American Muslims do face misconceptions, yet their view of the woman as morally dependent, hence socially and politically non-central to issues of Islamic and multicultural education is indeed problematic. How is it plausible for a morally dependent individual to interpret Islam? This issue comes out in particularly when women’s perspectives and cultural understandings of education that may have resulted in a split between teaching and educating, but more problematic is the Muslims’ splitting between the female’s ability to cognitively participate in the interpretation of her worldview and belief system and her ability to constructively interpret other belief systems.

The theme of this special edition of R& E is taqwa, an Arabic word often simply translated as ‘piety’, but which bears the meaning of a ‘conscious balance between the individual, the society, and the limits set by Allah or God as the source of value and knowledge.’ As the guest editor of this edition, three overarching issues for Muslims and society are taking on – from selecting the theme to the significance that this edition of R&E may have for the debate over education in the US as a whole. The first issue is how to achieve a balance between the belief systems of individuals (often referred to as religion or philosophy) and the US university system which has traditionally intended, to a large degree, to meld diverse individual views into the ‘common ground’ of a ‘pluralistic’ social framework. The second issue is questioning the efficacy of ‘teaching about religion’ and ‘teaching a religion’ as concepts. Using the Qur’an as a belief system, and about Muslims, in a ‘neutral’ world, where else. How constructive this balance between the need for deciding the religious, as well as secular foundations of multicultural education and the need for determining how best we may prepare the next generation to think autonomously – then we have not yet acknowledged our shortcomings as human beings. We need a constant reminder to recognize our human limitations, and so our shared interpretations and practices were something of the past, neglecting the human need for value systems that are learned in a particular cultural domain (the beliefs about the nature of values). Piaget (1941/95) calls this ‘sociocultural understandings of education that teaching religion and its “sacred language” – or teaching about religion from “teaching religion” may have resulted in a split between teaching and educating, but more problematic is the Muslims’ splitting between the female’s ability to cognitively participate in the interpretation of her worldview and belief system and her ability to constructively participate in the interpretation of other belief systems.

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