Foundations of Character Education

Section 1

Promising Directions for Character Education

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THE GROWING MOVEMENT FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION SHOWS that today's educators are seeking to reclaim the moral mission of schooling. This holds an implicit promise, namely, that schools can respond effectively to the apparent moral decline in American culture.

A discussion of foundations focuses on ascertaining the universal values that undergird character education efforts. Universal values are valid for contemporary and traditional societies, and are consistent with the findings of social-scientific research as well as time-honored insights from the world's spiritual and moral traditions. Establishing such universal values is the key to teachers reclaiming their moral authority, thus ending decades of non-directive and ineffective moral teaching methods.

Several fresh perspectives are presented here. The first is that other-centered love is at the heart of moral development. Values and virtues revered by people the world over, such as courage, responsibility, caring, respect, honesty, loyalty, fidelity, forgiveness and self-sacrifice, are all about giving to others and acting with the benefit of others in mind. Thus, working towards competence in giving altruistic love is the chief objective of character development. In other words, if our life task is to fulfill our humanity, our humanity is defined by our capacity to love and to live in accord with our conscience.

The second is attention to matters of life's meaning and purpose, which turn out to be profoundly linked to character development. Notions of meaning in life need not be obscure or metaphysical. Such commonly shared life goals as personal maturity, loving relationships and family, and making a contribution to the community provide a rationale for the pursuit of virtue. They also set up a framework for understanding character development in its fullness—a life-goals approach to character education.

1

Giving Character Priority

IN A POLL CONDUCTED BY *WHO'S WHO AMONG AMERICAN TEACHERS* two years ago, teachers observed a toxic trend in their schools over the past 10 years: 81 percent reported less respect for authority, 73 percent noted a decline in ethics and morals, 65 percent observed less responsible attitudes, and 60 percent saw children as more self-centered.[1] In a June 1st, 1995 radio interview, New York City mayor Rudolph Giuliani reported that though crime that year had decreased 18 percent, crime within the school system had increased 25 percent. In late April 1999, two students at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado went on a murderous shoot-out, killing twelve of their fellow students and a teacher, and wounding many others. Even as America enjoys unprecedented technological and economic prosperity, it is plagued by a pervasive moral crisis. This crisis is nowhere more evident than among youth.

The once common assumption that economic prosperity would solve social problems has not proven to be true. Family breakdown, crime and social problems have increased most sharply in affluent countries and nations experiencing their greatest period of economic expansion. For example, England has enjoyed considerable economic prosperity in the decades since the 1960s. Yet the crime rate, which had been stable for a full century, nearly doubled between the late 1950s and early 1980s. It doubled again between 1985 and 1995, congruent with a huge rise in divorces.[2]

Nor has social spending made much difference in solving social problems. Former Secretary of Education William Bennett has proposed

a list of "leading cultural indicators" to measure the character of a society. During the period from 1960 to 1990, America as a nation grew wealthier—the Gross Domestic Product increased 270 percent, far outstripping the population growth. Government spending on social problems increased more than five-fold, with spending on welfare for the poorest of the population increasing by 630 percent. Yet the same period saw a dramatic decline in the nation's character.[3] The billions of dollars spent on social and economic programs were of little avail in dealing with these problems, especially the problems confronting young people.

U.S. Social Trends and Cultural Indicators, 1960-1990

General Social Trends	
U.S. Population	Up 41%
Gross Domestic Product	Up 270%
Government Social Spending	Up 550%
Spending on Welfare	Up 630%
Spending on Education	Up 225%
Average TV Viewing Daily	Up to 7 hours

Cultural Indicators	
Rate of Illegitimate Births	Up 419%
Children on Welfare	Up 340%
Children Living with Single Parents	Up 300%
Violent Crime Rate	Up 470%
Teen Suicide Rate	Up 200%

Simply throwing tremendous amounts of resources at social problems has not proven effective. This raises the question of whether a more foundational approach is needed. The historian Arnold Toynbee once cautioned:

> The greater our material power, the greater our need for spiritual insight and virtue to use our power for good and not for evil.... We have never been adequate spiritually for handling our material power; and today the morality gap is... greater than it has ever been in any previous age.[4]

A good society requires effective economic programs to reduce poverty and improve living conditions, but it also requires concerted efforts to promote positive values and good character. But what are the social influences that most shape young people's values today?

The communication media and the entertainment industry often have greater impact upon young people's values formation than the great moral traditions. A Time/CNN poll found that the percentage of teenagers learning about sexual matters from television rather than from more responsible sources had doubled in the last twelve years.[5]

The American Psychological Association estimates that the typical child watches 27 hours of TV a week and witnesses 8,000 TV murders and 100,000 acts of violence by the age of twelve. The media often portray children as wiser than their hopelessly out-of-touch parents or disciplinarian schoolteachers. Young people are barraged with cultural messages teaching a perspective quite at odds with the values that caring parents, teachers and community leaders seek to transmit.[6] No wonder the Carnegie Foundation reports that "nearly half of American adolescents are at high or moderate risk of seriously damaging their life chances."[7]

A wide array of scholars, including Robert Bellah,[8] Christopher Lasch[9] and Roy Baumeister,[10] think the decline of explicit moral teachings in the last fifty to seventy-five years has left individuals with a "values gap"—no moral base on which to build a philosophy of life. Children are left to construct their own value system or even to avoid the task altogether. Without dedicated and consistent guidance, teenagers often adopt bits and pieces of values and goals from various sources, then to a large extent resort to personal satisfaction as their guiding orientation. Schools, home and the community owe it to young people to provide an explicit and consistent moral message so that popular, commercial culture and happenstance do not fill in the gap. Schools have traditionally played a key role in this socialization process, and their input is more crucial now than ever before.

Restoring Priority to Moral Education

The purpose of education concerns what sociologist Peter Berger calls "world-building."[11] The human world is a world of human achievements—of images, ideas and beliefs, of works of literature, art and music, of relationships, organizations and maxims of conduct, of skills, technologies and practical enterprises. All these are one's inheritance as a human being, and apart from them there is no humanity in a real sense. They are an inheritance that can only be grasped and possessed through learning.

Broadly speaking, human achievements have two dimensions. There is an external dimension: factual knowledge, skills, technologies, artifacts, etc. There is also an internal dimension: the wisdom of humanity concerning a good and meaningful life as embodied in its

moral traditions. Literature, history, customs, religion and philosophy all convey and promote this internal side of human culture. Education is properly balanced when it encourages the pursuit of both these dimensions of life. Educator John Sloan Dickey remarked, "The end of education is to see men made whole, both in competence and in conscience. To create the power of competence without creating a corresponding direction to guide the use of that power is bad education. For apart from conscience, competence will finally disintegrate."[12]

When people focus excessively on the practical and material side of life, pursuing technology, information, wealth and status while neglecting the moral and spiritual dimension, they may find the satisfaction they derive to be empty and fleeting. A healthier life orientation balances these practical needs with a concern for the inner values of truth, meaning, goodness, beauty and love. Moral values—such as responsibility, respect, caring, honesty, courage, loyalty and compassion—help people attain the inner happiness that comes through self-respect, companionship and honor.

Of the two dimensions of human life, the moral dimension has priority. To understand why this is so, consider the relationship between a person's mind (consciousness) and body (material existence). The mind, as the source and center of moral values, is the basis for harmonious relationships with others. The mind holds purposes higher than the individual self: helping the community, going out of one's way to aid a neighbor, raising a child well. Society depends upon the mind directing people toward altruism. Meanwhile, the body urges a person toward being concerned mainly with the physical needs and pleasures of the individual self—food, clothing, shelter, sex and material comforts. When bodily urges take priority over the more altruistic urgings of the mind, then unnecessary personal, relational and social difficulties ensue.

Even by the measure of career success, the significance of character cannot be underestimated. A study at Bell Laboratories examined why among engineers of comparable intelligence and technical ability, some were more outstanding performers. It found that the top performers devoted time to cultivating good relationships with their coworkers. Hence when a technical problem arose, they could turn for help to a network of supporters and friends. Other engineers of equal intelligence, but lacking in cooperation-building skills, might wait for days to get necessary information. In the end, they did not perform as

well, nor did they advance as far in their careers, as those with developed qualities of heart and character.[13]

Thus, the moral dimension has priority because it is the foundation for a worthwhile life. Good character enhances people's ability to form lasting friendships—and beyond that, strong marriages and families. People of good character can be entrusted with social responsibilities; hence they are more productive workers and citizens. From performance on the job to general satisfaction with life, the Greek philosopher Heraclitus rightly stated: "Character is destiny."

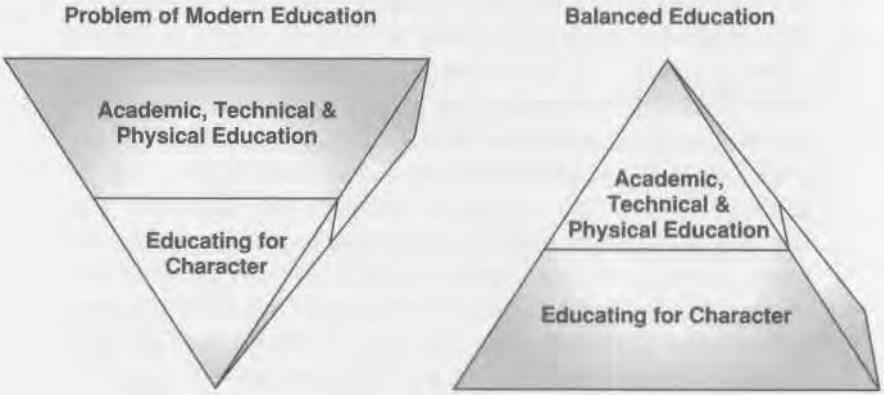

Figure 1: Reestablishing the Priority of Educating for Character

Balanced Education

Education has a crucial role to encourage the pursuit of both dimensions of life in proper balance. What can be called conventional education—academic education, technical and vocational education, artistic and physical training—enables individuals to better pursue practical goals and objectives such as abundant wealth, a comfortable life, good health and social status. What can be called "educating for character" is about nurturing the inner side of life. Whether this endeavor is called "character education," "moral education," "civic education," "values education," "ethics" or "moralogy" (these are roughly equivalent though with some distinctive emphases[14]), it involves providing appropriate moral values and guiding students to realize them in their character.

Of the two dimensions of education, educating for character has priority. It is the broad base upon which rest all other forms of schooling: academic instruction, technical training, artistic training and physical training. A child's potential in those practical areas naturally builds upon the foundation of values fostered by attention to her character development. Indeed, the first purpose of education is not to train future technicians, journalists, scientists and businessmen, etc. It is to foster a child's humanity.

This simple insight formed the basis of classical education in ancient Greece. Here is a description by Plato:

> Education begins in the first years of childhood. As soon as the child can understand what is said, mother and father exert themselves to make the child as good as possible, at each word and action teaching and showing that this is right and that wrong, this honorable and that dishonorable.... At a later stage they send him to teachers and tell them to attend to his conduct far more than to his reading and writing. And the teachers did so...they put into his hands the works of great poets, and make him read and learn them by heart, sitting on his bench at school. These are full of instruction and of tales and praises of famous men of old, and the aim is that the boy may admire and imitate and be eager to become like them.[15]

Classical education's explicit aim was to produce a definite type of character, a definite attitude towards life. Although the acquisition of knowledge, skills and physical prowess were important goals, more important was the fostering of virtuous character. Curricula and classroom readings were selected with character formation in mind. Note that home, school and community were partners in this educational endeavor.

Today many American educators are seeking to reclaim this traditional insight. They are recognizing that the prevailing emphasis of present-day education, with its focus on intellectual knowledge and technical skills, is unbalanced. Stephen Trachtenberg, president of George Washington University, remarked that schools of higher learning must respond to the current moral decline by providing moral and ethical instruction as part of their central mission.[16] Daniel Goleman, the author of the ground-breaking book *Emotional Intelligence*, wrote, "Even though a high IQ is no guarantee of prosperity, prestige or happiness in life, our schools and our culture fixate on academic abilities, ignoring

emotional intelligence, a set of traits—some might call it character—that also matters immensely for our personal destiny."[17]

Certainly, schools, parents and communities face challenges implementing effective moral education. At home, parents are tempted to push their teenage children to study hard to master a career while avoiding unpleasant moral issues. At school, conventional academic, vocational and physical education take up the majority of time and resources. The discordant values promoted in the media can lead parents to feel isolated and besieged. Yet children do best when they live in a positive moral environment formed by the cooperation and support of home, school and community. Now more than ever, educating for character remains an imperative. Here is a challenge where schools can take the lead.

There was a headmaster of a school who had survived one of Hitler's concentration camps. This man had experienced first hand how one of the most cultured, educated and scientifically advanced nations on earth descended into barbarism. He used to send every new faculty member at his school the following letter.

> Dear Teacher:
>
> My eyes saw what no man should witness: gas chambers built by learned engineers, children poisoned by learned physicians, infants killed by trained nurses, women and babies shot and burned by high school and college graduates. So, I am suspicious of education....
>
> My request is: Help your students become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmanns. Reading, writing, arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human.[18]

2

Recent Trends in Moral Education

DEB BROWN IS A KINDERGARTEN TEACHER IN WEST VIRGINIA. In the most challenging class she faced in her 21-year career, 90 percent of her students came from broken homes and 40 percent had never met their birth fathers. She realized that before she could begin teaching this class academics, she had to make character education the priority. One student, Cody, talked for months about his upcoming visit to his father in prison, when he could sit on his father's lap rather than talk through a glass. His father had killed a man while trying to steal some stereo equipment. After the visit, Cody said to her, "Mrs. Brown, I just know that if my Dad had been in your class, he wouldn't have had to go to prison. He would have made better decisions in his life."[1] Deb Brown is one of a growing number of teachers who in the last decade have joined the movement for character education. It is a healthy if belated response to the moral decline in America's youth.

In recent decades, educational efforts to remedy the moral shortcomings of youth have been disappointing, even as schools excelled in imparting the skills and knowledge required for the complex tasks of the information age. This failure was not for lack of concern; polls of parents and educators show that both groups have always regarded education in sound moral behavior as an important part of education.[2] Nor can it be attributed to a by-product of prosperity; the economy had already reached a mature, affluent stage by the late 1950s. Rather, it occurred

as the result of pervasive cultural changes since the 1960s and some well-intentioned yet unsuccessful attempts to reform moral education to fit within the new cultural milieu.[3]

The Decline of Moral Education and the Rise of Values Neutrality

Education in the early years of American democracy was permeated with moral lessons. The founding fathers, such as Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, believed that a vital mission of education was to add to what they called the "moral character" of society. They understood that a people with the power to govern themselves in matters of social policy must first of all be virtuous, able to govern themselves in their personal lives. They founded great universities with a moral mission. The motivating vision of Harvard College, for example, was to train leaders who could "spell the difference between civilization and barbarism."[4] Noah Webster wrote in 1790,

> Education, in great measure, forms the moral character of men, and morals are the basis of government.... It is much easier to introduce and establish an effectual system for preserving morals than to correct by penal statutes the ill effects of a bad system.... The only practicable method to reform mankind is to begin with children.[5]

18th and 19th-century education integrated moral lessons into the school setting. School children learned to write by copying such aphorisms as: "Employment prevents vice," "Praise follows exertion," and "Justice is a common right."[6] As children copied and memorized them, these aphorisms became a part of their being.

In this regard, traditional American education was no different from traditional education in most nations around the world. In premodern China, for example, the Confucian classics that students memorized and copied were infused with moral precepts—pithy proverbs like: "Idleness when young, regrets before long," "Where there is a will, there is a way," and "Intolerance of minor insults will ruin great projects."[7]

Public education continued to maintain its moral focus through most of its period of industrialization and maturation into a wealthy market economy. It only began to depart from it in the 1960s, after

widespread cultural changes and questioning of traditional values.

It is not the purpose here to analyze the complex reasons for these cultural changes, and it certainly can be argued that some traditional values deserved criticism. Americans did well to support the Civil Rights Movement's attack upon white racism and to examine the morality of the Vietnam War. However, the youth rebellion of the 1960s, despite its idealism, became infected with hedonism, narcissism and profound lack of judgment. It turned out to be the catalyst for a deep cultural shift. As the culture came to glorify youth, the moral authority of elders declined. As the culture exalted the values of freedom and equality for all, it came to tolerate and even celebrate deviant behavior. The result was mainstream acceptance of moral relativism. Many people came to believe that it was morally right to pursue personal fulfillment above social and family responsibilities, which were viewed as restricting the development of the self. An unintended result was the rise of self-centeredness.

With society questioning its moral foundations, teachers colleges and university education departments retreated from training teachers to be transmitters of moral values and instead emphasized teaching techniques, strategies, models and skills. The vision of the good teacher came to be that of the good technician—one who is effective in elevating students' scores on standardized tests of basic skills. Educational psychology, rather than philosophy and morals, took center stage in teacher training, and hence came to dominate the ethos of schools. In the opinion of many researchers in the area of character and moral development, the emphasis on technique to the exclusion of philosophy has left teachers ill-equipped to foster children's character development and often professionally indisposed to do so.[8]

Thus, in the decades following the 1960s, the most well-intentioned efforts at cultivating morals had to confront a culture pervaded by relativism and skeptical of public affirmations of traditional values. Teachers were trained to believe it was wrong to inculcate their personal moral beliefs. Many teachers and administrators came to believe that discussion of morals was entirely outside the bounds of proper curricula. Those educators who felt strongly about the importance of moral education had to find a way to do so within the constraint of a "values neutral" classroom. They gravitated to new, non-directive approaches to moral education, beginning with a movement called values clarification.

Values Clarification

When values clarification was first introduced in the 1970s, it enjoyed great popularity. *Values Clarification: A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students* sold over 600,000 copies, an almost unheard-of figure for a book on educational method.[9] Today, however, values clarification is regarded as a failure. The most definitive studies found it to have no significant positive impact on students' values, self-esteem, personal adjustment, interpersonal relationships or drug use, and only minimal impact on classroom behavior.[10]

Until its defects were discovered, values clarification had great appeal, particularly for educators looking for ways to promote moral learning in a values-neutral classroom environment. In certain corners of the curriculum, notably sexuality education, its basic perspective and techniques are still being practiced. Moreover, in developing countries where traditional values have been thrown into confusion by the pressures of modernization, educators are found promoting approaches that recycle its theory and methods.

To confuse matters further, sometimes the term "values clarification" is used in a broad sense to mean "clarifying the values within oneself" as one method within a moral education curriculum in which values are explicitly taught. Indeed, character education profitably utilizes many of the non-directive techniques pioneered by values clarification (see below). Yet that is far from the standard use of the term in professional circles, where it refers specifically to the values-neutral pedagogy of the '70s movement and its offshoots.

In the standard values clarification curriculum, the teacher refrains from teaching explicit values. Instead, he facilitates a process by which the student uncovers his or her own values. The method encourages inexperienced and immature young people to make their own choices about values, yet provides no moral instruction to guide them in making wise choices. Today, values clarification is widely criticized for promoting moral deviance by encouraging immature students to view themselves as arbiters of their own morality. Thomas Sowell said that a more apt name would be "values confusion," because its non-judgmental approach is at odds with any set of values that distinguish between right and wrong.[11]

Values Clarification: A Handbook of Practical Strategies declares that its purpose is to make students "aware of their own feelings, their own

ideas, their own beliefs...their own value systems."[12] In its first exercise, entitled "Twenty Things You Love to Do," students are asked to identify what they like and want. They are not asked to identify moral values, what one *ought* to do, but merely to identify *wants*. Nor are they asked to consider other values that may conflict with what they value. One eighth-grade teacher who used this exercise found that the four most popular choices were "sex, drugs, drinking and skipping school."[13] Missing was any framework by which she could persuade them otherwise. Her students had clarified *their* values and could justify *their* choices. The teacher was admonished not to be judgmental.

In an exercise called "Values Voting," the teacher asks such innocuous questions as "How many of you like to go on long walks or hikes?" or "How many like yogurt?" interspersed with questions of moral content: "How many of you approve of premarital sex for boys? For girls?"[14] In this motley collection of questions, students come away with the impression that all values are a matter of personal taste, like eating yogurt. In Bennett's view, the result was to clarify wants and desires in place of values, thus undermining values.[15]

Such exercises encourage students to be "in touch with their feelings." Since "valuing" means caring about something, values certainly do entail feelings. Yet a value is, first of all, a belief or cognition about what conduct and outcomes are desirable or not.[16] A firmly held value is founded on rational arguments about what behaviors will most benefit themselves and others. Clarifying feelings does not necessarily lead to clarity about values.

The teacher's role was to be a facilitator for the students' choices. Although an immature student might make unwise choices, the teacher had to refrain from instructing the student to change his or her choice. As the seminal text of values clarification notes, "It is entirely possible that children will choose not to develop values. It is the teacher's responsibility to support that choice also."[17]

The textbooks even disparaged parents' moral guidance, thus subtly undermining parental authority: "A major influence on you has been the attitudes and behaviors of each of your parents.... Many believe that these traditional attitudes hinder growth and development of a person because they limit possibilities." "If you feel your parents are overprotective...you may feel you have to tune out their voice entirely."[18] The argument ran: parental instruction imposes the parents' values, which may not be the same as the child's values. Parents have no spe-

cial claim to authority; they are just "ordinary people with faults and weaknesses and insecurities and problems just like everyone else."[19]

Yet the relationship of parent and child is no ordinary relationship. It is a unique and life-long relationship the child will never have with anyone else. Not only do parents have vastly more experience in values-formation than the child or the child's peers, they also inculcate these values out of enduring love and regard for the child's welfare.

By the early 1990s, values clarification had been largely abandoned. Merrill Harmin, a co-author of its manifesto, *Values and Teaching*, issued a retraction of sorts in 1988:

> Our emphasis on value neutrality probably did undermine traditional morality.... As I look back, it would have been better had we presented a more balanced picture.... It makes a good deal of sense to say that truthfulness is better than deception, caring is better than hurting, loyalty is better than betrayal, and sharing is better than exploitation.[20]

Howard Kirschenbaum, who co-authored the basic teacher-training manual for values clarification, has moved to an eclectic approach that combines student-centered methods with traditional inculcation of values.[21] He recently quipped, "Some administrators today would rather be accused of having asbestos in their ceilings than of using values clarification in their classrooms."[22]

Philosophical Roots of Values Clarification

Values clarification is heavily indebted to humanistic psychology. By promoting greater sensitivity to the student as an individual learner, psychology has had the salutary effect of counteracting the factory-like atmosphere in schools where education was seen as filling young minds with knowledge and where results were measured by test scores. It has promoted the notion that education is about teaching children, not just teaching subjects.

Psychologist Carl Rogers had revolutionized counseling practice by introducing "client-centered" therapy. It is a non-directive method in which the therapist refuses to give direct advice; instead, he reflects the patient's thoughts and feelings back to

her as objectively as possible without instructing the patient in any way. The goal is for the patient to recognize the solution to the problem within herself by drawing out her own deepest values, desires, and goals. Such self-realizations can be effective in motivating change in the adult client, whose values are already formed. In *Freedom to Learn* and many other publications, Rogers then suggested applying his therapeutic techniques to the education of children.[23]

This begs an important question. Do children have such a strong innate tendency to develop as moral agents that they can attain personal maturity independent of learning a moral code? Abraham Maslow, proponent of a non-directive psychological method he called self-actualization, warned that these techniques may be inappropriate for children: "Self-actualization does not occur in young people.... [They have not] learned how to be patient; nor have they learned enough about evil in themselves and others...nor have they generally acquired enough courage to become unpopular, to be unashamed about being openly virtuous."[24]

A second root of values clarification is Romanticism, the philosophy founded by the French thinker Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Romanticism holds that society's conventions are artificial and corrupting. Thus, if children were only allowed to grow in a natural state, they would automatically flower to display natural virtues.

Romanticism also gives primacy to feelings over intellection. Subjective feelings are thought to be trustworthy guides, while reason is often bound to social duties and norms, imposed from without.[25] The modern cult of personal authenticity and "getting in touch with your feelings" is Romanticist at its core.[26] Values clarification shares this viewpoint, confusing personal feelings with values that can be rationally supported.

Romanticism distinguishes the individual from his social context. Yet is it not in a social context that the conscience is properly formed? Today most moral educators argue that children need to be taught the content of moral norms as well as be nurtured in their own innate virtues. Not so in values clarification, where advocating society's values is out of bounds.

The Appropriateness of Non-Directive Teaching Methods

One reason for the enthusiasm that greeted values clarification was that it introduced new non-directive teaching methods that are sometimes more effective in promoting learning than traditional didactic lectures. While traditional lectures can result in students merely parroting the teacher, the teacher who uses a non-directive method refuses to give a pat answer. Her purpose is to set the students on the path of self-discovery. The resulting disequilibrium in the students can be productive of personal growth. It challenges students to draw upon their knowledge and life experience. It spurs their reasoning process and forces them to reflect deeply. Students become active participants in an engaging journey of learning.

Although education traditionally favored the methods of didactic lectures and rote memorization, non-directive methods are as old as Socrates and Confucius. Socrates invented the Socratic dialogue, a method of questioning designed to draw out his students' values. Confucius constantly questioned his disciples and encouraged them to state their own views. He remarked, "Only one who bursts with eagerness do I instruct.... If I hold up one corner and a man cannot come back to me with the other three, I do not continue the lesson."[27] However, a critical step in Confucius' non-directive method was evaluation—rational discussion of the students' answers and comparison against the moral standard. Socrates would not employ his dialogical method with students under 30 years old.

Today non-directive methods are being successfully employed in the context of positive moral instruction. For example, within the context of a lesson on friendship, it is good pedagogy to ask students to explain how they personally would treat their friends in a given circumstance. However, to complete the moral lesson, there follows an evaluation step where explicit moral discourse takes over. The previous cautions concerning values clarification are not a critique of all non-directive methods, but rather warn against using such methods *from a morally neutral stance* and *in the absence of moral reasoning*.

Raising Self-Esteem—A Moral End?

Another influence of the therapeutic perspective is the educational goal of raising self-esteem. Few doubt that valuing and respecting oneself is part of a healthy personality. Very low self-esteem is a character flaw that can lead to delinquency or even suicide. The question, however, is whether promoting self-esteem as an end in itself is consistent with character development.

"A dozen years ago, research was showing heavily positive things about high self-esteem," says Roy Baumeister of Case Western Reserve University. "Since then, questions have been raised about the size of effects, the direction of effects, and whether in fact it's a mixed blessing even to have high self esteem."[28] After all, people find self-esteem in things that have little to do with morality—high grades, popularity with peers, winning schoolyard fights, sexual conquests and bullying.

Traditional education was suspicious of self-esteem, valuing humility and self-denial as a better guide to life. A healthy sense of guilt and shame can steer one away from deeds that violate the conscience. When these negative emotions have the effect of reinforcing proper behavior, they promote a solid basis for self-worth.

Teachers concerned with educating for character would rather foster a healthy sense of self-respect that stems from being a person of integrity, kindness, loyalty, etc.—the aspects of good character. Following Aristotle's teaching that character is built through surmounting challenges, effective character education programs challenge students to strive for high goals and real accomplishments.

Focus on self esteem, particularly in programs aimed at poor and underprivileged students, can become a kind of crutch to justify and even reinforce low achievement, according to Richard Elmore, a professor of education at Harvard University. "For most teachers, self-esteem is a theory they invent to cover the fact that they have low expectations for kids."[29] Sooner or later the students are disillusioned and deflated, realizing that their self-esteem has no basis in objective fact. Spurred by these findings, educators today are returning to more traditional achievement-based programs. Honest criticism and fair evaluation can actually accomplish more for young people's self-esteem by giving them the knowledge and skills necessary for accomplishing their life goals.

The Moral Reasoning Approach

As values clarification lost its appeal, many moral educators turned to the moral reasoning approach pioneered by Lawrence Kohlberg. Following the work of developmental psychologist Jean Piaget, Kohlberg found that moral reasoning develops in distinct stages from infancy to adulthood.[30] His mapping of the process of cognitive moral development and his practical methods for measuring it were valuable contributions to moral psychology, and are his lasting legacy. The application to moral education, however, was less successful. Only a few of the "Just Community schools" established to practice his pedagogy remain open.[31]

At the heart of the moral reasoning pedagogy are discussions of moral dilemmas, in which the students are asked to discern the best course of action among several plausible alternatives. They can be phrased for any grade level, like this middle school example:

> Sharon and Jill were best friends. One day they went shopping together. Jill tried on a sweater and then, to Sharon's surprise, walked out of the store wearing the sweater under her coat. A moment later, the store's security guard stopped Sharon and demanded that she tell him the name of the girl who had walked out. He said that he'd seen the two girls together and was sure the one who left had been shoplifting. He warns Sharon, "Come on now, tell me. You could get in serious trouble if you don't give us your friend's name." Should Sharon tell on her friend? Why or why not?[32]

These moral dilemmas are not provided with a right or a wrong answer. Instead, they stimulate the moral reasoning process itself, making the student more aware of the choices at stake. In this example, Sharon could decide to tell out of fear of punishment, or deny all for fear her friend would spurn her. She could protect her friend because she owes her a favor, or turn her in because of remembered slights. Any number of reasons could be given for either course of action. The logic by which students arrive at their choices is more significant than the choice itself. It was assumed that presenting students with moral dilemmas and discussing their answers together would stimulate development of their moral reasoning towards higher stages.

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Reasoning—illustrated by Sharon's dilemma[33]

Stage 1: *Avoidance of Punishment:* "Will I get in trouble?"

Sharon should tell, otherwise she will be in big trouble.

Sharon shouldn't tell. Otherwise Jill will be angry and make her life miserable.

Stage 2: *Tit-for-tat Fairness:* "What's in it for me?"

Why should Sharon have to take the rap for Jill? Jill looks out for herself, so Sharon should do likewise.

It depends on whether she owes Jill a favor, or wants Jill to cover for her sometime.

Stage 3: *Interpersonal Loyalty:* "What will people think of me?"

What kind of friend would turn in her best friend? Everyone will think she's a fink.

If she doesn't tell, she's an accomplice in a crime. Her reputation will suffer.

Stage 4: *Concern for Larger Consequences:* "What if everybody did it?"

Sharon should tell, even though it would be hard to do. It's not fair for people to go around stealing. If you don't obey laws, society will fall apart.

Moral reasoning pedagogy is helpful because it allows a teacher to get inside the students' heads to understand how they think about moral issues.[34] This is essential if she is to meet the students' cognitive level and engage them in their moral development. Second, the method encourages students to "hear" their own way of thinking and to reflect critically upon it. They can listen to others' reasoning and think about which kind of reasoning will best guide them to become the people

they really want to be. Third, it fits the common experience that morality is not always black and white, but requires choosing between competing goods. Fourth, since moral reasoning is grounded in rational principles, teachers can guide a discussion comparing and evaluating the various judgments.

Moral reasoning is non-relativistic—it assumes some moral values are superior to others. Thus, it is superior to values clarification. Still, its methodology resembles values clarification in requiring open discussions in which students offer various answers. Does this mean that the teacher lets go of the opportunity to give positive moral teaching? A teacher cannot simply declare, "This is wrong!" or she will short-circuit the students' reasoning process. Yet if she merely clarifies and appreciates all students' reasoning, she would fall into the role of a facilitator in the way of values clarification. The teacher's role is to wisely guide the discussion, allowing students to critically reflect on each other's reasoning, to raise the level of moral discourse.

Unfortunately, in the culture of values-neutrality that still pervades many classrooms, teachers find this difficult to do. One remarked, "I often discuss cheating this way, but I always get defeated because they will argue that cheating is alright. After you accept the idea that kids have the right to build a position with logical arguments, you have to accept what they come up with."[35] Many teachers, particularly at the high school level, shy away from open-ended moral discussions for fear that they will degenerate into arguments for undesirable values.

Proper implementation of moral reasoning, therefore, requires a great deal of the teacher. A teacher cannot prevail with this approach without strong moral convictions and considerable training. Herein lies its practical weakness as a pedagogical method.

A theoretical weakness of moral reasoning is that it only deals with the intellectual aspect of the moral self. Educating for character involves training the emotions and will as well as the intellect. As character educator Thomas Lickona states it, "Good character consists of knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good—habits of mind, habits of the heart, and habits of action."[36] Knowing what is right does not necessarily mean choosing to do what is right. A one-sided reliance on intellect may also lead to sophistry. Critics of moral reasoning often cite the unintended consequence that students come away from class believing that morality is complicated and that, as Richard Baer put it, "almost everything in ethics is either vague or controversial."[37]

More commonly, people know the better choice but lack the courage to do it. A student may suddenly face a question of an embarrassing nature and be tempted to lie, all in an instant, to avoid humiliation in a social situation: "Yeah, I've done that (taken drugs, cheated, driven at high speed)." This is an experience more in keeping with a student's day-to-day life. While the student may *believe* in being truthful, the emotional pain of being left out may be a stronger prompt to action than an intellectual belief. Indeed, research on morally exemplary adults and adolescents shows that sustained moral commitment and a strong sense of personal responsibility do not always correlate with one's level of moral judgment according to Kohlberg's measure.[38]

Today's character educators have not abandoned moral reasoning. But they have turned away from a stand-alone moral reasoning pedagogy in favor of integrating it within a comprehensive character education curriculum. (See Chapter 10) Because character education explicitly teaches universal values, it sets a classroom context and tone that does not permit values-neutrality. The values-oriented classroom gives the teacher a platform upon which to utilize discussion of a moral dilemma as a constructive lesson.[39] Character educators also contextualize moral reasoning within a more complete theory of the moral person. Thus, while moral reasoning stimulates moral knowing, it complements other features of the curriculum, including good literature, a sound discipline policy and a caring classroom atmosphere, all of which stimulate moral feeling and moral action as well as moral reasoning.

The Character Education Movement

The declining morals and the rise of negative behaviors among young people reached crisis proportions in the 1990s. In the words of the National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1993, "if an unfriendly foreign power had done this to us, we would have deemed it an act of war."[40] Parents began to harshly criticize the public school system, many even removing their children and placing them in expensive private schools where moral education is traditional and content-driven. Other parents resorted to home schooling. Among public educators there was a growing desperation that something needed to be done, and done quickly.

Moreover, as a society, Americans began to give more importance

to character and personal integrity. Stephen Covey, the author of the widely-read *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, claims that people are shifting paradigms, from a concern for personality to a concern for character. They have grown dissatisfied with the mere social savvy of "winning friends and influencing people," and are recognizing the personal need for the bedrock values that give stability to life.[41]

Growth of Character Education in the United States

A new movement for moral education in the public schools has emerged under the rubric of character education. Character education has been defined as "the deliberate effort to develop good character, by inculcating core virtues that are good for the individual and good for society."[42] Fundamentally, the character education movement rejects the notion that educators must avoid advocating particular values. Christina Sommers states, "In teaching ethics, one thing should be made clear and prominent: Right and wrong do exist. This should be laid down as uncontroversial lest one leaves an altogether false impression that everything is up for grabs."[43]

The character education movement is gaining widespread support. While in 1990 intentional character education programs were a rarity, today 5 to 10 percent of public schools have them.[44] There is rapid development in the quality and comprehensiveness of curricula and methods. (See Section Three) Endorsements by public officials have encouraged the movement. Since 1994 the White House has held annual conferences supporting character education, and the President specifically endorsed it as an educational goal in the 1997 State of the Union Address. Currently, ten states have legislation mandating some form of character education in public schools and six more have pending legislation. Federal grants have been offered to help states implement character-based education programs since 1995.[45] Congress has declared October 16-22 as "National Character Counts Week."[46]

Several character education organizations have played a seminal role, acting as resource centers for the character education initiatives being implemented in schools throughout the country. They act as advocates for character education and organize conferences for teachers and principals. The Character Education Partnership, chaired by Sanford N. McDonnell, is a nonpartisan nationwide coalition of organizations and individuals based in Washington, D.C. The Character Plus (former-

ly PREP) program in St. Louis, through the efforts of Linda McKay, pioneered overcoming the presumption of the values-neutral schooling by building consensus among teachers, parents and administrators around teachable values. The Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character at Boston University, founded by Kevin Ryan, focuses on teacher competence. Thomas Lickona heads the Center for the 4th and 5th Rs at SUNY Cortland in New York. On the West Coast, the International Center for Character Education (ICCE), co-directed by Mary Williams and Ed DeRoche at the University of San Diego, organizes an annual international conference and offers extensive teacher training, including a Certificate program and the first Master's degree program in character education.

There is also an emerging trend to include character education training in the curriculum of teacher education programs. This is not a simple matter, as it confronts teachers college faculties with challenging questions. The teacher education programs that are reporting success are those whose faculties are aware of the need for character education; have given careful thought to the moral goals of schooling; and have made character education foundational for their own programs, infusing its ethos into staff and students alike, in order to create a model.[47]

Assessments of Effectiveness

Although national statistics do not yet exist because the character movement is so new, early assessments attest to the effectiveness of character education programs. The Child Development Project (CDP), a comprehensive whole school elementary character education program that as of 1998 had been implemented in 46 schools in four states, was evaluated in three different studies. The results demonstrate that students have consistently shown positive changes in a broad range of attitudes, inclinations, feelings and behaviors. These include: conflict resolution skills, concern for others, trust in and respect for teachers, prosocial motivation, altruistic behavior and positive interpersonal behavior.[48]

A study of the Mound Fort Middle School of Ogden, Utah, shows that incidents of cheating, vandalism, violence and other behavior problems declined significantly after character education was implemented. The school used to see students fighting daily; now it sees one or two

fights a month.[49] At Atlantis Elementary School in Cocoa, Florida, scores on a statewide writing test for fourth graders rose substantially, due in part to a decline in disciplinary problems.

At Marion Intermediate School in Marion, South Carolina, in one of the poorest communities in the state, a 5-year character education initiative was responsible for reducing office referrals for discipline problems by 50 percent. Meanwhile, staff absences of 10 or more days declined from 68 percent to under 20 percent, while school-business partnerships leaped from 25 to 75.

At the Kennedy Middle School in Eugene, Oregon, office referrals for discipline dropped from 100 per month to 35. Academic performance on state exams rose 15 percent in one year. Teacher morale also improved. One teacher who had resisted the character education initiative admitted, "Students are more respectful and caring. I didn't think it could happen in this day and age."[50] These and other empirical assessments are placing character education on a scientific footing.[51]

Towards a Comprehensive Framework for Character Education

Character education shows every sign of being adopted by the mainstream educators. The trend to implement programs that deliberately foster universal moral values is likely to accelerate in the years ahead. Parents support such explicit moral instruction. When asked what they want from schools, they consistently emphasize two things: first, to teach children how to speak, write, read, think and count correctly; and second, help them to develop reliable standards of right and wrong that will guide them through life.[52]

Nevertheless, many educational leaders wonder whether character education will last, or be just another passing fashion in the continually changing face of education. They question whether it is adequate to the task of reversing the moral decline among youth.

James Leming contends that at present the character education movement lacks a comprehensive theoretical base, with the current research consisting of disparate pieces of sociology, philosophy, psychology, and program evaluations.[53] Ivor Pritchard of the U.S. Department of Education wrote, "the formulation of an adequate philosophical psychology is the primary condition for significant improvement in educational theory and is the source of root conflicts between traditional and progressive schools of educational thought."[54] Leming calls

for the development of a "grand theory" of character education as the next crucial step.[55] Without developing an adequate theoretical foundation for values, the promise of character education may be only ephemeral.

Such a theoretical framework must tackle an array of philosophical and educational issues. It will address moral issues throughout the life span, not shirking controversial topics such as love and sexuality and their relationship to character. It will of necessity give consideration to the role of the family in character formation. It will address questions of meaning: why ought a student to develop good character? At the very least, it will give firm grounding to the values taught by character educators, demonstrating beyond a shadow of a doubt that they are universal values that transcend religions, cultures, politics and ideologies, the diversity of which is often used as an argument for moral relativism.

3

Ascertaining Universal Values

I know that some people say... different civilizations and different ages have had quite different moralities. But this is not true.... If anyone will take the trouble to compare the moral teaching of, say, the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Hindus, Chinese, Greeks and Romans, what will really strike him will be how very like they are to each other and to our own....

Think what a totally different morality would mean. Think of a country where people were admired for running away in battle, or where a man felt proud of double-crossing all the people who had been kindest to him. You might just as well try to imagine a country where 2 plus 2 equals 5. Men have differed as regards what people you ought to be unselfish to—whether it was only your own family, or your fellow countrymen, or everyone. But they have always agreed that you ought not to put yourself first. —C. S. Lewis[1]

THIS COMMENT BY BRITISH WRITER C. S. LEWIS SETS OUT THE fundamental premise behind character education: Certain moral values are in fact universal. Yet how do educators establish that universal moral values in fact exist? How can universal values be distinguished from other sorts of values that may not be universal? This question is preliminary to the character education enterprise.

Whose Values Do You Teach?

With the rise of moral relativism in the 1960s, whenever moral education was ventured critics immediately posed the question, "Whose values do you teach?" The common presumption of that era—that values were the product of culture—meant that any attempt to teach values was in reality only fostering cultural hegemony. This so disoriented that generation of educators that they retreated to values neutrality. Those who wished to pursue moral education eschewed teaching values and instead focused on non-directive methodologies such as values clarification that encouraged students to arrive at their own values—as defective as they might be.

Moreover, educators were caught in confusion over whether teaching values was a subtle way of promoting religion. Religion has traditionally been an important—but not the sole—foundation for morality and ethics. Since Supreme Court decisions in 1962 and 1963 banned school-sponsored prayers and devotional readings from public schools, educational authorities have scrupulously avoided even the appearance of religious instruction. These court decisions may certainly be justified on Constitutional grounds that the state is not permitted to establish or favor one religion over another, or even religion over atheism. However, fear of religious indoctrination in the schools had the negative effect of contributing to the neglect or outright rejection of any deliberate teaching of moral values.

How times have changed! Today, educational leaders critique the value-free atmosphere that still lingers at many schools and call for deliberate ethical instruction. Derek Bok, former president of Harvard University, has stated, "There are fundamental working principles of ethical behavior which are important, and we're not indoctrinating our students by making a conscious effort to make them understand, appreciate, and live by those principles."[2] Kieran Egan asserts that education should be explicit in its moral goals: "to believe that you can educate in a value-free environment is to believe that you can love non-emotionally."[3]

Character educators are no longer reticent about affirming the universality of moral values. Being universal means they transcend any particular culture or creed. They are cherished by people everywhere: East and West, North and South. They are valid today, they were valid in the past, and they will be valid in the future. They apply to the whole person, linking material welfare and spiritual well-being.

An example of a universal moral value, one that appears in each of the major ethical systems of the world, is the precept: "Treat others as you would have them treat you." Most people's common sense tells them that this is a reasonable and right way to behave. No conscientious parent would object to having their child taught this precept; nor would they object to a school that upholds and teaches the virtues of honesty, honor, respect and courage. Nevertheless, it is still helpful to elucidate the theoretical foundations of universal values.

Values as Beliefs, Virtues and Norms

A teacher in southern California tells of an Asian student named Ming who always addressed her as "Teacher." The other students, who called her "Mrs. Morrison," teased Ming for the funny way he spoke. Tim spoke up in class, saying he thought Ming was being disrespectful. Later, Ming explained to his teacher, "In my country, to say 'Teacher' shows respect. I don't want to address you disrespectfully merely as 'Mrs. Morrison.'"

This incident points out the important distinction between universal moral values and the manners and customs rooted in culture. Ming and Tim both understood that the question of their cultural differences was not a serious issue, but the matter of showing respect—a universal value—was. This problem lurks in the shadows of character education. Perhaps some of the social conventions Americans take for granted are not universal values. How does one distinguish between universal values and values that are culture-bound?

Another pitfall character educators learn to avoid is to allow discussions of values to become politicized. These days, politicians and interest groups wave the flags of human rights, freedom, and other universal values to justify controversial positions and policies. Sometimes these issues can generate informative class discussions that an experienced teacher can guide into lessons of moral insight. Nevertheless, more often than not, they become arid intellectual debates having no impact on the students' lives. This is a reason to keep the classroom focus on personal virtue and character. The learning experience is directed into the more fruitful avenues of self-reflection and cultivating personal responsibility.

Defining Values

To better grasp these issues, it helps to first clarify the catch-all term "values." Ethicists distinguish between several different types of values. In the most general sense, *values* are what people judge worth having (e.g., wealth, wisdom), worth doing (e.g., helping others, a rewarding career, gardening) or worth being (e.g., honest, happy, successful).

Moral values carry within them an obligation to others or to some greater whole. They may be intrinsically right (e.g., do not murder) or socially right (e.g., do not shout in a library). In either case to violate them does harm.[4] As the example of the Asian student demonstrates, these two domains overlap and are intimately connected.

A few ethicists distinguish such values as perseverance, empathy and self-discipline as a distinct group of "meta-moral characteristics." They are not intrinsically moral—for example, one can persevere in doing evil or use empathy to con someone—and yet they aid in proper moral functioning.[5] However, for anyone with a moral orientation, these values become obligatory for the full flowering of moral personhood. Thus, they are moral values that no character educator can afford to ignore.

Finally, non-moral or *personal values* are things people want or desire but are non-obligatory (e.g., exercise, reading). They are matters of personal preference or taste.

Character educators are more properly interested in moral values. Moral values appear in three forms: *beliefs, virtues* and *norms*. Universal moral values are beliefs, virtues and norms that are true—helping people thrive—regardless of place and time. Let's begin by surveying the meaning of these terms.

Values as Beliefs

A standard definition of value is "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable."[6] As a belief, a value includes a strong emotional component, since "valuing" also means caring. Still, values have a rational basis and cannot be reduced to mere wants. They can be rationally defended and critiqued. As such, universal moral values can be said to exist objectively regardless of whether people believe them or live by them.

Values Embodied as Virtues

Something is "valuable" because it has qualities that make it desirable to people. An expensive diamond has value because people esteem its flawless beauty, color and sparkle. Likewise, a person has value if other people like her, respect her, and want to be her companions. Everyone in a company values the diligent, helpful employee. Like a diamond, she is desirable because she embodies valuable qualities. From this perspective, moral values are to be embodied. Socrates once said, "Make yourself the kind of person that you want people to think you are."

A lived moral value is called a *virtue*. A virtue is attained when its value is practiced consistently and continually. A person of good character embodies many virtues. These days, many character educators have replaced the language of values with the language of virtues, especially as a way to distinguish their enterprise from the older and discredited method of values clarification. [7]

Values as Norms

Values also occur as norms, or the expected standards of proper behavior in relationships with others. The function of norms is to serve as guidelines for showing respect and facilitating harmony.

Some norms are rules that cut to the heart of the moral life, for example, the expectation of fidelity in marriage. Other norms are more superficial, e.g., manners and customs of appropriate dress and speech. With social norms especially, some people draw a sharp distinction between universal "moral" values and relative "cultural" values. Nevertheless, Emily Post, the classic expositor of manners, insisted that good manners in any society are rooted in morality and are rarely a matter of mere social graces. For example, consider the brainy political activist who refuses to wash up or comb his hair before he speaks at government hearings; to him, it's a matter of principle. Yet he complains that the officials don't want to listen to him. They interpret his "style" as indicating a lack of respect for them—and it does.[8] His violation of the expected social norm indicates his lack of moral sensibility.

A courteous person will be recognized worldwide even if he or she makes a cultural faux pas or two. When a professor from Chicago who travels extensively in Europe was asked how to navigate successfully in other countries, he replied, "Be humble. Humility is appreciated everywhere."

The limitation of not addressing social norms in certain character education efforts is illustrated by a breakout session entitled "The Self-Esteem Scene," presented at a recent character education conference in Connecticut.[9] Conference-goers viewed several student-authored morality skits that posed moral dilemmas and then suggested their resolution.

Four fifth-graders, two boys and two girls, performed one skit that was well received by the educators. The girls played best friends. As the boys walked by, the first girl told the second how much she wanted to date one of those boys. The second girl replied that the boy had already asked her to go on a date to the mall. Now that she knew that her friend liked the boy, the second girl has to make a choice. The performers stopped the scene and asked the audience, "What should the girl do? Accept the date or give the date to her friend?" The audience replied that she should give the date to her friend.

The skit's lesson was clear enough: be loyal to your friends. Yet it sidestepped a larger issue—in this case, the norms expected by the fifth-graders' parents. Would their parents approve of exclusive dating at such a young age? And even if they did, is such dating in the children's best interests? Loyalty to a friend may be a virtue, but it could be more than offset by the larger concerns of disobeying parents and engaging in premature dating. Without attention to familial and social norms, such well-intentioned efforts to teach good character may send unintended, contradictory messages.

Integrating Individual Virtue Ethics and Normative Social Ethics

The moral philosopher who gave the most thought to integrating individual virtues and social norms was Confucius. Rightly understood and modernized, his ethics speaks to the universal human condition. In his view, individuals realize their full humanity precisely through fulfilling their obligations within familial and social contexts. Consider this passage from *The Doctrine of the Mean*:

> The gentleman conforms himself to his life circumstances; he does not long for anything beyond his situation. Finding himself in a position of wealth and honor he acts as required of a man living in a position of wealth and honor. Finding himself in a position of poverty and humble circumstances, he acts as required of a man living in a position of poverty and

> humble circumstances.... In a word, the gentleman can find himself in no situation in life in which he is not master of himself.[10]

Excepting the antiquated notion that there should be different norms for rich and poor, this text makes a relevant point. People everywhere find themselves thrown into particular social roles, sometimes of their own choosing and sometimes not—as a husband, a wife, a father, a mother, a child, an employee, a boss, a student, a teacher, etc. Keeping to the norm required by a given social position affords the opportunity for character development; indeed, a person's success in keeping to the norm is a good measure of his or her character.[11] There are lessons here for a society where people sometimes make light of social norms as they pursue self-fulfillment.

Character education often focuses on cultivating individual virtues, a tendency that may have its philosophical basis in Aristotle. Many of the widely used concepts in character education derive from this philosopher. And with good reason: Aristotle propounded undoubtedly the most profound and complete moral philosophy in the Western tradition. At the heart of Aristotle's ethical teachings was the moral cultivation of the individual. Developmental psychology, a second root of modern moral education, is likewise individual-centered.

Nevertheless, the task of solving present-day moral problems—those that revolve around issues of family life, for example—requires linking individual virtue ethics and normative social ethics, as Confucius sought to do. They can be linked ontologically: Just as virtues are universal by way of people's common humanity as individual beings, so certain norms are universal by way of their common humanity as social beings. They can also be linked functionally and relationally: It takes virtuous individuals to properly keep the norms that make for just and loving relationships, and conversely, personal virtue is properly cultivated through fulfilling familial and social norms.[12]

Five Criteria for the Universality of Values

Having discussed what things—beliefs, virtues and norms—might be called universal values, it is useful to establish some criteria for establishing universal moral values. Five criteria or warrants for establishing the universality of moral values are identified, drawing on Eastern

as well as Western thought. They are: democratic consensus, philosophical examination, evidence from comparative cultures, basis in human nature, and basis in natural law.

Democratic Consensus

Advocates of character education have learned that before beginning a program, it is frequently necessary to establish a community consensus among teachers, parents, administrators and civic leaders. The effort expended in surveys and committee meetings helps overcome people's hesitations about teaching a particular set of values and results in strong community support. Even participants coming from different political or religious persuasions soon realize that they can agree on a set of common values.

Consensus can form on the level of a single school, a community, district or state. Character Plus pioneered consensus building at the community level. It was started as the Personal Responsibility Education Process (PREP) in 1988 by a concerned group of parents, educators and business leaders in St. Louis who determined that something had to be done about the deterioration of basic values. A crucial early step was for the group to invest themselves in a consensus-building process to decide upon the core values they wanted reinforced by the schools.[13] This process has been employed to set up character education programs in over thirty public school districts involving over 400 schools.

There have been several attempts to arrive at a universal list of values or virtues through democratic consensus. The Josephson Institute assembled a diverse committee of experts in 1992 to generate a list of universal values. They announced a universal list of "Six Pillars of Character": trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. Rushworth Kidder of the Institute for Global Ethics surveyed international leadership cohorts from many cultures and found seven values that were overwhelmingly selected as most important: truth, responsibility, compassion, reverence for life, freedom, self-respect and fairness.[14]

The consensus approach has the benefits of keeping education near to the people and building community support. It can be viewed as a good starting point and a guideline. However, to be deemed universal, a value should be able to withstand certain philosophical tests.[15]

Philosophical Tests of Universality

There are four widely recognized philosophical criteria for determining whether a particular moral choice or value is universal.

- *It is reversible*: If I do something to you, how would I feel if it were done to me? Respecting another person's property and not taking what does not belong to one meets this test.
- *It is generalizable*: Would it be good if everyone did it? If everyone in the world had compassion, for instance, then surely this would be a better world.
- *It produces good consequences*: It yields objective benefits over the long term to both the individual and the whole society.
- *It is compelling to the conscience*: It rings true to the intuition as well as to reason. Even young children understand values when they cry out for justice in the schoolyard: "He hit me first!" Instinctively, they know that the provocateur is considered the guiltier party.

In fact, the moral values that are arrived at by democratic consensus, such as respect, responsibility, caring, justice, integrity, etc., almost always pass these tests, attesting to their universality.

Comparative Cultures

As the world grows smaller and people become educated about other cultures, it becomes more apparent that among the earth's peoples there is not only wide diversity but also much common ground, particularly in the area of values. A heroic act of self-sacrifice, such as risking one's life to save a drowning child, is honored everywhere, from industrialized societies to aboriginal tribes. Evidence for this can be found by studying the traditional wisdom of cultures around the world.[16]

For example, the principle of reciprocity was stated by Confucius, "Do not do to others what you would not have them do to you," in the Bible, "Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them," and in the Indian epic the *Mahabharata*, "One should not behave towards others in a way which is disagreeable to oneself." It is echoed in an African proverb, "One going to take a pointed stick to pinch a baby bird should first try it on himself to feel how it hurts."[17] Indeed, this ethic is affirmed in all cultures.

"Repay Evil with Good"

A particularly good example of a universal moral principle, because it is quite challenging to practice, is to repay evil with good. Consider the following quotations:

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."
—Jesus[18]

"The good deed and the evil deed are not alike. Repel the evil deed with one that is better, then lo, he between whom and you there was enmity shall become as though he were a bosom friend."
—Muhammad[19]

"Conquer anger by love. Conquer evil by good. Conquer the stingy by giving. Conquer the liar by truth."
—Buddha[20]

"I treat those who are good with goodness, and I also treat those who are not good with goodness. Thus goodness is attained."
—Lao Tzu[21]

"Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."
—Martin Luther King, Jr.

Every culture in the world condemns murder, adultery, theft and the character flaws of arrogance, lust and greed. Every culture in the world encourages self-cultivation in the ways of self-control, moderation, purity of heart, sincerity of intention, vigilance over one's actions, and endurance in adversity. Every culture without exception teaches kindness, honesty, service to others, charity for the poor, and fulfilling one's duties to family and community. These are only a few of the great array of values that are universally shared among cultures.

Human Nature

Human beings are a single species, and as such share common biological and psychological characteristics and functions. It stands to reason that people also possess common moral faculties. Traditionally, human nature was studied in the field of moral philosophy; today it is fashionable to look to psychology. Both fields have worthwhile insights.

There is a broad consensus among philosophers that human beings have an innate and irreducible moral sense. The human moral essence is essentially rational, according to Immanuel Kant who defined its core as the "categorical imperative." Other philosophers have described it with such terms as reason, conscience and moral cognition.

On the other hand, Jean-Jacques Rousseau spoke of man's natural goodness being cultivated through the sentiments, and Martin Heidegger described the human essence using the language of emotion—terms like "care" and "attunement."[22] In the East, Mencius taught that the core of human nature is the heart of compassion, saying, "no man is devoid of a heart sensitive to the suffering of others."[23]

Developmental psychology comprises the theoretical foundation for much of educational theory and practice. Among educational psychologists, Kohlberg employed a Kantian perspective. His research plumbed the rational-cognitive aspect of the moral self. He described the development of a child's sense of obligation as a succession of stages: from external concern about rewards and punishments, to a self-interested "tit-for-tat" ethic, to a concern for the valuation of peers, and so on. (See Chapter 2) Cross-cultural research with children in China, Japan and the Middle East shows that the path of cognitive moral development is the same everywhere.[24]

Carol Gilligan criticized Kohlberg's work by raising the issue of gender. She argued that women voice a morality of care that puts priority on affective relationships. They are more concerned about the welfare of the persons they care for, about preserving and enhancing relationships with them, than they are about rational considerations of justice and principles of right and wrong.[25] Recent research suggests that both men and women show moral development along both the rational-cognitive and emotional-relational dimensions.[26]

These diverse lines of inquiry affirm that human beings have an innate moral nature with both emotional and rational aspects. The two roots of the moral self may be called *heart* and *conscience*. The heart is the emotional and intuitive root of the moral self; the conscience is its

rational root. The affective desire springing from the heart is what motivates a person to seek joy in loving relationships with others. Therefore, the heart motivates caring and altruistic behavior. The conscience is a moral compass that consistently points toward goodness and warns against potentially destructive behavior. It asserts the priority of obligations and duties over the self's egoistic desires. These moral faculties are discussed in the next chapter.

Natural Law

Philosophers East and West have analyzed human existence as manifesting the principles of the natural order. They studied human beings and the natural world, seeking to deduce the principles of their operation. They sought for the way of life by which people could be true to nature—and their own nature. In this way, they sought to deduce rational, ethical principles for living.

The Stoics of ancient Greece were the first to articulate the philosophical concept of natural law. They held that nature is designed according to a rational principle (*logos*), the very same rational principle by which humans can control their passions and create an ordered society. The rational principles that guide the movements of the stars, the growth of a seed, and the harmony of music will, when properly understood, also teach humans how to live their lives. Natural law philosophy, though sometimes disputed, has been a guiding philosophical idea in the West.

In the East, Confucianism also affirms natural law. It teaches that the way to self-cultivation begins with rational knowledge of moral truth, which is discovered through "the investigation of things" in the natural world. [27] A well-known maxim directly affirms the correspondence between the laws of the universe and the moral laws in human life:

> "The hawk soars to the heavens above, fishes dive to the depths below." That is to say, there is no place in the highest heavens above or in the deepest waters below where the moral law is not to be found. The moral man finds the moral law beginning in the relation between man and woman; but ending in the vast reaches of the universe.[28]

This correspondence cannot be a simplistic equation. Human beings are not of the same order of existence as birds or fish. The key distinc-

tion, of course, is that humans possess reason to understand moral choices and the freedom to make them. Decisions between right and wrong do not present themselves to animals, who act instinctively according to their given nature. Human life proceeds by conscious intention, decisions are made amidst knowledge of moral responsibility. Nevertheless, human beings are not alien to nature. In biology and in behavior, humans share much with the natural world. They exist within nature and are subject to its laws. Therefore, it stands to reason that human life is enhanced when lived in harmony with nature and its principles.

The import of the last sentence of the above passage is that love and the norms of the family—"the relation between man and woman"—is the beginning of the moral law. The centrality of the family as the natural school of morality and ethics is a continuing theme of this book.

Some scientists regard the human imperatives to grasp universal values and to know the principles of the natural world as fundamentally connected. Human beings, who have the intelligence to apprehend the meaning of existence, emerged through natural processes; they are the universe's way of becoming conscious of itself and completing itself. Humans prize the values of truth, beauty and goodness because these are inherent in the universe's structure. Nobel prizewinning biologist Christian de Duve writes:

> I opt in favor of a meaningful universe against a meaningless one—not because I want it to be so, but because that is how I read the available scientific evidence.... For me, this meaning is to be found in the structure of the universe, which happens to be such as to produce thought by way of life and mind. Thought, in turn, is a faculty whereby the universe can reflect upon itself, discover its own structure, and apprehend such immanent entities as truth, beauty, goodness, and love.[29]

Taken separately, any one of these five warrants for affirming universal values can be criticized, but together they make a strong argument. Moreover, given the pitfalls of considering one criteria such as "consensus" exclusively and leaving other criteria unexamined, multiple warrants for values provides for a richer, more comprehensive understanding of what makes values universal.

Survival of the Fittest?

One common objection to natural law theory is the view that, as nature is governed by natural selection and "the survival of the fittest," morality in the human world must be utterly unlike nature's "law of the jungle." However, modern evolutionary biology understands the law of survival of the fittest to be far more subtle. Biologists recognize that animals employ cooperation, altruism and even self-sacrifice as effective strategies to survive, attract mates, and raise offspring. Likewise, human nature is highly adapted, through millions of years of evolution, to participating in a social order, because people living in social groups are better able to survive and reproduce. People enjoy associating and working with others and are highly attuned to others' opinions, and influences and praise, because it is most often in their self-interest to cooperate. According to evolutionary psychology, moral impulses are motivated at the psychological level because they are ultimately conducive to reproductive success.

Biologist E. O. Wilson writes, "The evidence shows that because of [biology's] influence, people can readily be educated to only a narrow range of ethical precepts. They flourish in certain belief systems and wither in others."[30] In other words, the moral values and virtues that human beings universally prize—respect, altruism, courage, responsibility, honesty, etc.—are wired into human biology.

In an age when the hard "facts" of material existence often relegate the concern for values to the sidelines, and the emphasis on science, economics and technological subjects to the exclusion of values has left many students morally impoverished, such a case for universal values is necessary. It establishes the foundation for restoring balance in education and giving character its due priority.

Universal values integrate the best of Western and Eastern cultures, insights from modern science and traditional philosophy. They pertain to an individual's personal character and social relationships. They

affect people's material success as well as their emotional well-being. Grounding them on a wider foundation of philosophy, psychology and world cultures validates them even as it provides rich resources and a more profound direction for character education.

4

The Heart of Moral Education

ETHICAL CONDUCT IS NOT MERELY A MATTER OF KNOWING right from wrong. An interviewer once asked John Dean, who was sent to jail for his role in the Watergate scandal, whether he would have acted differently had his law school education focused on matters of professional responsibility. He replied, "No, I don't think so. I must say that I knew the things I was doing were wrong; one learns the difference between right and wrong long before entering law school. A course in legal ethics wouldn't have changed anything."[1]

Far more important than knowing what is right is *desiring* to do right and *caring* about what is right. An investigation into the core of a person's moral behavior thus leads to the emotions, and an examination of emotion leads inevitably to the issue of love. The capacity to love—to care about and for a person or thing and live for their sake—is the quintessence of character. What one loves determines what one does; how one loves determines how one does it.

True Love: The Essential Moral Value

There are several different kinds of human love: the love of children for their parents, love between siblings or between friends, love of parents for children, romantic love, love between spouses, and love of

things (e.g., a pet, a garden, an automobile). To a greater or lesser degree, each of these kinds of love builds upon physical and instinctual desires: maternal, filial, or sexual. Yet while physical desires are certainly present in human love, they are relatively low on the list of the necessary factors. Far more important is the moral quality of love; for this reason people seek a love that is true. *True love* refers to the ideal of ethical love.

There is an essential link between love and ethics, one that is not always recognized. There is no argument that the love of parents is essential for the moral formation of children and therefore has ethical content and implications. Devotion among friends grows as they practice the values of respect, loyalty, honesty and self-sacrifice. Conversely, the ethical content of love may surface when it is violated. A mundane and taken-for-granted sense of camaraderie among close friends may hide powerful passions that come to the surface when the friendship is betrayed. The emotional pain—the rage, hurt and self-doubt—manifests in reverse the deep affective content of the ethic of loyalty.

True love is a moral ideal, and it has the following characteristics:

1. True love is for the best interests of the other. It is by nature unselfish; the other's welfare is the primary concern. For example, parents live to benefit their children, doing whatever they can to help their children realize their fullest potential. True friends enjoy helping each other with little thought to "what's in it for me."

2. True love is unconditional. It does not demand anything in return—no repayment or appreciation. The other person's welfare is reward enough. Yet the unconditional nature of true love should not be confused with blind love that is excessively indulgent; in its trueness there is wisdom about what sort of caring is actually helpful.

3. True love is serving and sacrificial. "Love... whether sexual, parental or fraternal, is essentially sacrificial," said philosopher George Santayana. People give everything for the sake of the ones they love, not counting the cost. A father dismisses a day's exhaustion and heads out to a second job to earn extra money for his son's college education. Yet he is not depleted by such sacrifices. Love has the peculiar property that the more it is given, the more the giver is filled—and the more joy returns.

4. True love is constant and everlasting. It endures because it is not negated by the whims of feelings, convenience or circumstance. A good

Figure 2: Qualities of True Love

friend stays at his pal's side in good times and bad. Devoted sons and daughters care for their elderly parents when they can no longer look after themselves, remembering with gratitude all the nurture they received when they were young.

5. True love is forgiving. Out of true love, brothers forgive each other after fighting, all grudges forgotten. Good friends tolerate each other's faults and character flaws; they forgive each other's mistakes and angry outbursts. Ideally, a person of true love has compassion even on his enemies, knowing that they are people just like him, only as yet unable to overcome their insecurities, ignorance and fears.

6. True love is ethical. The adjective "true" placed before the noun "love" qualifies its meaning. Harmonious and enduring relationships are possible only when they are conducted according to ethical principles.

Since true love places the benefit of others above the needs of the self, it follows that mastery over the self is a prerequisite for loving another. To become capable of true love, a person cultivates self-control and other virtues of good character. The ability to freely give and fully

receive true love is attained through years of moral training, just as ability in painting or sports requires years of practice.

The Ideal of True Love: The Core of Universal Values

Character education begins with the universal values that are affirmed by all people. Everywhere in the world people revere such values and virtues as courage, responsibility, caring, respect, honesty, loyalty, fidelity, forgiveness and self-sacrifice. What do these values all have in common? They are altruistic. They are about giving to others and acting for their welfare. At the same time, they require self-denial, placing others' needs ahead of one's own. Therefore, the core principle behind all these virtues is true, unselfish love. Love is, in the words of Harvard sociologist Pitirim Sorokin, "the supreme value around which all moral values can be integrated into one ethical system valid for the whole of humanity."[2]

On the other hand, consider a list of vices: greed, cruelty, lust, dishonesty and exploitation. They characterize using others for one's own benefit. Even minor vices such as laziness and rudeness are rooted in a self-centered orientation that is lacking in regard for the needs or feelings of others. These vices manifest misdirected love, or love of self at others' expense.

True love is the root of universal values because it is linked to moral motivation. It pursues acts that are totally genuine, spontaneous, arising out of the core of being. A mother reaches for her newborn in tears of inexpressible gratitude after a harrowing delivery. A little boy nestles an injured sparrow tenderly in his hands and brings it home to care for. True love is patient, spurring a student to wait another hour in the rain hoping his friend might be on the next bus. True love breeds courage, leading a passer-by to rush to the aid of a woman who is being assaulted. Its power stirs people to acts of extreme bravery and self-sacrifice, where reasons of the heart prevail over calculations of the head.

The Inheritance of Love

People in every role and in all stages of growth can display the moral qualities of true love. Spouses demonstrate true love when they sacrifice for each other and persevere with each other through stormy times

in their relationship. Children cultivate true love through experiences of giving to their siblings. Neighbors practice it in their communities when they come to each other's aid.

The devotion of fathers and mothers to their children particularly exemplifies the ideal nature of true love. Even parents who are in other respects morally deficient are moved to unselfishness for the sake of their needy offspring. Most parents try their best to care for their children with unconditional, constant, sacrificial and ethical love. They work long hours only to return home to do housework, make dinner, help José with his homework and read Maria a bedtime story—all without condition or complaint.

Children first experience the altruistic and sacrificial quality of true love as their fathers and mothers model it. In a good home, they experience parental care as generous, steadfast, and entirely for their sake—and internalize that experience as pointing to the kind of love they want. Therefore, it is natural that such young people have an ideal of love—true love—and hope to attain it.

In their study of rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe, Samuel and Pearl Oliner found that rescuers were motivated by strong values of care and inclusiveness. These were in large part transmitted to them through the bond with their parents in early childhood, which became the "prototype for all subsequent relationships."[3]

The reality of home life, however, is not always nurturing and enriching. Parents have their own difficulties: moments of self-absorption and outbursts of temper. Try as they might, their expressions of caring still involve a mixture of altruistic and egocentric motives. Consequently, the children inherit their parents' mixed quality of love.

Regardless, young people have opportunities to overcome even a difficult home life. This depends on the choices they make every day in relating with siblings, friends, relatives and teachers. They can let matters take the path of least resistance or choose the more challenging and yet rewarding path of living for others. Where effective parents are lacking, a grandparent, aunt, cousin or teacher may step into the breach and offer children the care, modeling and discipline they require as the foundation for moral development.

Teachers supplement parents by continuing to work on raising the level of children's moral sense, especially their moral emotions—the cultivation of the heart. They impart wisdom about the nature of love and training in the standards of proper conduct. They also provide role models

by their own example of generous service for the sake of their students. Such intentional character education efforts help to properly nurture the young generation. It brings dividends in the future when these students grow to adulthood and have greater internal resources to bequeath to their children. Thus moral civilization is sustained and renewed.

Heart—The Core of Character

True love is the core of moral motivation and the ideal of moral striving; accordingly, there are innate human faculties for its expression. These are the heart and the conscience. The heart is love's emotional source, and the conscience is its guide. Formation of good character that is capable of giving true, altruistic love is centrally concerned with cultivating these faculties.

The motivational center of character is the "heart." It signifies the energy source for moral striving. The heart has been called "the core-force of personality...the locus of personal authenticity, the holistic force that is the shape of what we really are."[4] It is the core of human nature and the innermost center of character.

The heart is the seat of intention, because the deepest of human intentions are rooted in the affections. This is why the heart is so often depicted by emotional language. A person's heart may be aflame with passion, or cold, or broken. Lovers' hearts are said to "beat as one"; a whole community united in spirit "acts with one heart." Although the heart is first a faculty of feeling, it also has its rational aspect—people speak of someone having "an understanding heart." The heart has a volitional aspect as well: a person may be "faint-hearted" or "stout-hearted"; a boxer who fights gamely against a superior opponent is said to "have heart."[5]

Impulse for Relatedness

The heart's fundamental impulse is towards relatedness. It is the root of the emotional need for love. The affective desire springing from the heart is what motivates a person to yearn for the joy of loving and being loved, the satisfaction of valuing and being valued. Love and relatedness are human needs as strong as those for food or shelter; indeed, people have forsaken both for the sake of love. As psychologist Erich Fromm once stated, "The desire for interpersonal fusion is the most powerful striving in man. It is the most fundamental passion, it is the force which keeps the

human race together, the clan, the family, society."

By driving the self to relate with others, the heart motivates moral behavior. Ethicist James Q. Wilson, author of *The Moral Sense*, states, "The mechanism underlying human moral conduct is the desire for attachment or affiliation."[6] As a person's heart reaches towards love, he tries to act for the benefit of his object of love. His heart draws him to manifest virtue.

In Chinese ethical thought, the heart is the root of a person's humanity. The philosopher Mencius gave the example of a child who is about to fall into a well. Anyone who passes by, regardless of his relation to the child's family, cannot but be moved by anxiety for the child's safety and rush to save her. This is because all people have such a heart that "when they see another person suffer, they suffer, too." Mencius claims that not to feel such compassion would not be human.[7]

An actual incident of this sort happened in Midland, Texas, in 1987 when two-year-old Jessica McClure fell down an abandoned well and was trapped for 58 hours. During the anxious hours rescue crews worked to save her, the entire world watched the drama on the news. Strangers from all over the country showered the child's family with gifts, letters and money. When the child was rescued unharmed, the whole nation breathed a sigh of relief.

In people with poorly formed character, their heart's original direction may be powerless against the pull of self-centered desires, and therefore it remains undercultivated. Nevertheless, even the most depraved people have a heart and thus are capable of reform. Gangsters love their wives and children and want a better life for them. The presence of heart in every person means that no criminal is immune to rehabilitation. Russian writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote movingly of this realization as he lay in prison:

> In the intoxication of youthful successes I had felt myself to be infallible, and I was therefore cruel.... It was only when I lay there on rotting prison straw that I sensed within myself the first stirrings of good. Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either—but right through every human heart—and through all human hearts. This line shifts. Inside us, it oscillates with the years. And even within hearts overwhelmed by evil, one small bridgehead of good is retained.[8]

Assessing the Heart

In this discussion, "heart" is not simply a neutral term for passions and feelings. Rather, situated at the core of the self, heart is inherently moral, just as the term "character" by itself denotes a positive, healthy state of moral integrity. As the motivating and integrating center of character, the heart's promptings are generally productive of positive character development. Psychologists can recognize the functioning of the heart in the following measures:

a. Empathy
b. Sense of meaning and purpose
c. Self-ideality (sense of one's own integrity)
d. Moral reaction (when presented with scenes of good and evil)
e. Moral passion (zeal for justice)
f. Emotional intelligence

Cultivation of the Heart

Moral educators in both the East and West have emphasized the cultivation of the heart as the foundation for education. The 19th-century Swiss educator Johann Pestalozzi conceived the task of education to foster students' innate abilities, and viewed it as having three components: education of the mind, education of the hand, and education of the heart. Cultivating the heart lies at the core of education because the moral sentiment to love is the power that can unite these three realms of human ability. In this regard, Pestalozzi pointed to the educational process of a mother with her young child. Drawn to the mother's affection, the child tries to please, and in so doing his heart is naturally trained and molded by her moral instruction.

Mencius taught the doctrine of the "four foundations" of ethical behavior, all centered in the heart. Humane behavior arises from a heart that sympathizes with pain, he declared. Right action arises from a heart that is repelled by vice. Respectful behavior arises from a heart that is willing to defer. Receptivity to education is rooted in a heart that loves truth. Building up these four foundations means fostering a strong

moral sensibility through cultivating the heart that lies at their root. When this cultivation is neglected, the people become morally incompetent: "Leave [the four foundations] unfilled, and it will be impossible for a man to take care of his parents."[9]

Modern educators also affirm the centrality of heart in moral education. They understand that the quality of motivation is a primary factor in determining whether students develop quickly, slowly or veer off the path of optimal character development. They recognize that the motivational dimension often dominates the way people use reason and logic in solving moral challenges.[10] Advocating cultivation of the heart, Boston College psychologist William Kilpatrick states, "In education for virtue, the heart is trained as well as the mind. The virtuous person learns not only to distinguish between good and evil but to love one and hate the other."[11]

Experiences of Love

Among the ways the heart is cultivated, of first importance are experiences of loving and being loved in the family. Family experiences are foundational in moral development. A mother's care and concern naturally induces feelings of gratitude and filial respect in her children, along with a natural attitude of obedience. Following the example of their parents' love for them, they practice loving their siblings and peers and honoring their elders. Furthermore, the warm affection they have for their mother and father gives children an abiding sense of self-worth and the inner confidence to reach out to others and form lasting friendships.

Julie was a shy girl from Milwaukee who faced a difficult adjustment when she first attended college in California. It was her first time away from home. She felt awkward in social situations, lonely and homesick. But she discovered that the best "medicine" to her heart-sickness was her weekly phone call to Mom on Sunday mornings. Those nurturing phone conversations reminded Julie that she had people who loved her. They gave her the confidence to come out of her shell and make new friends.

Teachers do well to be aware of these profound moral influences on their students. As Kieran Egan says, "What children know best when they come to school are love, hate, joy, fear, good and evil. That is, they know best the most profound human emotions and the bases

for morality."[12] Teachers supplement the care and nurturing received in families and can also serve a remedial function when such experiences are lacking. When surveyed, most teachers agree with the statement, "I hope that I can have a lasting effect on the students whom I teach, not just by making them better students, but by making them better people."[13] Teachers have profound impact on their students not only by their values, but also by showing positive love in the form of personal attention and encouragement.

Role Models

Children's hearts are also cultivated through imitating moral examples. Social learning theory recognizes that parents and teachers play the most meaningful roles in modeling behavior.[14] The primary role models are parents and grandparents; adolescents look to them far more than to pop stars, politicians, sports figures or religious leaders, according to a German study.[15] Likewise, students are drawn to a teacher who genuinely displays the warmth and care of a good parent or wise aunt or uncle. Such a teacher forms a connection of heart that is both motivating and convincing.

A large part of moral teaching in the classroom is through example. Students resistant to a teacher's spoken instructions may be quicker to model his behavior. One teacher in an inner-city school recounts that shortly after he first began teaching, a kid wrote him a poem:

> Oh, how I loved to watch you when you teach.
> Oh, how I hated it when you preached.

Realizing that it was true, the teacher began to model what he believed in. He describes his method, "When I am giving 'morning lectures' about how messy the room is and we go to pick things up, I am picking up too. I'll say, 'If I can pick it up, you can pick it up, too.' They take to it very well."[16]

Conscience—The Moral Compass

Although the heart is ever prompting people to ethical behavior in the service of love, by itself this emotional faculty functions rather poorly as a guide to love. People's self-centered desires, felt as personal

needs—and sometimes family needs—make a noisy claim on their consciousness, often drowning out the moral impulses of the heart. The love that flows between two people can easily be derailed unless the relationship is guided by moral truth. When people behave ethically towards one another, their love is strengthened and affirmed. Discerning right from wrong is necessary to properly guide the heart's impulse into constructive behavior. The conscience is the faculty that does this.

Psychologists distinguish two modalities of the conscience. The first positively regulates behavior based on internal values.[17] This "active conscience" consistently points toward goodness and warns against potentially destructive behavior. It urges people to live for the benefit of others rather than for themselves. The second modality creates emotional discomfort subsequent to a transgression—guilt, remorse, and empathy for the victim—the "pangs" of conscience.

Active Conscience

Brian, a ninth-grade student in Poughkeepsie, New York, needed money desperately because he owed a friend. When he saw the cassette player sitting on a table in his Global Studies classroom, he was tempted to steal it. The room was empty; it would be easy to put the cassette player in his bag. The chances of being caught were minimal. Yet a voice in Brian's mind told him not to do it. "Why can't I just steal this cassette recorder?" he thought, as he kept walking down the corridor. "I know many other people who would snatch it without hesitation. Why am I different?" Brian is not "different"; his active conscience was strongly at work. By facing his conscience sooner rather than later, he would not have to suffer the pangs of conscience that a light-fingered classmate would inevitably face.

Humorist Mark Twain did not doubt the existence or power of the conscience; in fact, he considered its constant prodding toward goodness something of a nuisance. He wrote a humorous fantasy to that effect in which his conscience appeared personified as a leprechaun-like creature. Here, he wrote, was the source of his constant moral discomfort with smoking, cursing and all his other vices! In the story, Twain rose up and killed his conscience. Finally free to do as he pleased, he went on a crime spree, even burning down a neighbor's house that obstructed his view. The humor of this piece comes from the reader's recognition of himself (and his conscience) in it.[18]

A strong, active conscience is an effective guide to moral behavior. In a person of mature character, the directives of the conscience and moral impulses of the heart act in unison as the center of an integrated *moral identity*. A person with a strong moral identity identifies her self-interest in moral terms. In other words, she regards herself as a good person and strives to act accordingly.

Weak Conscience

On the other hand, when the conscience is weak, it is always a poor second to the self. People with a weak conscience form an egocentric identity that places self-interest above the needs of others. Their life is mainly occupied with gratifying the desires of the moment. The voice of the protesting conscience grows faint in this poorly formed self.[19]

Stacy remembered the first time she stole a candy bar. Dozens of people were swarming around the candy display. She was so nervous, her pulse raced and her hands sweated. And afterwards she felt really terrible. She thought about it for a long time: "What if everybody else did it?" A week later, Stacy found herself in the same store stealing again. It didn't feel so bad, and besides, the lady at the checkout line was in a foul mood. Three of her friends were waiting outside. First she told Erica about stealing the candy, and she was upset. But then she told Joanne, who thought Stacy must be pretty brave and even dared her to try to steal four candy bars at one time. Now it was simply a challenge, and Stacy knew she could do it.

Stacy has found rationalizations and excuses to justify her continued larceny. The poor manners of the checkout lady and the desire to win a friend's dare easily overpowered her conscience, which had bothered her the first time she stole. She also found peer support. Perhaps Stacy will feel pangs of conscience later, after her stealing gets her into trouble. But for now, her weak conscience is easily defeated. She is on her way to creating a badly formed moral self.

Educating the Conscience

Moral training establishes an integrated moral identity by strengthening the conscience and subordinating self-centered desires. The unhappy experience of educators in recent years with values clarification and other non-directive approaches has served to reaffirm the tra-

ditional wisdom that properly directive moral education is needed to educate and strengthen the conscience. Today, character educators inculcate positive moral values to fortify a young person's conscience with a firm knowledge of right and wrong.

Conscience is innate; its directives are felt even in young children. Although they are not yet able to completely articulate a rational justification, in exercises in which they are presented with simple moral dilemmas of right and wrong, they can usually choose between the two. Michael, a four-year-old, was playing at a neighbor's house. In a fit of anger, he smashed his playmate's plastic toy truck. There was a moment of silence, and then he broke into tears, knowing that something was wrong. However, for every Michael with a sensitive conscience there are many children whose anger against their playmate would blind them to any thought that they had done wrong.

With the conscience's intrinsic sense of truth as a foundation, moral education adds strength and confidence. Only through education do most peoples' consciences grow powerful enough to overcome the competing egoistic desires of the self. The conscience sometimes also needs correction, as it can be distorted by mistaken social beliefs and implicit negative messages in the culture.

Conflicting Moral Obligations

Sometimes there is a felt tension between conflicting moral claims, for example between love of neighbor and care of one's family. Judy, a young mother, was walking to school to pick up her children when approached by an elderly neighbor using a cane. The neighbor asked her to walk her home, saying that her nurse was sick for the day. Judy was torn by the request, because she was already a few minutes late to get her children. What if something happened to her children during her delay? Still, she knew she ought to serve her neighbor. Despite her fears and annoyance, she helped the woman. Later, with the children safely home, Judy's heart flooded with feelings of lightness and pride. Her choice to serve her neighbor was in accord with her conscience, which gives priority to the greater purpose. She felt its reward as a deep inner satisfaction.

Generally, the duties of citizenship and neighborliness are considered to have greater moral pull than the needs of family and self. A healthy society, after all, provides the context for family and self to

thrive. (See Chapter 9) Yet mature moral judgment affirms the need to strike a balance between familial and social duties.[20] There is also something unhealthy about extreme selflessness that suggests low self-esteem and can invite exploitation. Ethicist Steve Post warns, "Love requires the acceptance of a self-sacrifice justly limited by reasonable degrees of self-concern, lest love become oppressive and destructive of the agent."[21] People with a healthy sense of dignity and value are able to balance their own emotional and physical needs with those of others to whom they are obligated.[22] The intuitive messages of the heart can be a check upon an overly rigid and demanding conscience.

Character and Love

Character and love are inextricably connected. It should not be astonishing that a person of mature character with an integrated moral identity is far better able to form joyful, loving relationships than a person of immature character who is conflicted between his conscience and the lower desires of the self. Joshua, a young father in San Antonio, Texas, was out of work and short of money. When his 3-year-old daughter Trish wasted a roll of gold wrapping paper while decorating a box to put under the Christmas tree, he was furious and spanked her. The next morning, Trish brought the gift-wrapped box to him and said, "This is for you, Daddy." Joshua was embarrassed by his earlier overreaction, but his anger flared again when he found that the box was empty. "Don't you know that when you give someone a present, there's supposed to be something inside of it?" he yelled. Trish looked up at him and said, "Oh Daddy, it's not empty. I blew kisses into the box. All for you." The crestfallen father was humbled. Recognizing how his character limitations had led him to hurt his daughter, he saw a glimpse of himself he didn't like and resolved to change.[23]

A caring heart and a righteous conscience enable altruistic love. They are the primary faculties of good character development. Therefore, cultivation of the heart—the source of love and affection—is at the center of character development from an early age: so are moral training and self-discipline to establish the primacy of the conscience. These elements form the core of moral education. They provide the basis that young people need for personal growth and emotional and moral development in the school years and beyond.

5

Life Goals and Character Development

MOST CHARACTER EDUCATION SCHOOLS SHOWCASE A VIRTUE of the week or of the month. Each has an operating list of 6 to 12-plus virtues, which was arrived at after a process of consensus building. Other virtues among the many that have been identified are often attached as adjuncts to the core virtues on the list. The question can be posed: among the lists of virtues used in various schools across the country, which list is superior? Which virtues are the most important or fundamental to teach? More importantly, how can the practice of virtue be demonstrated as being relevant to a young person's life?

The end toward which virtues are practiced is as important as the virtues themselves. Simply practicing a set of virtues does not necessarily make for a person of character. For example, the members of the Mafia practice virtues every day. They value the virtues of honesty, trust and loyalty so highly that they commit to them with their lives. They love and care for their families. They are responsible and persevering in their work. Yet does this mean that Mafiosi are virtuous people? The more fundamental question is, what purpose and goals are the virtues serving?

Making a case for universal moral values relates to large questions of meaning and purpose. Alisdaire MacIntyre, a prominent contemporary ethicist, places instruction in virtues within the fundamental human need to have a meaningful life story. He states, "To adopt a stance on the virtues is to adopt a stance on the narrative of human

life... Belief in the virtues being of a certain kind and belief in human life exhibiting a certain narrative order are internally connected."[1] In other words, the way people conceive of virtues and vices depends upon their overall view of their life's path. When young people make a personal connection between values and their own life's purposes, they are more inclined in the end to act in valuable, prosocial ways.[2] Thus, a vision of the moral life as learning about love appeals to individuals' moral as well as romantic imagination. All in all, adopting a view of life's meaning affords a valuable perspective for understanding the elements of character development and fortifying the character education process.

A Framework for a Meaningful Life—The Three Basic Life Goals

Are there certain goals for life, which people universally desire and pursue? The universal longing for a happy and prosperous life is innate in human nature. All people seek the material goods that make for happiness—adequate food, shelter, material comfort, good health and long life. Likewise, people strive to attain spiritual and moral goals that are needed for lasting happiness. These may be broadly classified as follows:

(1) Personal maturity
(2) Loving relationships and family
(3) Contribution to society

For simplicity, these can be referred to as the Three Basic Life Goals. Achieving personal maturity, engaging in loving and satisfying relationships and contributing meaningfully to society are important priorities for achieving a fulfilling and balanced life.

These three purposes are found throughout the spectrum of moral thought. They are found in a foundational Confucian text that begins, "The Great Learning teaches: to manifest shining virtue, to love people, and to rest in the highest good." Covey expressed these goals as "to live, to love, to learn, to leave a legacy," and considers them fundamental to human life.[3] "To live" and "to learn" are aspects of the first life goal of personal maturity. "To love" encompasses the second life goal of loving relationships and family, and "to leave a legacy" describes the

third life goal of making a contribution to society. Longer lists of life's priorities can readily be classified accordingly.[4]

The purpose of education in the broadest sense is to produce decent, competent human beings who will form strong families and be assets to society. These three educational goals were identified by British educator Richard Livingstone as: 1) to achieve personal maturity and integrity; 2) to find happiness in love through having a family and friends; and 3) to be successful in one's chosen career and so to contribute to society.[5] Likewise, Brentwood High School in St. Louis County, Missouri arrived at a framework for their character education curriculum that affirms three fundamental moral domains:

- Personal goals (first life goal): accountability, honesty, perseverance, and respect for self.

- Social goals (second life goal): abstinence from drugs, alcohol and sex; caring about others; commitment to family; positive work ethic; respect for others and service.

- Civic goals (third life goal): equality, freedom, justice, respect for authority and respect for property.[6]

One parent expressed her expectations for her son as, "I want my son to be a decent human being first, someone who can win the respect of others, love his wife and children and make a difference in the world."

Psychological research into the meaning-dimension of personhood broadly supports the three basic life goals. Conner and Chamberlain's study of the dimensions of meaning at mid-life[7] found that the most common sources of meaning in the participant's lives correlated with:

- *Personal development* (first life goal). Abraham Maslow wrote of life as a process of "self-actualization." The theme of responsibility for self is found to be a common source of meaning in many studies.[8]

- *Relationships with people* (second life goal). This is consistently reported as the most frequent source of meaning across the life span.[9]

- *Creativity & relating with nature* (third life goal). Psychologists Victor Frankl and Irvin Yalom emphasize creativity as an important source of meaning.[10]

In reality, many people do not make these goals a priority. Even while they pursue them, they don't necessarily achieve them. Yet the desire to attain them is latent in the human personality. When parents and schools lift up these goals as an explicit moral framework for life, young people can orient themselves to what is most meaningful and identify those values and tasks that may bring the greatest fulfillment.

Life Goals and Universal Moral Values

Establishing life's priorities brings added clarity to the Why of universal values. Virtues such as honesty, respect, responsibility, caring, etc., are "values" because people find them "valuable" in journeying towards fulfilling their life goals. As such, the perspective of basic life goals answers the question, "*Why* should I be honest, respectful, responsible, caring?"

The path to attaining a fulfilling life requires people to learn and practice what Peter Bertocci, a personalist philosopher, called a "symphony of values."[11] Values are like the instruments of the orchestra that play together to create the music of a worthwhile life. The full spectrum of values forms a unity in a person of character, concurs William Kilpatrick.[12] Likewise, in Chinese moral philosophy, the purpose of following moral precepts is to train people who are fully human. Ethics is about "person-making," not "rule-following." Rules and values are but the means to the end of self-realization as a moral person who can fully participate in civilized life.[13]

Internally and relationally oriented goals of personhood comprehend the fact that virtues are expressed differently and developmentally throughout life. Values are elastic, in that they appear appropriately different in age-appropriate phases. For example, obeying rules and fulfilling tasks such as returning toys to their proper place may exhibit responsibility for kindergartners. For a middle school student, responsibility expands to include personal accountability for one's work and actions. For teenagers, responsibility may include a broader context of seeing the impact of one's own behavior on the group and society. These changing and developing values are readily subsumed by the unchanging life goals of personal maturity, loving relationships, and contributing to society. These goals set a distant horizon, an inner ideal that pulls human development in a healthy direction.

Establishing life goals is particularly important for adolescents. Unless they develop a clear moral identity and find a sense of meaning in life, they are likely to struggle with feelings of hopelessness, lack of purpose and anomie. This leads to antisocial behavior. Many studies have confirmed that both exemplary and antisocial behavior can be predicted by the manner in which adolescents integrate moral concerns into their theories and descriptions of self.[14]

Long past the point where simple appeals to responsibility, caring and honesty are effective, the life goals beckon teenagers and young adults to stretch themselves to embody virtues in new ways in each phase of development. This holds promise to not only engage reluctant teenagers in the character education classroom, but also to keep them mindful of character and moral purpose later in their adult lives.

The failure of the educational system to contend with the anchoring question of life's purpose and meaning has resulted in considerable confusion. Kevin Ryan asserts that the absence of discussions of life's meaning and purpose puts character education at great peril, and that ignoring it is "miseducative."[15] Yet many schools have difficulty handling these questions, for fear of ranging into territory usually considered to belong to religion, a highly contested and divisive issue.[16] However, questions of meaning and purpose are appropriately—even profoundly—addressed under the rubric of the three basic life goals. Their universality may be intuitively affirmed.

A Holistic Outline of Character Development

Viewing character development through the prism of the three basic life goals suggests a dynamic and multi-dimensional process. One may examine character development as the flowering of innate and learned personal virtues, as a social process nourished by family relationships, and as acquiring the virtues and attitudes that make for good citizenship. In fact, these three aspects are integrated in the development of moral persons. Examining them both separately and as interrelated in the makeup of whole persons provides a rich fabric for understanding what is centrally important in life.

A life goals perspective informs and supports current methods in the domain of character education: teaching values through the curriculum, moral reasoning, conflict resolution, cooperative learning,

service learning, or a focus on a particular virtue for an entire week or month. (See Chapters 10-13) It is helpful in illuminating theoretical connections among existing frameworks, such as the eleven principles of the Character Education Partnership.[17] Furthermore, sometimes character educators after their initial efforts find themselves running out of steam. "We've been doing this for five years," said one teacher at a character education conference. "We're wondering now: where do we go from here?" A larger rationale grounded in clearly articulated philosophy and research, with a clear goal orientation based on meaning-centered, relational themes, can help refresh the conviction and renew the creative inspiration needed to continue.

As various components of the life goals perspective will be referred to again and again throughout the book, it is worthwhile sketching it out in brief.

The Individual: Cultivation of Heart and Conscience (First Life Goal)

The starting-point for character development is the individual as a being of heart and conscience. The heart, as the innate impulse to love and be loved, is the emotional and motivational center of the moral self. It provides the impetus to altruistic love, caring, and ethical action. The conscience, as the cognitive center, distinguishes between right and wrong and steers the self accordingly. It stands in tension with self-centered desires; its proper function therefore depends upon taming these desires and channeling them towards moral ends. Cultivating the heart and conscience are the central tasks of character development.

Through this process, the individual acquires a good balance among the primary moral faculties: moral feeling, moral knowing and moral action. [18] Moral feeling involves empathy for others and a zeal for righteousness; moral knowing includes wisdom, honesty and prudence; and moral action includes courage, integrity and self-control. When these work together in harmony, the desires of the heart and the wisdom of the conscience bear fruit in moral behavior and upright character.

Family: The School of Love and Relationships (Second Life Goal)

Next, growth of character is molded through the familial and social relationships experienced on the journey from child to adult. The good family is primarily a school of love. Its lessons begin for the child in the

context of the relationship with his parents. There are more lessons for the older child as he relates with siblings, friends and other peers. Learning about love and training in character continue on life's journey into marriage and parenthood. The lessons of love and character learned in the family also facilitate forming good relationships with superiors, peers and subordinates in any social group. Recognizing the value of the caring community of the home leads by extension to efforts at building caring communities in schools, neighborhoods and at work.

The school of love that is the family has four progressive stages, or spheres: child's love, sibling's love, spouse's love and parent's love. These are called the Four Spheres of Love. (See Chapter 14) When a child practices generosity in relating with his parents, it broadens and deepens his capacity for unselfish giving later in life. A teenager who makes loyal and affirming friendships with siblings and peers is more likely to have an enduring marriage. Conjugal love forms a sphere unique to itself, deepening the heart through new experiences of intimacy, commitment and sharing. Parents' love deepens still more through the many sacrifices needed to raise the next generation.

However, to be successful in each successive sphere of love, the pace of inner character growth should match the challenges and opportunities afforded by the roles and relationships specific to the sphere.

Social Contribution: The Fruition of Character (Third Life Goal)

On the basis of life lessons learned in the family, people attain the maturity to take on civic responsibilities. The harvest of mature adulthood is to become a good parent, teacher and leader. Society functions at its best when its teachers, leaders and managers are capable of empathy and altruistic concern for those who look to them for leadership and instruction. Likewise, workers who practice an attitude of ethical caring are more productive. They take pride in providing attractive products and superior service; they have the relationship skills to get along well with their colleagues and bosses. Indeed, regardless of social position, people who possess mature character and live to be of service to others will have a positive impact on their communities.

An Integrated Dynamic

The personal, familial and social aspects of life are deeply intertwined with one another. A person's capacity for love, and hence her ability to build a strong family, is predicated on the content of her individual character—her depth of heart, clarity of conscience, and balanced functioning of moral feeling, moral knowing and moral action. Conversely, the atmosphere of love and caring in her family fosters the cultivation of heart and conscience; the habit of living for others practiced at home and with friends molds her good character. Character development and competence in the succession of life's relationships go hand in hand.

Individual character and its expression in a family context are foundational for the ability to function as a responsible citizen and take on leadership roles in society. Conversely, a family that practices good citizenship and cares about the welfare of its neighbors naturally deepens the love and respect at home and provides a more directive environment for the growth of individual character. Parents who serve their community naturally set an example for their children to do the same.

True Love: The Inner Dimension

Finally, the inner dimension of this rich dynamic of character development is the expanding scope of love. True love is both the motivating force behind the growth of character and the ideal of its expression. Efforts to achieve personal maturity, to make a loving family, and to contribute to society are fundamentally motivated by the heart's desire for affiliation—to experience belonging and affection, to feel value and find meaning. Moreover, each of these three life goals can best be realized by practicing true love, which takes the form of living for the sake of others.

Out of love, a child internalizes the moral demands of his parents in his budding conscience. He learns the norms of behavior that bring acceptance and positive regard by peers. His character is shaped and formed in the matrix of loving relationships—notably with parents, then siblings and peers, spouse and sons and daughters. His love for community and country becomes the impetus to civic participation. At each stage on his journey toward achieving the three life goals, his capacity to love and be loved deepens and expands accordingly.

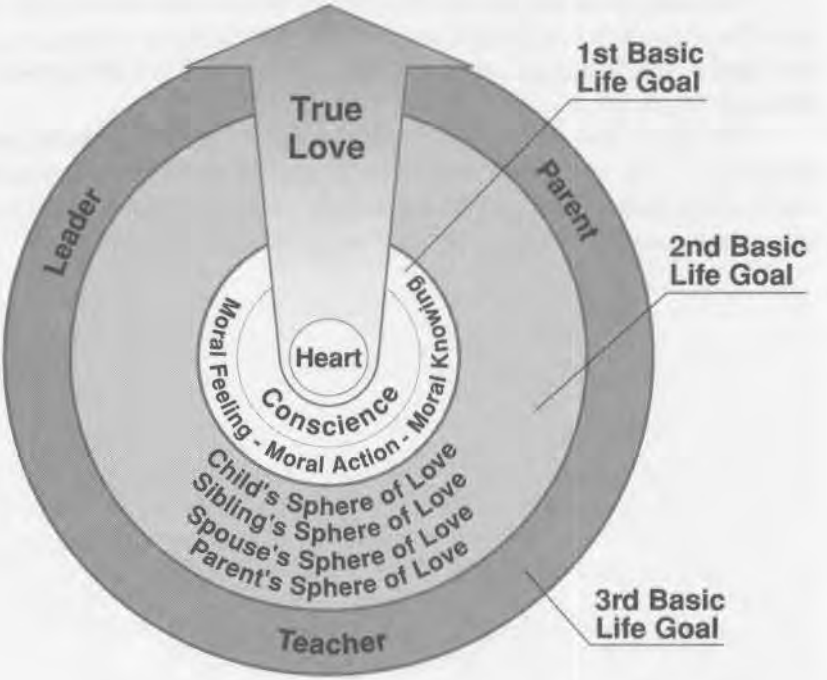

Figure 3: Character Development through the Pursuit of the Three Life Goals

The dynamic process of character development according to the framework of the three basic life goals is illustrated in Figure 3.

The central area represents the individual's moral faculties and the dynamic among them. At its core is the heart, the root of moral motivation and source of true love. The first ring depicts the balance between conscience and individual desires. The second ring represents the outward manifestation of individual character through the interplay of moral feeling, moral knowing and moral action. This is the domain for realizing the first basic life goal—personal maturity.

The middle area with its four concentric circles represents the Four Spheres of Love, the primary family-based relationships through which the individual grows in love and develops his or her character. This is the domain for realizing the second basic life goal—loving relationships and family.

The outermost ring represents the fruition of character in the context of society, as manifest in the civic responsibilities of parent, teacher and leader. This is the domain for realizing the third basic life goal—contribution to society.

The large, broad arrow represents the force of true love, which emanates from the heart outward. It signifies its ever-expanding momentum and nature, permeating life's various relational and familial contexts and extending to social responsibilities and beyond.