

January 1983

## The Morality of Moral Education

C. T. Symes  
*University of Wollongong*

A. J. Fielding  
*University of Wollongong*

J. D. Mackenzie  
*University of Wollongong*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Symes, C. T., Fielding, A. J., & Mackenzie, J. D. (1983). The Morality of Moral Education. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.1983v8n1.5>

This Journal Article is posted at Research Online.  
<https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol8/iss1/5>

## THE MORALITY OF MORAL EDUCATION

C. T. Symes, A. J. Fielding and J. D. Mackenzie  
University of Wollongong

"Where did we go wrong?" puzzled Mrs Walten. "We always taught you the difference between right and wrong."

"Yes, you did," Ann said. She sat upright, feeling the baby kicking and stretching.

"You were top in Scripture at school. Several times."

"Once," said Ann.

(Beryl Bainbridge, *Sweet William*)

### The Background — Moral Education as the Traditional Source of Personal Development

One of the abiding interests of moral philosophy is how some measure of competence at existence can not only be attained, but attained to an excellent degree. The idea that man is born imperfect but may so order his life that he approaches a more complete state of perfection has been echoed in the words and deeds of men through the ages. It is reflected in our willingness to revere those men and women who in their lives neared the condition of existential entelechy. Throughout the ages, for instance, humankind has sought out heroes and martyrs who by virtue of their superior conduct and more impressive virtues have become the models upon which lesser men and women model their own lives.

One way, then, of viewing personal development is to look at it as a process of transition from states of less complete to more complete excellence at existence. Associated with this view is the notion that men may learn and apply competencies that enhance the degree to which excellence at existence may be attained. That education inevitably should find itself drawn into the discussion is not unexpected. Education is in the business of developing competencies of all sorts — intellectual, physical, moral, spiritual and so forth. Indeed, the matter of how individuals gain excellence at existence has become an issue for prolific examination, particularly among educationalists of a philosophic frame of mind and certainly, for many hundreds of years now, among those who see education as a controlling influence in determining man's spiritual destiny. Perhaps as a consequence of that examination, the notion that education

should be making better people — that is, people who are in some sense better as people than they would have become without education — has tended to percolate down from the ivory towers of orthodox philosophy to the centre of educational activity, the classroom. Take for example the statement by the New South Wales Department of Education (1973, p.11) noting especially the culminating phrase:

The central aim of education, which, with home and community, the school pursues, is

to guide individual development

in the context of society

through recognizable stages of development

towards perceptive understanding, mature judgement,  
responsible self-direction and moral autonomy.

It is reasonable to suppose that the authors of this statement view increasing "moral autonomy" as a measure of the extent to which a person has attained personal development. In fairness it should be recognized that the operative word used by the authors is "towards". They thereby recognize that moral autonomy is not only an end in itself, but is an end which one may approach rather than ever attain.

Connected with the notion of excellence at existence is that of experience of the 'good life'. Likewise, the good life and its manner of attainment, which proved so problematic to Socrates and which led Kant to characterize education as an eminently moral enterprise, have represented perennial focusses of thinking for educationalists, no more so than today. In that thinking, autonomy and "responsible self-direction" may have been substituted for the familiar Socratic epithet of *arete*, but the notion that education can somehow, and ought to, ameliorate the quality of life, is as familiar to modern educational thinking and practice as it was to Socrates. Thus far the educational thinking of today resembles that of classical antiquity. Where there is more evident dissonance between them is over how this ideal might be realized.

### The Achievement of Moral Excellence — Contagion versus Experience

Whilst moral excellence (*arete*) and responsible self-direction (autarky) might be similar goals, the routes to their achievement need not follow the same itineraries. What recommended itself to Socrates as the pathway to moral excellence is not necessarily one that the modern educationalist might urge. Yet moral education in keeping with the Judeo-Christian

tradition, has largely been guided either by some version of the Socratic notion that the good life is the life of reason, or by the Bible. But either guide requires in turn justification; we need some reason to accept (a) that a reasonable and rational man will as a matter of course exemplify moral excellence in his conduct, the so-called "rationality entails morality argument" (Siegel, 1978, p.51) or (b) that mastery learning of the biblical message will likewise create morally excellent men. Both the idea that the development of reason is conducive to moral excellence, and the idea that living the good life is dependent upon a religious upbringing have been doubted (most recently by Hirst, 1965 & Schofield, 1972). Instead of seeing the development of the good life as occurring more or less with the development of reason, or with exposure to the moral injunctions of the Bible, some educationalists now see more merit in teaching that life through direct experience and in a way which is largely non-didactic. Aspects of so-called personal development courses, now part of the curriculum in many schools, are a step in this direction. Unlike preceding attempts to teach the good life, these courses confront students with the kinds of moral conflicts they are likely to encounter in the normal course of living and will have to settle amicably if they are not to bring disruption to their own and other people's lives. This change in approach is hard to dissociate from changes both in values and in understanding of how values relate to behavior. The period since the late 1960s has seen important changes in values from which the various so-called liberation movements were born. Principal amongst these is that associated with women. With its often belligerent and urgent appeal to renounce the stereotyped assumptions about the nature of womanhood, this movement has by the early 1980s led to a new encoding of the morality that should persist between men and women.

To use a neologism, there has been in the last decade or so a marked 'androgynisation' of our society. This, in addition to the new tolerance of homosexuality, and other activities that formerly would have been regarded as unnatural has meant that society at large has become cognisant of a range of living styles that were formerly quarantined from the public; or if they were not, there was considerable disapprobation associated with them. But if this disreputation with past moral standards represents the defeat of archaic principles of living, it can also be seen as yet another development in the direction of a more "open society", at least as Popper (1962, p.173) has defined it. For it is the very characteristic of an increasingly "open society" that there are more situations on which the mores do not decide, in which the individual has to make a moral choice; that,

in fact, an expanding "standards vacuum" exists. And this can be troublesome to those who would rather that the principles of life were externally formulated; and that the individual did not have to formulate for himself those principles, thereby facing a degree of personal responsibility never encountered in tribal society (i.e., a society of minimal openness). With good reason, then, which need not necessarily be construed as being over paternalist, some educationalists feel that in an epoch of rapid social change, where people are being exposed to a whole range of "possible conducts" that are considered all equally legitimate and defensible, the need for some style of moral education is even more apparent (Niblett, 1970; King, 1977). What concerns us is the style that that education should take. After all, if neither the Bible nor reason provides an arbiter of conduct, then we are adrift in a standards vacuum; and that is an uncomfortable prospect.

### The Teacher and Moral Education

But whatever the form it eventually takes — direct or indirect — the justification for a morally accented education rests on the assumption that an acceptable code of conduct cannot be acquired in a haphazard manner during the ordinary course of life; or that if it can, then education can improve not only on the processes of its acquisition but also upon what is acquired. Inherent in this assumption is the notion that people need moral direction in their lives if they are to avoid a condition of desultoriness; that in fact people are born human beings and only learn, through exposure to morality and knowledge, to become persons; they do not do so as a measure of their instincts (Langford, 1973, p.3). With one implication of this last notion we have no particular quarrel; being a person is so obviously related to being a member of a society and its culture than being simply a result of genetics. The notion that men have an inherent need for external moral direction, however, smacks very much of the tradition of original sin; of the doctrine that man is born in a condition of moral inadequacy and needs nurturing by external moral influences if he is to overcome that inadequacy. Even if this doctrine were conceded, it is not clear how it can be shown that one external influence is more efficacious than another. In particular, how is it to be shown that teachers are somehow better qualified when it comes to conducting moral education than other members of the community, certainly say, than parents? Why this should be thought to be so, especially when the whole area of morality is so fraught with ambiguities and doubts that the making of moral judgements is a notoriously diffi-

cult task is worth pondering in itself. Physics and chemistry, whether or not they consist of "well-tested facts" and "empirically-based theories" as Watt (1976, p.18) thinks (contrast Popper, 1965, p.53) do include substantial and largely uncontroversial bodies of material vouched for by generally esteemed institutions; but neither of these things is true of morality. Consequently, one wonders whence teachers are supposed to have derived their alleged authority and expertise in matters of morality. Presumably it is ordinary experience which forms the backcloth of most people's engagement with the moral dimension of living. Indeed, for a significant percentage of teachers, those who have led relatively closetted lives within schools, universities and colleges, it may be argued with some force that this backcloth of experience is markedly incomplete. Then there is the question, much emphasized by sociologists, that the ethos of education, being largely managed by middle class teachers, has a value bias that reflects that class, and therefore serves to penalize the opportunities of those, who, through no fault of their own other than an accident of birth, have been brought up with values conflicting with that bias (Halsey, 1970).

But perhaps the more pertinent point to be stressed is the all pervasive nature of morality as an ingredient in living. Dewey, for instance, argues that virtually all human action has a basis in some act of valuation or in estimating the worth of alternative valuative acts. According to Archambault (1964, p.xix), it is the Deweyan position that, "Not only is the ethical sphere continuous with the practical, but each are continuous with means . . . Ends are projected consequences of action in real experience, not separate states belonging to a future and different experience." From this position it follows that it would be a gross distortion of existential reality to attempt to dissect out from experience those experiences of a peculiarly moral kind. As both Popper (1965) and Polanyi (1972) have pointed out, all knowledge (including science) is rooted in human action and value judgement for its discovery and investigation. There is, then, no body of 'moral knowledge' that is distinct from knowledge in general in this sense. And in accord with this position of Dewey, it would be necessary in any course of educational action to consider the moral dimensions of all that is taught. After all, if morality is common to all human endeavours, it is better to learn to live with it in all those endeavours — if that is agreed as a more authentic representation of reality — than select out morality for special treatment in the curriculum and assume that teachers as one of very many public groups are best equipped to deal with it. Even if it were true that teachers, by virtue

of their special training and study and their special concern for the young, constituted a public group possessing superior knowledge and skill of how to conduct moral education, the separate treatment of morality in the curriculum, even as part of a course in personal development, seems in need of defence. Moral development pervades all the activities of the child in an even more profound sense than does linguistic development. Hence, moral education, like linguistic education, needs to be incorporated in all curricular activities. Just as every teacher is a teacher of English, every teacher is a teacher of morality. Nonetheless, it remains an open question whether there is a need for special programmes of moral education. Language arts, although pervasive, have a particular cognitive content which justifies their place as a separate curricular discipline. But morality, we have argued, does not. Further, there is reason to believe that a direct attempt to teach morality is not likely to be successful. Moral development cannot occur, as it were, *in vitro* (cf. Peters, 1974).

On a number of counts, then, it would appear easier to criticize than to defend the existence of personal development courses in schools, especially, as seems generally the case, when such courses give emphasis to the moral dimension of personal development. From the pedagogical point of view, there are serious objections to according separate status to these courses. There are no acknowledged moral experts, whereas there clearly are, for example, people who know more than others about the different dialects and registers of language. Indeed, moral "knowledge" is distinctly different from the kinds of knowledge imparted in other parts of the curriculum. The test of moral excellence is not theoretical and cognitive, but existential and practical: the good person differs from the bad not by giving different answers to questions, but rather by living differently. Further, morality is embedded in and pervades all human activity, and moral questions arise in all parts of the curriculum (Dewey, 1958, p.183). Beyond these, there is the further troublesome question of whether the teacher's expertise in the area is necessarily better (whether indeed it may be worse) than that of others in the community.

It remains the object of this paper, then, to look at the question of personal development in general and moral development in particular in what we hope will be a constructive way and one which might point up a number of the less evident pitfalls for schools attempting to implement courses of this kind. Our concern will be to examine the notions of individuality and to try to deduce connections between this notion and the notion of personal development. The method of attack will

echo Rawls' (1971) treatment of that other and not unrelated concept of justice. Like Rawls, we will try to get back to first principles by imagining that a "veil of ignorance" hangs around the whole matter of personal development.

### Individuality — Personal and Social

It will be taken as a premiss that when existence is stripped to its very core, what remains is a corporeal frame wherein consciousness of the world resides. Now whether that consciousness is an extension of the physical body, or a separate entity entirely, is taken as irrelevant to the current debate. What can be said is that from a phenomenological point of view whilst consciousness allows the world to be experienced and things outside the framework of the self to be imbibed, there is really no escaping the boundaries of one's personal consciousness. When it comes down to it, *contra* Donne, each man is very much an island on which consciousness, so to speak, has become marooned. Unlike a real island, though, it is impossible for a man to completely leave the island-home of his existence (as it were to detach himself from his self), or for other people to travel to that island, land on its shores, inspect its interior terrain and reach a familiarity with it equal to that possessed by its owner. For as yet we lack the means of getting totally inside another's consciousness. But whilst that might be the case it is true also that each existential island is a member of an archipelago. For although there are certain aspects of anyone's personal experience that must remain sealed from his fellows, in that part of the archipelago of humanity occupied by each person there is a good deal of trading and travelling. Life for each one of us is a virtual argosy. Not only does each of us want others to visit his particular island and savour its attractions, but also most of us have a desire to be invited to other islands. Such tourism is of course the stuff of social life. But whilst virtually all men want to be at the heart of a vigorous tourist trade, most would not want to have their islands totally surrounded and over-run by tourists such that they are denied any autonomous control over their lives. The ethics of imperialism are as dubious a principle to follow in man's social life as they are in politics. Yet so far as individual existence is concerned, such a principle may be a key to the explanation of the meaning of existence, or it may provide insight into the question as to why uniqueness of individual type in personality terms has evolved alongside a ubiquitous sociability. For my consciousness tells me that, "I am the centre of all things" (Ardrey, 1976, p.203). And, without this "indefensibly irrational illusion of central position . . . we should be lost . . . Without it we should die as individuals, become

extinct as a species" (ibid., p.204). But that same manifest experience of personal individuality through which a man is enabled to tolerate knowledge of the fact of his own existence against the daunting evidence of mortality requires a similar centrality of position of a man's parent society (ibid., p.205). Thus, man's need for personal and social individuality, acting as they appear to act as his means of defence against the forces of nihilism, anomie and existential anxiety and guilt, point up the enigma of man *qua moral agent* against the backdrop of a planet otherwise populated, apparently, by non-sentient forms of life. It is as though man is determined to find a sanctuary in his fellow men that will offset the abyss of fear generated by his knowledge of his own existence, an existence that is as fragile and uncertain in its experiential content as it is finite in its duration. Men are thus forced back on themselves to resist that temptation to self-annihilation that comes from grasping the all too discomfiting magnitude of their insignificance. And in so doing, they have invested a preciousness in their own kind. Thus each individual, both as a resident of his personal island home and as a member of an interacting archipelago of human islands, feels that he has rights and privileges of both personal and social kinds. In order to quell those doubts about the authenticity of his own existence, as a means of assuring himself that his own existence stands as a measure of existential meaning, a man tries so to conduct his affairs such that his rights and privileges are protected from possible seige and extirpation. And it is out of the desire that those rights and privileges are not adversely interfered with, that a moral code of entry comes to be cast. That code may be regarded as a social contract designed to guarantee the independence of individuality, both as a personal and social possession, should it be threatened. But what is meant by individuality apart from the notions that it has both personal and social aspects? Does it exist as an independent island state? And if so, how does it come to be realized in human experience?

### Individuality and Socialization

Whilst it is not impossible in practice to envisage a life that as a matter of fact is sealed off from one's fellow human beings, either by force of circumstances like a Robinson Crusoe or by choice like a hermit, the notion that such persons possess a socially viable individuality is difficult to conceive. A Robinson Crusoe might be an 'independent island state', totally self-governed, but given his complete lack of human contact the opportunities for revealing and developing his individuality are entirely absent. Indeed, his individuality immediately is put at risk by his

separation from other men. For individuality is not only revealed in the context of social life, it cannot develop except in that context. But how and under what circumstances is that individuality revealed? Presumably it is in situations of moral dilemma, when certain held imperatives have to be applied to contrasting or conflicting situations, that individuality is most prone to exposure. It is at such times in our lives that our capacity to attract or repulse tourists to our island is advertised and made evident. At these times the individual tends to reveal his capacity:

- (a) to acknowledge that others have rights and privileges that need to be observed impartially and without decided self-interest, and
- (b) to spring to the defence of others when their island is under that threat.

What is ordinarily called loyalty, then, is frequently a good curtain raiser on one's individuality. Not that that loyalty need always operate for the sake and benefit of others. There are times when loyalty to the self can be a positive virtue, for instance in circumstances where the actions of others threaten to annihilate the integrity of one's personality. Indeed, the absence of loyalty to one's self, as Wilson, Williams and Sugarman (1967) have pointed out, can be as much a sign of moral incompleteness in the individual as is the total disregard for the rights and privileges of others.

Loyalty, however expressive of virtue that it might be in certain contexts, hardly provides great insight into the nature of individuality. It is a factor in sustaining the integrity of the personal and social dimensions of individuality in a restricted category of situations. More significantly, to talk of individuality is clearly to talk of a paradox; for our notion of what we are, what might be the nature of that 'self' occupying central position is, as Hill (1972, p.52) has reminded us, as much a product of how others see us as it is a product of our private speculations about the nature of our individuality. It is almost as if our individuality has its provenance as much in other people as it does in ourselves; it is as though the island-home of individuality is formed from the echo that reverberates back and forth between ourselves and that social archipelago of which we are members. To put the matter simply, other people are the sound board of our own individuality. For it is through others that we come to know ourselves; it is only in interacting with others and becoming sensitive to the kinds of imperatives that the interaction gives birth to, that what we experience as individuality is launched into existence.

In looking through our "veil of ignorance" it has become apparent that individuality as personal style develops within the context of social interaction and the social arrangements we call relationships. Each of us has his own way of expressing his individuality, his own personal style. There is a degree of creativity involved in the development of individuality. The individual can impress and fingerprint the context of social interaction and relationship with his own style of living; he can become, indeed needs to become unique within the social group. At the same time, his uniqueness can become a contributing factor fostering group cohesiveness and identity by providing the group with a focus of interest and with a motivation to engage in social discourse with the promise of enhanced novelty and affect. For a social group is a system of interacting unique individuals offering effective and pleasurable surprise to those who participate authentically in the interaction, always provided that one's uniqueness is directed generally towards maintaining social cohesiveness and not social disintegration. Which is to say that the range of impressions that the individual can bring to bear on the social context, with a view to experiencing and augmenting individuality, is limited; the individual does not have *carte blanche* to conduct his life in whatever way he sees fit. Part of his developed individuality is his recognition that his individuality is dependent for its continuance in experience on the preservation of the individuality of others.

The freedom to express individuality is trammelled, then, by the obligations of social membership and by the need for commitment to the moral code that that membership involves. Kuhn (1963) would perhaps call this most basic of obligations the "essential tension" of life. For just as Kuhn has seen that the behaviour of scientists can be iconoclastic whilst the conventions of science are flexible enough to accommodate it, so too the same principle can be seen to pertain in life in general. Directly those conventions lose their flexibility, however, or the iconoclasm involved becomes too widely deviant, prohibitions are called into play. How these prohibitions might, in part, shed light on the nature of individuality is worth further exploration.

### Individuality as the Resolution of Two Vectors

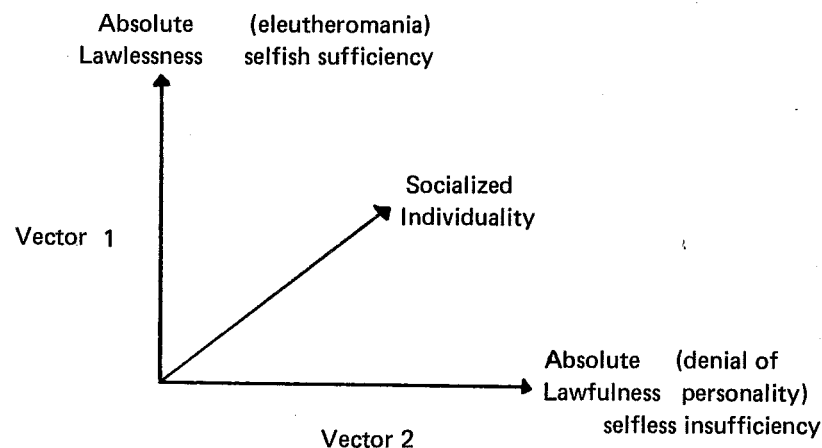
The realization of individuality can be regarded as being analogous to the resolution of two vectors. The first vector represents the pursuit of absolute lawlessness, the individual regarding himself as the sole occupant of central position. All other people and indeed the remainder of

the universe must be subordinated to his needs and wants. Such a form of existence is within the capacity of the individual to pursue provided:

- (a) he refuses to become a member of orthodox society and society is sufficiently *laissez-faire* as to tolerate such a refusal. Children reared by totally indulgent parents may provide such a 'society' to some extent and for a limited number of years;
- (b) he is able to ignore the consequences of consistently defying society's moral and legal codes by being able to keep at arm's length society's means of preventing him from so defying its codes;
- (c) he is able to exercise power over society through military, religious, charismatic or some other form of social control, and bring persons round to his way of thinking.

By our use of the term 'lawlessness vector' is meant the pursuit of total egoism and supreme self-interest. Clearly if everyone pursued it relentlessly, social experience would not be possible. The experience of existence would be chaotic rather than cohesive (Freeman, 1977; see also Angyal, 1958). By contrast to it, the second vector 'lawfulness' is formed from that behaviour which flows from strict observance of those ordinances that constitute the moral code of society. By and large, it is this vector that by its pursuit allows the development of cohesion and stability in society. Pursued exclusively of each other, we would argue, both vectors lend themselves to the creation of undesirable social conditions. Vector 1 has as its endpoint the establishment of a general eleutheromania in a population; that is, a form of anarchy in which each person seeks absolute freedom for himself regardless of the consequences this has for others. Vector 2 has as its endpoint the establishment of uncompromising totalitarianism in which the human personality is denied and existence is claimed as absolutely determined independently of the intervention of man. Vector 1 thus represents total self-interest and Vector 2 total disinterest in self.

If the resolution of these two vectors represents the essential tension of life, then it is possible to represent the resolution of that tension as follows:



And of course the extent of the 'slope' of the resultant vector would provide a representation of the closedness or orderliness of a given society. Thus, one would suppose that a thoroughly "closed" tribalistic society, like that of the Sparta described by Plutarch, would be represented by a resultant vector of minimum slope; whereas a decadent, hedonistic society, one in which utter self-interest prevailed, would be one of maximum slope. We would hasten to add that both societies represent an unsatisfactory resolution between the extremes of absolute self-sufficiency and selfless insufficiency.

More satisfactory in this respect is the conclusion that the diagram serves to emphasise: that the pursuit of personal expression occurs, within wide margins, within the constraints imposed by social membership. And we think it adds specificity to the matter to talk not so much of individuality but of 'socialized individuality', a concept that is not dissimilar from that of Brameld's "social self realization" (1971, p.421). For it seems clear from the foregoing arguments that there can be no such thing as a society without individuals; i.e. society exists only if it contains people possessing and expressing individuality, just as there can be no such thing as individuality if there is no society but merely an aggregate of people who are slaves to the collective will.

Now in societies oriented towards totalitarianism the problem of educating people towards socialized individuality is comparatively small. The emphasis is on socialization (lawfulness), and on the individual finding



himself in the collective purpose of the society of which he is a member. In pluralistic societies the problem reaches monumental proportions. For one thing the range of tolerance of optional variation in lifestyle, as was mentioned earlier, has become staggeringly large. Whereas in other civilizations and societies there have perhaps been more actual differences between lifestyles (the lifestyles of a duke and a washerwoman in Regency England were very different from each other), these differences were not chosen by the individuals concerned. A society which cannot accommodate a considerable degree of optional variation — indeed, of what for some parts of the society is deviancy — offends against an essential ethic of pluralism. It is implicitly understood in such societies that their defining attribute, *par excellence*, and that which distinguishes them from totalitarian societies, is their overriding support for optional variety of lifestyle, including support for those civil rights which are necessary for this e.g., freedom of religious and political choice as a matter of individual conscience and freedom to participate in related activities. When does individual freedom become eleutheromania? How is the untrammelled cult of personality to be avoided? Or, how is a society, if it wishes, to guard against compromising individual freedoms? Indeed, is it possible to find for these questions answers which possess morally justifiable content? It may be that the environment of formal education, at least as currently practised, is simply inadequate as a forum of debate and a source of experience so far as its capacity to deal with these questions is concerned.

### Education at the Crossroads of Morality

What now has to be asked is whether education can, in things like personal development courses, afford a more effective resolution between these two vectors and make for better socialized individuals than perhaps schooling has done in the past? Again, surrounding the whole issue of education's capacity in this area with a veil of ignorance can be somewhat enlightening. For it is important as a first step to ascribe weight to the power of real influence that education can potentially have on the development of the individual. Current definitions of education tend to see education as being in the business of epistemological evangelism, of converting individuals to cognitive points of view. It is the *sine qua non* of education that it **have** an influence of some kind. But of course that influence need not be so very great. The school is competing with the influences of home, peer group, media and neighbourhood in contributing to the moral development of the child. There is reason to doubt whether

the domain of cognitive change, which is education's natural home, is of overwhelming importance in moral development. For at least 40% of the occasions on which we are required to, it seems we do not act in conformity with our proclaimed morality (Eysenck, 1964). Further, it is of the very essence of morality that people can know perfectly well what to do in situations of moral dilemma, and yet not do it (Snook, 1973, p.55). Even if the school can induce cognitive changes in its pupils — improve their proclaimed moral codes, as judged presumably by some further standard approved by the teacher — there is little reason to suppose that cognitive changes will render the pupils any more virtuous or in command of the faculty of living.

But even if there were some way of resolving such problems, this is still only scratching the surface of the whole very complicated issue of personal development. For even if it could be discovered that school does have significant rather than marginal influence, at least in some of the areas of its endeavours, thus vindicating the worth of personal development courses, then there is the further matter of whether the values of social membership can be acquired best *in situ* or *in vitro*. It is a matter of proving whether in making mock existential decisions and in playing emotional 'war games' in the classrooms the experience gained can in any way be transferred to the real world of human relationships — that world which is uncontrived and unable to protect the individual from the consequences of his actions; that *in vitro* is, in fact, a useful baptism for *in situ*. But even if it can be shown that experience in the former can augment the capacity in the latter, there is still the problem of a teacher acting as an agent of a code of accepted morality. In a society in which there is a clear code of accepted morality — a society of low slope, in terms of the diagram — the teacher could "rubber stamp" the pupil's decision to act in accordance with that morality. But this is precisely what is condemned by pluralistic ethics, for it impairs the capacity of the pupil to take original and independently derived courses of action; and it is this capacity which is itself valued by pluralism in its advocacy of the individuality vector. Thus for the teacher to act as an agent of accepted morality cannot be socially acceptable except in societies where individuality, as a matter of sociopolitical ideology, is strenuously suppressed.

Can teachers legitimately be spokesmen for the social membership vector when the values forming the magnitude and direction of that vector are increasingly ambivalent, nebulous and in flux? For, society, within representative democracies, as mentioned earlier, is marked by an



acceptance of moderate pluralism — of lifestyle, political preference, and value system, at least an acceptance in principle if not always in actuality. To this extent, society is increasingly value-diverse. There are groups in society who on principle would rather don a permissive set of values, others who are distinctly puritanical in their outlook, and still others who pursue one of the many possible compromise value systems residing between the two. From this it follows that in their actual lives students will tend to gravitate towards that group in society which most accords with their vision of the good life, thus suggesting that teachers perhaps cannot claim the right to indicate either overtly or covertly which way of life is to be rubber stamped and which is not. Perhaps all that teachers have the right to do is present the options, smorgasbord style, as they presently exist on the social membership vector, and leave it at that. Moral educators should not presume that the tradesman cannot be as happy in the long run of life as the professional man, or that a life of continuous competition in the business world is as fulfilling as a life of modest means lived in a spirit of social co-operation and mutual helping. Nor need we expect there to be a single answer to the question of how a person can best apply himself to the task of daily living and of aiding his fellows in solving the manifest problems of humanity. Is stoicism more worthy than epicurianism; realism than idealism; pragmatism than romanticism; hedonism than asceticism; heroism than meekness? Or do all of these have their merits and attractions for different sorts of men and women having different dispositions towards the meaning of their individuality? For there are many styles of living, and many might choose to court several of these in the one life rather than be bound to any one of them. It need not be the case that one style of life is demonstrably better or more right than all others. The only virtue in such circumstances that therefore needs to be taught is tolerance, the tolerance that allows the individual his particular interpretation of living in a way that is neither interfered with nor interferes with the rights of others, this latter qualification being an obvious limit on one's possible behaviour if the eleanoromania vector of absolute lawlessness is to be avoided. The absence of such tolerance would mean that the individual's life options would be trammelled to a degree unacceptable if the condition of pluralism is to be maintained. On the other hand, there is tolerance and tolerance, and it is plain that its existence is only defensible if it is also accompanied by a sound rationale of why it is certain life-paths, so to speak, have the right to exist. Otherwise tolerance becomes the licence to adopt whatever life-path one chooses to adopt, a plainly intolerable situation. What emerges out of all this is that perhaps the only moral imperative which

can, with some certainty, be applied in uncompromising term is to ensure that students are offered an unfettered an opportunity as possible:

- (a) to come to know which options do exist as proposals for living; and
- (b) why some of these options are more (or as equally) legitimate and defensible than others.

But even more important than just exposing students to these options, and some of the reasons why behind them, is the fact that teacher's should also supply their students with the capacity to evaluate these options in the light of their **own** experience of life, otherwise they will simply shop around and be prey to that conduct that has most immediate appeal. If teachers do not do this, then they are abrogating upon a responsibility to foster a cognitive ability that it has been argued in this paper, is a friend to all epistemological endeavours, not just the moral. If there is any morality at all in moral education then the primary emphasis should be on developing the individual's capacity to evaluate and make reasoned judgments about life's decisions. Of course that might not guarantee that the students will *ipso facto* take away from the school a moral competency that will enable him to reduce all life's problems to solvable proportions; but no competency gained at school ever does that. On the other hand, unless the focus in moral education programmes (and education in general) is on the student fending and learning about life's options, for himself, then there is a real danger of such education turning into the imposition of one teacher's personal catechism, on the student, and for that, there is only one word, immoral!

## References

- ANGYAL, A. *Foundations for a science of personality*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958.
- ARCHAMBAULT, R. D. *Philosophical analysis and education*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964.
- ARDREY, R. *The hunting hypothesis*. London: Collins, 1976.
- BRAMELD, T. *Patterns of educational philosophy*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971.
- DEWEY, J. *Philosophy of education*. Totowa, New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams, 1958.
- EYSENCK, H. J. *Crime and personality*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964.

- FREEMAN, H. Egoism, community and rational moral education. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, October 1977, 9, 2, 1-18.
- HALSEY, A. H. The sociology of moral education. In W. R. Niblett (Ed.), *Moral education in a changing society*, London: Faber & Faber, 1970.
- HILL, B. V. Teaching children to make moral decisions. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 1972, 4, 2, 47-56.
- HIRST, P. Morals, religion and the maintained school. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 1965, 14, 1, 5-18.
- KUHN, T. S. The essential tension: Tradition and innovation in scientific research. In C. W. Taylor, & F. Barron (Eds.), *Scientific creativity: Its recognition and development*, New York: John Wiley, 1963.
- KING, E. Education for a communications society. In E. King (Ed.), *Reorganising education: Management and participation for change*, SAGE Annual Review of Social Change and Educational Change, London: SAGE Publications, 1977. (Vol. 1)
- LANGFORD, G. The concept of education. In G. Langford, & D. J. O'Connor (Eds.), *New essays in the philosophy of education*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973.
- New South Wales Department of Education. *Aims of education*. Sydney: Department of Education, 1973.
- NIBLETT, W. R. Some problems in moral education. In W. R. Niblett (Ed.), *Moral education in a changing world*. London: Faber & Faber, 1970.
- PETERS, R. S. *Psychology and ethical development*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1974.
- POLANYI, M. *Personal knowledge*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972.
- POPPER, K. R. *The open society and its enemies*. London: 1962.
- POPPER, K. R. *Conjectures and refutations*. New York: Harper & Row, 1965.
- RAWLS, J. *A theory of justice*. London: Oxford University Press, 1971.
- SIEGEL, H. Is it rational to be immoral. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 1978, 10, 3, 51-61.
- SCHOFIELD, H. *Philosophy of education: An introduction*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1972.
- SNOOK, I. A. Moral education. In J. V. D.Cruz, & P. J. Sheehan (Eds.), *Concepts in education*, Melbourne: Twentieth Century, 1973.
- WATT, A. J. *Rational moral education*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1976.
- WILSON, J., WILLIAMS, N., & SUGARMAN, B. H. *Introduction to moral education*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967.

## BOOK REVIEW

*Revised by E. B. Thornton*

*Western Australian College of Advanced Education*

### TOWARDS EQUALITY: PROGRESS BY GIRLS IN MATHEMATICS IN AUSTRALIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Jillian D. Moss ACER 1982

Experts in educational measurement in Australia tend to cherish two major illusions regarding mathematics. One is to think that their **testing** activities give them the right to prescribe about **teaching** and **learning** mathematics, of which they appear to know relatively little. The other is to think that mathematics learning is easy to measure!

Alas, labouring under this delusion, the book under review seeks to find evidence about girls and mathematics by analyzing the Australian data from the 1964 IEA international comparative test investigation project and from a 1978 project, which used basically the same tests. Nevertheless, there are some interesting features in Moss's book.

The first two chapters outline the situation and review the literature. There is some worthwhile work on this subject by mathematics educators, and the second chapter may point the reader towards it. The third chapter describes the samples and the test instruments. The IEA projects tested at age 13 and at terminal secondary level, and the results for these two age levels form the subject matter of the following two chapters. Then there is a chapter on 'Holding Power and Yield'. Some results gleaned from these three chapters include:

- At age 13, boys did better on the sub-tests labelled 'geometry', 'Advanced Arithmetic' and 'Higher Mental Processes', and girls excelled on those for 'Basic Arithmetic', 'Lower Mental Processes' and 'Algebra'.
- Over the 14 years between the IEA and Australian projects there were increases for both boys and girls in Year 12 in the 'Yield', defined as the area under the cumulative percentile curve of Year Cohort against Score.
- A Multiple Classification Analysis, assuming 'no interaction among predictors' showed that "the predictors behaved in a similar manner for the two sexes in each case", and, when sex was included as a