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Introduction

This paper will present an account of the processes by which young people are socialised (cf. Danziger, 1971) into personal and social morality in England and Wales and it will do so by making a contrast between the 19th and 20th centuries. The account is necessarily broad and general.

The 19th century

We can identify five main agents that help to shape the moral vision and behaviour of young people. The first and most obvious is to be found within the churches. The 1851 church census showed that approximately half the population attended church on 30th of March in that year. This is usually seen as the high point of church attendance within Britain. The 18th century had seen the Methodist revival and this continued on into the 19th century and had the effect of improving the zeal and piety of Protestantism in its various forms. At the same time Roman Catholics increased in numbers during the course of the century, particularly by immigration from Ireland (from 120,000 in 1800 to 900,000 in 1851). So, it we can divide the churches into three main groups: Anglican (Church of England), Nonconformist (including Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalist and other minor groups) and Roman Catholic. Yet in many ways they functioned similarly.

While church attendance gradually grew over the course of the 19th century, there was also a corresponding widening of civil

liberties expressed by an increase in the representativeness of Parliament and the extension of the right to vote in elections. This had the effect of improving the legal position of minority groups (like Roman Catholics and Jews) while at the same time making it possible for public money to be spent on schools founded and run by these religious groups.

While individual congregations and preachers may have had their own emphases, it is clear that the general thrust of 19th century Protestantism was towards morality and charity. It is generally true to say that 19th century Protestantism was not involved in theological controversy or interested in the refinements of Christian doctrine. Admittedly the so-called „Oxford movement" emerged in the middle of the 19th century as a gradual regaining of catholic liturgical forms within the Anglican Church, but, even here, the social impact of this movement was often to thrust anglo-catholic priests out as social workers into the poorest urban parishes.

The education system of England and Wales grew out of the activity of the churches. The original schools were often directly related to the activities of congregations or denominations. In 1808 the British and Foreign School Society was founded with the aim of „the education of the labouring and manufacturing classes of society of every religious persuasion"[1]. Reading was taught by using extracts from the Bible, but no catechism was taught and every child was expected to attend the place of worship to which its parents belonged (Murphy, 1971: 4). The success of the British and Foreign School Society prompted a specifically Anglican response in the founding of the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church in 1811. Although there was a rivalry between Nonconformists and Anglicans in the support of their respective societies, not all Anglican schools were affiliated to The National Society, as it came to be called. Then in 1843, the Methodist Conference decided to enter the field of education and received its first grant in 1847. The same year the Catholic Poor School Committee was formed and, after some delay, was able to receive government grants; by 1850 there were about 500

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[1] The Society was originally called the Royal Lancasterian Society.

Roman Catholic schools. By 1861, in the Newcastle Commission's report, it was estimated that of a child population of 2.5 million, 1.5 million were attending schools in receipt of public money, and the majority of these were church schools of various types (Cruickshank, 1963: 11).

The enormous growth in the provision of school places was related, on one hand, to the evangelical desire that pupils should know something of Christ and, on the other hand, to the moralistic tendencies of the age. Children learned the Ten Commandments in school. They learn to obedience and willingness to accept the social order. In this way the schools became an important agent reinforcing social morality.

It is also evident that the 19th century family was typically much more paternalistic and moral than it later became. The father was viewed as the head of the home and this leadership was expressed in the law that gave the father rights over the property of his wife and disadvantaged her in any dispute with him. So the family was vital in shaping the moral outlook of young people and, although there were families within the Britain of Queen Victoria that objected to the general consensus, these were rare and confined to intellectual circles but, even here, there was a general acceptance of the social utility of religion even if there was disagreement with individual Christian doctrines. This was largely Darwin's position, for instance, and one that was developed more fully by John Stuart Mill, the philosopher of liberalism.

The 19th century was an era when there was a gradual demographic change. Largely rural Britain became much more urban. The population drifted from the countryside to the growing cities. Factories were built, the expanding railway network improved trade and, at the end of the century, we are in a recognisably modern era as the mass media begin to make their appearance through huge newspapers sales in the cities. But at the beginning of the century, and even at the end of the century in the remaining rural areas, the ordinary village community functioned to enforce acceptance of law and traditional morality.

Finally, it is clear that the hierarchical nature of British society was underlined by other agencies. After the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, Britain continued to maintain an Army and a Navy as highly effective instruments of foreign policy. No military force can

operate without a chain of command and the presence within society of old soldiers and sailors, as well as national pride, helped to strengthen conformity to social norms. Later in the century when large numbers of people were employed in the new factories – Britain was the first country to undergo the Industrial Revolution caused by steam power – there continued to be a strict hierarchy within working structures. No factory or coalmine could operate without discipline. Similarly, the training of young people by apprenticeship schemes required the young tradesmen to learn from his master in a manner scarcely distinguishable from that found in the Middle Ages.

These five agencies – churches, schools, families, communities and the similar impacts of militarisation and industrialisation – were partially counterbalanced by the doctrine of individual freedom within the sphere of trade and the gradual acceptance of the affinity between economic liberalism and personal freedom. If a man was free to buy a house, he was free to do what he liked inside that house. So the underlying philosophical belief became that people were free to do what they wished provided only that they did not use their freedom to harm others (Mill, 1859).

It would be wrong, however, to paint a picture of smooth and painless progress within Victorian Britain. The police force was founded in London in 1929. There were riots in Birmingham in 1839 over political reform, and Hyde Park riots 1866-7, and there was crime and poverty. The novels of Charles Dickens reveal the darker side of urban life with their depiction of criminal gangs (*Oliver Twist*), sadistic schoolmasters (*Nicholas Nickleby, David Copperfield*), legal exploitation (*Bleak House*) and debtors' prisons (*Little Dorrit*). Yet, there was no equivalent in England of the Paris Commune (1871), and tolerant London even welcomed Karl Marx after he had been banished from Germany and France.

The 20th century

As the 20th century unfolds each of these agencies of moral formation begins to change or weaken. While it is true that others, like the Trade Unions, come into existence, these apply

to the behaviour of men (it was largely men) in their place of work rather than to the morality of the home or the family.

The decline of the Church, Protestant and Catholic, in 20th century Britain has been well-documented though its causes are difficult to pin down. Protestant church membership peaked in about 1950 whereas Roman Catholic membership continued to climb till about 1970 and then to decline gradually after that. Although actual numbers among of Protestants and Catholics rose, the ratio between those who attended church and those who did not worsened. In other words, the rise in membership and attendance did not keep pace with the rise in the population as a whole. The decline in the influence of the churches can be expressed in another way: in 1902, only 16% of marriages were solemnised by entirely civil ceremonies, but by 1980, 49.7% were civil. In 1902, 65% of live births were baptised in the Church of England, but this figure had dropped to 23% by 1993 (Kay, 2000).

The two world wars probably underlie this gradual secularisation. Between 1914 and 1918 almost a generation of young men lost their lives, and those who returned from war were not inclined to resume the habits of churchgoing. The faith of many had been shattered while others had simply become cynical. A similar disruption in churchgoing patterns occurred between 1939 and 1945. Here the difference was that the whole population, rather than the Armed Forces, was affected by the conflict. It was difficult to attend church in England because of bombing and blackout and petrol rationing. Moreover children were evacuated to the western side of the country to remove them from the danger of the Luftwaffe's blitz. This had the effect of disrupting Sunday school attendance among children. When men returned after 1945, some of them after six years away from home, churchgoing was not part of their lifestyle any more.

Even when attempts were made to re-evangelise Britain with crusades like those conducted by Billy Graham in the 1950s, it is arguable that Christian Britain lost its way in the 1960s (Brown, 2001). The latest statistics show that church attendance has dropped in the period from 1851 to 2000 from about 50% to about 7.5% (Brierley, 2000: 9). Regular church attendance is thus very much a minority activity in Britain today and, although the

153

figures rise at Christmas and Easter and although viewing and listening figures for the broadcasts of church services remain remarkably buoyant, the general impact of Christianity is low.

When we look at the family over the 20th century in England and Wales, it is evident that the traditional nuclear family of parents and children has been radically weakened. This can be most clearly expressed by the percentage of live births outside marriage in the period between 1845 and 1955. From 1845 until 1910 between 5.5% and 6.5% of births took place outside marriage. There was a rise in births outside marriage by about 2% during World War I and a steep rise to about 10% in World War II but it was after 1960 that the figures rose dramatically. By 1995 approximately a third of births (34%) took place outside marriage.

This rise in the number of children without both parents is a function of increased divorce rates and increased cohabitation without marriage. Amongst children born since 1970 over 20% have experienced the dissolution of their parents' marriage by the time they are aged 16 (Kiernan, 1998: 56). In some instances cohabiting couples marry when children are born but, in others, cohabitation is treated as equivalent to marriage. The fall in the status of marriage is indicated on official forms and in the media which now do not refer to „husband" or „wife" but rather to the much more general term „partner", which can also refer to cohabiting homosexuals.

The impact of divorce upon children is difficult to measure exactly because of the various circumstances under which divorce may take place, the age of the children at the time of the divorce and the attitude of the parents to each other during divorce proceedings. Nevertheless, statistics indicate divorce is associated with mental disorders (Morgan, 2000: 47), impaired performance at school and, more seriously, with the tendency for children from broken homes to go through divorce themselves in later life (Francis, 2000). In other words, children from broken homes are likely to perpetuate the cycle.

Equally, divorce is likely to be associated with failure to attend church. This means that couples who divorce and leave the church do not send their children to church. Consequently divorced couples who subsequently marry or cohabit for a second time tend to live outside the care of the church which, of course,

further reduces the influence of the church on their lives and quite quickly leads to a family tradition of non-attendance.

The village community has been eroded by the growth of cities. Previously the village was a group of people of all ages who knew each other and might celebrate harvest or Christmas together. Within the city this does not happen. City dwellers often live in isolation from each other even though they may live close together in the same housing block. It is not surprising that crime rates and suicides are almost invariably higher in cities than in villages. The social morality of the village gives way to the individuality of the city.

Recently the internet has provided the possibility of electronic communities where people of similar interests may congregate in virtual reality. These interest groups offer little in the way of *moral* support for their members. They do not function in the same way as a village to shape moral purposes and behaviour. So, for the majority of the population, the substitute for community is formed by television. Here the same TV programmes become common topics of conversation and provide electronic friends in the background to the lives of young people (over 13 million people, or about a quarter of the population, will watch the most popular serials). Yet these TV programmes rarely do more than reflect liberal opinion and depend for their interest on every permutation of strange relationship, sexual betrayal and erratic behaviour. To provide excitement characters must be emotional rather than rational and, in this way, they create the presumption that rash decisions supported by fierce arguments between weeping young people are entirely normal.

Britain is a far less disciplined society in the 20th century that was in the 19th. This is partly because the impact of the military has reduced as a consequence of cutting back the Armed Forces. It is also because of the reduction in the percentage of people involved within organised labour. The old-style pattern of attendance at a factory where discipline was rigidly enforced has given way to more flexible patterns of employment and to the closure of much of the heavy manufacturing industry that made use of the factory model The service sector, like banking and insurance, became far more prevalent in the 20th century than it was in the 19th. Here the discipline of the office is lighter than the

155

discipline of the factory and, in any event, it is possible to work from home. Additionally, part-time employment typically undertaken by women has softened the rigid pattern of attendance and this has also reduced the authoritarian nature of the workplace.

Among young people the lack of discipline within society is demonstrated most obviously by sexual activity and drug-taking. Between 1996 and 2002 sexually transmitted diseases rose sharply. Syphilis increased from 123 cases to 1,193 and gonorrhoea from 12,140 to 24,953 or 106% (Health Protection Agency, 2004; see website below). Drug-taking also rose to the extent that the police practically gave up the fight against marijuana and the government reclassified possession as a lesser offence to reduce the amount of police time being taken on its detection and prosecution. Ecstasy tablets which were sold largely to teenage clubbers tended to be treated more as a health risk than an indication of criminal activity. Nevertheless, the prison population rose steadily (up 3,000 in 2003: see website below) to the extent that the prison building programme of the government was unable to keep pace with offences, and overcrowding became endemic.

All this means that the main agents of socialisation of young people must be the schools. A huge weight of responsibility is placed upon schools and it is evident from the reaction of teachers that this is unpopular. Teachers do not like to see themselves as the moral guardians of the nation. Rather teachers see themselves as being involved with the pedagogy of their subject matter and the general care of children. Teaching unions object to the need for a moral concern for pupils even though, within the English legal system, the teacher is *in loco parentis*. In other words the teacher is not, as in France, a civil servant or functionary of state but 'in the place of the parent' and it was on this basis that corporal punishment was permitted until it was banished by the European Union in the 1970s.

To understand the role of the schools more fully it is necessary to appreciate the fundamental intentions of the epoch-making 1944 Education Act. This Act was passed before the end of World War II at a time when it was clear that the allies would win. The thoughts of the UK parliament turned to the future and to the rebuilding of the country. The Education Act was an

156

expression of this hope in the future and it introduced wide-
-ranging changes including the provision of free secondary
education for all. But the Act also made it possible for religious
education to continue to be taught in schools in England and
Wales, even when the schools were not church schools.

The administration of schools that had emerged as a result of
the efforts of the churches in the 19th century was a „dual sys-
tem". In other words, church schools and state schools operated
together as a coordinated whole and teachers were paid iden-
tically in both kind of school. Although the churches continued to
provide about 15% of funding for their own schools, the state took
most of the burden. In order to make both church and state schools
equal the curriculum was also almost entirely the same apart from
the fact that more specific religious education could be offered in
the church schools than in the state schools. In addition to all this,
the school day was to begin with „collective worship" when all mem-
bers of the school sang and prayed together. This was, in effect, an
abbreviated church service led by a headteacher.

The role of the teacher and the role ascribed to schools by the
government has depended on whether the government was on the
left or on the right. The left wing, or Labour, government of the
1960s tended to see the school is the place of the personal de-
velopment of pupils. Here the emphasis was on freedom of expres-
sion, play, creativity and a child-centred curriculum. The right-wing,
or Conservative, government of the 1980s emphasised discipline,
standards, the need to prepare children for the world of work and
a subject-centred curriculum. Within these two basic positions
religious education found itself having to operate slightly differently.

Although the Labour government did not take a great deal of
interest in religious education, and was certainly not prepared to
get rid of it, the general trend within the period was to increase
multi-religious education as a way of recognising the rights of
ethnic minorities. Religious education became, as it were, a part
of multicultural education. Religious education moved from its
original Christian basis, the basis that had been set up after
1944, and became an introduction to various religions in the hope
of increasing tolerance within British society. These changes
were not directly produced by political action but they fitted in with
the ethos of the government.

The Conservative government was more inclined to see religious education as being moral in its outcomes. Again, no clear government statements on the matter were issued but the impression given was that pupils should learn the difference between right and wrong in their religious education lessons. Religious education, particularly in the eyes of Mrs Thatcher, was more inclined to regain its Christian emphasis and, to her mind, Christianity was about morality. She once interpreted the parable of the Good Samaritan not only as a parable about caring for your neighbour but as a parable of choice where the economic strength of the Samaritan enabled him to decide to help.

As Britain became secularised, the population continued to grow and schools became larger. It became much more difficult for collective worship to be offered but, nevertheless, the notion of a single educational community coming before God had a vestigial power, certainly in the primary sector.

The next major educational Act was passed in 1988. This retained both collective worship and religious education but it was now obvious that teachers could not expect to make their pupils virtuous. Indeed in the case of disruptive pupils teachers would complain that they were battling against a libertarian society and unhelpful family backgrounds. The RE teacher should not be expected to succeed where the home had failed.

Yet in the preamble to the 1988 Education Act there was mention of the moral and spiritual education of pupils. It was still recognised that education was intended to provide a moral impetus to pupils and to stimulate a sense of belonging to society as a whole. The government in the second period of Tony Blair's premiership moved to introduce a citizenship as a subject onto the curriculum (see QCA website below). The idea here was to make young people take responsibility for society. It had been recognised that most of people were apathetic about politics and many were too bored to vote. It was thought that being taught citizenship in the classroom would help rekindle local democracy and provoke young people to take an interest in communal projects. Inevitably citizenship included a moral component that was, to some extent, in direct competition with what might be provided in religious education. Moreover, the Audit Commission (a parliamentary group) recognised the financial cost of crime committed

by youth and argued that the „schools should do more", though they did not explain how exactly they thought the hard-pressed teachers should alter the behaviour of the most indisciplined pupils (reported on BBC radio 4 21st Jan 04).

The problem was that religious education since the early 1990s had stressed that pupils should learn 'from' religion as well as learn „about" religion. This became a well-established distinction and it allowed RE teachers to concentrate upon the artistic and existential elements of religion rather than on purely doctrinal matters. Pupils became interested in the moral teachings and questions are raised by religion as evidenced by the introduction of a short-course programme for 14 to 16-year-olds that applied religious teaching to questions like „why are we here?" Or „what is the meaning of life?"

This is not to say that pupils have suddenly become much more interested in morality but the upsurge of interest in RE enabled them to appreciate that moral teachings are not entirely arbitrary because they arise from essential factors within the human condition.

Conclusion

This paper has considered five main agencies for the formation of personal and social morality within young people in England and Wales. It has concluded that, whereas these agencies in the 19th century operated powerfully to produce a conformist and disciplined population, in the 20th century most of these agencies weakened and only the school system remained with a fundamental moral purpose. In recent years the government has introduced citizenship into the curriculum in an attempt to arouse interest in moral questions but not overtly as a means of character formation. It remains to be seen whether the proposed changes will be effective.

Finally, if this account appears unduly pessimistic about British young people, it needs to be remembered that the deterioration of family and the rising crime has been matched in other parts of the world and that those who are alienated from British society perhaps constitute only about 10% of the total school population.

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