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Abstract

When Religious Education (RE) in England and Wales transitioned from Christian confessionalism to a multi-faith approach in the latter half of the twentieth century, the subject's moral aims were reasserted. In this article, we explore the moral assumptions of this transformation and map some of their connections to other theological and ethical ideas. Inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's metaphor of a rhizome, we make two novel contributions to scholarship in this regard. First, through some salient examples we show the connections between the moral aims of multi-faith RE and the assumptions of Kantian moral religion. The second contribution, building on this analysis, identifies three moral justifications of multi-faith RE: *universalist* (founded on assumptions of moral universals across religions), *vicarious* (the support of a religious worldview by using other religions' moral teachings) and *instrumentalist* (a moral justification based on the supposed extrinsic benefits of studying religions). We then go onto consider how these assumptions may differ from the moral commitments of the religions they appropriate, suggesting they disrupt and recombine theocentric concepts into pedagogic ones.

Key words: moral; multi-faith; ethics; religion; education

Introduction

Readers of this journal will be aware that RE in England and Wales has been undergoing a period of reappraisal following a substantial decline in provision and legal compliance (see Chater and Castelli 2017, CORE 2018). It is questionable, however, as to how new this problem may be, and the current situation can be interpreted as reaffirming two enduring tropes of RE (Cush 2018). The first of these are the ideological and pedagogical differences to be found among stakeholders. The second is the widespread institutional undervaluing of RE, which has meant the aptness of the epithet 'Cinderella subject' endures well beyond the term's coinage in the early 1960s (Garfoth 1961). These long-standing problems are likely to interact, presenting challenges for RE teachers and researchers who act as 'pedagogical bricoleurs', piecing together fragmentary and even opposing discourses to inform classroom practice and theory in order to preserve the subject in often precarious institutional contexts (Freathy et al 2017).

One theme among the multiple and sometimes ambiguous ideas and mandates invoked in RE policy, theory and practice is its moral aims. Although at times implicit, contested or overlooked, RE's moral purpose has been allied to the goals of studying more than one religion – a principal difference between the confessional Christian education practised before the 1970s, and the 'new RE' that replaced it. Like confessional Christian education, which aimed to nurture students in the moral norms of an undenominational and broad Christianity, multi-faith RE has been assumed to play a part in students' moral development, but through engagement with more than one religion. According to this view, which we call 'the multi-faith ethic', religions are assumed to comprise comparable systems of moral conduct. Students can therefore learn moral lessons or dispositions from them, independent of their own religious background and commitments (or lack thereof). This belief is implicit in the position endorsed by the 1988 Education Reform Act, which

enshrined multi-faith RE in law, stipulating it should represent Christianity and the main religious traditions represented in Britain as part of a system of schooling aimed at promoting all pupils' spiritual and moral development. Subsequently, school inspection guidelines and reports have repeatedly stressed "the contribution that RE makes to pupils' moral, social and cultural development" (Ofsted 2010, 47).

Barnes (2011, 2014) argues that at the demise of Christian confessionalism, the contribution of RE to moral education was disputed, and subsequently reduced. He centres his argument on Working Paper 36 (Schools Council 1971), which separates morality and religion on philosophical grounds, and advocates the phenomenological approach to religious studies, free of value judgement. In this article we present a more nuanced view. Although Working Paper 36 represents some influential protagonists' views (which no doubt have further historical and contemporary intersects), there was already belief in the moral edification to be gained by studying the world's religions long before the advent of multi-faith RE in compulsory schooling. As we go onto explain, to justify the 'new' multi-faith RE, its architects were therefore able to adapt the moral prerogatives of its undenominational Christian precursor, rather than dispensing with them altogether.

In the recent discussions about the future of RE, the multi-faith ethic has been reaffirmed as a viable rebranding to overcome its contemporary and perennial problems (Clarke and Woodhead 2015, Felderhof and Penny 2014, Stern, 2018). But the multi-faith ethic has also been contested, omitted (and sometimes retracted (compare Clarke and Woodhead, 2015 with 2018)). To try to understand this complex political and intellectual landscape, instead of the kind of genealogy Barnes offers, we see the multi-faith ethic better captured by the metaphor of a rhizome (underground plant stem) (Deleuze and Guattari 1988). The problems apparent in positing a 'genealogy' of the moral justifications of RE are well illustrated by Barnes' attempts (2011, 2014). The single event of Working Paper 36

becomes representative of a historicist and universal process that once identified, provides the premise for Barnes' own endorsement of a particular (contrary) view. While Working Paper 36 was, contrary to Barnes' account, situated in wider trends (Doney 2015), it is not just the problem of factual accuracy or scope that is important here, but the very principle of supposedly being able to 'trace' the 'root' of the binaries of 'confessional/non-confessional', moral/amoral or 'religion/secular' in a deterministic manner. In our view, such an account fails to acknowledge the confluence of multifarious approaches and assumptions that result from RE's convoluted associations between the academic study of religion, everyday religious and educational practices, and the dynamic landscape of educational policy and practice.

In opposition to 'arborescent' (genealogic or tree-like) logic, Deleuze and Guattari suggest the rhizome allows for a more sophisticated mapping of the connections between concepts, practices and power that produce difference, which crucially, do not rely on the representation of supposed inevitable chronological or dialectic stages. In Deleuzean terminology, a changing landscape – such as we argue is the relationship between RE and its moral agendas – is transformed by power apparatuses which re/de- territorialise new spaces in ordering 'lines of segmentarity' or rupturing 'lines of flight'. The rhizome therefore serves as an apt image of thought for the apparent contradictions of RE – what John Hull (1998) dubbed 'schizophrenia' in regard to its preservation of both religious and secular discourses.

The application of post-structuralist paradigms has enabled researchers to expose and problematize the multiplicities of RE with increasing sophistication (e.g. I'Anson 2004, Freathy et al 2017). Our further contribution to this growing trend is to map some of the assumptions about multi-faith RE as moral education. While neither exhaustive nor systematic (which would be antithetical to the spirit of the concepts themselves), our account gives an alternative analysis that shows RE's dynamic potential for the production of

difference and multiplicity. Questions such as 'how did change in English RE become possible?' (Doney 2015, 27) which arise out of genealogical paradigms become less pertinent because of the ease by which the rhizomatic concept allows for ideas and practices to segment or shoot to give rise to new concepts and practices while also being in some sense attached to those they replaced. In this article, we suggest and map three examples of such lateral, adventitious and interconnected shoots for the multi-faith ethic.

Universalism sees religions as expressions of theological and/or moral universals. (While sometimes connected to pluralism, rather than being inclusive of difference, universalism stresses the sameness of moral norms across religions). The vicarious approach shares some of the assumptions of universalism, but principally emphasises the moral teachings or practices of 'other' religions in order to support a religious (liberal or ecumenical Christian) worldview. The third approach is more purely instrumental in nature. Religions should be studied as part of an ethical mandate to promote the competences and/or knowledge necessary to live well and harmoniously in a religiously plural context. By considering several novel but striking historical examples selected for their salience, we argue these different moral assumptions are interrelated, and can be articulated in deontological or virtue ethics frameworks.

Kantian moral religion and the multi-faith ethic

We begin our map of the multi-faith ethic with Kant. While other points of entry are possible, Kant's moral religion offers the paradigmatic example of the connection between a binding and universal moral philosophy and a liberal theology. In this sense, it illustrates one default position of the multi-faith ethic. The relationship between 'post-Enlightenment Romantic theology' and RE have been well established and critiqued elsewhere (Barnes and Wright, 2006). However, the *ethical* emphasis on the interpretation and appropriation of non-

Christian religions that some post-Enlightenment theological positions entailed has not been emphasised. Tillich made the apposite observation that for Kant, while God was ultimately unknowable, the moral imperative was unconditional, binding and demonstrable. The effect of this philosophical move in nineteenth and twentieth century protestant churches, such as British nonconformist denominations, was a move toward a more rational, moral religion (Tillich 1967). One corollary of this among some more radical movements was a growing conviction in anthropological universalism on one hand, and theological universalism, on the other. To put it crudely, not only do all human beings share the 'moral law within' as a matter of their biology, but as a natural consequence, the religions of the world also state the same moral code, only in different manifestations. These ideas have strong educational implications. Kant assumed that moral education is primarily a matter of understanding the reasonableness of moral rules directed by conscience, not religious observances. Moral education therefore proceeds by enabling the internal, rational motivation of students. But Kant had also promoted the belief, shared by other philosophers of the Enlightenment, that *because* of universal rational ethics, there was such a thing as 'religion' which held true across cultures – as Kant summarises, 'for in despite of the diversity of religions, religion is everywhere the same' (Kant 1803/1960, 115). As an application of these beliefs, the multi-faith ethic first emerged in England as a supplementary, confessional Christian education among fringe groups such as the Tolstoyans and radical Unitarians during the latter part of the nineteenth century (Moulin 2014, 2017). If morals are universal and intuitive and the ethical teachings of the world religions are at heart the same, it followed naturally that children should consider the teachings of non-Christian religions on moral grounds. Didactics based on these assumptions endorsed by radical educationists included encouraging children to apply their own intuitions to interpret the Bible, nature-walks, and crucially, reading moral stories from world religions to imbibe their universal wisdom.

While radical movements of this ilk only represent one strand of nineteenth century Christianity (whose influence is difficult to ascertain today), they have striking similarities with more mainstream approaches of a century later, and some synergies with the beliefs of the more liberal members of the Victorian establishment. Liberal Christianity was influential in the political elite, not least in the passing of the 1870 Education Act that led to the adoption of an undenominational Christian religious instruction in Board Schools. William Cowper-Temple who took up the cause of the conscience clause for withdrawal from religious instruction and advocated the merits of undenominational instruction, serves as a good example of the progressive, but earnest theological commitments behind this political power (Cruikshank 1964). A believer in the unity of Christian traditions, and hence the possibility of religious instruction without creedal formulary, Cowper-Temple was well-known for his ecumenical garden parties and spiritualist séances (Gregory 2009). The origins of the undenominational principle are important here, not for giving any account for causality, but to show that comparable ideas along the same rhizome resurface after substantial periods. Although located in Christian culture at this point, the assumption that Christianity could be represented as a unified set of educable interdenominational moral values is one consistency held in common with the multi-faith ethic of a century later. It is possible, on account of the universal nature of Christianity/religion/morality, to have a universal form of Christian/religious/moral education.

The multi-faith ethic and the mainstream

One response to Kant's moral religion among liberal theologians, and the early pioneers of psychology and anthropology, was that morality may not be founded on any particular supernatural revelation, but is revealed in our own nature. We see such an assumption in William James' 'refined supernaturalism' that allowed for naturalistic investigation into

religious experiences without explaining them away in purely naturalistic terms (James 1901/1975). Similar convictions opened up a new and popular approach to Christian education that conceived religious knowledge as experiential and intuitive in nature, and therefore pedagogy as experiential and intuitive in practice. The work of Quaker George Cadbury and his friend, George Hamilton Archibald promoting the Sunday School Movement, offers a good example of this. Through their inherent capacity for reason, children know the moral of a story so it should not be pointed out explicitly, and furthermore, because of this, a scientific understanding of morality may be made by an analysis of children's responses to stories (Archibald, 1913). From Archibald's naturalistic position, although remaining firmly located in Christian culture, it is only a small step to the multi-faith ethic.

The World Congress of Faiths (WCF) gives a good illustration of this kind of change, exemplifying the impact of the imperial period whereby world religions appealed to the romantic imagination of colonial elites (a significant aesthetic trope of the multi-faith ethic) (Braybrooke 2013). WCF was founded by the explorer Sir Francis Younghusband with the remit to promote commonalities at the heart of the religious traditions for the moral improvement of the world (French 1994). Younghusband, an Army Colonel who invaded Tibet to jingoistic acclaim epitomises the colonial overtones of the universalist multi-faith ethic. After several conversion experiences, he quit military life to use his connections to bring together leaders from the British Empire to discuss the spiritual wisdom of the world's religions. The WCF has since continued its work, often informing RE practice on the same basis. Emblematic of this universalism (and indicating its indirect debt to the motivational internalism of Kant) is the promotion of the golden rule – purportedly a key belief of all the world's religions. A poster, an erstwhile common staple of RE classrooms walls, is supplied

by the WCF for these ends, showing the golden rule as expressed in different scriptures along with a symbol of each respective faith.

While Younghusband and others departed in some sense from orthodox Christianity in their syncretic universalism, the multi-faith ethic has been advanced from a Christian perspective, even as a Christian apologetic. Although not advocating theological universalism outright, this position vicariously appropriates the ethical teachings of other religions as support for Christian ones. C.S. Lewis is a good example of how in this different sense, undenominational, or 'mere' Christian beliefs may support a multi-faith justification for moral education. In his famous essay on education, *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis (1943/1947) draws on the world's cultures to advocate a conception of education based on universal notions of the good. Lewis appropriates 'the Tao' (the way) – a mystical term used in Taoism and Confucianism – as a name for this natural law. The appendix gives substantial evidence of this view, with moral adages cobbled from Beowulf, Cicero, Old Norse myths, Virgil, The Old Testament (tellingly referred to as 'Ancient Jewish' so as not to appear as a Christian source), and Christianity, but also Babylonian, Egyptian, and Indian texts. The example of Lewis is highly pertinent here because it shows how an apologetic for natural law (a Christian doctrine as well as a classical one) is evinced, perhaps even cloaked, by the rhetoric of a (Christian) multi-faith ethic.

The multi-faith ethic was further developed and aided by institutions set up by non-conformist Christians, such as Cadbury's Westhill College (which continues as the Westhill Trust). The work of the sometime Westhill scholar Michael Grimmitt represents a pivotal example of the Kantian inheritance of moral universalism in this regard. A key architect of the new RE, Grimmitt's (1973) dichotomy between 'learning about' and 'learning from' religion is inextricably linked to these moral commitments. Concerned that merely learning about world religions misses valuable educational opportunities, Grimmitt (1987) argued RE

made an important contribution to human development. Because religions espouse core values relating to the 'givens' of the human condition, and because the act of believing itself is human and necessary to life, the study of religions has a humanising influence on students, promoting their moral development by providing them with the opportunities, methods and the content material to construct their personalised worldview (Grimmitt 2000). While providing some distance from religions by learning 'from' them instead of 'learning them' outright, Grimmitt avoids imposing a strict universalism, but his notion of core values assumes moral development takes place through the acquisition of reasonable moral principles and is readily attributable to the influence of Kant and the Kantian psychologist Kohlberg (see Grimmitt 1987, 61-62; 70-72). For Grimmitt, following the basic assumptions of both, human development progresses by discerning moral commitments intellectually, and then applying them to one's own real life. Such moral assumptions can be found practically applied by the use of moral parables among educators of the multi-cultural model at around the same time. For example in Cole's *Religion in the multi-faith school* (1988), stories from the world's major religions are summarised for the purposes of espousing universal morals. Cole's stories, so selected, therefore have the purpose of educating about different religions in a multi-faith society, and reinforcing courage, faithfulness, love, caring and honesty vicariously through them. In this manner, vicarious, universalist and instrumental justifications are all blended.

Virtue ethics and instrumentalist variants of the multi-faith ethic

According to the universalist and vicarious multi-faith ethic, learning about major religions is morally instructive because of the universal nature of morality and religion. Central to these assumptions are two principles of Kantian moral religion: 1) religions can be unified into one construct, 'religion', and 2), morality is reducible to universalisable maxims that are to be

applied, and learnt, through reasoning. Multi-faith RE thus set out to demonstrate common ethical denominators between religions in order to show the universality and reasonableness of their moral imperative. However, while Kant – who is usually portrayed as the paradigmatic example of a deontological moral philosopher – is indirectly and directly related with multi-faith RE, the multi-faith ethic can also be formulated in a virtue ethics framework. In this, universalisable moral exemplars are not maxims or principles as they conceptualised in the golden rule, for example, but desirable, universal virtues or dispositions that can be identified, learnt and applied by studying religions.

Felderhof and Penny (2014) advance such a virtue ethics rationale for multi-faith RE (although the word 'disposition' is favoured given the Christian connotations of 'virtue'). This approach, which underpins the current Birmingham Agreed Syllabus, mixes the traditional multi-faith rationale with a virtue ethics framework. While deontological and virtue ethics approaches can overlap, such as in Cole's classroom materials, Felderhof argues for something more systematic. RE teachers should contribute to the moral development of students by first targeting appropriate dispositions, such as honesty, integrity and courage, and then choosing material from one or another of the world's religions to promote them in context. For example, the Birmingham Local Agreed Syllabus (2007) focuses on promoting 24 dispositions selected to join pupils of different faiths together in their universal appeal. These target dispositions include 'appreciating beauty', 'being thankful', 'caring for others'. This approach marries the Grimmittian assumptions of learning from religion, while stressing the aims of a civic model of RE. Instead of merely identifying humanising core values that help scaffold students' constructions, dispositions reanimate these ideals as virtues, which when understood and practised, are to contribute to the moral edification of the person and of society. This approach provides points of overlapping consensus across otherwise opposing ethical and theological frameworks (Felderhof and Thompson 2014; Barnes 2011).

Nonetheless, moral universalism persists in the dispositional approach because it assumes certain dispositions are common across religions, which are rendered and approached as different manifestations of a singular (Kantian) construct, 'faith'.

The instrumental multi-faith ethic presents a more oblique version of virtue ethics. This moral justification is perhaps the most prevalent at present and is articulated by several prominent religious educators including Jackson (2004), Moore (2007) and Wright (2000). On this view, RE should aim to educate persons with the correct set of knowledge, skills and competencies to live in, and contribute to, a religiously plural society. In the universalist and vicarious approaches, studying religions is morally instructive because religions contain moral rules or exemplar behaviours which are transmutable across their borders. In the case of the instrumentalist approach, on the other hand, where differences between religions and their students may exist, these promote moral enhancement in the form of a range of positive dispositions needed to understand and evaluate more than one religion. To take two influential examples, in critical religious education pedagogy, the philosophical under labourer of critical realism fosters in students a kind of 'phronesis or practical wisdom' when interrogating religious truth claims in the classroom (Barnes and Wright 2006, 74). The interpretative approach of Jackson, on the other hand, also has implicit moral premises, aiming to 'edify' students by developing the reflexive self-awareness necessary for understanding other cultures (Jackson 2004, 88). The instrumental approach is therefore one step 'further away' from religions than the universalist and vicarious approaches in the sense that the desired moral qualities arise from an appropriate engagement with religions, not from the emulation or adoption of qualities exemplified in religions. Nevertheless, the instrumental approach rests on a moral vision of the development of persons and societies who are tolerant, informed and inquisitive about religions – something shared with the vicarious and universalist justifications.

The multi-faith ethic as territorialisation of religions

We now consider some pedagogical and theological implications of the multi-faith RE ethic. The more general critique that multi-faith RE is a form of confessional liberal Christianity – made by Barnes and Wright (2006) and others – holds in terms of the multi-faith ethic's moral assumptions whenever the universalist or vicarious justifications are invoked. Religions become susceptible to romantic or orientalist representations and function as vehicles for an homogenised worldview in which each tradition is seen to manifest aspects of the universal moral religion. The multi-faith ethic therefore differs substantially from the religious traditions it appropriates. In Deluezean terms it 'deterritorialises' religions and 'reterritorialises' RE, arranging religious elements into a new expression of power.

The pedagogical implications of this territorialisation are most likely various. One we choose to focus on here is the difficulties presented for students adhering to a particular tradition who may find theological universalism at odds with their religious identities (Moulin, 2015). Members of faith communities and the secular alike may not appreciate attempts to syncreticly ground moral principles or dispositions in (other) religious traditions because for adherents (including those identifying with a particular secular view), moral principles and dispositions are related to particular practices, expectations and obligations.

An example of the kind of problem presented by the multi-faith ethic's appropriation of religions is illustrated by research conducted about the use of the Bible in schools (Copley 1998; Copley et al. 2001, 2004). A vignette of much relevance here is the Good Samaritan parable. Copley found that in schools the parable was represented as espousing the ethical platitude of 'do good to others', rather than being considered in terms of what the parable may say about God. While scholarly interpretations differ, in fact, according to historical

criticism, the purpose of the parable for its author, like all the parables, is actually for Jesus to reveal himself and the coming of the Kingdom of God – in this case, in juxtaposition to the inadequacies of Judaism (Franklin 2001). Arguably, a similar distortion occurs when the golden rule is used to represent and compare religions' expression of (supposedly) the same rule. The golden rule in Christianity is a less important injunction in traditional systematic theology than Jesus' exhortation to first 'love God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind' (Luke 10:27). Furthermore, the reciprocity implied by the singling-out of the wording often used, 'do unto others as you would have done to you' (Matthew 7:12) removes God from the discourse, and also puts forward a less demanding principle than that of loving your enemies as Jesus radically advocates in the Gospels. In this manner, we can see how in order to advance moral aims according to universalist, vicarious or instrumentalist justifications, religious texts may be cut up and their central claims overlooked: in this case, the existence of a loving, personal God. Paradoxically, here, the Gospels' moral imperatives are much reduced in their extent, yet it are still likely to be perceived as 'religious' by secular-minded students and teachers.

Theologically, the multi-faith ethic presents problems for positions at odds with versions of Kantian moral religion. Mainstream Abrahamic religions in their orthodox forms place reverence to God before ethical conduct between humans. In the Christian tradition, this can be readily understood in the Augustinian response to the Pelagian controversy. Indeed, aside from the Unitarians, Universalists and similar movements, orthodox Christian theology is difficult to reconcile with the universalist multi-faith ethic because it typically understands moral conduct as transformed by grace in personal relationship with Christ. (Comparable arguments can be made for Judaism and Islam based on their own unique theological claims). The vicarious multi-faith ethic is perhaps more amenable to orthodox Christianity because it merely substitutes Christian teachings with those from other cultures if

they concur with Christian ones. Nonetheless, in so doing it not only misses key motivating beliefs at the centre of Christian ethics, but also distorts other traditions' unique theological claims about morality. The instrumentalist approach risks similar problems. According to the instrumental justification, moral principles and dispositions are the means to produce desired civic dispositions and beliefs – a secondary, not primary purpose of religious teachings in their original contexts. This is also somewhat paradoxical to moral development when conceived as comprising in part the cultivation of genuine intrinsic motivation. For example, Grimmitt's appeal to the humanising core values introduces a hermeneutic gap between religion and the apprehender's moral development by virtue of their choice in what they 'learn from' it. Religions, even Kantian moral religion, on the other hand, see moral teachings as ethical imperatives that are mandated by God, and for their own sake.

Conclusion

The consideration of multi-faith RE given here shows how connections may be mapped between universalist, vicarious and instrumental justifications. This image of thought allows similar ideas and practices at different points in time to be related by the means of varying but multiple interconnected lateral shoots. Mapping them begins to show how RE has been considered to contribute to students' moral development over the last 40 years. The first of these shoots sees religions as manifestations of theological and/or moral universals. While this has been robustly criticised as a form of liberal theological confessionalism by several prominent religious educationists, this moral assumption continues, such as in the dispositional model that sets out to investigate universally good dispositions. The second shoot appropriates religious traditions as having ethical teachings or practices that support the worldview of another religion. This vicarious substitution of moral principles from one religion to another is a weaker form of the universalist principle. The third claims the

competence and/or knowledge gained by studying religions in a religiously plural context is beneficial for the individual and for society. The instrumentalist variant is furthest from universalism, but this also can be predicated on vicarious or universalist assumptions. All variants of these moral assumptions, which are related and sometimes blended, can be articulated in a deontological or virtue ethics framework. While different, all share the common belief that the study of more than one religion supports students' moral development by aiding their knowledge and understanding, and then by their applying of target moral rules, ideals, or dispositions (virtues) in their own lives. Identified target values, virtues or competencies may be learnt from a given religion itself, or may be methodological traits to be learnt from the *study* of that religion.

The multi-faith ethic is committed to an extrinsic moral justification for RE that falls outside the theological or ethical systems of most religious traditions – with the exception of theologies that can allow for a form of Kantian moral religion. Because of this, the multi-faith ethic both disrupts and sustains religious traditions' diverse and unique moral practices, promises and obligations. Crucially, it distorts the principal injunction of most religions which hold their own revelation to be particular, superseding or contrary to the revelation of other religions. (Even in movements that espouse a universalist theology, this universalism is predicated on a view of revelation at odds with those religions it appropriates. E.g. While the Baha'i tradition reverences earlier prophets, present adherents to those same earlier prophets would disagree with the overall Baha'i view of supersession).

Our analysis bears some similarities with other critiques that argue RE represents a form of liberal Christian confessionalism which treats religions as vehicles for secular ethics (Copley 2005, Wright 2000). Religious traditions are re-ordered into alternative meta-discourses as a means of resolving supposed tensions between religious truth claims and the demands of a secular education system. The extension to this argument made here is that the

emphasis on the universal morality exhibited by the major world traditions has been a central tenet of multi-faith RE, and one that is appealing to religious educators because it preserves a moral and therefore educational discourse while aiming to take into account religious diversity. However, while the multi-faith ethic can function as an apologetic for religion, it can reterritorialise them into ethical systems flying from, or leaking out their distinctive accounts of the revelation of God. The moral assumptions of multi-faith RE are therefore ruptures from the theological principles of the major faith traditions which place God at the fore of the ethical life. This contention may appear bizarre to religious educators working within the multi-faith ethic. It is perhaps to be expected that in a 'non-confessional' context religions should be appropriated ethically, rather than theologically in order to promote the subject in its contemporary and past crises. The question remains, however, as to how and if, such moral visions may be again reterritorialised in educational contexts with dynamic potential for reanimation – by students, teachers and others. New and alternative shoots can sprout from the anywhere and nowhere. 'A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but will start up again on one of its old lines, or as a new line' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, 9). The same goes for moral aims too.

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