

SPRING DIRECTIVE 1985

Morality and religion are the main themes of the Spring Directive. Can you have one without the other? We don't want to get caught up in a philosophical debate and let us rather consider what people actually do and what motivates them. As usual I have listed some topics, as usual many of them are in the form of questions and, as usual, I beg you not to treat them as such; they are there to provoke and stimulate thought.

And do not feel confined to the points of departure suggested here. The contemporary scene and very recent history provide many opportunities to discuss religion and/or morality. Do try especially hard to be as concrete as possible. It is dangerously easy to generalise on these topics.

At the end of Part 1 there is a real questionnaire. You might like to expand on some of the questions there rather than just give a YES or NO. If you would like to do this please feel free but I would be grateful if you would nevertheless answer the questionnaire as well.

Please read the whole thing through before you start writing. And please note that there is a Part 2 at the end of this Directive which might well engage the younger members of the household or provide an object for an afternoon's walk some fine Sunday.

PART 1

Imagine: You live in a militantly atheistic society; you have been arrested for 'being religious'; could they bring evidence to support the charge? If they could, what? ***** the Headmaster of a progressive school is said to regard religious beliefs as positively harmful and to be combatted in the classroom. How do you react? ***** If you have been converted to religious belief and practice or if you have abandoned beliefs held earlier, would you care to describe the experience? ***** Some people who profess no religious beliefs whatsoever have their children baptised, a lot of such people get married in church and almost all of them have some form of religious ceremony when they are cremated or buried. Why do you suppose this is so?

Imagine: you are visiting a town where you know no one; you find a £5 note in an empty street. What do you do and why? Would your action have been different if you found a 10p piece? If so, why?

So long as I don't hurt anyone else I can do what I like. Am I right?

Do you donate regularly to charities or only in response to appeals? Are there some charities to which you would never contribute? What about flag days - do you always give regardless or are you selective in your support of these and are there some you would never support?

PLEASE TURN OVER

Religion and Morality and the State: Should we keep religion out of politics?
Is it possible for a politician to be a moral person?

'If there is no God, everything is permissible' Most of us would freely admit that not all godly people are good and that many good people are not godly. But what are the motives and sanctions of atheistic or agnostic morality?

Medical science has made the prevention of birth possible and also the possibility of birth where there was none before; it has made possible the survival at birth of lives which would not have survived a hundred years ago and lengthened the expectation of life. Do any of these developments impinge on your judgements of right and wrong?

We all know of extraordinarily dreadful crimes committed by individuals. How do you react to the psychological explanation of such crimes? At an altogether less grave level how much are your moral judgements of yourself and others affected by the knowledge of past events in your life or the lives of others?

Does the lapse of time affect moral judgement? Can some crimes be wiped out, so to speak, by a very long prison sentence and others not? And what about Nazi war criminals?

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please do answer the questions even if your reply has already, explicitly or implicitly, been given elsewhere in your response to this Directive. PLEASE READ ALL THE QUESTIONS BEFORE YOU ANSWER.

1. (a) Do you think capital punishment ought to be reintroduced? YES/NO
 (b) If YES, would you want it to apply as before or only for certain crimes?
 AS BEFORE/CERTAIN CRIMES
2. (a) Experimentation and vivisection on animals when legally performed is morally neutral. YES/NO
 (b) If NO, should such experimentation be limited to research on human disease only or should it be made illegal altogether? LIMITED/ILLEGAL
3. (a) Enoch Powell's Unborn Children (Protection) Bill received its second reading in February. Were you IN FAVOUR/AGAINST/NOT INTERESTED?
 (b) If you had an opinion on this Bill did you WRITE TO YOUR MP/WRITE TO A PARTY LEADER/WRITE TO MR POWELL/SIGN A PETITION IN FAVOUR OF THE BILL?
4. (a) Suicide is a morally neutral act. YES/NO
 (b) If NO, may it be acceptable in certain conditions? YES/NO

PLEASE CONTINUE ON PAGE 3

5. (a) Programmes for regular overseas aid should be guided by the interests of the United Kingdoms foreign policy? YES/NO
- (b) If YES, should these interests still guide action in response to major and acute emergencies? YES/NO
6. (a) The Church of England should be disestablished? YES/NO/INDIFFERENT
- (b) Do you understand the Bishop of Durham's views on the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection? YES/NO
- (c) If YES, do you agree with him? YES/NO
- (d) If YES (to 6c), do you think his views are compatible with his position as a bishop? YES/NO
7. (a) Is there one single question which you would have liked to add to this questionnaire? YES/NO
- (b) If YES, what is it?

PART 2

Some residential areas seem more poster-prone than others. Occasionally I see a whole terrace with posters of all sorts in each window: some seem to be permanent manifestos of the occupants' opinions, and others seem to be there because no one has bothered to remove them, eg a general election poster surviving in December 1984.

How do you feel about posters and do you display them yourself - on occasion or permanently? If you know of a particularly well-postered street nearby, or one house for that matter, a detailed inventory of posters displayed would be useful. Children could be particularly useful here if notes have to be taken.

If you are not using the Business Reply Label (enclosed) please address your correspondence to:

The Mass-Observation Archive
 University Library
 University of Sussex
 Falmer
 Brighton BN1 9QL
 East Sussex