Citizenship education and its implications for moral education: a Scottish Perspective

James Conroy, Ph.D.*

ABSTRACT

In this paper I discuss first, the relationship between the good life as lived by the individual and the establishment of a democratic and moral community. Aristotelian Ethics and discussion on the nature of public morality are analysed to shed light on the complexity of separating the spheres of public and private. Following, this analysis is expanded to examine how issues of public morality are to be worked out in a Scottish context. I explore the consequences of globalisation in moral issues and the adoption of a national ‘bank’ of values as not being the same thing as rejecting the idea that schools and other public spaces (including Universities, medical schools, law schools and so on) should be places which promote moral citizenship. In the modern period Arendt argued, we have conflated the oikos and the polis into political economy; in postmodern thought I would suggest that we have inverted the roles ascribed to the two in ancient Greek thought. The polis is now the place where we work out how we live economically; the privacy of household is the place where we give our lives moral expression. The consequences of this inversion of values for moral education is analysed.

RESUMO

Neste trabalho eu discuto primeiro, a relação entre o que é para um indivíduo a boa vida e o estabelecimento de uma comunidade democrática e moral. A ética Aristotélica e a discussão acerca da natureza da moral pública são analisadas para iluminar a complexidade da separação das esferas pública e privada. A seguir, essa análise é expandida para examinar como aspectos da moral pública são trabalhados no contexto escolar. Eu exploro as consequências da globalização em questões morais e na adoção de um “banco” nacional de valores como não sendo a mesma coisa que rejeitar a ideia de que as escolas e outros espaços públicos (incluindo universidades, escolas de Medicina, de Direito, e assim por diante) deveriam ser espaços onde se promove uma cidadania moral. Arendt argumentou que no período moderno, a economia política fundiu o oikos e a polis, eu sugeriria que no pensamento pós-moderno nós invertemos os papéis prescritos pelo pensamento grego antigo. A polis agora é o lugar onde são trabalhadas as formas de vida econômica, e a privacidade dos lares tornou-se o lugar onde podemos dar uma expressão moral às nossas vidas. As consequências dessa inversão de valores para a educação moral é analisada.

KEYWORDS
- Ethics
- Morals
- Curriculum

DESCRITORES
- Ética
- Princípios Morais
- Currículo

J.Conroy@educ.gla.ac.uk

James Conroy, Head of Department of Religious Education, University of Glasgow, Gilmour Hill, Glasgow. G12 8QQ. Scotland.
INTRODUCTION

Aristotle and the Question of a Moral Citizenry

"For even if the good of the community coincides with that of the individual, it is clearly a greater and more perfect thing to achieve and preserve that of the community; for while it is desirable to secure what is good in the case of the individual, to do so in the case of a people or a state is something finer and more sublime" (Aristotle, 1955 ed, p. 64).

Aristotle, early in Book One of the Ethics, suggests that the community must take precedence over the individual in the establishment of "the good". There is nothing particularly new or insightful about the re-assertion of such a claim. It is, after all a doctrine which has been advocated by more than Aristotle and may be seen, but only superficially, to lie at the heart of those utilitarian doctrines which underpin current public political rhetoric about the need for public institutions such as education to serve the global economy 1. According to such a position the good of the individual self may indeed be something for which the individual strives; it may also, given that it is not directly contesting the common good, be something which the community holds as worthy of its support.²

But, where it is found to be in conflict with that which has been deemed in the 'common interest', it is to be suppressed or stripped of power. Here lies the first of many vexing questions about the relationship between the individual good and the good of the community. If Aristotle is right in making the distinction between happiness and pleasure (op cit, p. 68) (a distinction not adequately made by many utilitarian successors such as Bentham) and happiness is a form of contentment which may only be construed eudaemonically—that is that it can only be evaluated as the summary of the individual life—then how are we to judge whether or not the community has achieved its good end, thus vindicating any claims it might have to legitimately subordinate the individual to judge whether or not the community has achieved its good end, thus vindicating any claims it might have to legitimately subordinate the individual striving of the individual to achieve happiness?

This is an extremely important question for contemporary moral education given that its purposes are currently being defined in terms of the needs (largely economic) of the community. The terms and description of the good society appear to have become co-extensive with those of an economically prosperous one. However, if the needs of the community are so construed economically and the needs of the individual are to be understood as fulfilling those conditions which would bring about or enhance the possibility of living the 'good life' then it is difficult to see how the needs of society and the needs of the individual may be regarded as being shaped by the same ultimate end per se. Yet, Aristotle does appear to uphold the idea that the ends of the good individual and the ends of the good society are, indeed, the same. Later in The Ethics he suggests that "the end of political science is the highest good, and the chief concern of this science is to inculcate the citizens with certain qualities, namely virtue and the readiness to do fine deeds." (p. 81) From this it is clear that the achievement of the good community is, indeed, greater than that of the individual but only in so far as it serves to support and nurture individuals in living the good life. Its relative superiority is justifiable only to the extent that it partakes in underpinning and contributing to the good life of its citizens. Not any kind of community will do for Aristotle—community per se is not morally—or, indeed, socially—better than the individual. Acts of a community are not better than acts of an individual simply because the happen to be the acts of a greater number. Even where such acts can be construed as emanating from the collective will of the community they are not ipso facto superior. Consequently, even the acts of democratic communities themselves are not to be seen as morally superior to the acts of individuals simply because they are democracies.

Democracy is often offered into the rhetoric of world politics as the nearest approximation to the 'good' society available to organized societies— if only country X or Y country was more democratic then it would be a better (meaning more moral) place. Now, while it is true that a democratic system of government can provide a basis for a moral civic society there is no logical entailment that they will do so. Thus Aristotle points out that democracy is not necessarily a moral system if it fails to take account of its obligations to nurture the virtues in its citizenry, pre-eminent friendship and justice (op cit, p.289). Indeed in contemporary life it might be suggested that television and other communication technologies offer strong democratizing impulses to civic societies inasmuch as they develop access to information and consumer choice as well as undermine the totalitarianism of those regimes which would keep their citizens from exploring a range of political and social and economic alternatives from those in receipt of state approval.

WORK, MORALITY AND MORAL EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND

In the introductory section of this essay I explored the relationship between the good life as lived by the individual and the establishment of a democratic and moral community. In doing so I have suggested that this might be more complex than is frequently allowed for in public thinking and discussion on the nature of public morality. In this section this analysis is expanded to examine how issues of public morality are to be worked out in a Scottish context. Drawing on the thought of Hannah Arendt 4 I wish to suggest that there is a fundamental confusion at the heart of public life which arises from the conflation of two ways of being which were kept separate in the Greek City State: earning one's living and living the good life. The way in which such questions about the relationship between the public and private are addressed will have an important impact on the nature and place of moral education more
widely conceived than an activity of formal schooling. The reason these questions are so pertinent now is that Scotland, with its newly claimed democratic parliament, needs to decide whether or not to endorse the ‘moral’ rhetoric of economic globalization.

The economic arguments about the future of Scotland within a federated United Kingdom (or, for that matter, a federated European Union) abound. The practical question for the recently elected government revolves around whether or not it facilitates the social and personal well-being of its citizens as its primary goal or, alternatively, upholds and sustains the economic neologism of ‘globalization’. Of course it might quite reasonably be argued that individual flourishing and the common economic good are not antithetical notions and that the good of the individual relies on the efficient management of the economy in the face of substantial and robust international challenges. Such an argument might be sustainable if it was obvious that individual flourishing was a necessary or even a desired outcome of current globalizing tendencies but this is not so. One only has to look at recent public statements by both the Prime Minister and Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools (OHCI) in Scotland to recognize that the good of the individual is not self-evidently the goal of education. The claim is made by Douglas Elder (OHCI) that ‘education for work should be the chief end of education’ (Murdo, 1997, p.1). This, in turn, leads to the further assertion that such education for work is a necessary pre-requisite for successful participation in the global economy. Education in moral citizenship is then considered important to the extent that it supports these goals. To be a ‘good’ citizen is to partake in the dominant discourse of the work ethic. This is not a new phenomenon and, given Scotland’s particular post-Reformation history, is entirely consistent with the Weberian analysis that those with a Protestant background were much more likely than their Catholic counterparts to regard education as at the service of work.1

However, prior to the emergence of neo-liberal economics in Britain in the early 1980s, even among those who might have subscribed to the Protestant work ethic as a meaningful concept there was an adherence to the belief that work and its rewards were not of themselves the end of human activity but a reflection of and, in that sense, subordinate to other values. Thus Weber writes that ascetic Christianity ‘locked upon the pursuit of wealth as an end in itself as highly reprehensible but the attainment of it as a fruit of labor in a calling was a sign of God’s blessing’.

In contemporary Britain work itself is to be construed as a moral good and those who are out of work or are not seen to be actively and vigorously engaged in the world of work are pathologised as socially inadequate and, equally importantly, morally inferior. It has, one might suggest, supplanted means for ends. This is not a new phenomenon in either Britain or elsewhere. The valorizing of labor as the end of human activity and, indeed, being has been a developing trend since the Renaissance. Nowhere is this development more carefully articulated than in the writings of Hannah Arendt2 who regards the interpolation of means and ends to have arisen as a consequence of the confounding of the oikos (what might be understood as economics) with the polis (politics). Once, she argued, the demands of making a living and the reflection and consequent engagement with the business of the polis (determining how society should organize its affairs) were construed as discrete parts of one’s life. As such the household was that domain where people got on with the business of living, of holding body and soul together, of ensuring that the family had sufficient resources to enable its members to live.

The polis, on the other hand, was not bound to these biological processes but was concerned with giving expression to what was to count as ‘the good life’. As Arendt puts it, ‘No activity that served only the purpose of making a living, of sustaining only the life process, was permitted to enter the political realm, and this at the grave risk of abandoning trade and manufacture to the industriousness of slaves and foreigners, so that Athens indeed became the “pensionopolis” with a “proletariat of consumers”’. (p. 37).

Of course in the modern world we appear to have only political-economy. Thus political-economy itself becomes not only the end of activity in the public sphere but also a heuristic device by which we interrogate and measure other categories of collective activity and behavior. Politicians consequently construct their primary obligations as managing the economy and the ordering of civic society to meet the needs of this management process. As economy is now construed in global terms these same politicians see their obligations as so ordering society in such a way that global competitiveness is secured even where that means that more local and particular considerations about welfare, equity and justice have to be subordinated. So it is that the concern with what people do to make their living becomes to ask, What is it to live the ‘good life’?

This confounding of the oikos and polis has significant implications for moral education in Scotland. The people of Scotland might reasonably be said to have desired a significant degree of autonomous self-government since there was a strongly held belief that governance from the British parliament at Westminster failed to meet their local and particular needs. These needs were not construed as exclusively or even primarily economic though it is true that a sense of the economic disparities between the South of England and Scotland fostered a strong sense of alienation. Rather, Scotland has tended to see itself as a country more wedded to notions of the dignity of the individual and the civic centrality of redistributive justice than might be seen to be the case in Britain as a whole. Scottish Education Department (1947) Nowhere is the distinctive character of Scottish educational and public life more clearly articulated than in the 1947 Report on Secondary Education (Scottish Education Department, 1947 & 1962; see also Ministry of Education,
1949 & 1959) which developed a child-centered approach to education before it became fashionable some twenty years later. In doing so it challenged the then prevalent, notions that (1) education was a privilege, (2) that it was to be seen as a social stamp of approval or, (3) that it was to be regarded as a means to successful employment. Indeed it argued unambiguously that “there is no alchemy by which education can transmute into fine gold the base metal of a distracted and materially-minded age” (ibid, p.9). The material-mindedness of the age may be seen as the outworking of the conflation of the claque and the polis as described by Arendt. The intention of the 1947 report was to challenge the idea that education was purely economically instrumental and publicly ground it in the idea of the fundamental rights of citizens in a free democracy. Thus post-war Scottish education might reasonably be construed as a moral activity; the purpose of which was to ensure the development and maintenance of an effective moral citizenry. As Arendt points out, politics is much too important to be left to politicians: public spaces should be places where citizens engage in reflection about what activities and ideas are to constitute the ‘good’ community (Arendt, 1955 & 1970: 71-80). Education was and is seen in Scotland as a public space the purpose of which was to do more than provide the means for a secure income. This public space was to be construed as a creation emanating out of the notion of a Christian democracy. Such a democracy affirmed the principles of Christian philosophy as constitutive of civic virtue. These principles did not preclude the engagement and involvement of those not Christians but suggested that there was nothing in such a Christian philosophy which did not serve to offer a common ground for all democrats of good will. Thus the report offers the following grounding for its perspective on the nature and purpose of Scottish education.

“The stress we have laid on religion in report after report clearly implies a general acceptance of the great tradition of Christian teaching as regulative of our national life and education. Now if there is an affirmation of Christian philosophy which lies outside the field of controversy, it is the sacredness and abiding significance of the individual, the insistence that the natural and social environment exists to promote the growth of free and rational beings, of spiritual personalities. Hence put it in a poet’s way, when he described the world as ‘the vale of soul-making’. For us the conclusion is inescapable that the chief end of education is to foster the full and harmonious development of the individual. We do not suggest that only on a Christian basis can such an educational doctrine be built: on the contrary, all healthy democratic thinking, as opposed to state-worship, must remain unimpressed by the mere power and permanency of organized society, unless in so far as it ‘helps to fashion desirable patterns of individual life.’ What may be claimed is that such a concept of education finds in the Christian view of man its sufficient rationale and the necessary safeguards against anti-social excess or distortion.” (Scottish Education Department, op cit, p96). 4

Whether a distinctively Scottish view will be maintained in the education system into the twenty-first century remains an open question and one to which I will return at the end of this essay. What is clear is that until this point in time, Scotland has maintained a separate education system throughout the union of the United Kingdom. In doing so it has laid claim to a different approach to moral education. If Scottish education were to follow the line adopted by Osler (outlined above) then the difference might be merely cosmetic but if there are other forces at work in education for morality it may yet be possible to maintain a discrete approach to moral education.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMON VALUES? – A DISTINCTIVELY ENGLISH APPROACH

In part two I suggested that Scottish education after the Second World War had attempted to re-establish the ancient distinction between the economy and education but that in the present moment it is unclear whether such a distinction can be maintained in the longer term. In this section I wish to explore the distinctively English approach to the question of how we should proceed to morally educate our students, and suggest why it is probably doomed to failure.

The difference in approach to education generally and to moral education in particular between Scotland and England has been quite marked in recent years despite strong governmental forces pushing towards harmonization. To understand the differences it is important to grasp the particular position adopted by government agencies such as the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA), now the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) in England and Wales. In the mid-1990’s the perceived loss of a common values base had spawned a number of attempts to develop a basis for shared values across England and Wales (Interfaith Network for the UK, 1997; National Forum on Social Mentoring and Values Guidance, 1998). Most notable of these was the creation of a National Forum on Values, established by SCAA (a governmental body which controlled the curriculum), which invited representatives from a wide variety of communities to contribute to the development of a coherent set of values to which all might subscribe. This might legitimately be seen as an attempt to establish a greater sense of social cohesion than had appeared to be the case for some time. It was also a recognition that Britain was a pluralist country, no longer dominated by a public morality rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Thus the question for SCAA became one of how to produce a uniform approach to the teaching of values throughout the school system, given the plurality of views as to what might count as moral goodness. Although the term plural society is frequently used interchangeably with multicultural society there are important distinctions to be made. For example, there is likely to be a greater congruence of views
between traditional British Christians and Muslims from Northern India and Pakistan about sexual ethics than would be between Christians and post-Christians whose families had lived in the same South of England village for five generations. So it is that ethnicity is unlikely to be a better predictor of moral perspective than being religious (though even within religious traditions there can be a wide discrepancy between "modernisers" and "traditionalists"). Because of this it is important to focus on plurality as a derivative of modern living conditions rather than of widespread differences in religious and/or ethnic origin.

In any event the political move to establish a "Values Forum" represented a sincere (though not necessarily authentic) (Conroy and Davis, op cit, ) response to a widespread unease with the perceived disintegration of modern civic life an unease felt even at governmental level. But, as Smith and Standish among others have pointed out the establishment of a values forum and its conclusions really only served to highlight the deep-seated difficulties which civic societies have in maintaining and promoting any kind of coherent, cohesive and meaningful moral values. This is most especially true at a time when, for example, the grounding philosophy adumbrated in the Scottish 1947 Report can no longer claim to have any kind of axiomatic status in a plural society.

Of course, it may be true that a body such as the SOCA Forum can establish agreement that a civic society should promote tolerance, justice and so on. But these are, what might be called philosophically and practically "thin" concepts. To suggest that one should be tolerant provides no basis for suggesting how such tolerance is to be exercised in a society which contains a plurality of beliefs, some of which are undoubtedly inimical to a moral civic society. In other words, there was virtually no agreement on how these philosophically "thin" concepts might be "cashed out" in the actual daily engagements of human beings. To be sure the adoption of a somewhat skeptical stance towards the attempt to establish a national "bank" of values is not the same thing as rejecting the ideas that schools and other public spaces (including universities, medical schools, law schools and so on) should be places which promote moral citizenship. It is certainly not the intention of this paper to do so. Rather, it is precisely because I wish to see a more robust model of moral and civic education built into education in our public spaces that I believe attempts to create a list of values to which everyone subscribes actually represents a failure of nerve. It is a failure of nerve at two levels; firstly it is a failure to the extent that it does not confront a fundamental issue in contemporary societies; - the common postmodern belief that since human beings do not share a coherent and contiguous set of values grounded in a common story then all talk of moral values must be evacuated out of these public spaces. To do otherwise, it is argued, is to prefer illegitimately one "collection" of moral values over another without having a set of defensible criteria for doing so. Simply listing common values does not address this real problem for contemporary social life. All it may do is offer a distraction from facing up to the need for a substantial public and political conversation about what it is that a nation state wishes for itself and how it is to maintain and sustain the well turned lives of its individual citizens. If the notion of the polis is to have any purchase then more than a wish list of values is required. It is rather necessary to discriminate truly what is in the public domain and what is a matter of private inclination and/or aspiration. The failure to address this issue has very practical consequences for not only schools but also for the practice of law, medicine, genetics and other public "goods". If, for example, we have no sense of what constitutes a matter of public concern and what is private how can we make a sensible or coherent judgment as to whether or not embryo experimentation should be permitted and/or its fruits used in genetic engineering. Of course it is often argued that there are substantial economic interests at stake which make this a matter of public interest; if Country X can keep at the cutting edge of the technology then it will sustain its position as a high tech economy and everyone will reap the fruits. But this only serves to re-awaken Arendt's question as to the relationship between the citizen and the polis. This is an issue to which I will return in the conclusion of this essay.

A second problem with the SOCA approach is that it assumes that the listing of values has any impact either on the pedagogies.

There is a second, more practical, reason for being cautious about the SOCA approach. Communities develop their values out of their collective felt needs. Just as the decalogue (a set of commandments which are the incarnation of deeper values) in the Judaeo-Christian tradition emerged out of the needs of a collection of nomadic peoples trying to become a community faithful to their God so too there is a need to allow the felt needs to guide the public sense of the good. The difficulty is that such felt collective needs require, among other things, an act of the imagination. The creation of a set of values by a group of individuals, no matter how well meaning is artifice, unlikely to fire the moral imagination of students (or, indeed, adults) in such a way as to ensure that they would behave as more moral citizens.

Allied to this is a third objection. Such an approach fails to confront the immediate practical consideration that the listing of common values by those with a major stake in society is unlikely to persuade those who don't have such a stake that it is indeed a good thing to live by such a list. let me offer a practical example of this particular problem. I recently supervised a student on a practicum where she was working on a drugs program with children in an elementary school (the students were 9 years old). The school was in an Area of Priority Treatment (in Scotland such areas were established by looking at a range of indices of material and social poverty). As I sat in on the lessons I became increasingly disheartened by the responses of the children to the injunction that they should try to resist drugs. These responses ranged from "everyone..."
around our block of flats smokes coke’ to ‘We go down to the Garages
where all the “druggies” hang out because then the cops chase us, I’ve
been picked up three times’. As the program progressed it became
increasingly apparent that the language of the teacher as the representa-
tive of a ‘mainstream’ culture where people had a stake in the mainten-
ance of social cohesion was not shared with the students. They saw them-
Selves to be standing outside this world. Their transgressions or identi-
fication with the transgressions of others, if they might be so descri-
bod, were marks of their difference, of their outsider status. The commu-
nity which shapes their social attitudes has a sense of itself as outside, as
gin, often more rudimentary concerns. This is not to sug-
gest that such people are more immoral than others in their particular
policy rather it points to the development of a more subtle and sophisti-
cated approach to moral education than allowed for in the SCAA approach.

It was precisely because the newly elected Labour Government recog-
nized that there were large groups in our society who did not percei-
ve themselves as citizens that they established a Working Group, chair-
ed by the political scientist, Bernard Crick, to explore how best Citi-
zenship Education might be approached. Crick had for many years been
advocating the development of an explicit curriculum which would de-
velop political and economic literacy among young people. While he
subscribes to the belief that all education systems reflect the ideologies
of the ruling elites he does not accept that they are necessarily rooted in
economic exploitation or are equally malign. Further he is concerned
that if citizens don’t participate in politics then so much the worse for
what I have termed in this essay, a moral democracy. His approach, and
that of the final report of his committee, is rooted in an adherence to the
Greek notion of the citizen as one who is at liberty to participate in the
polity. This, he compares with the contemporary notion that the citizen
is to be as far as possible at liberty from state intervention*. This latter
notion is seen by many in Britain as being responsible for the perceived
decline in moral attitudes and behavior and as rooted in the ideas of the
17th century philosopher Thomas Hobbes whose social, economic and
moral philosophy was predicated on a combination of self-love and fear
such as regarded social structures which were mediated through the law
as existing in order to protect citizens from each other. His views cer-
tainly formed the backbone of those neo-liberal accounts of social ex-
change propounded by conservative politicians in Britain from the late
1970’s onwards. The upshot of this is seen in Hobbes view that the
defining characteristic of human beings is solitary self-preservation
(Gray, 1993 & 1996, PP 7/8), This leads to a view of economic engagement
as concerned with protecting my right to self preservation in any ex-
change of goods, services and associated emotional transactions. This
in turn has implication for education in general and moral education in
particular gives rise to a view of educational purposes as equipping the
individual for the fight for self-preservation. All other considerations
must be subordinated to this: concern for the welfare of the others, for art,
culture and so on are admissible only in so far as they contribute directly
or indirectly to the primary purpose. It is not difficult to see the possible
consequences of this way of thinking for civic moral life.

Crick argues that education should serve industry quite as much as it
does learning and culture not by preparing individuals for work but by
having a common core with lots of room for choice including options for
jobs in the local communities factories etc. He also wishes to bind stu-
dents into participation in a moral citizenry. This is to be done through
the nationally approved framework for ‘Education for citizenship and
the teaching of democracy in schools’ which is based on the 1998 Report of
the Advisory Group on Citizenship which aims ‘at no less than a change
in the political culture of [the] country both nationally and locally: for
people to think of themselves as active citizens, willing, able and equipped
to have an influence in public life and with...critical capacities’** *(p.7).

There is much to be commended in the Crick approach including (1)
the recognition that moral education cannot be isolated from other for-
ms of public life and discourse (2) that education as a preparation for
work does not, in fact, serve the needs of industry, and (3) that teaching
for democracy does have an important part to play in moral education.
The emphasis on political literacy as a way of ensuring moral behavior
has its roots in Arendt’s belief that aesthetic, emotional and other forms
of personal education are inadequate to the task of ensuring such beha-

vior. Ultimately, she, believed that the only lasting protection for civil
liberty and justice as the two pre- eminent moral values could only be
guaranteed in law. Crick largely agrees with this and consequently re-
gards the involvement of students in understanding the law and political
life as the way to sustain these guarantees.

However, there are difficulties not least of which is the danger that
‘Education for Citizenship’ is transmuted into an uncritical acceptance
of state authority. There is also a difficulty in the assumption that what
is moral is axiomatic that which the state promotes. A third problem
area is that moral citizenship is something to be learnt rather than a way
of being. In the next section I argue that faith in the law is a necessary but
not sufficient condition for an effective moral education. Finally, it is
likely that Education for Citizenship is as likely as Comunitarianism
to become mere artifice unless it is embodied in the values, dispositions
and attitudes of individual students. Thus in the English and Welsh
context, while the idea of Education for Citizenship is a distinct improve-
ment on the approach of the SCAA Values forum, it retains a number

---

*Crick clearly shares this view with Hannah Arendt.

**Qualifications and Curriculum authority on behalf of the Citizenship Advisory Group (1998) Education for citizenship and the teaching of democracy in schools: Final Re-
port of the Advisory Group on Citizenship, (London, QCA)
of important flaws. Of course there are other places in the English and Welsh Education system where moral education is to be addressed, such as religious education, but the danger, and the fear among many professionals is that, in an already crowded curriculum, these other areas of personal development and education will be supplanted by ‘Education for Citizenship’.

SCOTLAND: A HolISTIC APPROACH

In the previous section I explored two recent responses to the challenge of moral education in England and Wales and found both wanting. In this final section I wish to propose a more holistic approach which has its roots in the 1947 Report on Scottish Secondary education discussed at the beginning of this essay. The citizenship approach to moral education pursues the argument that political apathy spawns moral apathy and that to ensure a moral community it is necessary to develop political literacy. I do not wish to discuss these arguments at any length but it is important to point out that there are large numbers of monks, nuns and others living religious lives across a broad spectrum of religious traditions who would wish to take issue with the idea that it is not possible to live a moral life outwith active political engagement. The focused nature of citizenship education as moral education also runs counter to much of the evidence available about school effectiveness which suggests that a complex whole involving specific moral education, the nurturing of moral feeling and sentiment and the development of a just and moral community are most likely to produce morally well-adjusted citizens capable of partaking in public political life.

The Scottish system has resisted the drive towards specific citizenship education as the way to develop morally educated students preferring a more broad-based approach which still finds roots in the 1947 Report. This is not to suggest that Scotland is immune from the same broad economic forces which are generally deemed to be important in the public political rhetoric of Britain as a whole. However there remain significant differences and there remains a strong emphasis on religious and moral education broadly conceived within Scottish education. Indeed Religious and Moral Education is one of the five modes of study in the National Guidelines for Scottish schools from 5-14. Here religious is broadly conceived though there is always the danger that moral and religious are deemed to be synonymous. Nevertheless this represents only one site for moral education. There are a large number of others.

One approach increasingly adopted in Scottish schools is the literary approach. This has been researched and developed by a wide range of scholars throughout and beyond Britain and, in Scotland through the work of my own project, funded by the Gordon Cook Foundation. Foundations is a project for students from 5 to 14 and is widely used in Scottish schools. It draws upon the insights of Robert Coles among others, to promote the idea that moral education requires, among other things, acts of the imagination. To be moral requires some understanding of the other; it also requires that one can imagine things to be other than they appear at any particular moment in time. This latter is particularly important in enabling students to adopt the hermeneutic of suspicion in respect of the claims of government and its agencies. It is also, interestingly, important for medics and other service-oriented professionals who are required to think critically about the claims of companies involved in the development and production of drugs, genetic therapies, cloning and so on.

The literary approach is predicated on the understanding that language is pivotal in our ability to make sense of and engage with the world. If I cannot describe the world and its features adequately then I am always prey to its particular vagaries. If I have a vocabulary which is inadequate to the complexity of the world in which I live, what heuristic tools can I use to interrogate the claims of McDonald’s, for example, that their burgers are actually healthy, life enhancing foods? Let me take an even more carefully worked example. In a recent research project (Conroy, et al 1999) exploring the most efficacious way to develop moral reasoning in final year elementary students a number of experiments and interviews were conducted in 8 schools in Glasgow, all of which exhibited significant social and economic problems. One major part of the project was to conduct interviews with teachers and students. A number of issues emerged from these discussions, one of the most important being the need for children to develop a language capable of matching the complexity of their lives. Many of them lived in circumstances of extreme difficulty where it was difficult to have any control over a range of forces which appeared ineluctable and overpowering, thus early adolescents would find themselves pregnant, be regularly involved in serious violence, using drugs and so on at an early age. Many had no capacity to articulate their emotional and other needs and, as a result struggled for survival; in such circumstances the notion of the moral citizen seems remote indeed. However through the use of literature it is possible to nurture the moral imagination through the development of a language which matches the social and moral complexity which they face on a daily basis. Further it allows them to entertain a range of moral possibilities by encountering and engaging with them in story, play and poem (Conroy, op cit, 1999). The provision of a sufficiently nuanced and subtle language equips students with a key to controlling the world of their experience. It also has the advantage of being particular and local; it is not something which is imposed from outside the context of the community as a kind of artifice. In adopting this approach, while I am clearly indebted to Arendt’s thinking I disagree in one major respect. She, like Hargreaves, thought that the maintenance of the law was the only protection for goodness and that moral education was political education (1963 & 1992, pp.104ff). Sentiment was too capricious for so serious an endeavor as justice. My disagreement is fairly fundamental. What gives
rise to the need for justice if it is not fellow feeling and compassion\(^9\) to suffer with the other. Of course there can be false sentiment (sentimentality) but no useful argument may be predicated on a false expression.

Of course other approaches are used in Scotland and these include the development of schools as participatory places which nurture notions of justice and fairness in teachers’ dealings with students; students’ dealings with each other; and, equally importantly, teachers’ dealings with each other. Some schools follow the development of Just community schooling which was first articulated by Kohlberg and his colleagues.\(^{18}\) Higgins and others are working with a range of alternatives all of which are designed to nurture the sense of the moral individual within the community. There are a wide range of local initiatives which both reflect the more subtle approach adopted in Scotland when compared to the rather tighter restrictions in the rest of the United Kingdom. This is not to suggest that Scotland is immune from the same economic forces and discourse which governs thinking about education in England and Wales. Indeed, at the beginning of this essay I intimated what some of these are. So far Scotland has managed to resist the more excessive prescriptions developed in England and Wales.

The development of a moral citizenry does not happen because politicians wish it to be so; nor does it happen because selected groups of people tell us what values we hold in common; rather it happens because we wish it to be so. But the wishing it to be so is itself predicated on a clear conception of the role of politics. As I have attempted to suggest throughout this essay moral education is a function of a moral society where individuals come together because they have a keen sense of their and others’ collective needs. In the modern period Arendt argued, we have conflated the oikos and the polis into political economy; in postmodern thought I would suggest that we have inverted the roles ascribed to the two in ancient Greek thought. The polis is now the place where we work out how we live economically; the privacy of household is the place where we give our lives moral expression. This inversion has serious consequences for moral education. In such a world the listing values and educating for citizenship may serve only to answer the question ‘how shall we eat?’ The nurturing of the moral imagination serves to answer the question, ‘how shall we live?’

REFERENCES


