

OpenLearn animation

Why worldviews?

Narrator:

What are worldviews? Let's begin to answer that question by using our imagination.

Suppose you are at a demonstration – about climate change or human rights for example. You might see all kinds of different people there, with many different motivations or convictions.

Perhaps some people there are from a religious organisation - a mosque, a synagogue or a church. They might be there because their particular beliefs about the world are driven by religious ideas – perhaps by a particular religious text.

You look around and see that others - equally passionate about the demonstration – are not obviously religious at all. Perhaps they are holding banners which display loyalty to a particular political party, charity or identity. Or perhaps they are even clearly non-religious – A flag saying 'Humanists for change', for example.

Most likely, it won't be clear whether individuals are protesting for religious or non-religious reasons. In fact, as you talk to the individuals protesting, you realise they are there because of a combination of personal convictions, loyalties, life experiences and beliefs which are too complex to reduce to one simple thing.

Complexify this further and you might find that there are people opposing the demonstration who are from the same religious or non-religious traditions, groups or communities, but have completely different views about the issue.

Might we say, in some ways this imaginary scene is representative of the complexity of beliefs and practices in real life? People can hold to ideas about the world – worldviews - which are significant whether they are religious or non-religious. We see them all in both private and civic life.

These sets of ideas – say... Christianity or Socialism – might at first seem homogenous but are rarely so. Equally, we tend to find that many of our ideas and practices are highly individualised. We each have a view of the world, and this deserves to be taken seriously.

We call the study of all this – Worldviews.