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# Worldview Literacy as Transformative Knowledge

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## Introduction

In 2018 the Commission on Religious Education for England and Wales published its report and proposed National Entitlement (CoRE, 2018). The proposals have been heralded as a 'paradigm shift' towards a 'worldviews approach' (Cooling et al., 2020). Worldviews is a contested term (Benoit et al., 2020) and what a worldviews approach means is by no means settled. What is clear though is that it represents a shift away from the 'world religions' approach that has dominated RE in England since the 1970s and, as such, offers the possibility of a shift in thinking about the nature and role of knowledge in RE.

Following the CoRE report, the English Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) conducted a research review around Religious Education, which, in drawing on recent developments in the field, presents a framework of three forms of knowledge involved in the subject.

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These are described as 'substantive', 'disciplinary' and 'personal' knowledge (Ofsted, 2021). The knowledge question has long troubled RE (see Kueh, 2018, 2020; Stones & Fraser-Pearce, 2021) and the Ofsted review offers a welcome framework for thinking about the kinds of knowledge involved in the study of religion/worldviews. How these forms of knowledge are understood and translated into practice remains to be seen, and the relationship between them is still to be articulated.

This chapter presents the idea of 'worldview literacy' as a framework to support worldviews education and for understanding the relationship between these three types of knowledge. This builds on the concept of 'religious literacy', but goes beyond reductive conceptualisations of the latter as knowledge, skills and attitudes vis-à-vis religious diversity, to present a framework for a transformative process of educational praxis.

Understood as a process of praxis in which interpretation and application are interwoven, worldview literacy emphasises the interdependency of substantive, disciplinary and personal knowledge in a process of critical, reflexive interpretation that is inseparable from skills development and personal formation. I will argue that this process is transformational in two senses: firstly, in relation to the individual who undergoes a transformation through reflexive encounter with the subject matter and, secondly, in relation to the public sphere as the process is an enactment of engagement in plurality that promotes critical consciousness and empathy. I suggest that employed as a framework to support curriculum planning and classroom practice, worldview literacy can contribute to the 'unlocking of human powers' (Deng, 2021) and so to ways of rethinking ideas of 'powerful knowledge' (Young & Muller, 2016). In relation to Religious Education, this offers a way of reconciling what are sometimes seen as conflicting aims of personal, social and academic development.

## The Knowledge Turn

Within ongoing debates around the aims and purposes of RE in English schools, the subject has not been immune to the 'turn to knowledge' embraced by our school system. This is evident, for example, in the increased focus on content and the acquisition of knowledge about

religion and belief in the 2015 GCSE[1] Religious Studies examination reforms and in increased attention to the disciplines underpinning RE (Georgiou & Wright, 2018; Kueh, 2020). The development of 'knowledge-rich' RE is seen by many as contributing to the academic rigour and thus the status of the subject. Yet RE is a multidisciplinary subject and rather than the aim being the mastery of one or more of its academic parents, disciplines have been presented as lenses through which pupils might make sense of the complexity of religion and worldviews (O'Grady, 2022; Freathy et al., 2017). Thus, the CoRE report suggests that the study of religion and worldviews draws on disciplines such as 'anthropology, area studies, hermeneutics, history, other human and social sciences, philosophy, religious studies and theology among others' (CoRE, 2018, p. 37). So too, Wright and Kueh posit theology, philosophy and the human sciences as the key disciplinary lenses (see Kueh, 2020; Georgiou & Wright, 2018).

This multi-disciplinarity reflects the multidimensional nature of RE and underpins ongoing debate around its aims and purposes. Whilst critical academic enquiry is certainly a key aim, RE is variably associated with more instrumental goals, both socially or civic oriented and those that relate to personal development. Ofsted's recent suggestion that three types of knowledge, 'substantive', 'disciplinary' and 'personal', stand as the pillars of progression in RE (Ofsted, 2021) builds on Kueh's work in terms of embracing knowledge richness as the key to curriculum design (Kueh, 2018) whilst also reflecting broader educational purposes. The inclusion of personal knowledge suggests a broader formational role. Beyond 'recontextualising' knowledge from parent academic disciplines, as in Young et al.'s 'disciplinary knowledge', the combination of three types of knowledge provides the context for more attention to the transformation of 'disciplinary knowledge into educational purposes' (Deng, 2021, p. 1654).

[1] The General Certificate of Secondary Education—a qualification taken at age 16 in academic subjects in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

## 'Worldviews' as More than Content

Based on research conducted in English schools around stakeholders' aspirations for RE (Dinham & Shaw, 2015, 2017), Adam Dinham and I made some recommendations around content: that it should better reflect the changing contemporary religious and non-religious landscape and the fact that worldviews are dynamic, fluid and lived, emphasising identity alongside tradition. We also suggested an explicit focus on the category 'religion', exploring the concept itself, how 'religion' is classified, and its relationship to the secular. As embodied in the CoRE report (2018), it is now widely accepted that RE ought to embrace the diversity both between and within religious traditions, and there is a broad consensus that it should include non-religious traditions. Whilst there is no set definition of the term 'worldview', and its usage varies across disciplines and contexts (Benoit et al., 2020; Bråten & Everington, 2019), it can be broadly understood as denoting religious and non-religious ways of being in the world. The CoRE report describes a worldview as someone's 'way of understanding, experiencing and responding to the world. It can be described as a philosophy of life or an approach to life. This includes how a person understands the nature of reality and their own place in the world. A person's worldview is likely to influence and be influenced by their beliefs, values, behaviours, experiences, identities and commitments' (CoRE, 2018, p. 4). Worldviews then are about more than a set of beliefs and practices related to a tradition. There is growing recognition of the need to focus on worldviews as identity and as lived. Indeed, the CoRE report distinguishes between 'institutional' and 'personal' worldviews, acknowledging worldview as lived experience and identity that are fluid and hybrid. The retention of 'religion' in the proposed name-change to 'Religion and Worldviews' emphasises too the need to focus on religion as a conceptual category, alongside 'secularity', 'secularism' and 'spirituality' (CoRE, 2018).

Whilst these changes are important in developing students' understanding of the 'real religion and worldview landscape', the move towards worldviews education reflects more than a broadening or deepening of content. It presents a wholescale shift away from the dominant world

religions paradigm, associated with 'objective' knowledge about religion, towards a much more holistic, reflexive educational approach. As it is being articulated by its proponents in England, a worldviews approach adopts a hermeneutical frame, in order that students 'come to understand how worldview works in human life' (Cooling et al., 2020, p. 42), as a 'matter of interpretation' (ibid., p. 61). With this reframing is a shift in pedagogical approach, from one based on the acquisition of content (knowledge) to a process of dialogical encounter between the pupils and the subject matter. Dialogical or hermeneutical approaches are not new to RE, and a worldviews approach draws on these, including Jackson's interpretivist approach (Jackson, 1997), and on the work of David Aldridge (2011, 2015), which foreground a Gadamerian process of understanding, a 'fusion of horizons', in which the student is transformed through reflexive encounter with the subject matter.

## Why 'Worldview Literacy'?

I have elaborated elsewhere on the idea of worldview literacy as a framework for this process of understanding (Shaw, 2020, 2022). In this chapter, I focus on how it might support the articulation of a worldviews approach by providing a framework for thinking about how 'substantive', 'disciplinary' and 'personal knowledge' are related in RE and for a more holistic, transformative educational process that challenges content-focused curriculum planning and pedagogy. This is important if the critical and transformative potential of a worldviews approach is not to get lost within a school system that is governed by a performativity agenda.

Before presenting worldview literacy as a framework for thinking about knowledge in the study of religion/worldviews, I wish to briefly explain the rationale for a new terminology. Why not stick with 'religious literacy'? The reasons for this are twofold, relating to the reductive way in which religious literacy is often understood and the shifting scene in English RE.

Religious literacy remains a contested concept (Dinham, 2020) and its value as an aim of Religious Education is debated (Biesta et al., 2019). As the latter highlight, its value as an educational aim partly depends on

what is meant by 'literacy' and 'religion', both themselves open to interpretation. That said, alongside other literacies such as political, cultural and financial, having an understanding of religion, and the skills to engage positively with religious diversity, is considered an important part of education for the twenty-first century (COE, 2008; Eurydice, 2017; UNESCO, 2015). Religious literacy remains an often-cited aim of Religious Education in England (Ofsted, 2010) and internationally (Franken, 2017; Halafoff et al., 2020; Marcus & Ralph, 2021). The concept is however problematic in that it is often understood in reductive terms as the acquisition of substantive knowledge of the majority religions, alongside the development of certain skills and attitudes vis-à-vis religious diversity and living in a religiously plural society. This is problematic for several reasons: firstly, because normative and narrow interpretations of the 'religions' that one should be literate about, serve to reinforce essentialist notions of religion and overlook the diversity, hybridity and fluidity of religions and non-religious worldviews as evidenced in contemporary research (Shaw, 2018; Hannam et al., 2020; Walker et al., 2021). Such conceptions can also minimise the critical dimension, overlooking the importance of understanding the sociopolitical dimension of religion, the role (good and bad) that religion plays in history and contemporary society (Davie, 2015; Moore, 2007). Furthermore, benign, essentialist representations of religions, as objective 'knowledge' can overlook the need for the critical deconstruction of the very notion of 'religion' and its representation in society, including in education.

A further problem relates to the relationship between religion(s), knowledge about them and the individual. Religious literacy, as it is often employed, can reinforce the idea that religions or worldviews are 'out there' as things in the world that the individual needs to make sense of or understand rather than seeing the individual as part of this plurality. Prothero's (2007) notion of religious literacy builds directly on Hirsch's (1987) ideas on cultural literacy in suggesting there are building blocks of knowledge about religions that everyone or every American should know. This is related to a 'content' focused approach in which religious literacy is seen as a product of education—a set of prescribed knowledge, skills and attitudes that can be learnt and that then inform engagement with

diversity. This overlooks both the contribution of the individual to knowledge and the value of the educational process itself as a part of enactment in diversity with transformational potential.

My understanding of worldview literacy goes beyond a change in content to address the educational process itself and how to unlock the substance of the content, to present a way of translating curriculum content 'into events and tasks that bring about 'fruitful' encounters between students and content' (Deng, 2021, p. 1658). Changing the name from 'religious' to 'worldview' literacy then denotes both an explicit broadening of the subject matter and reflects a particular approach to education, based on hermeneutic understanding.

As a framework, worldview literacy is distinct from reductionist understandings of religious literacy in its focus on process and on the interdependent nature of content and action. Worldview literacy is not a product of education in the sense that pupils become worldview literate, but a framework for an educational process of reflexive engagement in plurality. This distinction rests on the explicit foregrounding of three key foci: *interpretability*, *reflexivity* and *transformative encounter*. Each of these suggests a rethinking about the nature and purpose of knowledge in RE and when woven together present a process of educational praxis in which knowledge and the 'knowers' are transformed.

## Interpretability

A worldviews approach acknowledges that worldviews are diverse and dynamic and can be interpreted in different ways by their adherents. There is a focus on 'lived' worldviews, how they are understood and experienced in daily life and how they change over time. Within worldview literacy, this interpretability becomes the central focus and worldviews understood as being in a constant process of change through human interaction. Both personal and organised worldviews can be understood as being in constant flux as people 'live in and from and through tradition' (Meijer, 2006, p. 13). There is much debate around what might be the 'generalizable principles' of RE. After all, according to Young and Muller, 'access to such principles is a major reason why all countries have

schools' (2016, p. 103). I argue that a general principle of the study of worldviews is their interpretability, that they are contested and in constant transition.

A focus on lived worldviews brings this principle together with the diversity of expressions and experiences of worldviews, what might form part of pupils' 'everyday knowledge' (Young, 2007). As argued by Van der Kooij et al. (2013), the diverse personal worldviews of those identifying with religions should be a subject of classroom discussion. Rather than seeing this as inferior to 'curriculum knowledge', the two are reunited through a focus on lived experience as interpretation. As worldviews are in transition through interpretation, so therefore is knowledge about them. The focus on interpretability acknowledges the role of the individual in reshaping tradition through encounter and emphasises the 'symbiotic relationship between knowledge and the knower' (Freathy & John, 2019).

This focus on the interpretability of worldviews inevitably extends to the interpretability of received knowledge about them. As Adam Dinham and I have argued (Dinham & Shaw, 2015, 2017; Dinham, 2020), there should be a specific focus on the categorisation of religion and worldviews (e.g. what gets classed as religion and the relationship between the religious and the secular). Worldview literacy should include an explicit deconstruction of knowledge of religion and worldviews—an unpicking of essentialist representations. As Goldburg suggests, we should be asking, 'What knowledge is revered? Whose histories are legitimated? Whose voices are silenced? What religions are marginalised or excluded within dominant discourses?' (Goldburg, 2010, p. 353). This necessarily includes an explicit deconstruction of how knowledge has been 'recontextualised' (Bernstein, 2000) for the classroom context—how it has been 'modified by selection, simplification, condensation, and elaboration' and 'repositioned and refocused' (Bernstein, 2000, p. 87). This involves unpicking the social and political basis and biases that have shaped the recontextualisation process. Given its multidisciplinary nature, within RE this epistemic awareness is not solely related to Religious Studies, although there is much to unpick there (Flood, 1999; Nye, 2019), but related to RE's other 'parent disciplines' such as anthropology and sociology. It is also important in relation to everyday representations, for example, in the

media. This is not to dismiss 'knowledge' about religions as presented in scripture or as observed in ritual, but to argue that education should call out the interpretive nature of that knowledge as an understanding of a person (or group of people) in a time and place.

With a focus on interpretability, disciplines are seen less as sources of knowledge in themselves as lenses through which students might develop epistemic awareness. The focus on interpretability helps us move away from a 'knowledge rich' to a 'knowledge powerful' understanding in which '"knowledge about knowledge" is a specialist form of enquiry' (Young & Muller, 2016, p. 93). In this sense, the disciplines employed in RE are a source of power, as interpretations, offering new ways of knowing about the world that can address important issues of power in knowledge construction. Such a focus contributes to what Stones and Fraser-Pearce term 'epistemic literacy', the 'nuanced and reflexive understanding of how knowledge works' (Stones & Fraser-Pearce, 2022, p. 98), which they argue should be a key aim of education.

## Reflexivity

The second strand of worldview literacy is reflexivity, a key focus of interpretive approaches in RE (Jackson, etc.) and approaches to critical religious literacy (Dinham, 2020, Goldburg, 2010). Within a process of worldview literacy, the epistemic awareness developed in relation to substantive knowledge is nurtured at the personal level as students are enabled to recognise their own positionality, the assumptions and bias that may shape their understanding. Based on a hermeneutical process of understanding, a focus on reflexivity reflects Gadamer's argument that when encountering religion and worldviews as 'other', this is best understood when explored in relation to students' own 'fore-meanings' (Gadamer, 1975).

I suggest that an explicit process of 'self-critical scholarship' (Goldburg, 2010, p. 352) or metacognition is a crucial part of powerful knowledge in RE. A focus on reflexivity, on the dialectic relationship between student and subject matter, brings together 'substantive' and 'personal' knowledge.

The process is particularly important if the idea of 'personal knowledge' is not to be reduced to one's opinion or experience. As defined by Ofsted, personal knowledge is when 'pupils build an awareness of their own presuppositions and values about the religious and non-religious traditions they study' (Ofsted, 2021, 8). This is more than understanding that people may see things or act in a certain way because of their personal 'worldview', although that is itself a huge step from the homogenising of people by emphasising common ground between traditions. Personal knowledge involves recognising the dynamic relationship between one's personal worldview and those of others. This requires going beyond the recognition of difference and where it might come from, to explore the meeting of worldviews—for example, recognising that one's position is one of suspicion, fear or hostility, superiority or deference to another. This awareness is part of Stones and Fraser-Pearce's 'epistemic literacy', the awareness of one's own epistemic preferences and 'blind spots' which have implications for understanding and empathising with others (Stones & Fraser-Pearce, 2022). Personal knowledge is then not simply one's way of understanding the world; it is both understanding where your view comes from with an explicit awareness of how your view has moved on through encounter with the subject knowledge.

O'Grady (2022) highlights the tendency amongst those in favour of a knowledge-rich or disciplinary-oriented RE, to minimise or to separate out personal development. The re-introduction of personal knowledge can be interpreted as a re-vamped 'learning from' (Grimmitt, 1987), which whilst welcomed by many can be seen as at odds with and a threat to the academic rigour of the subject. This misses the point. Firstly, it ignores the difference between curriculum and pedagogy (Grimmitt never suggested that 'learning from' was to be given specific curriculum time or that it should be a separate attainment target). More importantly to the argument I am making here, personal knowledge, along with substantial and disciplinary knowledge are interdependent parts of the same process of *understanding*. It is through interaction between the student's own perspective (or worldview) and that of others that understanding happens. Bringing that process of interaction into the frame in an explicit

way through a process of reflexive encounter or metacognition develops the student's personal knowledge or positionality which is a key academic skill.

## Transformative Encounter

I have argued elsewhere that worldview literacy can be understood as engagement with difference and different ways of understanding the world through which one's own self is put into question and ultimately transformed (Shaw, 2022). Personal knowledge as described above is the developing ability to think reflexively about one's own positionality in relation to worldviews. This transformational process is neither simply intellectual nor personal. Rather, it is about the student's orientation to the world. As described by Bamber et al., 'transformative education involves an ontological process that elevates the importance of existential change for the learner, as regards both their way of being in the world and ways of knowing that world' (Bamber, 2016, cited in Bamber et al., 2018, p. 217). As with Biesta's notion of 'subjectification', this is about a process of empowering young people to 'come into the world' and enabling them to engage with it (Biesta, 2013). Biesta contends that the 'I' that develops through a process of 'subjectification' does so through encounter with the other—when the 'I' is put into question: 'This is not then, the moment where the individual asserts itself into the world as meaning-maker or learner, it rather is the moment where the "I" as subject is called into the world, called into existence' (Biesta, 2021, p. 16). Biesta is clear that this is not a matter of 'finding oneself' in terms of identity, but 'a matter of existence, of existing in and with the world "outside" of oneself' (Biesta, 2021, p. 18).

Such a process can only happen through encounter, which, as pointed out by O'Grady (2022), is an often neglected, yet important, aspect of the CoRE proposals: 'It is our view that learning about a worldview without reference to the lived experience of adherents, and where possible direct encounter with them is insufficient for effective learning in Religion and Worldviews' (CoRE, 2018). It goes without saying that a diversity of representation is essential if that action is to be oriented outside the individual and to their relationship with the world in all its plurality. As

argued by Hannam and Biesta, 'if education and, more specifically, RE has a concern for the public sphere, for the life we live together *with others*, it needs to make sure that children and young people can begin and, most crucially, encounter the beginnings of others in this process' (Hannam & Biesta, 2019).

As I have elaborated elsewhere (Shaw, 2022), understood an encounter in plurality, worldview literacy bridges the aims of RE and citizenship education. The connections between worldviews education and intercultural citizenship education are manifold and well explored by many (Jackson, 2016, 2019; Johannessen & Skeie, 2019; Franken, 2021; O'Grady, 2019; Gunnarsson, 2021; Halafoff et al., 2016; Iliško, 2019). Worldview literacy can support the kind of critical self-examination that Nussbaum (2006) argues is required to combat stereotypes and promote empathy and understanding, and critical to a sense of connectedness as global citizens. Through a focus on the complexity and dynamism of worldview identity, it can contribute too to understandings of cosmopolitan citizenship (Osler & Starkey, 2003), contributing to a 'counter-narrative' (Starkey, 2021) to exclusivist notions of citizenship and engendering a sense of 'world-mindedness' that empowers young people to be active agents in tackling global issues (Iliško, 2019). Crucially, worldview literacy promotes a process of transformational encounter, essential to intercultural understanding and global responsibility that is both existential and socially oriented through action.

## Worldview Literacy as Praxis

As argued above, worldview literacy, understood as a process of reflexive dialogical encounter with difference, is different from understandings of religious literacy as something that is to be gained and then informs or prepares young people for engagement with diversity. In highlighting a focus on *interpretability*, *reflexivity* and *transformational encounter*, worldview literacy can be understood as educational praxis: an interwoven practice of understanding, interpretation and application that operates in a hermeneutic spiral (Bernstein, 1983). This process brings together substantive knowledge (of worldviews as lived) and disciplinary knowledge

(as understanding of worldviews as interpretable), developed and applied through dialogic, reflexive encounter that informs the student's personal knowledge (understanding of their relationship to the world), which in turn informs their engagement in it.

It is through encounter that the student's understanding is applied as *phronesis*, a practical wisdom based on values, concerned with practical judgement and informed by reflection. Phronesis is 'pragmatic, variable, context-dependent, and oriented toward action' (Kinsella & Pitman, 2012, p. 2). So too, through encounter with the interpretability of worldviews, phronesis is informed and re-evaluated as students develop understanding of difference and of themselves in relation to it. Similarly, Cooling et al. see the interaction of substantive, disciplinary and personal knowledge as a hermeneutical process in which the awareness of worldview developed by pupils 'will contribute to their academic understanding, their personal development and their growth as active citizens' (Cooling et al., 2020, p. 61).

## A Reconciliation of Aims

Worldview literacy thus serves as a framework for worldviews education that reduces the gap between subject and object or personal formation and content knowledge (Iliško, 2019) and between understanding and action. As such, it addresses the false binary between 'learning about' and 'learning from' (Grimmitt, 1987) that makes dialogue over future of RE difficult (Franck & Thalen, 2021). In a process of praxis, what might be considered the intrinsic aim of academic development (critical understanding of worldviews and the construction of knowledge about them) is inseparable from the instrumental goals of personal formation and civic participation (as self-aware engagement in plurality).

As commented and illustrated in several examples by O'Grady (2022), there is more understanding of this approach outside of England, for example, in Norway, Latvia and the Netherlands. As a process of transformative encounter, worldview literacy and the 'worldviews approach' as understood by Cooling and colleagues sit more comfortably within Didaktik, as developed in continental European teacher education,

particularly in Germany and the Nordic context (Hopmann, 2007) than in the Anglo-American content-focused context, where, as Hopmann argues, it is almost unknown. At the heart of Didaktik is the idea of *bildung*, which in the words of Wolfgang Klafki, pioneer of bildung-centred didaktik, 'refers to the formation of the full individual, the cultivation of human powers, sensibility, self-awareness, liberty and freedom, responsibility and dignity' and 'the development of self-determination (autonomy), co-determination (participation) and solidarity' (Klafki, 1998, cited in Deng, 2018, p. 374).

As with Biesta's subjectification, bildung is about 'more than mastery of contents or development of competencies and abilities, more than "knowing something" or "being able to do it"' and about 'the use of knowledge as a transformative tool of unfolding the learner's individuality and sociability' (Hopmann, 2007, p. 115). With the focus on the encounter between student and content as a transformational process, worldview literacy is in line with Deng's (2021) case for linking the teaching of content knowledge to the development of human powers (understanding, ways of thinking, capabilities and dispositions) by way of knowledge transformations.

## Worldview Literacy and Powerful Knowledge

Within bildung, an important distinction is made between the subject itself and its 'educative substance'. Thus Deng (2021) argues that the didaktik tradition and the concept of bildung offer an understanding of 'powerful knowledge' in which it is not the knowledge or content that is powerful in itself, but about the potential of content for unlocking 'human powers'. In a critique of what he sees as Young and colleagues' 'exclusive focus on the internal properties and explanatory power of knowledge', Deng (2018, p. 136), borrowing from Hamilton (1999), suggests that the focus be less on 'what should they [students] know?' and more on 'what should they [students] become?' (Hamilton, 1999, cited in Deng, 2018, p. 136). Similarly, Hopmann argues bildung is about 'more than mastery of contents or development of competencies and abilities, more than "knowing something" or "being able to do it"'

(Hopmann, 2007, p. 115). The purpose of teaching is then 'the use of knowledge as a transformative tool of unfolding the learner's individuality and sociability' (Hopmann, 2007, p. 15). Hopmann explains that within Didaktik, the contents of teaching, for example, the 'Great War' or basic arithmetic, are not important simply in terms of knowing history, or being able to count, although these may be outcomes. What is important is what pupils learn about mankind by understanding the course of the Great War or about numbering the world by counting (Hopmann, 2007). Hopmann emphasises that it is not 'that what is learned about mankind, the world or my inner being is inherent to the subject matter at hand' but that 'the meaning of these learning experiences emerges within the learning process itself, based on the meeting of a unique individual with a matter at hand' (Hopmann, 2007, p. 116). In relation to worldviews education, through a process of encounter in which students engage critically and reflexively with worldviews as ideas, lived experiences and social and political phenomena, they are led to a greater understanding of the world and their relation to it. Thus, within worldview literacy, the focus is on the 'fruitful encounter' between the content and the learner rather than on the transmission of content.

With importance given to the 'meeting' of students and content, 'the criteria for knowledge selection and organisation are not residing in the academic discipline, but deriving from a vision of education' (Deng, 2021, p. 1665). Thus students' 'everyday knowledge' of worldviews and the practical wisdom developed are themselves powerful knowledge in that they are part of a process of 'human flourishing' (Biesta, 2013, p. 133).

Within worldview literacy, the focus on *interpretability* echoes the perspective of Bildung and Didaktik that 'there is no matter without meaning, and no meaning without matter' (Hopmann, 2007, p. 16). As Hopmann asserts, this is not a natural feature of teaching in the UK and why the meaning of any knowledge, its construction and its interpretation by individual who 'meets' it should be made an explicit part of the teaching process. Again, this is not to say that a focus on disciplines is not useful to the study of worldviews but that their usefulness as interpretations should be made explicit. Worldview literacy then provides a framework for how the student meets the content (substantive knowledge)

through a reflexive process which highlights the interpretability of that knowledge (including disciplinary knowledge) and of their own experience to develop a critical understanding of the world and their relation to it (personal knowledge). In this sense, it can help to unlock the potential of content for the development of 'human powers' (Deng, 2021, p. 1668), to render that knowledge powerful.

## A Way Forward for RE?

In this sense, the power in worldview literacy lies in the provision of a framework for bringing together substantive, disciplinary and personal knowledge through action. This promotion of praxis presents a challenge to content-focused curricula and pedagogy and has consequences for teaching. In stressing the interwoven nature of the intrinsic and instrumental aims of RE, there is also perhaps a safeguarding against its reduction to a set of generic skills or values and everyday accounts and against reinforcing stereotypes around religion and worldviews that threaten both students' critical understanding of and engagement in plurality.

Lastly, it is important to note that whilst worldview literacy is presented here as a framework for bringing the subjective back into RE, a focus on the critical, reflexive 'event' of understanding is, of course, not unique to the study of worldviews. However, RE may be well placed as a driver of more transformational approaches for a number of reasons. The first relates specifically to the English system in which RE is often marginalised yet has the odd status of being statutory (in schools, not Further Education Colleges) until the age of 18, although it remains optional as an examination subject. Whilst in practice this means that RE is often neglected, it can also provide a unique space outside the restraints of the performativity agenda with potential for innovation. This is evidenced in a set of case studies developed to showcase approaches to worldviews education in England, where freedom from the examined space was a key enabling factor.[2] Secondly, dealing as it does with people's deep-felt values and convictions, RE provides the opportunity for encounter with

[2] See https://www.gold.ac.uk/faithsunit/current-projects/reforreal/case-studies/.

difference at the level of the experiential, the everyday and the more existential. Finally, RE has traditionally had a formational role, and whilst the kind of human flourishing aimed for through a process of worldview literacy is absolutely not to be confused with the inculcation of specific values, any more than it is the transmission of prescribed knowledge, it may provide a launch pad for reinforcing the idea of personal knowledge as interrelated with content.

Yet as argued in this chapter, worldview literacy has educational value beyond the RE classroom and as elaborated elsewhere (Shaw, 2022) has particular importance for citizenship education. Furthermore, what I have presented as the key elements of worldview literacy, *interpretability*, *reflexivity* and *transformative encounter* could be built into all subjects as describing and making explicit a process of understanding and facilitating capabilities required of citizens. As evidenced in the growing wealth of classroom materials and practices that promote a worldviews approach (see, e.g. Cooling et al., 2020, Larkin et al., 2020), this may provide a platform for thinking more broadly about the nature and purpose of schooling and the place of knowledge therein.

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