

School Britannia? Rhetorical and educational uses of 'British values'

John Beck* – *Homerton College, University of Cambridge, UK*

Abstract

Schools in England are now required by law to 'actively promote British values' (DfE, 2014). This paper seeks to set this requirement within the context of a somewhat longer history of debates about values in Britain. It discusses the views of certain neoconservatives who claim that multiculturalism has eroded or even abolished British values. It then discusses the refocusing of the debate in relation to the rise of Islamist terrorism and examines some of the key rhetorical responses of leading UK politicians. The view that 'promoting British values' will strengthen identities and promote social cohesion is challenged. The concluding section of the paper develops an argument focused on *liberal* values, and stresses the importance in a pluralistic society of *prioritizing* certain values over others – notably rationality and autonomy – especially in education. Aspects of the work of Amartya Sen, John Rawls, Bernard Crick and Charles Bailey are discussed in this regard.

Keywords: British values; Islamism; multiculturalism; pluralism; autonomy; reason; citizenship

Introduction

The prominence given to the term 'British' in recent political rhetoric about the common values that supposedly underpin a shared sense of identity among UK citizens is mainly a twenty-first-century phenomenon. But earlier uses of the term can be identified, for example in the launch of UK Prime Minister John Major's 'Back to Basics' campaign in the early 1990s:

The old values – neighbourliness, decency, courtesy – they're still alive, they're still the best of Britain. ... It is time to return to those old core values, time to get back to basics, to self-discipline and respect for the law, to consideration for others, to accepting a responsibility for yourself and your family and not shuffling off on other people and the state (Major, 1993: n.p.).

Yet despite Major's insistence on the continuing relevance of such values, it is the note of nostalgic retrospection that sounds most strongly through his discussion. Other commentators of the period painted a much more apocalyptic picture of what had happened to traditional British values and attitudes. According to Peter Hitchens, by the end of the twentieth century, this amounted to nothing less than the '*abolition*' of Britain:

We have ... sundered many of the invisible bonds that once held our society together, and inflicted upon our country a permanent and irreversible

change in morals, values, customs, taboos, language, humour, art and even eating habits (Hitchens, 2001: xxiii).

Hitchens (2001: xiv) added that 'a whole system of thought and belief was fast becoming unthinkable and unsayable'. Around this time I myself discussed and critiqued a range of similar diagnoses of alleged moral crisis and decline, put forward by a substantial group of 'millennial moralists' (Beck, 1998: Chapter 2). Some of these writers shared Hitchens's view that this decline was not only deplorable but also irreversible. Others, though, proposed various agendas of *cultural restoration* in which *educational reform* usually figured prominently. Either way, what the declinists were lamenting was the fading away of a set of attitudes, traditions and their embodying institutions, which together constituted a certain inherited British identity. In the declinists' imaginations, but also to some significant degree in fact, this was a 'thick', dense, particularistic and historically rooted set of attitudes, values and behaviours. No matter that such values were far from universal and that in some cases they included expressions of intolerance, prejudice or worse – nor that they were, by definition, ethnocentric.

These backward-looking 'British values' have, of course, been subject to substantial erosion ever since the 1960s, in a period that saw the rise of a highly articulate and self-confident 'new' middle class that had sponsored a much stronger emphasis on chosen identities as opposed to inherited role-prescriptions and prerogatives. The transformation of Britain in the same period into a far more culturally and ethnically diverse society has, according to many social theorists, along with ongoing globalization, led to a process of detraditionalization (Heelas *et al.*, 1996; Giddens, 1994), weakening the hold of traditions of all kinds and creating a situation where, in the words of communitarian philosopher Charles Taylor (2007: 531), we live in 'a pluralist world in which many forms of belief and unbelief jostle, and hence fragilize each other'.

It is, therefore, somewhat ironic that British values rhetoric should have been revived in this broader context of heightened pluralism as a response to – of all things – a form of resurgent religious fundamentalism.

Modernizing and mobilizing British values in opposition to Islamism

The unforgettable spectacle of the destruction of the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York in September 2001 is still the most dramatic symbol of the rise, in Western nations, of Islamist-inspired terrorist attacks. The 9/11 attacks, of course, proved to be the precursor of a whole series of such atrocities. In the UK, the 7/7 (2005) attack on the London underground (and one bus) remains the most spectacular as well as injurious instance of 'home-grown' Islamist violence, though the series of atrocities in London and Manchester that disfigured the year 2017 were a brutal reminder of the continuing threat posed by such extremism. The rise of the so-called Islamic State (IS), initially in the context of Syria and Iraq but subsequently as a much more widespread flag of convenience for violent jihadist groups in a widening range of countries, has added powerfully to these security concerns in many Western nations.

These developments are central to the context in which British values rhetoric has been not only revived but also, in significant respects, refocused. In certain ways, this shifting and strengthening of the focus – not only onto 'shared values' but also onto a revised conception of 'Britishness' – was probably inevitable. A 2013 report from the Prime Minister's Task Force on Tackling Radicalization and Extremism, commissioned

by David Cameron, pinpoints this aspect of the rationale. It argues, persuasively, that the type of Islamist extremism associated with groups like Al-Qaeda and IS preaches that Britishness is un-Islamic. This ideology includes 'an uncompromising belief that people cannot be Muslim and British, and insists that those who do not agree with them are not true Muslims' (Prime Minister's Task Force on Tackling Radicalisation and Extremism, 2013: paragraph 1.4). Understandably, the temptation to refute such assertions in their own terms, by countering that the really true Muslims are those who *endorse* British values, has proved politically irresistible.

However, we need to appreciate that the refocusing and foregrounding of British values rhetoric is part of a broader agenda that seeks to address wider though related concerns about cultural and ethnic diversity in twenty-first-century Britain. As the new millennium dawned, several analysts began to argue that ethnic, cultural and religious divisions in British society were deepening dangerously. Some communities were said to be leading 'parallel lives' (Home Office, 2001); other commentators warned that the nation was 'sleepwalking to segregation' (Phillips, 2005). In the aftermath of 7/7, Prime Minister Tony Blair entered the debate with a landmark speech that sought to combine support for cultural diversity with a new stress on all UK citizens having a duty to integrate into the mainstream by endorsing British values.

Integration in this context is not about culture or lifestyle. It is about values ... The right to be in a multicultural society was always implicitly balanced by a duty to integrate, to be part of Britain ... When it comes to our essential values – belief in democracy, the rule of law, tolerance, equal treatment for all, respect for this country and its shared heritage – then that is where we all come together ... Our tolerance is part of what makes Britain, Britain (Blair, 2006: n.p.).

In the preamble to this speech Blair noted that his advisors had warned against framing these issues in the context of 7/7 and Islamist terrorism, not least because Muslims generally are as law-abiding as other citizens and they have no monopoly on terrorism. But he decisively rejected this advice:

The reason we are having this debate is not generalised extremism. It is a new and virulent form of ideology associated with a minority in our Muslim community ... a minority ... particularly originating from certain countries (ibid.).

Five years later Prime Minister David Cameron delivered a speech to a special conference on international security held in Munich. The speech is noteworthy in various ways. It clearly illustrates the phenomenon of 'rhetoric recycling'. But it is also *substantively* indebted to Blair's speech, especially in its focus on those young Muslim men who identify neither with the beliefs and practices of their parents nor with the UK mainstream: young men who 'find it hard to identify with Britain (in part) *because we have allowed a weakening of our collective identity*' (my italics). In response, he argued,

We must build stronger societies and stronger identities at home ... [W]e need a lot less of the passive tolerance of recent years and a much more active, muscular liberalism ... [A] genuinely liberal country ... believes in certain values and actively promotes them. Freedom of speech, freedom of worship, democracy, the rule of law, equal rights regardless of race, sex or sexuality (Cameron, 2011: n.p.).

In the context of addressing this international audience, it is not surprising that early on in his speech Cameron characterized these values as 'liberal' rather than as 'British' – and this is a centrally important distinction to which I shall return. But for the moment I want to focus on his insistence on the need to *actively promote* such values – a task that has devolved mainly onto schools and colleges. Indeed, in this regard, English state schools have witnessed a kind of mission-creep. From January 2013, certain categories of state school – academies and free schools – were required to meet a set of standards that already applied to independent schools (which, it should be noted, include private Islamic and other private faith schools). The relevant standard stated that 'the proprietor ensures that principles are promoted which ... encourage pupils to respect the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs' (Full Fact, 2014: n.p.). This specific list of values, with its clear lineage connecting to both Blair and Cameron, had its proximate origins in documents produced in 2011 as part of the government's 'Prevent' counter-terrorism strategy. (Note that I have deliberately chosen in this paper not to discuss the Prevent strategy that has now been adopted by a succession of UK governments. Although Prevent is intimately linked to many of the issues I discuss, its complexity (as well as the controversy that surrounds it) means that it cannot be adequately addressed in an article of this length.) In 2014 the same list of values was included in a revised model funding agreement – and its application was widened to include various categories of school governors – specifically to 'conduct by a relevant Charity trustee or a board member of an academy trust'. In June 2014, Education Secretary Michael Gove announced two further highly significant changes:

We already require independent schools, academies and free schools to respect British values. Now we will consult on strengthening this standard further, so that *all schools actively promote* British values (Wintour, 2014: n.p.; my italics).

This requirement was put into effect from the start of the academic year 2014/15 and schools' performance in relation to it is inspected by Ofsted.

Having outlined these developments in education policy I shall not at this point pursue them further. Instead, I next discuss the question of the persuasiveness or otherwise political rhetoric centring on British values, and in particular, how far the repeated insistence on this nationalistic signifier is likely to prove a help or a hindrance in achieving the goals that many leading politicians have set out.

Branding liberal values as 'British': Persuasive or counter-productive?

I noted earlier that in his Munich conference speech David Cameron chose the term 'liberal' in preference to 'British'. But when addressing a UK audience, he has, like his predecessors (and his successor Theresa May) insistently emphasized what he regards as the distinctively 'British' character and lineage of these core values. A *Mail Online* article, written at the time of the 'Trojan Horse' controversy (which centred on issues of Islamist infiltration in several Birmingham schools), highlights the key issues.

I'm clear about what these values are – and I'm equally clear that they should be promoted in every school and to every child in our country ... To me, they're as British as the Union flag, as football, as fish and chips ... I believe this combination – our values and our respect for the history that

helped deliver them and the institutions that uphold them – forms the bedrock of Britishness (Cameron, 2014: n.p.).

Cameron's aim in promoting these values is clear enough: to build social solidarity in a culturally and religiously diverse society, and strengthen a sense of collective identity as British. Cameron claimed that this was necessary because 'we have allowed the weakening of our collective identity' as a result of years of 'passive tolerance' and also of government policies that promoted the 'wrong kind' of multiculturalism.

Under the doctrine of state multiculturalism, we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the mainstream. We've failed to provide a vision of society to which [these young men] feel they want to belong (Cameron, 2011: n.p.).

Interestingly, the last aspect of this analysis – the contention that successive governments have supported the 'wrong kind' of multiculturalism – has been endorsed from a surprisingly wide range of much more radical stances. Such critics include antiracists, feminists, Marxists and mainstream liberals, like Kenan Malik, Priyamvada Gopal, Sivanandan and Amartya Sen. Such commentators have all argued that the kind of multicultural policies that seek to promote distinct traditional cultural and religious identities work to legitimize conservative elements within minority communities and to foster divisive forms of identity politics that undermine concerted opposition to racism (see Beck, 2008: 131–5).

Now, it is worth emphasizing at this point in the discussion that few reasonable UK citizens would dissent from the view that, in themselves, and when formulated at a high level of abstraction, the liberal values of liberty, tolerance, democracy, due process and the separation of powers, freedom of speech, freedom of worship (or not to worship) *ought* to be foundational in liberal pluralistic societies. They are noble principles, even though they need closer specification and institutional embodiment to be effective, and even though they can come into conflict with one another in ways that mean that simply endorsing them can never be a panacea for the divisions that beset us. But insisting that such values are *British* is likely, in my view, to do more harm than good.

As we have seen, for some UK citizens, growing cultural and ethnic diversity is in itself responsible for eroding a clear sense of national identity and social cohesion. And recently, many such conservatives have reacted strongly against 'uncontrolled immigration' from within the European Union: immigration was almost certainly the biggest single issue in the Brexit referendum of 2016 (see Clarke *et al.*, 2017). We should also notice here that the most conspicuous *official symbols* of British national identity – the monarchy, the rituals that surround it, the established church, the union flag, the honours list – also evoke divergent reactions. For most neoconservatives they symbolize the essence of 'who we are'. For some they are primarily a tourist treasure-trove. For yet others they are, in David Marquand's memorable phrase, 'Ruritanian absurdities' – but ones that sustain an enduring reality: that 'Britain has never been an egalitarian society' (Marquand, 2014: 126).

A further issue is that for some British citizens, the term 'British' is irretrievably *ethically compromised* because it cannot be dissociated from a centuries-long history of imperialism, colonial exploitation, racial oppression, militarism, etc. For them, 'British' signifies *un-freedom*, *intolerance*, *denial* of democracy, oppression of indigenous religions, etc. Of course there are competing views about the legacy of empire, but that is the point: deeply held views co-exist and are unlikely to be resolved. Another

source of divisions is the trajectory of British foreign policy in more recent decades – for example, arms sales to deeply illiberal regimes that ignore the most basic human rights of their own citizens, or various ill-considered military interventions aimed at securing 'regime change' in several countries. Again, there are of course counter-arguments: but on either side, the divisions run deep.

It is increasingly clear too that 'British' can sometimes be a polarizing category – and this despite many Britons being perfectly happy to endorse 'hybrid' or 'nested' identities (as, say, British-Bangladeshi-Muslim). Here, promoting 'Britishness' carries a risk of widening existing divisions even further. On the one side, far-right groups wrap themselves in the union flag and claim to be the ones who are authentically British – and this now extends to religious polarization, embodied in such overtly anti-Islamic organizations as the English Defence League, Britain First and the Anti-Islam Alliance. In the face of provocations of this kind, some of those already disposed to associate Britishness rhetoric with Islamophobia are likely to feel vindicated.

Finally, insisting as Gordon Brown once did that such values as 'a commitment to liberty ... a belief in fairness' are among 'the enduring ideas *that Britain gave the world*' (2006, my italics) is bound to seem to many not only patronizing but factually questionable. In light of this, let us now consider a salutary corrective to claims that certain values are the distinctive property or legacy of particular cultural and/or national traditions. This corrective is developed in Amartya Sen's book *Identity and Violence* (2006). I shall highlight here just two key points from Sen's rich and wide-ranging discussion. First, he insists that, especially in pluralistic societies and where matters of cultural diversity are concerned, it is essential to prioritize certain principles over others. Throughout the book, what Sen prioritizes is the principle of reasoned choice, which itself combines two values: the priority to be accorded to reason and the right and capacity of the individual to exercise reason in making significant life choices, especially (but not only) in relation to the particular cultural traditions that have helped shape their identities. Addressing the tensions that can arise between 'cultural liberty' and 'valuing cultural conservation', Sen links the principle of cultural liberty to his celebrated *human capabilities* approach:

There is undoubtedly a strong case for including human freedom among the human capabilities people have reason to value ... If freedom of human decision is important, then the results of a reasoned exercise of that freedom have to be valued ... The critical link includes our ability to consider alternative options, to understand the choices involved, and then to decide what we have reason to want (Sen, 2006: 113–4).

The second key point is that Sen traces back arguments about the priority of reason not, as many scholars have done, to the Western Enlightenment tradition but instead to the sixteenth-century Indian emperor Akbar, the Great Mughal.

Akbar...was born a Muslim and died a Muslim, but he insisted that faith cannot have priority over reason, since one must justify – and if necessary reject – one's inherited faith through reason ... Reason had to be supreme, since even in developing reason, we would have to give reasons (Sen, 2006: 161).

Sen, of course, uses this example deliberately as a device to challenge claims that it was Western Europe alone that gave the world values like respect for reason, tolerance, liberty and democracy. In Chapter 3 of his book, he refutes such claims with an acerbic

wit, excoriating arguments like Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996) as both dangerously reductive and grounded in 'foggy history'.

A final point to notice is that Sen's stance has important implications for education. Unfortunately, his discussion of these educational issues is rather fragmented – partly because much of his argument is embedded in the course of a vigorous critique of faith schools (whose expansion in England was championed by New Labour under the provisions of the 1998 Education Act). Nevertheless, the key points are clear enough. If young people are to be enabled to exercise reasoned choices about their own lives and the values they wish to live by, they need to have opportunities to develop an informed and autonomous understanding of the value pluralism and the cultural diversity of the society they are part of:

education is about helping children to develop the ability to reason about new decisions any grown-up person will have to take. The important goal ... [is] what would best enhance the capability of children to live 'examined lives' as they grow up in an integrated country (Sen, 2006: 160).

Actively promoting British values within education

Using legislation to compel all English state schools to 'actively promote British values' (DfE, 2014) is educationally problematic. As the foregoing analysis has suggested, even as political rhetoric, British values is a contentious and question-begging concept. As a foundation for sound educational practice it is worse than shaky: it is educationally incoherent. Moreover, the term 'actively promote', especially when mandated by the government, carries unfortunate suggestions of inculcation, even indoctrination, rather than of reasoned analysis and open and critical discussion.

David Cameron was, I think, on stronger ground when he chose to talk of *liberal* rather than British values. It is a truism but an important one that education (and education systems) cannot be value free. So in justifying any particular approach to education, especially one that involves government prescription, it is highly desirable that the key justificatory principles should be stated and debated as clearly as possible. Moreover, schools, or at least a national system of schools, are ineluctably engaged in some form of *citizenship education*, whether this is explicit or not. A signal achievement of New Labour governments between 1997 and 2010 was the introduction of citizenship education as a required area of study within the English national curriculum. Not infrequently, the practical implementation of this provision left a lot to be desired (Beck, 2011; Cremin, 2011). And Michael Gove, during his years as secretary of state for education (2010–15), not only undermined the status of the subject but also reduced its official specification to something close to descriptive civics: he demoted citizenship from being a statutory foundation subject to a mere basic subject, at the same time freeing academy and free schools to make their own choices about its content and delivery.

But in principle, in a broadly liberal, democratic and pluralistic society, there continue to be very strong educational arguments for involving students (not least but not only as future citizens) in forms of political and moral education that equip them to better understand key political and ethical concepts, and their bearing on political issues including issues that are significantly controversial. Similarly, there are strong arguments for helping students develop capacities to arrive at their own reasoned and informed choices in political and ethical matters, and for fostering the competencies needed for practical engagement in these areas. Bernard Crick, the main architect of New Labour's approach to citizenship education, coined the term *political literacy*

to encapsulate many of these desirable educational aims. There is no space here to discuss this concept at length but it is pertinent to notice that Crick insisted that certain *procedural values* were essential both to political literacy itself and to forms of education aimed at developing it. These procedural values comprised “‘freedom”, “toleration”, “fairness”, “respect for truth” and “respect for reasoning” ... values which are presupposed in political literacy’ (Crick, 2000: 62).

Very similar conceptions of liberal citizenship can be found in the work of other leading political theorists, for example the American political philosopher John Rawls, who – like Crick and Sen – accords priority to individual autonomy and reasoning as values and capacities underpinning justifiable forms of citizenship in pluralistic and democratic societies. Rawls identifies one of the key ‘moral powers’ of citizens who engage in seeking agreement on the principles informing the ‘basic structure’ of a just, democratic and liberal society, as follows: they possess, he says,

a capacity for a conception of the good: it is the capacity to have, to revise, and rationally to pursue a conception of the good. Such a conception is an ordered family of final ends and aims which specifies a person’s conception of what is of value in human life (Rawls, 2001: 19).

Crucially, Rawls adds: ‘as citizens they are seen as capable of *revising and changing* [their individual conceptions] of the good on reasonable and rational grounds, and they may do so if they so desire’ (Rawls, 2001: 21, my italics).

Education is not, however, the primary focus of any of these three distinguished theorists. One writer for whom the justification of a particular conception of liberal education is central is the educational philosopher Charles Bailey. The conception in question, and justificatory arguments in support of it, are systematically set out in his book *Beyond the Present and the Particular: A theory of liberal education* (1984). Bailey’s work is one of the most interesting and sustained attempts to justify an approach to liberal education that is centred on the goal of *liberating* children and students from the limited horizons of their ‘present and particular’ social and cultural experience. It liberates by helping them to become increasingly capable of exercising reason in relation to encounters with humanly important forms of knowledge and understanding, and by equipping them to become more autonomous individuals. Especially noteworthy is that, in Bailey’s account, the development of a commitment to reasoning is closely intertwined with a morally laden conception of autonomy:

What the liberally educated person is released *for* is a kind of intellectual and moral autonomy, the capacity to become a free chooser of ... beliefs and actions – in a word a free moral agent... The word ‘autonomy’ is not lightly chosen here. The idea is one of *self-government*, not romantic anarchy. The supposition is that by knowledge and reason one can come increasingly to understand the forces acting upon one ... and thereby make ones-self independent of them (Bailey, 1984: 21–2).

Such autonomy is not, however, only a matter of self-cultivation. It also faces outwards in ethically demanding ways: ‘a commitment to the rational life does not only imply a justification in terms of knowledge and understanding but also, and importantly, a disposition to value creatures who are the founts or originators of reason, namely persons’ (Bailey, 1984: 42).

As I have written elsewhere, this is ‘a strenuous Kantian vision’ (Beck, 2018: 46) but one which, Bailey contends, remains the educational goal that is most worth pursuing in societies like our own (despite the forces currently assailing it).

Bailey anticipated that his prioritizing of reason linked to autonomy was liable to be misunderstood as both utopian and arid. When formulated very abstractly, he conceded, such an approach might seem to be 'a mere assertion of faith in an ideal ... which many see as an outmoded attachment to eighteenth-century enlightenment, blind to the romantic reaction, the insights of depth-psychology, the revelations of two world wars, rampaging and alienating technological growth and the power of social and political pressure and change' (Bailey, 1984: 22). In a later chapter, he considered in some depth the challenges of a range of more relativistic epistemological stances, before decisively rejecting them.

We can, perhaps, best understand Bailey's overall educational vision by focusing very briefly on ways in which his analysis extends very much further than some dry-as-dust scholastic rationalism. There are some similarities here with Bernard Crick's proposals for citizenship education, where, it will be remembered, Crick was at pains to stress the importance not only of key cognitive aspects of political literacy – helping young people to understand both political and ethical concepts – but also of the development of a range of virtues, dispositions and skills. Bailey's approach to rational autonomy, as we have seen, is centred on a deep concern with educating young people morally as well as intellectually. And, crucially, he saw this as having exacting implications for the ethos of the classroom and the school – most importantly that both should be environments that emphasized cooperation, not competitiveness, and embodied practices of caring. Only in such a context could 'liberal educators ... positively seek to bring about in their pupils an active morality which must involve care and concern for others' (157). It is not irrelevant here to note that Bailey taught for 12 years in the field of special education (as it was then called) between 1960 and 1964 as head teacher of the Phoenix Special School in London's East End.

When it comes to specifying and justifying the *content* of such a liberal education, Bailey does not simply offer a list of academic subjects or 'areas of experience'. Instead, drawing on Michael Oakeshott's idea of human practices, he proposes that, within the broad area of the humanities, the highest priority should be given to introducing young people to enquiries concerning 'social and political institutions; and economic, commercial and industrial institutions' (121). He emphasizes that such enquiries should be partly historical, developing a critical understanding of the evolution of these major human institutions, as well as of their often contested character in the present. Noting the marginality of these areas within most existing curricula, he robustly contends that

These matters should be part of a liberal education for *all* pupils because they involve human practices of great significance affecting all people in a ... pervasive way ... they are the major practices of humankind everywhere in some form or another (Bailey, 1984: 122).

He also refutes claims that such issues are too complex to be studied during the years of compulsory schooling and that including them would be undesirable because of the risk of indoctrination.

Conclusion

Whatever else may be said about the UK government's requirement that all schools in England must actively promote British values, it is manifestly *not* a stance that holds that political and ethical values are too complex and too open to ideological distortion to be addressed during the years of compulsory schooling. Concerns about 'homeland' security apparently now trump scruples of this kind – scruples that, we might note,

were prominent among conservative thinkers of previous decades, including many who opposed the introduction of statutory citizenship education.

Now that government has placed political and ethical concepts back so centrally on the educational agenda, the question that urgently arises is: what approach should be adopted to help students engage with these matters in educationally defensible ways? Insofar as the arguments of Sen, Crick, Rawls and Bailey considered above are persuasive, the core of the answer to this question should be clear. In one guise or another, we need a return to a form of citizenship education – and education more generally – that not only emphasizes respect for reason and the development of autonomy but also seeks to promote active caring for others and a disposition to engage actively with a range of political and controversial issues. The current educational climate in England, with its pressures to narrow the curriculum down to STEM subjects, its rampant competitive instrumentalism and its pervasive performativity culture, is scarcely conducive to the achievement of such aims (Beck, 2018: 53–4). But they remain vital if education about values is to be a serious endeavour through which young people can be helped to think, in an informed way and *for themselves*, about the meaning, application and scope of such values as 'democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs'.

Notes on the contributor

John Beck taught in schools for seven years before joining the staff of Homerton College, Cambridge. He became Head of Education there in 1986, continuing until Homerton education staff joined the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education. He retired in 2008 and is now an emeritus fellow of Homerton College. His main academic field is the sociology of education, with particular interests in the sociology of knowledge and of the professions, as well as citizenship and citizenship education.

References

- Bailey, C.H. (1984) *Beyond the Present and the Particular: A theory of liberal education*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Beck, J. (1998) *Morality and Citizenship in Education*. London: Cassell.
- Beck, J. (2008) *Meritocracy, Citizenship and Education: New Labour's legacy*. London: Continuum.
- Beck, J. (2011) 'A brief history of citizenship education in England and Wales'. In Arthur, J. and Cremin, H. (eds) *Debates in Citizenship Education*. London: Routledge, 3–16.
- Beck, J. (2018) 'Beyond the present and the particular: Similarities and differences between Michael Young's and Charles Bailey's arguments for the public provision of liberating forms of education for all'. In Guile, D., Lambert, D. and Reiss, M. (eds) *Sociology, Curriculum Studies and Professional Knowledge: New perspectives on the work of Michael Young*. London: Routledge, 43–55.
- Blair, T. (2006) 'Our nation's future: Multiculturalism and integration'. Speech at 10 Downing Street hosted by the Runnymede Trust, 8 December. Online. <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20080909022722/http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page10563> (accessed 21 April 2018).
- Brown, G. (2006) 'We have renewed Britain, now we must champion it'. *The Guardian*, 27 February, 15. Online. www.theguardian.com/politics/2006/feb/27/immigrationpolicy.policy (accessed 11 June 2018).
- Cameron, D. (2011) 'PM's speech at Munich Security Conference', Cabinet Office, 10 Downing Street, London, 5 February. Online. www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference (accessed 21 April 2018).
- Cameron, D. (2014) 'British values aren't optional, they're vital'. *Mail Online*, 15 June. Online. www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2658171/DAVID-CAMERON-British-values (accessed 21 April 2018).
- Clarke, H., Goodwin, M. and Whiteley, P. (2017) *Brexit: Why Britain voted to leave the European Union*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Cremin, H. (2011) 'Conclusion'. In Arthur, J. and Cremin, H. (eds) *Debates in Citizenship Education*. London: Routledge, 208–13.
- Crick, B. (2000) *Essays on Citizenship*. London: Continuum.
- DfE (Department for Education) (2014) *Consultation on Promoting British Values in School*. London: Department for Education. Online. www.gov.uk/government/news/consultation-on-promoting-british-values-in-school (accessed 11 June 2018).
- Full Fact (2014) 'The "new" definition of "British values" for academies and free schools isn't new'. Online. <https://fullfact.org/news/new-definition-british-values-academies-and-free-schools-isnt-new/> (accessed 21 April 2018).
- Giddens, A. (1994) 'Living in a post-traditional society'. In Beck, U., Giddens, A. and Lash, S. *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, tradition and aesthetics in the modern social order*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 56–109.
- Heelas, P., Lash, S. and Morris, P. (eds) (1996) *Detraditionalization: Critical reflections on authority and identity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hitchens, P. (2000) *The Abolition of Britain: The British cultural revolution from Lady Chatterley to Tony Blair*. London: Quartet Books.
- Home Office (2001) *Community Cohesion: A report of the independent review team chaired by Ted Cantle (Cantle Report)*. London: Home Office.
- Huntington, S.P. (1996) *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Major, J. (1993) 'Mr Major's Speech to 1993 Conservative Party Conference', Blackpool, 8 October. Online. www.johnmajor.co.uk/page1096.html (accessed 21 April 2018).
- Marquand, D. (2014) *Mammon's Kingdom: An essay on Britain, now*. London: Allen Lane.
- Phillips, T. (2005) 'After 7/7: Sleepwalking to segregation'. Speech given at the Manchester Council for Community Relations, 22 September. London: Commission for Racial Equality.
- Prime Minister's Task Force on Tackling Radicalisation and Extremism (2013) *Tackling Extremism in the UK*. London: Cabinet Office. Online. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/263181/ETF_FINAL.pdf (accessed 21 April 2018).
- Rawls, J. (2001) *Justice as Fairness: A restatement*. Ed. Kelly, E. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Sen, A.K. (2006) *Identity and Violence: The illusion of destiny*. London: Allen Lane.
- Taylor, C. (2007) *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Wintour, P. (2014) 'Michael Gove wants "British values" on school curriculums'. *The Guardian*, 9 June. Online. www.theguardian.com/education/2014/jun/09/michael-gove-british-values-curriculum (accessed 21 April 2018).