphasis) and had not long previously been regarded as 'innately inferior races' (p. 9). Rattansi shows how the 1948 Nationality Act allowing entry to Britain and citizenship for workers from former colonies was intended for white workers from Canada, New Zealand and Australia, and at a push Poland and Eastern Europe. 'The British government tried to prevent the *SS Windrush* from sailing' (p. 22), preferring white workers. The Colonial Office tried to prevent sub-continental and Caribbean immigrants. It was recruitment from a desperate NHS and London Transport direct to the Caribbean and India that brought large groups of workers to Britain. However these incoming workers still did the worst jobs; the most dirty and dangerous, the poorest paid and the night shifts. They were treated with hostile disdain by landlords, employees, teachers and the police. Rattansi argues that the ideas that led to multiculturalism were always framed 'in terms of 'race relations'' (p. 24); itself a phrase implying a genuine incompatibility between the 'races'. The underlying and unacknowledged racial tone to multiculturalism means that anxiety concerning 'growing economic insecurity and more general social fragmentation' is all too often 'displaced into issues of immigration' (p. 5). The racial underlay of notions of multiculturalism is visible, when, as Rattansi argues, "multiculturalism' appears to have become the container into which Western European nations have poured anxieties whose origins often lie in social and economic changes that are considerably wider than those stemming from the consequences of immigration and multiculturalist policies' (p. 5). Thus the racialization Rattansi describes, whereby incomers were seen primarily as racially different, gave way to 'culturalisation'; blame for any social problems laid at the feet of incomers or minority groups' cultural differences.

Rattansi's historical account warns teachers not to take multicultural claims at face value, much as I have argued throughout this thesis; that a superficial positivity towards diversity will not engender either understanding of the roots of inequality or greater social cohesion. However analyses such as Rattansi's combined with political philosophical questions around the self and community raise pertinent lines of enquiry for the classroom. The example below has been published in a practical book for teachers; *Examining Religion and Belief: Sikhs* (RE Today, January 2019), where students also consider how many British Sikhs observe the 5b K's, based on data from the British Sikh Report 2018. Combined with the historical roots of Sikhs in the UK, as presented above, such a line of enquiry allows students to grapple with ideas of individuality and belonging, external and internal contexts and to engage with racist and other forms of exclusion. The wider context of white racism towards Asian incomers is connected to an exploration of individuality, belonging and identity, to allow a wide-ranging and messy consideration of religion's multiple dimensions.

TEACHING EXAMPLE

Topic area: Racism/ Identity/ Sikhi

Age: KS3-4

Fitting In, Standing Out

Teacher Page

This information and activities will help you class to think about the benefits and hazards of religious commitment with regards to the 5 Sikh *kakaars* (5 K's) and for teenagers more generally.

How do teenagers balance their connections and commitment to their culture and family, and how do they assert themselves as individuals? The activities on this page allows these conversations about identity and belonging though up to date data from British Sikh practice. The following page (student page) can be given as a classroom resource.

.....

- 1) The film- maker Gurinder Chadha, a British Sikh from Southall, talks about her father's experience when he first came to Britain in 1962 on Desert Island Discs (27.11.15, BBC Radio 4). Link to the programme: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06psb58> (from 5:00 minutes to 7:08, but the whole interview is excellent). She explains very succinctly the racism faced by first generation immigrants, and the high hopes they had for their children.

Chadha's answers have been transcribed on the student handout, but it is best to listen to her voice and expression as well as reading along.

As a child Chadha wanted to direct films but her school suggested she become a secretary and her family wanted her to become a doctor and then get married. The film is about her own determination to follow her dreams, while being acutely aware of what her parents suffered as first generation immigrants to Britain and their high hopes for their children.

- 2) Watch the trailer for Chadha's well-known film, *Bend it Like Beckham*. Use the clip to discuss the benefits but also potential difficulties for British Sikhs growing up in two cultures. Students might point out that Jess's white friend Jules also has pressure from her family, and it is not just girls from Asian families who face assumptions and stereotypes.
- 3) Talk about all the things that restrict teenagers, whatever background; parents and teachers, school work, rules and laws, expectations, tradition and custom, etc.

List what teenagers gain from belonging to a specific culture or groups, and the ways these might restrict them. Can members of the class offer any personal examples?

Student page

...

Gurinder Chadha, British Sikh filmmaker

Gurinder Chadha explains why her father decided to move the family from Kenya to London in 1962. Kenya had become independent after many decades of British rule and society was changing. The Asian populations in Kenya, brought over by the British, were feeling increasingly out of place.

Chadha says,

'Kenya has become independent and something called Africanisation was going on. My father had grown up in a land which, as far as he was concerned, was England, so every morning when he went to school he would sing 'God Save the Queen'. And so for him, and a lot of people like him, suddenly everything was shifting and changing and nobody knew what was going to happen to them. And so there were offers at that time for people to come to England, to the Motherland, as it were, and he decided, he had two young daughters, he would come to England and see what's what.

He says if he had the money to buy a plane ticket back he would, it was that inhospitable and that cold. He used to work for Barclay's Bank, and then when he came to Southall, he went to the Barclay's Bank in Southall and was duly thrown out.. literally, 'you can't have those expectations', you know, 'damn you for having that, kind, of, audacity, to think that someone who has got a turban and a beard can even dream of being in a bank.' But because my father grew up in Africa he kind of loved the outdoors and so he decided to go for the Post Office, and then he was very happy being a postman.... Sadly he cut his

hair and took off his turban because he couldn't get a job.... It was upsetting, definitely, at that time, and there is quite a sweet story... I was too young to know, about when my sister arrived with us she hardly recognised him, and she couldn't quite work out who he was.

My parents' generation did it for their kids; making a life for the children, education for the children, so when we hear the sort of cliched version of 'every Indian parent wants their child to be a doctor or a lawyer', you know, that comes from truth, that comes from struggle and hardship.'

From <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06psb58>

Conclusion

I have taken steps to exemplify how a wider framing, drawn from disciplinary analyses, can enhance understanding and offer purchase for critical enquiry. My initial rejection of the claim that the RE curriculum allows critical investigation is based on the abstract and one-dimensional view of religion and belief offering nothing to critique.

As I have noted, I first began researching issues of equality and diversity through interest in my students' lives but came to realise that sociological and philosophical explorations of what it is to be an individual, to belong to a group, to be privileged or demeaned, to interact with others and the world, are all highly pertinent to a multidisciplinary religion and worldviews curriculum with the aim of understanding. In this chapter I have shown how such framings can enrich ordinary topics on the RE curriculum. In the following chapter I focus on the benefits for understanding of a critical view.

Chapter 5

Critical RE

Introduction

As I have shown multiculturalism in policy, as well as RE curricula, lacks the critical view present in theory from a range of related disciplines, whereby hidden sites of power are rendered visible and become part of the analysis. RE has been far more influenced by education policy than academic debate in developing along multicultural or community cohesion lines. Both describe a form of integration dressed up as shared values. Both look at minority communities in abstract, with no consideration of current and past contexts. I have suggested therefore that RE as liberal education, with a primary aim of developing understanding, should offer wider historical, philosophical or social contexts in order to enhance understanding. I have shown how multicultural policy is partial and therefore non-educational when expressed in schools. Critiques of multicultural policy reveal a tendency to essentialise minority cultures or religions or present them as monolithic. I have proposed several teaching examples drawn from theory to add texture, depth and complexity to a study of people, community, belonging and believing, to contribute to a growing interest in a multidisciplinary studies of religion and worldviews.

In this chapter I focus on the service to understanding a critical view offers. While some of this ground has been covered in my considerations of critical multiculturalism and political philosophy, I present a critical view separately for the particular insights it offers. A critical view, whether of gender, whiteness, Christianity or other forms of power, reveals hidden structure and norms which explain how and why power is distributed in certain ways, how power is maintained, and, crucially, how exclusion from power is maintained. A critical view will not be employed all the time but when necessary for understanding, it is an essential mode of analysis.

In this chapter I set out the particular insights offered by critical race thinking, from Critical Race Theory and Charles Mills' philosophy of whiteness and suggest how these insights could nourish an understanding of culture and community, power and domination in RE. I show an example of uncritical RE and consider how far a critical angle already exists in RE pedagogies and approaches. A critical view is proposed as a necessary dimension to understanding in RE as liberal education.

a) What is a critical view?

i) Antiracism and Multiculturalism

I have shown how the limitations of early multiculturalism are also found in the RE curriculum; a lack of criticality and context. I have used insights from critical multiculturalism to add texture and complexity to a study of belief, belonging and diversity. In this section I compare antiracism to critical multiculturalism to consider the insights both offer to a critically aware religion and worldviews curriculum.

Both critical multiculturalism and antiracism turn the critical gaze on structures and outlooks that permit discrimination in schools, workplaces and institutions. Antiracist scholars within the trans-Atlantic field of Critical Race Theory (CRT) reveal how schools reinforce and reproduce racialised norms. CRT, a sociological discipline, shows how by subtle interpersonal and corporate responses white teachers in schools create racialised outcomes for black and ethnic minority students. I have mentioned the Commission for Racial Equality's 2000 report that black boys are routinely excluded for behaviour that white boys are not punished for, and have consistently lower educational outcomes (CRE, 2000: p. 11). Data and analyses of this kind form the basis of CRT.

A British antiracist movement preceding CRT's emergence is identified by Alastair Bonnet. Writing in 1993 he describes the emergence of a British antiracist movement, a loosely applied epithet which encompassed 'street-level anti-Nazi demonstrations', 'local government Racism Awareness Training programmes' and, 'the most active and controversial arena of anti-racist activity', work within education (Bonnet, 1993: p. 4). This form of antiracist analysis and activism in British education did not survive the neoconservative government of the 1980s. Despite British antiracism's demise, CRT crossed the Atlantic and is active in a British form. David Gillborn also describes the 1980s as the height of the antiracist education movement in the UK, where antiracist educators used schools as a space in which to address racist organisations such as the National Front (Gillborn, 2004). Such educators were part of the wider antiracist movement located in 'radical left authorities' (p. 35), such as the Inner London Education Authority.

In 1993 Bonnet points out differences between perceptions of the terms 'antiracism' and 'multiculturalism' in Britain and the USA. In Britain the term 'antiracism' attracts particular ire from various arms of the conservative establishment, needed by the criticisms of the British status quo inherent in its stances. However in the United States, the term simply refers to

anyone who dislikes racism, and can be claimed by a range of people across a wide political spectrum. In Britain, while antiracism is portrayed as intolerably radical, multiculturalism seems to occupy a less threatening space, as doing away with unjust power structures is not an overt aim. The British multicultural focus is on understanding the non-Christian, non-European groups residing in Britain. However, across the Atlantic, multiculturalism is seen as more controversial and more of a threat, partly because it does address issues of power and is therefore overtly more radical than it appears to be in Britain. Paul McLaughlin in a philosophical exploration of what is meant and understood by the idea of 'radical' notes that what is radical, that is reform seeking to get at the root of an idea, institution or power form, can be viewed both positively and negatively by progressive and conservative thinkers, on both sides of the political spectrum (McLaughlin, 2012). Seen from either left or right, an unwelcome radical outlook speaks of intolerable extremism or the threat of revolution (p. 9). In the period referred to here, Britain in the 1970s to early 1990s, both left and right objected to the other's perceived radical agenda. The left perceived the right to be tearing down the structural supports of society, the right perceived the left to be doing much the same. Over twenty years has passed since Bonnet made these observations, and I have presented multicultural education thus far as not employing a view radical enough to understand the scope of social injustice in Britain. The split between antiracist and multicultural education work in Britain remains of interest because I want to weave insights from both into a religion and worldviews curriculum. While RE has certainly been influenced by a multicultural agenda, I myself have never encountered any critical multicultural or antiracist ideas or discourse in schools. I have shown how although teaching resources and policy claim to support multicultural aims, they do not permit any more than a superficial analysis in the classroom, remaining focused on minority and incoming cultures. However critical multicultural and antiracist education analyses have the potential to enable a critical view of society.

In the UK there has been a schism between antiracist education and multicultural education, but is it necessary? Stephen May (1999) calls this split 'a peculiarly British problem' (p. 3), based on antiracist education's rejection of multicultural education for the same reasons that gave rise to critical multiculturalism; multicultural education risks creating people as 'others', it reifies cultural difference and ignores completely structural discrimination. Antiracism on the other hand names discriminatory structures in order to fight them. May notes that between the 1950s and 1970s antiracist work showed how British institutional and social life was constructed in a way that left black and Asian people at a colossal disadvantage. The antiracist approach sought to change this by directly attacking the state institutions and social attitudes

that enabled this form of inequality. However, this nascent movement was too short-lived to have a significant impact. The multicultural movement, while sharing antiracism's social-ethical aims, imagines that prejudice can be met with greater understanding of human cultural and religious differences. Antiracism's attitude is oppositional, using language like, 'oppression, exploitation, power struggle' (Gillborn, 2004: p. 37). A multiculturalist approach might pursue adaptations to the law to accommodate cultural difference, but essentially seeks to change peoples' minds. It uses words like, 'culture, ethnicity, prejudice, equality.' (p. 37). Both fields are concerned with social inequality but have different understandings of the cause and therefore the solution.

I have noted Bonnet and Gillborn's accounts of antiracist activity in education and wider society in the 1980s. Antiracism from the outset sought to uncover how racial inequality is created and maintained. What does this period reveal? Godfrey Brandt in his 1986 antiracist *tour de force*, *The Realization of Anti-Racist Teaching*, declares that racism is 'endemic' (Brandt, 1986: p. 38) in British society, based on the clear evidence of the prospects and living conditions of black Britons: in all areas of life they are at a disadvantage- schooling, housing, employment, in dealings with the police, institutions and under the law. Brandt shows how the highly contested notion of 'race' in education, which many antiracist thinkers assert is a white fabrication, has been packaged as uncontroversial fact and then used to explain black underachievement. For example through 'IQism' where the sort of knowledge that marks a child as 'intelligent' is class and culture-specific, or black disadvantage viewed as a fact, an unfortunate side effect of 'black culture', rather than the end result of contingent forces external to black children. IQ-ism crops up in Gillborn's analysis of New Labour's education policies, themselves seen as a re-versioned form of Thatcher's 'meritocracy'. IQ-ism is also found in later studies, for example Ladson-Billings (2004) and Gillborn (2002). This suggests that Brandt's findings had no impact on educational practice and the ongoing reproduction in schools of power inequalities remained invisible. The use of this for an RE curriculum prioritising understanding is clear; antiracism in education offers the criticality necessary to reveal what is hidden.

Despite the differences between multicultural and antiracist approaches, particularly the antiracist focus on external structures as opposed to multiculturalism's internal cultural landscape, critical views can be found in multicultural as well as antiracist work. For example Parekh calls for a critical view of Europe's Empire-building aggressions and for 'changes in the legal arrangements of society' as well as changes in society's 'attitudes and ways of thought'

(Parekh, 2006: p. 2), arguing that his alignment with the politics of recognition encompasses an implicit understanding that economic and material conditions, and considerations of power, institutions, group identity and individual identity have always been part of this politics. However Parekh, as a multicultural thinker still prioritises an understanding of others' internal landscapes over understanding the external factors that shape identities, driven by the desire to understand what a human culture is, prior to gaining an understanding of problems like prejudice and discrimination.

ii) Critical Whiteness

Stephen May suggests that the schism between critical multiculturalism and antiracism is largely unnecessary as the two approaches can work to complement rather than compete with each other. However this distinction has helped me understand that the RE curriculum only offers a partial view of both injustice and culture or religion. While it may offer some reasonably robust multicultural work and fulfil the politics of recognition, the RE curriculum avoids analyses of power or the context of religious beliefs and religious lives, which would be required in a critical multicultural view. In this section I present the notion of critical whiteness as territory where antiracism and multiculturalism overlap in both methods and aims, a dimension which will be essential for a religion and worldviews curriculum geared towards understanding. Critical whiteness turns the critical gaze onto the dominant forms of the dominant group, the reverse of early multiculturalism which looks at the minority or weaker parties, although often only at the dominant forms within those cultures. Critical multiculturalism's contribution to critical whiteness is to delve into whiteness itself as a cultural form.

Whiteness studies or critical whiteness takes the view that necessary to an understanding of racism is an understanding of the role race and associated concepts play in white cultures. White cultures are usually Christian suggesting the possibility that the RE curriculum, in offering a more genuinely critical view, could at times offer a critical view of Christianity where necessary for understanding. I give an example of this with regards to anti-Semitism later in the chapter.

Early indications of critical whiteness are found in Barry Troyna's 1987 *Racial Inequality in Education* in which he argues that British schooling reproduces racialized outcomes. In 1993 Alastair Bonnet describes white teachers' emerging realisations of the negative impact white cultural and economic life has on their non-white pupils (Bonnet, 1993). Ruth Frankenberg's

1993 series of 'life history interviews' with 30 women reflects her emerging realisation that 'race shapes white women's lives' (Frankenberg, 1993: p. 1) as much as non-white women's lives. She uses the term 'whiteness', because, as she says, 'it may be more difficult for white people to say, 'Whiteness has nothing to do with me- I'm not white' than to say 'Race has nothing to do with me- I'm not racist'' (p. 6). Alastair Bonnet argues in 1996 that, '[w]hiteness is a peculiar identity. It appears to be both everywhere and nowhere, simultaneously a pervasive normative presence and an invisible, largely undiscussed, absence.' (Bonnett, 1996: p. 97-8). David Roediger in 1994 describes whiteness as 'far from being natural and unchallengeable, is highly conflicted, burdensome and even inhuman' (Roediger, 1994: p. x). Roediger suggests that in 'seeing race as socially constructed' a 'vital intellectual breakthrough' has been made (p. 3), and therefore a 'consciousness of whiteness' is the next essential step enabling a 'critique of that consciousness' (p. 3).

A critical whiteness outlook has therefore been around for decades, yet is not present in British multicultural policy. It seems that the political climate of the 1980s and 1990s presented serious obstacles to the development of radical views. Bonnet describes how the British and American right's shift to neoliberalism in the 1980s derailed much of what the left had hoped for in the 1970s. Britain, in his view, 'has seen some of the most extreme and enduring examples of conservative entrenchment in the Western world. Singled out for funding cuts and public ridicule, the confident local anti-racist interventions seen in some British cities in the early 1980s have given way to a sombre culture of survivalism' (Bonnett, 1993: p. 1-2). During this time the RE world was engaged in its own struggles over the curriculum. I have argued in chapter 1 that this destabilising struggle was not then and has not been now resolved, and has resulted in competing and incompatible aims. Possibly this lack of internal clarity meant that New Labour's community cohesion agenda was adopted without the educational and ethical interrogation it should have received. Whether this is the case or not, it is true to say that a critical whiteness or critical Christianity view has never been a feature of the RE curriculum, nor a significant presence in education policy with regards to community cohesion. However as a tool for understanding critical whiteness is extremely powerful. Set against the backdrop of white culture, white power and white concerns, discrimination against non-white, non-Christian, non-European groups and nations is rendered explicable, as I shall show using several examples below. In a curriculum for understanding, such a revealing view must be part of the toolbox to be employed where necessary.

iii) Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a tool used to establish the mechanisms by which educational systems and norms produce racialised outcomes. CRT grew out of Critical Legal Studies in the US; a post-civil rights academic movement exposing the maintenance of white dominance in landmark legal cases and legal theory. CRT shows how non-white students are created as inferior in education just as non-white citizens are created inferior in law.

What follows is a brief tour of CRT findings in both the US and Britain, and from older research to more recent, to demonstrate the powerful insights CRT has offered for some time.

CRT in the USA

Investigations into teachers' attitudes reveals both the invisibility of white privilege and any deficit, blame or responsibility located with non-white individuals or communities. Joyce E King (King 1991: p. 71), working in a US context, describes white teachers' 'dysconscious racism' (p. 73). White teachers are aware of racial disadvantage but do not question white privilege or a deficit model of non-white pupils. Christine Sleeter notes the tendency among white teacher trainers to view racism as a 'misperception' (Sleeter, 1993: p. 164); a perceptual mistake that can be corrected rather than the result of specific distributions of power, clinging to the 'myth' (p. 167) that America offers the same rewards to all those who work hard. Although white teachers might be fond of their non-white students on a personal level, their outlook 'denies white social institutions any complicity in the subordinate status of people of color' (Sleeter, 1993: p. 167). White teachers understand non-white underachievement as the fault of the non-white students, these findings are found once again in 2005, as May and Sleeter express it, '[t]eachers still too often construct indigenous and other minoritized students in deficit terms', referring to research into Maori educational and social disadvantage in New Zealand society more widely (May and Sleeter, 2010: p. 3, citing Shields, Bishops and Mazawi, 2005). Menken shows that disproportionately high numbers of non-white students in Special Educational Needs classes fails to draw comment, reflecting a deficit view of non-white students rather than a criticism of the system itself (Menken, 2008).

As well as individual attitudes, CRT work also reveals large-scale structural inequalities. Kozol and Pollock have shown, in 1992 and 2008 respectively, how in the US, funds derived from residential taxes support public schools, meaning that schools in the richest areas are much better funded (Kozol 1992, Pollock 2008). Jonathan Kozol's stark account of extreme poverty in

Mississippi uncovers the physical and psychic barriers this almost entirely black community faces daily where debt, underfunding, a disintegrating infrastructure and inadequate facilities is compounded year on year by redundancies and further cuts in funding. Accounts of places like East St Louis demonstrate the causal relationship between race and poverty. In 2002 Guinier and Torres show how non-white Americans lack cultural as well as economic capital and struggle to advance at the rate of more wealthy white children (Guinier and Torres, 2002). These research findings offer a flavour of the sorts of results and analysis CRT offers; revealing both the attitudes and structures of a white-dominated education system and how racialised inequalities are reproduced.

Interviews with white college students on a diverse campus in 2016 reveal how much and how little has changed since CRT's early days. Hikido and Murray (2016) gather white students' reactions to race and racism, and in doing so highlight a difference between 'diversity' as an 'ideal', which 'peppers countless college marketing materials and mission statements', and the experience of difference as an 'organic, compositional diversity' felt by white and non-white students alike (p. 390). This research 'challenges the assumption that white supremacy will dissipate as universities become more racially diverse' (p. 390), an assumption that simply being exposed to diversity will improve relations, also found in multiculturalism and RE. The authors employ a 'critical lens' (p. 390) taken from critical multiculturalism, although the paper could equally be badged CRT, suggesting perhaps that the difference between antiracism and multiculturalism has decreased through a mutual focus on critical whiteness.

Hikido and Murray find that whiteness and the privileges it confers are beneath mention, allowing white students to 'construe their social, political, and economic statuses as natural and their achievements as solely the products of individual merit' (Hikido and Murray, 2016: p. 392). The authors suggest a 'third wave' of whiteness studies is necessary, exploring variables such as locality and social standing, because whiteness is not a 'monolithic' identity (p. 392). However, the invisibility of whiteness is still its salient feature. White students in this study report the need to be 'more prudent' (p. 398) about comments that could offend, and some feel left out of cultural groups such as the 'Philippines club' (p. 400), but they do not perceive the power and presence of their own ethnicity and culture. The authors conclude that because these white students lack 'a critical historical perspective', they 'remain blind to the legacy and extensions of whiteness' (p. 402). This shows that the main problem of whiteness seems to be its invisibility to white people, and suggests that, once again, the solution is to make it visible.

CRT in the UK

The UK-based presented findings show that this research has been available to both New Labour and the RE world for many years, although seemingly unknown.

David Gillborn has written widely about how the media present white working class male students at most risk of underachieving, although data shows that it is black male students who hold this unenviable position (Gillborn, 2010). Gillborn argues that claiming white victimhood is merely a smokescreen to obscure how schools fail black children. Despite coming from homes that tend to put more pressure on their children to complete homework and take school seriously, black British students are more likely to be excluded than their white counterparts and more likely to be placed in classes where their chances of acquiring high-status qualifications are reduced or impossible (Gillborn, 2002). He describes this as 'a deep privileging of white students and, in particular, the legitimization, defence and extension of Black inequity' (Gillborn, 2009: p. 155).

The ways schools maintain and perpetuate racialised ways of seeing seem to be invisible to white teachers. Ghazalah Bhatti finds racism to be 'a major daily battle for many Asian and African Caribbean children' in a London Secondary school, although 'it never formed the subject of serious discussion in the staffroom' (Bhatti, 1999: p. 148). Youdell shows how teachers play into a perception of black boys as hyper-masculine, fuelling but never questioning the myth of black boys as 'undesirable learners' (Youdell, 2003: p. 86).

An ethnographic study of three 'behaviour support units' in three London secondary schools, Gillies and Robinson (2012) shows schools monitoring rates of exclusion by ethnicity, as the law requires. Although the schools' own data shows that black boys are disproportionately represented in the units, alarm bells do not ring. The authors report that schools simply fudge the exclusion rates they publish (Gillies and Robinson, 2012: p. 170), not perceiving their own high rates of excluded black boys as problematic. The authors report staff to be defensive in conversations about institutional racism, addressing accusations of racism at the personal level only, in a process the authors call 'deracialisation', a phrase often used to deny discrimination against non-white people. Gill Crozier (2005) presents an exploration of black British children's massive underachievement at school through the eyes of their parents, in an article entitled 'There's a war against our children'. She finds teachers' low expectations clashing with parents' high expectations, the pathologising of black children, and an overwhelmingly negative school experience where the children's spirits are quite simply broken.

Focussing on RE, Moulin's 2016 study of Jewish high school students in non-Jewish schools suggests that the RE curriculum contributes to an unthinking Christian dominance. Although European Jews are largely white, Moulin's critical analysis reveals the boundaries of Jews' non-Christian-ness. This raises the interesting possibility of a study of critical Christianity as part of a religion and worldviews curriculum. As noted, Moulin has shown similar distortions in RE with simplistic presentations of Islam post 9/11 (Moulin, 2012) and depictions of Islam, Judaism and Christianity that teenagers from those traditions find alienating (Moulin, 2015). In Moulin's 2016 research Jewish teenagers in English community or church schools witness anti-Semitic attitudes and experience discomfort in some of the ways their Jewish identity is singled out, as well as enjoyment and mutual learning in multicultural, multifaith peer groups (Moulin, 2016). It is interesting to read between the lines of this study as a teacher. It is in their peer-worlds that students seem to report positive explorations of other worldviews, not their classroom-worlds. When Judaism is the subject of study in the classroom, students report an outdated picture of Jewish life and practices, a narrow focus on Judaism's 'most "religious" Orthodox form' (p. 699), teachers' 'inability to pronounce words for Jewish festivals and other religious terminology' (p. 699) and the 'misrecognition' (p. 698) of Jewish beliefs seen through a Christian lens. In each school the Jewish students are aware of a dominant Christian outlook on the world which is utterly invisible to the teachers and most of the students. These critical analyses of education and race show the invisibility of a white, Christian outlook to many of those who embody it.

b) Pedagogy of Discomfort

Megan Boler's 'pedagogy of discomfort' describes the learning space, when a critical view is employed, where both teacher and student may have to deal with their own 'defensive anger and fears' (Boler 1999: p. 179). Of course a critical view is uncomfortable for teachers and students, especially if they embody one of the power forms being revealed, but as Boler proposes there is educational value in the discomfort, if it can be handled with sensitivity and skill. For my purposes, Boler shows me the significance of the interpersonal dimension to learning. Over the course of my research I have become wary of a focus on the interpersonal. Firstly, through coming to see the failure of the community cohesion agenda where warm personal relations between members of different groups are presented as a method of addressing injustice, rather than the result of practical measures to acknowledge and address economic and social discrimination. Secondly through confessionalism in the RE curriculum

permitting partial or dishonest presentations of religious history and ethics. Both community cohesion and confessional RE approaches seek a particular reaction, an *a priori* conclusion has been drawn; diversity or religion is good, and the correct reaction is positivity. I have rejected both these approaches as unethical and non-educational; both hide or ignore evidence of inequality or domination, as well as wider contexts, in order to achieve a desired reaction. However in Boler is an argument that, once a teacher has decided to explore a critical view, to reveal and deconstruct a form of power, it is in the space between teacher and students that learning can take place.

Boler's argument centres around the need to allow human emotional capacities to be part of an educational process, rather than an irrelevance to be side-lined in favour of a rational, emotion-free acquisition of knowledge. In the process of making this argument she describes the emotional dialogue between student and teacher, as 'simultaneously difficult and painful' as it is 'enriching and fulfilling' (p. 179). The pedagogy of discomfort represents a refusal to avoid these feelings because, even if they are hard to bear, they lead to deeper understanding and the potential for growth both in understanding of the subject at hand, and in understanding of people, the world and oneself. Discomfort cannot allow an educator to avoid a subject that unlocks understanding, however discomfort can become part of what is learnt. In exploring how 'our modes of seeing have been shaped specifically by the dominant culture of the historical moment' (p. 179), students and teachers who have never questioned or perceived their privilege might feel 'defensively angry' (p. 178), they might in defence voice views which the educator or other class members find abhorrent, but Boler insists this cannot be shut down, because of the potential for transformation contained in such fertile discomfort. For my purposes I see in Boler's pedagogy both the transformative potential of acquiring knowledge which unlocks the present, as well as the potential of inhabiting a self with moral blemishes, and not defending or avoiding that self. While I have perceived the desire for certain conclusions to be drawn, evident in both community cohesion and confessional RE, as unethical and non-educational, Boler describes an arena where abuse and domination is not avoided, but students' and teachers' responses to such information is also part of the learning. This shows me the possibility of an ethical and educational approach, where injustice is not ignored and the aim is understanding, but where personal reactions are an important dimension of learning.

Boler's pedagogy of discomfort describes the emotional terrain between teacher, students and peers as well as what is taught and why. Henry Giroux's critical pedagogy also encompasses emotional and social growth as well as knowledge and understanding. Giroux defines all

critical pedagogies, after Paulo Friere, as a deliberate attempt to help students 'recognize authoritarian tendencies' and 'connect knowledge to power and agency' as they learn (Giroux, 2010: p. 335). Giroux reflects in 1979 on his time as a classroom teacher of history, describing an 'atheoretical, a historical, and unproblematic' curriculum where the 'social order is legitimised and reproduced' as the 'death of history' (Giroux, 2011: p. 19). Giroux presents the dominant, limiting, anti-educational culture of neoliberalism as a 'new kind of public pedagogy' (p. 134), a pedagogy of 'conformity that teaches unquestioning reverence' and the 'passive absorption of knowledge' (p. 5). Critical pedagogy uncovers 'domination' (p. 5), but this critique is only half the story, the uncovering of cultural and economic domination means a vision of a fairer world is possible, and Giroux's critical pedagogy involves not only hidden domination but allows 'an ennobling, imaginative vision' and the development of a 'language of possibility' (p. 5). Where a deliberately conservative pedagogy 'shamelessly' views students as 'cheerful robots', and where 'matters of justice, values, ethics, and power are erased from any notion of teaching and learning' (p. 5), critical pedagogy demands critical and ethical engagement. Over his work Giroux presents school as a key battle ground to deliberately uncover the creation and maintenance of inequality through education, and as an arena to voice hope and imagine a more equal world. I do not follow Giroux's conclusions in refusing to have any expectations as to how students will use or respond to the information learnt. However Giroux presents an educational justification for a critical view; much that helps young people understand the world is simply hidden in a conservative, uncritical curriculum.

In *Being White, Being Good* Barbara Applebaum explores the claim she finds in academic education work on social justice that 'white people are complicit in the reproduction of racist systems despite their good intentions and even when they might want to renounce the privileges they accrue' (Applebaum, 2010: p. 3). An interesting dimension to Applebaum's analysis is the question of whether white people are able to make changes to a racialised world. She finds white students studying social justice pedagogies tend to deny their complicity if they wish for a more equal world, perceiving 'their moral being as transcending their whiteness' (p. 4). However Applebaum argues that white students continue to be complicit in white privilege by wishing to maintain their '*white moral standing*' (p. 4). Ultimately Applebaum proposes that to be moral, white people must first acknowledge and secondly disrupt the cultural, political and linguistic ways white responsibility is denied. However they might have to abandon a claim to being moral at all, accepting that vigilance and understanding is the most they can do. In educational terms, Applebaum's argument can be explored as one way to frame information learned about racism or other forms of injustice.

The possibility of white morality in the face of the sheer scale of global white supremacy can be considered, with students free to form their own argument in response. Analyses such as Applebaum's provide a way of understanding what has been learned. Students don't have to agree but they are offered a way to make sense of the grim reality they have been shown. Some might conclude that white people can indeed be moral if they are honest about white privilege and devote themselves to overturning it, others might conclude that accepting white immorality is the price of white privilege, while others might create arguments of their own. Boler proposes to use emotional reactions as part of what is understood, and analyses such as Applebaum's provide narratives which could be used to form a coherent view, including one's emotional state, rather than leave students (and teachers) simply uncomfortable, if not distressed.

Recent research reveals white University teachers attempting to disrupt both the pedagogical and social structures of white-dominated educational institutions, as Jessica Charbeneau reports (2015). Charbeneau's literature review refers to many such studies across the US, suggesting that her subjects are not alone in their attempt to 'challenge the hegemony of whiteness in the university classroom' (p. 655). Firstly Charbeneau categorises the approaches her 18 white teachers themselves report, and which are found in similar studies; an acknowledgement of whiteness as both their personal identity and a power form, deliberately attempting to engage a plurality of voices and opinions in their classroom and forging alliances whereby white hegemony might be disrupted.

Charbeneau observes the impact of these processes on teaching and learning and on 'everyday encounters' (Charbeneau, 2015: p. 657). Pedagogical approaches, albeit occurring within a white-dominated superstructure, can permit views, voices and analyses to be heard which either challenge white hegemony or offer different ways of thinking. Charbeneau's subjects do not just welcome and employ non-white viewpoints, they actively illuminate 'patterns of white dominance and hegemony as they arise in course materials, classroom dynamics, oneself, and in the university' (p. 662). This combination is valuable; all students need to be heard and to feel their outlooks matter, but this must be combined with a systematic attempt to explain how and why whiteness has come to such dominance. Charbeneau's research illustrates not just an intellectual or educational unlocking, but an interpersonal one. For example Charbeneau cites Kelly Maxwell's approach to acknowledging the reality of white hegemony by 'telling my story- my story of coming out as white' (Maxwell, 2004: p. 163, cited in Charbeneau, 2015: p. 658). One of Charbeneau's subjects explains how he prepares in advance to include all students and hear all voices;

‘I think about [diversity] ahead of time. I think about structuring of the curriculum, watching out for classroom seating patterns, watching out for who I talk with, and a whole bunch of things like that ahead of time... I will sometimes early on, first day, second day of class, ask students to meet in groups of people who don’t look like them. (Male, Social Sciences)’ (Charbeneau, 2015: p. 665).

An attempt to disrupt patterns of white dominance means they must first be revealed and scrutinised, and Charbeneau reports white teachers who ‘do this in pedagogical practice by explaining patterns of white dominance and hegemony as they arise in course materials, classroom dynamics, and the university itself’ (p. 665).

The interpersonal work in Charbeneau’s research goes much further than anything I have ever seen on an RE curriculum, involving intervention at both the professional and personal level. The former requires great attention paid to both curriculum and teaching approaches, the latter requires challenges to white students’ use of all available ‘airtime’ (p. 667) or comments which unthinkingly reify a white outlook, to ‘ease the burden on students of color’ and be active rather than ‘remain impassive to patterns of white dominance’ (p. 667). In this respect the teachers attempt to create a space where genuinely diverse views can be heard together with the opportunity to deconstruct the power structures underlying students’ views of what is normal. Charbeneau’s teachers, as well those in other research studies, make deliberate attempts to depose the teacher as ‘expert’ in order to disrupt and highlight personal, social and institutional power forms. In doing so they challenge the educational assumption that teachers are ‘unbiased conveyors of knowledge, unaffected or uninfluenced by their own or students’ social identities or the larger structure of race’ (p. 669). These challenges are interpersonal as much as educational.

While I have rejected the personal aim of RE as non-educational, research and thinking such as the above suggests the importance of the space between pupils and teacher. I have challenged liberal confessional RE’s right to bring the assumed benefits of religion into pupils’ personal lives, but such findings suggest the interpersonal is a key mechanism, maybe *the* mechanism, for enabling students’ understanding, certainly as much as balanced and well-researched information. As can be seen from CRT’s findings, racism is reproduced when teachers are not aware of, or shy away from an awareness of, what they are reproducing. In educational terms this means they also can’t understand and then teach about structural and institutional racism, as I show with examples of uncritical RE which reproduces anti-Semitic tropes below.

Therefore I can say that the interpersonal dimension in RE is not unimportant, providing the teacher can model engagement with a critical view, even if she finds it uncomfortable. In fact it

seems RE as liberal education requires an interpersonal dimension to unlock the deep implications of the critical views learnt and to help students manage the uncomfortable, challenging questions these raise. The necessity of a teacher who is committed, supportive and knowledgeable is of course an essential ingredient of all education, but it seems particularly important when introducing students to an outlook which might engender distress and confusion, as much as illumination.

Critical pedagogies such as Boler and Giroux's are a much more deliberately political and disruptive call to transform society through education. I do not go this far, but use Boler and Giroux to acknowledge the role of the teacher in overcoming her own discomfort and employing a critical view to unlock understanding.

c) Critical RE

Below I consider assessment at GCSE and a current RE pedagogy to consider if a critical view is called for in RE at present.

i) Assessment

Is there anything like a critical view tested for in the current GCSE specifications? These reshaped qualification require hugely increased knowledge and understanding of two religions. Most schools will teach either 'Catholic Christianity' or 'Christianity' and Islam or Judaism, with fewer numbers offering Buddhism, Sikhi or Hinduism to accompany the Christian papers. These specifications require knowledge and understanding of key religious beliefs and practices with reference to holy texts and other sources of authority. Most references are directly scriptural or come from within the religion, such as the Hadith, Mishnah or Christian ecumenical councils. No references are given to the historical context or environmental pressures of key tenets or competing beliefs. In addition to the religious papers students will study 'themes', some philosophical and ethical, such as prejudice and discrimination or views of the afterlife, and some textual, such as accounts in texts of the lives of key religious figures. All six religions are to be understood through abstract concepts, neither a contextual nor critical view is required by any of the four exam boards.

Most schools will also study one or two philosophical and ethical themes. Of the four exam boards, only AQA and Eduqas (WJEC in Wales) cover themes which could utilise a critical view; AQA's 'Religion, Human Rights and Social Justice' and Eduqas' 'Human Rights' themes. Both

AQA and Eduqas' sample assessment material asks for students to see through a religious lens, for example in questions such as 'Give two examples of what religious believers would see as exploitation of the poor' (2 marks) and 'Explain two religious beliefs about the status of women in religion. Refer to scripture or sacred writings in your answer' (5 marks) (AQA, sample assessment material). An idealised religious view could obscure a more critical view. However, both ask for students' analysis and evaluation, in questions such as "'Religions should do more to fight against racial prejudice and discrimination". Discuss this statement showing that you have considered more than one point of view. (You must refer to religion and belief in your answer) (15 marks)' (Eduqas, sample assessment material). Here is the potential for a critical view of religion to be taken, if appropriate. However the huge increase in detailed knowledge of religious concepts required by the GCSEs certainly means a significant decrease in time spent studying social or ethical questions.

ii) In RE Pedagogies

I have argued that the influence of community cohesion outcomes on RE, to present a positive view of religion and culture, limits understanding. This argument is supported by Vivienne Baumfield's research into how community cohesion policy 'is being translated into pedagogies for inter-communication and inter-cultural understanding' (Baumfield, 2010: p. 184). Baumfield shows how implications in documents such as the Parekh Report (2000) and a DCSF-funded project considering RE's contribution to community cohesion (DCSF, *Religious Education and Community Cohesion in Secondary Schools and Colleges*, 2010) promoting dialogue about difference has led to an increase in the application of 'dialogic approaches' (Baumfield, 2010: p. 188) and 'constructivist' pedagogies (p. 189) in RE. These approaches allow students to create shared understandings of the world through conversation. Both require the teacher to allow freedom in talking and asking questions, freedom in coming to negative conclusions about religion and 'to shift their practice away from instruction to facilitation' (p. 197). Baumfield notes that while such approaches contain the potential for critique and encourage dialogue as the adults take a back seat, there is evidence that the depth of learning can remain superficial, especially if pupils avoid areas of controversy in their conversations. If conversations remain at the level of pupils' knowledge and impressions of the world, a wider scholarly framing will not be employed.

The Interpretive Approach to RE, developed by Robert Jackson at Warwick, has the potential for critical views to be incorporated into learning about religion. Jackson and colleagues have

for many years explored approaches to studying religion which recognize the 'inner diversity, fuzzy edgedness and contested nature of religious traditions as well as the complexity of cultural expression and change from social and individual perspectives' (Jackson, 2004: p. 93). This approach views religion as multiple, lived, constantly evolving and as both a spiritual commitment and an identity form. The interpretive pedagogy, a phenomenological pedagogy, stems from Jackson and Eleanor Nesbitt's research in the 1970s into South Asian religious communities in Warwickshire. Jackson and Nesbitt's original research concerned 'the transmission of religious culture from parents and faith communities to children' rather than the ultimate truth claims or philosophical concepts behind the religion (Grimmitt, 2000: p. 38). Religion should be understood, in the words of Joyce Miller, 'at first hand rather than only through textbooks' (Miller *et al*, 2013: p. 1). The interpretive method teaches students to view religion itself as a cultural form, quite apart from the truth claims made by the religion. Within each group of complex social relations that is loosely described as a 'religion' are many forms, with a dominant form, a power structure and lesser forms. The approach 'is essentially an approach to understanding the ways of life of others' (Jackson, 2004: p. 93).

The Interpretive approach broke new ground both in its view of religion as a lived and living thing, and as a thing in constant relationship with religious peoples' diverse contexts. The interpretive approach views students themselves as active meaning makers, bringing their views and interpretations to bear on what they study, rather than passively receiving incontestable information. Although the approach has the capacity to analyse the social or economic contexts this is not inherent and is not found in every application of the approach.

Jackson states that all Britain's RE pedagogies are aligned in some way with multicultural education (Jackson, 2004). All the RE pedagogies involve a serious study of the way culture and religion shape lives, to understand people better, as well as for improved communication between people, as an assumed outcome of better understanding. Jackson notes the criticisms made against multicultural education; superficiality and tokenism (citing Troyna, 1983), essentialism and Orientalism and the neglect of internal diversity, internal power struggles, and external context. Jackson acknowledges that the major criticism against multicultural education is the invisibility of power structures. However, despite these criticisms, which he seems to fully accept, Jackson and others who use the interpretive approach may bring an analysis of power structures into a wide and messy understanding of religion, or they may not. A critical view is not necessary to interpretive RE, as I will show in this section.

Jackson outlines four applications of the Interpretive Approach in 2004 which, in his words, 'illustrate religious education's contribution to the discussion of issues relating to diversity'

(Jackson, 2004: p. 94), covering South Africa, England and Sweden. Only the South African researchers deliberately and explicitly address history and context in their use of the Interpretive Approach in RE. In this case 'an engagement with the politics of representation' and an attempt to 'counter the colonialist suppression and containment of African Religion' is an inherent part of the learning (p. 95). White and black students, as part of their exploration of African Religion, learn how it has been treated with contempt and 'in effect, defined out of existence' (p. 96). They explore African Religion in the forms it itself is transmitted, which is orally and through 'myth' and 'biographical and autobiographical stories' (p. 95). The other three studies utilise ethnographic and hermeneutical techniques to support pupils in making increased sense of their own lives. Anne Krisman, a teacher of young people with Special Educational Needs, uses interpretive methods to 'build conceptual bridges between pupils and those studied in the texts' (p. 99). Krisman's pupils find it easier to understand the life stories of individuals rather than 'a body of knowledge about religions' (p. 99) and moreover, their own experiences of suffering, isolation and gratitude mean they identify at deep levels with similar events in the biographies of religious heroes and heroines. Keijo Eriksson in Sweden and Kevin O'Grady in England use interpretive ethnographic methodologies to discover, respectively, 'the central values of life held by the pupils' (p. 101) and what classroom content and techniques 'pupils saw as motivating and engaging' (p. 103). Neither study went outside the pupils' worlds, but used questioning and data-gathering to further understand pupils' outlooks. Both these research projects inform the teacher, by reminding her that pupils have life-worlds of a richness and reality that can be taken into account when teaching, and that pupils are discerning consumers of lessons. However none of these last three examples explore religion in the terms I have suggested; in critical socioeconomic, cultural or political contexts.

Miller *et al's* collection of reflections of 15 years of Interpretive RE reflects a similarly various use of critical views in order to understand religion. Part of Eleanor Nesbitt's 15-year ethnography of children in Warwickshire from Sikh and Hindu communities involves observations of their experiences in religious education (Nesbitt, 2013). Her account of a (non-Sikh) teacher who blithely assures the class there are no castes in Sikh traditions is juxtaposed with her own impression that Sikh students in the class feel all too keenly the impact of caste in their communities. Nesbitt comments that the teacher's use of textbooks which 'confuse principle and practice' means she is 'reproducing uncritical confessionism at second hand' (p. 17), and that 'both teachers and curriculum materials often lack clarity in distinguishing between an idealized past, a more historically substantiable past and the present-day

situation' (pp. 17-18). Nesbitt, in witnessing simplistic and often inaccurate representations argues that received orthodoxy must not occlude the more complicated and messy reality of peoples' lives, and historical and theological context must be sought, for the sake of understanding.

Sissel Østberg, however, writing from a Norwegian context (Østberg, 2013), begins her chapter with reference to the Utoya Island attacks, which, incidentally, is the third chapter in the volume to use Islamist terrorist attacks to justify RE. Østberg's ethnographies of Pakistani-descendent Norwegian Muslims, collected since the 1990s, aim to show what meaning Islam has in their ordinary, 'everyday' lives, in comparison to the media portrayal of Islam as 'conflict-oriented' (Østberg, 2013: p. 62). Østberg argues persuasively that to understand Islam and Muslims better is to disrupt Islamophobia. However her research does not seem to include analysis of the institutional and social contexts that shape Norwegian Muslims' status in Norwegian society. For Østberg stereotypes are viewed as a function of misunderstanding and their ill effects limited to being misunderstood. Østberg does not analyse non-Muslim Norwegian-ness as a culture in itself, as the common denominator underlying the various social, economic and institutional contexts Norwegian Muslims must navigate.

The hermeneutical method at the heart of the interpretive approach, where students actively participate in meaning making, and the potential to consider the context of the person or people being studied, mean that a deeper and more critical analysis of context is certainly possible, if not always utilised. Context is considered critically when it is explicitly part of the analysis, as in Nesbitt's comparison of simplistic, quasi-confessional RE with religion as a lived and living entity, and the researcher's attempts in South Africa to disrupt centuries of demeaning presentations of African Religion. Although the interpretive approach can draw on context and history and employ a critical view, these dimensions are not necessary or inherent to the method.

iii) Uncritical RE

In Chapter 1 I presented pedagogies of RE, such as by Grimmitt and Hull, and utilised Barnes' argument that religion is protected from critical scrutiny. To show what uncritical RE looks like I present prejudice and discrimination content from three textbooks and one revision book. These books were all published in 2002 or 2003 and have directly informed GCSE teaching until 2016, when new textbooks came into effect.

The pages are reproduced in full, and my comments and questions follow. I have focussed on anti-Semitism in the three textbooks for consistency. These books have been a backdrop to my life for so many years yet I had never considered them critically. I found information that is highly unlikely to lead to an understanding of the roots and causes of anti-Semitism and in fact often seems to blindly reinforce anti-Semitic views.



24 Prejudice and discrimination

1D 2A 2B

Topic summary

- **Prejudice** takes many forms and can often lead to **discrimination** based on race, religion, gender, age and disability, amongst others.
- Jesus showed that he was against the prejudices and discrimination of his time by his words and actions.
- A number of well-known Christians have fought against prejudice and discrimination, usually with non-violent action.
- Various passages in the Bible stress the equality of all human beings and the correct attitude Christians should have towards their 'neighbours'.

What do I need to know?

- The definitions of the terms 'prejudice' and 'discrimination' and the difference between the two. The main types of prejudice and discriminatory behaviour.
- Jesus' stand against the prejudices of his time.
- Examples of discriminatory behaviour, for example, apartheid, the Holocaust.
- Passages from the Bible relevant to this topic.
 - 2A Luke 7: 1–10; Luke 10: 25–37; Acts 11: 1–18; Galatians 3: 28
 - 2B Luke 10: 25–37; James 2: 1–9; Luke 7: 1–10
- 2A The work of a well-known Christian whose beliefs led him or her to campaign against prejudice and discrimination.

What are prejudice and discrimination?

Prejudice is an unfair thought or action about a person or group because of their race, religion, gender, age, appearance or disability. It is usually based on a lack of understanding and knowledge. An example of prejudice is: 'Women are homemakers. They should stay at home and look after the children.'

Discrimination is prejudice in action. It is when a person or group is treated differently as a result of prejudice. An example of discrimination is: 'This woman should not be offered the job as she ought to be at home with her children.'

Here are a few examples of prejudice.

- **Racism** is prejudice against those of another race or ethnic group. Racists often divide human beings into racial groups; they believe that some of these groups are inferior to their own. A form of racism is colour prejudice. This is prejudice against people of a different colour to one's own. Racial discrimination puts racial prejudice into action. People from a different race or ethnic group are treated unfairly or badly. It can also result in civil unrest.

- Religious prejudice is prejudice against those of another religion, or another **tradition** within the same religion. At its worst, religious prejudice can lead to riots and even war. This can be seen in the unrest between Jews and Muslims in the Holy Land and between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland.
- Gender, or sexual prejudice leads to people being treated differently because they are either male or female. It is based on the attitude that one sex is **better** in some way than the other. Historically, gender prejudice and discrimination arose from the different roles men and women played in society. Men were dominant in society, the breadwinners and the head of the family. Women were the homemakers and child rearers. Great advances have been made in ensuring that the genders are treated more equally. However, many still feel discriminated against in society and at work because of their gender. They believe that some still have sexist attitudes.
- People are often treated differently if they have a disability. Those in wheelchairs, for example, sometimes find access to buildings and facilities difficult. They find that more able people tend to avoid eye contact with a disabled person and many disabled people feel cut off from the rest of society.

Why are people prejudiced?

There are a number of reasons why people are prejudiced.

- People inherit many of their prejudices from their parents and wider family circle. We are not born prejudiced – we learn it.
- Others tend to pick up and copy the prejudices of their peers and friends.
- We are sometimes afraid of people or things we do not understand or which are different from us in some way. This leads to discriminatory behaviour.



The effects of prejudice and discrimination

The effects can range from individuals feeling isolated or bullied to great injustices and even death for a whole race of people.

In the 1930s and 1940s, the Nazis were determined to destroy the Jewish race. It began with gradually taking away their basic human rights and ended in the murder of nearly 6 million Jews in concentration camps. This terrible crime against humanity is known as the Holocaust.

Until the 1990s, there was a system in South Africa called apartheid. This is an Afrikaans word meaning 'separateness' or 'apartness'. It was set up and supported by the white government of South Africa and is one of the most extreme cases of legalized racism in history. Under this system, white and black people were totally separated from each other. Black people were not allowed to vote or to have well paid jobs. They were given poor housing with no running water and their children were taught in separate schools from white children.

did you know?

The Nazis also persecuted gypsies, homosexuals, the handicapped, Catholics and communists.

Jesus' lack of prejudice and discrimination

Jesus said, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' He is the perfect role model for Christians of the way in which all human beings should be treated. Many of the prejudices which affect our modern society were also present in Jesus' day.

- **Race.** The Roman Empire had conquered Israel. Many Jews hated the Roman soldiers who took over the land of Israel and forced Roman laws on the people. Yet when a Roman centurion asked Jesus to heal his favourite servant, Jesus did not hesitate. Jesus also praised the faith of the centurion – a man of a different race of people.
- **Religion.** The Jews and the Samaritans hated each other. Jews looked upon the Samaritans as having polluted the Jewish religion as they had married **Gentiles**. When he was asked, 'Who is my neighbour?' by an expert in the Jewish Law, Jesus told him the **parable** of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25–37). The hero of this parable is a Samaritan, not a Jew. In fact, the Jewish characters in the story are not cast in a very good light. The parable makes a good point – everyone is our neighbour, even those of a different faith and culture.
- **Gender.** In Jesus' time a woman's social position was beneath a man's and they were not usually allowed to talk with men on such an important topic as religion. Jesus, on the other hand, showed his appreciation and respect for women and he healed both men and women. Two of his closest friends were Martha and Mary, sisters of Lazarus. Jesus let them listen to him teach as well as serve him food. Women stayed with Jesus during the crucifixion when his male followers ran away. On Easter Day, Jesus appeared first to women and gave them the privilege of spreading the news of the **resurrection**.
- **Disability and appearance.** Jesus felt compassion for all those who suffered from disability or disease. He was not put off by them, nor did he judge them by their appearance. He touched lepers, which would have made him 'unclean' according to Jewish Law; he held the hands of the blind and the deaf and of the dead daughter of Jairus before he raised her.



The Centurion's Servant
Luke 7: 1–10.
See page 43.

This extract is taken from a revision guide and offers a distillation of key knowledge for each topic. This page, supporting the Christianity paper, consisting of examples of prejudice and Christian teachings relating to prejudice and discrimination, such as on peace and the treatment of others. The text feels rather detached from the litany of horrors listed, possibly because this is a revision guide and therefore a succinct summary of information to master. 'Prejudice' is presented as an 'unfair thought' or a belief that people are 'inferior' to others (p. 135). The roots of such thoughts are not given. Religious prejudice 'can lead to riots and even war' (p. 136), as if to imply that social disorder is what is wrong with religious prejudice. The description of sexism as 'the attitude that one sex is better in some way than the other' is strangely abstract, when 'sexism' overwhelmingly involves women's subordination to men. A quick glance into three dictionary definitions affirms this, as can be seen at the end of this section. The ongoing Israel-Palestine crisis, described as 'unrest between Jews and Muslims in the Holy Land' is a fine example of bathos. Do these disinterested phrases reflect an attempt to remain neutral? If this is the case the attempt at neutrality in all these examples does not enhance students' understanding.

The summary bullet points on page 135 show students that they must know the many forms of prejudice, Jesus' teachings of love towards others, Christians who have stood up to prejudice, and biblical teachings of love of neighbour. However one significant omission is prejudice and discrimination *caused* by Christianity, for example approaching two millennia of focused anti-Jewish violence in Europe and Russia.

This is a revision guide as opposed to a textbook used for day-to-day teaching. The following three extracts are taken from textbooks rather than revision books, covering topics in more detail and designed to be used in class. I have focused on anti-Semitism in each book for consistency.

3 dictionary definitions of 'sexism':

Meriam Webster: 'Unfair treatment of people because of their sex; *especially* : unfair treatment of women' (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sexism>)

Oxford: 'Prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, on the basis of sex: *sexism in language is an offensive reminder of the way the culture sees women*' (<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/sexism>)

Wikipedia: '**Sexism or gender discrimination** is prejudice or discrimination based on a person's sex or gender. Sexism can affect any gender, but it is particularly documented as affecting women and girls' (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sexism>)

LIFE ISSUES

Prejudice

Aims

- to investigate the difference between prejudice and discrimination
- to explore types of prejudice.

What is prejudice?

The word **prejudice** means thinking less of somebody because of his or her race, religion, colour, gender etc. It is an opinion formed without good reason, knowledge or experience.

Prejudice was responsible for the deaths of millions of people during the twentieth century, especially during World War Two, when six million Jews were killed because of their beliefs. And today, for example in Kosovo and Iraq, the term ethnic cleansing has been used to describe the practice of wiping out groups of people.

Prejudice leads to discrimination. This means to treat someone differently, usually badly or unfairly. All religions believe that prejudice and discrimination are wrong, even though throughout history their treatment of other religions, and of women, would be seen today as discrimination.

Racism

Prejudice or discrimination against someone of a different race is often linked to the skin colour of the victim. For example, many top football teams include players from all over the world. Their skin colours are as varied as their nationalities, but often racist abuse and chanting from the crowd is reserved for the black players.

Racism is against British law. However, few victims resort to law. Many just accept the abuse as a part of life and try to live as normally as they can. The mental damage that such attacks cause cannot easily be measured, nor can the effects on young people growing up.

Sexism

Another common type of prejudice is gender prejudice (**sexism**). Whilst it is illegal to discriminate against women, old attitudes about the supposed superiority of men still exist. The idea that 'a woman should stay at home, doing the housework' has been used by many men over the years to deny women the opportunities that men have. It is true that most religions have seemed to support this, but there is a difference between acknowledging different roles in life and judging on their importance.

I will begin with this phrase;

'Prejudice was responsible for the deaths of millions of people during the twentieth century, especially during World War Two, when six million Jews were killed because of their beliefs' (p. 96).

I have skimmed through pages such as this in planning my lessons for years, but it is not until this current analysis that I have looked at them with critical eyes. Were Jews victims in the Holocaust because of *their* beliefs or the beliefs of others? I would suggest that Jews were victims because centuries previously they had the misfortune to fall on the wrong side of a religion on the up, but the genocidal *beliefs*, or the thoughts that allowed genocide, were present in minds other than the Jews'. Between Constantine's 3rd Century conversion to Christianity and the Holocaust, Europe and Russia have been consistently anti-Semitic places.

This is what allowed the Holocaust, but this phrase gives the causation of the Holocaust as Jews' own beliefs. In fact, although Jews had been persecuted for theological differences for the previous millennia, they were considered genetically unacceptable by Nazis in the modern era. Therefore it could be argued that they were not killed because of their beliefs at all but a racial identity imposed by the Nazis. The conflation of the Holocaust with the fighting of World War Two is also problematic, as if the victims of the Holocaust were free soldiers who unfortunately lost their lives in battle. It is a small point, but this text does not do justice to the brute wrongness of the Holocaust. While the teacher will not just read this sentence to the class when studying religious prejudice against Jews, and might well spend more than one lesson on the topic, this phrase remains incorrect. Moreover, crucially, centuries of European anti-Jewish hatred which culminated in the Holocaust (and is alive today) is omitted.

However, the authors go on to acknowledge that,

'All religions believe that prejudice and discrimination are wrong, even though throughout history their treatment of other religions, and of women, would be seen today as discrimination.' (p. 96)

This is an admission of sorts that religious communities themselves often behave in discriminatory ways which might inspire the teacher to provide more concrete examples of this. A suitable and relevant example of discrimination framed in theological terms would be Christian anti-Semitism, rooted in the fallout from opposing 1st Century Jewish responses to the destruction of the Temple. That no example is given leaves the Holocaust seemingly beyond comprehension, when in fact its causes are entirely comprehensible, well-documented and easily accessible.

Judaism

Jewish teachings about equality and racism

Jewish teaching about how other people should be treated is very clear:

When a proselyte dwells among you in your land, do not taunt him. The proselyte who dwells with you shall be like a native among you, and you shall love him like yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt – I am HASHEM, your G-d.

(Leviticus 19:33–34)

Judaism believes that the aim is to live at peace with other people.

This passage from Isaiah shows the hope for peace:

It will happen in the end of days: The mountain of the Temple of HASHEM will be firmly established as the head of the mountains, and it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will go and say, 'Come let us go to the Mountain of HASHEM, to the Temple of the G-d of Jacob, and He will teach us of His ways and we will walk in His paths'. For from Zion will the Torah come forth, and the word of HASHEM from Jerusalem. He will judge among the nations, and will settle the arguments of many peoples. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation will not lift sword against nation and

will not lift sword against nation and they will no longer study warfare.

(Isaiah 2:2–4)

The Rabbis taught that when G-d created Adam, he took soil from the four corners of the earth and used dark, light, red and yellow soil to create the first human. This means that as everyone is descended from Adam, no-one can say 'my father is better than your father'. Different languages are explained by the story of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:6–9) and it is suggested that the three sons of Noah founded the three races: black, caucasian and semitic.

Although the Jews are described as a 'chosen people' this simply means that they have a special role to play in setting an example for others and therefore have to work harder to fulfil G-d's will. The Talmud is clear that 'The righteous of all nations will inherit the World to Come' and that it is the responsibility of society to ensure that everyone, of every colour, race, religion, disability, wealth or poverty should be equal.

Despite this teaching, Jews have themselves been the victims of persecution for 2,000 years. Jews were driven out of Israel at the time of the Exile in Babylon, sixth century BCE and after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. They were driven out of Spain in 1492 CE and massacred during the Shoah (Holocaust) of the Second World War 1939–45 when six million Jews were killed. All these incidents are blamed on anti-semitism, 'hatred of the Jews'. Nevertheless, Judaism is totally opposed to racism and Jews work actively to oppose it.

In the Shabbat ser a husband tells his wife how valuable she is to him.

Image removed for copyright purposes

The text in the Discovery series is rather confusing. The first paragraph seems unsure about whether Jews are the 'chosen people' or not, without explaining what the significance of being chosen is in modern and ancient Judaism. Moreover, this book uses 'G-d' as a formulation, which is attentive to a Jewish religious outlook, and is rarely found in RE textbooks, including the rest of this textbook. Is it for the sake of Jewish readers? Is it an educational point? The use of this formulation serves as a reminder of the difficulties of addressing notions of the sacred in a rationalistic way.

In the next paragraph we learn that despite Jews' own teachings on equality, they have 'themselves been victims of persecution for 2,000 years (p. 154). Can Jews' own ideal moral code and the persecution they were victims of, based on other groups' negative views, appropriately be connected? If there is a connection between these ideas it is not made, but offered again, in reading that the Holocaust is 'blamed on anti-Semitism, 'hatred of the Jews', but that 'Judaism is totally opposed to racism and Jews work actively to oppose it' (p. 154). The phrase 'blamed on' implies that Nazi and wider European anti-Semitism is somehow contested. Again, the connection is made between Jews' own religious teachings of equality and the unequal treatment they receive at the hands of others. There is not much text to work with, but I question the connection, however loose, between *internal* Jewish beliefs and the anti-Semitic behaviour and attitudes which have been an *external* context of global Jewish life for two millennia.

The Jewish View

Much of Jewish history shows the Jews as victims of racism. The Jewish law and way of life can make the Jewish people stand out. This has given them a separate racial and cultural identity, as well as a different religion, and has resulted in

discrimination. We call this *anti-semitism*. At times, Jews have found it illegal to keep their faith; or to own a business; their rights have been denied; they have been forced to live in ghettos; anti-Jewish laws have been passed; and, they have been hounded and murdered. Perhaps of all faiths, the Jewish people know best what it is to be discriminated against.

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Image removed for copyright purposes

Racism is wrong. *Leviticus* orders Jews to treat strangers (non-Jews) equally (p61). *Genesis 1 v 27* says all are made in God's image, and, later, that all nations came from a single man and woman (Adam and Eve). These are from the Torah – the word of God. *Leviticus* is law, binding on Jews.

- ▶ Do you think that people such as the Jews would be more or less likely to be racist given their historical experience? Would they be more or less active in fighting racism?

Parry states that;

‘Much of Jewish history shows the Jews as the victims of racism. The Jewish law and way of life can make Jewish people stand out. This has given them a separate racial and cultural identity, as well as a different religion, and has resulted in discrimination’ (p. 63).

The implications of this line of thinking is that the Jews are responsible for their own persecution. This is not a chance remark made by someone who had not thought it through, it was written by a senior examiner and experienced religious educator, and presumably checked and edited by Hodder, none of whom questioned the reinforcement of this anti-Semitic attitude.

Another connection between Jewish teachings against discrimination and discrimination the Jews themselves suffer is made here. Firstly Parry notes that ‘of all faiths, the Jewish people know best what it is to be discriminated against’ (p. 63). Secondly the question is posed, ‘*Do you think that people such as the Jews would be more or less likely to be racist given their historical experience? Would they be more or less active in fighting racism?*’ (p. 63). Aside from the fact that, as a teacher, I am not sure how I would go about assisting students to answer this question or what value our answers would have, it seems rather crass. To enquire into how racist, as a result of their persecution, the *Jews* are, is to avoid turning the critical gaze onto the Christian communities themselves where hatred of Jews fomented.

In this short but revealing exercise curriculum content that lacks a critical view can be seen. Hatred and persecution of Jews in Christian Europe is presented as serious but inexplicable when revealing the wider framing of Christian anti-Semitism would make it visible and explicable. However this unlocking, critical view is not taken. Christian institutional, theological and cultural hatred of Jews that enabled or led to the Holocaust is simply omitted. Students are not provided with enough information to understand the causes of anti-Semitism and in some cases anti-Semitic attitudes are actually reinforced, such as that Jews cause their own persecution by choosing to be different. The application of Biblical teachings from both Christian and Jewish points of view is distracting. None of the passages help students understand anti-Semitism or Christianity’s part in it.

Compare the textbook extracts with a Year 10 worksheet I have used in the classroom for several years. It was made in a hurry the night before a lesson and the facts are gleaned entirely from Wikipedia and the BBC’s Religion and Ethics pages, but in educational terms this resource offers an historical account of anti-Semitism, in order to understand the issue today.

Anti-Semitism: A Brief History

The Nazi Holocaust of Jews, in which 6 million died in ghettos and death camps, is the culmination of a hatred which has existed in Europe for hundreds of years and exists today. Anti-Semitism, the hatred of Jews, is a form of racism and religious discrimination.

Ancient Judaism

Judaism began as a tribal faith in the Middle East around 1500 BCE. In ancient times the Jews, also called the Hebrews or the Israelites, engaged in skirmishes and battles with other tribes for land, livestock and riches. The land of Israel was fertile in a desert region, so was constantly under attack from various groups, notably the Philistines who we know today as the Palestinians. In order to make the land of Israel their home initially, the Jews invaded and destroyed the people who already lived there, the Canaanites. These early conflicts are seen today as tribal struggles for resources as opposed to antisemitism.

Roman Rule

By the 1st Century CE much of the Middle East, North Africa and Europe had fallen under the control of the Roman Empire. The Romans allowed some groups within their empire to follow their own religion as long as they paid their taxes and showed respect to the Roman Emperor. The Jews were offered this privilege, but never accepted Roman rule. Decades of battles, sieges and all-out wars occurred between Jewish groups and the Romans. Finally the Romans destroyed the Temple of Jerusalem in 70 CE and expelled all Jews from their ancient homeland.

However, this savage treatment was not unusual in an invading foreign empire which had to maintain control of a vast and diverse region. Many other groups received similar treatment. Roman repression of Jews in this period is seen as political rather than religious.

During this period the life and death of a Jewish teacher, Jesus of Nazareth, inspired a new religion. Jesus was Jewish, his followers were Jewish and his theology and ethics were deeply rooted in Judaism. The early Christians saw themselves as Jews. Jesus argued with some teachers of Jewish law who he accused of putting petty technicalities above the needs of people, but this rebellion was not outside Jewish ethics and theology. After Jesus' death his followers began to be convinced that he was the long-awaited messiah. In this they differed from mainstream Judaism, and slowly the two sects drew apart. The destruction of the Temple in 70CE caused a crisis in Judaism. The Christian groups came to believe that Jewish law could be fulfilled by following Jesus, whereas Rabbis in mainstream Judaism analysed the ancient texts to discover how to fulfill God's wishes in a new age.

Constantine's Conversion

Both groups were persecuted by the Romans over the next two centuries. However, in 312 CE the emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, and overnight a small, threatened sect had become the state religion of the Roman Empire. Constantine's reasons were

certainly pragmatic rather than religious. His vast empire was slowly collapsing and he sought a unifying philosophy to unite the thousands of religions, tribes and groups within it. Christianity was seen as able to bring this stability, and yet be adaptable to various local contexts. However, once the Roman Empire had become Christian, anti-Jewish sentiment exploded.

1. Why do you think the newly-Christian Roman Empire turned against Jewish groups living within it?

Anti-Jewish feeling grew rapidly in this period. Jews became the focus of religious intolerance and political oppression. Churches would refuse to marry Christians and unconverted Jews and forbade Christians to celebrate Jewish festivals with Jewish friends or relations. Later Christians were forbidden to convert to Judaism. Synagogues were attacked and destroyed in many countries. Political leaders restricted the movements and worship habits of Jews in their areas.

The root of this oppression seems to be the accusation that it was Jews who were responsible for 'deicide' or the killing of God. This seems to be the root of all future hatred of Jews, despite the fact that the individual Jewish priests who had encouraged Jesus' arrest by Roman soldiers were long dead and that crucifixion was a Roman punishment, carried out by Roman executioners, also long dead. The entire Jewish people were now to bear the blame. This disastrous change in social attitudes was further compounded for Jewish communities because they had been expelled from their homeland, Israel, in 70 CE and had nowhere to live and worship freely.

2. How accurate was your answer to 1?

Middle Ages

By the Middle Ages Europe was openly hostile to Jews and many countries engaged in full-scale persecution of their Jewish communities. Jews were expelled from towns, cities and entire countries, they were subjected to forced conversions and mass killings. This was justified by the idea of the 'blood libel'. Christians accused Jews of ritualistically murdering Christian children, draining their blood and consuming it, often at Passover. This goes against Jewish teachings firstly against the murder of children, but also against the consumption of blood at all, even from an animal. Despite this, Jews were presented in writings and images as bloodthirsty, violent and full of hatred for Christians. They were often blamed for ill-fortune. The spread of the Black Death in Europe was blamed on Jews deliberately poisoning wells, for which thousands were attacked and many burnt alive. They were associated with black magic, witchcraft and the devil. The accusation of deicide was also an undercurrent, all of which justified the persecution of Jewish communities.

3. Can you draw any parallels between views of Jews in this period with Islamophobic views of Muslims?

In 1096 an attack by Christian Germans destroyed flourishing Jewish communities on the Rhine and the Danube rivers. This was seen as a 'crusade', a war fought for the glory of Christ, sanctioned by the church. The following three centuries saw many crusades in Europe and the Middle East, resulting in the death, displacement and persecution of hundreds of thousands of Jews. Muslims in the Middle East also suffered these attacks.

4. What is your response to the idea of this violence against Jews being sanctioned by the church?

In this period Jews were forbidden by both the church and local governments from having professional jobs or owning land to farm. The only jobs open to them were those considered socially inferior or 'unclean', especially tax collecting and lending money. At that time the church believed that money-lending was sinful. After generations of honing the skills required to work with money many Jews became rich, leading to stereotypes of them as greedy and grasping.

Jews were forced to live in contained areas of towns and cities called ghettos, and had to wear clothing that distinguished them from Christians. Muslim communities in Christian countries suffered similar treatment.

Early Modern Period

Hatred of Jews in Europe continued. The rulers of Spain and Portugal expelled all Jews from their borders in 1492 if they would not convert to Christianity. In 1543 Martin Luther, father of the Reformation and the Protestant church, published *The Jews and their Lies*, in which he states "...we are at fault in not slaying them...". This comment is held to be a precursor to the Nazi's intention to rid the world of Jews. Luther encourages attacks on Jewish houses and business in this volume, which have become known as *pogroms*.

Enlightenment

After the Reformation, in which the Protestant church was formed and split from the Catholic church, Europe saw decades of bloody fighting between Catholic and Protestant Christians. In his *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1693) John Locke makes the case for the conflict between the Catholic and Protestant to end. He argues that each party should be able to let the other live without killing them, even if they don't like the way they worship, pray or take communion. Following this logic, he notes in this book that if Christians are going to tolerate each other they might as well tolerate Jews as well.

The Enlightenment heralded the dawn of a more rational age. Jews still suffered from violence and control, their opportunities were severely limited, and stereotypes about their greed, echoes of the blood libel and the charge of deicide persisted unabated, but they experienced less brutal repression.

5. List religious objections Christians had to the Jews

6. List other objections that do not seem to be rooted in religion

7. What would you say motivated the hatred and persecution of Jews in the Middle Ages?

Racial Discrimination

However, as religious discrimination of Jews resulted in less violence enacted on them, a new form of classification was emerging. As Western nations such as Britain, Spain, France and Germany discovered more and more of the diverse peoples and countries of the globe, a new awareness of 'race' developed. Western thinkers began to categorise the world's 'races' into an order of superiority, with white, Christian, Europeans at the pinnacle of humanity, and black African tribal people at the bottom. Many races, such as black African and Aboriginal Australian were seen as barely human at all. In this new way of seeing humanity, the Jews were perceived as an inferior, 'alien', *racial* group, rather than objectionable for religious reasons.

20th Century

In Russia, pogroms increased against Jewish communities after the publication of a book in 1903 accusing Europe's Jews of plotting world domination in a secret group called the Elders of Zion. By 1921 150,000 Russian Jews had been slaughtered.

A combination of ancient anti-Semitism and modern ideas of racial purity culminated in the Nazi genocide of 6 million Jews between 1942 and 1945. France and Poland, two countries occupied by the Nazis, willingly gave up their Jewish communities to the death camps. Neither the Catholic nor Protestant churches offered significant objections to the mass deportation and murder of European Jews.

At the end of WW2, Europe and America were truly shocked at the scale of the Nazi murder of Jews. In 1948 the State of Israel was given to the Jews as their homeland again. The fact that it was already a country called Palestine, inhabited by Muslim Palestinians, the ancient Philistines, did not concern the colonial powers at the time.

21st Century

Today much anti-Semitism which stems from Muslim sources, as opposed to Christian, is based on the Israeli occupation and control of Palestinian land. Muslim antisemitism is increasing and sometimes involves denying the Holocaust happened.

However, antisemitism, including Holocaust denial, still exists in Christian Europe and Russia. The old stereotypes adhere to Jews and the habit of scapegoating them for any unlucky event still occur. Jews in Russia, Eastern and Western Europe are still subjected to violence and attacks. Conspiracy theorists in America and the UK accuse a shadowy cabal of Jews of plotting to take over the world.

8. Why do you think someone would deny the existence of the Holocaust? Why is this seen as anti-Semitism?

9. What, in your judgment, can overcome anti-Semitism?

This is critical in that it reveals the roots of anti-Semitism in Western Christian culture. Christian or Jewish teachings do not feature, instead students learn the historical emergence of anti-Semitic ideas; deicide, blood libel and greed, followed by the early modern racial categorisation as opposed to a theological categorisation. The tone is rather matter of fact, a point I raised with regards to the revision book. This information would be read and discussed in class, and would form the basis of discussion, much of which would naturally take an emotionally-charged tone as students respond. However, the roots of anti-Semitism in Christian communities is not avoided, even if they are presented in an informative, rather than emotional, manner. Question 9 is a chance for students to offer their own thoughts and responses, and comes closest to asking for a value judgment, although students may answer as they wish. However I do not claim that this information sheet will lessen anti-Semitism in society, but support modern teenagers' understanding of its historical roots. There are no questions which require an explicitly critical outlook, but critical questions might be, '*is not being Jewish part of being Christian? Should Christianity be seen as anti-Semitic?*' Or '*should Christian Europe be seen as anti-Semitic?*' However this material itself is usually critical enough for a class of teenagers in that it reveals Christianity as a power form that acts on other groups, and conversation often organically strays into this territory as the class makes sense of the information.

iv) A Philosophy of Whiteness

To offer a picture of what a critical view could look like in I use philosopher Charles Mills's *The Racial Contract* (1997) and Eamonn Callan and Meira Levinson in political liberal philosophy.

Mills offers a detailed theory of global white supremacy, based on demonstrable historical moments and movements. Mills' detailed explanation shows how and why the white, Christian world came to such dominance, which shows me as a teacher that this history and analysis can be taught.

Mills' 'racial contract' is inspired by Carole Pateman's 1988 *the Sexual Contract*. Nancy Fraser describes Pateman's influential work as revealing the 'master/ subject model' beneath all forms of gender relations (Fraser 1993: p. 173). The unpaid, unacknowledged use by one man of one woman's body, labour and attention, and patriarchal society's use of all women's bodies, labour and attention is, in Fraser's words, the 'shadow myth' (p. 173) thrown by political philosophy's accounts of justice, society and political power. Mills grapples with political philosophy's whitewashing of history to reveal an inherent racial imbalance, as

Pateman and other feminist thinkers expose an inherent gender imbalance. This imbalance is not accidental, but inherent to human understandings of self and other. Mills lays bare the 'racial contract' which is inherent to white supremacy, the 'unnamed political system which has made the world what it is today' (Mills, 1997: p. 1).

In a 2005 paper considering the relationship of ethics to political theory, Mills problematizes 'idealizing approaches to ethical theory' as 'obfuscating' and even contributory to the maintenance of 'illicit group privilege' (Mills, 2005: p. 166). Moral and political theorists working within the liberal tradition, particularly that influenced by Rawls, have an idea of how things should be; more just, more equal, more free, and in this sense they theorise an ideal form of society. However Rawls, in describing the *ideal* just and rational human response to injustice, seems to overlook the already historically entrenched structural injustice that characterises all liberal societies. Therefore Mills' inherent critique of Rawls' theory of justice is based on its 'reliance on idealization to the exclusion, or at least marginalization, of the actual' (p. 168). The 'actual' involves 'relations of structural domination, exploitation, coercion, and oppression', but an abstract, ideal theory removes them from sight (p. 168). In the *Racial Contract* Mills notes that Rawls' *Theory of Justice*, regarded as an authoritative exploration of what justice is and means, contains 'not a single reference to American slavery and its legacy' (Mills, 1997: p. 77). Thus Rawls's abstracted actors are allowed to remain rational and just, and are to remain disconnected from, and unaccountable for, real exploitation and dehumanisation. I have suggested a similar trend in RE material, where ideal Christian teachings about how humans *should* treat others replace histories of how Christians have actually treated others, such as Jews, preventing an analysis of real Christian injustice. Mills' argument is that an idealised vision of justice will fail to yield real justice unless the highly particular, complex and contingent causes of real injustice are understood. This uncovering is then what Mills offers.

Mills' work uncovers how and why whiteness came to be the world's normalising hegemony. Like the causes of the Holocaust which I have argued are perfectly explicable, racial domination can be traced as a concept and form of domination which serves to unlock racial injustice and make it explicable. Once something is explicable, it can be taught. I will outline two major points from Mills; firstly the invisibility of white supremacy, and secondly, the invention of the categories of race. Once I have outlined these two pillars of Mills' argument, I will consider how they can be taught.

In noting how a study of political philosophy yields almost no allusions to white supremacy, 'the basic political system that has shaped the world for the past several hundred years' (Mills,

1997: p. 1), Mills shows how invisible and normalised it has become. It is not even seen as '*political*, as a form of domination. It is just taken for granted; it is the background against which other systems, which we *are* to see as political, are highlighted' (pp. 1-2). European 'specialness' (p. 33) is suggested as a causal factor in the continent's coming to dominance, with its 'rationalism and science, innovativeness and inventiveness' (p. 34). The peoples who fell under Europe's hooves are not seen as the steps Europe stood on, and necessary for its rise.

The colossal fortunes to be made in Africa, Asia and the Americas, once discovered, drove further invasion and exploitation. These fortunes funded the industrial revolution and ever richer governments and industrialists could countenance underwriting the social and political innovations Enlightenment thinkers dreamed of. Mills, as a political philosopher, spends considerable time analysing the work of Locke, Kant, Hobbes and JS Mill, the architects of Enlightenment ethics, and the notion of the social contract which replaced feudalism. Over the same centuries as these thinkers produced the works which shaped modern democratic theory and institutions, the white world, their world, was growing richer and richer through invasion, plunder and enslavement. Such lucrative profiteering coexisting alongside the supposed moral goodness of the West was an inconsistency that could only be resolved if Enlightenment values of equality, fairness and autonomy could somehow not apply to the colonised peoples, hence their status as subhuman. As Mills shows, the racial contract has evolved through various stages. The early presentations of native peoples as subhuman, to be bought and sold as property, existed when 'white supremacy was *openly* proclaimed' (p. 73). These presentations would not be acceptable now when, in theory, the social contract has been enlarged to apply to all humans. But this enlarging of the social contract has simply meant that the racial contract '*has written itself out of formal existence*' (p. 73), presented as no longer relevant or worth thinking about. Through this sleight of hand the subjugation and exploitation of half the planet is not seen as necessary to the rise of Europe and North America. The contemporary incarnation of the racial contract requires not only the material privilege of the white world, but the *moral* superiority of white peoples, and to allow this it must remain invisible at all costs.

I come to the second of Mills's broad arguments; the categorising of humans into races. Following invasion the people who fell under European rule were classified in various ways, as natives, slaves, savages, barbarians, wild people in wild lands where laws do not apply, to justify their domination. Thus the world was slowly but surely categorised into human and not human, which Mills explains, 'eventually coalesced into the *basic* opposition of white versus

nonwhite' (Mills, 1997: p. 21). This categorisation was a necessary measure to justify the wholesale plunder of the colonised lands. The racial contract's foremost feature is its economic nature; for those at the receiving end, the foremost part of their experience is economic exploitation and dependency. Yet the categories of race, invented to justify plunder, have become an underpinning of global human self-identity.

As Mills argues, 'It would be a fundamental error... to see racism as anomalous, a mysterious deviation from European Enlightenment humanism' (p. 26). The white world has not fallen short of an ideal, but is adhering to a norm, a norm which is inherently racialized. The norm of white supremacy has such power that endemic racism is seen as regrettable, but never as *necessary*. Mills continues, '[r]ace has been made to seem marginal when in fact race has been central... what is involved is compliance with a *norm* whose existence it is now embarrassing to admit' (p. 56). The racialization has shaped 'white moral psychology' (p. 57) meaning that white people now *need* non-white people in order to understand themselves as white, 'as Hegelians would be quick to recognize' (p. 58). The racial contract demands white blindness allowing white people to 'act in racist ways *while* thinking themselves as acting morally' (p. 93). The racial contract requires 'an epistemology of ignorance' (p. 93) where '[e]vasion and self-deception thus become the epistemic norm' (p. 97).

In terms of teaching both these broad arguments of Mills; the backgrounding of white hegemony and the invention of the notion of 'race', they show me conceptual markers which can be explored through any number of historical and current examples. Mills offers several historical case studies which reflect European intolerance and sense of entitlement to the peoples they encountered. For example, he cites Robert Williams, a Lumbee Indian and legal scholar, who has traced Native American groups' treatment at the hands of European invaders. Europeans seem to have arrived at the New World with the view that the Pope held sway over the whole planet. Williams describes the process whereby Native American groups would have a long letter read to them, the *Requerimiento*, in Spanish, a language they did not understand. The *Requerimiento* acknowledged their status as human beings but ones that must accept the Gospel to prove they were human. If, somehow, they signalled a rejection of the offer, 'a just war could be lawfully waged against them' (Mills, 1997: p. 22, citing Williams, 1986). Examples such as this could be taught to teachers or older students, with an amount of preparation, such as a map, a timeline and an image of Spanish *conquistadores*. This example could be offered in a lesson on Christian evangelism, currently a topic on the GCSE Christianity papers, and used as a springboard to discuss the morality of Christian mission, combined with more positive examples of development work, to offer balance and enable students to offer

their own conclusion. In this example what is already required to be taught, the topic of Christian mission and church growth on all four current GCSE specifications, could be widened to add a much richer historical and ethical understanding and a chance to explore notions such as divine truth, inclusivism, pluralism and exclusivism, the morality of Christian proselytising and how religions define themselves in relation to other beliefs or groups. As I noted, many examples could be offered in the classroom to lead students to understand the concepts underlying the examples; how European colonists behaved and what attitudes their behaviour reveals. The key is a teacher who desires to introduce a critical view.

For younger children a critical view is not impossible and if well-managed could be introduced lightly in order to plant the seeds for future critical analysis. For example I was commissioned to produce around 6 hours of lesson for 8 and 9-year olds for an Agreed Syllabus entitled 'What does it mean to be a Hindu in Britain today?' and to include information about Mahatma Gandhi and Hindu moral duties, or *dharma*. I combined Gandhi's life and struggle with the *dharma* to work for justice, connecting his non-violent resistance against injustice. Any pupils who go on to study Hindu ethics in more detail when they are older will realise the connections I offer are extremely simplistic, but it is appropriate for this age group. Pupils find out briefly about the British annexation of Mumbai in 1757 by the East India Trading Company. Below are the notes given in the syllabus to support teachers' understanding of a BBC clip covering the East India Company's plunder of India;

Watch the BBC clip.

Ask the children what the British did in the 17th Century. The BBC clip says the British 'gained control of Mumbai' and 'leased it' to a company. What does this mean? It means that the British navy invaded Mumbai and took it over, making it part of Britain. They then leased, or loaned, it to a company; the East India Trading Company. This meant the company could take what Mumbai produced, sell it, and keep the money. Let the class discuss how this feels to them. It is not really fair. We would not like it if India invaded Birmingham and took all its goods to sell.

When did British rule end? 1947. If the East India Trading Company was established in 1757, for how many years did Britain control India?

The aim of this starter to is establish that life in India is very colourful and busy, and contains many contrasts. Also to establish that Britain controlled India for around 200 years.

I included this in the unit partly to set Gandhi's struggle in context, but also to offer an age-appropriate bit of critical whiteness. If the teacher chooses not to discuss the issue her class would still gain some contextual understanding of Gandhi's teachings, but the opportunity is given in the notes for her to pause and explore the morality of the issue in more detail, if she is inclined.

The editor of this resource, herself a Primary teacher, objected to this context as too upsetting and too difficult. However she listened to my defence and included the paragraph after all, reporting to me a few months later that teachers in her region had singled this bit of historical context out as helpful to their understanding and enjoyable to discuss with their pupils. This pleasing result means an increased potential of future resources to offer an age and subject-appropriate critical view. Although a teacher might experience discomfort and avoid a critical view, I justify it in educational terms. A critical view unlocks a situation to make it explicable. Educationally, the teacher's discomfort might influence how they approach the topic, but it is not a reason to avoid taking this view.

As for teaching Mills' second broad point, the creation of racial categories, again I suggest the process would be to simply demonstrate with well-chosen examples European racialised thinking. GCSE students studying Christian teachings on equality and love, or indeed baptism, could consider Christian slave-owners' resistance to baptising their slaves, as they would then have to accept their equality as humans, for example (eg Ryrice, 2017). The lesson could begin with designs of slave ships, with sketched black bodies stacked up in the holds, to show how the human cargo fits inside. There is much stimulating material such as this to be found online. Again, the key point is teachers' wish to communicate the development of racialised thinking. Although it is upsetting for all, and teachers working with non-white young people will tread carefully, allowing critical whiteness and critical Christianity thinking to emerge as slowly and as lightly as they see fit, the critical element is still a teacher willing to engage in this type of thinking with a class.

Coming face to face with this level of brutality is probably not appropriate for younger children, but the present realities resulting from past racial injustice, such as the trans-Atlantic slave trade, can be explored, allowing the potential for children to ask questions and acquire a slice of history in response. For example, a class might learn about the black Pentecostal groups originating in the Caribbean and Florida as an example of a non-Anglican Christian church. Even with younger children, the key is a lesson designed with the potential for discussion of wider moral and historical issues built into it. The starting point is a teacher who is prepared to answer some tricky 'why' questions, such as why black Caribbeans were not

permitted to join the Anglican Church initially. Such questions could be answered in simple terms, with the teacher affirming to pupils that it *is* upsetting because it is unfair. The key is a teacher who is not actively avoiding a moment of critical honesty.

Therefore teacher education is crucial, although beyond the scope of this thesis. It will be teachers willing to have these conversations and include content which reveals power imbalances which enables this process of critical understanding. Over the years I have met a few teachers interested in pursuing education's critical potential, and a great deal more who are much more comfortable in liberal confessional territory. As Megan Boler and Henry Giroux warn, this process is uncomfortable for the teacher and pupil. However both Boler and Giroux reject a view of education as rationalistic and apolitical, presenting human emotions, values and interpersonal connections as an integral part of learning. To conclude this account of Mills, it shows me that an 'epistemology of ignorance' can be undone with the refusal to let key knowledge be hidden.

d) Political Liberal Education

Having acknowledged critiques of abstraction and neutrality in liberal education, in a brief section before I conclude, I present two thinkers within liberal philosophy of education who see the political potential in liberal education in ways which resonate with my proposal. I use them here to suggest how a deliberately political liberal education could operate in light of critical multicultural and antiracist constructs.

Eamonn Callan and Meira Levinson wish to see children educated in a liberal manner by a liberal state leaving school with an active commitment to maintaining that state. Callan and Levinson are philosophers of education in the same vein as Hirst, Peters and John White in that they are operating within a broadly liberal framework. However they describe a liberal education which is critical of white, Christian dominance, and is extremely helpful for my purposes because it shows thinkers firmly within the liberal educational fields taking a step into critical multicultural and antiracist territory, something I am also suggesting for religion and worldviews.

In his 1997 *Creating Citizens*, Callan addresses many of the issues raised by critical multiculturalism and antiracism such as cultural alienation and ingrained social inequality. While Callan's investigations uncover problems with aspects of liberal education, he is essentially committed to it as the solution to educational inequality, with a few adaptations. For Callan, the continued alienation of certain groups in society is a fact that has to be

addressed, in education as in wider social discourse, as a matter of urgency. The volume opens with the acknowledgement that the world is not fair and proceeds to ask what role liberal education might play in both maintaining unfairness and enabling a transformation.

Callan proposes that school children should not only meet diverse peers and teachers, they should learn *about* inequality in society, to enable what Callan calls the 'Protean' (Callan, 1997: p. 5) potential of open debate and reflection. While I have taken issue with the assumption that classroom talk allows a critical understanding, devoting much time to evidence that classrooms can equally be places where inequality is reproduced and dominant forms reified, Callan states that learning about diverse worldviews is essential to understand *why* some groups perceive life in a liberal state as bruising or demeaning, and why some groups seem to reject what the liberal state has to offer. While Callan is not averse to making claims about the ethical moulding of the next generation, his view of what should constitute education about others in a plural, liberal state also represents the historical and contextual honesty I have championed. Callan does not assume respect will follow from learning about others, an assumption I have tested and found wanting, but proposes understanding of the reasons for social and economic discrepancies to enable understanding of alienation and exclusion. Callan ultimately is more comfortable with normative assumptions about the value of such learning than I am, but in explicitly calling for teaching which is honest about the roots of cultural oppression and dominance, he represents a step towards the particular in liberal philosophy of education which I also wish to take in religion and worldviews.

Meira Levinson also talks about real issues and real people from within the liberal ideal, in reflections on her time as an American middle school teacher (Levinson, 2012). On pondering the massive "mainstream' or 'dominant' cultural capital' (p. 11) her students lack, who are '99 per cent Black and about 94 per cent poor enough to qualify for free or reduced-price lunch' (p. 6), she realises that trying to offer 'one kid at a time' (p. 13) as good an education as she can within the current system won't make a difference. Schools in fact 'need to teach young people knowledge and skills to upend and reshape power relationships directly, through public, political, and civic action, not just through private self-improvement' (p. 13).

Levinson is concerned with what she calls the 'civic empowerment gap' (Levinson, 2012: p. 23), a multiple entity based on studies of poverty, race, comparisons of those native-born or naturalized and how far particular individuals and groups trust American power structures and institutions to respect and protect them. This compound set of factors influences people's likelihood to vote and to become politically engaged, in other words, how far they consider their voices will be heard and their concerns met. America's most politically engaged groups

seem to be the nation's richest and best educated, middle-class and upwards, white or Asian, American-born. Conversely America's black and Hispanic, poorest, and least well educated communities seem to be the least politically engaged.

Levinson suggests 'codeswitching' (p. 87); supporting young people from excluded and minoritised groups to 'represent and express themselves in ways that members of the majority group- those with political privilege and power- will naturally understand and respect' (p. 87). This is to enable minority groups to enter arenas of political power, as well as, or instead of resorting to 'direct action' (p. 87) in order to be heard. Teaching poor, non-white students to speak the language of power, means all students will have to confront the idea that 'there is a language and culture of power' (p. 87).

Is Levinson challenging or colluding with power imbalances? I propose Levinson offers valuable advice because her theoretical understanding (she studied philosophy at Yale and politics at Oxford) is put to the test in the classroom, and therefore her proposal of codeswitching is practical, based on her vivid experiences of a diverse, disenfranchised student body. A teacher attempting to support students in codeswitching might discuss as a class whether they are challenging or colluding with power imbalances; some might feel they are reinforcing white dominance while others might feel they are preparing to engage with, and share in, power. Levinson's theorising is interwoven with snippets of conversations with her Dominican, Puerto-Rican, Cape Verdean, African American, Laotian, Vietnamese, Chinese, and so on, students, realisations of her own ignorance and what she learns at her pupils' hands, as much as what they learn at hers. Reading Levinson reminds me of my West London teenagers, of being confronted with my own ignorance of Moroccan, Somalian or Eritrean culture and history, and of realising that my students needed to be known as Moroccan, Somalian, Eritrean, and so on, as much as I wanted to empower them with an education. I have used the phrase 'light-touch' with regards to introducing criticality into the classroom because emotions need to be managed when working with children and teenagers in order to learn and progress. Levinson suggests codeswitching as a pragmatic path between assimilation and exclusion, a suggestion stemming from particular experiences of the classroom. Levinson's work once again underlines the importance of the interpersonal as well as the educational; it will be individual teachers, guided by the needs of their particular students, who will bring a critical outlook to the classroom.

Levinson writes in the same vein as Callan. Without wishing to move away from the liberal ideal for education she theorises what would need to change for liberal ethics to be achieved in and through schooling. Levinson's answer is to deliberately teach children how to see and

then critique the world around them, such as where power resides, how it operates and how they can commandeer some.

Both Levinson and Callan are philosophers of education along liberal educational lines, both desire young people to leave school with a sense of their place as citizens, and both turn the critical gaze firmly on dominant forms of power, proposing these be taught in school and to become part of teachers' professional vision. For me they represent the enlarging of liberal education that I wish to develop in religion and worldviews. Callan and Levinson represent a step on from an idealised liberal model of learning to a contextualised one. Callan is especially clear about his extrinsic aims and while I might not follow him, his and Levinson's work shows me that to teach *about* power, history and context, as well as concepts, is well within the liberal educational ideal.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have considered the service to understanding a critical view offers in revealing structures and norms which explain the world as we find it. Therefore a critical view should be considered part of the toolbox of a religion and worldviews curriculum.

It is the utility for understanding provided by looking through a critical lens that leads me to justify it in educational terms. A teacher might avoid looking because of the discomfort this revealing lens evokes, both in herself and her pupils, but if it unlocks a particular understanding it should not be avoided. However using Boler I suggest that the discomfort itself is a dimension of learning, and can be explored as a dimension of what is to be understood. I conclude that the interpersonal dimension, the space between pupil, teacher and what is being learnt, is a significant site of learning. A critical stance, or the possibility of a critical stance where necessary for understanding, places the teacher in a particular relationship to what is being learnt, which is different to a non-educational or confessional positioning. I have described both liberal confessional approaches to religion and community cohesion expectations as non-educational because pupils' understanding is not the primary aim. The primary aim is the transmission for assent of *a priori* metaphysical or values stances. Community cohesion policy actively avoids investigation of political or economic contexts and focuses solely on signs of interpersonal friendship between groups. A teacher employing a critical lens in order to unlock understanding is entering into a riskier, more uncertain space, both for herself and her pupils, but it is also a liberating positioning; she is no longer avoiding, fudging or misleading pupils about the sheer complexity of human belief and interaction. She

is deliberately moving away from an 'epistemology of ignorance' (Mills, 1997: p. 93) to an epistemology of understanding.

Chapter 6

Discussion: RE as Liberal Education

Introduction

In this final chapter I will address objections that could be made to a religion and worldviews curriculum following a liberal educational model, and in doing so further develop and articulate my proposal. A liberal educational model, as I have noted, is not just a model I happen to prefer to the interpretive or Human Development approaches. A liberal educational model contains within it the capacity for justification of what is done in the name of education. Within this overall model different approaches can be utilised if they support a particular understanding. Furthermore, rejecting a model which is justified educationally, is to reject educational aims of the subject, or to combine them with moral and personal aims. The incoherence at the heart of RE can be seen as an incoherence of aims, derived, as I have argued, through the tussle of competing and incompatible aims. Therefore one aim, an educational aim, provides both a standard by which to measure what is done in the name of religious education, and makes clear when non-educational aims are being pursued.

Objections to a liberal educational model drawn from analytic philosophy of education concern the assumption of rationality, abstraction and neutralism; tendencies which hide human differences, abstracting the human to a rational, male type and fail to defend substantive ethical or conceptual stances. For a model which sets out to justify what is done in the name of education, the assumed neutrality and lack of defence of underlying values is paradoxical. The assumption of neutrality has meant that the social liberal values of Hirst and Peters' era are indistinguishable from the neoliberal market values of Thatcher's government. I address and explore how this can be managed, often taking refuge in pragmatic principles to give teachers clarity and coherence.

A major virtue of a liberal model is in the clarity it offers. Teaching requires intelligent and systematic planning, but it is a highly practical endeavour. While acknowledging objections to certain of my formulations, such as aiming for students' autonomy or seeking only an intrinsic justification, I uphold them on pragmatic grounds. Simple guiding principles help teachers when making quick decisions in complex situations, offering clarity both for the teacher's own

decision-making and in discussion with other parties. As noted, there are times when the teacher might avoid critical, challenging views if they would not ultimately be helpful for understanding. She might offer a critical view as an option among many, allowing students to decide for themselves the value of the conclusions drawn. This is up to the teacher and can be defended educationally. An angry or upset class can't learn, moreover, an imposed liberal criticality is as confessional as the expectation of respect for religious beliefs. The architecture of a teaching model must rest on visible principles which can be articulated and justified in clear, simple terms. As well as providing clarity for the teacher, visible aims and principles are open to critique and challenge, through which the model can develop and become stronger.

Ultimately employing a liberal educational approach allows the teacher clarity of aims within the wider social and ethical dimensions of schooling. Claiming only an intrinsic value to learning in religion and worldviews can seem reductive, but it also protects the curriculum from extrinsic expectations which, as I have shown, rarely seek understanding as a primary aim. While acknowledging extrinsic outcomes are likely, if not inevitable, making only intrinsic claims allows a clarity of aims for a practical project. The aim of understanding, through planning, teaching and assessment, can be met. Challenges to curriculum content can be made on the grounds that they do not enhance understanding. Improvements to curriculum design can be made on the grounds that they improve understanding. Whereas claims as to how learning will benefit students existentially or morally are nebulous and not tested in any meaningful sense. Claims as to resulting value judgments, such as respect, deny students' autonomy, and are also not tested. This is not to say that students' existential and moral outlooks won't be changed by their learning, or that teachers might not at times temper a critical analysis if it would distract from understanding. Teachers can no more claim that all students will respect a view or belief, as they will all welcome critical analysis of a view or belief. Through showing students what types of questions they might ask in order to investigate truth claims, now or in future, teachers can uphold the aim of understanding without imposing a process that might feel coercive or uncomfortable for students at a particular moment.

Abstraction in the curriculum can mean one particular way of seeing the world is imposed, without comment, on all humans. Thinkers in philosophy of education have challenged a white, male, rational bent to what is presented as universal knowledge, and such challenges are built into a model which is justified in terms of understanding. However, while abstraction on the curriculum limits understanding, abstraction of aims, away from political or economic outcomes, protects the curriculum from being anything other than a model of education.

Challenges within philosophy of education force evolution; challenges made on liberal education's own terms; that of understanding, for future intellectual autonomy. I resolve tension between conceptual problems, considerations of which could go on indefinitely, and the need for clarity in the field, pragmatically. Principles need to offer clarity and simplicity, they need to be visible and they need to work in practice. They are also open to challenge, but where principles are clearly articulated they can be critiqued in their own terms, and so evolve.

a) Justification

As Bailey notes, citing Hirst, liberal education can be justified through its foundational connection to 'the very nature of justification itself' (Bailey, 1984: p. 28). Liberal education, with its roots in analytic philosophy of education, has deep roots in thinking which seeks to uncover the meanings of educational concepts, and therefore to justify actions in relation to aims.

I justify a liberal framing, as opposed to a critical pedagogy or Marxist or other framing. This is deliberate. My defence and use of liberal intellectual values, autonomy primarily, and associated values such as humility and openness, meets a pragmatic as well as a conceptual function. Teaching is a practical matter and guiding principles help teachers stick to their primary aim in a busy and complex working environment. Of course teachers can no more ensure values of humility and openness or an increased capacity for autonomous thought are achieved, as they can pupils will respect other religions or worldviews, but the aim of autonomy is clear and simple when planning and in classroom conversations. I have used Brighouse's suggestion of 'autonomy-facilitating' classroom approaches to denote autonomy as a guiding principle that also upholds students' rights *not* to apply critical interrogation to deeply-held beliefs.

The curriculum design I propose would pursue several avenues of enquiry that might be uncomfortable for people of faith. I have had many experiences of faith insiders resisting contextual or critical aspects of religion; a Christian teacher at a Lambeth Palace launch complaining that she didn't want to be studied like some sort of specimen; an Imam at an APPG for RE declaring children should be taught that all religion is simply 'love your neighbour'; writing with a group of Christian educators who fiercely resisted any mention in our teaching materials that the doctrine of the Trinity does not appear in the Bible; writing for a Christian editor who noted, in response to my first draft, 'I don't see what we can learn about Christianity from 1st Century Palestine'; and a moment when a Shi'a Muslim chair of

SACRE at my training on teaching the history and concerns of Sunni and Shi'a, stood up and asserted there weren't any differences, we are all one. Of course this is anecdotal, but gives a flavour of the sorts of reactions from those more accustomed to an acontextual, interior presentation of religious beliefs, and certainly unused to critical analyses. In each of these examples I am able to compare a liberal *confessional* approach to a liberal *educational* approach and justify the latter according to educational reasoning. If learning something of the history of the Trinity or 1st Century Palestine is necessary for understanding Christianity, then it is justified in educational terms; if organizing principles such as the roots and concerns of Sunni and Shi'a, however subtle their differences, aid understanding of the complex, ancient and multiple entity we call 'Islam', then it is justified in educational terms. Students could explore a question such as, '*are the differences between Sunni and Shi'a as important as that which they share?*'. In other words, students could decide for themselves whether 'we are all one' or not, by analysing the information taught and offering their own view.

Exploring the roots of the Sunni and Shi'a split in order to gain an understanding of its causes is an example of how employing disciplinary thinking, in this case historical thinking, can aid understanding. Through finding out how and why the split occurred knowledge of Islam's history and present is widened. In my own research for the purposes of teacher training, I have found analysis by Daniel Brown useful with regards to the subtle yet significant differences between Sunni and Shi'a (Brown, 2009). Archaeological evidence suggests Islam's rapid expansion after Muhammad's death did not involve widespread conversions to the religion (Brown, 2009: p. 110- 111), leading Brown to propose that the early Islamic empire was a bureaucratic rather than a religious colonisation (p. 115). Brown argues that within Arab society 'the theme that looms largest is leadership' (p. 116). The early Caliphs had above all to maintain order and stability, and Sunni and Shi'a differences on what constitutes a good leader are the key to understanding the split. As Brown notes, leadership was 'invested with deep moral and religious import.' (p. 119). This level of analysis is appropriate for teachers, who invariably find it fascinating. In the course of training we discuss themes to be developed in the classroom, such as what makes a good leader, to enhance students' understanding of modern Sunni and Shi'a Islam.

This would be a liberal educational approach, justified by enlarged understanding, rather than a custodial approach, where the conclusion is foregone and students are only asked to assent. The liberal framing is not neutral; rather it underpins the choices made about what is taught and why. An articulation of what is happening in religion and worldviews and why means firstly that different approaches are made visible, such as between liberal educational and liberal

confessional, and secondly that practitioners can make an informed choice between competing options. The first step is to admit they *are* competing.

I use Hogan's argument that Western education since Socrates has been 'custodial' (Hogan, 1995) in that a metaphysics that stands behind what is learnt, whether Platonic or Christian, is in itself not to be interrogated or critiqued. This is political, and so a liberal educational approach which reveals underlying metaphysics is also political. They are both choices made by the curriculum architect. In the case of RE as liberal education, the choices are made overt and are themselves open to challenge.

An example of a learning approach which acknowledges rather than passes off as neutral a metaphysical commitment is found in the enquiry question below;

'If someone doesn't want to be saved, can they call themselves a Christian?'

This question could be considered in the course of learning about Christian beliefs about God and humanity. Students have to show what they have learnt about Christian theology, but Christian metaphysics, visible in such doctrine as Original Sin and salvation is not hidden or passed off as beyond comment and is subject to scrutiny.

Liberal education should not claim neutrality, it might have done, but should not have. It is driven by the 'sovereignty', to use another phrase of Hogan's, of understanding (Hogan, 1995: p. 15), which is in itself a political position, I justify it as an aim suitable for a secular school in a multicultural, liberal state, and an aim that can be met, as opposed to an aim for suitable for a religious environment, and competing aims that prevent each other from being met.

b) Rationality

Hirst's forms of knowledge thesis presents humans as rational above all. I have noted an objection that this is too sweeping an estimation of all humans. In this section however I will consider a justification of the forms of knowledge thesis, which is represented in my proposal as multidisciplinary thinking to build a systematic and increasingly sophisticated understanding of religion and worldviews.

A justification for the forms of knowledge, or a multidisciplinary understanding, is an educational one. A major, even the primary aim, of schooling is to learn. How children learn about the various aspects of the world or how they acquire new skills will be shaped by the nature of the thing they are learning about; the past, the natural world, a language or a

practical technique such as cooking or swimming. Hirst describes liberal education as not 'vocational' or 'specialist' (Hirst, 1974, p. 30). It is general; a general exploration of the ways the people of the world have found out about different dimensions of the world. If liberal education appears to be over-rationalistic, this is a problem because some students are more practical than academic, or more visual than linguistic, and will struggle to relate to certain methods of communication. But this is a problem for teaching and learning, not for curriculum design. Physics lessons must do what the discipline of physics does; explore the processes and forces which make up the physical world. History lessons must do what history does; uncover and investigate the pressures and influences that shaped the past and shape the present. Teachers whose students respond well to active learning might take them out into the playground to 'be' particles, or bring costumes for role play about an historical era. Teachers all have to choose the amount and challenge of the information their students can absorb; they might employ less 'chalk and talk', avoid too much writing or formal assessments, they might reduce what is learnt to a core, so as not to overburden students with too much information. However the manner of their learning will stay within the discipline of physics and history, driven by the thing they are trying to understand. A definition of 'rationality' as describing the process by which the primary aim of education, the aim of understanding the world, is met, need not exclude some learners and can be justified educationally.

Moreover that the forms of knowledge are 'publicly specifiable' (Hirst, 1974: p. 38), I have argued, protects RE from non-educational influences. The boundaries are public; history, theology, philosophy and ethics are employed to explore the multidimensional thing we call 'religion'. Students might find abstract philosophical thinking hard, or become confused by words in languages that are unfamiliar, such as Arabic, Sanskrit, Greek and Hebrew. The teacher's job is to manage this, but if philosophical thinking or the etymology of a word is the best approach to unlock an idea in religion and worldviews, educational aims demand that it is employed. The methods of the academic disciplines have evolved to understand the thing being understood, thus the methods of religion and worldviews should widen to understand religion's multiple dimensions.

A critical view is deliberately part of a liberal educational model because at times a critical view reveals something hidden and thus unlocks understanding. I have acknowledged that at times a critical view brings discomfort, and this discomfort might be part of the learning. I have also acknowledged that the personal dimension, where a teacher in relationship with her students can lead them through critical territory, is a dimension that allows learning to take place. Educational aims mean a critical view, where necessary for understanding, could be employed.

Liberal education is not conservative and a critical view can be defended as such. As Luntley suggests, a liberal educational view necessarily contains the potential for critical investigation; it is the 'critical scrutiny' and 'critical care' of our inherited knowledge and understanding of the world (Luntley, 2011: p. 38). Through the academic disciplines which have evolved to explore a particular dimension of reality, and the potential of a critical view where necessary for understanding, liberal education describes how the next generation continue to know the world. The delight of school teaching is to bring children and teenagers, through their imagination and curiosity, to engage with the big ideas that shape our understanding of the world. The process might be creative and fun, but the aim of understanding is essentially rational.

c) Pragmatic principles

I have used arguments by Hirst to suggest that one fundamental justification of liberal education is for teachers to define and defend what they are doing. This might seem like a rather circular argument, but I have resisted a wider justification for liberal education because I can't predict therefore claim extrinsic outcomes. How can I say what benefit, if any, learning will offer to students? Although Peters makes intrinsic claims for liberal learning his vision contains a wider extrinsic worth; a foundation to future life. Wider extrinsic goods are also to be found in Bailey where a general education takes individuals beyond 'the present and particular' (Bailey, 1984). However I have upheld a solely intrinsic justification to protect the RE curriculum from extrinsic claims, firstly about respect for religion and secondly for meeting community cohesion aims, because these outcomes are not tested, and because they limit educational aims. I have described this justification as pragmatic, a reminder for teachers when faced with a complicated question or situation in the classroom, that learning is for its own sake, it is a good in itself.

If teachers can defend what they are doing on educational grounds this puts them in a different relationship to the thing being studied; the infinitesimally rich and varied world of human thought. They don't have to account for it or explain away injustice or paradoxes, they simply have to help students explore it. No extrinsic claims as to changed attitudes or personal growth are made. No extrinsic claims as to increased respect for religious diversity are made. The intrinsic claims of understanding can be pursued. A teacher's discomfort can be part of the understanding, but it should not in itself mean a topic that would otherwise unlock understanding can be avoided.

Likewise, the defence of autonomy as an aim is pragmatic. Students are far from free at school, whether in the system of the whole school or in individual lessons, partly to allow learning to take place at all. However the aim of students' autonomy stands as a practical guiding principle. Teaching requires logical and deliberate planning, but it is a practical endeavour. Autonomy as a practical guiding principle is a quick and easy way for teachers to manage their actions in relation to a goal, in a hectic and complicated day at school. When a difficult question is asked about religious extremism or child abuse by priests, when a parent seems to feel their religious principles are being undermined, when parents withdraw children because they fear confessional pressures in RE, when SLT make social ethical claims for RE that cannot be met, or when a textbook reinforces demeaning norms; at all these times the guiding principle, the primary aim of understanding to enable pupils' autonomous decision making, is readily available in the teacher's tool box. Her aim is students' understanding, to contribute to their future autonomy, drawn from information which allows understanding. This aim can be defended to parents, colleagues or leadership; other aims and outcomes can be compared to this aim; and curriculum choices can be defended for their value in unlocking understanding. A doctor justifies her decisions with regards to her patients' health; a teacher can justify her decisions with regards to her students' growing understanding.

As I have noted several times with regards to the benefits of a clear, guiding principle such as autonomy, or understanding, the teacher does not have to bring a topic to the classroom if she suspects it would cause a level of upset or anger that would then undermine understanding. Like a doctor avoiding a certain treatment for health reasons, a teacher can avoid a certain analysis for reasons of understanding. The question is regularly raised in my work with teachers; *what if this upsets my students?* I have had many conversations with individual teachers about the needs and contexts of their particular students and have come to the conclusion on many occasions to avoid a topic, or to tread very carefully. When developing a Primary pupil day in Luton for largely Pakistani-heritage Muslim children we removed a section on Islamophobia that had been felt beneficial for understanding with groups of white children in Church schools. When considering how the insights of CRT could be utilised in a GCSE lesson on racial prejudice, one teacher with a large black student population decided the analysis would not be helpful for her boys. In both cases teachers felt that their young people already knew about these forms of racism and to bring them deliberately into the learning space would be counter-productive. In both examples the principle of autonomy is not abandoned, but the particular needs of a particular student body inform what sort of information will enhance understanding.

d) Abstraction

A major critique of philosophy of education is abstraction, and abstraction to a rational, white, male person. A deep normalising of a particular life and context is shown by thinkers such as Charles Mills and Jane Roland Martin. The question for a model which underpins curriculum design is whether this has an impact on a curriculum which sets out to understand people. Abstraction is problematic both in the abstracted nature of knowledge itself, which is itself a particular cultural, gendered artefact, and in the lack of representation of other types of people. I am quite prepared to accept philosophy of education in Hirst and Peters' era as an abstracted, gendered and privileged way of seeing the world. However the model has value, as I hope this thesis demonstrates. It is thinkers within the liberal philosophical tradition, although Mills claims his work for CRT, who have thrown up these insights. This is liberal learning doing its job, and indeed the era of Hirst and Peters brought a new level of rigour and scrutiny to education. I have shown critical lenses through which to see power structures, including liberal learning's own power structures, and how their application enhances understanding.

However I have suggested that abstraction in learning aims, rather than curriculum content, could offer some protection for a curriculum beset by non-educational aims. Having traced the roots of abstraction in philosophy of education and acknowledged this is a problem, it seems that the project is abstracted from context and human differentials to avoid external pressures. As Pring states, liberal education should be 'separated from the world of business and usefulness' (Pring, 1993: p. 55). A desire to be an educational project, shaped by educational concerns, not by passing trends, seems to be the basis of this abstraction. I have shown how various non-educational agenda have distorted the RE curriculum, starting with a demonstration of RE's original non-educational, confessional aims. I am not suggesting abstraction *within the curriculum* as an answer, but a clear educational aim, to be visible against non-educational influences, protects curriculum design from non-educational influences. Meanwhile a curriculum justified in intrinsic terms can frame formerly abstracted knowledge of religion and worldviews in various contexts, building on disciplinary insights, that deliberately enhance understanding.

The serious problem of abstraction, following thinkers such as Roland Martin, is in the masking of power. Political choices which underpin the learning approach are not made explicit, and therefore are neither justified nor defended. For this reason, abstraction underpinning a curriculum masks power and obscures dimensions which should be made visible, whether

contexts, connections or moral questions. Abstraction is not a necessary part of liberal education, in fact thinkers within the liberal tradition identify it and, following educational goals, attempt to avoid it in future.

e) Neutralism

I have argued that phenomenological approaches to religion and belief encourage relativistic thinking as they are couched in a supposed neutralism. I have also used analyses by Barnes (2014) and Revell (2012) to suggest that neutralism itself hides a liberal Protestant ethic and is therefore not neutral.

Neutralism in philosophy of education means values which should be openly claimed and defended are passed off as beyond comment. In presenting critiques of this tendency in liberal education, I justify and defend my own stance; my use of the liberal model for educational reasons and the notion of autonomy and learning for its own sake as guiding principles. In this way the model can be strengthened by accurate critiques, and when it is no longer useful it can recede from use. My model is a tool to allow learning to take place, in time a new tool might provide more effective solutions to educational problems. In articulating and defending my philosophical framework and guiding values I can show teachers exactly what I offer, and they can decide if this is what they need.

Conclusion

I have argued for a liberal educational approach to the teaching of RE, or religion and worldviews, as the most effective method to overcome the problems identified; a curriculum burdened with competing and incompatible aims, untested claims, hidden values and an almost total avoidance of context or criticality. A liberal learning approach starts with aims, themselves derived from the nature of the thing to be understood. Religion and worldviews are multidimensional, therefore religion and worldviews should be multidimensional, or multidisciplinary.

Religion encompasses several dimensions of human experience and can be viewed from external, internal, historical and conceptual angles. This is equally true of an expanded religion and worldviews curriculum, where commitment and belonging are not the sole preserve of organised religions and can themselves be explored as human phenomena.

My own contribution to the growing interest in a multidisciplinary study of religion and worldviews is in employing the insights of critical race and multicultural thinking to an understanding of culture, community and identity as well as exclusion and the exercise of power. Such insights have not before been formulated for what they offer a religion and worldviews curriculum. I have also drawn together modes of thinking from political philosophy as well as liberal philosophy of education and shown how these could support explorations of self and identity in a religion and worldviews curriculum. Alongside this thinking are examples of teaching materials to support and exemplify my proposal for a new, single aim for religion and worldviews in the curriculum.

A good example of how liberal education can evolve is found in Callan and Levinson's work which sits within the liberal framework but calls for a critical, honest analysis of white, Christian dominance as part of liberal learning in schools. This represents a synthesis of social and ethical insights from critical multicultural and antiracist thinking with a liberal model of learning. The critical gaze is trained on dominant cultural norms and sites of power allowing more contextualised conversations about self, identity, belonging and commitment in the classroom. As I have argued for religion and worldviews, both these liberal philosophers of education show that to explore power, history and context sits within the liberal ideal for education.

As I stated at the start of the thesis, my first experience of classroom RE was filtered through the infinitely varied lives of my students in a West London school. It was finding out about my students that led me to CRT and a new critical view, always a memorable moment. Exploring critical multiculturalism and antiracism in education, initially in an attempt to understand the pressures my students were under, soon meant the critical gaze was turned upon RE itself. Although my research began with my students, this thesis begins with aims. Coming to understand why RE's stated aims cannot be met leads me to offer one clear aim, justified educationally.

My reshaped aim for religion and worldviews studies is understanding, using disciplinary thinking to explore religion's multiple dimensions. Religion inspires individuals, it is a form of global and local power, woven through culture, it is myth and meaning that holds communities together. Religion raises philosophical questions as well as answers questions of meaning; it raises ethical questions as well as offers ethical frameworks. Analytic philosophy of education is ultimately concerned with what is being done in the name of education and why. A liberal educational approach to religion and worldviews offers an educational justification for a

subject of the school curriculum to deliberately and systematically aim for understanding in multiple dimensions.

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