

Islamic Worldview, Education & Islamic Schools

Prof Mohamad Abdalla AM



University of
South Australia

Centre for Islamic
Thought & Education

REVIVAL | EMPOWERMENT | INTERCONNECTEDNESS

This presentation will address:

1. What does it mean to teach from an Islamic worldview?
 2. Why must Islamic schools teach from an Islamic worldview?
(What's the alternative if they're not teaching from that worldview?)
- A. Where are Australian schools as it relates to teaching from an Islamic worldview?
 - B. Where do they need to go?
 - C. How might they get there?



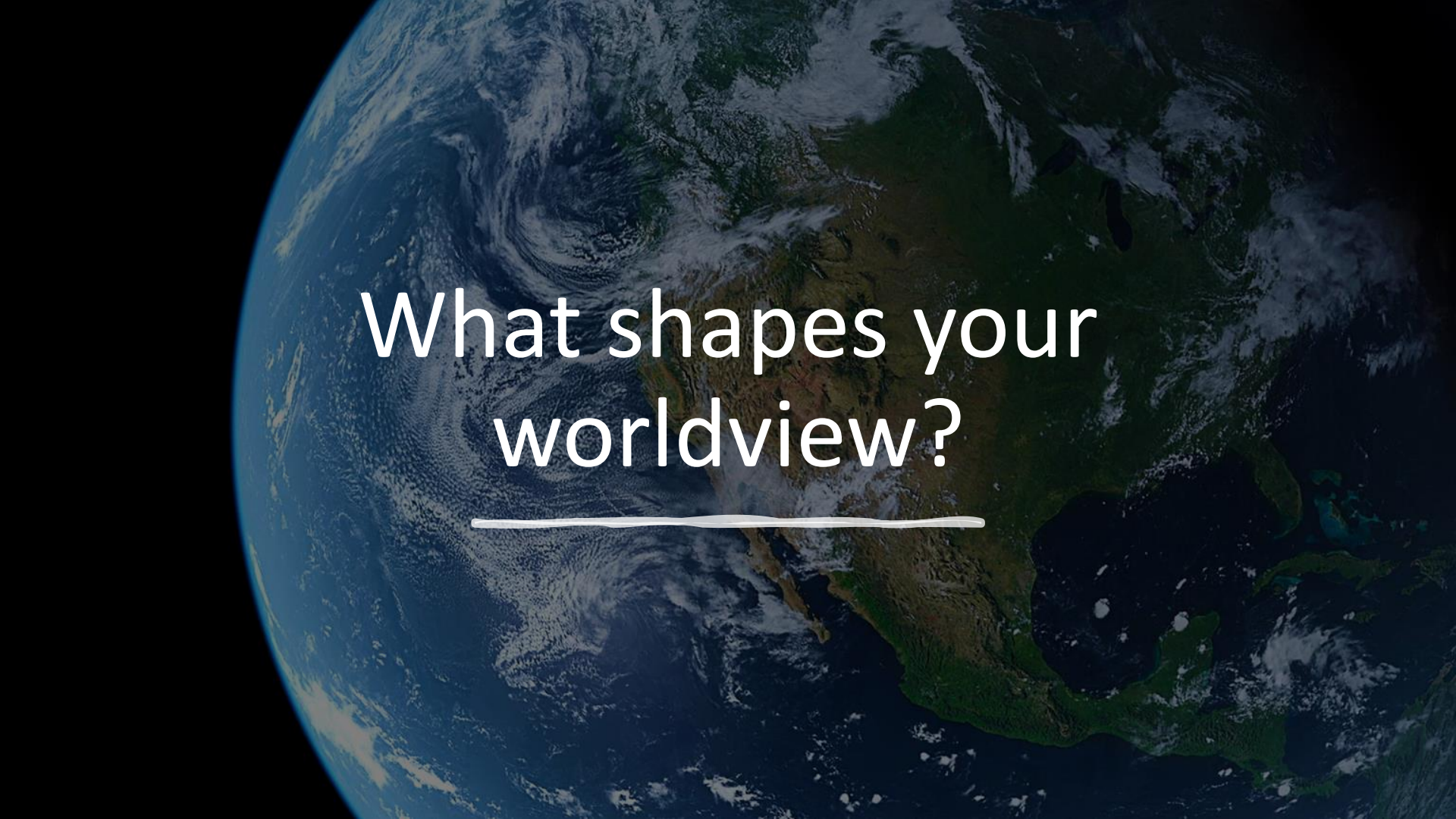
What is a worldview?

“A worldview is the set of beliefs about fundamental aspects of Reality that ground and influence all one’s perceiving, thinking, knowing, and doing.” (Funk 2001)



It also refers to
your **set of**
answers to all
the **big**
questions of life.

How you answer the big
questions of life will
inform how you
think/behave in your
day-to-day existence

A satellite image of Earth, showing North and Central America, the Gulf of Mexico, and parts of the Caribbean. The image is darkened to serve as a background for the text.

What shapes your
worldview?



epistemology: beliefs about the nature and sources of knowledge.



metaphysics: beliefs about the ultimate nature of Reality (“the study of what is beyond the physical world such as God, angels, the human soul”).



cosmology: beliefs about the origins and nature of the universe, life, and especially human.



teleology: beliefs about the meaning and purpose of the universe.



theology: beliefs about the existence and nature of God.



anthropology: beliefs about the nature and purpose of human in general and, oneself in particular;



axiology: beliefs about the nature of value, what is good and bad, what is right and wrong (Funk 2001).

For example: Epistemological Beliefs



What is knowledge?



What is the basis for knowledge?



What is the difference between knowledge and faith?



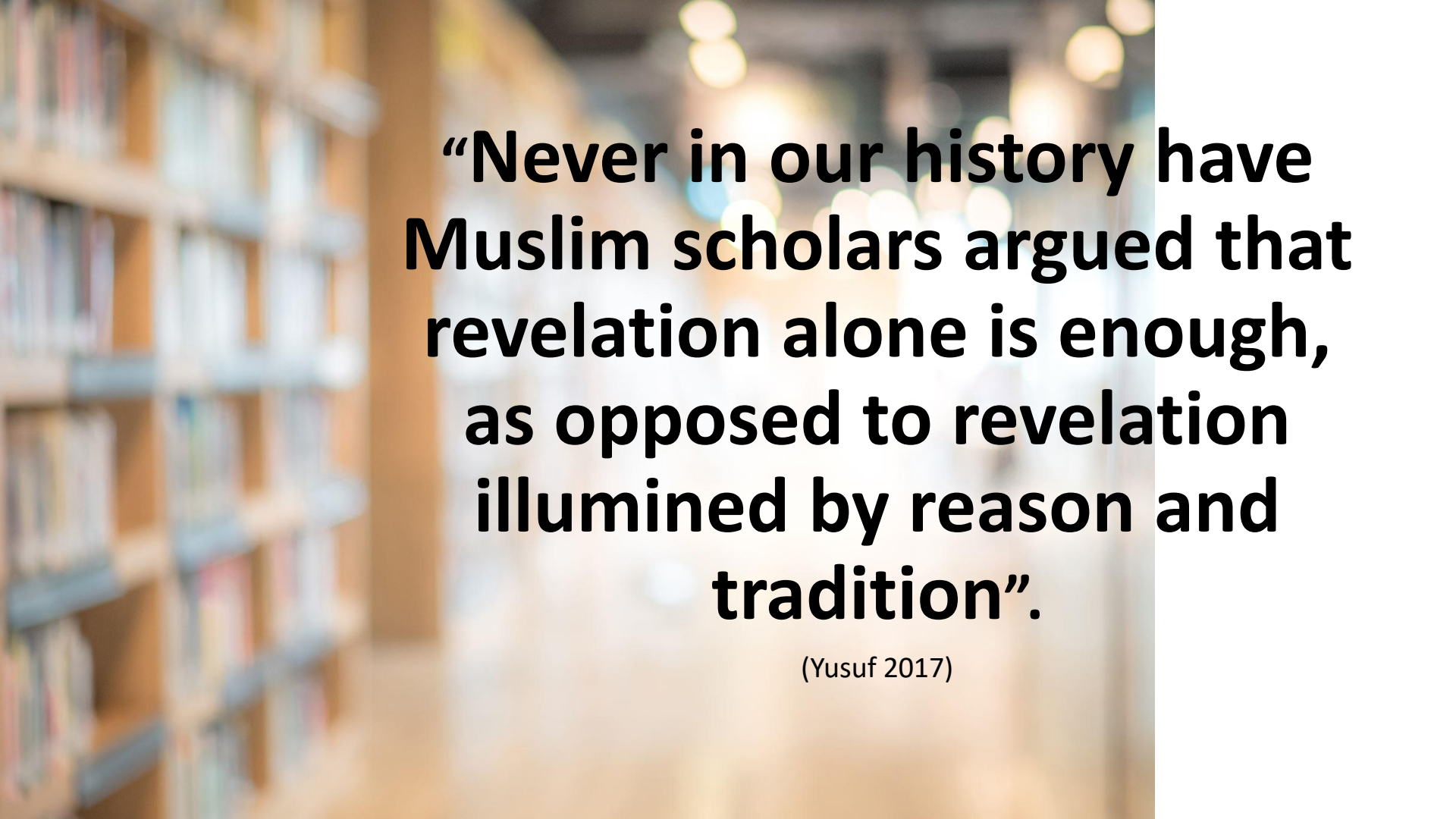
“...what you believe about knowledge, affects what you accept as valid evidence and therefore what you are willing to believe about particulars.” (Funk 2001).

- **epistemology**: beliefs about the nature and sources of knowledge

Revelation (*naql*) and Reason (*‘aql*)



“Revelation does not present anything that contradicts reason...” (Al-Ghazali, *al-Mustaṣfā*)



“Never in our history have Muslim scholars argued that revelation alone is enough, as opposed to revelation illumined by reason and tradition”.

(Yusuf 2017)



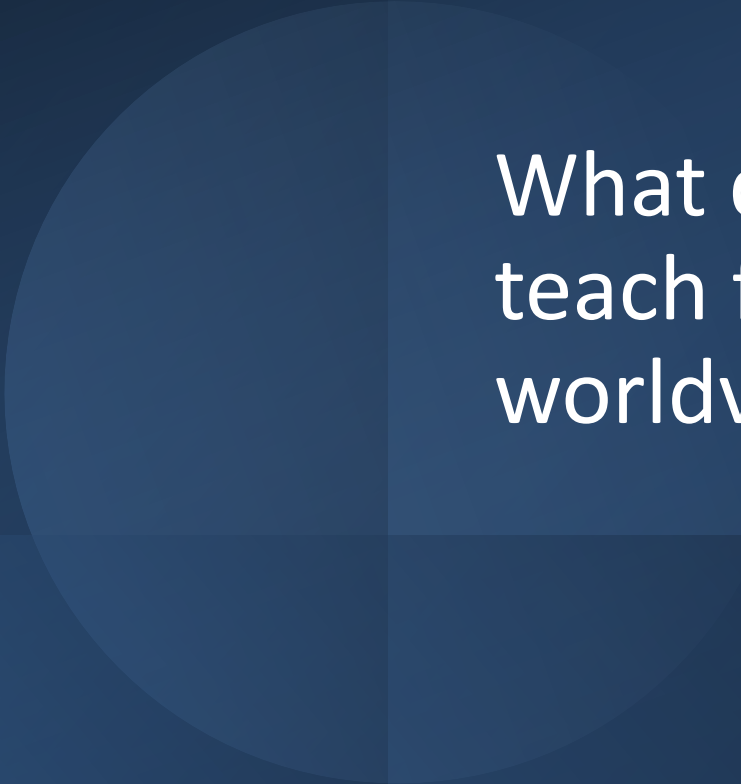
TELEOLOGY

“The nature of the cosmos is purposive, serving a purpose of its Creator, and doing so out of design.”

(Faruqi in Hassan 2013)



Islamic Worldview is a theistic
and ethical worldview which
contrasts sharply with the
secularist or atheistic
alternatives.



What does it mean to
teach from an Islamic
worldview?

- Teaching from an Islamic worldview means **approaching education through the lens of Islamic principles, values, and beliefs**, viewing all knowledge as interconnected with **a divine purpose** of human existence.
- It involves permeating Islamic worldview **into every aspect of the educational experience**, rather than treating religious knowledge as a separate, disconnected subject.



Key elements of education from an Islamic worldview include:

- **Tawhid (Oneness of God):** Underpins an Islamic approach to teaching and learning, emphasising the unity and interconnectedness of all creation under the sovereignty of Allah. Knowledge is understood as a means to grow closer to Allah and fulfill one's role as His vicegerent (*khalifah*) on Earth.
- **Purposeful Education:** Education is seen as a means to fulfill one's purpose of worshipping Allah and contributing positively to society. The focus is on **holistic development**: nurturing spiritual, moral, intellectual, and physical dimensions of a person.
- **Ethical and Moral Framework:** An Islamic worldview aim to instil values/morals/ethics in learners, guiding them to make ethical decisions and act responsibly in all areas of life.

- **Tarbiyah:** Education **focuses not only on the transfer of knowledge but also on tarbiyah**, to nurture righteous individuals who embody Islamic principles in their daily lives. This includes instilling adab (proper behaviour) and encouraging self-discipline, patience, and humility.
- **Balanced Education (*Waṣaṭiyyah*):** An Islamic worldview **promotes a balanced approach to education**, emphasising both the intellectual and spiritual growth of students. It encourages reflection, critical thinking, and the pursuit of excellence (*iḥsān*) while remaining rooted in faith and moral values.
- **Fitrah (Innate Disposition):** **Seeks to nurture this natural inclination and protect it from corruption.** It emphasises guiding students to live in harmony with their fitrah, making education a means to align with divine will.
- **Community and Responsibility:** Teaching is also viewed as **a means to strengthen the ummah/humanity** by producing **knowledgeable and morally responsible individuals** who can contribute to the betterment of society. Learners are taught to care for others, uphold justice, and fulfill their responsibilities as global citizens.

In essence, teaching from an Islamic worldview involves cultivating a learning environment where faith and knowledge are seamlessly interwoven, and where the ultimate goal is to help learners develop as balanced, ethical, and spiritually aware individuals.

- Why must Islamic schools teach from an Islamic worldview? (What's the alternative if they're not teaching from that worldview?)

This approach nurtures learners' identity and sense of purpose, linking their knowledge and personal development with the principles of Islam, ethical values, and social responsibility.

An Islamic worldview is fundamental
to **framing the development of
curriculum in Islamic schools**, which
is **purposeful** and lays the
foundation for active,
transformative learning through
careful consideration of knowledge.

A clear worldview based on *tawhid* can frame the *how* and the *what* of classroom instruction and are vital to inculcate values that develop a **balanced and mature student identity** throughout an Islamic schooling journey

- **If an Islamic school does not teach from this worldview**, learners may receive an education that is **disconnected** from their faith and identity.
- They might learn subjects solely through **secular perspectives**, potentially leaving gaps in their understanding of how their studies relate to their Islamic beliefs.
- This disconnect could result in **confusion**, weakened faith, or a diluted sense of identity, as students might struggle to reconcile their values with what they learn.
- Without an Islamic worldview, students may also **lack the moral and ethical guidance** that Islamic education seeks to provide, limiting their growth as well-rounded, spiritually conscious individuals.

Alternative Worldview

- Naturalist worldview - (equivalently, a materialist) – the belief that **nothing exists outside of the physical universe**, no spiritual realm, **no God**.
- There can be **no absolute, externally valid standards of value and morality**.



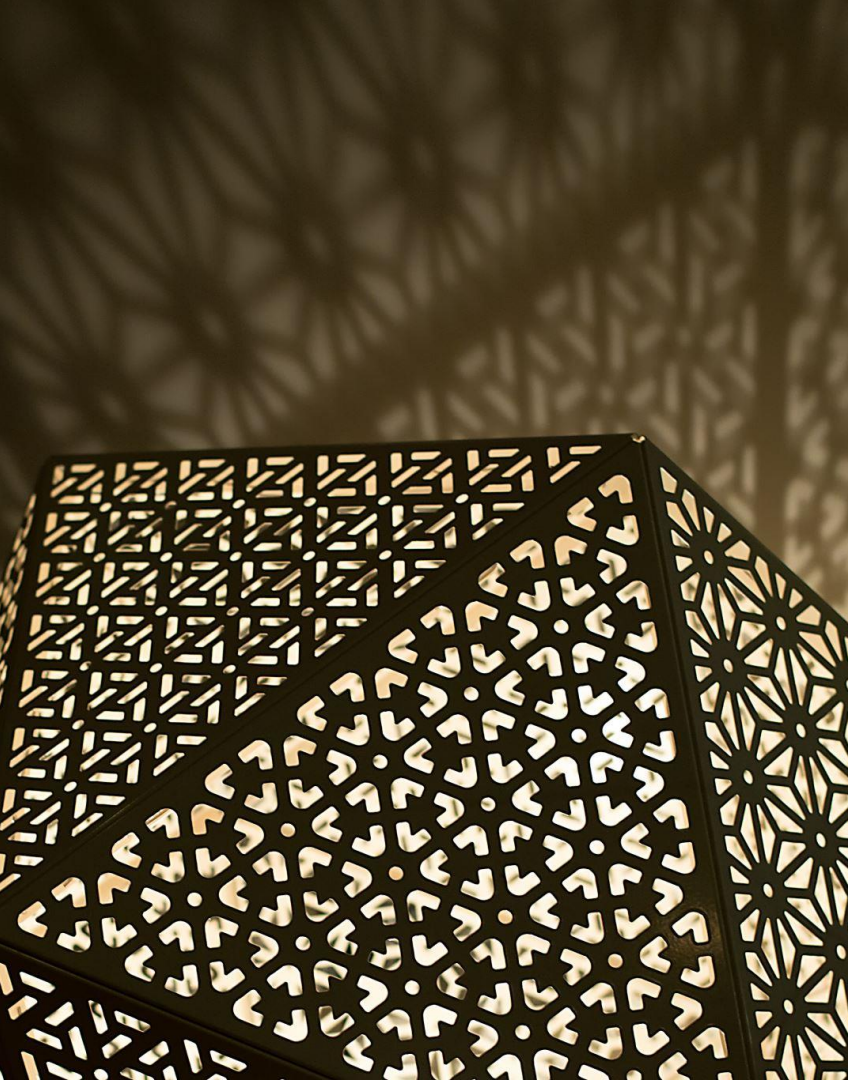
Islamic worldview in Islamic art & architecture



1. All authentic Islamic art must reflect *Tawḥīd*.

- Islamic art is always a centered art...
- Exclude all forms of idolatry

(Nasr 2011)



2. Reflects beauty of the Divine

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: عن عبدالله بن مسعود قال

إن الله جميل يحب
الجمال

من رواية مسلم وأبي داود والترمذي

.

Allah is beautiful and He loves beauty



3. Un-iconic

“...un-iconic art means an art that **refuses to depict the divine in a direct form**. It excludes a statue or an image that represents divinity.”





Sultan Amir Ahmad Bathhouse,
Kashan, Iran









Islamic Geometry, Iranian
Masjid



Architecture



Nasir Al-Mulk Mosque, Shiraz, Iran



ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE









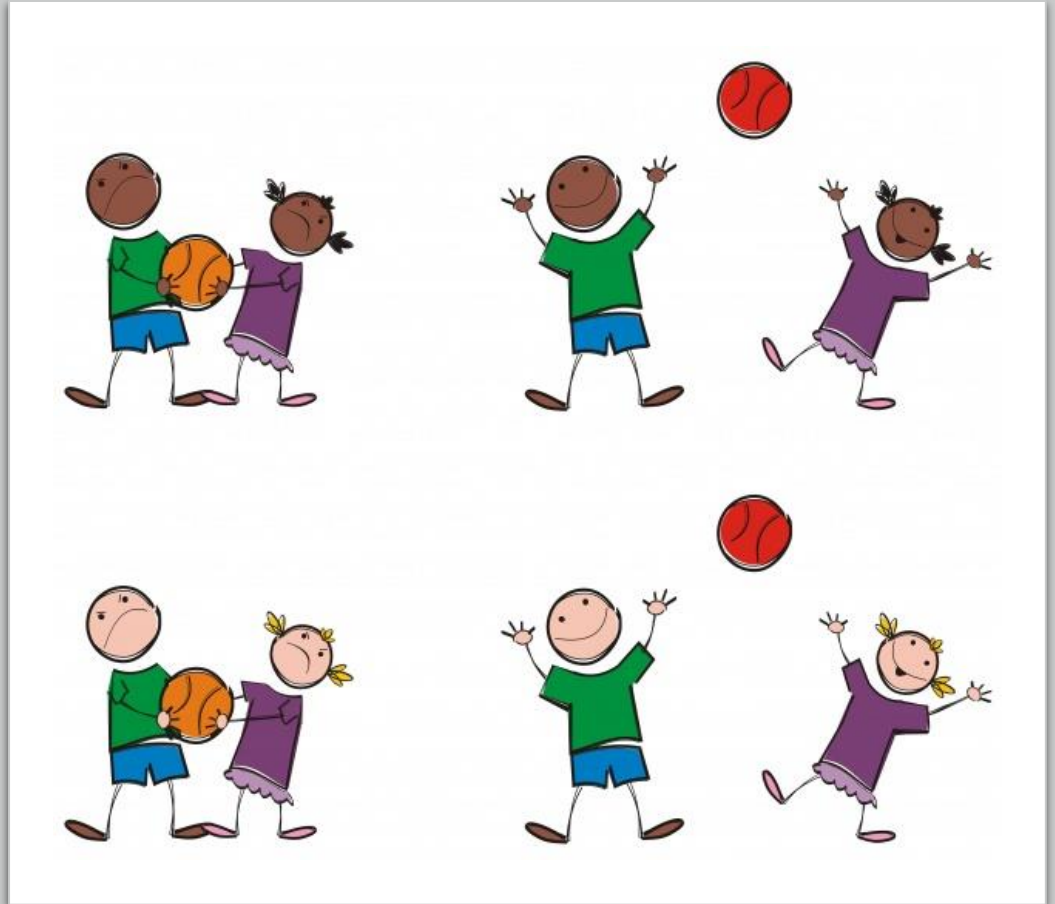


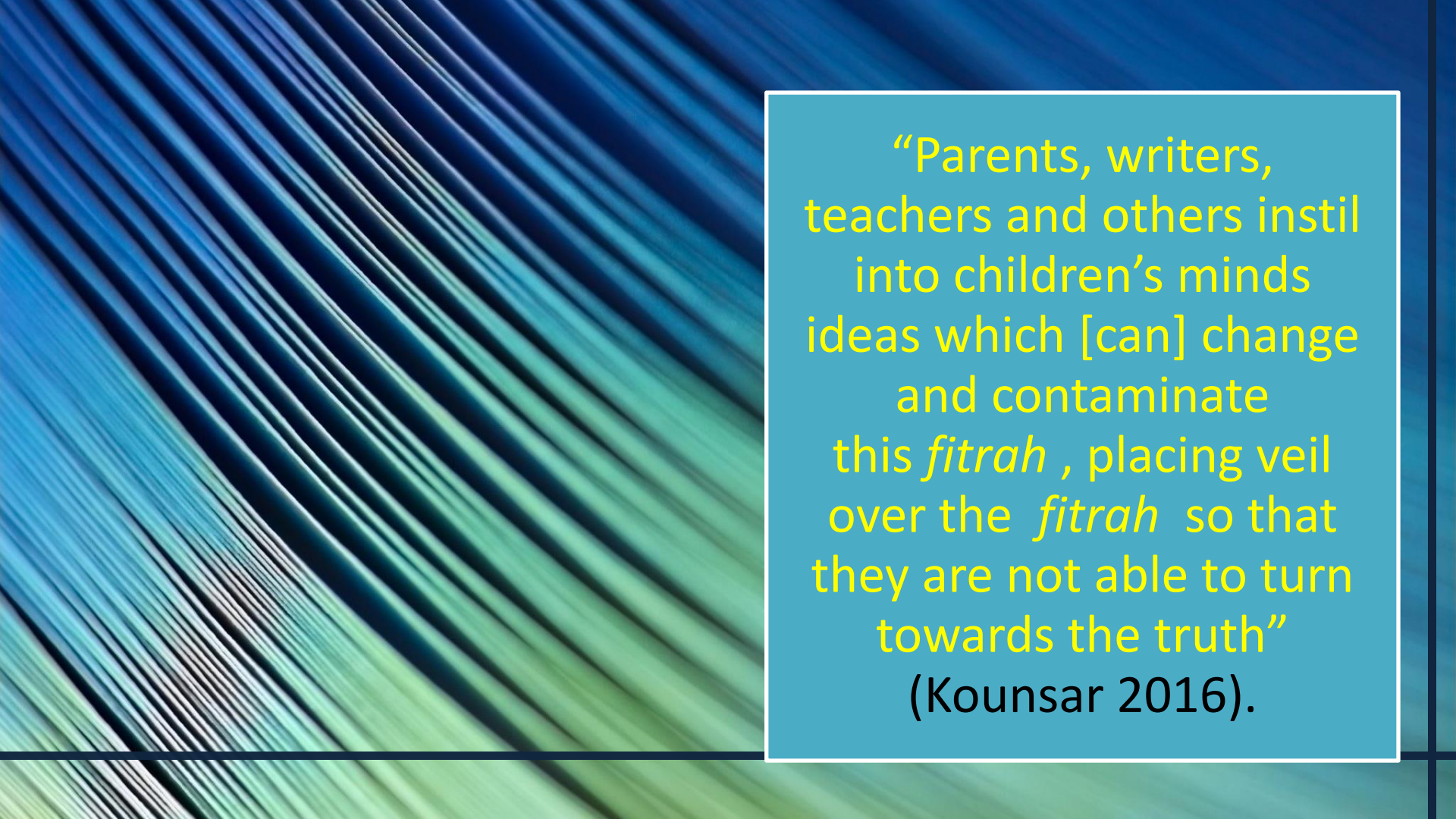


Islamic worldview and the child/learner

Fitrah (natural disposition)

- Hadith: "Each child is born in a state of *fitrah*, then his parents make him a Jew, Christian or a Magian" (Bukhari)
- All children below age of reason (puberty) are **pure, innocents and sinless**
- Children are **not liable**





“Parents, writers,
teachers and others instil
into children’s minds
ideas which [can] change
and contaminate
this *fitrah* , placing veil
over the *fitrah* so that
they are not able to turn
towards the truth”
(Kounsar 2016).



Looking after
the child is a
trust &
responsibility

Where are Australian schools as it relates to teaching from an Islamic worldview?

- At the beginning phase but quickly adopting this approach.
- MFIS is one of the oldest and largest in Australia and they have redesigned their vision, teaching frameworks, behaviour policy etc accordingly.
- At least 8 other schools are working with CITE toward achieving this objective.

Where do they need to go to make it a reality?



They can start by gaining a deeper understanding of:

Islamic worldview

Islamic pedagogy

Purpose and philosophy of Islamic education



CITE offers courses on all of these

How might they get there?

- **Strategic Planning and Vision Setting**
 - **Define Clear Objectives:** Schools should develop a strategic plan that outlines clear objectives for embedding the Islamic worldview in all facets of education. This includes vision and mission statements explicitly rooted in Islamic values.
 - **Leadership Commitment:** School leaders must be dedicated to the mission, modelling and championing Islamic values in decision-making and daily practices.
- **Invest in Educator/leaders Training and Development**
 - **Professional Development Programs:** Provide specialised training for educators on how to integrate Islamic worldview into their school. This could include courses on Islamic pedagogy, workshops with scholars, and peer mentoring.

How might they get there?

- **Curriculum Integration**
 - **Islamically Enriched Content:** Develop or adapt curriculum resources to reflect Islamic perspectives in subjects like science, history, and literature. Collaborate with educational experts to design lessons that emphasize the relevance of Islam in modern knowledge.
 - **Islamic Frameworks:** Use Islamic educational frameworks to structure learning experiences that promote spiritual and moral growth alongside academic excellence.
- **Partnerships with Islamic Institutions:** Form partnerships with universities, educational foundations, and scholars to access resources and expertise that can aid in the transition.

References

- Nadeem A., Alhashmi, M., & Abdalla, M. (Eds.). (2021). *Curriculum renewal for Islamic education : critical perspectives on teaching Islam in primary and secondary schools* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Memon, N. A., Abdalla, M., & Chown, D. (2024). Laying Foundations for Islamic Teacher Education. *Education Sciences*, 14(10), 1046-. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14101046>
- Funk, K (2001). What is a worldview? <https://web.engr.oregonstate.edu/~funkk/Personal/worldview.html>
- Kamali, M. H., Bakar, O., Batchelor, D. A.-F., & Hashim, R. (2016). *Islamic Perspectives on Science and Technology*. Springer Singapore Pte. Limited.
- Kounsar, A. (2016). The Concept of Tawhid in Islam: An Overview of the Perspectives of Some Prominent Muslim Scholars. *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization*, 6(2), 95–110. <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.62.06>
- Yusuf, H. (2017) Is the Matter of Metaphysics Immaterial? Yes and No <https://renovatio.zaytuna.edu/article/the-matter-of-metaphysics>