**The Nature of Morality**

**“Pluralism”**

**Learning objectives:**

**Knowledge**

* The similarities and differences between Chinese and Western cultural values
* The meaning of pluralism and its similarities and differences with relativism
* How to seek consensus through tolerance, understanding and dialogue in a pluralistic society

**Skills**

* Critical thinking skills, communication skills, creativity

**Values and Attitudes**

* Rationality, open-mindedness, inclusiveness and traditional virtues

Important notes:

1. This learning resource is prepared for teachers of Senior Secondary Ethics and Religious Studies. Teachers are expected to make adaptation and enrichment according to the needs of their students. Moreover, after each learning activities, teachers should provide debriefing to students for their development of positive values and integrative application of generic skills.

2. The ERS curriculum is for S4-S6 SS students. This learning resource uses plain language as far as possible to explain theories of ethics, which, in some cases, are simplified to suit the learning needs of the students.

3. Cases, stories, movie plots, and classic moral dilemmas are included for the purpose of students’ reflection in the learning process. To illustrate moral dilemmas, some viewpoints in this material may seem exaggerated and critical. Teachers should always remind their students of the difference between these viewpoints and the reality in the present world. Judging the past with contemporary standard is not the intended perspective, rather, students should be guided to make contrast and holistic understanding of the relationship between these practices and their historic, cultural and social contexts.

4. The discussion questions, key points and knowledge content of the learning resource are suggestion in nature. Learning and teaching should not be limited to these suggestions. Teacher should use them flexibly for ongoing development of school-based resource according to the learning objectives of the curriculum.

**Suggested teaching period: 4 lessons**

**Teacher shall prepare:**

* Introductory Activity: Domestic helper’s Ramadan
* Knowledge Content of the Subject (1): Comparison of Chinese and Western values
* Knowledge Content of the Subject (2): Pluralism
* Case Study (1)**: Christianity and Polygyny: An African example**
* Case Study (2): French ban on face covering and conspicuous religious symbols
* **Worksheet (1)**: Core moral principles

Teaching process:

1. Teacher discusses “Introductory Activity：Domestic helper’s Ramadan” with the students.

* This case is expected to help students understand that moral conflicts may arise as a result of interaction of different cultures. When a conflict arises, unless one party overpowers the other party, both parties can only find solutions that they consider acceptable by means of dialogue.

1. **Teacher explains “**Knowledge Content of the Subject (1): Comparison of Chinese and Western values”. Teacher may invite students to share daily examples that reflect the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western values. Then teacher may ask students to summarize the key points about similarities and differences between Chinese and Western moral values:

* China's traditional moral values mainly come from Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. Western traditional moral values mainly come from Christianity and ancient Greek philosophy
* Similarities between Chinese and Western moral values
* Focus on the cultivation of virtues
* Focus on good interpersonal relationships
* Differences between Chinese and Western moral values
* Universal moral law and human relations: Western ethical Theory of act pursues the universal ethical principles. Confucian ethics thinks that people should pursue proper relationship.
* Individual and family: the foundation of Confucian ethics is family. Western morality focuses on individual and society.
* Individual rights and community responsibilities: modern Western ethics advocates that everyone enjoys basic natural rights. Confucian ethics, on the contrary, holds that individuals must first fulfill their responsibilities in family and society. Buddhism and Christianity are closer to Confucianism, and they are more concerned with relations and responsibilities.
* Adaptation and confrontation: Western and Christian ethics treasure the value of proactivity and confrontation. Chinese culture advocates following the nature and adapting to the environment. One remarkable example is Taoist Lao-Zhuang's thought of promoting inaction.

1. Divide the students in groups of 4-5 and ask them to discuss “Case Study (1): **Christianity and Polygyny: An African example**”.

* This case allows students to further think about the conflict of values arising from different cultural contacts
* Western missionaries were one of the first to deal with non-Western cultures, bringing the moral standards of the West to the rest of the world, creating a conflict between the West and the local cultures.
* Whether the local cultures should change in response to Western moral standards depends on (1) whether the Western moral standards are universally persuasive (for example, universal values such as equality), and (2) whether the traditional morality, which was supported by the local situation, has the ability to change to the point where Western morality can be supported (for example, whether polygyny that supply the rural labor force is no longer needed).

1. Teacher explains “Knowledge Content of the Subject (2): Pluralism”. Teacher explains (1) the meaning of pluralism, (2) its similarities and differences with relativism and (3) how tolerance, understanding and dialogue could be kept in a pluralistic environment. Then teacher may ask students to summarize the key points of pluralism:

* Pluralism is a theory of value that advocates that there is no so-called highest value, and there is no absolute ranking of different values.
* Plurality refers to a social reality, just as in the free society today, all kinds of opinions, thoughts, religions and values can coexist.
* Moral relativists think that our judgment of ethical issues is not absolute but is rather "relative" to culture, and that the culture in which an individual lives affects one’s moral judgment.
* Strong version of relativism thinks that there is no such things as abstract values in trans-cultural moral judgements, both in terms of content and expression.
* Weak version of relativism admits that there are abstract values that transcend cultures, only that each culture expresses these values in a different form.
* Pluralism is closer to the weak version of relativism and does not agree with the strong version.
* In the era of globalization, every society must prove that the values that its own culture holds are beneficial to the human race (and all kinds of living things) and can enrich their lives.
* It is an undeniable fact that there are different, or even contradictory, values in society. Recognizing with tolerance that others hold different values and moral standards than oneself is the most basic requirement for peaceful coexistence.
* Different cultures can increase mutual understanding through dialogue and seek **common ground while recognizing differences with the spirit to respect, and also pursue the common good for the human race.**

1. Teacher asks students to finish “Worksheet (1): Core moral principles?”

* This worksheet helps students to understand that there are some core ethical principles that apply to different cultures, even if there are differences in specific ethical rules. When different cultures put these core moral principles in practice, even though in different forms or allowing exceptions (for instance, allowing lying in some cases or tolerating outdated laws). The survival of society depends largely on these core moral principles.

1. Divide the students in groups of 4-5 and ask them to discuss “Case Study (2): French ban on face covering and conspicuous religious symbols”

* This case lets students consider that there are still unavoidable disputes under pluralism. This case is a conflict between two sets of values--"living in harmony" and "religious freedom."

**Introductory Activity：Domestic Helper’s Ramadan**

Arik was the newly hired Indonesian domestic helper of Wang Chi’s family. One day, Wang Chi’s parents learned that Arik strictly observes the fasting month every year according to her Islamic faith. During this month, she only had dinner every day and did not eat any food or drink anything before dinner. Wang Chi’s parents thought that fasting like this would reduce Arik’s physical strength or even damage her health and in consequence greatly affecting her daily work. Although Arik assured that fasting will not affect her work, Wang Chi’s parents seemed unimpressed and still insisted that she could not fast completely but at least had to eat at least a small amount of food. Otherwise, it might lead to a breach of contract. Arik was reluctant to give up her religious observance because of her work. Therefore, she found the problem very difficult to solve. Wang Chi understood both the views of his parents and Arik, he would like to mediate the conflict between the two sides.

Question for discussion:

In your opinion, who is right in this conflict?

If you were Wang Chi, how would you deal with this conflict?

**Knowledge Content of the Subject (1):**

**Comparison of Chinese and Western values**

|  |
| --- |
| China's traditional moral values mainly come from Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. Western traditional moral values mainly come from Christianity and ancient Greek philosophy. Here are some of the main similarities and differences between Chinese and Western moral values:  Similarities:   1. Focus on the cultivation of virtues: both Confucianism and ancient Greek philosophy emphasize the cultivation of personal qualities. Confucianism advocates the idea of *junzi* (“gentleman”) as an ideal personality standard, possessing virtues such as benevolence, justice, courtesy, filial piety and so on. Greek philosophy resembles Confucianism, advocating virtue ethics, and praising virtues such as courage, abstinence, prudence and so on. Confucianism and ancient Greek philosophy, unlike the later western deontological and teleological theories of act which are concerned with universal principles that guide individual behavior, but are concerned with the need to cultivate human virtues in order to create a better life in reality. 2. Focus on good interpersonal relationships: It is well known that Confucianism values human relationship and sees good human relationship as the basis of personal happiness. Western virtue ethics also agree that a caring relationship is a condition of flourishing life. Christianity, with its core value of love, naturally agrees that establishing relationships with love is a part of an ideal life.   Differences:   1. Universal moral laws and human relations: Western ethical theory of act pursues the universal ethical principles. Among them, Kant's deontological theory emphasizes that when individuals make moral judgments, they should only rely on rational thinking and should not be influenced by external factors. Confucian ethics thinks that people should pursue proper relationship as a means of establishing a good life. 2. Individual and family: Confucianism regards family life as the main place for learning care, respect and order. Therefore, the family is the basis of ethics. This view is different from the western morality with individual and society as the foci. 3. Individual rights and community responsibilities: Modern Western ethics advocates that everyone has basic rights. These rights are inborn and need not be obtained through the fulfillment of responsibilities. Confucian ethics holds the opposite position, believing that individuals must fulfill their responsibilities in family and society so as to gain value and happiness. At this point, Buddhism and Christianity are closer to Confucianism, with more emphasis on relationships and responsibilities. Buddhism takes dependent origination as fundamental. It believes that all things are lack of inherent identity (self) and focuses on the interlinkage of all beings. Christianity also emphasizes the relationship of love and community life. 4. Adaptation and confrontation: In the case of the individual, Western and Christian ethics treasure the value of proactivity and confrontation. In particular, the modern West focuses its efforts on fighting for and defending human rights for individuals or identity groups (race, gender, sexual orientation and so on). On the contrary, Chinese culture advocates following the nature and adapting to the environment. One remarkable example is Taoist Lao-Zhuang's thought of promoting inaction.   However, since the world has entered the era of modernization and globalization, there are frequent interactions between Chinese and Western cultures, and there are diversified developments in each of them. For example, lawful demand for the protection of individual rights has become a component of culture in Chinese society. Conversely, as Western societies have also witnessed how the development of individualism has led to the neglect of public affairs by individuals, they became interested in the idea of community responsibility in Chinese traditional culture.  Reference:  “Comparative Philosophy: Chinese and Western”. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* （<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/comparphil-chiwes/#3>） |

**Case Study (1): Christianity and Polygyny: An African example**

In the nineteenth century, Christian missionaries from Europe and America went to Africa and deeply engaged with Africans during missionary work. This had led to a lot of cultural conflicts. Among them, the indigenous system of polygyny had been the most controversial one. Polygyny means that men can have more than one wives. This system was in fact contrary to the moral requirements of monogamy promoted by Christianity in Europe and the United States. However, some churches established by African indigenous peoples in Africa regarded polygyny as admissible.

In general, most scholars agree that even though the Christian population in Africa is on the rise, the proportion of polygyny in Africa will not decrease and will not disappear in the foreseeable future.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Opposition | Supporting/Neutral |
| A Catholic priest:  “Polygyny is contrary to the moral teachings of the church. We firmly stand against it! If our church members want to receive baptism, they must be monogamous. If a male church member has more than one wives, he must, before his baptism, resolve this issue, separating from other wives and keeping only one wife.” | A European Christian missionary:  "I personally will not ask a man to keep one wife and expel the other wives because it is cruel and has nothing to do with the teachings of Christ. Moreover, such a request is much the same as to kick the polygamous family out of the church." |
| A native woman:  " I oppose mostly a man marrying more than one wives. A man can only really love one woman. If he marries more than one, he will not be faithful and may not love you anymore. Moreover, if several wives get together, will they not only fight each other and be jealous? " | A pastor of an independent church founded by indigenous African:  "We, as an indigenous church founded by our own people, respect the local culture very much. Monogamy is nothing more than European culture and it is not necessary to be related with Christianity. Our African churches do not regard polygyny as a sin. Nor our laws ban it! " |
| A Christian man:  “The monogamy brought by Christianity is more progressive! Men and women are therefore more equal. Marriage can reflect true love but not just a means of production.” | A local male farmer:  "If we peasants do not marry more women and give birth to a few more children, then how can we have manpower to do the farming work?" |

Reference:

Falen, Douglas J. "Polygyny and Christian Marriage in Africa: The Case of Benin." *African Studies Review* 51, no. 2 （2008）: 51-74.

1. In the views of these people, what opinions are in favor of polygyny and which are against it?
2. If you were a foreign missionary, how would you respond to the cultural conflicts between the two marriage systems?
3. If you were an indigenous African, how would you respond to the cultural conflicts between the two marriage systems?
4. From this case, what are the difficulties in dealing with ethical conflicts in cultural pluralism? How can it be solved?

Students may give answers containing the following key points (other reasonable answers are also acceptable):

* Consider the issue from the perspectives of husband and wife relationship, gender equality, economic production, legal norms, cultural traditions and welfare protection
* Monogamy brought by Christian missionaries and churches is not only a moral standpoint of Christianity but also a part of Western modern culture. Therefore, the conflict of the two marriage systems is also the ethical conflict between the indigenous culture and the modernization from the West.
* Ethical conflicts in pluralist culture are not easy to deal with, as the values and customs of both parties in conflict are generally rooted in history and living habits. Moreover, to change the ethical norms of any one side or to undermine the interests of the other side will lead to strong resistance.
* Therefore, only through dialogue between the two sides and recognition of the needs of both sides that the two can find mutually acceptable values.
* Take this case as an example. The love and responsibility of the husband and wife can be the shared values of the two sides. So, Christianity can ask polygyny husbands to take good care of their wives and handle well their family relationships. In the long run, cultural development may promote modern values such as equality between men and women through education, publicity and discussion. Also only when the socio-economic environment is improved, such as solving the peasants' labor needs, will modern values be practiced.

**Knowledge Content of the Subject (2): Pluralism**

**What is Pluralism?**

Pluralism is a theory of value. It advocates that humans will pursue different values in order to establish a good life. There are often conflicts between these values. In order to recognize some values, some people often exclude other values or rank some values above the others. Pluralism holds that there is no so-called highest value at all, and that there is no absolute ranking of different values. Even in some cases, we can prioritize different values, but there is no one value that will always be superior to other values.

For example, if someone steals food to feed his family, for they are starving because of poverty. At this point, the two values of love and law-abiding are contradictory. He or she cannot achieve both at the same time. Some people may agree that love is more important than law-abiding, while others will hold the opposite position. Therefore, there is no absolute highest value so that the two can be ranked.

It is important to distinguish between pluralism and plurality. Plurality refers to a social reality, such that all kinds of opinions, thoughts, religions and values can coexist, such as the case of our free society today. In such as society, members pursue their good lives according to their own ethnic and religious cultures. On the other hand, pluralism is a theory of value, advocating that there is always contradiction between values and exclusion of values and that there is no common standard of comparison. In other words, pluralism is only a theory that advocates and promotes the development of society towards the pluralist idea. However, it is quite another issue whether the society has really realized the pluralist state.

**Relativism and Pluralism**

Moral relativism is skeptical about the existence of right and wrong in morality. The reason for such skepticism lies in the clear difference in the moral values of different cultures in the world.

Moral relativists believe that our judgment of ethical issues is not absolute but rather "relative" to culture. They insist that one’s culture affects one’s moral judgment. For example, in some cultures, there is nothing wrong in obtaining convenience through interpersonal relationship, while in some other cultures it is right only if work is done in accordance with standard procedures. There are cultures that allow only monogamy and cultures that allow polygyny or "walking marriage" (走婚).

There are strong and weak versions of relativism. Strong version of relativism thinks that there is no trans-cultural (across or beyond cultures) right and wrong in ethics. Weak version of relativism recognizes the existence of abstract values across cultures, but each culture expresses these values in a different form. For example, "valuing life" is an abstract value that every culture holds. However, what counts as "life" and what it means to "value" life is culture-specific. Some cultures only value human beings’ lives but not the lives of other species. Some cultures even value only the lives of people of the same race or the same ethnic group. Some cultures hold that not eating meat is to respect animal life, while some cultures think that eating animals with a grateful heart is already respecting life.

We could say that pluralism is closer to the weak version of relativism and does not agree with the strong version. Strong version of relativism supports that all values are accidental products of a culture or religion. They are relative and can be given up or changed. On the other hand, pluralists argue that some basic values have to be realized for human survival. These values can be physical (such as food, rest and so on); psychological (companions, self-esteem and so on); social (order, security and so on). We have to rely on particular cultures, religions and customs to provide norms that allow us to achieve these basic values in our life together. For example, Hong Kong people will line up and will not jump the queue. In fact, this cultural habit provides us with the values of order for building a good life.

In this way, when we want to survive and live an abundant life, we need culture and customs to help us live out some basic values. Conversely, in the era of globalization, every society is eager to prove that the values that its own culture holds are beneficial to the human race (and all kinds of living things).

For example, any society that holds that men are superior to women needs to explain to the world why would such an unequal gender relationship could help humankind to live a better life. Similarly, we have to ask if the modern way of life have shown respect to the life of other living things.

Since ethics wants to ask the questions of right and wrong and questions of good and bad, it can accept pluralism but can hardly agree with the strong version of relativism.

**Tolerance and Dialogue**

Globalization has led to frequent exchanges of population and information, such that pluralistic culture has become the current state of modern society. Even if people living in the same society have different moral standards, religious beliefs and habits of life. Conflicts may arise if everyone only stands firm on one’s own opinions.

Tolerance and dialogue are essential for avoidance of conflicts. Pluralism reminds us that it is an undeniable fact that there are different and even contradictory values in the society. Recognizing with tolerance that others hold different values and moral standards from our own is the minimum requirement for peaceful coexistence.

In addition, dialogue is needed if we are to understand each other in a pluralist society. Pluralism is not relativism and does not think that there is no important value. Pluralism admits that those who hold different moral standards, especially those of different religious faiths, will stick to their own values. On this basis, different cultures can increase their mutual knowledge through dialogues and respecting common ground while admitting differences, but at the same time they also pursue the common good of better lives for humankind.

Reference:

Diana L. Eck, 2006, “What is Pluralism?”, *The Pluralism Project* (Harvard University), accessed July 28, 2017, <http://pluralism.org/what-is-pluralism/>

MacKinnon, Barbara and Fiala, Andrew. “Ethical Relativism,” in *Ethics: Theory and Contemporary Issues*. 8th Ed. Belmont, California: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning, 2015.

Baghramian, Maria and Carter, J. Adam, "Relativism", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, accessed July 28, 2017, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/relativism/.

Complete the following table on pluralism and relativism individually or in groups:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Definition：** | **Explanation：**  **Pluralism** |
| **Example :** | **Non-example：** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Definition：** | **Explanation：** |
| **Example :** | **Relativism**  **Non-example：** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Definition：**  A set of beliefs that holds that there is a diversity of values without ranking. | **Explanation：**  Pluralism advocates that there are often conflicts between these values. In order to realize some values, some people often exclude other values or rank some values above other. Pluralism holds that there is no so-called highest value at all, and that there is no absolute ranking of different values. Even if there are such rankings, there is no one value that will always be superior to other values.  **Pluralism** |
| **Example :**  If someone steals food to feed his family, for they are starving because of poverty. At this point, the two values of love and law-abiding are contradictory. He or she cannot achieve both at the same time. Some people may agree that love is more important than law-abiding, while others will hold the opposite position. Therefore, there is no absolute highest value so that the two can be ranked. | **Non-example：**  Plurality is different from pluralism. Plurality refers to a social reality, such that all kinds of opinions, thoughts, religions and values can coexist, such as the case of our free society today. In such as society, each member pursues their good life according to their own ethnic and religious culture. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Definition：**  Moral relativists believe that our judgment of ethical issues is not absolute but is rather "relative" to culture. | **Explanation：**  Moral relativists insist that one’s culture affects one’s moral judgment. |
| **Example :**  For example, some cultures may think that there is nothing wrong in obtaining convenience through interpersonal relationship, while some cultures think that it is right only if work is done in accordance with standard procedures. There are cultures that allow only monogamy and also cultures that allow polygyny and "walking marriage" (走婚). | **Relativism**  **Non-example：**  Different from “The theory of relativity” proposed by Albert Einstein in explaining physical phenomena. |

**Worksheet (1): Core moral principles**

Although there are often differences in moral standards among different cultures, some ethicists believe that there are still some "core moral principles" that are observed by different cultural practices. Without these core moral principles, it is hard for the members of the society to live well.

Can you list five examples of core moral principles? Why are they indispensable to the society?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Core Moral Principles** | **Reason why they are indispensable to the society** |
| 1. Do not kill innocent people. | Life is most basic. If the society does not protect the lives of innocent people, members cannot survive. |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

（suggested answer）

Can you list five examples of core moral principles? Why are they indispensable to the society?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Core Moral Principles** | **Reason why they are indispensable to the society** |
| 1. Do not kill innocent people. | Life is most basic. If the society does not protect the lives of innocent people, members cannot survive. |
| 1. Do not cause unnecessary pain or suffering. | Normal people do not want to suffer without reasons. |
| 1. Do not lie or deceive. | If the society is full of lies and deceits, no one will trust the words of others, even the reliability of the language itself will be destroyed. |
| 1. Do not steal or cheat | If stealing or cheating were allowed, personal belongings and even our physical body would not be protected. People would stop creating for the fear of their products being copied. |
| 1. Keep your promises and honour your contracts | If the society did not keep promises and honour contracts, people could not cooperate and plan their future. |
| 1. Do not deprive another person of his or her freedom. | Without protecting individual freedom, people would not be able to do what they like. |
| 1. Do justice, treating people as they deserve to be treated. | In a just society, the same performance will get the same return, not biased towards a particular ethnic group or gender. At the same time, in this environment, everyone's talent can play well. |
| 1. Reciprocate: Show gratitude for services rendered. | Recompensing kindness with kindness is the basic requirement of society, otherwise people will be less motivated to do good in society. (Recompensing injury with kindness, of course, is a higher moral sentiment, but we cannot request everyone to do so.) |
| 1. Help other people, especially when the cost to oneself is minimal. | Only by helping each other society can we unite to survive and live together. |
| 1. Obey laws | Everyone abides by the law in order to have peaceful coexistence. If a member considers that a law is unfair, he may request the authority to amend it. |

(Chosen from Pojman, Louis. *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2009. 39-40）

**Case Study (2): French ban on face covering and conspicuous religious symbols**

In 2004, France passed a new law prohibiting the use of visible religious symbols in public schools, including Muslim headscarves, Jewish cap, Sikh turban, and large Christian crosses. Parliament members who support the bill explained that the act would protect the French secular and democratic society from religious interference. Public opinion held that the bill was actually targeting Muslim girls wearing headscarves and suppressed the expansion of Islamic culture in French society.

In September 2010, the French Senate passed a law banning the wearing of clothing designed to cover the face in public areas. No person shall wear any clothing covering their faces or their whole bodies in public areas such as banks, hospitals and schools. Banned clothing includes *zentai* (tights garments covering the whole body), Muslims women's *burqa* and *hijab*, with the exception of wearing protective clothing and helmets for safety reasons. Any person who violates this law will be fined 150 Euros. In September 2010, the French Senate passed a law banning the wearing of clothing designed to cover the face in public areas.

France has a population of 67 million, of which 90% are indigenous French and more than 5 million are Muslim. In this pluralist society, it is difficult for the new law to accommodate the concerns of everyone. Thus, the new law has caused much controversy, mainly focusing on issues of religious freedom and human rights.

Those who support the law have pointed out that it is not directed against any group. The banned clothing covered by the law includes the headgears that criminals regularly use. The prohibition of masking is to ensure national security. The identity of each person is clearly revealed so as to preclude the criminals or terrorists from their wrongdoings. In addition, this law can also reduce social resistance, because the function of modern society relies on facial recognition. Removal of any facial covering allow people to communicate without barriers, and this is everyone's right. Moreover, the concept of "living in harmony" prevails in France. Some people think that people do not have to display their religious belief to others, so that they can communicate with each other on equal status. This will help promote a more harmonious community. French social norms advocate the separation of church and state. Religion cannot set foot in the public culture. If all religions display their religious symbols in public, the principle of religious neutrality in French culture will be undermined and the separation between people will also increase.

Opponents of the law believe that this would discourage Muslims from practicing their religion, which is detrimental to religion and freedom of expression, and even violate human rights. Choices of clothes and of whether to wear a veil are the personal decision of Muslims and should not be discriminated against by law. After the enactment of the law, a female Muslim was forcibly taken off her hijab by a number of people in the street. This incidence has made female Muslims worried that they will be attacked and insulted in the street just because of wearing hijabs. For female Muslims, the burqa and hijab were originally used for protection purpose, but now they cannot be worn in French society.

Reference:

<https://kknews.cc/zh-hk/world/6nozpaq.html>

<https://www.thenewslens.com/article/46510>

Questions for discussion:

1. What are the most important reasons for supporting and opposing the law banning face covering? What are the moral values advocated by both sides?
2. Do you think these are justifiable reasons? Why?
3. In the case of this new French law, when religious norms and secular social norms are in conflicts, what do you think is the focuses of the two sides?
4. In your opinion, how can we keep the balance between the values of “harmonious living” and “religious freedom”?
5. When the values of “harmonious living” and “religious freedom” get into conflicts, how should we deal with them?

Students may give answers containing the following key points (other reasonable answers are also acceptable):

* From this case, we can find that pluralism is not absolutely smooth in its practice due to the conflicts between different values. Some values promoted by pluralism, such as "freedom," contain gray areas. Therefore, pluralism is not a panacea for all moral problems and needs to be adjusted to social reality, interests and values of all parties.
* It is possible to resolve conflicts if we uphold the values of pluralism, such as dialogues on an equal footing and mutual understanding.
* According to the case of this new law in France, when the religious norms and the mainstream social norms are in conflicts, the focuses of both sides are:
* Secular free society focuses on:
* The freedom of religion of different members in the society (including religious believers, non-believers and atheists), the requirements of religious morality may undermine this freedom (French idea of political and religious separation)
* Social peace and security
* Equal rights of members of society
* Religion:
* Freedom of religion and freedom of religious expression
* Religious rights and not being discriminated against because of religious belief

Reference:

# “Europe faces up to Islam and the veil”, *The Guardian*, Feb. 4, 2004, accessed July 28, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/feb/04/schools.schoolsworldwide>

“French Assembly Votes to Ban Religious Symbols in Schools,” *New York Times,* Feb. 11, 2004, accessed July 28, 2017,

# <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/02/11/world/french-assembly-votes-to-ban-religious-symbols-in-schools.html>

# “French law on secularity and conspicuous religious symbols in schools,” *Wikipedia*, accessed July 28, 2017, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_law_on_secularity_and_conspicuous_religious_symbols_in_schools>

〈百年來政教分離的法國〉，《法國在臺灣》，2017年7月28日參考，<https://www.france-taipei.org/%E7%99%BE%E5%B9%B4%E4%BE%86%E6%94%BF%E6%95%99%E5%88%86%E9%9B%A2%E7%9A%84%E6%B3%95%E5%9C%8B>