Worldviews

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Aims:

- Examine definitions of worldviews
- Address historical and current debates around worldviews
- Investigate the rationale behind **why** worldviews are being related to RE
- Discuss possible advantages/disadvantages in employing a worldviews paradigm. What might that look like in school?

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Worldviews: what do you think they are?

Worldviews – what are they?

Ultimate stories

'A big picture'

Weltanschauung

A map of the mind

frameworks

Lenses or filters

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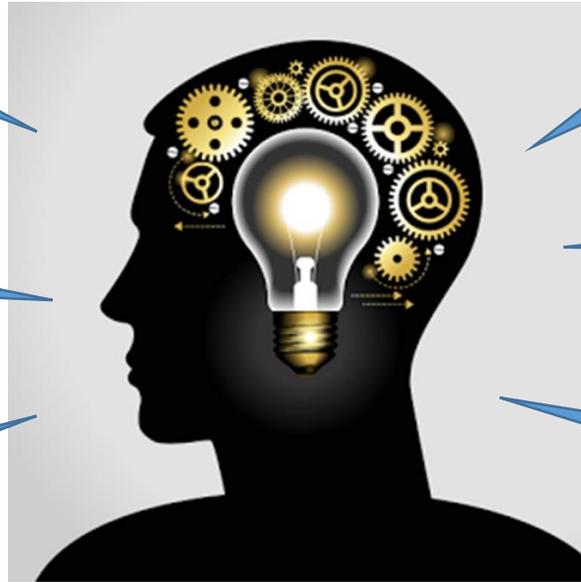
Proposed definitions

Raise questions:
e.g. Map – passive
Guide – active

One challenge for definition is that

'the concept of worldviews is worldview dependent'
            (Sire, 2004:93-94).

Discipline	Examples of definition for worldviews	Author(s)
Philosophy	conceptual frameworks	Hegel, 1807
Psychology	'An intellectual construction'	Freud, 1933
Political science	System to guide its adherents through the social landscape	Olsen (1992)
Sociology	'map of the mind'	Lappe and Lappe (2003:9)
Cultural anthropology	'A set of images and assumptions about the world'	Kearney (1984 :10)
Religious studies	'model of the world which guides its adherents in the world'	Walsh and Middleton (1984:32).
Christian theology	'An ordered whole'	James Orr (1893: 3)
Intercultural communication	'meaning overarching philosophy or outlook or concept of the world'	Samovar and Porter (2004:103)
Science	'A worldview or paradigm is a way, a lens or else glasses, to look at the world.'	Nijs (2019: 42)

Debates now reflect past differences:

The original use of the term 'weltanschaunng' by Kant (1790)

- **Content**

- **Character**

- **Construction**

- **Choice**

(Worldview C's in Flanagan, 2020)

Debates now reflect past differences:

- **Content**

An explanation of the world, a futurology, values and answers to ethical issues, a praxeology, an epistemology and aetiology.

Politics, religion, values and societal norms are all impacted by, and aspects of, individual's worldviews.

(Hegel, 1807, Valk, 2009, Van der Kooji, 2013)

- **Character**

Static defined body of knowledge (Freud, 1933) , yet Jung (1942) saw his comparable 'philosophy of life' as elastic and flexible.

'Personal' and/or commmunity/national (Hegel, 1807, Kierkegaard, 1843, CoRE, 2018)

A framework for thought (Hegel, 1807, Aerts et al, 2007)

- **Construction**

A conscious pursuit by individuals to solve 'the riddle of life' (Dilthey 1907) **or** an (un)conscious evolutionary process (Hegel, 1807; Sire 2004;

Copley 2005).

- **Choice**

Kierkegaard (1843) not all posses a 'lifeview', 'optionality' (Hand, 2012)

'Inhabit' a worldview (Cooling, 2020) or embodied worldviews (Flanagan, 2018)

(Worldview C's in Flanagan, 2020)

Defining worldviews

A frame of reference

'A world view is a system of co-ordinates or a frame of reference in which everything presented to us by our diverse experiences can be placed. It is a symbolic system of representation that allows us to integrate everything we know about the world and ourselves into a global picture, one that illuminates reality as it is presented to us within a certain culture.'

 (Aerts et al 2007: 7)

Fixed frame   Moving frame
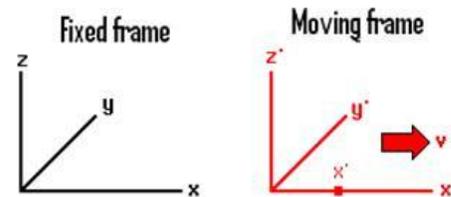
One frame of reference
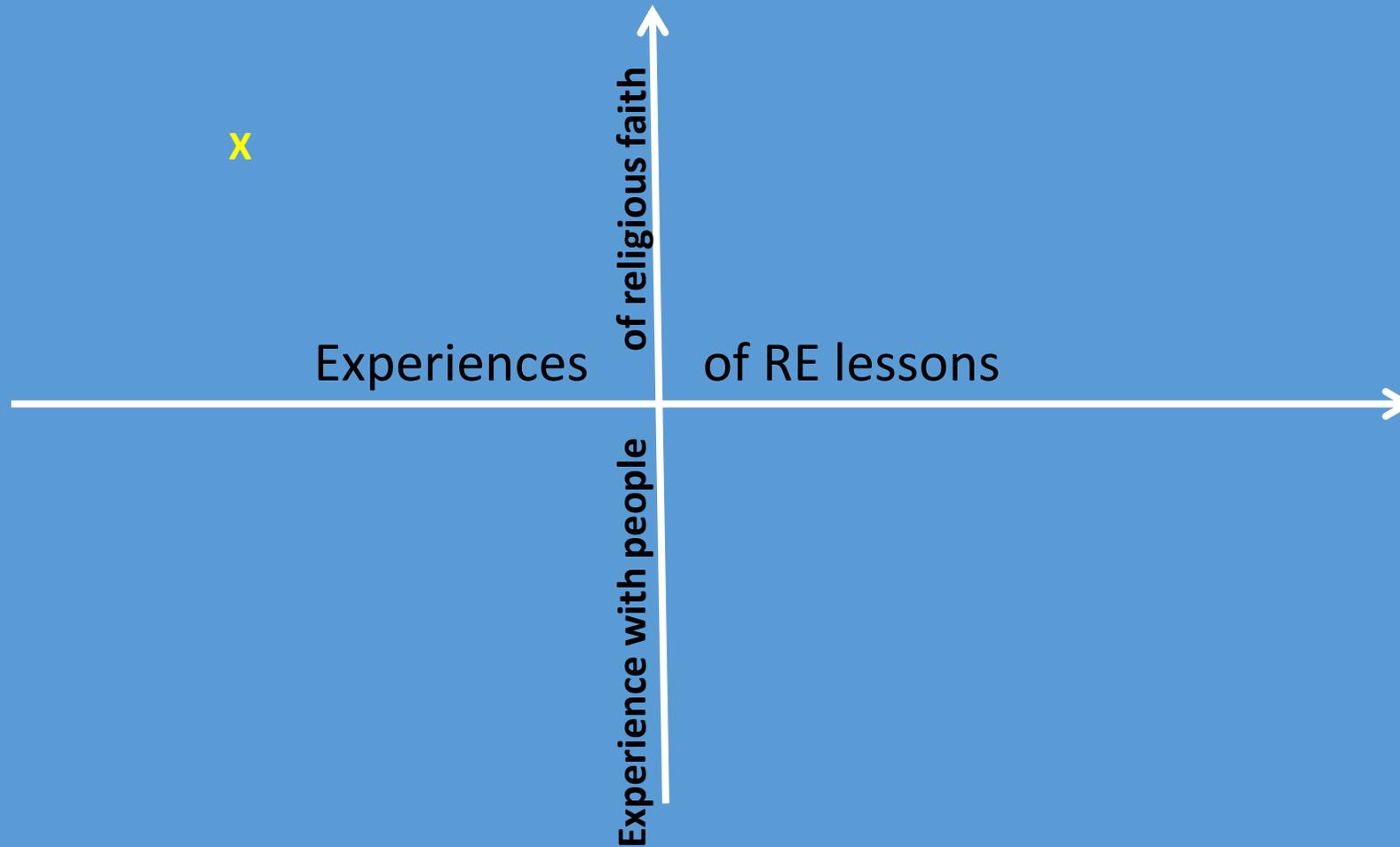
How worldviews 'make sense' of our world
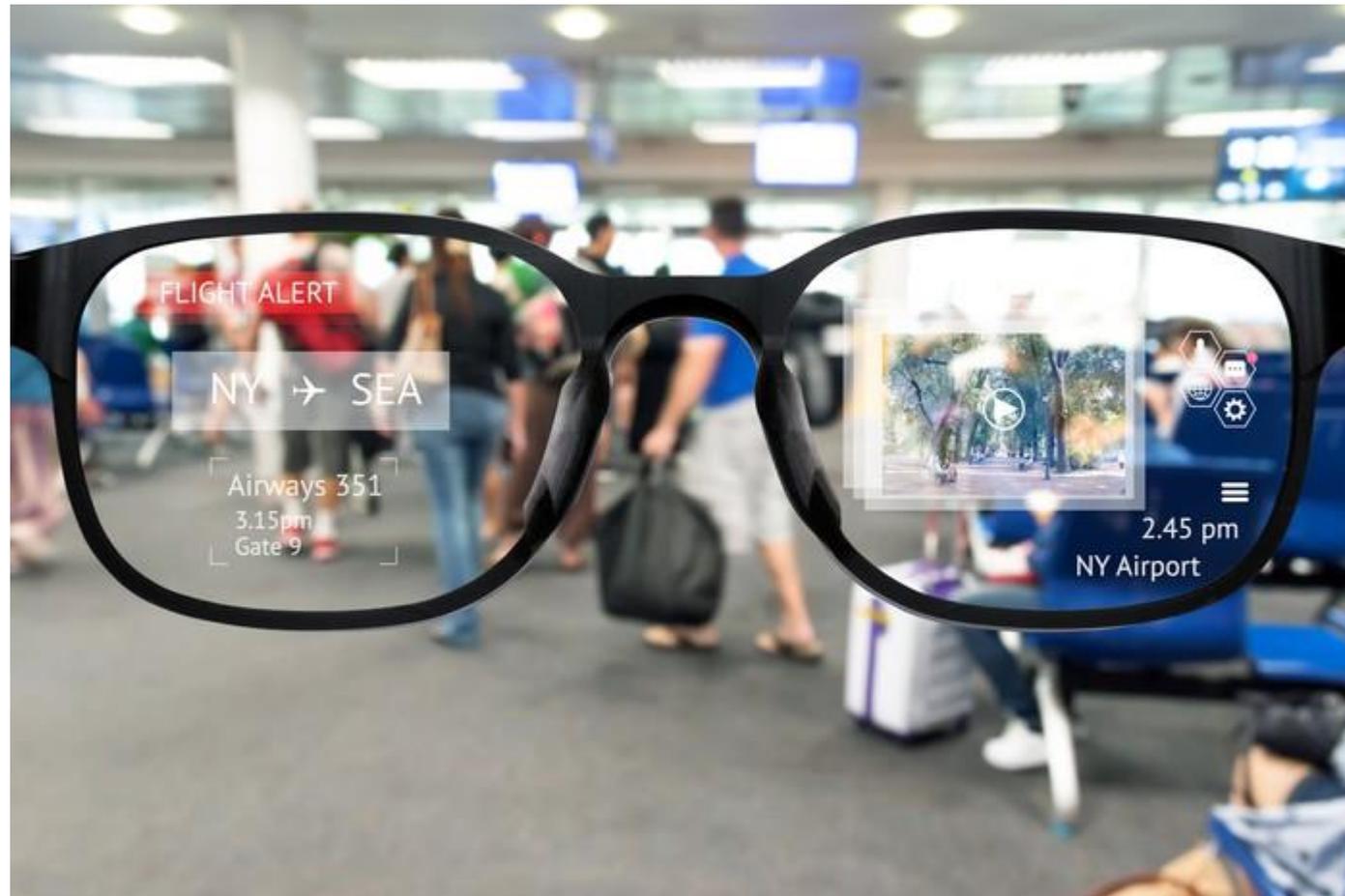
Processing and interpreting information


Drawing on our data base – our worldview

(TEDx East. T McCall (2011) NY Times centre)

What constitutes a worldview?

- **(Un)conscious** - 'A world view is a set of presuppositions (or assumptions) which we hold (consciously or unconsciously) about the basic make-up of our world.' (Sire, J. ,1997:16)

- '**Personal**' and 'institutional' worldviews, CoRE Final Report (2018: 4) or 'personal' and 'organised' Van der Kooij et al (2013)

- **Dynamic** (Aerts et al, 2007, Mansour, 2008)

- **Eclectic** (Van der Kooij et al, 2013)

- **Embodied** – lived response to personal experience

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Religion and worldviews

Worldviews

Religion

Worldviews **Religion**

Worldviews
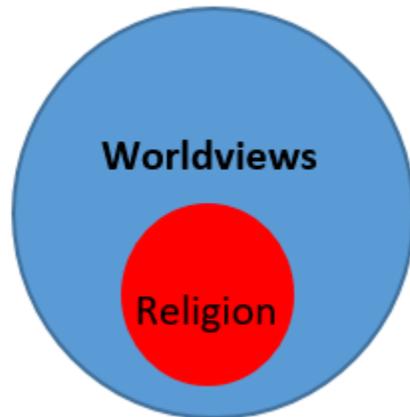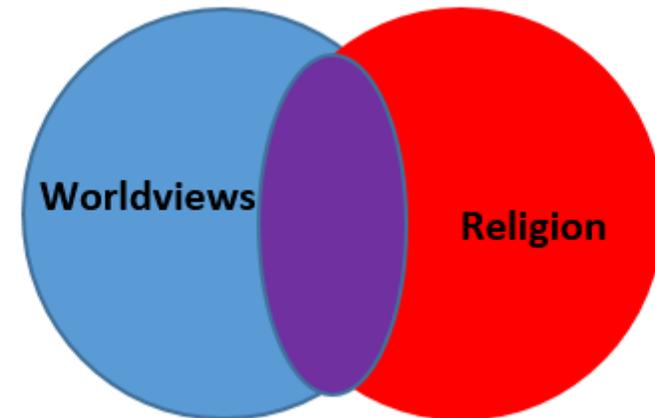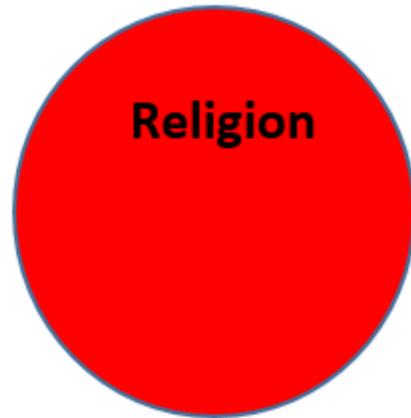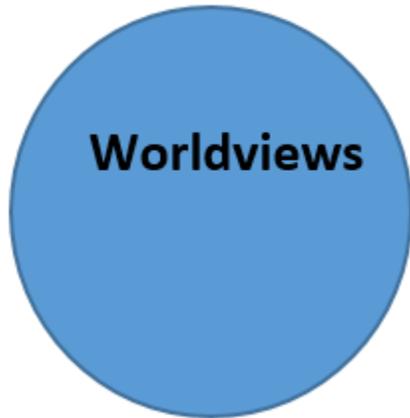
Religion

CoRE(2018) recommended name change of RE to 'Religion and worldviews'

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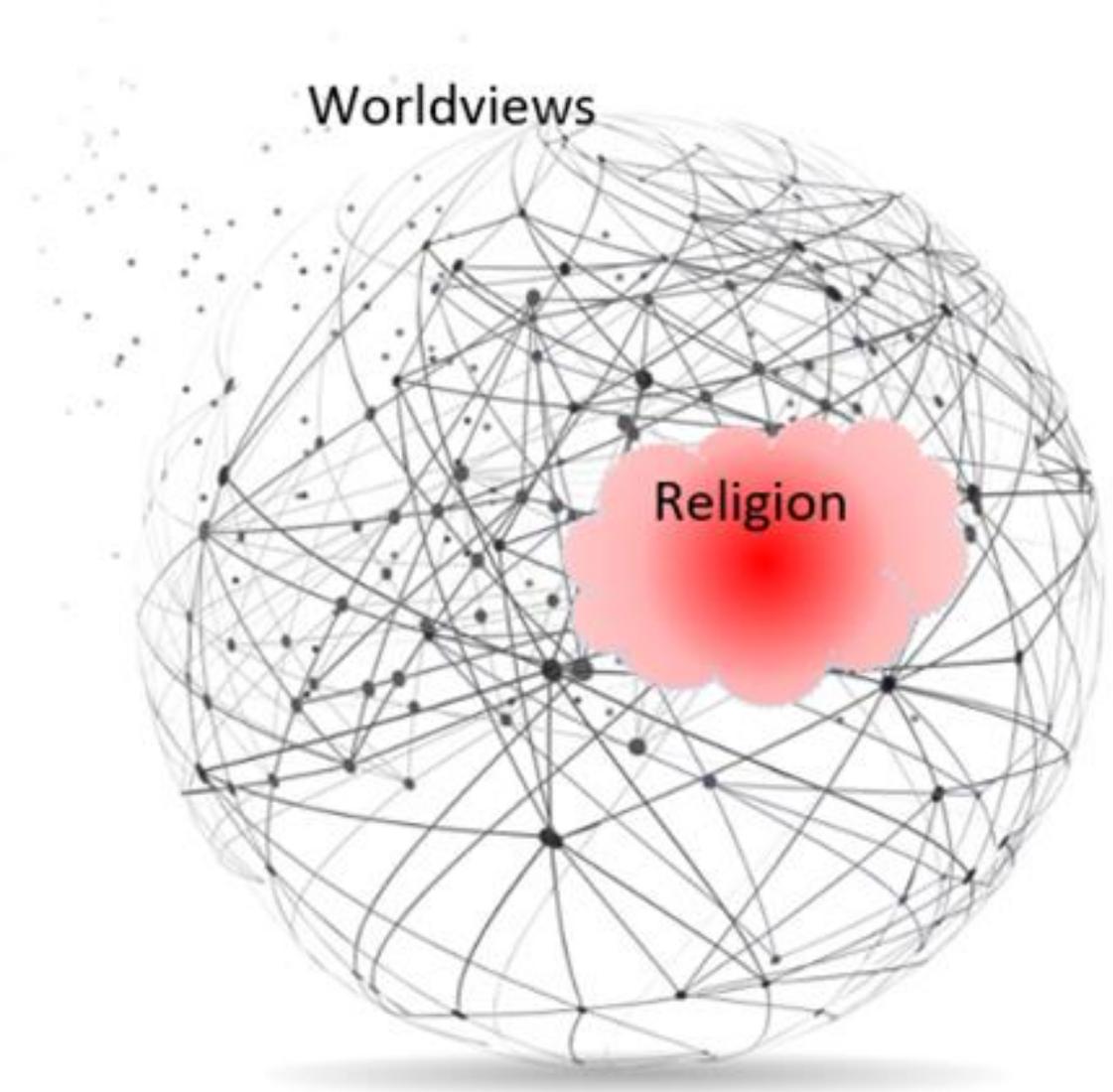
Why focus on worldviews for RE?

- Develop understanding and empathy as religions are no longer seen as exotic or 'alien' but a response to shared life experience

- Provide an approach

  to new subject

   knowledge

- Increase confidence

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Activity: Frames of reference

- Examine this selection of pictures

  [Worldview perspectives](#)

- Choose one that you think portrays different perspectives in a way that appeals to you.

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Images: Frames of reference

1967 Plowden Report

Behaviour:
topic based learning

Values:

Belief:
Child should be at the centre of education
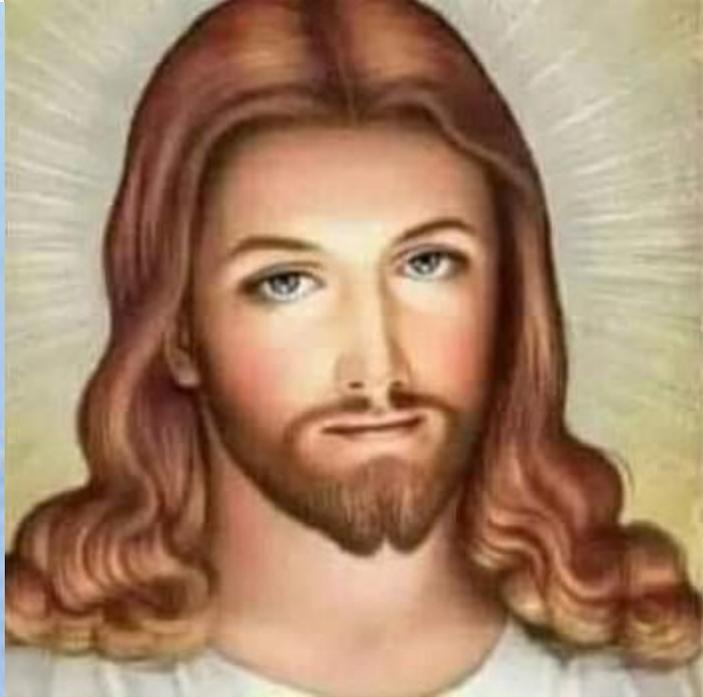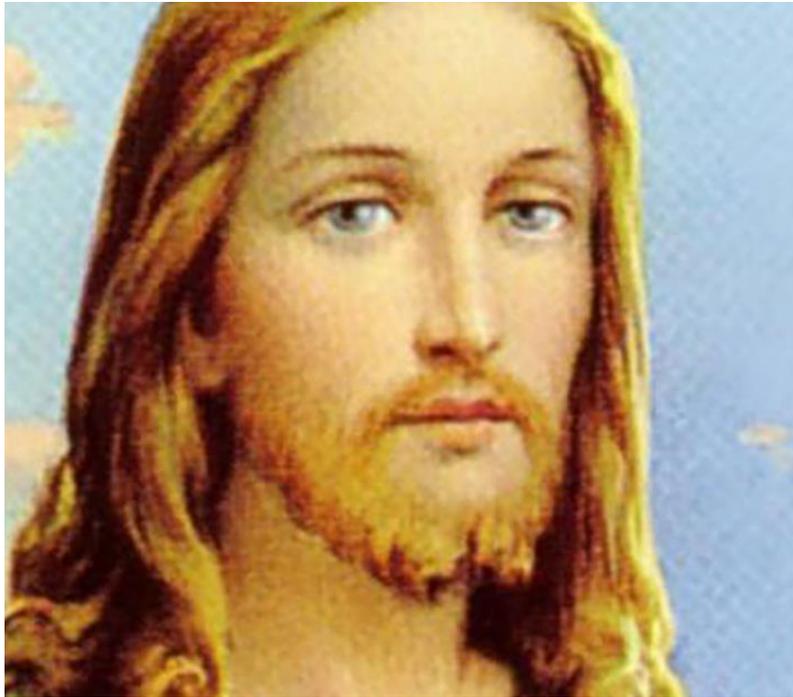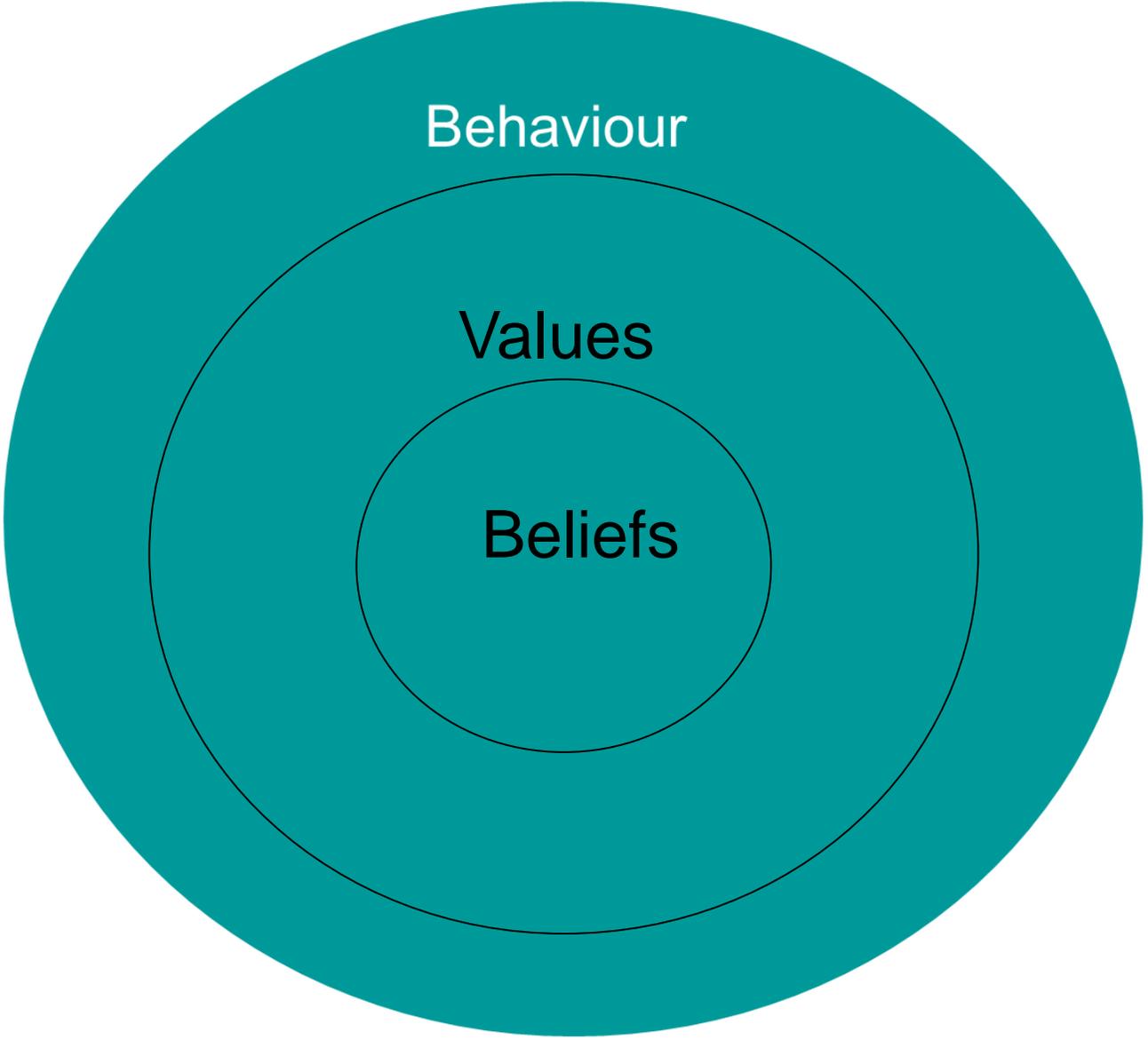
Importance on building child's interest
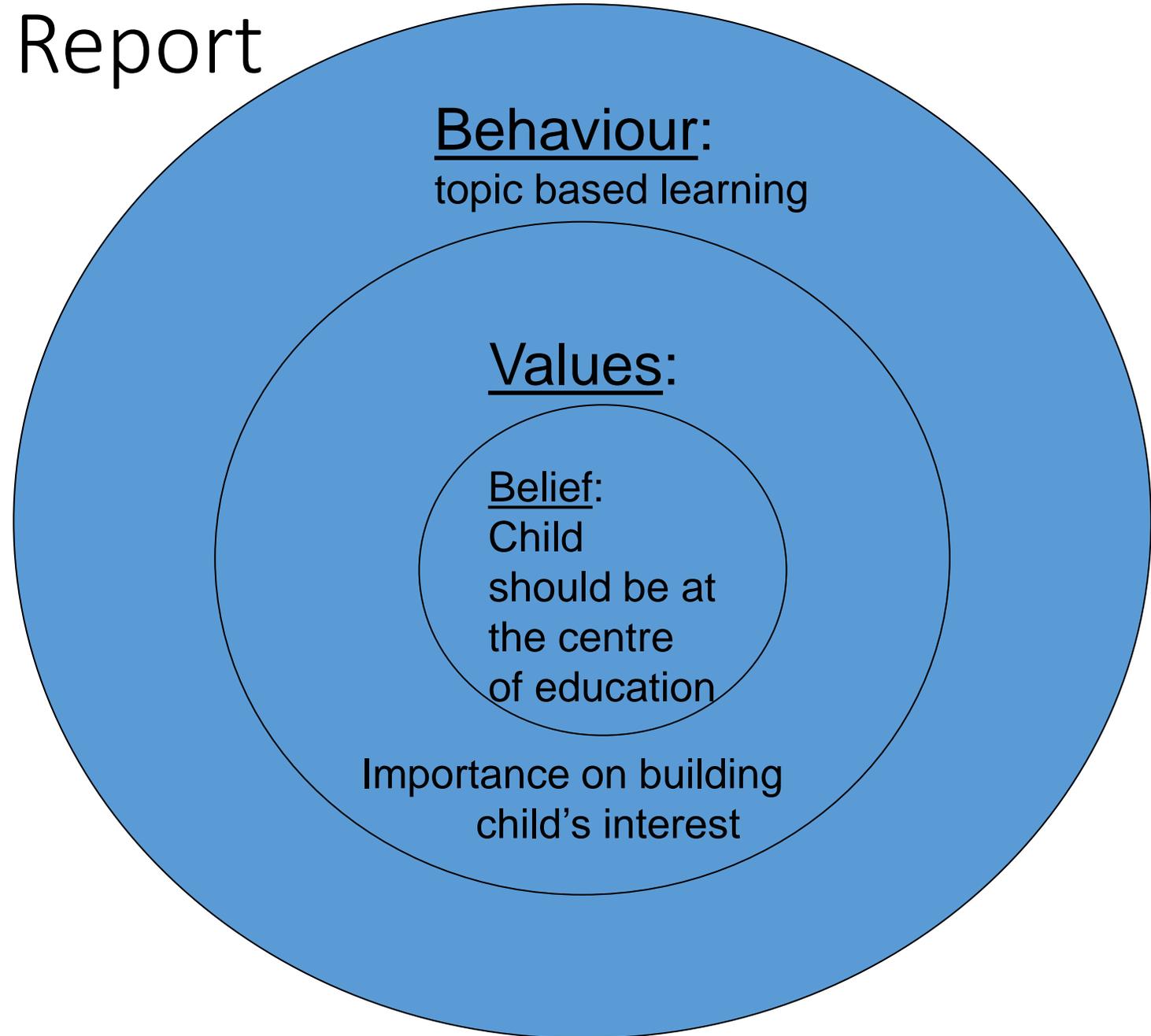
Worldview questions:

Why did you want to become a teacher?

What would make you vote for a war? Is there ever a just war?

What would make you remove a pupil from school?

Is it acceptable to lie?

Do you make any conscious decisions about shopping i.e. organic, fair trade, UK produce, local produce?

What is your Worldview?

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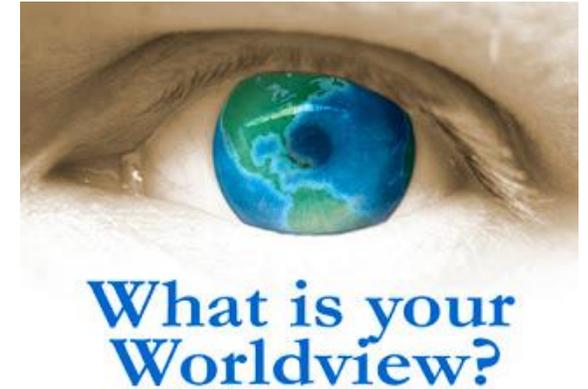
Activity

Try and map out the beliefs and values beneath your behaviour.

Behaviour:

Belief:

Values:

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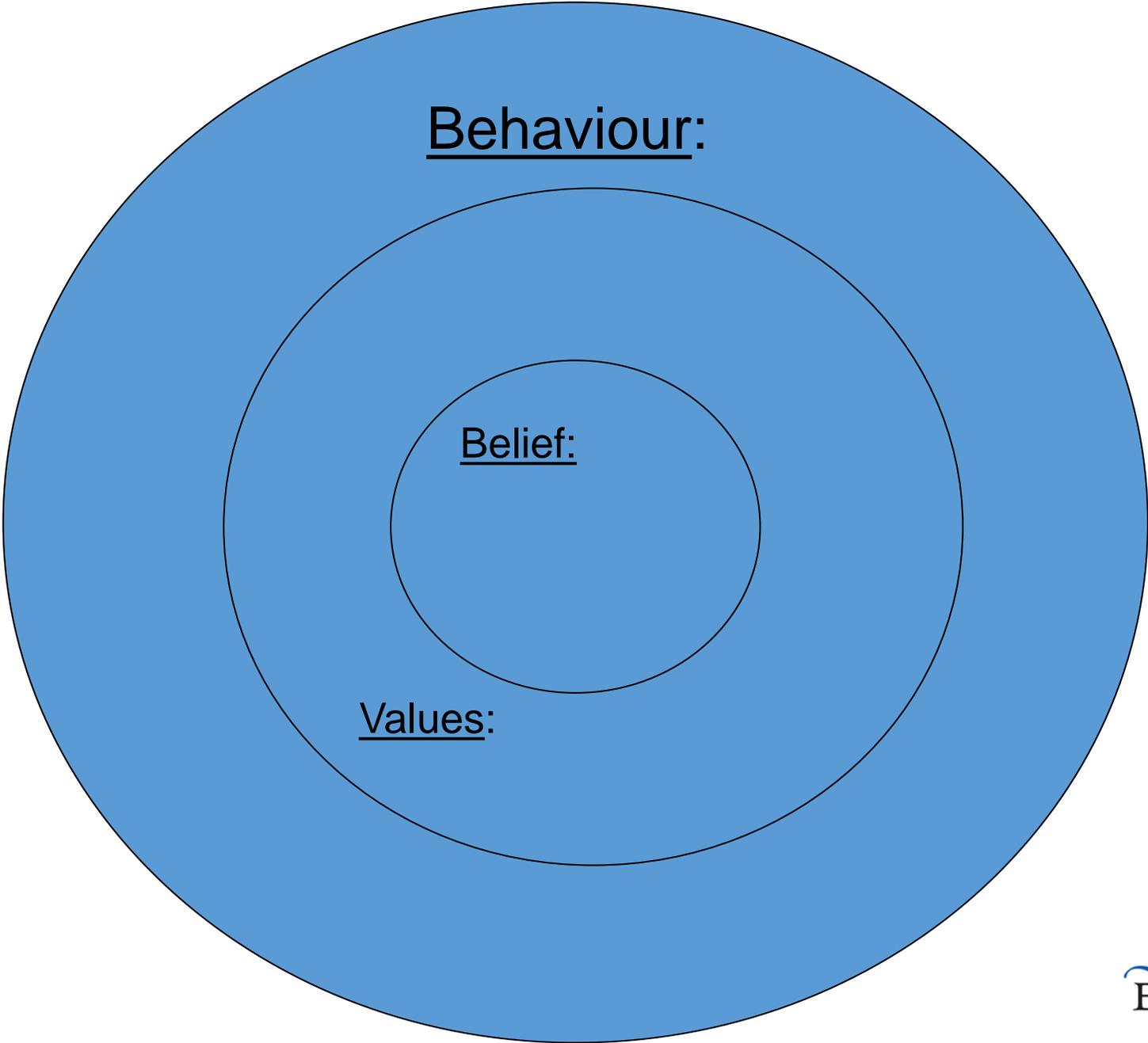
What belief do these behaviours express?

How are worldviews formed?

Paul Ricoeur:

Identifications are associated 'with values, norms, ideals, models and heroes, in which the person or community recognises itself'   (1992: 122)

To understand self Ricoeur suggests an examination of narrative: 'Self-understanding is an interpretation; interpretation of the self in turn , finds in narrative....a privileged form of mediation; the latter borrows from history as well as from fiction, making a life story a fictional history or, if one prefers, a historical fiction'
(1992: 114)

Hermeneutic circle
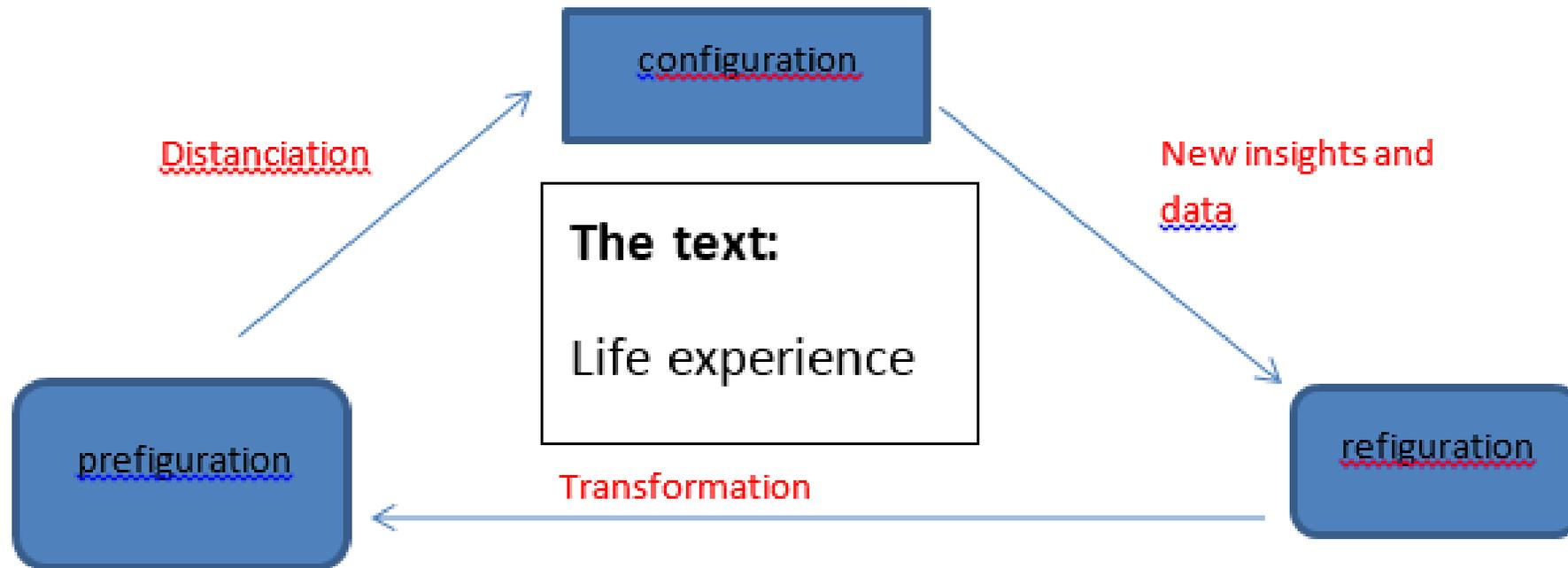
Figure 11. The hermeneutic spiral, diagram adapted from web image (Boje, 2011)

How are worldviews formed?

refiguration

configuration

Text/experience

Time

prefiguration

The hermeneutic spiral

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Worldview evolution

Stories

Justice system

Education

Community worldviews

History

Experiences

Stories
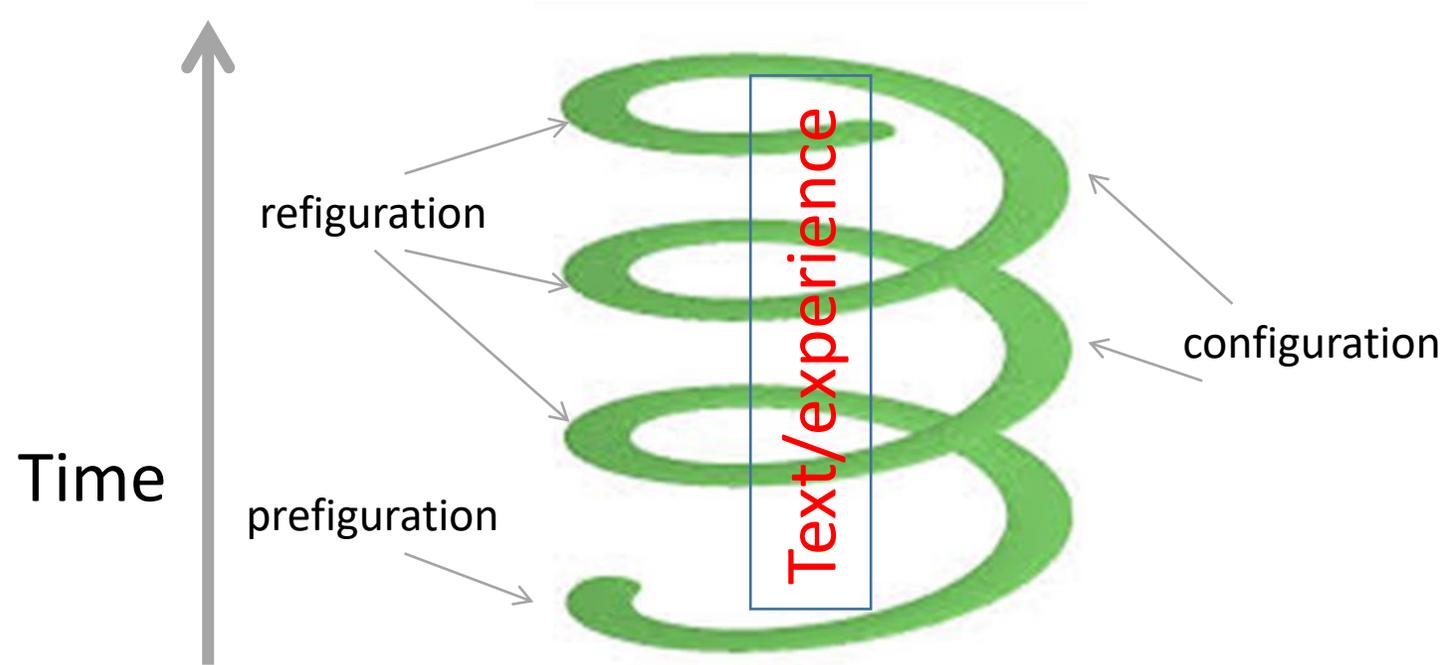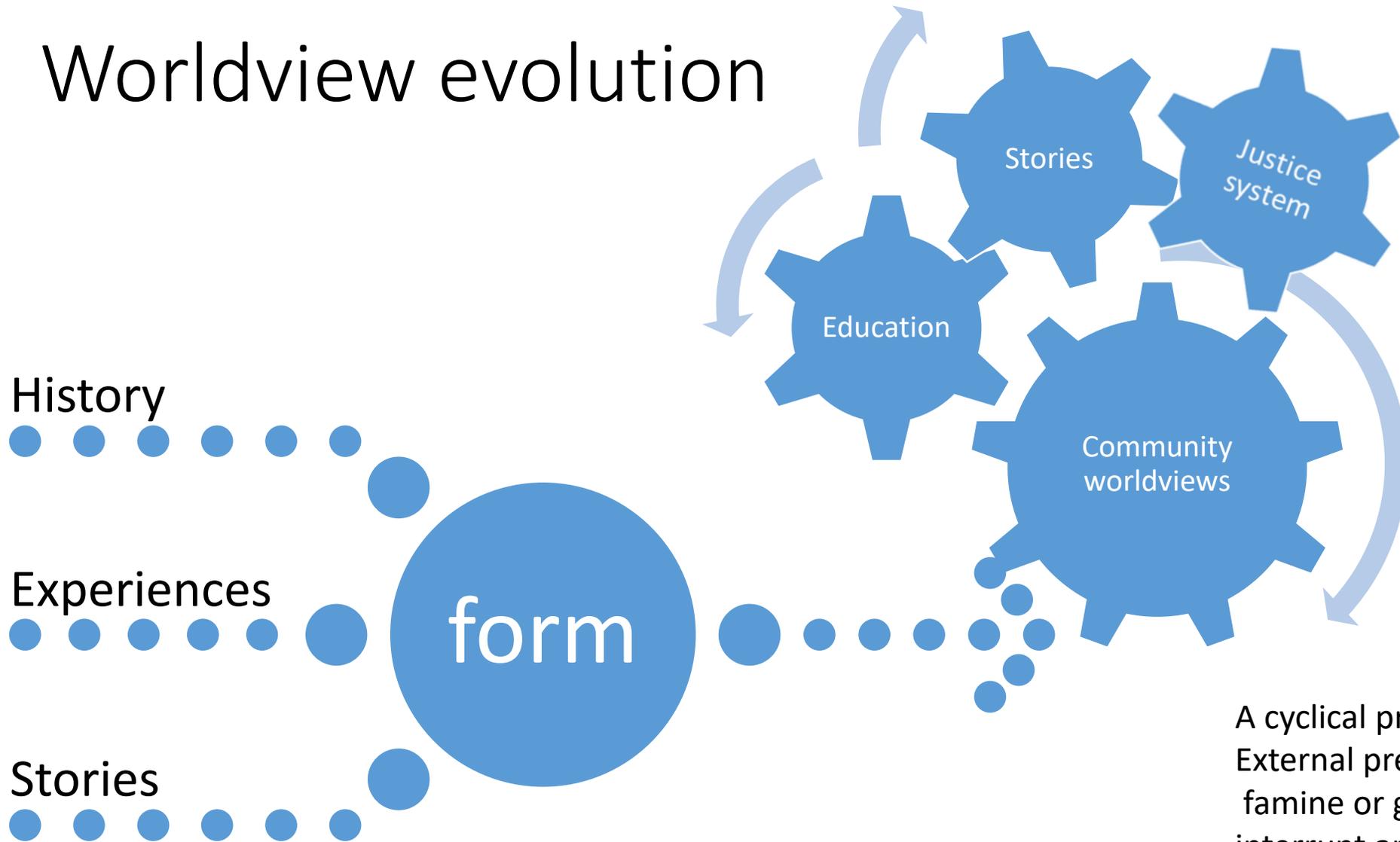
form

A cyclical process
External pressures such as civil war, famine or global pandemic may interrupt and transform.

Activity: How are worldviews formed?

Take a look at the answers from the circles activity task.

- Choose one answer

- Can you identify the **origins** of any of your views?

(such as education, parent, teacher, peer influence, life experience?)

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'By seeing worldview as a concept that makes sense of the world, which can be different due to different life experiences, may assist understanding that what one perceives as the 'norms' of life are merely a product of our own life narrative and worldviews.

To recognise this prevents the views of others as being negatively perceived as 'other', 'exotic' or even 'wrong', as they deviate from individuals' accepted norms, but rather view these as shared responses to life experience.'   (Flanagan, 2019)

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Perhaps the main question for a teacher is not is there an objective truth but is it possible to be neutral? An individual is a product of socio cultural and personal history but this does not negate truth rather it negates neutrality and acknowledges that all individuals are engaged in 'informed' interpretation:
as 'active participants in the process of interpretation
…we must abandon any strict claim to neutrality and objectivity' (West, 2012:399).

(Flanagan, 2018.)

What is your Worldview?

John Valk's (2009) framework tool

Secular Worldviews		Religious Worldviews	
Consumer Capitalism	Exclusive Humanism	Spiritualities	Monotheism
Consumerism Capitalism Materialism	Individualism Humanism Rationalism Scientism Atheism Environmentalism	Buddhism Hinduism Taoism Confucianism Ecological Spirituality Indigenous Spirituality	Judaism Christianity Islam

Examining worldviews

Worldview Frameworks
Personal Identity
Ultimate Questions
Worldview Dimensions
Epistemological/Ontological
Primary/Secondary Values

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Activity: My own worldviews

- How would I answer these questions?

Framework	Components
Ultimate Questions	Meaning/Purpose
	Responsibilities/Obligations
	Discerning Right/Wrong
	Righting our Wrongs
	Greater Force/Power/Being
	Eschatos: Life after this life

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What is the purpose of life?

Do I have any responsibilities or obligations?

How do I discern what is right/wrong?

How can I right any wrongs?

Is there a greater force/being?

Is there an after life?

- Using one religion attempt to discover how does it answer the big questions?

NB: There are many variations within each religion

- How does this differ from your own?

Framework	Components
Ultimate Questions	Meaning/Purpose
	Responsibilities/Obligations
	Discerning Right/Wrong
	Righting our Wrongs
	Greater Force/Power/Being
	Eschatos: Life after this life

Purpose of life   obligations/responsibilities   discerning right and wrong

Righting our wrongs   greater force/power/being   after life?

Worldviews

Contested definitions often informed/restricted by personal worldviews.

However, the usefulness of the paradigm:

- as a bridge for connecting pupils who have no religious faith allegiance to religions;

- as a means for understanding religion(s) beyond the superficial;

- as a basis to know where to begin to find out new subject knowledge;

- And to reinforce the diversity found within each community of religious believers.

Thank you! Any questions?

If you can spare 10 – 15 minutes to fill in a survey, I would be very grateful.

Worldviews survey

If you would like to be involved in research on worldviews please contact me on r.flanagan@exeter.ac.uk

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