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Title of Thesis/Project/Extended Essay

Content and Procedure in Moral Education

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June 22, 1994

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Before entering into a discussion of content and procedure in moral education, a brief examination of the rational basis for moral knowledge is undertaken. This examination begins with a description of the human predicament, a universal condition involving such givens as emotions, fears, wants, needs and environment. Because of the nature of this human predicament and the fact that man lives in groups, conflicts arise. The occasion for morality is to ameliorate the human predicament through the use of reason rather than by force or coercion. The use of reason presupposes certain basic principles which are referred to as the principles of rationality. A person who adheres to these principles is considered rational and has achieved a necessary prerequisite for entering into more complicated forms of discourse such as science, mathematics and morality. To engage in moral discourse one must adhere to the basic principles of morality. These moral principles are not only of a procedural nature, but also inherent in these principles is some basic content.

The 'habitual' and 'rational' forms of morality are also discussed with an investigation of the alleged paradox of moral education. It is pointed out that there is no
paradox in moral education but rather a series of very complex problems which require careful study.

Problems with the use of 'procedure-only' or 'content-only' approaches are pointed out. Among other problems 'procedure-only' approaches often communicate to the young that all of morality is merely subject to personal tastes, opinions or views. 'Content-only' approaches often tend to be rather authoritarian and may run into problems with regard to indoctrination.

A system is suggested which allows for the appropriate use of these two approaches along with rational moral training for the total moral development of an individual from infancy to adulthood.

A discussion of religious 'education' and rational moral education is undertaken, pointing out reasons why the former cannot substitute for the latter and thereby reasserting the conviction that content and procedure based on the basic principles of morality are the only legitimate means of providing for moral education.

A brief summary is given with a statement on the importance of training in the moral development of a child and the place of content and procedure in moral education.
Argument and teaching, we may suspect, are not powerful with all men, but the soul of the student must first have been cultivated by means of habits for noble joy and noble hatred, like earth which is to nourish the seed. For he who lives as passion directs will not hear argument that dissuades him, nor understand it if he does...the character, then, must somehow be there already with a kinship to virtue, loving what is noble and hating what is base.

Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, X, 9.
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INTRODUCTION

Nancy and Theodore Sizer once wrote:

There was a time when 'moral problems' were recognized as the core of formal schooling. These problems were cast in sectarian religious molds, and youngsters were 'taught' moral conduct...there was an appealing simplicity to their task: 'right' and 'wrong' were clear and undisputed and were to be learned directly. If one could recite righteous precepts, one would practise them--or so the crude pedagogy of the day implied. The nineteenth-century teacher sermonized, and his charges listened (sometimes) and learned (some things). For a class of people it worked; it took hold. But was it moral? (Nancy and Theodore Sizer, 1970, p. 3)

In examining the role of content and procedure in moral education one must be prepared to answer the above question posed by the Sizers. What do we mean when we speak of moral education? Is it the passing on of specific content in the form of numerous rules with a view to having the learner obey these without question? Or, is it the passing on of a system of procedures based on certain principles which the learner can use to obtain his/her own content? Is there a middle way between these two extremes: (1) allegiance to a moral code resulting in a relatively narrow range of judgements and including habitual action, and (2) allegiance to a procedure for making moral judgements resulting in a relatively broad range of judgements. These questions have been the subject of serious

*NOTE: Throughout this essay I use the masculine pronoun for "a person" recognizing that this may appear sexist, I use this pronoun merely as an analytic convention and do not mean thereby to exclude the feminine gender.
debate since the time of Plato and Aristotle and remain today the centre of much controversy in moral education. This is the controversy examined in this discourse to clarify our ideas regarding the proper role of content and procedure in moral education.

We begin this discourse with a brief examination of the rational basis for content and procedure in moral education. We go on to discuss the 'habitual' and 'rational' forms of education that result when emphasis is placed exclusively on content or procedure respectively. We follow with an investigation of the alleged paradox of moral education. We then go on to examine the problems with 'procedure-only' and 'content-only' approaches and then suggest a system which will allow for the appropriate use of these two approaches along with rational moral training in the total moral development of an individual from infancy to adulthood.

We go on with a brief summary and a statement on the importance of training in the moral development of a child and the place of content and procedure in moral education. Finally we proceed to discuss religious 'education' and rational moral education and point out reasons why the former cannot be a substitute for the latter and thereby reassert our conviction that content and procedure based on the basic principles of morality are the only legitimate means of providing for moral education.
"In the past few years there has been a general resurgence of interest in moral education. Serious confusion and disagreement remain, however, about its exact nature and scope" (Cochrane, Hamm and Kazepides, 1979, p. 1). It is imperative, therefore, that before entering into a discussion of content and procedure in moral education, an examination of the rational basis for moral knowledge is undertaken to avoid confusion.

This chapter begins with a brief description of the human predicament, a universal condition involving such given as emotions, fears, wants, needs, and environment. Because of the nature of this human predicament and the fact than man lives in groups, conflicts arise. It is suggested that the occasion for morality is to ameliorate the human predicament through the use of reason rather than by coercion or force. The use of reason presupposes certain basic principles which are referred to as the principles of rationality. These principles are utilized whenever man attempts to reason, or understand, or hold discourse with others. A person who adheres to these principles has achieved a necessary prerequisite for entering into more complicated forms of discourse such as Science, Mathematics, and Morality.
Much as a scientist is guided by the principles guiding scientific enquiry, so it is that in order to engage in moral discourse, it is necessary to adhere to the basic principles of morality. Finally, it is argued that moral principles are not only of a procedural nature, in that they show us how to go about obtaining moral judgements, but also inherent in these principles is some basic moral content.

The Human Predicament

Though there is great diversity in human interests and desires, it is obvious that certain basic fears, needs and interests are common to all mankind. A.M. Loring states:

We believe, or take it for granted, that besides immediate pain, such experiences as fear and frustration are universally disagreeable, and that the sense of physical well-being, confidence, and the ability to do what we want to do are universally agreeable. This body of ideas, so much part of our human thinking that it usually passes unnoticed, I call 'The Basic Values Assumption' (Loring, 1966, p. 19).

Hamm and Daniels explain that, "this 'Basic Values Assumption' forms a solid basis for morality" (Hamm and Daniels, 1979, p. 21). They further elaborate on Loring's view in stating that mankind is beset by a common set of fears such as fear of pain, injury, death, interference with purposes and deprivation of pleasures. Furthermore, there is a common set of wants - to be free, fed, clothed, healthy, enjoy sexual expression and associate with fellow human beings. Although one would find difficulty in undermin-
ing the truth of these basic ideas more can be said of the 
human condition. It is the human condition which Kazepides 
articulates in his rather detailed list of universal human 
beliefs. He states:

Every human being believes that he exists, 
has a body with limbs, a head, and sense 
organs that enable him to perceive the world; 
that he has needs, desires, appetites, tastes, 
likes and dislikes; that other people exist, 
similarly equipped; that there is a world of 
objects, plants and animals, some of which he 
and other humans use for their purposes; that 
all human beings are vulnerable (may be 
injured, constrained or killed), fallible 
(make mistakes in perception, judgement, choice, 
planning, acting, etc.), and have limited 
knowledge, skills, aptitudes, virtues, etc.; 
that all humans are born in need of care due 
to their physical, social and intellectual 
immaturity; that all humans, as members of 
society, may have conflicting desires, wants, 
interests and needs; that all humans communi­cate through language and can be informed, 
guided, corrected and admonished or misinformed, 
misguided, deceived and misled; that all humans 
experience emotions such as fear, shame, pride, 
envy, jealousy and the like; that no human can 
avoid those situations where he has to choose 
between alternative beliefs, suggestions, rules, 
plans, courses of action and the like. 
(Kazepides, 1979, p. 61).

Kazepides goes on to explain that these beliefs are 
universally held, that is, no one can be exempted from them 
without "seriously risking his status as a human being" 
(Kazepides, 1979, p. 61). It may be said that the human 
condition sets "the boundaries of human possibilities; and, 
consequently, the boundaries of our moral code and our social 
and educational policies" (Kazepides, 1979, p. 61). The 
human condition is what we refer to as the human predicament
for it is the 'state of affairs' into which we are born. As previously mentioned it is not ours to choose, reject or abandon. What we as intelligent reasoning creatures do in this predicament is, however, another matter.

The Occasion for Morality

Unlike animals, which merely react to the conditions they find themselves in, man is a reasoning creature capable of engaging in rational thought. R.S. Peters states that:

Man is thus a creature who lives under the demands of reason. He can, of course, be unreasonable or irrational; but these terms are only intelligible as falling short of reason...The demands of reason are not just an option available to the reflective. Any man who emerges from infancy tries to perceive, to remember, to infer, to learn, and to regulate his wants.


It is this use of reason to "ameliorate the human predicament" which is the essence of morality. Hamm and Daniels suggest that because of the nature of the human predicament and the fact that man lives in groups, conflicts arise. They state:

The point of morality is to 'ameliorate the human predicament' (Warnock, 1971, p. 16) through the use of reason (rather than by use of law and punishment, force and coercion, or even the replenishing of resources, and the like) when human interests conflict.

(Hamm and Daniels, 1979, p. 21).

It appears, therefore, that morality is not mere obedience to a set of rules supposedly handed down to mankind by some supernatural creature who as leader of the forces of
good wages war against the forces of evil. Nor does it seem likely that the answers lie in an examination of nature. It is a careful examination of the characteristics or peculiarities of reason itself which is required if man is to achieve greater understanding of morality.

The Principles of Rationality

We have stated above in agreement with Warnock, Hamm and Daniels that the point of morality is to "ameliorate the human predicament" through the use of reason. However, to engage in reason necessarily involves adherence to certain basic principles. For example, one's reasoning would be rather nonsensical if one refused to adhere to evidence or constantly contradicted himself. Peters states that:

To hold a rational code a man must subscribe to some higher-order principles...in a rational code these would be procedural rules which could be regarded as presupposed by the very activity of giving reason for rules.

(Peters, 1963, p. 51).

These principles of rationality or reasoned thought are that one should adhere to evidence; that one should reason logically, e.g. abide by the principle of non-contradiction; that one should be consistent, impartial, truthful; that one should have regard for relevance, accuracy and clarity. These principles are presupposed in all rational thought. They are not ours to choose, but are utilized whenever we engage in rational thought. For example, to even begin to think in a rational manner is to assume some things as true. To doubt
everything at once would be a logical impossibility.

Wittgenstein states:

The questions, that we raise and our doubts depend on the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt, are as it were like hinges on which those turn... if I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay on.


According to Peters "it is only an irrationalist who welcomes contradictions in an argument, who laughs with delight when accused of inconsistency, or who is nonchalant when convicted of irrelevance" (Peters, 1979, p. 128). Hence, it would seem impossible to hold any meaningful conversation with such a person. However, a person who adheres to the principles of rationality is considered to have achieved a necessary prerequisite for entering into more complicated forms of discourse such as Science, Mathematics, and Morality.

The Basic Principles of Morality

Once an individual has achieved the basic prerequisite of rationality he is able to enter into serious moral discourse. To enter into moral discourse, however, presupposes certain further basic moral principles.

Peters explain:

Of far more importance are arguments pointing to what an individual must presuppose in so far as he uses a public form of discourse in seriously discussing with others or with himself what he ought to do... if it can be shown that certain principles are necessary for a form of discourse to have meaning, to be applied, or to have point, then this would be
a very strong argument for the justification
of the principles in question.
(Peters, 1966, p. 44)

Other philosophers, such as Hamm and Daniels, also
reason according to this line of thought. They state:

To ameliorate the human predicament through
the use of reason logically requires that
one posit certain fundamental principles
which must be recognized as necessary for the
point of morality to be achieved and for moral
discourse to be made possible. Generalizability
and the principles of justice and equality,
for example, are presupposed in what makes a
reason a reason.

(Hamm and Daniels, 1979, p. 21)

Peters states that other principles must also be pre-
supposed if it is assumed that interpersonal rules of conduct
are to be discussed by rational beings with a concern for
people's interests. He states:

For one of the main features of the use of
reason (in ethics) is the settling of issues
on relevant grounds - i.e., the banning of
arbitrariness, some kind of impartiality with
regard to people's claims is also required.
They cannot be ignored just because of the
colour of their eyes, or ruled out of court
just because of the colour of their skin.
People must be treated with respect as sources
of arguments and claims. Without, too, the
general presumption that people should tell
the truth, rational discussion would be
impossible; for, as a general practise,
systematic lying would be counterproductive
in relation, to any common concern to discover
what ought to be done, finally, too, there
must be some presumption in favour of freedom.
For without freedom of speech, the community
would be hamstrung in relation to its concern
to arrive at an answer...there must also be a
presumption in favour of freedom of action;
for what rational man would seriously discuss
what ought to be done without also demanding
freedom to do it.

(Peters, 1979, p. 189).
An examination of the presuppositions of moral discourse reveals that the following principles are necessary:

1. consideration of interests
2. impartiality (justice, fairness)
3. respect for persons
4. truth-telling, and
5. freedom.

Peters states that the most fundamental principle of all practical reasoning is that of impartiality. According to Peters, "This is essential to reasoning, in that what is meant by a reason for doing A rather than B is some aspect under which it is viewed which makes it relevantly different" (Peters, 1979, p. 131). Although this is correct it seems that no particular principle is 'most fundamental' or overriding. Peters later states that without some other principle the principle of impartiality really has little positive guiding possibilities. He states:

But though this principle gives negative guidance in that it rules out arbitrariness, making an exception of oneself, and so on, it is immediately obvious that it is quite impossible to apply without some other principle which determines criteria of relevance.

(Peters, 1979, p. 131).

These five principles we refer to as the principles of morality, and it seems that all play an equal part in guiding one in obtaining correct moral judgements. It may be safe to suggest, however, that in the event of a conflict of
principles, consideration of peoples' interests must take precedence over all others.

The Procedural Aspects of Moral Education

The principles of morality are essential to morality, it is argued, in that, rather than providing exact or specific content they give us guidelines or procedures to follow in order to go about finding moral truths. Peters states:

These fundamental principles do not, of course, lay down in detail what ought to be done. They do not, in other words, provide any detailed content to the moral life. Rather, they supply a form for the moral consciousness; they sensitize us to what is relevant when we think about what is right and wrong. But neither do the principles underlying Science guarantee an agreed content for Science. In both cases, all that is provided is a form of thought which structures experience.

(Peters, 1979, p. 189)

Hence, in moral education it is suggested that rather than teach specific content or moral rules it is more appropriate to teach children how to go about using moral principles to arrive at their own moral conclusions. There are several strong arguments against this 'procedural method' of moral education which we shall examine in Chapter 3. Although there are times when one must follow one principle in direct conflict with another, this is not common. They rather work in unison acting as softening or tempering agents one upon the other. Any one principle followed blindly without the restraining or tempering effect of the other would
lead to serious consequence for morality. For example, to follow the principle of 'impartiality' without at the same time adhering to the principle of 'consideration of interests' could lead to a situation of justice without mercy. To be guided absolutely by the principle of 'truth-telling' without the softening or tempering effects of 'respect for persons' or 'consideration of interests' could lead to untold cruelty, vulgarity and the like. To follow only the principle of freedom (liberty) without the effects of other principles would lead to mindless irresponsibility so typical of a rioting prison population trying to break out of its confines. The rational moral agent, therefore, is not one who adheres to, or applies one principle in domination of, or in violation of other principles but rather acts in accordance with all principles, tempering truth-telling with consideration of interests, justice with mercy, freedom with respect for persons. It seems therefore that the rationally autonomous moral agent requires more than mere knowledge of formal procedural moral principles but also knowledge, understanding and sensitivity to the human predicament. It follows that such a condition can be most effectively brought about by the teaching of specific content. However, the teaching of specific content requires that it be justified on rational grounds if it is to serve as education.
Basic Content and Moral Principles

One of the lingering debates in moral education we examine in greater depth in Chapter 3 is the "Procedure Versus Content Debate". Procedure approaches may be defined as providing the young with a methodology which guides children in reasoning about various moral problems so they can reach their own conclusions or moral rules. Content approaches, however, may be defined as the transmitting of specific rules, i.e. a set of do's and don't's to the young. Many moral educators such as Raths, insist that there is no justification for the teaching of specific content, i.e. rules. They associate it with indoctrination and authoritarianism (Raths et al., 1978). At first glance it appears that these educators have a significant point. In teaching content or a set of specific rules, is the educator indulging in some other type of non-educational activity? The answer lies in whether the content can be justified on a rational basis. A close examination of the principles of morality show that inherent in them or derivable from them is some basic content which can be readily identified. As in the tautology (a) all unmarried men are bachelors (b) John is unmarried, it follows indisputably that John is a bachelor, so it is from the principle of truth-telling, we logically derive the notion of honesty. If we state that John adheres to the principle of truth-telling it follows indisputably that John is honest; for how could someone be committed to truth without at the
same time being committed to honesty? In order to be honest it follows that one must adhere to certain "do's and don't's", i.e., "Do not steal", "Do not cheat", "Do not tell lies", etc.

Likewise, from the principle of impartiality we derive our sense of justice and fair play. Rules such as, "Do not be prejudiced", "Do not gang up on someone", "Do not take unfair advantage of someone", are all derivatives of this principle.

Again from the concept of freedom it follows that it would be wrong to constrain someone or force him to do something against his will arbitrarily.

From the principle of consideration of interests, we may derive such regulations as "Do not harm or hurt anyone purposely and for no reason", "Try to help others when you can without harming yourself".

From the principle of respect for persons we derive such rules as, "Do not try to humiliate or undermine the character of anyone for no good reason". Respect necessarily implies respect of a person's mental and physical ability as well as dignity. Hence rape, molesting, or degrading someone is undoubtedly immoral. These rules follow like natural corollaries from the basic principles of morality. As Cornel Harnm suggests in his essay, "In Defense of the Bag of Virtues", one does not expect everyone to agree on this content, but if they do not, they ought to have good reasons for objecting.
We have tried to identify in this chapter the purpose of morality and to provide for a rational basis for content and procedure in moral education. In Chapter II we further examine the problems with procedure and content with a view to identifying their roles in moral education.
CHAPTER 2

THE 'HABITUAL' AND 'RATIONAL' FORMS OF MORAL EDUCATION

The previous chapter included a brief discussion of the rational basis for morality. This discussion involved a description of the human predicament, the occasion for morality, the basic principles of rationality, and the principles of morality. We noted that the principles of morality are of a procedural nature in that they show us how to go about obtaining moral judgements. However, it was also pointed out that these same moral principles assist one in deriving some basic moral content, i.e. a set of do's and don't's which can be transmitted directly to the young.

It would seem that once a rational basis for morality is established, with some basic content agreed to, there would be no other problems. We could now go about transmitting this acceptable moral content to our children. However, this is not so. It is possible that moral education can differ widely depending on whether emphasis is placed on content or procedure. In this chapter, we shall firstly identify the two different emphasis in moral education. We shall then go on to discuss the views put forth by R.S. Peters on the 'paradox' of moral education and follow with a brief description of A.C. Kazepides analysis of the paradox.
Finally, we shall go on to show why the 'paradox' of moral education was not resolved by isolating the many complicated problems involved in the 'paradox', and point out that these problems require careful study by all those interested in moral education.

Two Different Emphases in Moral Education

In his book Rational Moral Education, A.J. Watt comments on the problems remaining after agreement on content is reached:

Even agreeing about the basic content for moral education, there are decisions to be made about the form. Are we aiming, for instance, to develop children's habits and dispositions so that they act in accordance with our norms by second nature, or do we seek to teach them to work out decisions and judgements by systematic thinking guided by the chosen principles of morality?

(Watts, 1976, p. 45)

In order to demonstrate these two distinct ideas regarding moral education let us examine some of the statements made by Aristotle and Kant on the subject. On first glance they appear to be advocating the extreme positions outlined by Watt; Aristotle the habitual form and Kant the rational form. Closer examination, however, proves that this is not true.

In the Nichomachean Ethics, Aristotle appears as a proponent of a form of moral education emphasizing that the virtuous individual is one who behaves rightly as a matter of course. Moral education, he writes, is aimed at develop-
ing in individuals a moral goodness that:

...is the child of habit...Men become builders by building, harp players by playing the harp. By a similar process we become just by performing just actions, temperate by performing temperate actions...so it is a matter of real importance whether our early education confirms us in one set of habits or another.

(Aristotle, 1955, p. 55 and 56)

It seems that Aristotle's concept of moral education is to produce an individual who does not need to deliberate over principles before acting. Should one need to pause constantly to reflect and agonize over all decisions, then the requisite virtues are simply not entrenched firmly enough. A virtuous person is described in this way:

We may use the pleasure (or pain) that accompanies the exercise of our dispositions as an index of how far they have established themselves. A man is temperate who abstaining from bodily pleasures finds this abstinence pleasant; if he finds it irksome, he is intemperate. Again, it is the man who encounters danger gladly, or at least without painful sensations who is brave; the man who has these sensations is a coward.


The school of thought represented by Immanuel Kant appears to be in direct conflict with Aristotle's view. Kant's statements seem to suggest that he takes an extreme rationalist line in which morality is viewed in terms of a constant struggle against temptation. It seems that he values not the well-formed, habitual inclinations of Aristotle but rather decisions that are made in spite of inclinations. He praises actions that arise from a knowledge of duty, as opposed to an unreflective action. Kant makes this statement
about the individual who aids others merely because of inclination to do so:

Yet, I maintain that in such a case an action of this kind, however right and however amiable it may be, has still no genuinely moral worth...it stands on the same footing as other inclinations...for it's maxim lacks moral content, namely, the performance of such actions, not from inclination, but from duty.

(Kant, 1947, p. 66)

We have tried to elucidate these two different forms of moral motivation for action by the use of various statements by Aristotle and Kant; these forms are more clearly explained by Michael Oakeshott: In the first form:

The moral life is a habit of affection and behaviour; not a habit of reflective thought...the moral life in this form does not spring from the consciousness of possible alternative ways of behaving, and a choice determined by an opinion, a rule, or an ideal; from among these alternatives conduct is as nearly as possible without reflection.

(Oakeshott, 1962)

In the second form Oakeshott states that:

Activity is determined, not by a habit of behaviour, but by the reflective application of a moral criterion. It appears in two common varieties: as the self-conscious pursuit of moral ideals, and as the reflective observance of moral rules.

(Oakeshott, 1962, p. 66)

Oakeshott goes on to point out the significance of this contrast for moral education, inasmuch as, "the character of each form is reflected in the kind of education required to nurture and maintain it" (Oakeshott, 1962, p. 62).
The first form of morality, which we refer to as habitual morality, is acquired primarily, it would appear, by living amongst persons with certain habits of action and feelings, following their example, and acquiring certain rules. The second, which we refer to as the rational form of morality, requires overt instruction in thinking about moral issues. The implications of these forms for moral educators are very significant.

Oakeshott suggests that the two forms of morality are not mutually exclusive. The difference between habitual and rational morality is essentially one of degree and emphasis. The individual who acts in a certain way from force of habit must necessarily determine whether or not a situation warrants action of a particular kind. Hence, there is always an element of rational thought or decision-making involved. Similarly, the rationalist necessarily exhibits certain habits in order to simplify daily life.

Aristotle also suggests this same type of reconciliation between the rational and habitual forms of morality. He suggests that one acquires reasoned habit rather than mere unthinking reactions. He states that, "virtuous actions are not done in a virtuous, a just or temperate way merely because they have the appropriate quality". The person must be in a certain frame of mind when he does them. He suggests that: (1) the individual must act in full consciousness of what he is doing; (2) he must 'will' his action, and will it for its own sake; and (3) the act
must proceed from a fixed and unchangeable disposition.

Kant also reaches a conclusion regarding the rational and habitual forms of morality. Indeed, he states that one must use the 'pure intellect' to arrive at an understanding of what one's duty is. However, once this is settled one may act from a sense of duty without having to agonize over the proper course of action to take. It seems, therefore, that actions stemming from a sense of duty, are not altogether that far removed from Aristotle's idea of actions stemming from 'reasoned habit' (Kant, 1963, p. 38).

The 'Paradox' of Moral Education

Having briefly discussed the two forms of morality we shall now turn to R.S. Peters' assessment of the 'paradox' in moral education. Peters makes the distinction between matters of procedure and matters of substance and suggests that this is a condition applicable to every discipline including moral education. He cites Professor Oakeshott as making a similar distinction, one of the "language" and the "literature" of a subject, the literature representing the established body of knowledge in a given area and the language being the means to implement it. Implicit in such languages are rules of procedure which permit criticism, development and updating of the literature. Without the tool of the language of a discipline, one has no resource with which to decipher the literature, or rather, one has no means
with which to deploy the knowledge in an autonomous manner.

It is on this premise of dependence that Peters' paradox rests:

What then is the paradox of moral education as I conceive it? It is this: given that it is desirable to develop people who conduct themselves rationally, intelligently and with a fair degree of spontaneity, the brute facts of child development reveal that at the most formative years of a child's development he is incapable of this form of life and impervious to the proper manner of passing it on.

(Peters, 1963, p. 54)

Peters notes the importance of early learning by children for the proper development of character in later years. Secondly, Peters refers to the Freudian theory of super-ego and Piaget's theory of the transcendental stage of a child's development to point out that "up to a certain age rules appear to a child as something external and unalterable, often sacred" (Peters, 1963, p. 55). Children do not realize until after the age of seven or eight that rules are:

Not in fact cast in cement, but can be revised and altered should all of the parties concerned be in agreement. The child is presented with the literature, the rules, but not the language with which to evaluate their content. Until the child is initiated into the use of the language in conjunction with the literature, he will remain in the position of primitive people in respect of their attitude to the traditions of their tribe.

(Peters, 1963, p. 55)

Peters goes on to state that without a working knowledge of the language of moral conduct a child is incapable of understanding rules and conventions. He cites evidence
that the giving of reasons has virtually no educative effect on children anyway. Commands have an effect on children's behaviour, with accompanying reasons or explanations carrying very little weight. However, Peters insists that:

Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that a rational code of behaviour and the 'language' of a variety of activities is beyond the grasp of young children, they can and must enter the palace of Reason through the courtyard of Habit and Tradition. (Peters, 1963, p. 35)

The problem, then, according to Peters, is one of how to develop in children the necessary habits of behaviour and the "deep-rooted assumptions of the literature" of various activities in such a way that they can proceed to master the "language" at a later stage of development. Does dwelling in the courtyard of Habit prepare or incapacitate a child for life in the palace of Reason? Peters defines the problem as being one of definition, that is, that the concept of habitual actions has been regarded in too broad a sense for the purpose of moral education. The issue, he states, is not one of habit versus reason, but rather one of developing certain types of habits through the use of reasoned thought processes. He suggests that reason in fact does much to contribute to the development of certain habits and asks:

What, then, do we mean by 'habits' and is there any necessary contradiction in stressing the importance of habit in moral matters while, at the same time, stressing the intelligent adaptability which is usually associated with reason, together with the spontaneous enjoyment associated with civilized activities? (Peters, 1963, p. 59)
Habits are not merely components or "furniture" of the mind, but rather actions that individuals learn to do automatically. Once a basic skill is mastered, one is free to concentrate on more important and interesting things. Peters insists that it takes intelligence to acquire the higher order habits involved in morals. Moral habits, by their very nature, cannot be picked up blindly or automatically. It must first be reasoned out and practised under the auspices of some wider conception. Peters states:

To learn to act on rules forbidding theft, lying, breaking promises, etc., is necessarily an open-ended business requiring intelligence and a high degree of social sophistication. For the child has to learn to see that a vast range of very different actions and performances can fall under a highly abstract rule which makes them all examples of a type of action. (Peters, 1963, p. 62)

Hence, according to Peters, it seems correct to state that there is just too much involved in acquiring moral habits without some reasoned thought. However, at a very young age a child is not equipped to understand the high level moral precepts parents are trying to instill and so will tend to equate a specific action with a specific reward. Hence it is imperative that children receive such intrinsic rewards of love, warmth, affection, and praise whenever they have carried out a moral rule. Although these suggestions by Professor Peters appear to be correct he has not solved the 'paradox' of moral education. Cornel Hamm explains the problem remaining in this manner:
First, the problem or 'paradox' as posed ex hypothesi rules out insight and intelligence as a solution, for the difficulty is precisely that the child is not yet capable of such rational processes. One would still want to know if, before such intelligence is possible in a child, his previous habits, instilled by other means, did not militate against such reasoning. Professor Peters' suggestion, it would appear, merely displaces the problem, pushing it back somewhat in the temporal scale, only to have it reappear at an earlier stage.

(Hamm, 1975, p. 425).

We shall now go on to examine briefly the views put forth by A.C. Kazepides on this 'paradox' of moral education.

The 'Paradox' of Moral Education Resolved

In his paper, 'The Alleged Paradox of Moral Education'', Kazepides suggests that Aristotle was not advocating a form of unreflective, habitual morality as Peters suggests, but rather that he was advocating the habit of reasoned choice. Kazepides states that, according to Peters, Aristotle was "led into a paradox about moral education which resulted from his attempts to stress the role both of reason and habit" (Kazepides, 1979, p. 156). However, this view of virtue, a habit of reasoned choice, dispels any idea of a paradox in moral education. Aristotle states:

But virtuous actions are not done in a virtuous - a just or temperate - way merely because they have the appropriate quality. The doer must be in a certain frame of mind when he does them. Three conditions are involved. (1) The agent must act in full consciousness of what he is doing; (2) He must 'will' his action, and will it for its own sake; (3) The act must proceed from a fixed and unchangeable disposition.

(Aristotle, 1955, p. 61)
Kazepides goes on to explain that to the extent that young children are capable of understanding moral reasons and arguments they are capable of moral education; to the extent that they are unable to engage in any rational communication they cannot be educated morally although they can be conditioned to act in certain ways; that is why nobody talks about the moral education of new-born babies. But if, say, at the age of five a child is still treated as if he did not understand any moral arguments at all, then it is clear that the moral development of that child has been neglected for too long (Kazepides, 1979, p. 138).

Kazepides suggests that what Peters sees as a logical problem is instead a practical pedagogical one, wherein the possibility of conditioning or indoctrinating creates not a paradox, but a serious problem for moral educators.

Kazepides does much to clarify and correct some of Peters' views on this 'paradox' of moral education. Further analysis shows that Kazepides is correct in stating that there is no paradox in moral education but rather a number of very serious problems (Kazepides, 1979, p. 165).

Let us begin with the first problem Peters originally points out, that of child development and the nature of moral education.

Peters states that given that it is desirable to develop people who conduct themselves rationally and intelligently the brute facts of child development reveal that in the
early years a child is incapable of this form of life. However, Peters goes on to explain that in spite of these "brute facts of child development", children must be taught to reason through habit and tradition. Although it appears that there may be a contradiction here, we are interested in identifying the first problem. How do we get children to conduct themselves rationally and intelligently if they are incapable of doing so in the early years?

Now Peters continues on and runs into several separate but related problems. He states:

The problem of moral education is that of how the necessary habits of behaviour and the deep-rooted assumptions of the 'literature' of various forms of good activities can be acquired in a way which does not stultify the development of a rational code or the mastery of the language of activities at a later stage.

(Peters, 1963, p. 56)

This is the problem which Kazepides refers to as a practical pedagogical one. He states:

But this makes it clear that the difficulty was not a logical problem, but a practical pedagogical one. For if habits are not developed 'in a certain way', i.e., if they are divorced from the proper reasons altogether or if the wrong reasons are given, we can no longer claim to be involved in moral education; we are instead conditioning or indoctrinating the young.

(Kazepides, 1979, p. 161)

Kazepides is correct in stating concern regarding the dangers of indoctrination and conditioning, however there are two problems involved here. Briefly explained, if we identify what constitutes indoctrination and conditioning and we are able to avoid such pitfalls does this mean we now have the
proper pedagogical plan to instill "habits of behaviour...in a way which does not stultify the development of a rational code at a later stage". Should we, for example, use intrinsic as opposed to extrinsic rewards? Should we use rewards at all? Should we have the children study and learn to recite the moral principles by rote as they do the alphabet? Perhaps we could convey these abstract principles by way of pictures or by way of films? These are merely a few of dozens of questions which must be answered. Consequently we have two closely related but distinctly separate problems. Firstly, we have a problem with regards to identifying moral education as distinct from indoctrination and conditioning and showing that the latter two are unnecessary as Kazepides states:

We would have a real paradox if somehow we had to condition or indoctrinate children in order to develop them into rational moral agents.

(Kazepides, 1979, p. 161)

Secondly, we have a practical pedagogical problem in finding the best possible methods to facilitate the acquisition of habits in the "proper manner". Let us refer to the first of these two problems as the "Moral Education, Indoctrination and Conditioning Problem" and to the second as the "Practical Pedagogical Problem".

Finally, we have a fourth problem and that is a conceptual confusion about the meaning of 'habit' itself. Kazepides explains:
The problem seems now one of conceptual clarification and Peters attempts to show that 'habit' does not necessarily exclude the use of intelligence. (Kazepides, 1979, p. 160)

In providing this explanation on the concept of habit Peters feels he has resolved the 'paradox' of moral education which began with a statement on "the brute facts of child development".

So it seems as if the paradox of moral education is resolved. For there is no necessary contradiction between the use of intelligence and the formation of habits. (Peters, 1963, p. 62)

Surely clarifying the concept of habit does little towards providing answers to problem one.

Let us now summarize the problems touched on by Peters in his attempt to resolve the 'paradox' of moral education. Firstly we have the empirical problem of the brute facts of child development and the nature of moral education. If the brute facts are that a child cannot reason morally before a certain age then how can habits be instilled in a reasoning way? Furthermore at what age can one say that the child is now at a stage when he is capable of reasoning morally?

Secondly, there is the moral education, indoctrination and conditioning problem. How do we distinguish between conditioning, indoctrination and moral education? Furthermore if it is not possible to morally educate the very young then is it necessary to condition them?
Thirdly, there is the, **practical pedagogical problem.** What are the best methods for imparting morals to our young?

Finally, there is the **conceptual confusion about the meaning of habit itself.** What are habits? Is there a contradiction between the use of intelligence and the formation of habits?

In discussing the 'paradox' of moral education Peters touched on several extremely complex problems. Obviously we could not even begin to examine the numerous theories put forth by various educators on the matter. However, in discussing the alleged paradox, Peters alerted educators to the numerous problems in moral education. No meaningful discussion of the proper role of procedure and content could be undertaken without at least an awareness of the problems mentioned in the examination of the 'paradox'. For example if children at an early age are incapable of reasoning morally it would be foolish to suggest a procedure-only approach in moral education at that age. It would also be unwise for an individual to suggest specific moral content without having some idea as to the difference between moral education and indoctrination. Kazepides was correct in stating that the problems of moral education are more tragic than paradoxical.

"They result from, among other things, ignorance and confusion about the moral life itself, lack of knowledge about the way children develop, and ignorance of the proper ways of initiating the young into moral thought and action" (Kazepides, 1979, p. 160).
We shall return to these problems again in Chapter 3 after we have discussed the problems with the use of 'procedure-only' and 'content-only' approaches in moral education.
CHAPTER 3

THE PROPER ROLE OF PROCEDURE AND CONTENT

In the previous chapter we briefly examined the two different forms of moral education which result when emphasis is placed exclusively on either procedure or content. We also discussed the views of R.S. Peters on the 'paradox' of moral education and also the brief analysis conducted by A.C. Kazepides on this topic. We concluded in agreement with Hamm and Kazepides that the 'paradox' was not resolved by Peters for really there is no 'paradox' but rather a series of very complex problems which require close attention by all those concerned with moral education.

In this chapter we shall firstly identify several of the major procedural approaches in moral education and discuss some of the reasons put forth in favour of such approaches. We shall then go on to discuss the major weaknesses of advocating procedure only in moral education. We shall also examine briefly some of the problems which could result in the teaching of content only. Finally, we shall conclude with a discussion of the proper role of procedure and content in moral education.
Procedure Approach in Moral Education

For our purposes, we shall define procedure approaches much as Royce does in his paper, "Process and Product in Moral Education". Royce describes a procedure approach as:

One which either places exclusive or pre­
dominant emphasis upon providing children with a method for arriving at their own moral views without those who are undertaking the moral education entering into discussions on specific moral issues with the children; or one which either prescribes or regards as peripheral the presentation and discussion by teachers and parents of the merits and demerits of particular moral values.

(Royce, 1983, p. 73)

We shall state further that procedure approaches all have in common the teaching of some sort of methodology which guides children in reasoning about various moral problems so they can reach their own conclusions. The emphasis is not placed on the ultimate moral outcome but rather the particular methodology employed.

The values clarification approach, as espoused by Raths et al. (1978) allows teachers to express their personal moral values, although this is only an incidental component of the exercise. This approach believes that teachers, "should make it very clear that an expression of their position is not an indication of what should be desirable for others" (Raths et al., 1978, p. 41). Here, values are seen to be a personal thing, not just a matter of true and false. "We may be authoritative in those areas that deal with truth and falsity...but where a question involves a personal
activity our view is that it is unreasonable for a teacher to assume he or she has the correct answer" (Raths et al., 1978, p. 34). They go on to state that "We are interested in the processes that go on in valuing. We are not much interested in identifying the values which children ultimately hold as a result of these processes (Raths et al., 1978, p. 35).

Wilson (1967) also places emphasis on procedure by stating, "We are not primarily out to impart any specific content, but to give other people facility in a method" (p. 27). He shares the distaste expressed by others of settling moral issues by consensus: "correctness in morality is not a matter of what is commonly accepted" (Wilson, 1967, p. 27). Wilson suggests that, even when the rules of procedure for morality have been established, no specific moral view can be proven right, and personal choice thus plays a very important part.

Kohlberg (1976) also places emphasis on procedure, advocating open discussion on moral issues in order to achieve "movement to the next stage of moral reasoning" (p. 185), regardless of whether those involved in the discussion hold views in favour of or against the matters under discussion.

However, in a recent article, Kohlberg has admitted to the importance of the teaching of specific content in moral education. He states that the educator must be a socializer teaching value content directly to the young (Kohlberg, 1978, p. 14). We must, therefore, view Kohlberg as an advocate of both content approach and procedure approach although he does
not outline any specific rules or content which should be transmitted to the young. Stenhouse believes that the humanities are an area where no simple answers are available, and thus emphasizes individual responses and judgements. His approach involves presenting students with controversial issues in order to familiarize them with recognizing and understanding the issues in question, but not with developing moral views that may be used in dealing with these issues (Stenhouse, 1968).

To reiterate, advocates of procedure approaches to moral education stress the importance of personal choice, in forming moral judgements. The collective view seems to be that "effective moral education should provide us with the means of deciding what we ought to do in any personal situation which puzzles us" (McPhail, 1972, p. 77), rather than providing any right answers in addition to those means.

The question which arises here is why advocates of procedure approaches are so opposed to the teaching of specific content to children? It appears that they all share a disposition towards avoidance of indoctrination, as well as toward avoidance of authoritarianism, "getting children to accept a fixed body of rules by the use of techniques which incapacitate them from adopting a critical autonomous attitude towards them" (Peters, 1973, p. 71). Furthermore, although most admit that there indeed exists a body of rules which could be considered objective knowledge they do entertain
views concerning the subjectivity of morality which draws them together in a united defence for procedure approaches. We shall discuss these views further in Part II.

Problems with Procedure Approaches

The first problem common to all procedure approaches is the possibility that too much emphasis is placed on providing children with a methodology for arriving at their own answers to complex moral problems and the settling of moral dilemmas. In approaching the problem of moral education in this manner, one runs a serious risk of transmitting to the child the idea that, if not all, at least much of morality is merely a matter subject to personal preferences, tastes or opinions. Although we must provide children with a methodology for dealing with moral dilemmas such as abortion or suicide, we must also communicate to them that certain rules such as, do not torture another person, or do not murder anyone, are not subject to change merely because of our viewpoint or opinion. The view that all of morality is merely subject to personal preferences, tastes or opinions we shall refer to as ethical subjectivism.

Most advocates of procedure approaches are quick to point out that they do not subscribe to the view of ethical subjectivism. However, it is apparent from their statements that, if they do not subscribe to the view of ethical subjectivism, they certainly hold a flirting relationship with the
idea. Raths et al.: "We are not much interested in identifying the values which children hold, values are personal things". Stenhouse: "The humanities are an area where no simple answers are available". Wilson also has been criticized by Royce for stating that, "We may fail to find an answer to moral perplexity because we may be in doubt about the sense, if any, in which we can talk about the 'right' moral views. Since morality seems to be in some degree a matter of choice" (Wilson, 1967, p. 25). Royce's comments that this statement suggests some version of ethical subjectivism seems rather unfounded for Wilson in the article "Moral Components and Moral Education" states:

One set of muddles may be due to a strong monistic temptation...to regard moral education as some single sui generis process. On this view it is all to be done by 'imitation', a methodology', 'procedures', 'ratiocination', 'training the will', or whatever. But on any plausible account of morality, the morally educated person will need a number of very different attributes or characteristics: The possession of certain concepts, such as the concept of a person; the understanding of certain rules, such as the logical rule that there is nothing special about one's own interests; the willingness to adhere to the rules and act on them, which might involve such things as determination or alertness; the abilities required to interpret how the rules should be applied in particular cases, such as the ability to identify the emotions of other people...

(Wilson, 1979, p. 178)

There is indeed an element of truth in all these views. It is true that there are no definite answers to some moral questions such as abortion or suicide which would
be acceptable to all people who are seriously engaged in moral reasoning. But neither are there definite answers to many questions which confront the scientist or the mathematician. This, however, certainly does not mean that we do not have scientific or mathematical knowledge. It only means that our knowledge is limited. And so it is with morality. The fact that a society cannot always agree on the proper moral response, in practice, is no reason to suggest that there exists no acceptable set of moral rules, or indeed, that there exists no form of objective moral knowledge. We may ask why no society has ever regarded dishonesty, murder or torture as morally good. Could any group of people exist as a peaceful, close-knit society where the telling of lies was valued and truth-telling was not acceptable or where murder was praised and encouraged? Statements such as "we are not much interested in identifying the values which children ultimately hold" cannot be taken seriously for this would be inimical to the moral development of the child as well as socially hazardous to a community. The fact that sometimes moral agreement cannot be reached on specific issues merely means that moral dilemmas do exist, often because moral demands conflict, but perhaps more often because there is lack of adequate factual knowledge and insight into moral principles. There is, therefore, objective moral knowledge which is immediately recognizable and indisputable, and there are moral dilemmas. The existence of moral dilemmas, though, does not provide
grounds for the justification of ethical subjectivism. For this reason, then, procedure approaches alone cannot constitute valid moral education unless exact content is specified. As previously mentioned to state that the outcome of children's valuing processes is less important than the process itself is irresponsible in the extreme. It would be a matter of grave concern if a child, after having gone through the 'proper' methodology, emerges valuing murder or dishonesty. Should it be claimed that there is no danger of such a consequence, why then give the children the impression that they are seeking their own moral truths when in fact we know full well that there can only be one appropriate moral answer. In other words, why let the rat run the maze of moral procedures knowing full well that there is only one final acceptable moral outcome. This attempt to delude a child and give him a false sense of freedom seems unethical in itself.

A further weakness of these approaches as outlined by Cornel Hamm is that young children are unable to understand the rather complex abstract concepts that procedure approaches entail. Also, Hamm goes on to explain that the learning of content has pedagogical utility for the learning of principles. Children first learn situation-specific rules of behaviour long before they are able to grasp the underlying principles. "They learn to walk before they run, so to speak, even in matters of morals" (Hamm, 1977, p. 218). It is difficult to make generalizations without particulars on which
to base them, and it is believed by some that the two must be learned concurrently. However, children originally have an egocentric conception of rules, that is, they abide by rules so as to avoid punishment or to obtain rewards. Eventually, though:

...to achieve autonomy, the individual must come to see these rules as acceptable because they are justified on moral grounds. But this again presupposes a thorough understanding of the rules themselves, it presupposes content. (Hamm, 1977, p. 224)

Finally, Hamm suggests that specific content must be taught long before children understand or can apply methodology, for practical reasons, in that rules are set down for children in order to ensure their own safety and security, and to protect them and others from their misconduct.

The Proper Role of Content and Procedure in Moral Education

If the use of procedure-only approaches are inadequate for transmitting moral knowledge and the teaching of content-only runs the risks of indoctrination and conditioning, how do we provide for proper moral education to the young?

To find the answer to this question we must once again return to the alleged paradox of moral education and examine the brute facts of child development. Firstly, it is rather obvious that at birth and for some time afterwards children are incapable of "conducting" themselves "rationally" and "intelligently". Equally obvious is the fact that under normal circumstances, children do reach a stage when they are
capable of "conducting" themselves "rationally" and "intelligently". It is this vague area between the two extremes of "incapable" and "capable" which poses considerable problems for educators.

Despite the conflicting theories regarding child development few would argue the point that the moral development of a child should begin as early as possible. As babies the children learn to value the warmth, tenderness and love given to them for this is no doubt a pleasurable experience. Later, as they grow older they will learn to reciprocate such feelings if encouraged to do so by those who surround them. They will learn the concept of impartiality not by way of explanation at this tender age, but rather by the manner in which they are treated in relation to others. They will learn by way of adult approval/disapproval, punishment and reward to control certain actions and exhibit others. At this particular stage in children's development one must resort to conditioning and the children who are conditioned to favour love instead of anger (cuddled and hugged when smiling and cooing, ignored when throwing a fit of bad temper or tantrum), conditioned to share with others (hugged and praised when they share a bit of their cookie with others), etc., is far, far ahead in moral development than children who have had none of this, for the conditioned children will be predisposed to doing good as they grow older. It is questionable whether children who have not had this type of conditioning can ever
recoup what has been omitted in this early stage of moral development.

When the child begins to speak it is time to enter into rational moral training. This is not to say that conditioning must be abandoned abruptly and rational moral training suddenly entered upon. Far from it. The conditioning aspects of child development will continue, only there will now be an added dimension of rational moral training. Rather than being merely hugged and praised when the children share something they will now be given reasons why their actions are considered good. Hence, as children learn to speak, they will also in a sense learn a moral vocabulary. They will also learn that for every rule there are reasons to be given even though they may not understand the full significance of these reasons. But full understanding here is not required any more than full understanding of the numerical system is required when a child learns to count. Later as children grow older they will be prepared to begin examining and understanding all that they were taught. They will be equipped with the proper "reasoned habits" and moral vocabulary, that is, they will be predisposed to acting in a certain way and they will have reasons for acting in such a manner. All they need now do is examine these reasons to arrive at an understanding. And if these rules are based on good reasons and they are grounded in rational moral knowledge rather than on some shakey belief or on the word of some authority figure,
they will, rather than feel confused and rebellious, now have new reasons to support their habits. Hence, reason and habit become friends supporting each other and growing together as the child grows into adulthood.

It appears that at an early age there can be little use for procedure approaches in the moral development of the child. Children must be taught specific moral content first by conditioning techniques, then by rational moral training whereby rules are given along with reasons and finally these rules and reasons are examined and traced back to the principles of morality. The principles of morality serve as reasons for the rules imparted to the children.

Once children have acquired much of the objective moral knowledge available along with understanding they will undoubtedly begin asking questions for which there are no acceptable moral answers. They will want to have answers to such moral dilemmas as abortion, euthanasia, suicide, prostitution, etc. It will now be time to teach these children a sound rational procedural approach so that they can arrive at a moral judgement they will be satisfied with. They will use the principles of rationality by gathering evidence, using language correctly and sticking to the rules of logic. They will avoid casting judgement on the basis of mere belief or on the statements of some authority figure although these could be held up for examination also. Finally, before casting judgement they will enter into discourse with others.
for morality is a public affair. And in entering moral discourse they will be guided by the principles of morality. Hopefully, in this manner they will arrive at their own answers to moral dilemmas, which if not agreed to, will be respected by those who have utilized the same procedures.
In Chapter 1 we discussed the rational basis for content and procedure in moral education. We began with a brief description of the 'human predicament' and pointed out that this condition is a given, into which all people are born. We stated that because of the nature of this 'predicament' and the fact that people live in groups, conflicts arise. The purpose of morality is to ameliorate the 'human predicament' through the use of reason rather than by force or coercion. The use of reason presupposes certain basic fundamental principles to which one must adhere if one is to obtain a state of rationality. Hence these principles are referred to as the principles of rationality. Once one has achieved the basic prerequisite condition of rationality, one is able to enter into more complicated forms of discourse such as mathematics, science and morality. In order to engage in moral discourse one must adhere to the principles of morality. These principles are not only of a procedural nature, but they can also serve as some basic moral content.

In Chapter 2 a brief examination of the 'habitual' and 'rational' forms of morality was undertaken. It was pointed out that this results when emphasis is placed exclusively on content or procedure. This was followed with an
investigation into the alleged paradox of moral education. It was suggested that there is no paradox in moral education but rather a series of very complex problems which require careful study.

In Chapter 3 problems with the use of 'procedure-only' and 'content-only' approaches were pointed out. Among other things it was suggested that 'procedure-only' approaches tend to degrade objective moral knowledge to the level of subjective personal values while 'content-only' approaches run into problems with regards to authoritarianism and indoctrination. A system was suggested which allows for the appropriate use of these two approaches along with conditioning and rational moral training in the total moral development of an individual from infancy to adulthood.

Although we suggested that it is necessary to condition the very young if proper moral development is to be achieved in later years, we must caution that this method must be used only because there are no alternatives. However once a child is able to speak, it seems that one can enter into conversation with a child and thus explain much about morality even though the child is not capable of fully understanding all that is told to him. True moral education can only begin when the child is fully capable of understanding the principles involved in morality. However, one cannot wait for a child to develop to this stage without doing anything. Cornel Hamm states:
Habits to be inculcated before the child has reached the age of moral reason (by which I mean that the child has reached the level where morally justifiable reasons can be, and usually are, his reasons for action) will have to be carefully selected by the parent-teacher so that the child can benefit from his training upon reaching the age of reason. As much as possible the habits he has been given should accord with the kinds of actions the child will in his autonomous stage deem justifiable. The manner of inculcating these habits cannot be by appeal to moral reasons, for it is precisely because these moral reasons are not yet understood that alternate means must be found.

(Hamm, 1975, p. 427)

In concluding, it seems appropriate to state that sound rational moral training is a very important part of the total moral development of the child.
RATIONAL MORAL EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS 'EDUCATION'

In the previous chapters we discussed the role of content and procedure in moral education. It was argued that procedure-only approaches may be inadequate to impart moral knowledge to children. It was further suggested that children must be presented with specific moral content, along with reasons, even though they may not fully grasp the significance of the higher order principles involved therein. It was also argued that rather than impeding, this actually facilitates rational moral development in later years.

No discussion of moral education is complete without some discussion of religion and its relation to morality. Traditionally, moral teaching was in the hands of the various religious groups. We shall point out briefly some reasons why religious teachings cannot substitute for moral education and thereby reassert our conviction that rational moral education based on the principles of morality is the only legitimate means of imparting moral knowledge to the young.

Moral Education as Separate from Religious 'Education'

An argument most commonly raised against the possibility of teaching morals in public schools is that morality and religion are so closely intertwined that it is difficult
if not impossible to teach one without the other. In the interest of impartiality, religion is not taught in public schools, and so, the argument continues neither should morality be taught there. In the Yearbook of Education, (Education and Morals, 1951), these views are explained in this manner:

Moral education has always been closely associated with religious instruction and in most countries more than one religion is practised by large fractions of the population. The state, in many cases, has found it well to maintain absolute neutrality in religious matters, and this policy, of course, is reflected in the public schools. As a result, explicit moral as well as religious training may get left out, or nearly so, from the normal curriculum of such schools.

(Hamm, 1979, p. 36)

Cornel Hamm in his article "Moral Education Without Religion" rightly takes exception to this line of reasoning. He suggests that the argument for this proscription is not that it is difficult to manage under these circumstances:

The contention of the impossibility of moral instruction arising from this close association of morality and religion is rather that without any reference to a religious creed moral education is impossible because it is logically connected with religion; that in the absence of religion there is no residue that could constitute any content worthy to be called moral; and, therefore, that there is nothing to teach.

(Hamm, 1979, p. 36)

The above mentioned view as espoused by the committee in the Year Book of Education are not the reasons for which we feel that rational moral education must be taught in the
public school system. The view maintained herein follows that of Hamm in that morality and religion are:

...logically distinct forms of discourse; that morality cannot be based on religion, and, therefore, that it is a serious mistake to attempt to substitute religious for moral instruction; or merely to supplement the latter with the former; or even worse to omit moral instruction altogether in public institutions, because it is erroneously believed that this is demanded by separation of church and state.

(Hamm, 1979, p. 36)

Many philosophers in addition to Hamm have demonstrated rather convincingly that moral discourse is distinctly separate from religious discourse (Rubin Barrows, 1983; R.J.W. Selleck, 1976; P.H. Hirst, 1969; Kai Nielsen in Christian and Contemporary Philosophy, 1973; I.A. Snook, 1972). The above mentioned philosophers are but a very few who have, as previously mentioned, shown that moral discourse is not only independent of religious discourse but that "at least some forms of religion are inimical to morality" (Hamm, 1979).

A rather simple argument showing that moral and religious discourse are indeed separate and independent is the fact that there are many non-religious people that appear very moral by any standards while on the other hand, there are religious people who appear very immoral. Norman Bull in his book Moral Education examines the secular humanist view which maintains that, not only are religion and morality separate from one another, but that religion is in fact hostile to morality. He states:
Secular humanism does not lack ammunition with which to attack religion as hostile to the moral needs of society and to moral progress. From the past it can cite such evils as human sacrifice, sacred prostitution, taboos on valuable foods, rites of initiation that maim the adolescent, and the use of torture, killing and war to secure orthodoxy and conformity.

But it need not go back to the past. From the present it can cite the heteronomous prohibition of all forms of artificial contraception by the Roman Church as going against, not only the well-being of human society, but also the individual family in preventing planned parenthood, and refusing sexual intercourse its sacramental nature as the expression of love. It can instance, too, religious sects that deliberately break up family life; and that refuse such medical necessities as blood-transfusion, even at the risk of death. It can quote, too, the justification of apartheid by a Christian Church as yet another contemporary example of inhumanity sanctioned by religion.

(Bull, 1969, p. 93)

From reading the above one is tempted to state that further proof is unnecessary, that religion and morality are separate.

Problems with Religious Teachings as Moral Education

Let us begin by stating that religious teachings like many forms of political or economic teachings is a form of indoctrination. John chambers in his book, The Achievement of Education states in line with the views of such philosophers as Kazepides (1973) and Antony Flew (1972), that the concept of indoctrination has to do with doctrines; that is, with various interrelated systems of belief, rather than with interrelated systems of knowledge. It makes little sense,
for example, to talk of indoctrination in the learning of multiplication tables or the chemical compound in chemistry for these are purely of a factual matter and not matters of belief. To store this information in one's mind with little comprehension or understanding is merely acquiring information by rote and not indoctrination. Chambers states:

The point about such doctrines as Marxism, Mormonism, Fascism and so on is that they consist of interrelated sets of statements, a number of which cannot be demonstrated to be unquestionably true (i.e., about which there is no well-established and general agreement among intelligent people who have carefully considered the matter), but which, taken together, have immense repercussions for the way the believer deals with other persons, chooses his friends, lives his life, sees the truth, demonstrates his values, views the world, and indicates how society should be organized.

(Chambers, 1983, p. 36)

It follows from the above quote that whether an individual believes that iron is made up of the same chemical compounds as plastic is radically different from a belief that white men are superior to black men. The latter belief holds very serious repercussions for society and for human relations in general.

Let us use to illustrate the problems with indoctrination an example used by Chambers (1983). In the Mormon Faith, polygamy is justified by virtue of having been sanctioned by God. As the, "Revelation of the Eternity of the Marriage Covenant Including Plurality of Wives, given through Joseph the Seer, in Nauvoo, Hancock County, Illinois, July 12, 1843" says:
Verily thus saith the Lord unto you my servant, Joseph, that in as much as you have enquired at my hand, to know and understand...as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines...therefore prepare thy heart to receive and obey...if a man espouse a virgin and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent; and if he espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then he is justified; he cannot commit adultery, for they are given unto him... and if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him, therefore he is justified.

(Riley, 1967, p. 87)

Appealing as the above quote may be to many male readers, the question arises as to how can the above statements be proven right or wrong. As Chambers states, certainly it does not seem easy to demonstrate conclusively that God said it. Yet it has been taught to Mormons that God said it. It was part of Mormon Doctrine during the nineteenth century, and thereby had enormous repercussions for the Mormon way of life. The above example is merely one of the most controversial of once-held Mormon beliefs, but the problem of truth-status holds as surely for other religious beliefs as it does for this particular one.

Let us examine the questions which arise from this "Mormon quote", and for which proper evidence must be accumulated if they are to be answered in an intelligent rational manner. Firstly, of course, the basic question arises, does a God really exist to make such a pronouncement? Secondly, if a God does exist did He really tell Joseph Smith that polygamy is morally acceptable? Thirdly, even if we could
answer the above questions with a definite yes, which is not likely, does that mean that the statement is automatically correct as a moral statement? Surely that would depend on whether it satisfied a fundamental moral principle. Fourthly, and closely tied in with number three above, would it be considered moral to merely follow blindly the dictates of this pronouncement without any rational reasoning and understanding involved?

Chambers states that one could not even begin to prove the above "Mormon quote" as true or false since we could not even agree as to the sort of evidence which would count for or against the pronouncement. He explains in this manner:

Thus it is crucial to an understanding of indoctrination that a distinction be drawn between two different sorts of statements. I am distinguishing, on the one hand, statements about which there is no disagreement among intelligent people who have carefully considered the matter, about the kind of evidence which would count as showing that the statements were true or false—potentially provable or dis-provable statements—and, on the other hand, statements about which there is disagreement concerning the evidence—potentially neither provable or disprovable statements.

(Chambers)

For instance, a religious man might say "God loves all children" but when the skeptic or agnostic offers evidence to the contrary, i.e., that there is massive misery and suffering in the world and that a loving God would not allow such things to continue, far from abandoning his belief, the religious man goes on to qualify his original statement in various subtle ways. As Chambers explains it, what seemed to
be at the beginning of the discussion a straightforward statement, "God loves all his children", is progressively modified: "His love is different from human love", "He is only testing us", "We cannot understand the ways of God", and so on. The claim is changed so that no matter what contrary evidence the questioning agnostic either assembles or might in principle assemble the religious man will still go on saying, "God loves all his children". If the believer will not allow any sort of evidence to count against his belief, then what sort of belief are we dealing with? A statement which is both ambiguous and cannot be tested by evidence is not a statement in any normal meaningful sense. Such statements can account for any kind of phenomenon. "Believers note what they consider to be confirming instances of their doctrinal belief, and because they see the world in terms of their belief, of course they continually see what they take to be confirming instances" (Chambers, 1983, p. 40). Finally, Chambers states:

While the presence of interrelated sets of statements of this metaphysical sort may be the best evidence that a set of claims is doctrinal, close analysis of content will show further problems. For instance, there is often inconsistency and contradiction, selective use of evidence, overgeneralization from insufficient instances, and the use of authority as a 'stopper' to discussion.

(Chambers, 1983, p. 41)

Returning to the "Mormon quote" and the four basic questions posed afterwards, we find that the first two are impossible to answer. For we cannot even agree as to the
evidence which would be needed to prove the statements true or false. Answers to questions three and four may be obtained not by means of appeals to some supernatural creature but by the careful use of reason itself. The "Mormon quote" is not grounded in supporting reasons or evidence to hold as true and, therefore, cannot be considered moral education. For moral education as with all other education must be grounded in rationally defendable arguments, "within which reasons can be given as evidence for knowledge claims". Cornel Hamm explains this more clearly:

In this strict sense education also implies 'knowledge and understanding in depth and breadth', where knowledge implies familiarity with, and acceptance of, the supporting reasons (evidence, grounds, justification) for the beliefs held to be true. The possibility of education in this sense then rests on there being available public grounds for propositions to be warrantable. It makes sense to talk of various kinds of education (historical, mathematical, moral, scientific, etc.) only if there exist various types of grounds, or various canons of verifiability, within which reasons can be given as evidence for knowledge claims. Education then becomes initiation into these 'forms of knowledge'. To establish the plausibility of moral education we must establish the plausibility of a moral 'form of knowledge'...

(Hamm, 1979, p. 19)

Obviously, the "Mormon quote" used previously as an example of religious teaching does not meet this criterion and hence it would be illegitimate to call religious teachings educational. It should be noted here that religious teachings do often convey very sound acceptable moral content, i.e., "do not steal", "do not tell lies", etc. However, what is
lacking is a sound justification for the content or in fact a wrong justification for that content. This is the problem in trying to equate religious 'education' with moral education. The former is indoctrination, the latter, because it is based on sound rational reasoning, can be considered education.

Norman Bull explains that indoctrination is an enemy of personal autonomy for it seeks to impose upon an individual beliefs and teachings that are not founded upon, nor can ever be open to, the processes of reason. In particular, also, the tying of social morality to religious beliefs has been a leading cause of contemporary moral confusion. Furthermore, indoctrination denies the values necessary for the realization of personal autonomy:

In terms of moral education, it could only be harmful, dangerous and self-defeating. As a subtle form of authoritarianism, it not only denies the individual his rights as a person and as a rational being, it also exposes him to the possibility of moral breakdown if and when reason asserts itself and cracks open the flimsy foundations upon which values had been built. Morality must be reasoned, and seen to be reasonable, if it is to have sure foundations.

(Bull, 1969, p. 124)

To summarize we may state that religious teachings cannot be proven true or false by rational reasoning or the giving of evidence for we cannot agree as to the type of evidence which can be used to count for or against these religious doctrines. Furthermore, religious teachings are inimical to moral reasoning for they attempt to impose beliefs
on individuals which are based on some authority figure either human or supernatural. This appeal to an authority figure acts as a stop-gap to further reasoning. Finally moral values based on religious teachings rest on very shaky grounds for if the individual should lose faith in his beliefs the whole moral structure is seriously weakened if not destroyed. It appears therefore that the basic principles of morality provide a solid rational foundation for transmitting moral knowledge which religious teachings lack.
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