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## Teaching As A Moral Act: Simone Weil's Liminality As An Addition To The Moral Conversation In Education

MaryZoe Bowden  
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TEACHING AS A MORAL ACT: SIMONE WEIL'S LIMINALITY AS AN ADDITION TO  
THE MORAL CONVERSATION IN EDUCATION

by  
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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Education  
in the Department of Educational Studies  
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Orlando, Florida

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2009

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## ABSTRACT

We are facing a crisis in education: there is a vacuum where there once was an exhortation in terms of how teachers serve as moral models for their students. This reality becomes even more complex when the particular educator facing the dilemma has a specific religious perspective herself. The problem confronted in this philosophical study is how does today's educator, working in the public sector and having a particular religious background, best serve her students in her role as a moral agent, given an environment that is either vacuous of or even hostile toward the moral vector implicit in education. The following questions are considered: 1) Does education today have a moral end? 2) What should that moral end be? 3) What should the educator's role be in said education? 4) Has education historically served as a moral endeavor? 5) And finally, how much should a teacher with a specific religious basis for her morals allow that to affect her role as moral agent in a secular setting? In order to respond to these questions, an historical review of how teachers were traditionally expected to serve as moral agents was undertaken, as were a review of contemporary research on moral education and a consideration of numerous philosophers' perspectives. Simone Weil, a French philosopher and teacher, is looked to as an example of a woman who lived her life with a core set of beliefs that led her to both push boundaries and yet remain in a liminal space that allowed her to remain open to others' values and needs. Weil's liminal approach to life is explored in combination with MacIntyre's call to found a morality on virtues based on a teleological view of man. Ultimately it is suggested that the educator with a deep sense of faith must both strive to function in the liminality Weil represented, and to root herself deeply in her own faith, from which she will gain the strength to live within the necessary tension evoked by teaching in a secular institution.

Dedicated to Bill and all our children: Anthony, Joanisa, Alex, Rachel, Kristin and Zoe

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing is a solitary occupation. Family, friends, and society are the natural enemies of the writer. He must be alone, uninterrupted, and slightly savage if he is to sustain and complete an undertaking. (Jessamyn West)

Although most people who write would probably like to reject the above reflection by West, there is an (unfortunate) element of truth to it. I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to all the people who had to tolerate my slightly savage tendencies as I undertook this present study. My family, more than any, had to bear the brunt of my solitude. In a home with, at the start of this project, 6 busy teenagers and both parents holding full time jobs, my absence meant that the daily familial responsibilities were left in the hands of my exceptional husband, the children themselves and often my parents, who fortunately lived within a 20 minute drive. I could not have accomplished any of this without trusting in the unfailing support and love of my family. It is with unqualified gratitude that I acknowledge their participation in this project. I was also sustained, throughout this endeavor, by my faith community. I am grateful to them for their reminders to keep my priorities straight and to persevere even when I was most tempted to give up. Of course no dissertation could get written without the support of the dissertation committee itself. I would like to express enormous gratitude to my entire committee for their patient and generous responses to my queries and concerns throughout the process. Finally, I am grateful to my community at Seacrest High School, both students and faculty. Their support and friendship is greatly appreciated.

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## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

The highest subject in the liberal arts and learning is that moral philosophy which brings a remedy for the deadly diseases of the soul. (Vives, *Introduction to Wisdom*)

The urgency with which studies relating to teachers' roles as moral agents are necessary in today's culture was codified for me more strongly than ever at the start of this school year. I work in a small, private, independent high school in south Florida. The high school was formed only 5 years ago as an expansion of a Pre-K through 8<sup>th</sup> grade school that had been in existence for 25 years. The head of the Upper School was hired after a nation-wide search. She came from New York and brought several teachers down with her, teachers with whom she had worked in New York. My son was a student in the first class of the high school; I taught one Spanish class in the new school (along with my duties in the middle school). I was eventually hired to teach in the literature department.

One of the missions of our new high school, from its inception, was to offer students a forum to ask the important questions in life. In order to do so, we instituted a "seminar" class as a core class in our curriculum. This seminar was intended to serve as a place where questions related to ethics and values could be considered and discussed.

The extent to which we have been successful in creating this seminar has varied from year to year and is difficult to gauge. Although it is unscientific, I will speak of the students' casual responses as one form of measurement of the program. In the first year or two of our school there was only need for one seminar teacher; he designed and taught the curriculum and students spoke very highly of the class. Recent graduates who experienced the seminars in those

first years have expressed, in writing, how valuable they found those first years of the program. As the school grew, more teachers were needed to cover the seminar classes. After 3 years we had enough students that the personal curriculum of the one original teacher was expanded upon and given enough clarity that other teachers could teach it as well. Several other teachers were required to offer the class, loosely based on the initial teacher's curriculum.

The first year's attempt at incorporating other teachers was not entirely successful. Teachers from all disciplines were required to lead the seminar discussions and students complained that some teachers appeared to value the seminar classes while others seemed to treat it more like a study hall. We are now in our 5<sup>th</sup> year of existence and our 5<sup>th</sup> year offering seminar classes. The curriculum has been formalized and is presented to both students and teachers. Only teachers who request a seminar class are given one, and the teachers who teach it are expected to value it and communicate their belief in the significance of the course to the students. The entire high school faculty is expected to attend monthly faculty seminar sessions in which, as a faculty, we engage in the same discussions that the students will be addressing. In this way all the teachers in the school should remain apprised of the themes in the seminar classes. I was involved in the writing of the seminar curriculum, I teach the classes, and I attend the monthly seminar discussions.

### *Statement of Problem*

An anecdotal telling of our most recent faculty seminar, the one at which I was painfully reminded of the extent to which studies such as the present one are critical to the world of curriculum theorizing, should serve as an initial expression of the problem I addressed.

I have been fascinated by and reading about the concept of the teacher as a moral agent for years. As I sat observing (and participating) at our most recent faculty seminar, the extent to which this concept has become muddled and confused became disturbingly evident. The question posited by the leader of the seminar was “Are humans, by nature, good or bad?” The topic was chosen, according to the director of the discussion, because he believed that the response one gives has a direct affect on how both curricular and discipline issues in any given school setting are addressed. These are, after all, the foundational philosophical assumptions upon which any educational theory and curriculum theory rests.

The responses varied, as may be expected. I did not have a recording device, and I do not have perfect recollection, but I did recognize many of the expected responses. Expressed in an abridged form, they varied from perspectives that show a relativistic stance, such as “We can’t know the Good because what is good varies from person to person, so how can you say if people are good or bad?” to a democratic ideal, “Let’s take a survey to see if we can’t come to a consensus as to what is meant by good and then decide as a group whether people are good or bad,” to a religious perspective, “We are born in original sin, with a tendency toward evil, but we are able to overcome it and do the good if we follow our consciences/religions,” to the Hobbesian, “Every person wants only what is best for himself and is willing to do whatever necessary to obtain it,” to the social Darwinian, “People are neither good nor bad; the strongest and most able people will and should outperform the weakest.” There were surely other perspectives expressed as well.

Seminars are meant to explore ideas; I was not surprised by the variety of perspectives expressed. The aspect of the discussion that clarified the problem facing educators today was

when faculty members started suggesting that even *discussing* the concept of the “good” was something that was beyond the scope of educators. The conversation steered itself away from the issue of whether humans are primarily good or bad (which, once answered, will certainly affect how you run your school and classes), and headed toward the question, “Is it appropriate for teachers to be discussing such an issue?” It was suggested that such a discussion, in itself, necessarily brought up religious topics, which should be beyond the boundaries of a discussion at school, since, after all, “Historically speaking, it is always religions that f\*\*\* up the world and start wars and suffering,” as one teacher stated.

This statement struck me in at least three ways. It first struck me because of its pedestrian and juvenile perspective on both history and religion. Phillips and Axelrod (2004), authors of *The Encyclopaedia of Wars*, stated that of the 1783 wars they catalogued throughout recorded history, only 123 were fought for reasons that were legitimately deemed religious. If that number is even close to being valid, religion has only been the cause of about 7% of wars, not “most” or “all” as my colleague suggested. Wars are primarily about power and politics; it is only when a religion is distorted that such are its interests. It struck me, secondly, because I had recently read a 2006 study by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life that suggested that 92% of the people surveyed said they believed in God, 75% of the people surveyed said they prayed at least weekly, and almost 60% said their religion was “very important” in their life (Pew Forum, 2006). This individual’s comment, which was one of the strongest made and which went unopposed, seemed surprisingly insensitive and intolerant towards the vast majority of people there, who, if the statistics are even close to true, may have found his remarks offensive. Yet he was accusing religious people of intolerance. Thirdly, and finally, it struck me because this well educated and

well respected teacher, who was so disturbed by the notion of discussing the good and the bad in a faculty setting, seemed so unaware of the history of his own profession, in which, for so many years, a clear and concise concept of the good was not only one of many topics for discussion, but also a primary end of education in itself.

We are facing a crisis in education: there is a vacuum where there once was an exhortation in terms of how teachers serve as moral models for their students. There is no longer general agreement in terms of how educators should serve our students as moral agents. My recent personal experience serves as an extreme case, in which some teachers are no longer willing to entertain the idea that such critical concepts are even legitimate discussion topics within a high school faculty seminar. This reality becomes even more complex when the particular educator facing the dilemma has a specific religious perspective herself.

And so the problem that is confronted in this philosophical is how does today's educator, working in the public sector and having a particular religious background, best serve her students in her role as a moral agent, given an environment in which there is no clarity whatsoever as to the moral vector implicit in education, as demonstrated anecdotally in the above vignette? In order to address this question, it is necessary to address the following additional questions: 1) Does education today have a moral end? 2) What should that moral end be? 3) What should the educator's role be in said education? 4) Has education historically served as a moral endeavor? 5) And finally, how much should a teacher with a specific religious basis for her morals allow that to affect her role as moral agent in a secular setting?

This study attempts to demonstrate that one of the primary historical purposes of the educational endeavor is to develop students with a pre-conceived answer to the question, "What

does it mean to be a *good* human?" For since education's earliest days, whether one was sitting with a rabbi in the temples of Jerusalem, in a discussion with a peripatetic theorist in ancient Greece, in a monastery on Mt. Athos, or in the Medici palace in Italy, education has had a moral vector. And so, throughout much of the history of schooling in the United States (perhaps excepting the past 50-60 years) schools have been intended to serve as moral vehicles (Nord, 1995; Marty, 2000; Lewis, 1974). Teachers in these schools knew what was expected of them in terms of the moral education of students (Nord). Lewis (1974) wrote that in the older systems of schools, both the kind of person teachers wanted to create and the motives for doing so were prescribed by a norm within which the teachers themselves functioned and from which they did not seek to depart.

And yet, as anecdotally described above, it is no longer the case that teachers have a sense of what is expected of them in terms of their students' moral development. Schools, in developing the minds, bodies and souls of their students, do still serve as moral vehicles, and teachers today, simply insofar as they are in a position of power over their students, still serve as moral agents (Giroux, 2000; Apple, 1990). Schools are places where students go to receive help, to become more knowledgeable and to learn skills, all of which are intended to benefit the student. The moral aspect implied here is that these things are offered by individuals who intend to do their students good (Jackson, Boorstrom & Hansen, 1993). Furthermore, research has shown, at the college level, that interaction with faculty affects students' personal identities, their moral development, and their values, beliefs and behaviors (Lindholm & Astin, 2006). Despite such recognition, in the culture of most secular (both public and private) high schools in the United States of America today, the expectations of the role of the individual teacher, in terms of

students' moral education, are much less clear, as was expressed so succinctly at our recent faculty seminar. These expectations are often conflicting (McKinney, 2005; Campbell & Thiessen, 2001; Sanger, 2001). As a result, individual teachers are uncertain as to how best serve their students as a moral agent. This problem is amplified when the teacher herself is consciously rooted in a particular moral system. She may find her own inclinations toward serving as a moral model in conflict with other prevalent systems or with a culture that denies the role teachers play in the moral life of their students.

### *Purpose of Study*

This study recognizes that the educational aspect that most influences the individual student is the individual educator. Yet in a recent dissertation, addressing how teachers' religious orientation affects their classroom identity and behavior, White (2007) cited research that showed that the least heard voice in research is that of the educator. "There is one crucial element that is omitted throughout the entire educational literature," she says, "...very little attention is given to teachers' experiences...how teachers use their own...beliefs to navigate decisions is silenced" (White). This finding is echoed in Lindholm and Astin's (2006) study that suggested that research on the effects of belief systems in education has almost exclusively been centered on students' experiences, ignoring the experiences, attitudes and behaviors of faculty. Because of this missing yet crucial voice in the conversation about the moral vector of education, this study will listen carefully to the words of one educator who was passionately concerned with human obligations and actions toward others, who was a woman of great faith, yet who remained

painfully aware of the risks of dogmatic beliefs. This philosopher, activist and educator, Simone Weil, may offer a valuable response to today's teachers' confusion.

Simone Weil held passionate and ardent beliefs about God, like many of today's teachers. She lived a life that manifested her own deeply held values, but she was not afraid to question the source of her views. She maintained a certain distance from a full conversion into one particular faith in a conscious attempt to avoid living a life that was entirely determined by her adherence to one specific way of understanding things. This allowed Weil to remain in a space that could view both ways of being in the world: that of the professed believer and that of the doubter and questioner. It is this position of remaining in the space in-between the believer and the non-believer that will be explored in Weil's life and writings. For it may be that this position is precisely where teachers with particular religious backgrounds are called to remain. It is possible that the moral course that today's educator is called to charter is one that is directed, in part, by a position like Weil's. It is a position that remains poised at the threshold of differing perspectives.

And so the ultimate purpose of this study was to provide a forum for myself and for the many other educators with a strong faith background to consider in depth not only how it is that educators serve as moral agents, but also how one particularly thoughtful, powerful and faith-filled educator was able to serve in her role as a moral agent. It purposed to consider the individual educator's question: how do I best serve my students in my role as a moral agent? Its purpose may have been considered especially poignant and potentially risky because it was asked by an educator who recognizes that her morals are based in a particular ethos, i.e., a religion, whose values may be opposed to the general, secular culture of the school.

### *Assumptions*

Despite the numerous approaches to education and the contending ideas as to how an institution best serves its students, the one aspect of the moral education of students that cannot seem to be escaped or denied is the influence that the individual educator has on her students. Coles (1998) writes of the moral intelligence of children as being a result of narratives, images, and observed behavior—all things that come directly from a relationship with a teacher. As he says,

The child is an ever-attentive witness of grown-up morality—or the lack thereof; the child looks and looks for cues as to how one ought to behave, and finds them galore as we...teachers go about our lives, making choices, addressing people, showing action in our rock-bottom assumptions, desires, and values, and thereby telling those young observers much more than we may realize. (Coles, p. 5)

Individual educators indeed function as moral agents, yet educational institutions today appear to have relinquished their role of moral education.

This study began with the assumption that education has an implicitly moral dimension that is manifested most clearly in the individual educator's words and actions. Thus its first intention was to demonstrate the pressing nature of this problem as faced today by educators who do not have sufficient direction in terms of their roles as moral agents. It further assumed that for much of the history of education, the moral element in education was acknowledged and owned. Yet numerous informal conversations about this specific area, similar to the one related above, convinced me that not all educators are in agreement with that belief. Thus, in order to convince the reader of the reality that there is a moral dimension implicit in the educational endeavor, this

study offers a brief historical overview of a Western liberal education in order to demonstrate ways in which education, traditionally, has been driven by a moral vector. To do so, it considered the influence of the European ideal of a liberal arts education on the specifically American system of education. This section of my exploration will remain aware of the question of why the American system of education suffered the breakdown of the moral vector in education. Yet it is acknowledged that the discovery of the precise roots of the problem is not the ultimate goal of this study. While some speculations must be made as to what particular historical events and forces may have affected the change in perspective (from wide spread acknowledgement of education as a moral endeavor to teachers' reluctance to even discuss moral issues at school), it is recognized that a full consideration of the causes of the change would entail an entire dissertation in itself. And so the historical consideration will be broad and for the purpose of convincing the reader that there was, indeed, a moral dimension embedded in the idea of education for as far back as we have evidence of educational institutions that have affected our system in the United States, and even into the very recent past in the United States itself. The primary purpose of this section is to show that things have changed, not necessarily to definitively determine why the observed changes came about.

An additional purpose of this study is to demonstrate the extent to which today's educators are left in a state of confusion as to their role as a moral agent. In order to do so, I presented a series of synopses that demonstrated the perspectives of several contemporary philosophers of education. This exploration offered, from a more global and contemporary perspective, some insight into the breakdown of the moral vector in education. It purported to demonstrate that 1) education does have an inherently moral vector that is recognized by

numerous curriculum theorists, and yet, 2) there is simply no consensus among these curriculum specialists as to how to approach the moral end of education. During this process, the question of why there is no longer consensus will be considered. For this lack of agreement contributes to the muddled way in which today's educators are left to determine their role when faced with their role as moral agents. Considering the statistics referred to above, which suggest that the majority of the people in the US say that their religion is "very important" to them, part of the purpose of this study was to explore the conflict that results when a teacher who admits that her religion is very important to her acknowledges the source of her morals as her religion and finds herself teaching in a secular setting with demands that may run counter to her personal beliefs.

### *Methodology*

The belief that instruction is possible incorporates the assumption that there are truths that can be told. (Jackson, Boorstrom & Hansen, 1993)

The consciousness of the roots of one's actions is especially important for teachers, as educators' actions are public and formative. They are public inasmuch as they are noticed by other students in the classroom, hallways, or sports courts, and they are formative inasmuch as we learn partly from observation, vicariously (Bandura, 1997). "We teach values," according to Morrison, "by having them" (2000). So even when an educator's response is not intended to be a planned part of a lesson on values or morality, it nevertheless constitutes part of the formation of students. Thus numerous aspects of a teacher's interactions with her students have a moral aspect: daily activities, rituals and ceremonies, classroom rules and regulations and the classroom environment, as well as lessons in which issues of values and morals are a planned part of the

discussion all can be considered a part of the moral vector of an education (Jackson, Boorstrom & Hansen, 1993). The classroom, in the words of Jackson et. al, is a place of moral complexity.

As a result of the acknowledged need for conscious reflection about the moral nature of teachers' work, this project was undertaken as a philosophical inquiry into one possible way of approaching the educator's dilemma as to how to best approach her role as a moral educator. The obvious yet necessary disclosure is the fact that I am not a philosopher by trade. Yet Grote, a professor at Cambridge, was quoted as saying, "Thought is not a professional matter, not something for the so-called philosophers only or for professed thinkers. The best philosopher is the man who can think most simply..." (in Pipan, 1984). In full recognition that my thoughts, compared to those who spend their lives contemplating such things, are humble and the mere beginnings of deep philosophical inquiry, I approached this work as a personal, existential inquiry into my own dilemma as an educator rooted in a particular faith. I searched for the simple thought alluded to by Grote, or a simpler expression of a more complicated thought, as I sought to express the voice of another educator who may have a great deal to say about the role of an educator of faith.

Philosophical inquiry is a methodology that has a great deal to offer curriculum studies, as was pointed out by Floden and Buchman in "Philosophical Inquiry in Teacher Education" (1989). Education, as well as most other professions, is driven by a foundational philosophical component. A class in the history of education could just as easily be considered a course on educational philosophy; curriculum theory also uses philosophical considerations and categorizations. Floden and Buchman distinguish between various types of philosophical inquiry and suggest the ways in which they may add to the conversation in education. The particular type

of inquiry to be used in this present work was addressed to normative questions. Such questions about what is right and wrong in terms of educational issues, “often work by reminding people of what they already have in mind, of shared values and ideas, either by analyses of concepts in ordinary language or by references to texts that are part of a tradition” (p. 7). The ultimate value in such a thoughtful, philosophical inquiry was not the discovery of a specific, incontrovertible answer to a particular question. It came, rather, as a series of questions that were pressed and considered “until (the writer and ideally the reader) have reached *some* clarity or are overtaken by the need to act” (p. 9).

In my own case, the greatest act that I would hope to elicit from myself and my readers would be a richer, more reflective understanding of the moral nature of education and the role of the teacher as moral agent. I would hope that my own approach will be deepened, and that other teachers, too, will be more willing to acknowledge the reality of the inherently moral nature of the educational enterprise, and that as a result, we may all consider the implications of such on the way we function on a day to day basis in our classes, and treat our students accordingly.

### *Definitions, Driving Questions, and Structure of Study*

It will not be possible here to distinguish the numerous and complex ways the word “morals” can be and has been used. For the purpose of this study, the word morals is understood as a set of principles that define, for a culture, a system or an individual, what it means to be a good human. This includes how that understanding is manifested in the way we deal with others in human relationships, the way we face the world in general, and whence our standards of things such as goodness, truth and justice. As Purple (2004) points out, morals can be used both

prescriptively (i.e., she should help that boy) and descriptively (i.e., she is a good person). Such ideals have not presented themselves to all people at all times in the same light. This recognition has led to numerous responses and attempts to clarify an appropriate moral stance. As such, the idea of what was meant by moral education has varied over time. It becomes important, then, to posit a framework within which to view the various conceptions of moral education.

It is usually at this point in a study in the field of Curriculum and Instruction that the author reveals the philosophical and curricular framework that will guide her inquiry. In the spirit of Weil herself, I want to try to avoid adherence to any one particular ideology. I will seek rather to posit the important questions that have emerged naturally as I have considered these issues over the last couple years. If I were required to specify a framework, I would call upon the thoughts of Jerome Bruner, a cognitive psychologist whose curriculum work in the 1960's could be considered constructivist. I turn to Bruner, though, not because of his constructivist approach to teaching and learning, but because of his anthropological and humanistic consideration of the nature of schooling. Bruner suggested that it is “astonishing how little systematic study is devoted to the institutional “anthropology” of schooling, given the complexity of its situatedness and its exposure to the changing social and economic climate. Its relation to the family, to the economy, to religious institutions, even to the labor market, is only vaguely understood” (Bruner, p. 32). This humanistic and anthropological perspective—and the questions that accompany it—will remain at the center of my consideration.

As such, I will approach this inquiry about education as a moral endeavor with a series of questions that drove the curricular work of Bruner as he was creating curricula in the 1960's. These queries will remain in the background of the study. I suggest they will remain in the

background, for while they all may not be directly addressed in every case, these very issues are implied in the nature of this consideration. They naturally emerge. Weil herself expressed great willingness to question and search for the deepest truths of what it means to be human as well as her longing to avoid barriers between humans. In the forward to the book written about his relationship with her, Fr. Perrin (1953) wrote that Weil “does not provide us with a solution but a question: not a reply, but an appeal; not a conclusion, but a need” (Perrin & Gibbon, p. 17). And so we, too, will allow this search to be driven by questions.

Five questions were previously mentioned as issues that will be directly confronted throughout this study. They are as follows: 1) has education historically served as a moral endeavor? 2) Does education today have moral end? 3) Should today’s educators consider this moral end to the educative process? 4) What should that end be? And finally, 5) how can today’s educators best play a role as a moral educator? In order to uncover some possible responses, as we consider both the history of education as a moral endeavor and the contemporary state of uncertainty, we will use another series of questions provided from the world of curriculum and instruction, since it is ultimately the world of curriculum and instruction that will be examined. They are those which Bruner, in the 1960’s, delineated as the pressing questions that were to be addressed in his social studies curriculum called MACOS. Though that project as it manifested itself has been critiqued since it was introduced in the 1960’s (Dow, 1992), the particular questions it posed remain pressing and vital to any educational endeavor and suit this project in its search for the moral vector in education. Bruner worded his questions as such, 1) what is uniquely human about human beings? 2) How did they get that way? And 3) how could they be made more so? These three questions will undergird our consideration of each particular

educational ideology as well as the contemporary perspectives that are reviewed throughout this work.

The first question, “What is uniquely human about humans?” intends to explore the significance of humanness as suggested in the ideals posited by the various educational models. Bruner’s anthropological considerations are evident here. By what standards does a particular culture determine what it means to be human? How is humanity defined? What are the implications of defining humanity as such? How may this affect the student? The assumption made here is that asking what it means to be human is in itself a moral question: what is most unique about humanity suggests that there is something about humans that make them distinct from other creatures. If the answer is nothing, then that in itself has moral implications.

The second question, “How did they get that way?” builds upon the first anthropological aspect, but takes an additional historical and cultural perspective. What was it about the past that encouraged people to develop as we have? Social forces will be considered, as will tendencies in human behavior. It is not expected that this or any of the questions will be answered fully, but it is expected that a consideration of these questions will bear interesting insight into the moral aspects of the various movements we review.

The final question, “How can they be more human?” is perhaps the most important question to consider, as how it is answered will certainly impact how one understands the role of the educator as a moral agent. For this question, more than the others, looks to the future. If you have defined what it means to be human and can articulate how it is that humans came to be as such, what does that imply for your actions in the future? For the assumption, we must keep in mind, is that the morals that guide us are manifested in our actions. And so an exploration of

what actions would serve to make a human more human should shed light on the very things we said we were concerned about in terms of what is meant by morals: how do we deal with others in human relationships, how do we face the world in general, and where do we get our standards of truth, justice, and goodness?

With these questions in mind, the remainder of this work will be structured as followed: Chapter II will review the literature in terms of the moral nature of education in order to present the problem in the most specific terms possible. It will provide a glimpse into the ideas of several contemporary curriculum specialists, as they either try to elucidate the contemporary moral state of the educational system or warn educators in very clear language of the danger of an educational system that is rooted in mistaken grounds and is not concerned with the questions of moral values. It will consider not only the theorists' perspectives, but also show the reader the amount and variety of contemporary research about teachers in their role as moral agents and as people concerned with the ethics of the educational institution. Once it has been shown that we are, indeed, in need of more guidance in this particular area, Chapter III will take an abbreviated look at the history of education as a project that was highly aware of its moral ends. It is hoped that this brief perusal of the history of education will convince today's skeptics of the professed role of education, throughout much of history, as the creation of the "good man." It also intends to explore the ways in which the moral end of education subtly began to change, as an acknowledgement that we did not end up in today's state of "conceptual moral chaos" (Hoff Sommers, p. 1) overnight; it took years of conflicting ends to get us here. Chapter IV will examine the multitude of ways in which today's teachers are expected to serve as moral agents. Finally, in Chapters V-VII, I will carefully examine Simone Weil's writings as a thinker whose

philosophy is deeply rooted in moral precepts and may have significant insights and implications for today's educators.

Weil's work defies association with any particular ideology, and this is reflected in the courage and originality with which she approached the world. Weil's conscious choice of a position at the threshold of various modes of being will be the focus of this interpretation of her. The liminality of Weil's thought is intended to serve both as a means of understanding her work and as a challenge to our own way of positioning ourselves as moral agents in an educational endeavor that has a history that goes back several millennia. Thus a serious consideration of her work may offer other educators a way of approaching their own responsibilities as moral educators. Weil was deeply concerned with the moral and spiritual development of not only her students, but also the entire culture in which she lived.

It is hoped, in this reflection upon the history of education as a moral endeavor and in this examination of the numerous and often competing contemporary perspectives of the moral state of the educational institution, that Simone Weil can serve us today as an educator whose story reminds us of our own call towards risk and others. Weil was driven by a catholic, ecumenical and rich concept of the good, she was willing live a great part of her life in the risky world of the liminal in order that she could reach out to all people at all times and as such she can serve as a model for educators who are passionate themselves about their difficult but critically important role of moral agent in the contemporary classroom.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH ON THE MORAL VECTOR OF EDUCATION**

In the previous chapter, five questions were articulated as pressing for us to consider as we attempt to uncover a response to the question of how an educator with a religiously oriented morality could best serve her students in her position of moral agent. To recapitulate, they were the following: 1) Does education today have a moral end? 2) What should that moral end be? 3) What should the educator's role be in said education? 4) Has education historically served as a moral endeavor? 5) And finally, how much should a teacher with a specific religious basis for her morals allow that to affect her role as moral agent in a secular setting? In order to situate this study and demonstrate the contemporary moral morass, this chapter will begin by addressing the first question: does education today have a moral end? To do so, the numerous works that theorize and prophesy about the role of teachers as moral agents must be considered.

There are plentiful recent studies available that have addressed such concerns as stated previously, "Does education today have a moral end?" "If so, what is it?" "Do teachers actually serve as moral agents?" And if so, then "How do teachers best serve their students as moral agents?" The contemporary researcher with whom we will start was chosen because she has extensive experience in both teaching English in high school classrooms and in researching teacher ethics. As an English teacher myself, and finding myself frequently confronted with situations involving ethics, I found her writings to be particularly valuable. Campbell (2004, 2003a, 2003b, 1997) wholeheartedly supported the idea that there is, indeed, a moral end in education today. Campbell referred to teaching as "a moral and ethical activity," and schools as "arenas of moral agency" (2003a, p. 47). She described moral issues as "embedded in the ethos"

of a school (1997, p. 255). Campbell (2003a) referred to an earlier study that identified four specific frameworks that are said to have guided moral education for the past 35 years: values clarification, Kohlbergian theory, caring ethic, and character education. Additional perspectives could be added to this list, such as social justice theory or virtue ethics (which Campbell herself espoused). Campbell suggested that the particular lens through which one understands the source of one's ethics will affect the manifestation of the values held therein. Thus, as Campbell recognized, what may appear to be a just action on behalf of one educator could be seen as a violation of justice to another. There are various ethical dimensions to the educational process, including 1) professional ethics, 2) deliberation and reflection on educational policy, and 3) moral education of students. Though they were identified as distinct realms, there is a great deal of overlap, as we will see as they are explored by recent studies. Each of these categories will be considered, beginning with professional ethics.

### *Professional Ethics in Education*

A great deal of Campbell's (2004) research is concerned with how teachers perceive their roles as moral agents: what is the source of their ethical knowledge? Is their sense of ethics one that is highly reflective? Did these teachers appear to have been prepared for their role as moral agents through professional training? What is meant by teacher professionalism? Are there ethical standards for educators that would clarify moral accountability? Because the present study is concerned with how it is that teachers can best fulfill their role as moral agent, these questions about a teacher's perceived source of her ethical knowledge and the extent to which

she feels prepared in her role as moral agent should help us to have a sense of how today's teachers see themselves in terms of their moral agency.

By and large, Campbell's (2001) studies found that teachers were aware of and concerned with issues of morals and ethics. Most, for example, were highly conscious of the importance of fairness in the classroom, though they did not equate fair with equal. It was rather recognized that some students may require more assistance or more attention as a matter of fairness, despite the fact that such entailed an unequal distribution of teacher resources. Other concerns she consistently found were care and a respect for the dignity of each student. This respect, however, was manifested in different ways (perhaps a reflection of the distinct frames from which one can understand one's ethics). Despite these diverse orientations, Campbell believed that most teachers' ethical knowledge was rooted in core principles such as honesty, justice, compassion, dedication, diligence, courage, integrity and other pluralistic morals (2003). Campbell (2003) stated that "at least some teachers...demonstrate a self-conscious awareness of what they try to do in their capacity as moral agent;" many could and did express their ethics and acknowledged themselves as agents of morality (p. 39). It seems clear, from Campbell's studies, that at least some teachers today are aware of the moral ends of teaching.

Yet Campbell herself recognized the lack of clarity in the field. She offered an interesting response to one question that she suggested adds to the "moral muddle" among educators (Campbell, 2003, p. 14). In Campbell's most complete work, a book called *The Ethical Teacher* (2003), she wrote that the question "Whose values should be promoted as right and wrong?" is often posited as if it were an argument against attempts to articulate core ethical principles, suggesting that such principles are merely subjective constructs used as control mechanisms. She

continued that this question of “whose values,” though it can be used to caution against extremism, it is just as often used in a way that confuses the question of the moral ends of education and becomes “an instrument of moral relativism, subjectivism, and nihilism (which) undermines the confidence and conviction of those who exercise a fairly mainstream appreciation of right and wrong, consistent with the laws of the land, informed by reasoned and humane judgment, and supported by a legacy of philosophy...” (Campbell, p. 14). As a response to the question of “whose morals?” she simply stated that a detailed defense for an ethical distinction between right and wrong is not necessary. She defended such position by stating that most people can and do distinguish between ethical principles, and most can recognize and agree upon what are exemplary virtues when manifested in an educator’s actions, and conversely, what are violations of such virtues.

Campbell’s belief in the moral ends of education are deep and convincing. The stated concern in her studies is “teachers’ perceptions of their inevitable position as moral educators and ethical role models as an inevitable aspect of moral agency in teaching” (Campbell, p. 55), and she found that overall, teachers do have some sense of their moral agency. Furthermore, teachers have a dual and interrelated role as moral agents; they are committed to be both moral individuals and moral educators. In terms of the ways in which the education system can strengthen its teachers’ moral agency, she felt that it is incumbent on professional education to collectively share and strengthen ethical knowledge in teacher training programs. Educators must be encouraged, in their professional programs, to be self-reflective and examine the nature of their own ethical knowledge. Teacher education should use the concept of ethical knowledge as the theoretical framework for their programs; only thus can the idea of ethical professionalism in

the teaching realm be attained. Yet it must be noted, Campbell insisted, that ultimately morals and professional ethics are the personal responsibility of the individual teacher as an individual practitioner and a moral agent.

While one of the main questions driving this present study is how it is that teacher functioning within a particular set of religious beliefs might be confronted with values that conflict with the ethos of a particular secular institution, Campbell noted other sources of distress for educators as moral agents and almost brushed off the religious question. She noted what she called particular “challenges to ethical professionalism” (Campbell, 2003, p. 59). The challenges she demarcated were those relating to a variety of controversies, starting within the classrooms (such as how to handle literature in which things such as suicide, sexuality, and other morally charged issues), then widening her consideration to dilemmas that result from conflicts with administrators, colleagues or the norms and culture of the school (for example, computerized report cards with prefabricated comments that some teachers find impersonal or pressure to give higher grades than students earn in order to assure college acceptance). From there she considered challenges resulting from unionization, and from there considered the problems associated with a teacher who takes a strong political position. Campbell devoted one paragraph in this section about ethical challenges to moral agency in the classroom to the question of most concern to this study. She mentioned Marissa, a high school teacher who suffered from her feelings of spiritual hypocrisy.

Marissa’s personal system of morals was based in Buddhist principles, but she taught in a private, Catholic school. She felt hypocritical because she was expected to teach and uphold Gospel values based on Catholic teaching as part of the faculty in a Catholic school (she did not

share her Buddhist beliefs with her colleagues or with the students at school). While she suffered for some time with her concerns, she ultimately was able to overcome them as she learned more about Catholic teaching and realized that “her lifestyle and teaching philosophy are perfectly compatible with the best of Catholic principles” (Campbell, 2003, p. 67). Marissa, however, was only able to overcome her struggles because she was able to see commonality in her beliefs with the espoused beliefs of the institution. The problem in this present study is how to conquer such feelings of betrayal of personal principles when one’s religiously based values do not coincide with the secular values of the institution.

As a whole, Campbell’s studies supported the idea that education is fundamentally a moral endeavor, teachers were concerned with the moral aspect of their roles and could discuss their ethics and morals when questioned (2003). If there were general agreement with such a belief, our problem would be minimal; however, her position is distinct from the findings of other contemporary researchers who did similar studies. Socket and LePage (2001) agreed fully with the position that teachers serve as moral agents, but their findings were less optimistic in terms of the degree to which educators see themselves as such.

Socket and LePage (2001) explored teachers as moral agents in their study on the language teachers used in classrooms. They determined that a language reflective of a clear sense of a teacher’s moral agency was missing from the daily vocabulary of classroom teachers. Their study considered the language used by teachers as they described and interpreted their classrooms and their graduate school experiences. In addition, they analyzed the students’ exit portfolios and reflective essays. They found that the type of language that was used by teachers to describe classroom activities and experiences did not show a complex or rich system of ethics.

They did not feel that moral sensitivity was lacking in the teachers; they did, though, note a missing vocabulary among the teachers. Socket and LePage identified three areas in which the teachers struggled: 1) moral autonomy and moral agency, 2) critical self-reflection, and 3) collaboration and community. They also identified what they perceive as the roots of the underdeveloped moral vocabularies as 1) behaviorist psychology, 2) developmental and Freudian psychology, and 3) everyday metaphors. As a result of their work, they felt that it was incumbent on teacher education programs to require the intellectual and spiritual work that is demanded of teachers in order to work towards moral development. They acknowledged the profound struggle posed by such work, but stressed that teachers must be willing to undergo such efforts, perhaps as a part of the moral obligation that is associated with being a teacher. They also insisted that the typical behaviorist mentality that stresses moral relativism is detrimental to sophisticated moral deliberation. The reason that teachers lack moral sophistication is not because of any defect or unwillingness on the teachers' behalf, but rather because teacher education has not adequately addressed it in their programs. Why, then, we must ask, is there not a general consensus among educators that education is a moral endeavor at its roots?

### *Reflections and Deliberations on Educational Policy*

Some would say that it is precisely because it is a question that is consciously avoided by those in control of the educational process. For despite the fact that it is not clearly articulated, most teaching institutions have an ethos that encourages a specific mode of being in a classroom and promotes a particular type of knowledge. Again, whether it is acknowledged or not, this dominant culture of educational institutions has a distinct moral vector: it promotes productivity

and efficiency among both students and teachers (Apple, 1990). The type of knowledge most valued is that based on scientific ways of thinking and empirical modes of exploration (Lyotard, 1984). These two combine to create what Lyotard calls a “performativity principle.” With performativity as an ethos, educational policy becomes functionalist and can be assessed according to objective standards of measurement. These objective standards are much easier to assess than any sort of moral ends. Knowledge is viewed as an organized stock of data, with market value. This data (and its corresponding value) is transmitted through established pedagogical policies and principles. These values, described by Lyotard in the 1980’s, are amply demonstrated today in most schools’ federally driven emphasis on accountability, federally mandated testing, and the bulk of research grants and funding earmarked for the sciences. This in itself suggests an ethos in education. The degree to which and ways in which teachers acknowledge the effect of the educational institution on their own teaching (which, we hold, is a reflection of their moral agency), then, is a question that must be considered.

### *The Establishment*

Carr (2003) acknowledged that education has a moral end. His concern was the role of the institution in the control and expression of individual teacher’s moral agency. He developed more deeply one of the problems that Campbell (2003) listed in her consideration of challenges to teachers’ moral agency: the culture of the school itself. In questioning how the institution itself can affect the teachers’ understanding of their roles, he clarified the distinction between education and schooling. He reminded us that most schools are social institutions: they are located in a given place, during a given time, and organized and regulated by bureaucratic bodies

as determined by the society. Education, on the other hand, needs neither schools, nor organization, nor regulations to take place. What is necessary for both schooling and education is teachers. These teachers, both inside and outside of institutions, function as moral agents (Carr, 2003; Campbell, 1997; Kwak, 2004). They are in a position of power, as we have seen: their spoken words, environments, overt and hidden curriculum all address issues that are moral and ethical in nature. Yet how they approach and conceive of their roles differ depending upon how closely they associate themselves with the establishment. A teacher who functions primarily in her role as the representative of an institution may feel obliged to respond to moral situations distinctly from a teacher who sees herself apart from her institutional role. According to Carr, the professional roles that drive many teachers actually obscure the rich human and moral significance in an education because of this role's concern with accountability and duties.

This vision of teaching as a professional, institutional role, driven by criteria that one can be said to reach, excel, or fail to reach, is rooted in contemporary concerns about such things as accountability and professional regulation. It is based on an understanding of teaching that is focused on competencies and other technical skills, rather than the moral ends. Carr's (2003) primary concern in his article was whether teaching should be considered a practice in the MacIntyrean sense of the word. Carr's critique of this suggested that the more one sees teaching as a practice, as a set of skills or competencies that can first be provided by an institution, next bundled and finally taught, the less one recognizes the subtle issues of values and morals that are more at the heart of the educational endeavor. He pointed out that most questions related to schooling and curriculum are value-laden, yet that most policy making and educational research

has underestimated the “profoundly moral or evaluative character of much if not most teacher reflection” (Carr, p. 261).

Carr (2003) suggested that good teachers should develop an Aristotelian sense of morals, in which virtues are cultivated as ends in themselves, as a personal ordering of both reason and affect—simply to value virtue for its own sake. A good education, according to Carr, is not something that is based on the most recent theory, focused on technical skills and competencies, and assessed by standardized expectations, but rather it is a “fundamental form of moral association,” (p. 266) in which all humans are engaged simply by participation in the social realm. Understanding the extent to which the institution itself shapes the morality of the educators within it calls for a serious consideration of the norms of the schools themselves.

Another researcher who was keenly aware of the role of the institution in the moral practices of its educators and also interested in the tension between the view of teaching as an institutional and professional practice, is Kwak (2004). Kwak’s primary concern was the source of an educator’s moral authority; in her consideration, she, also referred to MacIntyre’s vision of teaching and the question of whether education should be seen as a practice. She echoed statements encountered in other literature that suggested that many educators today, when faced with numerous co-existing models for moral outlooks (pre-modern, modern, post-modern) have very little confidence in their perspective and find themselves “disoriented and lost in (their) moral teachings” (Kwak, p. 92). A question of prime importance to Kwak is, “Among the numerous moral outlooks, where is the teacher to find legitimate moral authority?”

*Moral Education of Students: Source of Moral Authority*

Kwak (2004) examined the concept of indoctrination, which she readily admitted had been long considered a danger and disease within education. She presented two opposing views of indoctrination, one as delineated by John Wilson, an analytic philosopher of education from Britain, and one as described by MacIntyre, whom she described as a communitarian. Wilson understood indoctrination to be anathema to a good education primarily because it involves multiple levels of deception: first one is deceived about the content of a belief in relation to the world—one believes something has legitimate grounding in the world when it does not, and secondly one is deceived about oneself—one believes that a value was chosen freely, whereas in reality it was chosen because one wanted to please the indoctrinator. Indoctrination is created and supported by the establishment morality and serves a repressive, ideological function. In terms of the teacher and the source of her moral authority in Wilson's view, the educator is warned to remain personally alert to the pervasive ideologies that serve the status quo in order to avoid perpetuating society's irrational, repressive prejudices through their students.

Kwak (2004) criticized this perspective because it was limited to a political understanding of indoctrination. She suggested that this type of thinking privileges a liberal world view and posits an antiestablishment morality. The teacher influenced by Wilson's thinking would see herself as a "heroic protector of her students from repressive traditional morality that illegitimately affects students' free minds" (Kwak, p. 97). In contrast to this viewpoint of indoctrination, she cited MacIntyre. Kwak suggested that for MacIntyre, indoctrination is not to be avoided; it can rather be considered as an essential aspect of a moral education. This is because, for a communitarian, education functions to prepare young recruits to

take their place in society as a productive member of a community. To do so, we must all—both teachers and students—be willing to submit ourselves to the morals and systems of ethics as represented by the best practitioners of the day. The rules and internal standards of excellence are defined by a community; the masters and authorities of the community present them to us, and we imitate them and pass them on as well. Insofar as an educator has mastered the morals and internal standards of excellence of a given community, she has grounding for the basis of her moral authority. In such a case, students' obedience to her authority is justified, as they are being exposed to the rules and standards of to be mastered (as determined by the community), not to the individual teacher.

According to Kwak, MacIntyre's support of moral indoctrination is not one that is as simple as students' acknowledging and assuming the social roles as presented to them by respectable authorities. For MacIntyre, part of the pedagogical task is teaching within an atmosphere of dialectical enterprise, in which students are ultimately encouraged to acquire independent thinking within the community. In other words, if one of the social roles expected of students is that of critical thinking, then in assuming this role, albeit through some process of indoctrination, the idea of indoctrination may not pose the risks that are often associated with it.

Kwak (2003), though, was not convinced by MacIntyre's notion of indoctrination. She countered that within this communitarian perspective, the beliefs and values are so tightly held and so deeply embedded in people's lives that the possibility of stepping back enough to truly question and critically evaluate the grounds for the practice of moral conduct is unlikely. Kwak turned rather to a third possibility for an educator's grounding of her moral authority. She suggested that although the idea of indoctrination cannot be entirely overcome (she remains

highly aware that indoctrination is always taking place whether intentionally or not), it is the job of the educator to recognize the conditional nature of his or her values and beliefs. In acknowledging the psychological arbitrariness and genealogical contingency of our values and beliefs, a teacher's self-awareness is heightened. She is then able to present her own values and beliefs as authentically held, yet held with an awareness of their tentative nature. It is this awareness, communicated to the students, that allows the teacher moral authority and allows the students room to question the roots of their own values and beliefs. This offers an open space—a trust—in which the most important type of moral learning can occur. For Kwak, then, it is ultimately a deeper level of self-awareness and self-reflection on the part of educators that functions as a source of moral authority.

Although there are some compelling arguments put forth by Kwak, there is also some irony in her suggestion that it is precisely a teacher's acknowledgement of the sandy base on which her house of morals is built that provides a source of moral authority. It seems unlikely that most people will admit of such precarious sources of their own foundation of morals and values.

Much of the criticism Carr (2003) and Kwak (2004) made about the nature of the educational institution as being overly concerned about technical skills and issues of productivity and the need for teachers to have legitimate sources of moral authority in order to provide a foundation for the moral education for students, are echoes of Purpel and McLaurin's (2004) *Reflections on the Moral & Spiritual Crisis in Education*. This work, which revisits a book Purpel wrote in 1989, is seminal in its presentation of the numerous ways in which education is a

moral endeavor, yet one that has neglected its role as such. In the very first chapter, it is stated that

To the extent that education is seen as a technical enterprise and educators present themselves as experts, marks the degree to which we have obscured the social, cultural, moral, and political aspects of education. It may be wiser for educators to see themselves as cultural and moral leaders and critics who choose to focus their efforts on an educational institution rather than technicians called upon to legitimize, implement, operate and manage. (Purpel & McLaurin, p. 18)

The establishment's concern for the technical and institutional aspects of education is what Purpel referred to as the trivialization of educational discourse. It has allowed the school community to focus on concrete solutions (i.e., how are we to assess students better?) rather than engage in the difficult, yet critical questions of social, political and moral issues. Purpel (2004) noted a crisis of morality as the result of the trivialization of the educational process. He held that schools try to deny their role in moral education. In order to avoid serious consideration of moral issues, our education system has chosen to solve what he calls technical problems, clothed in such ubiquitous terms as *educational policy* or *educational issues*. This simply serves, according to Purpel, to avoid conflict and change in any significant way, and to trivialize and depoliticize what are ultimately moral and power issues. One cannot talk about education, says Purpel, without confronting moral issues; "Serious education has a way of forcing continual confrontation with the basic moral commitments and, more unnervingly, our failures to meet those commitments" (Purpel, p. 24). What is sorely needed in the educational community is a new vision. This vision should allow us to "illuminate what we are doing and what we might

work to achieve. Such a vision needs to inform all aspects of our life,” (Purpel, p. 41). In addition it must be recognized that the language required to articulate such a vision is fundamentally religious and moral language, for it is only in religious and moral language that one finds a language of meaning.

While many people agree that education is a moral endeavor, and educators are moral agents, there is still enormous disagreement as to the best way to approach the issue of ethics in education, especially in public education. Several methods have been attempted over the years, including those specified earlier by Campbell (2003): character education, values clarification, Kohlbergian theory, and caring ethic. One of the most widely implemented among those was character education. As part of the answer to our second question, “What should be the end of education?”, we will consider the ubiquitous program known as Character Education.

### *Recent Trends in Character Education and Evaluation*

Partly as a result of several court cases that upheld the separation of church and state and thus seriously curtailed religious references in schools during in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a new approach to questions of morals and values had to be sought. The court case *Engle v. Vitale*, 1962, in which the Supreme Court ruled that states cannot mandate prayer in school, was an especially public blow to the traditional approach to moral education, which had based many of its principles on religious values. This demanded a transition in the history of our American educational system because schools were required to avoid a transcendental source of morals. Yet their teachers served as moral agents as much as ever. These teachers were expected to find other sources of moral authority, other sets of values to offer their students.

MacIntyre, reflecting on features of “moral utterance” in 1984, wrote that “the language and the appearances of morality persist even though the integral substance of morality has to a large degree been fragmented and then in part destroyed” (p. 5). He argued that the roots of this destruction go as far back as the Enlightenment; I will suggest later that they are situated even further back. Yet the ultimate cause of the disarray is evidenced when parts of a moral scheme are eliminated (i.e., schools may no longer reference traditional religions as sources of morality), and the moral vacuum left behind is filled with fragments of a once coherent system. The teachers in those schools (and perhaps we teachers today as well) found themselves in a position similar to the Enlightenment philosophers as they struggled with moral issues. These philosophers “inherited incoherent fragments of a once coherent scheme of thought and action and, since they did not recognize their own peculiar historical and cultural situation, they could not recognize the impossible and quixotic character of their...task” (p. 55).

And so, not surprisingly, there were numerous and, according to MacIntyre (1984), only partly-successful responses to the notion that a school’s moral teachings could not be based strictly on traditional Christian values. These included, among many others, values clarification (Raths, Harmin, & Simon, 1966), Just Communities (Power, Higgins, & Kohlberg, 1989), and Gilligan’s (1977) and Noddings’ (1984) focus on care and relationship as the foundation for the development of character. Today’s character education programs are an outcropping of those systems of ethics; they share the manifold ideals and dilemmas evident in the history of their development. This can be seen in the wide range of programs extant in our school systems. And though Americans still perceive a strong relation between religion and character, they also show respect for the diversity of religious beliefs, as can be seen in a report by the Public Agenda

Foundation (2001). This report shows, among other things, that people prefer moments of silence over specific prayer at school functions (Farkas, Johnson, and Foleno, 2001). Thus both the traditional character approach and the progressive approach to moral education are open to a multitude of interpretations and implementations within an educational institution. And while a respect for diversity offers certain benefits to the school system, the wide variety of programs and approaches has also created problems in today's culture of assessment and evaluation. For just how does one evaluate the worth of any given character education program?

It is becoming evident that they must be evaluated. Even if one is not concerned with the nature of the ethics being taught, there is economic incentive for evaluation. In 1995 the U.S. government, under the Clinton administration, began funding character education programs in what was called the Partnerships in Character Education Pilot Program. Between 1995 and 2001, 45 states and the District of Columbia received grants for character education programs from the Department of Education (DOE). In 2003, the total expenditure for character education grants was \$24 million (US Department of Education). In a 2004 notice in *Education Grants Alert*, the federal government announced the availability of \$2.5 million a year to local education agencies toward character education initiatives, in amounts of \$100,000 to \$500,000 per year for four years offered (US Department of Education). Although this is a miniscule amount of funding given the entire budget of the DOE, it still raises the question: if the U.S. government is using public funds for character education programs, by what means are the programs being evaluated to determine their impact and their worth? It is an issue that should be of public concern.

A website that regularly came up during Internet searches for character education was the Character Education Partnership webpage. This site claims that its assessment database

“provides the most comprehensive information available on (character education) assessment tools and instruments” (Character Education Partnership [CEP], 2003). It uses wording such as *national* schools of character awards, associating itself with the government, which lends it credibility. Yet it is a private site. It sells services such as character education kits, curriculum literature, memberships, and conferences. Out of the eight assessment tools listed, five of them were self-assessments, which are problematic, as they neither account for the possibility of bias in the evaluation, nor compare students in the program with non program students (Leming, 1993). One assessed school climate as opposed to character education, opening the question of its validity when used to evaluate a character education project. One looked promising and had been used as a formative and summative evaluation of South Carolina schools, but it did not yet have any results available. Only one of the assessment tools reported specific results: it had previously determined that a character education program in Dade County schools, implemented for several years in the late 1970s and early 1980s, had produced no significant change in student behavior, principles, or achievement (CEP). This was an unimpressive show of tools for evaluating character education programs, especially as it had been billed as the most comprehensive list of assessment tools. And yet programs such as those funded by the Department of Education continually report “improved academic achievement, behavior, school culture, peer interaction, and parental involvement...(as well as) pro-social behaviors such as cooperation, respect and compassion” (CEP), without mentioning the fact that those findings were based on self-report by stakeholders in the program itself. Such a program, that is selling itself as a character education project, has little motivation to provide honest evaluation. Its evaluation would be likely to support its own purpose: to sell character education.

Another problem with character education programs appears to be that evaluation of the project is not necessarily considered during the planning stages. In a study of a character education initiative in one high school, the students were asked, as part of a research study, to judge their school's program (Romanowski, 2003). In describing the planning process, the school's character education committee was said to have determined the program's vision and mission, goals, objectives, monthly themes, and words of the week. There was no mention of any sort of control or evaluation intrinsic to the program. The results of the study showed that the high school students actually thought the program was ineffective, as (1) they were satisfied with their character as it was, and (2) they believed it was too late to teach character education in high school (Romanowski). Additional critiques of this and similar programs were brought up in the study, such as a curriculum that students considered demeaning, ineffective and overly simplistic. A student was quoted as saying, "You don't learn how to be nice to people by doing a word search...I don't think you can teach character education by doing busy work" (Romanowski). If there had been enough foresight to plan evaluations of the project on a regular basis, such concerns could be accounted for and appropriate action taken.

In a district wide character education project described by Woodfin, Sanchez and Sclafani (1996), there was a consideration of evaluation. The purpose of the external evaluation was to determine how the program was implemented at the school level, how the faculty perceived the training, how the faculty believed the program influenced students, and what topics would be important to consider in future trainings (Woodfin et al.). Just over half (53%) of the schools responded to the survey. While 90% of the schools said that the program had been implemented in their curriculum, 68% said that planned programs were used regularly, and 78%

said character education had a positive effect on the students. Yet the comments were such things as, “I can see it in their self-esteem,” or “They are respecting themselves and others,” or even “The school climate is positive,” all of which are admirable comments, but not necessarily attributable to a specific character education program. Once again, we are left with an evaluative quagmire.

Bulach (2002) clearly recognized the problems and failures of many character education programs. He articulated specific weaknesses of programs based on several surveys he conducted, in which he collected data from both students and teachers. He determined that (1) effective character education programs must involve all faculty, staff, parents and the community to succeed, (2), students must talk about character education, but more importantly, they must see it modeled by people they respect, (3), *words* of the week (or month) are not as effective as *behaviors* of the week—actions speak louder than words, (4) school leadership must take an active role, model the characteristics, and insist that the entire school community do so as well. In his final paragraph, he says that it is important that the program’s progress be evaluated. He offers a survey that suggests it provides both process evaluation (how well the program is being implemented) and outcome evaluation (whether it actually effects student behaviors). He also refers to two surveys that he says can be found on the Character Education Partnership website referred to earlier. While he attaches one survey, he does not provide information as to its validity or reliability, which makes one hesitant to trust it completely. Yet it is certainly a start.

This consideration of character education programs has made it clear that due partly to the divergent historical and religious perspectives from which the programs have developed, as well as the problems encountered in measuring the development of character, it has proven

difficult to assess the value of specific programs. And yet as the programs multiply and the government funding is extended, it becomes even more important to develop reliable, valid procedures through which the impact of a specific program can be determined. Leming (1993) suggested that informal evaluations are insufficient to evaluate character education, and that carefully controlled experimental designs are as necessary when evaluating character education projects as they are in other fields in the social sciences. It is, unfortunately, difficult to properly set up such experimental designs around character education programs. So it becomes increasingly complex to determine the actual results of such programs. It also becomes more incumbent to return to the second question: what should the end of a moral education be?

Because the establishment of character education projects was largely unimpeded due to the tacit belief that they promoted universally agreeable values and goals, a closer look at the wide variety of values espoused in them shows that there is actually considerable disparity in the ends of these programs. An unscientific and brief survey of schools from different parts of the country serves to give us at least a glimpse into the distinctions we might expect to find among many more schools. What, then, are the ends of character education programs?

To get a sense the great variety of responses, even within character education programs, to our second question, “What should the ends of a moral education be?”, an Internet search was done with the key words listed as, “character education, public school system, list of values” and a state’s name from different geographical locations (all within the United States) added to the search. As might be expected, the lists of values taught in the school systems varied greatly, with Georgia at the top of the list in terms of the number of values said to be taught (there were 41 on the list, including such as “frugality, moderation, cheerfulness, respect for health, respect for the

creator, and virtue” (Georgia DOE, 1997). A document from Santa Clarita’s city government webpage in Colorado listed the following “six pillars” of character education that had been determined at a 1992 conference in Aspen and since then used by hundreds of Colorado schools, citizens and youth organizations as, “respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, justice and fairness, caring, and civic virtue and citizenship” (Aspen Declaration on Character Education). Two New York charter schools’ websites were perused and in their annual reports such values as the following were listed as the root of their character education, “discipline, respect, enthusiasm, accountability, and maturity” at one, and “mindfulness, achievement, professionalism and preparedness” at the second (Democracy Preparatory Charter School; Williamsburg Collegiate Charter School). Finally, for a taste of the Midwest, an Indiana school’s website was explored and the following values were listed as part of their character education program, “respect, responsibility, honesty, trust, caring, initiative, teamwork, perseverance, courage, fairness and citizenship” (Indiana Public Schools Publication). While there is some overlap (most notably with the word “respect”), there is also a great deal of variety, even in this brief, non-scientific perusal of websites. Once again, the reality of the moral muddle with which contemporary educators are faced becomes evident.

### *Individual Teacher’s Approach to Moral Education*

Despite the proliferation of character education programs in the 90s and into this century, and perhaps as a result of the questioning of their effectiveness (Romanowski, 2003; Bulach, 2002), most teachers are not provided with a tool-kit of character education ideas, but rather have to wade through the process on their own. This next section will explore our third question,

“What should the educator’s role be in said education?” Joseph and Efron (1993) addressed the moral formation of students as they studied moral choices, moral conflicts, and teachers’ self-perceptions. They asked teachers to describe their moral selves and their decisions as moral educators. They found that teachers’ individual moralities do shape their choices, and that though they are reluctant to teach values, they feel a commitment to share their personal ethos. Although Joseph and Efron did not intend to research teachers’ religious values, they found numerous incidents in which value conflict originated in dilemmas relating to religion. The teachers they interviewed struggled with their religious values because they believed that classrooms should be secular, while they recognized that their morals and motivations were religiously driven. Clark (2003) asked a similar question in her studies of teachers’ perception of their roles as moral agents. Her first study sought to determine not only whether teachers saw themselves as moral agents, but also how prepared they felt for their roles as moral agents. Her second study followed up upon her first, and asked what teachers used as their guide when addressing moral issues in the classroom. She looked for barriers that teachers encountered when addressing moral issues, and differences among teachers as a result of age or experience.

What she found in the first study was that teachers felt confronted with restraints on their moral agency. Many of these educators cited religious beliefs as the root of their moral authority, yet they felt that the laws that addressed religion in schools were restrictive and hindered their ability to adequately discuss ethical issues. None of the sixteen teachers she interviewed in this rural, Midwestern community said that their teacher’s education program addressed their role as moral agent.

In her second study, Clark's (2003) primary question was "What are the perceptions of teachers regarding their role as moral agents in the classroom?" She also wondered whether, because of the complexity and multiplicity of views about teaching morals and ethics today, that perhaps there was a pattern of thought among teachers that the moral domain should be separated from the purpose of schooling. This question was readily answered with a resounding, "No." Although many teachers expressed strong feelings about it, and admitted it was a sensitive issue, most felt it was inevitably in the domain of education.

In order to address the additional questions, her second study focused more on the development of teachers as moral agents—the differences in age and background that may affect their perception of themselves. In addition to interviewing the teachers, Clark (2003) carefully examined the history of moral education in the United States. As she continued the second half of her study, she came to see how the responses she got from the teachers she interviewed corresponded somewhat to previous movements in the history of education. This was most obvious, she proposed, in those teachers who believed that moral education should be either religious (like the Puritan schools) or secular (like the progressive schools) in nature. Clark found that the teachers today who acknowledged a religious base for their moral teachings prefaced their statements with "I believe," or "In my faith..." She also found that most of the educators she interviewed had what she deemed a conservative bent to their moral understanding. By that she meant that they appeared to uphold a system of ethics very similar to those suggested by schools throughout the history of American schooling. She included respect, manners and honesty.

A final, interesting finding of her study was that of the fear that younger educators expressed. The less experienced teachers said that their concern for losing their jobs impeded their willingness to take a strong stance on moral issues. Clark (2003) noted historical cases in which nineteenth century teachers wrote of their fears and concerns about public examination at the end of the school year; if their students did not perform well at the public demonstration of skills learned during their year in school, the teacher may not be rehired the following year. Similarly, the educators she interviewed expressed a fear of administration and parents as that which impeded their discussions of moral dilemmas. Yet that, too, may be a misinterpretation of the general public's expectation of schools.

Recent research (Lickona, 1991; Wynne & Ryan, 1993) shows that there is an increasing public demand that schools directly address the issues of morals and ethical principles. A fascinating and perhaps tangentially related study suggested that the question of *whether* religion as a source of morals should be in schools has changed over the last 8 years to *how* religion should be incorporated into schools (White, 2007). We have seen just a few of the numerous studies in the past 10 or so years that have addressed the question of the role of teachers as moral agents (Campbell, 2003; Campbell, 1997; Campbell, 1996; Kennedy, 2001; Sockett, 2006; Morrison, 1994). Yet despite the agreement that teachers do serve to transmit messages about morality, and despite the articles and books devoted to an exploration of the many ways in which these messages are transmitted (Hansen, 2001; Sockett, 2006; Jackson, 1993; Purpel & McLaren, 2004), we are reminded of Campbell's (2003) suggestion that the research frequently does not probe "the extent of and reasoning behind (the teachers') moral and ethical inclinations" (p. 46). Perhaps this is related to Sockett and LePage's (2001) contention that teachers are concerned

about issues of morality, but that most of them lack moral language. Or perhaps it is the result of our educational system, which de-emphasizes moral decisions, controls and monitors its teachers with things like standardized tests, and rewards and punishes teachers based upon meaningless standards. In any case, it points to the general sense of confusion when it comes to teachers and their roles as moral agents.

Our next chapter will deal with our fourth question, “Has education historically served as a moral endeavor?” and then, with a look at one particular educator of great interest to the conversation, we will consider, in our final chapters, our fifth question, “How much should a teacher with a specific religious basis for her morals allow that to affect her role as moral agent in a secular setting?”

### CHAPTER 3 A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MORAL ENDS OF EDUCATION

If our previous chapter presented a somewhat blurry snapshot of today's educator, whose role as a moral agent was affirmed but hardly clarified due to the conflicting ways in which this role is understood, this chapter intends to take a somewhat panoramic view of the history of education as a moral endeavor and to explore whether such confusion in the role of a teacher as a moral agent has always existed. For in understanding the history of our role as educators, the extent to which our present approach to morals in education *has changed* should become evident. When we have a better understanding of our past, we can ask more pressing questions, such as, "Is our present state of moral confusion as teachers something that could possibly be good for the teaching profession?" and "What can we do to confront our present situation?"

To address these issues, I will start with the fourth question that was delineated in our first chapter, "Has education historically served as a moral endeavor?" and move on to consider related concerns, such as, "What are the roots of the moral muddle of today's educator?" This search for the source of today's confusion is important, as it helps to sharpen our perception of the problem. If we can see clearly how we developed into our present state, we should be in a better position to confront it and turn toward Weil's thoughts and actions as part of a solution.

It should become evident that the proposed answer to the most important question of this chapter, whether education has historically had its roots embedded in questions of morality, is an unequivocal "Yes." This chapter intends to demonstrate the reality that education was considered, for most of its history, as specifically moral in nature. And so in order to view the

problem in its historical context, I will present a perusal of the ends of education as a moral endeavor.

### *The Moral Vector of Ancient Hebrews*

As was the case in most primitive societies, education in the Hebrew culture prior to 1200BC was informal. Parents taught children the life skills they deemed necessary until it was their children's time to assume their roles in the community life of the village. At the appropriate time, the child learned the necessary crafts or skills from elders in the community (Frost & Bailey, 1973). Such an education was practical; its primary concern was social and material survival. Some years later, after the nomadic wandering resulting from the Hebrew escape from Egyptian slavery, it became incumbent upon the leaders of the Hebrew nation to reshape a national and spiritual unity that had deteriorated somewhat as a result of years of living in an alien culture. An oral religious and historical tradition, based largely on the bondage and deliverance from Egypt, was developed. Over generations this history and tradition was passed on orally. This became the root of the Hebrew educational system. Eventually this religious tradition and the laws accompanying it were written down as books. Schools were organized to teach these books only after their oral and informal transmission was no longer feasible (Frost & Bailey). As such, education became an essential part of the Hebrew religion and religion became an essential part of Hebrew education. The two were inextricably united.

As early as the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, Philo of Alexandria described the ancient Hebrew custom of the pursuit of wisdom, which took place within the synagogue itself. This schooling was necessary as the Jewish people had recently been exiled and the Diaspora had begun; in

order to keep the laws sacred and remembered, formal schooling was necessary. According to Philo, these ancient schools would consist of

The ruler expounding and instructing the people what they should say and do, while they received edification and betterment in moral principles and conduct...for what are our places of prayer throughout the cities but schools of prudence and courage and justice and also of piety, holiness and every virtue by which duties to God and men are discerned and rightly performed? (Philo, II, 215-217)

Because education was important to the transmission of their religion, the priests and Levites who taught the tradition would gather, at times, all the members of the community to hear the law and to learn the proper interpretation of it. What is fascinating is that it was not just the wealthy men of the culture whom the priests instructed: men and women, old and young alike were gathered around in the synagogues such that they could all hear and absorb the tradition and laws of the Hebrew people (Frost & Bailey, 1973). It is obvious from Philo's remarks that the primary end of this type of education was widely understood to be moral in nature.

The Hebrew child would be inculcated into his religion in every aspect of his life because religion was inseparable from his life; it was his way of understanding the world. In addition he would learn a craft or trade and he probably would learn to sing and play an instrument, as is evidenced by David, their great king who was also "a singer of sweet songs and a master of the harp" (Frost & Bailey, p. 38). A more specialized education came about as a result of the rise of the prophets. Somewhat informal and voluntary schools arose in order to train the sons of the prophets. Such schools consisted of a prophet and a number of students who felt compelled by his teachings and thus wanted to identify themselves with him. The prophet Samuel is known to

have started a prophet school in Ramah, and other such schools existed in Bethel, Gilgal, Jericho, Carmel, Gibeon and Samaria (Frost & Bailey). The curriculum was wholly religious, consisting of the means of inducing prophetic ecstasy, the law, prayers, meditation and rituals of worship.

During and after the Babylonian exile, the Hebrews prophet schools gave way to the more sophisticated education of the priests and scribes due to the influence of outside cultures. By the third century BC, the synagogue had developed into a place not only of worship and oral instruction, but also of more formal education. Children were taught to read and write there, in order that they might come to understand the law. Most synagogues contained a library. By the time of the destruction of the Jerusalem, in 66AD, it is estimated that some 400 such synagogues were functioning in the city (Frost & Bailey, 1973). Between the third century and the fall of Jerusalem, two primary challenges emerged to the traditional Hebrew education: the people gave up Hebrew as a spoken language and began speaking Aramaic, and the Hellenistic culture in the Mediterranean basin around them reached into Palestine. The young men in schools at that time picked up on the philosophic type quest of the Greeks and began to struggle with questions about the meaning of life, with the issues of suffering and prosperity, and with matters of practical concern. Out of this stimulus a new literature emerged: the wisdom literature. From the studies of Mosaic Law, the students were turned toward the stories of Job, the Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes (Frost & Bailey). There was a reaction against some of these “subversive” trends and some academies were established outside of the synagogue environment by the first century BC.

Nevertheless, throughout all of these changes and reforms, the end of the curriculum of the ancient Hebrews was entirely centered on questions of morals and values. As Marty (2000) suggested, within this theistic conception of the world, God made commands and His people

followed. It was this and only this that was of enough value to be a part of the education of the people. And despite the fact that there was often (at least a small) multi-cultural presence in the large cities of the ancient world, there were no concerns among the ancient Hebrews about offending the Canaanite or Egyptian or later Roman sensibilities to their respective gods and goddesses. The ancient Hebrew morals and values were clear and unquestionable; they took primacy in the educational curriculum. There can be no question that these types of beliefs and teachings were intended to lead people away from personal concerns and toward others, in a life-giving and life affirming system.

If one were to ask an ancient Hebrew a question about the ends of education, it is likely that his response would be rooted in his belief in and concept of God. Humans, he would believe, were created in God's image (Gen. 1:26). As such, they are called to holiness in the likeness of God as when God declares, "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2). Heschel (2001) described this outlook as *theomorphic anthropology*. It is not so much that the ancient Hebrews sought to make God like them as it was that they sought to become more like God themselves. Perhaps this perspective is most fully expressed in the prophetic writings of the Old Testament. In these writings, God is shown as so deeply concerned about humanity that God suffers with and for human weakness. As Heschel said, "Whatever man does affects not only his own life, but also the life of God insofar as it is directed to man. The import of man raises him beyond the level of mere creature. He is a consort, a partner, a factor in the life of God" (p. 292). What is important about an education to the ancient Hebrew people? A participation in God: the ancient Hebrew education was intended to lead one directly to know and understand God. The end of their education was first and foremost moral in nature.

### *The Moral Vector of the Ancient Greeks*

Though not as clearly theological in nature, the education of the ancient Greeks, too, demonstrate the moral concerns that drove their system of education. The years from around 450 to 350 BCE have been called the “pedagogical century” when referring to Ancient Greece (Kimball, 1995). It was about that time that the Greeks developed their ideal of educating the free citizens of Athens in a broadly liberal education. Prior to that, the Hellenic concept of education was based primarily upon the pursuit of aretē (virtue or excellence). The models of virtue and excellence towards which education strove were to be found in Homeric epic poetry; thus instruction centered on the recitation of poetry. The educated citizen knew not only the poetry itself, but also the mores and norms for behavior. Thus, even before the turn of the pedagogical century, education (the learning of poetry) was esteemed as a result of the values and mores it instilled in its learners. The Homeric epics said, “Be—act—like Odysseus, or be—act—like Achilles.” There was a specific moral code implicit in the learning of the epic poems. It was not until the rise of democracy in the fifth century that this dominant form of education was challenged. The challenge to the moral code of the early Greeks—a moral code that was embedded in their songs and demonstrated through their heroes’ actions—came about as certain individuals came to reflect, articulate, and even record in writing their reflections about what it means to human, and more specifically, what it means to be a good Greek citizen. Thus as the first western schools of philosophy were developing, the heroic ideals began their subtle shift that will be examined below.

The three primary groups whose voices provided an image of the perfect Greek citizen that varied from the epic ideal were the following: 1) individuals who taught the technique and

skills necessary for composing, delivering and analyzing speeches. These people were referred to as sophists (Gorgias, Protagoras and others), 2) those who argued that knowledge was only discovered in a never ending and critical intellectual quest for the highest truths (Socrates, Plato, and later Aristotle), and 3) a smaller group who sought both—an “orator who would live out the noble virtues and persuade the free citizen of the democratic city-state to adhere to them” (Kimball, 1995, p. 18). The espousal of this latter form of education came from Isocrates. Each of these will be briefly considered in terms of their contribution to the moral ends of education.

### *Socrates on Sophists*

Despite the weighty role the gods played in the ancient Greeks’ life, even within the age of the great philosophers, their curriculum did not focus on learning about the roles of the gods and goddesses in their lives. You may say that it was not technically “religious.” It was, nevertheless, concerned with the moral life. Their most influential teachers may have been the Sophists, who taught mastery of language; this in itself suggested an ethos. There was a tacit belief that the best speaker should also be the best man (Frost, 1989). This type of individualism appeared to have been more attractive to most students than the state-centered curriculum of other famous teachers of the day: Plato, Socrates, and, a bit later, Aristotle (Frost). The Sophists’ stress on rhetoric as the supreme art was criticized as having little concern for the good or the true. It was seen by contemporary teachers, such as Socrates and Plato, as destructive; many references to the negative affects of such teachings are referenced in their writings. A look at the dialogue entitled *Sophist*, in which Plato appears to detest the entire group of educators, is representative of his opinion of these teachers. He ascribes to them every idea of which he

disapproves, including accusing them of selling knowledge (*Sophist*, 223c), of vain conceit (*Sophist*, 231b), and, in terms that show his concern that their morals insidiously lead one toward ignorance and intellectual and moral death, he says that the Sophist “takes refuge in the darkness of not-being, where he is at home and has the knack of feeling his way, and it is the darkness of the place that makes him so hard to perceive” (*Sophist*, 254a). If Socrates does indeed depict the Sophistic educator in a true light, this is a type of moral education that stresses individual gain and minimizes a search for goodness, truth or justice.

### *Socrates/Plato*

In one of his more complete discussions about moral education, Plato has an Athenian suggest that goodness could be trained into the little human creature before the age of reason is reached. Education, he says, which is “goodness in the form in which it is first acquired by a child,” and entails the proper human response to pleasure and liking, pain and dislike, should be “formed in the soul on right lines before the age of reason is reached” (*Laws*, 653b). A harmony of feelings with understanding in the soul of the child (that results from early discipline of the habits), says the Athenian, is virtue. So some training and a great deal of discipline is necessary to train a man, from his “first beginnings on,” to despise what he should despise and love what he should love. And this training and discipline is education (*Laws*). Yet other truths—knowledge of forms and eternal verities—are present deep within the child and simply must be remembered through the assistance of a good coach. This was demonstrated during Socrates’ interactions with an uneducated slave boy who came to do geometry in the sand during a discussion Plato records in the *Meno*. Part of the lesson in that particular case was the fact that

natural reason initially led the boy astray. Socrates' technique was to question the boy in progressively more difficult reckonings related to the size of a square. The boy answered incorrectly, even with some of the simpler questions, and only as the questions became more complex did the boy come to recognize not only his error in the more difficult questions, but also his initial error. Thus part of the job of the educator is to perplex the student such that he becomes aware of his ignorance and ultimately comes to desire to learn the truth (*Meno*, 84). Ultimately the well educated youth will "see most clearly whatever was most amiss...and with a just distaste would blame and hate the ugly even from his earliest years and would give delighted praise to beauty, receiving it into his soul and being nourished by it, so that he becomes a man of gentle heart" (*Rep*, 420a).

Despite the popularity of the Sophists in the ancient world, the influence of Socrates' and Plato's teachings on moral education in the western philosophic tradition have had much more of a lasting effect on our understanding of what it means to be a good person than the sophist's art. As we have seen, they are frequently concerned with the ends of education. They hold that in addition to the educator's duty to perplex his students is his obligation to compel the best natures in the *polis* to attain the knowledge that the founders pronounce greatest, such that each student could attain the vision of the good (*Republic*). This knowledge would ultimately not only benefit the individual, but also the State. Thus a good education was seen as necessary to make life worth living for the man himself and to secure the State from the dangers to be found both within and without (Cubberley, 1902).

Socrates, as he was defending himself in front of his peers in his final days, presents his primary concern as one of a moral nature—to teach people to be good in themselves and good for their city-state—as evidenced this in speech recorded in the “Apology,”

I went to each of you privately and conferred upon him what I say is the greatest benefit, by trying to persuade him not to take care of any of his belongings before taking care that he himself should be as good and wise as possible, not to take care of the city’s possessions more than for the city itself, and to take care of other things in the same way.  
(Apology, 36c-d)

Finally, in what is perhaps one of Plato’s most famous stories, the “Allegory of the Cave” gives a clear indication of how easily we are misled by false teaching (as a result of our trust in our senses), symbolized by the shadows on the cave walls that most people mistake for reality. The “Allegory of the Cave” also serves as a reminder that it is the responsibility of good teachers who have themselves come to know truth, to go back down into the morass of shadowy half-truths and pull their unwilling students into the light of the fire of the truth. This is the teachers’ obligation because only those who have seen the truth can then act in accordance with it. In the story of the cave, Socrates says to Glaucon that result of an ascent into the realm of the intelligible is a sight of the “good, and that when seen it must needs point us to the conclusion that this is indeed the cause for all things of all that is right and beautiful, giving birth in the visible world to light and the author of light...and the authentic source of truth and reason, and anyone who is to act wisely in private or public must have caught sight of this” (Rep, 517c). Thus the job of the educator is twofold: it is focused on helping the students to find the good such that they can do the good and be considered good men and good citizens, ideas which were

almost inseparable in the Greek mind, but doing so through the use of speculative wisdom, contemplation and dialectic (Kimball, 1995).

### *Aristotle*

A student of Plato's and later the founder of his own school known as the *Lyceum*, Aristotle reflected and wrote a great deal about morals and ethics as well. One of his well known works, the *Nicomachean Ethics*, is a treatise that is devoted to the nature of the good and human happiness. He started this work by stating the way in which he understood the word *good*. "Every craft and every inquiry, and similarly every action and project seems to aim at some good; hence the good has been well defined as that at which everything aims" (*Nicomachean Ethics (NE)*, Book I, 1...). Thus from the very start, we know that for Aristotle, the good is the goal, purpose or end of somebody (or something's) movements. To continue in his reasoning, just as there are many ends or goals toward which we might head, so there are many goods. Yet he allowed for the possibility that there may also be a supreme good, "*the good and the best of goods*," as he phrased it early in his reflections (*NE*, Book I, 1094a). One possible name he offered for the supreme good is *εὐδαιμονία*, or, perhaps poorly translated, happiness. McIntyre (1996) suggested that happiness is an inappropriate translation because *εὐδαιμονία* suggests both behaving well and faring well. The importance of this distinction from the way we understand happiness today is that the Greek sense in which Aristotle used this term suggested an interdependence between virtue and happiness (in the sense of doing well for yourself). And so Aristotle, from the outset, sought the way of life in which doing well and faring well would exist together.

It may be noted here already that there is a distinction in the way Plato and Aristotle perceived the idea of the good. Plato's idea of the good is one toward which you can aspire only by leaving the shadows of this world behind and seeking a higher level of knowledge, independent of worldly happiness. Aristotle, on the other hand, understood the good to be that final end-in-itself toward which each individual strives, which is ultimately something like what is expressed in *εὐδαιμονία*. This is something that is very much a part of the good man's daily life experience in his *πόλις*, or city-state. MacIntyre (1996) reminded us that the *Nicomachean Ethics*' topic was referred to as politics, and the sequel to the *Ethics* was entitled the *Politics* specifically because there were specific expectations of how the individual must act within his city-state. Aristotle intended to explain in detail how the citizen of the Greek city-state was expected to behave in terms of both the institutions in his *πόλις* and towards his peers. "In the assembly a citizen meets his friends; with his friends he will be among fellow members of the assembly" (MacIntyre, p. 57). Thus ethics and daily politics are intricately intertwined and must be considered together.

When Aristotle spoke of happiness as a possible end, he must consider exactly what is it that provides this sense of happiness. He did so by asking whether there is a specific activity that belongs to all men, simply by virtue of being human. In very Greek style, he then suggested that rationality is the explicitly human quality that sets men apart from other creatures. Thus, for Aristotle, specific human activity consisted of "man's exercise of his rational powers...and in the right and able exercise of them lies the specific human excellence" (MacIntyre, p. 62). Aristotle further explained that humans display rationality in two senses: 1) in thinking, where reasoning is the very activity itself, and 2) in other activities, where we may fail to obey what our reason

tells us. The first type of activity he called intellectual virtues, and the second were called moral virtues. In terms of the moral virtues, Aristotle suggested, like Plato, that they must be trained, but there is a distinction in their concept of training. For Plato, as we saw, the young child must be trained to discipline his body and mind to prefer virtuous actions, but for Aristotle, the young child must be trained by performing the virtuous actions in order to instill them as habit. One courageous act does not make a man courageous. A virtue must be entirely habitual and the only way to acquire the habit is by performing the acts. Thus the virtue of courage is merited by performing numerous courageous actions until the habit by which these actions are performed is inculcated into the man. Only then can we call the man courageous (MacIntyre, 1996).

The virtuous man will get pleasure from virtuous activity, and he will choose well among pleasures and pains. The standard by which he chooses is another important concept for Aristotle's conception of the good. For right choice, as described by Aristotle, is choosing the mean between two extremes of action or emotion. This is not easy for us to discern as we confront it today, but Aristotle was operating within the "code of a gentleman" of ancient Greek society; this code, understood among the rich upper classes, was taken to be normative and thus did not need further explanation (MacIntyre, 1996).

The final considerations in terms of Aristotle's conception of what it means to be a good man is the role of choice in his ethics and his understanding of prudence. A human action must be voluntary to be considered praiseworthy or blameworthy. Any action considered voluntary unless it is done either as a result of compulsion or ignorance; however, not all voluntary actions are chosen (MacIntyre, 1996). Aristotle posits the "prudent man" as he whose actions were done only after he had deliberated before he acted. The concept of prudence, understood as the virtue

“which is manifested in acting so that one’s adherence to other virtues is exemplified in one’s actions” becomes, in a sense, the foundation of all the other virtues (MacIntyre, p. 74).

Thus with the sense of prudence as primary, with the understanding that humans are primarily rational creatures who seek happiness as an end, and with the acknowledgement that different activities produce different pleasures, the question remains, which activities are those of the good man? Which is the highest virtue? This is where once again Aristotle and Plato, despite all their differences, converge once again. For Aristotle suggests that if reason is that which is best and most human about us, then the best activity for us is reasoning. This leads us right back to the speculative reasoning that Plato allegorized in the cave. Such an activity as *θεωρία*, speculative reasoning, which deals with unchanging truths, can be both pleasant and continuous. Aristotle refers to it as “the pleasantest” form of activity (MacIntyre, 1996). Thus the end of human life, that happiness toward which all humans should strive, is ultimately very similar for both Plato and Aristotle, despite their distinct ways of understanding how it is to be attained.

The Aristotelian concept of virtue deserves an additional moment of reflection in terms of this work as a whole. For I will argue, along with MacIntyre (1984), that the loss of an Aristotelian style understanding of the nature of virtue is one of the great losses of our contemporary American culture. For Aristotle presumed teleology. Man had a specific end and insofar as he reached that end, he could be considered good. Some variation of this *telos* (based on Jewish, Christian, and Muslim principles) replaced Aristotle’s vision for almost two thousand years, during which there was at least a clear ideal of the good available. Today such a *telos*, such a transcendental ideal, has all but vanished, resulting in our present state of morals in disarray. This can be seen across the board in American society, and in schools as much as

anywhere else. This argument will be presented more fully at a later point, but is good to keep in mind here at the start.

The third vector of education in the ancient Greek culture may be the one that most influenced preceding generations. Isocrates denied Socrates' focus on pure speculative wisdom, criticized the Sophists for their empty rhetoric and suggested that the height of philosophy demands both. Rhetoric, according to Isocrates, "is mere sophistry if it is divorced from truth" and truth "can only be ascertained through philosophical dialectic" (Kimball, 1995, p. 18). Thus the primary rationale for education for Isocrates came to be the training of students to speak well and think right. The orator must not only preach eloquently, he must also intend to produce virtuous actions in those whom he affects. Isocrates' orator requires that philosophy be manifested in the world through enhancing virtue in others. Such, we will see, is the precise motto of the early orators in the next epoch of education: the Romans.

### *The Moral Vector of the Ancient Romans*

In his tome on the history of education, Cubberley (1902) described the ancient Romans as "a concrete, practical, constructive nation of farmers and herdsmen, merchants and soldiers, governors and executives...(with) practical rulers—warriors who were at the same time constructive statesmen and executives who possessed power and insight, energy and personality" (p. 54). The vastness of their early empire, he said, could never have been accomplished without their balance of force, guidance, forbearance, patience, executive power, and understanding of the psychology of a subject people in order to first conquer and then hold their lands together. This, in itself, suggests a creative, practical people who were well trained in their roles in society.

It was not until around 300 BC that primary schools began to develop in Rome. Previous to that, the virtues necessary to a Roman citizen were learned from the parents: young girls from their mother and boys from their father. Slightly later in life, the boys were sent to be an apprentice to a soldier, farmer or statesmen. The idea was to produce young men who would in turn become a good father, a good citizen and a good soldier. The shared activities among boys and their fathers began with a basic level of reading and writing, perhaps enough mathematics to keep the business accounts in order, the memorization of the laws of Rome known as the Twelve Tables and the recitation of legends and songs. It also included running, swimming, farmwork, religious duties (domestic sacrifices), visiting acquaintances and helping to serve guests at table (Dobson, 1932). In addition, the boy may have been taken along to the forum to attend public speeches; if his father were prominent enough, the boy may have been permitted access to the Senate-house in order to be exposed to senatorial procedures. As may be imagined, the education for girls was quite distinct. The young girl was taught the skills necessary to become a good housekeeper, wife and mother. The virtues taught to both girls and boys, though, were similar: modesty, firmness, prudence, piety, courage, seriousness and regard for duty (Cubberley, 1902). Religion was important to the Romans and a great deal of their lives was centered on their home, where the father was regarded as a high priest (including holding power over the life and death of all the inhabitants) and the mother managed expenditures and trained the young children, which gave her a respected position in the culture. The same virtues that were upheld in the home life became civic virtues as well. "Morality, character, obedience to parents and to the State, and whole-hearted service were emphasized" in the upbringing of Roman children (Cubberley, p. 59).

Roman education is most often considered in its relation to Greek education (Corbeill, 2001). Some of the greatest Roman orators, such as Cicero, Cato and Varro, spoke nostalgically about the banquet songs of old, those hymns of praise that sung the feats of heroic men. Those very songs were developed from the Greek banqueting tradition. And those songs, for the purpose of this paper, can be seen as a form of moral education. For it was precisely in the praises sung of heroes that the young came to be inculcated into what was expected of them in order to be considered heroic. The symposium and the banquets of the Mediterranean was the sight where “elite values and stories were propagated—(and) the site for communal gatherings becomes the sight for promoting collective values” (Corbeill, p. 264). Cato and his contemporaries complained bitterly when the songs that had previously been freely sung as socialization at such banquets came to be supplanted by zealous Greek poets who attached themselves to banquets and sold their services, treating the art of the poem like a “borrowed poetic craft” (p. 265). The risk seen from the perspective of this paper was that as paid Greeks composed the banquet songs, Greek values would seep into the stories of the Romans.

The first Roman schools appeared around 300BC, but were only attended by a few of the wealthiest citizens. In 272BC, after the capture of Tarentum, a Greek prisoner of war named Andronicus was passed into the hands of Livius, a wealthy landowner; this slave Andronicus was soon recognized for his intelligence and learning. He was then employed as tutor to Livius’ and other children. Livius eventually freed Andronicus and thus Andronicus became Rome’s first schoolmaster to follow Greek educational methods, including translating *The Odyssey* into Latin verse and writing Latin poetry himself (Dobson, 1932). It wasn’t until around 250BC that Rome, having expanded its empire through a series of battles to include a great deal of the Italian

peninsula, began to have greater need of education—partly for diplomatic ends, partly for business purposes, and partly for cultural reasons (Cubberley, 1902). Rather ironically, many of the teachers of these new schools in Rome were the very spoils of its wars: like Andronicus, they were Greek scholars, captured as slaves in the Greek colonies in south Italy, and soon employed as teachers and scribes. Not surprisingly, *The Odyssey* became the preferred textbook (supplanting the older Roman *Twelve Tablets* as the primary literary source), and numerous Greek works were translated into Latin. With continued Roman expansion came additional wealth. Cubberley suggests that such a rapid increase in wealth ultimately had an unfortunate affect on the Romans, as both public and private practice of religions and moral behavior drastically declined.

Wealth intoxicated the people; the avenues to wealth were greatly sought after. Thus such positions of public service that included army commanders, governors, or public orators who could sway the crowds and influence votes came to be in great demand. In the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC, after the fall of Greece, even more Greek scholars migrated to Rome. The first *Gymnasia*, schools focused primarily on studying Greek and practicing gymnastic exercises and modeled almost exclusively on the Greek prototype, were erected for the training of the Roman youth (Cubberley, 1902). These schools were not universally accepted and eventually adapted themselves to a model more in line with Roman values. Plutarch suggested that the Greek model encouraged effeminacy and sexual relations among young men (Corbeill, 2001). The Hellenized Roman camps that eventually developed trained Roman youths to be warriors and horsemen, as opposed to “elegant and lovely gymnasts” (Plutarch, in Corbeill). Young men trained for war in the fields outside the city, known as the *Campus Martius*. These future soldiers rode horses and

chariots, threw the javelin, ran foot races and practiced boxing. All along the ideal of what it means to be a good Roman citizen was implied in the training.

Another form of training that was prized among the elite Romans was the hunt. This recreation was introduced, not surprisingly by the Greeks as a form of both physical and moral training (Corbeill, 2001). What must be kept in mind, though, in all of these exercises is that these training fields and pre-military drills were not state run. They were the result of individual (elite) fathers entrusting their sons' education and training to other members of the elite. The moral intention and the intent to maintain the Roman virtues cannot be ignored.

It is interesting to note that the elementary schools were called *ludus*. *Ludus* is translated as both "playtime" and "school." Some have suggested the irony implied in this apparent contradiction (Dobson, 1932), and others have suggested that it refers to the intention of a play-like atmosphere or even the relatively unimportant, diversion-like nature of the school (Boyd, 1966). Yet Corbeill (2001) traced the double meaning to the original meaning of *ludus* as military training. The playtime aspect came from the 'play' battles that were staged as a part of the training. And so from its meaning as training in the military sense, it came to cover training of all sorts and eventually was used to connote schools for young children. It is interesting to note that both boys and girls could be found in the *ludus*. The gender of the child was not as important as the social position of the family at the elementary school level (Corbeill; Cubberley, 1902).

In these early schools, the children learned to read, write and count. Because they had no zero in their numeric system and they used a decimal system for counting and a duodecimal system for currency, counting and reckoning was complex and required a great deal of school

time (Cubberley, 1902). The tools expected of a student included an inkstand, pen, letters, a box of manuscripts, wax tablets (for incising) and a stylus. Their school equipment was carried in a circular pouch called a *caspa*, which was carried by a servant who followed the student to school (Dobson, 1932). Corporal punishment was commonplace, as was evidenced by a comment by Martial, who lived in the vicinity of a *ludus*, and complained that the “noise of shouts and floggings kept him awake in the early morning” (in Dobson). There were exceptions; Quintilian, a Roman orator to be considered shortly, deprecated this use of excess violence in schools. He, however, was probably in the minority.

After graduating from the *ludus*, the sons of the most prominent Romans would pass on to the *Grammaticus*, where they were introduced to the study of literature. The subjects that came to be studied were listed by Varro as the following, “grammar, dialectic and rhetoric, followed by geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, music, medicine and architecture” (Dobson, 1932). The first three listed there will be seen again in our consideration of education in the Middle Ages, for it is precisely those which came to be studied as the trivium (elementary course). The next four were also incorporated into the medieval schools as the quadrivium (advanced course).

In 149BC, the well respected Roman orator Cato died. His concerns were demonstrative of the moral implications acknowledged in the Roman system of education. His voice was among the loudest protests against the Hellenistic schools precisely because he considered them to pose dangerous innovations in Roman values. Plutarch, a Roman priest, philosopher and writer who lived until 125AD, recorded Cato’s concerns as such,

Cato, at the very outset, when this zeal for [Greek inspired] discussion came pouring into the city, was distressed, fearing lest the young men, by giving this direction to their ambition, should come to love a reputation based on mere words more than one achieved by martial deeds. And when the fame of the visiting philosophers rose yet higher in the city, and their first speeches before the Senate were interpreted, at his own instance and request...Cato determined, on some decent pretext or other, to rid and purge the city of them all. So he rose in the Senate and censured the magistrates for keeping in such long suspense an embassy composed of men who could easily secure anything they wished, so persuasive were they. "We ought," he said, "to make up our minds one way or another, and vote on what the embassy proposes, in order that these men may return to their schools and lecture to the sons of Greece, while the youth of Rome give ear to their laws and magistrates, as heretofore. (Parallel Lives, 22. 4-5)

Despite Cato's protests against the Greek tutors (and he protested despite the fact that he himself had a Greek tutor at home for his son), by 100BC the Greco-Roman school system had taken form (Cubberely, 1902). Plutarch, in his own day, still had a sense of ambivalence toward the Greeks, as can be seen in his remark cited in Corbeill (2001), "Teacher, rhetorician, geometer, painter, trainer, Augur, rope-dancer, doctor, magician—they do it all, those hungry little Greeks," (Juvenal, 3.76-8).

The Roman educational theorists of greatest import to our considerations were Quintilian (d. ca. 100AD), Cicero (b. 106AD), and Plutarch (46AD-120AD). It is obvious by their dates of birth that they were all educated in the Graeco-Roman tradition.

## *Quintilian*

Quintilian started his treatise on education, called the *Institutio Oratoria*, by citing Cato and stating that the aim of education is the creation of the perfect orator, “a good man, skilled in speaking” (*Institutio Oratoria*, 12, 1.1). Like Cicero, he held that most essential is that the orator be a good man, possessed of outstanding powers of speech and moral excellence. Quintilian’s writing about education was so forward thinking in several ways that it will later be compared to a much more modern writer’s “innovations” in this field of thought. For this section, though, what is of interest is Quintilian’s recognition that there is necessarily moral vector in the education of a good orator. When speaking of the type of man he intends to educate as an orator, he suggested,

...(L)et us fly in the face of nature and assume that a bad man has been discovered who is endowed with the highest eloquence. I shall nonetheless deny that he is an orator....It is no hack-advocate, no hireling pleader, yet no...*causidici*<sup>i</sup> that I am seeking to form, but rather a man who to extraordinary natural gifts has added a thorough mastery of all branches of knowledge, a man sent by heaven to be the blessing of mankind, one to whom all history can find no parallel, uniquely perfect in every detail and utterly noble alike in thought and speech. (*Institutio Oratoria* 12.1.23-6)

Quintilian also supported the exercise of copying out stories and axioms that convey moral lessons for his students’ practice in writing. The sayings of famous men and great poetry should be memorized and recited as well, in order that the student come to understand what it is that makes a good man (Dobson, 1932). This recitation of poetry and maxims played the role of

the ancient Roman tradition of banquet songs: it instilled the values and traditions of the Roman people.

Despite the intention of the philosophers of education, the content of education was not always driven by moral considerations. Numerous reflections on the misuse of rhetoric are found in the literature, as seen in the suggestion by Messalla, a character in one of Tacitus' dialogues, who complains that "education is deteriorating because pupils become addicted prematurely to the tricks of the rhetorical trade" (in Dobson, p. 120). This sounds very much like Socrates' complaints against the Sophists. It can also be said that there was a great irony at the heart of the Roman educational system. This may be evidenced by the repetition of the very same Sophistic tendencies in Rome that Socrates decried in Athens over two hundred years earlier. Corbeill (2001) points out the dilemma as such: the educators of Rome, those whose job it was to promote the social and moral values of the Roman people (i.e., the Roman elite), were Greeks, who were, due to their relegated social status as slaves or freedmen, politically impotent. Yet it was they who determined, to a certain extent, the way the Romans approached the world. "Mastery of things Greek," said Corbeill, "becomes part of being Roman" (for certain Romans). It should not come as a surprise that similar weaknesses were found in both school systems.

### *Cicero*

Cicero turned to Cato for his understanding of what defined a great orator; the moral suggestion is apparent in his definition: "A good man skilled in speaking." Thus the moral worth of the man himself was as important as the content and form of his speech (Dobson). In addition, the orator, the model of the well educated man, must be exposed to a wide education. This

education must begin early in the *puerilis institutio*, the youth or child oriented schooling, and continue in an advanced course that leads to a *politior humanitas*, the designation suggesting the student has become a humanistic member of the city-state. Thus the inception of the studies known today as the Humanities. At the start of his most famous manual about speaking and education, called *de Oratore*, he listed the topics taught in the schools as “philosophy, mathematics, music, literature, and rhetoric; and later in the same work geometry and astronomy are added to the mathematical studies” and there we have, directly from Cicero, a list of seven ‘arts’ he termed ‘liberal arts.’ These very same areas were carried on into the Middle Ages and beyond as the essential course of study for a well educated man (Dobson). The topic of interest to this paper, though, is the fundamental assumption that an orator be a good man; thus the moral dimension to the teaching.

### *Plutarch*

The final commentator whose writings on Roman education and its moral vector will be briefly considered is Plutarch. We have already seen some of his reflections regarding earlier thinkers. When he himself writes his essay on the education of children, called *De liberis educandis*, he started off with a few paragraphs about the importance of the parentage of the child. The discussion, though, was based on a moral precept and warned people of the social consequences of low birth due to “random cohabitation with...courtesans and concubines” (Plutarch, 1.1B). The very next issue he discussed was one that he suggested had been ignored in other treatises about education and child rearing; it was a caution to men intending to “approach their wives for sake of issue” to do so only when sober. This, he said, was imperative because

children born to women who conceived while their husbands were drunk were likely to produce “emotional and crack-brained youth” (Plutarch, 2:1A). After these initial warnings, based on moral principles, about the parentage of children, he began his document on education by addressing the necessary requirements for moral virtue through both natural endowments and education. The things necessary to moral excellence are the very same things that lead toward excellence in the sciences: “there must be a concurrence of three things in order to produce perfectly right action, and these are: nature, reason, and habit” (1.2B). Plutarch’s thoughts, like Cicero’s and Cato’s, demonstrate to us the stress that was placed on the moral vector of education in the ancient Greek and Roman world.

In later years, when the Roman schools increased in number and in size, there was not a uniform educational system (Corbeill, 2001), yet there was certainly agreement in the ideal education being one that created a moral citizen. Even when the father and mother were no longer the primary educators and the child’s duties to his gods, his home and his State were not the primary focus of his education, the student received a secular school education that retained its consciousness of the moral duties of the citizen (Dobson, 1932). Religious education was not a subject for the schools, but because religion was so closely bound up with all of the duties of each Roman citizen, it was simply taken for granted that the young Roman student knew his duties to his gods and his parents before he went to school; he never forgot them as he progressed through the educational system (Dobson).

Thus it is evident that in both Greek and Roman schooling, the good man, good morals, and a search for a good life remained a priority (Frost, 1989). It will be seen how these ideals were somewhat transformed in the next major movement in education that was centered on an

unexpected movement that spread quickly and effectively through much of the western world: Christianity.

*The Moral Vector in Christendom*

THOSE Holy Martyrs of God, who loved our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ, and God supreme and sovereign of all, more than themselves and their own lives, who were dragged forward to the conflict for the sake of religion, and rendered glorious by the martyrdom of confession, who preferred a horrible death to a temporary life, and were crowned with all the victories of virtue, and offered to the Most High and supreme God the glory of their wonderful victory, because they had their conversation in heaven, and walked with him who gave victory to their testimony, also offered up glory, and honour, and majesty to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost...Let us therefore, relate the manifest signs and glorious proofs of the divine doctrine, and commit to writing a commemoration not to be forgotten, setting also their marvelous virtues as a constant vision before our eyes. For I am struck with wonder at their all-enduring courage, at their confession under many forms, and at the wholesome alacrity of their souls, the elevation of their minds, the open profession of their faith, the clearness of their reason, the patience of their condition, and the truth of their religion: how they were not cast down in their minds, but their eyes looked upwards, and they neither trembled nor feared.

(Eusebius, 1861)

The education of the earliest Christians was carried out in homes. Converts to Christianity were adults, and these adults passed on their beliefs and values to their children. A

life within the Church demanded careful and prayerful adherence to Church teachings that were lived out, first and foremost, at home. This early Christian education was primarily devoted to the moral development of the child or adult (Frost & Bailey, 1973). There was a clear and obvious *telos* to human nature and thus to the process of education in the Christian vision of man and education. Man was created in the image of God. Insofar as he acted in a way that accorded with that image (i.e., as defined by Christian values, based on the revealed Word of God), he was good. This understanding of virtue and morality was Aristotelian in nature: it is tri-partite. MacIntyre defined what he called the general moral scheme of Western culture from the classical Greek days through the Enlightenment as such, “there is a fundamental contrast between man-as-he-happens-to-be and man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-essential-nature. Ethics is the science which enables man to understand how they (sic) make the transition from the former state to the latter...human nature in its untutored state is initially discrepant and discordant with the precepts of ethics and needs to be transformed by the instruction of practical reason and experience into human-nature-as-it-could-be-if-it-realized-its-telos. Each of the three elements of the scheme (unschooled human nature, nature as it could be, and ethics to mediate the two)...requires reference to the other two if its status and function are to be intelligible” (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 53). With this idea of an ethics based on a particular teleology and complete only with all three parts in place, we may proceed with the history of the moral nature of education in the west.

One of the early schools of the Christian church came about as the result of the preparation of individuals, called catechumens, for church membership. This school included an application process, a preliminary examination, an intricate initiatory ceremony, and two or more

years of instruction in the faith (given by individuals designated by the congregation). If this proceeded smoothly, the candidate applied for baptism and awaited approval from the congregation. Upon approval, a period of intensive instruction began, which included fasts, prayer, and additional character appraisal. Only after successfully completing all of the above steps was the catechumen finally initiated into the Church. It must be kept in mind that, once again, such an education was not limited to the wealthy men of the society. Both men and women were welcomed into these church schools, and at least initially, most of them were from the lower classes. As a result, most of them had little former education beyond the synagogue or Roman elementary schools (Frost & Bailey, 1973).

It was thus that from the second century through the ninth century, the spread of Christianity was partly the result of the development of these catechetical schools, in which instruction was specifically intended to train Christian leaders in the beliefs of the Christian faith (Frost, 1989). Education in Christendom followed clear, easily determined norms (Marty, 2000). Individuals who were well trained in the Christian ethic then served to teach others in the faith and they established small schools of their own. Education was not intended to serve the values of the state, but rather specifically intended to serve God. These schools became so widespread and popular that by 529 the Emperor Justinian closed all pagan schools and allowed only Christian schools to operate. The pagan schools were operating under the Roman model, in which the emperors had a great deal of control over education (culminating in the emperor Theodosius, who established a monopoly in education, determining who could teach, what they would earn and what opinions and ideas could be set forth). As a result of the schools' reliance

on state subsidy, Justinian's decree was easily carried out. He simply stopped payment of teachers' salaries and ceased subsidies on all pagan schools (Frost & Bailey, 1973).

Because the earliest Christians were living in a Roman culture, they were continually at risk of persecution. If the Christian faith was to survive, it would be necessary for Christians to learn to endure persecution, even to the point of martyrdom. As a result, manuals were written and studied to instruct people how to answer magistrates' questions when arrested, how to approach the torture of the whip or the rack, and how to meet death by fire or in the arena (Frost & Bailey, 1973). Frost and Bailey suggested that there were actually schools of martyrdom. The training in these schools focused not only on the physical duress of martyrdom, but upon the spiritual aspects as well. Tertullian, a Christian writer from the second and third centuries, wrote what is referred to as "To the Martyrs." In this treatise, he exhorted the Christians, "O blessed, consider yourself as having been transferred from prison [i.e., the world that blinds men's hearts] to what we may call a place of safety [i.e., prison]. Darkness is there, but you are light; fetters are there, but you are free before God. It breathes forth a foul smell, but you are an odor of sweetness. There the judge is expected at every moment, but you are going to pass sentence upon the judges themselves" (Tertullian, Chapter 2). The mind was trained to endure persecution gloriously, to approach it as an opportunity to live out the faith in such a way that the admiration of the Roman world would be won. The body was trained by ascetic practices to be hardened to physical duress and to focus on the soul. Such ascetic practices, common in numerous faiths throughout the centuries, not only prepared the believer for a serene, glorious death, but also led the believer farther from the norms of the surrounding community.

That such suffering and possible martyrdom for the faith was something to be expected at the very least, or even hoped for can be seen in numerous examples taken from the writings of additional early Christians. One of the first written accounts of the martyrdom of a Christian teacher is that of Polycarp, who, at 85 years old, was captured and taken to the Roman governor. He was brought into the midst of a Roman “circus” and threatened with wild beasts, to which he replied, “Why then, call them up” (*The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 11). At this point (due to his lack of fear in the face of lions) his sentence was converted to immolation. One of the reasons he was so reviled by the Romans was because he was considered a great Christian teacher and he refused to repent even in the face of death. Moments before his burning, it was said that

the whole audience, the heathens and the Jewish residents of Smyrna alike, broke into loud yells of ungovernable fury: “That teacher of Asia! That father-figure of the Christians! That destroyer of our gods... is teaching whole multitudes to abstain from sacrificing to them or worshipping them!” (*The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 12)

This protest by the Roman crowds and the entire scene of Polycarp’s death was recorded by his own congregation at Smyrna at the request of another Christian community. As such, this incident became included in the martyrologies that were used for the moral education of the early Christians.

Additional evidence of the proper demeanor for early Christians can be seen in this comment written by Ignatius of Antioch as he was headed for a visit with the Christian community established by Paul in the Roman city of Ephesus. Ignatius had been detained some forty miles away from Ephesus at Smyrna. The bishop of Ephesus traveled to visit with Ignatius in Smyrna and returned to his community in Ephesus with a letter from Ignatius. To express his

gratitude for their welcome into their community, Ignatius wrote, “For as soon as you heard that I was on my way from Syria, as a prisoner for the Name and the Hope we share (and trusting through your prayers to be granted an encounter with the wild beasts at Rome—a boon that will enable me to become a true disciple), you were all eagerness to visit me” (*Epistle to the Ephesians, 1*). It is obvious that Ignatius had embraced the possibility of facing the lions in the Roman arena in the name of his faith. He had learned the appropriate demeanor and the moral lessons of his predecessors.

As a result of the persecution, the perceived degeneracy and moral laxity of the Roman culture and the restrictive laws and taxes, many Christians withdrew from community life and fled to the mountains and deserts. This began as a movement of individuals, increased to small groups of men, and eventually developed into monasteries, groups of devout people choosing life away from corrupt city life. The primary purpose of monastic living was a routine devoted to simple, ascetic and communal life. Eventually a rule, or guidelines by which to live such a life, was developed by Benedict, the head of a famous monastery based on work and study. St. Benedict emphasized the belief that education was necessary to ensure the continuance of Christianity (Frost, 1989). Monasteries then became the primary sources of education in the middle ages. Two types of schools developed in the monasteries: one for those who intended to remain devoted to the monastery (*oblati*), and one for those who sought an education for non-ecclesiastical purposes (*externi*) (Butts, 1947). Yet in both cases, the learning was wholly controlled by and in the service of the church. The end of education was the salvation of the human soul, based entirely on the Christian concept of ethics and morals. These monastic schools dominated the educational landscape for about six centuries, from the sixth through the

eleventh century (Butts). In this Christian model of education, a clear set of morals was available, based on the prevailing theology, which stated that man's end (*telos*) was one that was revealed in Christ's life, death, and resurrection; man was created by God and for God and to come to know and serve God. Insofar as one lived one's life according to standards that support such teleology, one was good. Insofar as one missed the mark, veered from the end intended by his Creator, one sinned and was out of line with the expected ethical code of the culture. The Aristotelian model was extended and made sacred by the addition of the Christian concept of God: now the ethical expectations were not simply premises based upon human reason; they were divinely revealed. Their authority now gained a transcendental element.

Despite the heavily Christian influence, the pagan model of education had not simply disappeared. It was during the time between late antiquity and the Middle Ages that our contemporary understanding of the liberal arts was developed. One of the earlier Christians who claimed the Greco-Roman heritage of the liberal arts as his own was Cassiodorus who, around the mid sixth century, founded a monastery and wrote a manual of "divine readings" accompanied by a second book of "human readings." These latter readings were intended to aid the monks in their understanding of the divine readings, but they consisted of the seven *artes liberales*. These readings in the liberal arts included, of course, pagan literature. This tendency to accommodate pagan works to Christian purposes influenced much of the education in the Middle Ages and was an important issue frequently debated (Kimball, 1995). The fear, of course, was the corruption of the students' soul by the dangerous ideals of the pagans that were not entirely centered on the Christian concept of God.

In the early ninth century, Charlemagne, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, helped to create a monastic palace school that continued the church's ideal that education was fundamentally a matter of saving human souls through religious studies. It was vocational only in that it trained young men for service to the church and state. Even most popular education was pointed towards the church, yet not without exception (Frost, 1989). The Anglo-Saxons had schools that they considered suitable for anyone. These schools were generally located in monasteries of monks or nuns, or perhaps (later) in minsters (churches operated by more worldly priests), yet they were attended by both girls and boys who had no liturgical ambitions (Orne, 2006a). But from the perspective of a moral education, although some of the students went on from their schooling to operate in the secular world as warriors or merchants, the basis of their learning was most likely to start with scriptures, prayers, and school song (Orne). There was clearly a moral tone, and a hegemonous moral tone, to their education.

As education became more widespread, a Roman Church council from 853 decreed that schools for instruction should be provided by all parishes and that all cathedrals should provide instruction in the liberal arts. So by the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the monastic schools gave way to cathedral schools, in response to the growing populations of towns and cities. A Bishop during Charlemagne's reign ordered the priests in the towns and parishes under him to provide schools for children without charging any fee whatsoever. Another later council in 1179 decreed that every cathedral engage a master in the instruction of not only potential clerics (who were likely to come from the wealthier families in town), but also for boys whose parents could not afford to pay for an education. There are other similar ordinances stemming from this period that demonstrate the Church's intent to provide an education, based on sacred scripture and prayer,

for children of all social classes (Butts, 1947). The curriculum in the Church schools is an obvious development from the Greco-Roman model of education. The smaller parish or song schools might offer elementary education in reading, writing, and music. The monasteries, collegiate churches and cathedrals provided both song schools for elementary aged children and secondary and higher classes for instruction in the seven liberal arts as established in Rome, as well as medicine, law and (of course) theology (Butts). None of these schools would have denied that the primary end of education was the moral education of the child.

Although it can certainly be said that the Church with its parish church schools, song schools, monasteries, collegiate churches and cathedral schools dominated the educational scene in the Middle Ages, there were, at the same time, schools that were not directly tied to the Church. Butts (1947) suggested that though their intellectual level was probably relatively low during the seventh and eighth centuries, it is likely that secular schools still existed in Italy, as a continuation of schools that had been established by the later Roman emperors in the Roman towns. These schools, taught by private and public teachers from the towns, emphasized grammar, classical literature, rhetoric, law and medicine. They were not interested in religious instruction. The philosophy of these schools was that it was not religious feeling, but intellectual and practical advantage that should be sought in education. This sentiment, still rather rare at this time period, will be a refrain that becomes more common as the history of education progresses.

In addition, it must be recalled that the feudal system of societal and governmental management was strongly in place during most of the Middle Ages. This ordering of the world placed slightly distinct demands upon education. Although the moral education of the child was primary in import, it was seen in slightly distinct light among the castles of the great lords of the

medieval manors. The ideal to which the medieval high society aspired was chivalry. The curriculum that prepared young men for their chivalrous life was not the same as that of the clerics in the church schools and monasteries; it was practical and efficient (Frost & Bailey, 1973). Before his seventh birthday, the young noble would remain at home and learn basic reading, writing and mathematics from family members. At seven he would be sent to the castle of a higher nobility to serve as a page and to increase his intellectual and physical skills until his fourteenth birthday. At that point, as a squire, he would be expected to participate in tournaments and battles alongside his master. At twenty-one, with the requisite skills, he may become knighted. After this momentous occasion, he would be subject to the king, accepted into society as an adult, and obliged to serve his class and king as prescribed by tradition.

The morals and values of chivalry, though, called men to be “pure in body and soul, devoted to Church and lord even unto death, honorable and just toward their equals, skillful in the profession of arms and management of estates, and an example to all lesser men” (Frost & Bailey, p. 131). Thus, once again, it is obvious that the education passed on to children had, as a primary end, the moral development of the student. It must be remarked, though, that the nobles were often described as less than chivalrous. The actual morality of the many nobles has been called into question, as can be seen when Frost and Bailey described the nobles as tending toward snobbishness, cruelty, wildness, ruthlessness, selfishness, moral laxity and depravity. They apparently did not live up to their own standards.

The church based schools were not exempt from outside pressures, either. The influence of the Greco-Roman liberal arts was frequently felt but not always accepted in education. A ninth century monk, Ermenric of Ellwangen was quoted as saying, “Since even as dung spread up the

field enriches it to good harvest, so the filthy writings of the pagan poets are a mighty aid to divine eloquence” (in Kimball, 1995). The widespread use of the ancient texts, combined with additional and new translations of ancient texts (brought into Europe by Arabic and Jewish scholars) began to influence the approach to education. Sometime around the twelfth century a subtle transformation could be seen in many schools in Europe. The Church underwent reforms that demanded monasteries and minsters become stricter and more enclosed. Children were not as readily admitted to their premises, and clerics were not as available to teach. As a result, some schools were required to move out of churches and acquire separate identities (Orne, 2006).

In addition, the scholars of the late Middle Ages were exerting more rigor in their thinking. A purely faith based perspective and education was giving way to the more scholastic thinking that was re-discovered in the works of the ancients (especially Aristotle). This movement will be examined more carefully in the next section on the Early Renaissance. It must be seen, though, that the roots of this type of thinking were well established during the Middle Ages in the thoughts of some of the great educators of the day: Abelard in the twelfth century (known as a critic because he exalted the claims of reason, logic, and the intellect over the faith and mysticism of many of the Church fathers) and St. Thomas Aquinas in the next century (known as a reconciler due to his attempt to reconcile faith and reason) (Butts, 1955).

And so, by the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance, we see the start of a transformation away from the strictly religious outlook on the purpose of education and toward the addition of not only ancient pagan works into the curriculum, but also some secular works. In this slight shift we see the beginnings of humanism, in which the human person and his life here on earth take precedent over concern with a transcendental spiritual world. If it is possible that

humanism leads to a focus on the individual and an individualistic or relativistic sense of morality, it may be that one of the roots of today's confusion goes as far back as these early Renaissance thinkers. If this humanistic and individualistic position were taken to its extreme, and if a relativistic stance on morals developed as a result, one could not expect a coherent model of moral education to follow. There was, nevertheless, still a prominent concern with the morals and values of the society as a whole among these early humanists, and this concern was still deeply embedded in Christian values. This will continue into the Renaissance, to which we will now turn.

#### *Education in the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance*

It can be said without question that the earliest centers of Christian learning, the monasteries, were focused on the development of the soul in pursuit of a higher Truth: God. It can also probably be said that a direct outgrowth of the monasteries, the earliest universities, had a parallel focus: they shared with the monasteries the common goal of the pursuit of Truth, and they also remained concerned with religious precepts and ideas. The distinction that developed, though, was the universities' primary concern and vehicle through which they sought Truth became the development of the intellect through reason, as opposed to the development of the soul through faith.

The earliest universities were comprised of small societies of masters and students and found in large cities such as Paris and Bologna (Butts, 1955). There was little structure or organization as of yet. A student would associate himself with a particular master or doctor. If a dilemma arose, the student would bring the problem to his master, or if necessary, before the

bishop of the city. Thus there was a sense in which the students controlled the administrative processes. By the thirteenth century, scholars themselves organized into corporate bodies and formed “universitas,” still primarily run by the members of the scholars. Although this functioned well in some cases, the students became tyrannical in their control of the doctors.

According to Butts,

the student “universities” brought their teachers into entire subjection. They [the doctors] were forced to swear to obey the rectors [chosen from among the students] and to regulate their classes according to the instructions of the students’ officers. They could not be absent without leave for even a single day. They must begin and end their lectures punctually...Any infringement of the regulations was punished by a fine.... (Butts, p. 142)

Needless to say, the system was still overseen by the Church. The cities’ ecclesiastical authorities responded to the students’ domination by paying the salary of the doctors in order to usurp the control of the students’ guilds. Eventually boards were created to reform the structure of the universities. Most medieval universities were legally contracted to the Church and as such were subject to the local bishops, popes, or even monarchs and dukes at certain points and in some countries (Scott, 2006). The mission of the medieval university could be said to have been “the pursuit of divine truth and learning” (Scott, p. 4). In the year 1300, there were approximately fifteen to twenty such universities in Europe. By the year 1500, there were over seventy functioning universities, though many had opened and closed their doors along the way (Kimball, 1995).

### *Nominalism, Realism, Scholasticism, Humanism*

In terms of their studies, two primary ways of understanding truth came to prominence in the universities during the late Middle Ages. One was known as realism and the other nominalism (Butts, 1955; Boyd, 1966; Kimball, 1995). The realist thinkers were the traditionalists, whose thoughts may be traced back to a Platonic understanding of truth found in universals, in general conceptions of things. To the realist, the individual objects available to sensory experience are misleading; they are but appearances. The nominalist, on the other hand was seen as a critical philosopher. He believed, more like Aristotle, that it is precisely the individual manifestation of things that offers us knowledge and understanding. These two broad ways of understanding truth were the impulse behind a great number of the changes brought about in the system of education in the coming centuries.

Partly as a response to the nominalist-realist struggles, the great thinkers and teachers of the Church struggled to contain numerous contradictory and confusing ideas that had arisen over the centuries. A number of these Church scholars turned toward human reason as a tool in its search for truth. The resulting movement is known as Scholasticism. The Scholastics employed the intellectual resources that had been lost for centuries. Theirs was a method of

selecting and classifying general principles or statements taken from religious and classical authorities, comparing these authorities, commenting upon these statements in systematic order, examining the arguments on both sides, drawing conclusions, and refuting the arguments of the other side in detail by marshaling evidence in support of the conclusions accepted. (Butts, p. 142)

They ultimately sought to bring believers to faith and morality through their use of reason. The first generations of scholastics did not doubt that reason would bring them to the very same answers as faith: to the truth as revealed in Church doctrines and as taught by the Pope. They did not question this infallible authority. They began with the premise that reason is God-given; it could not lead man astray from God (Frost & Bailey, 1973).

The late medieval church scholar most known for his attempt to reconcile Christian doctrine with reason is St. Thomas Aquinas. St. Thomas combined reason and faith, but he started with the firm belief that truth is anchored in eternal realities. Truth is created by God; it is fixed, universal, permanent and objective. This truth is available to man through his reason; man's intellect was created to strive toward truth. And yet man in himself is imperfect and thus must be perfected through grace, which comes from God. Man can know practical things such as political, economic and daily realities by his intellect alone, but to grasp higher truths about theology and religion, man must have faith and grace from God (Butts, 1955).

Throughout much of the thirteenth century, Scholasticism reigned in university studies. The three great proponents of this approach to education through an appeal to logic and dialectic, Alexander of Hales, Albertus Magnus and St. Thomas Aquinas had all taught at the University of Paris and had left their mark on Catholic doctrine and theology. Theology, at that time, was considered the keystone of university study and this particular Dominican faculty, in Paris, had become arbiters of truth. They were called upon to determine the outcome of matters of dogma, heresy and disputes for not only local issues and struggles, but also even the Pope from time to time (Butts, 1955). While these premises were widely accepted and provided a response of sort

to the nominalist-realist debate, it was not long before this concept of human understanding was attacked as well.

One response against Scholasticism and its course of studies that focused mostly on the *trivium*, namely on logic, was led by Roger Bacon. The faculty of the university at Oxford, headed by Roger Bacon, held that mathematics, part of the studies associated with the *quadrivium*, was the paradigmatic study in one's search for truth (Kimball, 1995). In addition to a place of prominence for mathematics, he upheld a thorough study of science, literature and languages as necessary to one's education. He approached all of these in the spirit of "experimental inquiry" (Butts, 1955). This distinction in the methodology to ascertain the truth had repercussions in the moral realm, for it signaled a shift in the understanding not only of how one arrived at truth, but also of how humans were defined.

The question relevant to this consideration of the history of education, of course, is how this debate, the resulting Scholasticism and the eventual responses to Scholasticism affected the moral vector in education. As the dominating influence of the Church lessened in the period leading up to the Renaissance, a greater interest in the interests of the individual and in secular life could be found. This interest was sparked as a response to the Scholastics' stress on logic and dialectic. For although Scholasticism as practiced by Aquinas intended to fully synthesize the experiences of both sense and intellect within the demands of the faith, the scholastic synthesis left man without the possibility of absolute knowledge (Bowen, 1975). For Aquinas and the Scholastics, it is part of man's plight that he will never "rest content in a completely explicated world," and thus he must maintain a "continually alert consciousness of sustained intellectual activity" to best use his faculties and to avoid moral degeneracy (Bowen, p. 152).

The primarily Dominican Scholastics were criticized by the Franciscans, who held that the Thomists' system of knowledge, if only accessible through faith, grace and revelation (in accord with reason) does not allow for direct human knowledge of God. Although there were several intervening strains of thought about these matters (which perhaps have yet to be resolved), ultimately the great debates of the thirteenth century resulted in an intellectual spirit and education that was of a distinct character and was "marked by a vitality, liveliness and humanity that was in contrast to that of the scholastic epoch" (Bowen, p. 175). A renewed interest in the individual human, mentioned briefly above, was the root of what is often considered the dominant strain of thought in the Renaissance: humanism.

#### *The Education of Young Children in the Renaissance*

Yet despite all the intellectual debates and machinations occurring in higher education, much of the education of young children remained unchanged. Orme (1999) examined the literature read or experienced (through oral tellings) by children from the late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance in the British Isles. He began with the earliest genre of oral telling, the lullaby. He found no authentic lullabies from medieval England, but he did discover "religious lyrics which copy their form" (p. 219). The songwriters of the fourteenth century composed lyrics about the Virgin Mary holding and singing to the Baby Jesus. They expressed through song the Holy Family's sense of pathos in their mutual and inevitable suffering. Religious topics were not the only subjects in children's songs, and although simple nonsense words and phrases could be found in children's songs in the late Middle Ages, just as they are found today, other

topics included deeds of famous people or advice about life (Orme). These types of lyrics also suggest a particular way of approaching the world and teach the child a moral ethos.

### *Minimal Effect on Lower Education*

Orme(1999) found that the literature available to children in the British Isles up to about 1300 usually consisted of works of wisdom and moralizing, medieval fables and mythology. After 1300 the works of wisdom and moralizing became even more prominent and the other genres less popular. Unlike the children in southern Europe, where Latin was more likely to be heard spoken, and unlike the children from earlier times in Britain (until around 400 AD) when Latin was still heard that far north, the children of the British Isles had a difficult learning Latin as a second language. Thus from the early seventh century on, the Latin alphabet was learned by children, quite likely at home by the mother or father, and then this Latin alphabet was used to write in English, allowing the child more access to reading. The reality that many women of high social status were literate at least at a basic level is suggested by a list of women's occupations from around 1300 that includes the following statement, "woman teacheth child on book" (Orme, p. 223) and several instances of women commissioning textbooks to teach their children. The image in art that was most often used to represent a mother teaching her child to read should not surprise us:

In the later Middle Ages, it was common to represent the Virgin Mary in art as a girl being taught to read by her mother St. Anne. There was, perhaps, symbolism here; Mary learns to read because she will bear the Word of God. Equally, the scene may have been

meant realistically. The Holy Family tended to be understood and portrayed as a wealthy family of the later Middle Ages, and it would have been natural to credit Mary with the education of a well-born girl of that period. (Orme, p. 223)

The more secular genres became widespread, as books became more available, the more children were exposed to them and the more certain sectors of the society became concerned that the moral nature of education was being undermined by allowing children to read such works. The attacks made on narrative literature and ballads by Protestant writers of the 1500's sound eerily similar to the cries of people today who are concerned about the influence of the media on children. This can be seen when Tyndale says that the reading of "Robyn Hode and Bevis of Hampton, Hercules, Hector and Rtoylus, with a thousande histories and fables of love and wantones, and of ribaudry, as filthy as herte can thinke, (will) corrupte the myndes of youth with-all," and Coverdale, some years later, agrees, "As for the common sort of ballads, which are now used in this world...what wicked fruits they bring. Corrupt they not the manners of young persons?" (in Orme, 1999).

Even in learning the alphabet, there was a moral and religious vector. Before reciting the alphabet, the earliest surviving primers from the British Isles (from the late fourteenth century) show that children were to make the sign of the cross and say 'Christ's cross me speed' and then to end the recitation with an 'Amen' (Orme). After learning the alphabet, included in the primers were numerous and only slightly variable prayers, the offices or hours of the Virgin Mary and short meditative or expository tracts. When it appeared in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries that secular tales (such as *chansons de geste*) were working their way into the children's palate of reading, reformist authors felt it necessary to remind parents that their job is

to teach children the typical religious fare (the Paternoster, Creed and Ten Commandments). Though several such texts are available, one particularly critical author suggested the appropriate prayers and adds with obvious disapproval, “bot som men settep here children to lerne iestes of batailles and of cronycles and nouelleryes of songes pat sterep hem to iolyte and harlatrye” (in Orme, 1999). Thus, even exposure to battles and other chronicles was considered as a possible temptation toward (idolatry?) and harlotry!

And yet careful consideration of these tales from other genres shows that they, too, have a moral message. Though it might be a story about a child abandoned by his parents or a tale of young romance, the stories usually showed virtues and deeds that embodied the some aspect of the morality of the time. There was no separation of education as such from moral education. To be educated in The Middle Ages meant, as it did in the Ancient Hebrew, Greek, and Roman epoch, to be educated in the existing hegemony. And in those ages, perhaps more than other times, there was a clearly defined hegemony: Christianity. Christian values were regarded as the scales upon which everything else was weighed. Even most of the secular schools could not avoid the teaching of prayer, scriptures and biblical readings.

### *The Enlightenment and the Age of Revolution*

Since the Renaissance...the very conception of science has been that of a branch of study whose object is placed beyond good and evil, especially beyond good; viewed without any relation to either good or evil, but especially without any relation to good. Science only studies the facts as such, and the mathematicians themselves regard mathematical relations simply as facts of the mind. Facts, force, matter, isolated, considered singly;

without reference to anything else—there is nothing there the human mind can love.

(Weil, *The Need For Roots*, p. 251)

### *Secularism and Empiricism*

Beginning as early as the thirteenth century and more obviously in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the changes that had been quietly simmering in European thought boiled over with widespread results (Sherrard, 1987). Knowledge came to be widely understood as something that could only be garnered through the senses; it was objectified and abstracted by the principles of logic. As a result of this, the entire tradition of Christian education, whose purpose was the transfiguration of man through his participation in the divine, something that is unintelligible to the senses, but known more immediately in personal conviction (mediated by the church), was questioned (Sherrard). This resulted in a change in the aim and values held in education. The move away from church dominated schools resulted in cities and private groups establishing schools to train students in such things as “piety, knowledge, and eloquence” (Frost, 1989). As is suggested by the inclusion of piety, morals based on religious teachings were not entirely absent from the curriculum, but such schools also taught values that clearly had their basis in secular culture, as instruction was carried out in the vernacular language in order to serve the children of the burgher class. These new, town-controlled schools were created specifically in order to educate children for business and commercial ventures. In one representative incident that took place in Brussels in 1320, it was brought to the attention of Church officials that there were numerous private teachers who were tutoring children in reading and writing without the sanction of the Church. When the Church suggested they cease their activities, the duke of

Brabant, John III, created his own educational legacy by opening five new elementary schools for boys and four for girls in Brussels. These schools would compete with the one school for boys and one for girls that the Church had previously established (Frost). Similar occurrences, in which town schools were created by secular authorities, probably took place in many other European cities of the time.

And yet it is naïve to think that there was not still a great and strong tradition of Christian centered values in the schools that were created outside the Church's jurisdiction. Because at this time and place in history, it is safe to assume that Christianity was still embedded in the culture of the people. Most educators, even if they were working in a secular school, were so rooted in Christian beliefs and values that they could not consider teaching without such values as part of their curriculum. Frost (1973) devoted a generous section in his history of education to Vittorino Rambaldini, whom he referred to as the man with "the most famous teaching careers in all the Renaissance" (p. 178). In 1428, Vittorino was independently hired by the prince of Mantua to start a school to educate the prince's children. Vittorino was given a palace near the prince's residence and allowed to furnish it according to the needs for his academy. He removed the palace's luxurious royal decorations and created the look of a knightly institution. He then invited as many poor and underprivileged boys to attend as there were aristocratic boys. His educational philosophy included the beliefs that

(C)hildren learn best in pleasant surroundings where they can play while they are learning....Health was basic to efficient learning. The school must be a community in which children live and learn together in close friendship with their teachers....School should be a place where students learn discipline. The child does not know right from

wrong, the accepted from the unaccepted...It is in school that he must learn these things, and it is the teacher's duty to develop discipline...Love, respect, and mutual appreciation are the keys to discipline....Children are different and they must be allowed to develop as their own natures intend.... (And finally), the first goal of all education is character.

Vittorino saw each pupil in the setting of eternity and strove to build within him goodness and righteousness, the criteria he used to judge all else.... (Frost, p. 179)

For although Vittorino was hired by a prince, he was above all an ardent Christian. He believed that only Christian values could underpin a laudable education and structured his students' education in accord with those values.

### *A Moment of Reflection*

It is worthwhile to pause here, where we see an educator who is called a Humanist (Frost, 1973; Butts 1955) from the early 15<sup>th</sup> century, whose educational ideals sound modern until he starts talking in terms of seeing his students "in the setting of eternity." During his time, even among the Humanists, there was a clear stress on moral training, based upon transcendent Christian ideals (a concept of man with a clear *telos* as revealed by God), as the primary end of an education. Despite the Humanists' more worldly concerns, such as community building, children's health and often commercial interests that were being added to the educational ideal, an independent headmaster could still speak of the primary end of his school as his students' spiritual and moral development. We will continue our perusal of the history of education as we search for the roots of the evident shift from such a perspective to where we find ourselves today: in the moral muddle described earlier in this study. Teachers are no longer certain of how

to express themselves as moral agents in the classroom. The source of this shift, a move away from a concept of man with a clearly defined and transcendental *telos*, should become more evident in the upcoming centuries.

It is necessary to posit some theory as to the causes of today's confusion in order to discuss possible responses to the problem. And it is about this time in history that the tiniest roots of the dilemma that we are presently facing were taking hold. For it is at this time that people started turning more toward things of this world in order to find meaning in their lives. This makes perfectly good sense, for there were great strides being made in our scientific understanding of things of this world. It is unnecessary to discuss advancements of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment; it is assumed that we are all familiar with it. But we must keep in mind the inevitable results of a turn toward things of the material world: when meaning is sought in the things of this life, then the things of the next life become obsolete. If you can find ultimate significance in science and empiricism and even social causes (though those are often intimately related to things of the next world), then it becomes easy to reject the existence of another world.

For the purpose of this paper, then, it will be argued that the first major bifurcation in thinking (that at this point was still just a slight fissure) that eventually led towards an unclear role for teachers as moral agents in our United States of America came when people, starting as early as the Renaissance, prioritized a way of finding meaning in their lives that focused on things of this world over the way of thinking that held sway for the previous 1500 years that suggested that the things of this world are passing and offer little in terms of ultimate human fulfillment. To express it in its most basic form, then, today's lack of clarity stems from the

distinction between the view that fulfillment can be found in this world (developed over the years in humanism, secularism, empiricism and similar ideologies) and the view that fulfillment can only be fully attained in things related to a transcendent or spiritual world (seen primarily in a variety of religions). How this plays itself out will be seen more in the later sections of this chapter, when I confront the situation of 20<sup>th</sup> Century American educators.

### *Back to the Humanists*

Initially most Humanists, as can be seen by Vittorino, were still faithful members of churches and still very much under the sway of Christian values and morals. They still saw the human person as a spiritual being for whose soul they, as teachers, were partly responsible. Yet, over the next several centuries, as the Humanists became more focused on things of this world and more determined to throw off the other-worldly yoke of Church oppression, the Christian way of thinking slowly lost its hegemony. If humans are seen as merely of this world, and not with a clear *telos* in relation to God, then a whole new set of values must be found—a whole new morality must be created. This was certainly being pondered and discussed over the next several centuries (perhaps articulated most loudly by Nietzsche in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century), but its results in terms of the moral education of students in the United States were not obvious until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century. As we look, later in this study, more closely at the development of the schools in the US, we will get a sense of how these early roots of humanism and the ensuing Enlightenment mentality actually affected the development of today's morals in American education.

The most obvious distinction, even from very early on, between the Church run schools and the secular institutions is related to the end of education: is there an end centered on a source

of ultimate Truth, as the Platonists and the Christian Church that created and ran the schools of Europe for so many centuries would have us believe, or is there an empirical and human end, as the Aristotelians and Humanists who were starting a new generation of schools would suggest? This differing view of the ends of an education will surely influence the curriculum and course of studies. And yet, as suggested above, up to this point in our history of education, these distinct ends (which I will call transcendent or worldly) do not yet make a large difference. As was recently noted, most of the teachers, even those in the schools who celebrated the human and secular ends of an education, were still rooted themselves in the hegemony of Christian thoughts and morals that prevailed in Europe well into and beyond the Renaissance. As this hegemony broke down over the next several centuries, the division between the educational goals of the Church run schools and those of the secular schools became more evident. As noted earlier, this will eventually affect the schools on the other side of the Atlantic as well.

### *Evidence of Shifting Sands*

#### *The Emile of Jean Jacques Rousseau*

In the previous section, general agreement about the moral nature of education in the ancient through seventeenth century European cultures was evident. A subtle shift had taken place from a teleological, traditional Church-based understanding of man's place in the universe towards a more humanistic, empirical (but nevertheless God-centered) view of humanity. Comenius, well known for his writings on education in the seventeenth century, is representative of the shift in thought expressed at the time. He held that "true knowledge and edification came from God through the right reading of the three 'books' of His wisdom. These were the physical

world around us, the power of human reasoning within us, and the divine revelation to be found in the Holy Scriptures” (Greengrass, 1993). Thus while one of the sources of human wisdom is God centered, the other two are empirical and human centered. It is interesting to note that Comenius’ greatest influence was Calvin, who, like Luther, rejected the more authoritarian and communal tradition and teaching of the Catholic Church in favor of a more individualistic relationship to Scripture and God Himself. This is an additional tension that affected the development of the moral mission of teachers: does one stress the value of the individual, or that of the community? It is sometimes seen as the distinction between a Protestant outlook and a Catholic perspective. MacIntyre (1984) suggested that in the ancient Greek and early Christian tradition, “man is to fill a set of roles each of which has its own point and purpose: member of a family, citizen, soldier, philosopher, servant of God. It is only when man is thought of as an individual prior to and apart from all roles that ‘man’ ceases to be a functional concept” (p. 59). It is time to watch the development of precisely this: the growth of the idea of man as precisely an individual above and beyond any of his social relations. This theme, born in Europe as part of the Enlightenment, was reiterated in the colonies that were forming across the seas, in the New World.

This next section intends to continue our narrative with a consideration of how the European struggles and conflicts affected the schools in the newly forming American colonies. It is an exploration of the values that drove the early American educational institutions. Ultimately it will show how the very forces that started affecting changes in how humans saw themselves as early as the Renaissance, i.e., humanism, empiricism, and individualism began to take effect in more significant ways, ways that may have changed the moral direction of students in schools.

## *The Emile*

But before we begin to look too closely at the schools in the new world, we must consider a European legacy that influenced our fledgling American schools. This French bequest is a treatise that was published in 1762 by a man who was neither very successful as a tutor nor as a father. Rousseau, in his lifetime, was known as a controversial character. In the preface of a work on the writings of Rousseau, Boyd (1966), who was also a well known editor and translator of the *Emile*, tells us that people who knew Rousseau were likely to either adore him or despise him, “When in the flesh,” writes Boyd, “(Rousseau) excited the most violent feelings of love or of hate in all who came in contact with him.” He then goes on to admit that even today, Rousseau’s writings can galvanize his audience, for “even after a century and a half he tempts the reader of his works to the same partisanship in milder forms” (Boyd, p. v). Whether one agrees with all of Rousseau’s ideas or not, it is important to consider them here, for he is known to have greatly influenced the European perspective, which then carried over to our American understanding, of not only the educational process, but also of the way in which children and students should be treated (Heater, 2003; Boyd, 1966; Cubberley, 1902). The degree to which he was influenced by the stress on the individual over the community will be evident, as will the fact that one of his primary concerns was the moral development of the child.

Rousseau set out to write his reflections and recommendations about education for some of his patronesses. Boyd (1963) suggested that it was originally for their “edification and entertainment” (p. 169). Rousseau himself was not known as a successful tutor; he had little teaching experience and was considered a failure in the positions he had attempted. There is some irony, then, that his thoughts about education came to have such a lasting impact on the

history of education. In his writing, in order to keep his educational thoughts interesting and to avoid speaking of merely abstract concepts, he created a student and named him Emile. Emile, according to Rousseau, was an average student. He was of ordinary ability, from a temperate climate; he was rich and healthy. He was also a boy. Later in the treatise *Sophie*, Emile's female counterpart, is introduced with an educational vision more appropriate for a girl.

Some of the distinctions of Rousseau's thoughts were that he started his discussion about education in the infancy of the child and based his educational recommendations upon his understanding of the developing psychology of the young mind. His very first words of *The Emile* proclaim the position upon which he based his philosophy of education. He stated that humans are born good; it is in the hands of society that human nature degenerates. As a result of this position, it is incumbent upon the tutor to protect the young child from the influences of society for the early years; they should remain uncorrupted by imposed habits for as long as possible. During these years, the child's own inclinations, those sensations derived from the objects around him, must be that which drives the child. Everything, says Rousseau, "ought to be in conformity with (those) original inclinations" (Rousseau, p. 13). It is at this point that Rousseau considers the ends of education. He suggests that the educator must choose: is it the tutor's duty to educate the man for himself or for society? The two ends are incommensurate. He ends that reflection some two pages later with the statement that "when he leaves my hands... (f)irst and foremost, he will be a man" (p. 15).

And so we have seen that the motivations behind Rousseau's education were an attempt to protect the child from societally imposed bad habits, to respond to the child's natural inclinations, and to educate the child to become a man as opposed to a citizen. If we were to step

back for a moment and consider this in terms of the debate brewing in the colonies just a few years earlier, Rousseau would have appealed to the libertarians and separatists. The authoritarians and collectivists would have disagreed with such suggestions and with the resulting education.

But if one were to educate a child according to Rousseau's ideals, one must begin in infancy, at which point one must allow the child as much physical freedom as he desires. The infant, as soon as he has a will of his own, should be allowed to follow the dictates of his will. He will experience the consequences of his bad choices and learn thus. The tutor must allow the infant to feel resistance to his will only in the objects in his environment, not as a result of an opposing human will. The tutor must also discern and be certain to only offer assistance, not service, to the infant for fear the child will perceive himself as weak. From the child's sense of weakness springs feelings of dependence, which then lead to a recognition of the ideas of mastery and domination. The danger here: the child will enter the moral world too early and without enough rationality to fully comprehend it.

The next chapter of Rousseau's work treats the ages he calls the boyhood of the child. This lasts until the child is around 12 years old. It is at this age that the child becomes conscious of himself as a self, "He becomes one and the same person, capable of happiness or sorrow. From this point on it is essential to regard him as a moral being" (Rousseau, p. 31). The tutor's duty, at this point, is to love childhood and be humane to the child. Play games or at least enjoy the games the child plays; view the child as a child, not as a miniature man. These may be some of the most profound insights that Rousseau offered the world about education. They are certainly some of those which were later adapted into the educational philosophies of other

important thinkers, such as Froebel and Pestalozzi. It is at this stage that the law of necessity and negative morality become the standard for the tutor.

The law of necessity suggests that the child should get nothing but what he needs, and that he should act from necessity, not obedience. In order to accomplish this, the child should not be given any orders of any kind. The words “duty,” “obedience,” “obligation,” “force,” “weakness” and other similar words should not be used. Children should not be reasoned with (they are not capable of reasonable thought). The child should be allowed to feel the yoke of necessity, not to experience human (i.e., the tutor’s) caprice. Because humans are born good, because it is an “incontestable principle” that the first impulses of human nature are right, the child should be encouraged to do nothing except what nature demands of him. So the moral lesson is a negative one: do not teach virtue or vice, simply preserve the child’s heart from vice and his mind from error. The teacher should act reasonably, but not reason with the child.

Another of Rousseau’s fundamental beliefs about human nature is stated here, and that is his postulate that the only passion natural to man is self-love and self-esteem. Because it is strictly centered in the self, it is good and useful. If self love and self esteem are used inappropriately in society, they are bad. But until a child can reason, he cannot be expected to distinguish such things and so he should not be expected to behave in a particular way in society. He should be expected only to act on the basis of his nature (driven by self love and self esteem) and he will do “nothing but what is right,” (Rousseau, p. 40).

Rousseau recognized the difficulty of an actual education such as he described and he admitted that while it was unlikely that a child could be brought up with so little contact with society and without instilling in him any habits or any sense of the moral expectations based on

human relationships. He suggested, though, that teachers postpone such realities for as long as possible. And here, once again, he reminds the readers of his basic philosophy before suggesting the appropriate way to introduce the boy into the moral world.

“Our first duties,” he said, “are to ourselves,” and he reiterates, “Self is the centre of the primitive sentiments....Hence the first sentiment of justice does not come to us from what we owe others, but from what others owe us,” (Rousseau, p. 44). And based on that principle, he suggested that children’s morality should start off with not such concepts as liberty, but rather with property. Once a child possesses something of his own, he will understand the meaning of expecting others to respect it as his, and thus will come to understand the need to respect others’ property. The child has entered the moral world through experiential learning. He is now susceptible to vice. Punishment, though, should still be none other than the natural consequences of a bad deed. Rousseau ends this section, the first discussing the child as a moral entity, with a saying that may well sum up the 200 pages of this entire project, “Be virtuous and good yourselves (teachers), and the examples you set will impress themselves on your pupils’ memories, and in due season will enter their hearts” (p. 46).

The boy at this age has learned from nature, not from men. He is unaware of the happenings in the world about him, but he knows how to take care of himself. He has developed judgment and foresight about things that may affect him. It is time to train his senses. Once again, the self is the primary focus of this training. Self-preservation is the aim of his first studies in the senses. Each of the five senses and ways in which they can be developed is then discussed. It is interesting to note that up to age 12, the child should be encouraged to neither read nor write, since such activities are not of inherent interest to the young child.

During the next state, still referred to as childhood but with adolescence approaching, the powers of the child take a new direction. It is now that the universe outside the child himself is open to exploration. Because the senses have been developed in the previous stage, they are now to be used to explore the world at large. These empirical scientific studies are still to be based upon the child's interests and they are to be clear and straightforward. Poetic language, metaphor, "rhapsodies and figures of speech" are still to be avoided; their time will come (Rousseau, p. 74). The instruments necessary to explore the world should be made by the tutor and not attempt to resemble the sterile, overly sophisticated scientific apparatus. The lessons to be learned, then, will be clear and simple, though they be slow and laborious. The purpose for the clumsy instruments is to keep the child physically active and engaged with the instruments, not merely speculatively reading and interpreting sophisticated equipment.

As Boyd (1956) states in the epilogue, from this point on there is not a great deal of controversial material in his treatment of education of Emile. He continues his course of tailoring the study to the development of the child and furthers his purpose of creating the man as opposed to the citizen. In Book Five Rousseau introduces a counterpart to Emile, Sophie. Sophie is necessary because Emile is now a man and so deserves a mate, the mate for whom the tutor has recently been preparing Emile. The rest of the story is taken up discussing the institutions of marriage, religion, and the proper role and education of women as opposed to men. Because their roles are different and different things are expected of them, their education should be distinct. As Boyd points out, Rousseau shows quite a bit of his eighteenth century prejudices here and yet he may also be quite a bit ahead of his time. Considering some of the recent research about gender differences in learning styles, it is obviously a topic that deserves consideration.

Ironically, though, it may well be that the educational system, as it has developed, is more suited to the female temperament than the male.

It is interesting to note that many of the educational ideals that Rousseau addressed were considered *avant garde* in his time, as it was when similar suggestions to take the particular needs and interests of the child into consideration were made by the American philosopher and educator John Dewey. But as we have seen, earlier educators, as far back as Quintilian (the ancient Roman whose writings inspired the humanistic Renaissance educators) and Vittolino were also aware of the need to consider the individual needs of the child. And all three: Rousseau, Quintilian and Vittorino, were highly concerned with the moral development of the child. An important difference, though, is that both Quintilian and Vittolino believed that the child's morals must still be based on a good higher than the child himself. For Quintilian this good would be the good of the city-state, and for Vittolino the good of the child's soul according to a transcendent standard. Rousseau's idea of the good is much more centered in the individual. This distinction is important to keep in mind because it is more evidence of the humanist influence on the educational process and on the students' moral development. We will soon come to see that Rousseau's educational humanist values, values that are centered on the individual human and his immediate needs in this world, are reflected in some of the greatest conflicts in the newly forming American colonies, conflicts that were also part of the Protestant-Catholic debate raging in Europe: the individual vs. the collective. The struggle between the primacy of the rights of the individual and the interests of the collective is one of the forces of contention in the American colonies, which, by the time *Emile* was published, was just over a decade from becoming the United States of America.

Both the changing nature and the differing perspectives of the ethics and morals that drove the educational system should be recalled before continuing our study with an exploration of American schools. For although the root of the ethics shared may be said to have shifted from state centered to religious to scientific, economic or even social in recent history, there were nevertheless very strong underlying norms by which the educational process was driven. It is worth repeating here that the entire educational ordeal is one driven by questions of morality, questions that up until this time were answered in a similar fashion by most cultures.

### *Colonial America*

At this point it makes sense to shift our focus from demonstrating the importance given to schools as places to develop the students' morals in Europe (that by eighteenth century had a formal history of well over 2000 years, going back to the ancient Greek teachers), to the schools just being born in the colonies of the New World. Because many immigrants left Europe to escape the complicated political, economic and religious factors of the Reformation, they arrived on our shores with preconceived ideologies, based upon their European experience. As a result, some consider the founding of seventeenth century America as an overseas extension of the Reformation (Butts, 1955; Butts & Cremin, 1953; Frost & Bailey, 1973). It should not be surprising that the fledgling colonies were confronted with some of the same problems that led to decades of war and destruction in Europe. And these religious, political and economic considerations that affected both Europe and the fledgling colonies surely affected the founding of our schools.

### *Early Theocracy*

Despite the fact that many had come to colonial America seeking religious freedom, the New England political institutions initially served as a theocracy, based on Calvinistic principles brought over from Europe with the settlers (Butts, 1955; Butts & Cremin, 1953; Frost & Bailey, 1973). The state supported and protected the Church. An example of this is the “True Blue Laws of Connecticut” from 1672. Under these laws, the state could award the death penalty to those deemed guilty of blasphemy, worshiping false gods, witchcraft, and even insubordination to parents. And the education that such a state supported was Puritan: primarily concerned with religion and morals. By 1689 the Act of Toleration was promulgated by William and Mary, in order to weaken the theocracy (by allowing all property owners to vote, not just those who belonged to a specific Church) and to encourage religious freedom.

While the different geographic locations in the colonies had different religious, economic and political experiences, several of them followed the church-state pattern established in Europe and New England (Butts, 1955). The state often supported a single preferred religion (levying taxes, granting public lands to the church, supporting its ministers, erecting and maintaining the church buildings) and the state enforced laws requiring its residents attend and support one (and only one) particular church. This was seen Connecticut, Massachusetts (Puritans), parts of New York (Church of England), Virginia and somewhat less in North and South Carolina (Church of England). Maryland was originally settled by Catholics (with a law of toleration passed as early as 1647), but after the turn of the century the Church of England made its way into Maryland and established itself by law (Butts). In addition, the Spanish Catholics wielded a great deal of influence in the American Southwest in both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

And despite the obvious control that the churches had as a result of their state support, there were other forces in the colonies that counteracted the state/church element. A strong sense of libertarian individualism also pervaded the inhabitants of the New World. This could be heard in the strident voices of the separatists, who insisted on religious, political and economic freedoms. And so these twain elements: the authoritarianism and collectivism of the Puritan authorities and the libertarian individualism of the separatists and dissidents found themselves at odds. It may be that these two forces, with certain distinctions, are the colonial American counterpart to the European church-humanist debate discussed above. There is no doubt that the conflict that developed as a result of their distinct perspectives defined and continues to define two of the primary forces in the development of many American institutions, including its schools (Butts, 1955).

### *Theocratic Schools*

Despite the different perspectives on the value of religious freedom, and despite religious differences among the colonies, there was a shared assumption among the early settlers that prevailed even into later centuries: religious training is valuable in order to save people from their sinful natures, and to make people more godly. This is most clearly articulated in the now famous “Old Deluder Act” of 1647, in which it is stated that because “one chief project of the old Deluder, Satan” is to “keep men from a knowledge of the Scriptures,” it is therefore necessary to require every township in Massachusetts (once God has blessed it with 50 households) to “appoint one within their town to teach all such children as shall resort to him to

read and write” (Bowen, 1981, p. 268). The reading material of primary import was the Holy Bible, and it was up to either the parents of the children or the townsfolk to pay for the teacher.

The predominant model of early schools among the colonies was based on the Latin grammar school, intended to prepare men to enter the clerical life. The curriculum of these schools was based largely on the predominant faith, called a generalized Protestantism by Marty (2000). The earliest reading curriculum of 17<sup>th</sup> century colonial schools consisted of hornbooks on which were pasted an alphabet, underneath which was printed the Lord’s Prayer. The next step of the reading curriculum was the Calvinist catechism and Cotton’s *Spiritual Milk for Babes Drawn out of the Breasts of Both Testaments* (Bowen, 1981). Some years later, primers with woodcut illustrations and rhyming couplets alongside the alphabet letters were widely used. Primers were originally books of private prayers; that the books used for curriculum were so called is telling in itself. It is interesting that Cotton’s Puritan text was abridged slightly by the Anglican community to better reflect their sectarian beliefs.

This church-state based model of schooling held sway until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Revolutionary years. Around this time, the colonists’ struggle for political independence from England was reflected in their developing approach toward education, in which the independent spirit and move toward support for the federation of some of the colonists began to be felt. By now there was more wealth in most communities and therefore in the churches; some of this wealth was used to build new schools (Frost & Bailey, 1973). The churches still considered education to be one of their primary obligations and still started and supported schools, but three important changes took place at this time. First it became obvious that because there were competing denominations in many colonies (and each church denomination was jealous of its

position as the primary educator of children), it was necessary to abolish any particular church preference by the state. As a result, the 18<sup>th</sup> century saw “all churches free to establish schools and to compete freely for support and students” (Frost & Bailey, p. 333), regardless of earlier church-state relations.

The second influence of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was the increase in commercial and business oriented schools. These schools were private ventures, supported by tuition, and were intended to better serve the needs of a new country. Franklin’s Academy, opened in 1751, chartered in 1753, considered a college by 1755 and known by its name of University of Pennsylvania by 1791, was intended to be a model of a new type of American schooling. Rather than the European model of education, the new academy taught its classes in English rather than Latin, and it included practical topics, such as drawing and perspective, practical experiences in agriculture and the history and technology of machines in addition to the European curriculum (Butts & Cremin, 1953).

The third factor is related to the second; it is the developing feeling of federalism and loyalty to the new United States and the recognition of the need to foster this among the youth. Once the federal constitution was adopted and the colonies were established as united, democratic states, it became evident that education was necessary to ensure responsible voting and participation in the government. There were numbers of lawmakers, including Washington, Franklin, Webster, Jefferson, Rush, who lobbied for national control of universities to ensure this end. The idea was to keep our intellectuals on our home soil and protect them from the dangers inherent in a European education, such as the ones Jefferson refers to in a 1785 letter to J. Barrister. In it, he warns of the need to form students in America, away from the English love of

“drinking, horse racing, boxing...” He also intends to protect them from “a partiality for aristocracy or monarchy” that they might find attractive if they’re exposed to “the privileges of the European aristocrats” (Jefferson, in Bowen, p. 277).

As a result of the increased sectarianism, the interest in vocational and technical academies, and the national interest in education (especially higher education), churches in the United States lost their monopoly on education during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The ideals that were becoming introduced into the schools of this time may be summed up by this somewhat tongue-in-cheek saying by Franklin, “It would be well if (the students) could be taught everything that is useful and everything that is ornamental: but art is long, and their time is short. It is therefore proposed that they learn those things that are likely to be most useful and most ornamental” (Marsh & Willis, 2003). Although an education centered on moral values could be argued to be useful by some, the type of usefulness that Franklin and his school were interested in at that time was much more related to productivity within a culture. Although Franklin was most certainly concerned with developing a nation based on morals and values, his ideal school placed emphasis on pragmatic concerns. It is here that we can see the way in which concerns for things of this world, i.e., the secular perspective, lead to a different way of understanding the ends of education. A slightly different morality is implied in Franklin’s ends. It is not primarily to create a good man that education should tend, but rather to create a productive citizen. This, once again, is a precedent for one type of educational vision that prevailed in our country into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, an educational system that ultimately became focused on productivity and perhaps consumerism, as Kozol (1991), Giroux (2000) and others will argue in the coming chapter.

It is worthwhile to pause for a moment here and reflect on the direction of education thus far in the development of the United States. In the colonial days, public authority over education was asserted, but the public authority included the teaching of morals as revealed in Christian Scripture. The 18<sup>th</sup> Century saw the rise of a great deal of private (usually church-based) control, albeit delegated through the state, over the education of its students. The 19<sup>th</sup> Century once more swung back towards the public arena and even into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, according to Butts & Cremin (1953), curriculum specialists were asking, “Should America continue its experiment to maintain public and private systems of schools side by side, or should we give still greater emphasis to public institutions to become the major factor in American education?” (p. 525).

Of course there were conflicts inherent in the two ways of thought. This conflict will become more evident in the next 150 years of the states’ approach toward education, and it is in this conflict that we see the European philosophies effect on the United States. The conflict between a view of man that has a specific, teleological understanding (traditional and Aristotelian), and that of a worldly and individualistic perception (European Enlightenment) was translated into our American ways of viewing, among other things, the purpose of our schools. And so although early American schools were originally, unlike some of their counterparts in Europe that had focused more on classical humanism, a means for religious, moral, and political training, the nature of that training underwent a shift of their own by the end of the colonial period.

### *Direction of Morals in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*

During this time frame, women were most often teachers of moral education, as they were, by nature, better role models (Howard, et al., 2004). Public school textbooks reiterated the Puritan concern for strict character education, as can be seen in the McGuffey *Readers*. An increase in the immigration of Catholic parochial schools, dominated by the moral injunctions of the Church, introduced additional forms of character education. As the Catholic schools introduced their religiously based character education, the Protestant-based public schools were forced more toward secular or religiously neutral character education (Howard, et al.).

An attempted fusion between the mainstream, generalized Protestantism and democratic secularism, (the developing, quintessentially American social theory in which natural rights, a more democratic form of government and a humanitarian social philosophy took precedence over a supernatural authority), dominated the curricula of nineteenth century American schools. By the late 1800s, two distinct approaches to moral education took predominance in US schools. In the first, called the *traditional character education* approach (Howard et al., 2004) there was an emphasis on the Aristotelian concept that one's actions and habits are fundamental. To *be* good, one must *do* good. Doing good and living by traditional values and virtues (primarily as articulated in religions) would protect one from the perceived dissolute effects and temptations of modern society. It can be noted that this language and these ideals have a moral base in teleological concerns: they presuppose a specific end for man. And that man is good who fulfills that specific end. MacIntyre (1984) in *After Virtue*, described the Aristotelian (and later Christian, Jewish and Islam) moral scheme as such, "(It is) a threefold scheme in which human-nature-as-it-happens-to-be (human nature in its untutored state) is initially discrepant and

discordant with the precepts of ethics and needs to be transformed by the instruction of practical reason and experience into human-nature-as-it-could-be-if-it-realized-its-*telos*” (p. 53). Thus we have three necessary elements: an untutored human nature, the precepts of rational ethics, and most importantly, a concept of a *telos*—an end—for which humans are created. If man allows his untutored nature to be led by the moral exhortations, his nature will reach its *telos*. The beauty of this schema is that it allows for a great deal of clarity. The good is a matter of fact. If one has an end, and if one fulfills that end, it becomes a simple factual statement to say that one is good. The distinction between the Aristotelian and the religious concepts of ethics (which were direct descendants of the Aristotelian concept) is that the precepts are transformed from mere teleological commands to divinely ordained law.

The second school of moral education developed around that time was based on an ideal that was associated with the progressives. Although there were varieties of progressivism, it is probably justified to suggest that progressive ideals, in general, had a moral exhortation with change as the base of its program. Again in general terms, the progressives were concerned with transforming the social order of the day, developing the individual (not based upon religious ideals), and bettering society (this world) as their ultimate goal. The progressives were influenced by the European Enlightenment thinkers, and their ideal character education program taught its students the values of democratic participation in social groups, citizenship, and rational participation in governance. In terms of well known educators who exemplify the values of each approach, William Bennett could be said to champion the traditional character approach, while John Dewey could represent the developmental democratic group of progressives. A

distinct and also influential group of progressives are the social efficiency progressives, with whom Cubberly and Bobbit are identified.

Because the Progressive curriculum specialists were so influenced by the Enlightenment thinkers, it is worth taking a moment to explore MacIntyre's critique of the moral philosophy of the Enlightenment philosophers. We must look carefully at their attempt to create a system of ethics to replace the traditional Christian ethics that they by and large rejected, because it is my contention that here is where we find the most direct source of today's moral confusion in our schools.

All of the Enlightenment thinkers, according to MacIntyre (1984), rejected any teleological view of human nature. Man, according to them, does not have an essence that defines his true end. Yet these thinkers were functioning in the historical context of the Aristotelian (Christian, Jewish, Islamic) understanding of ethics in which three elements were necessary: man in his untutored state (potential), a system of ethics to bring man out of such a state, and the *telos* or end of man as he is created to be. The removal of the *telos* "leaves behind a moral scheme composed of two remaining elements whose relationship becomes quite unclear..." (p. 55). The untutored nature of man remains, as does the need for moral injunctions, but what was missing was a source of true statements about man. And the problem is complicated by the fact that the Enlightenment philosophers' view of human nature was inherited; it was that very same nature that was in need of moral tutelage. And so the new injunctions of morality would be difficult to deduce from human nature in its original form. Or if they were, it would be most likely that they would be injunctions that human nature will be likely to disobey (since it lacks tutoring). Hence the eighteenth-century moral philosophers engaged in

what was an inevitably unsuccessful project; for their inherited moral injunctions and their concept of human nature were inherently discrepant with each other. MacIntyre argued that at this point in history, “moral concepts and arguments...radically change their character so that they become recognizably the immediate ancestors of the unsetttable, interminable arguments of our own culture” (p. 59).

And so although the Progressive curriculum movement supported types of change that benefited particular aspects of education in the United States (making it more child-centered and holistic), MacIntyre (and I) would argue that it also brought with it, at its very heart, a source of moral confusion. Insofar as they were influenced by the Enlightenment philosophers, they rejected a teleological definition of man and were left with the need to create their own injunctions. These, though successful to different degrees, have lacked the Aristotelian ability to make factual statements about the good. In this way of understanding the world, there is no way to refer to any sort of transcendent values that serve as an incontrovertible source of right and wrong. Such an approach to ethics has slowly led to our present state of moral muddle, in which individual educators are no longer certain as to how they are expected to manifest their moral agency in the classroom. Their particular perspective might suggest one thing, while the general culture may expect something quite distinct. There is a lack of clarity in their role as a moral agent.

Because of its lack of access to transcendental or even teleological ideals, some, probably including Weil, as we will later see, could argue that it was precisely the type of thinking demonstrated by the Progressives, based in the Enlightenment ideals, that discouraged the educational institution to function as a place based on the type of “sustaining inspiration” that is

needed for any institution to function with a disposition that relates it to a higher good that is “impersonal and unrelated to any political form” (Weil, 1986, p. 77 ). What she meant by that will be examined more in a latter part of this essay, but suffice it for now to suggest that Weil believed that the words that so drove the Enlightenment movement and later the Progressive educators in this country, words such as *right*, *democracy* and *person*, are words that are accommodating and comforting, but insufficient as moral ideals. Weil would argue that the concept of right, for example, is always subordinate to the concept of obligation: “A right,” she argued, “is not effectual by itself, but only in relation to the obligation to which it corresponds, the effective exercise of a right springing not from the individual who possess it, but from the other men who consider themselves as being under a certain obligation towards him” (Weil, 2006, p. 3). We must use different language, she suggested, to sustain the type of educational institution that will “expos(e) and abolish...everything in contemporary life which (sic) buries the soul under injustice, lies, and ugliness” (p. 78).

### *Social Concerns*

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was a general recognition among educators that (1) the masses could become educated, (2) democracy required peoples’ participation and thus education, and (3) egalitarianism (economic and social) and a strong national identity demanded knowledge of practical subjects in addition to religious ideals (Marsh & Willis, 2003). Thus secular purposes, such as social utility and commercial subjects in schools (such as bookkeeping and surveying), drove a change in the purpose of schooling from a subject-centered curriculum to society-centered plan. The American culture, leading up to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, was undergoing

its own transformation. Industrialism, bureaucratization, secularization, and even changing gender relations all demanded a revision of the concept of what it means to be American (or even what it means to be human). The traditional understanding of a man with a telos was being replaced by an image of man as an economic and social entity.

In previous years, the American common school, the predecessor to public education, had the inculcation of a common morality intended to integrate the various immigrants into the American civic culture as part of its mission. It assumed the existence of a core series of values that defined the American way. Compulsory schooling was initiated not long after the establishment of the common schools, due mostly to demographic and economic changes resulting from urbanization, industrialization and immigration (Feinberg, in Goodlad, Soder & Sirotnik, 1990). According to Feinberg, the primary purpose of education in the compulsory schools was threefold: 1) to provide the human resources required by the numerous changes wrought by the changing demographics (urbanization), 2) to create a compliant work force (industrialization) and, 3) enculturation of the immigrant workforce (immigration).

It should not be surprising that with these three ends of education, man came to be seen primarily as an economic and social entity. It was not so much that Americans had lost their sense of faith, but rather that many had undergone a conversion of sorts. It could be argued that what developed over these years was a particularly American style faith: a faith in capitalism and in democracy. Gabriel & Walker (1986), reflecting on the development of this faith, wrote,

Among Americans of the Middle Period the word democracy took on two different but related connotations; it had both a realistic and a romantic meaning. Realistic

democracy was a behavior pattern that included caucuses and log-rolling, the struggle for office among individuals, and the sparring for advantage among the sections of the nation....Romantic democracy consisted of a cluster of ideas and ideals that, taken together, made up a national faith which, although unrecognized as such, had the power of a state religion. Some of the ideas were as old as classical Greece and others as new as the American nation. But, though most of the ideas were old and had been handed down by tradition, the configuration of the cluster was unique. Taken together they comprised quite literally an American democratic faith. (Gabriel & Walker, 1986, p. 14)

And so although more diverse immigrants with backgrounds in various faiths were arriving in the country and challenging any sort of mainstream, common belief system, there remained a sort of secularized faith that served to provide some source of moral authority. For many, though, such concepts were insufficient.

Yet for some time, from about the Second World War until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the idea of a civic faith or a civil religion seemed to be taking hold of the country and influencing the morals taught in the schools (Marty, 2000). Yet even these ideals, based primarily on the three largest faith communities (Protestants, Catholics and Jews) came to be criticized by many. Feminists, African Americans, Hispanics, and other people felt that their voices were still not represented in the values that characterized this civic religion and thus they questioned whether such a civic religion could, indeed, be practiced appropriately. In the 1940's, the Supreme Court began to apply the Bill of Rights to the states in regard to educational issues. The Supreme Court, since then, has been a large source of structure in the relationship between

religion and public schools. The federal government's role in the teaching of morals in schools is evident as well, as can be seen in a 1995 United States Department of Education hearing entitled, "Parents, Schools and Values."

As a result of our growing awareness of the need to respect the various norms and morals found in the multitude of cultures represented by the students in our schools today, numerous approaches to moral education (including denying the need for the school to function in such a capacity) have been attempted and had relative levels of success. What has become painfully clear throughout the history of education is that questions of what it means to be good, how humans define themselves, how one should act in this world, and other questions of a moral nature are at the root of any educational endeavor. It will now be valuable to hear what some people who are well respected as deep thinkers in have to say about the nature of education as a primarily moral endeavor.

## CHAPTER 4 PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS ABOUT EDUCATION AS A MORAL ENDEAVOR

### *The Educator as Moral Agent: Prophet and Muse*

“Sing to me, Muse, about the man of many turns, who many  
Ways wandered when he had sacked Troy’s holy citadel” (*Odyssey* 1: 1-2)

“I sing of warfare and a man at war.  
From the sea-coast of Troy in early days  
He came to Italy by destiny...” (*Aeneid*, 1: 1-3)

All the kings of the earth will praise you, Lord,  
when they hear the words of your mouth.  
They will sing the ways of the Lord:  
“How great is the glory of the Lord!” (Psalm 138: 4-5)

“Of Man’s first disobedience and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world and all our woe...  
Sing Heav’nly Muse...” (*Paradise Lost*, 1: 1-4 )

Chapter 2 of this study served as a review of the recent literature of contemporary researchers in the field of education. It demonstrated agreement in the field in terms of the importance of the work to be done to address the nature of teachers’ role as moral agents, but the lack of agreement in terms of the best way for this to be accomplished. Chapter 3 served to

present the history of education as a primarily moral endeavor. It demonstrated that education has traditionally been conceived of as the way in which a particular culture teaches a child what it means to be a good person. It offered a glimpse into the roots of the incoherence in today's moral utterance, through MacIntyre's elucidation of the loss of teleology and the resulting emotivism that attempted (but failed) to replace it as a coherent system of ethics. It also showed the extent to which our American curriculum specialists of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century were influenced by the very European forces that embraced the language and suppositions of emotivism. Before moving on to the primary topic of this study, a consideration of Simone Weil and how she confronted her role as a moral agent in a classroom, it will be valuable to consider some of the other voices who have shared their perspective about how it is that a teacher functions as a moral agent. The ideas to be considered here are not necessarily those of researchers, as we heard in chapter 2, and not those of historians, as we heard in chapter 3. Here we will attend to philosophers and theorists, psychologists and perhaps theologians.

These people are, like Weil, are the thinkers and dreamers of our present culture. It is important to hear what they have to say about our situation. The song they sing may sound more like the priests and prophets who wrote and sang the words that started this chapter. The ancient Greeks and Romans and Hebrews and Christians who composed those verses were people who were deeply imbedded in the truth of their song. They sang of particular deeds and taught their people what it meant to be good, to be virtuous, to be just. These very works often formed the basis of the educational system, as was seen our section on the Ancient Hebrew, Ancient Greek, and Ancient Roman cultures.

Today's philosophers, too, should be attended to as we face some of the most pressing social, moral, political, and spiritual crises in the history of schooling. It will be worthwhile for us to keep MacIntyre's warning in mind. If his arguments, put forward earlier, are true, then it is possible that despite their fully good intentions, the moral language of these thinkers has been muddied and rendered incoherent insofar as they reject an end to human nature and consider humans primarily in terms of individuals, not in relation to a society with set expectations. It is likely that MacIntyre would suggest that these thinkers are susceptible to emotivism, the position that grew out of the claim that it was not possible to provide rational, objective justification for morality (MacIntyre, 1984). What replaced the traditional sense of morality was emotivism, an ethics that asserts that "all moral judgments are nothing but expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are evaluative in nature" (p. 12). The statement that most clearly represents this emotivist moral judgment would be, "I approve of this; do so as well." It is both a statement of personal preference and an attempt to influence others in one's own beliefs. MacIntyre offered several reasons for the failure of such a project (despite the general acceptance of it that pervades moral thought still today). His refutations include pointing out the circularity in the attempt to elucidate the type of sentences emotivism claims to hold. So he asks for the identification of the feelings in question. If it is true that moral judgments express feelings or attitudes, then what specifically is meant by the feelings and attitudes? Emotivists, according to MacIntyre, are loathe to respond, for the obvious answer is "feelings of approval," which opens the next question, "Which feelings of approval," to which the obvious answer is, "Moral approval," which becomes circular. MacIntyre offers several additional reasons to

question the status of emotivism as a coherent moral system, the most convincing of which is his recognition that at its heart, emotivism has the potential to manipulate.

Emotivism, according to MacIntyre, “entails the obliteration of any genuine distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative social relations...for ultimately evaluative statements are simply intended to be expressions of my own feelings in order to influence others...The sole reality of distinctly moral discourse is the attempt of one will to align the attitudes, feelings, preference and choices of another with its own. Others are always means, never ends” (MacIntyre, p. 24).

Whether such is the case or not, no one would doubt that our educational system has undergone great transformations over the past 70 or so years. We have faced numerous watershed moments, including a rather recent crisis that was in the spotlight during the Reagan era. The nature of this crisis can be heard in *A Nation at Risk* (1983), written by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (a commission created by then Secretary of Education, Terrence H. Bell). This study started off by stating that the “educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. What was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur--others are matching and surpassing our educational attainment” (*Nation at Risk*). Eight years after a *Nation at Risk*, Kozol (1991) reminded us that whatever song that may be sung about our educational system as a whole, cannot be sung about schools in inner cities. “In these recent years of ‘summit conferences’ on education, of severe reports and ominous prescriptions,” he said, he found “inner-city schools, where filth and disrepair were worse than anything...seen in 1964” (Kozol, p. 5).

More recently Giroux (2000) called out to educators about the enormous risks of child abuse inherent in the corporate structures that drive our media and culture at large. “If democracy is to carry us forward,” he proclaimed in a prophetic voice, “surely it will be based on a commitment to improving the lives of children, but not within the degrading logic of a market that treats their bodies as commodities and their futures as trade-offs for capital accumulation. On the contrary, critical educators...need to create a cultural vision (whose)...whose challenge has never been so strained nor so urgent” (p. 63-64).

Once again we find ourselves, as contemporary educators, confronted with the problem of how we are called to respond to our students. What is our role? Are we truly prophets, muses, moral agents as suggested by Purpel (2004)? In what context do we serve as critics of the present institution? From what perspective do we question and seek to change? To what model do we aspire? Is it possible to envision a model that is somehow ‘universal?’ What would that look like? All of those above questions are ultimately served when we ask the most important question that drives this entire study, “How is it that an educator best serve her students in her role as moral agent?” This chapter intends to consider how that question (or one very much like it) has been considered in the recent past.

And so this next section is devoted to an exploration of the way education has been seen as a moral endeavor by numerous contemporary philosophers from both within and without the field of education. For all of the questions we are struggling with throughout this study have been pondered over the years. Numerous educators and philosophers of education have been highly conscious of education as a moral enterprise. Some, in their passion and willingness to call out in critical and sometimes strident voices, can be seen to speak as prophets, muses and

moral agents. There are literally hundreds of philosophers in recent years who could have been included in this section. Although there was no terribly scientific manner in which these were finally chosen, there was a sincere attempt made to include voices from a diversity of ethnicities and backgrounds, in order to demonstrate the universal acknowledgement of the moral vector in education and to hear the wide variety of possible responses.

It must also be kept in mind that, while each of these brilliant thinkers has a great deal to add to our conversation, the vast number of these voices available to the educator, all speaking at once, can sound more like a cacophony than an aria. It can lead to more confusion than direction. And so, despite all the hours and lives spent considering these critical issues, today's educator may still find herself wading through a moral morass of philosophies. It is nevertheless incumbent upon this study to consider some of the many ways educators have been called to consider themselves as moral agents in order to understand the distinction among these ideas and the way of being presented in the final chapters by Weil. It may also be interesting, as we proceed, to ask to what extent any of these philosophers see human existence as having a *telos*, and what, if any, that *telos* might be.

Foucault (1995), a French philosopher, understood the evolution of education as heavily laden with ethical considerations. Foucault rejected the suggestion that ideals based on reason and the rigors of scientific knowledge drove educational institutions. Foucault was fascinated by the relationship between knowledge and power, a concept that has become even more critical to examine today as we exist in what is often called the Information Age. He proposed that a desire to control and discipline the masses was the impetus for schools. The scientific ideals that were so popular at the time were of value only insofar as they could provide the psychological and

sociological underpinnings of the most effective control mechanisms for various institutions that were developing at the time. In *Discipline and Punish* (1995), Foucault described the reform of punishment that began in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and affected the social institutions: the schools, the hospitals, the military and the prisons of Europe. The intent of this reform was to imbed the institution of punishment into the culture of said organizations. Punishment was no longer a public spectacle, such as the flogging or quartering of criminals offered, but it became perhaps more insidious as the most influential institutions of the society were created, using the best techniques that science had to offer and specifically intending to fabricate obedient, productive and docile workers and soldiers.

Foucault's contention was that although corporal punishment as a public spectacle was no longer the norm, the shift in focus may point to an even more insidious power. "It is no longer," he suggested, "the body, with the ritual play of excessive pains, spectacular brandings in the ritual of public executions; (what is now punished) is the mind or rather...the soul, said Mably..." (Foucault, p. 101). This is, in a sense, another form of corporal punishment, and it is dependent upon the ability to control the bodies of those potential offenders.

This is related to the moral nature of education insofar as Foucault (1995) mentioned the 1760's as the years during which the actual arrangement of educational spaces was developed. During this latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, students no longer simply sat side by side, awaiting a moment of the master's attention; they began to be ranked and ordered in strict rows—not only in the classrooms, but also in the corridors and in the courtyards. This ordering would not only allow strict supervision of each student, but also served as a reward or punishment (as students were arranged according to academic success) and created a sort of hierarchy among the

students. Foucault attributed this shift in the educational institutions to the military influence that stretched from the Roman legions into the French Revolution, combined with the Jesuit colleges' disciplinary elements.

The spatial and organizational structure of the educational institution, according to Foucault, was born partially out of society's intent to control such things as the distribution of bodies in space (every student has his or her specific space pre-determined and partitioned). Additional elements of control included the management of students' time (strict schedules and limits on all daily activities), in the omnipresent vigilance to which students were subjected (reinforced by the partitioning of space), in the classification system to which their abilities were subject, and in the power of the assessment methods (in the examination). The goals and values of the educational system used normalization as an instrument of power. This normalization served both to create homogeneity and to offer a code against which the system could measure gaps and determine levels. The individual, in the development of the European school system (after which the American school was modeled), was "a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power that (Foucault) has called 'discipline'...Power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth..." (p. 194).

Foucault outlined the reasons that the values held as sacred in the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment ultimately led toward an educational system based on control, power, and manipulation. This is a great irony, as these are the very things that Humanistic values of the Enlightenment attempted to overcome themselves. We can see Foucault's primary concern with morality as one rooted in the system itself. Before we can pretend to serve as moral agents ourselves, he may say, we must address the morality of the entire institution of education. A

great deal of Weil's interest lay in the students' response education. She was more concerned with developing the students' proper relationship to studies. This concept of relationship was crucial to the thinking of another man with great insight into both education and human nature: Buber.

### *Buber*

Buber's essays on education date back to two international educational conferences in which he spoke in 1925 and 1939. In the first essay, called simply *Education*, Buber began by suggesting that education should "strengthen the light-spreading force in the hearts of the doers" (Buber, 1947, p. 99). Immediately it becomes apparent that what is most important in the educational endeavor is not the content of a particular lesson, but rather the values and actions that result. Buber overtly denies adherence to any specific religion, but he, like Weil, sees the ultimate role of the educator as one who forms an image of God for the students.

The curriculum is seen as that which the educator consciously selects and manifests from the effective world. It is the educator's job to release the powers inherent in the child, but this release of powers is merely a presupposition of education, nothing more. The educator's model is that of a master acting with such skill in his manifestation of the selected world that the student does not perceive the teacher as interfering. The teacher's influence is somewhat hidden, offering from its own integrity an integrating force for the student (Buber, 1947). The educator must be an ascetic who recognizes and can distinguish between the value of his influence on students and the risk of interference.

For Buber (1947), the ultimate way of relating in the world is a dialogic relationship. He refers to it as an *I-Thou* relation. In order to enter completely into this *I-Thou* relation, though, there must be a sense of mutual entering-into between the parties. There must be what he calls inclusion. Inclusiveness for Buber is “the complete realization of the submissive person, the desired person, the ‘partner,’ not by fancy but by the actuality of being” (Buber, p. 114). For teachers and students, this type of inclusive relation is neither possible nor desired. The teacher-student relationship should be based on mutuality—there should be the recognition of a steady and deep presence of one to the other—but the mutuality is not based on inclusion. It is completely one-sided because the educator must experience the student’s education, but the student cannot experience the teacher’s reality. This non-inclusive but mutual relationship is unique to teachers and students. As soon as the relationship moves toward inclusion (if the student could somehow experience the educating of the educator) the relationship would no longer be one of teacher-student, but would become one of friendship.

Buber’s (1947) ideal educator is one who can subordinate his or her tendency to group students and see, instead, the “life and particular being” of each individual student (Buber, p. 112). These educational values call for an asceticism in which the balance of giving and withholding oneself and intimacy and distance with one’s students must be primary in the teacher’s conscience. Buber calls the teacher to “gather the child into his life...(to create) a reality between them” (Buber, p. 117). This is an experience of inclusion, of opening oneself to other. In such a relationship, the values and purposes of an education become a personal matter between the teacher and student. Both are perceived as individuals, in relation to one another, and in relation to the subject matter. The content may be negotiated as part of the relation, and

the methodology may be acknowledged to be open to scrutiny (from both parties involved) as well.

Buber's stress on the mandate for the teacher to experience the reality of the student is not to be taken lightly. His focus on relation as that which creates meaning is reminiscent of Weil's call to look outward, to focus on other, to go beyond one's self as a way of living and as a way of teaching. Buber, though, is careful to remain a whole, independent self in the interchange. This relational call is one that most educators would benefit from considering. Similar suggestions have been taken up by more recent educators such as Noddings, Gilligan, and Spivak, all of whom call for a classroom ethic based on care for one's students though in slightly different ways, as we will see at a later point. Buber, like Weil, was born Jewish, questioned his faith, taught for many years, and wrote extensively. Like Weil he also admired Christian teaching. He, however, ultimately deepened his commitment to his own faith, unlike Weil who was drawn more towards Christianity. A very distinct perspective on religion and spirituality was offered by another thinker: a post modern curriculum specialist, Doll.

### *Doll*

Doll's post-modern thinking placed value on scientific knowledge, but he acknowledged that the changed nature of scientific knowledge in the past 30 or so years required a changed way of understanding the world and its morals. Modern science's myths were orderly, organizing, consonant and simple. Post-modern science's stories are unpredictable, changing, and full of dissipation, tensions, and contradictions (Doll, 2002). This view of the world has implications for morality and for curriculum. Hard and fast objectives that are impartially taught as truths and

tested mechanistically have no place in Doll's schools. Doll rather suggested that emergent objectives, fluid plans, participatory experiences, and dynamic, creative experiences should drive education (Doll, 1993).

This emphasis on *becoming* affected how he perceived morality, spirituality, topics that he sporadically addressed in his book about curriculum (Doll, 1993), and later specifically addressed in an article (Doll, 2002). Modern religions' images of God fit comfortably within the orderly universe envisioned by modern science: God was a stable, organizing, creative, permanent force in the universe. Now that post-modern science has overturned the belief in a stable universe, Doll posited that we must respond with an overturned concept of God. Thus his morality is not based on an anthropocentric perspective which posits humans, created in the image of an unchanging Divinity, at the center of the theology, nor is it one with absolute, eternal truths centered in the demands of an omnipotent God. It is rather one in which we recognize and celebrate our evolving participation in creation. We are a part of the creative process—we, participating in an emerging, evolving world, are ontologically *becoming* as opposed to *being*. There is mystery implicit in the source of the creative process. Doll acknowledged the mystery, yet is able to simply leave it as mystery rather than attempting to define it.

For Doll, the recognition of this mystery—the *mysterium tremendum*—of the complexity and creative forces in nature, is a call to responsibility and a source of morality in both education and in our lives in general. Once again we note the theme of responsibility acknowledged and defined in the literature.

Doll clarified his idea of responsibility as a responsibility that comes simply from the fact that we are—that we exist. We freely choose, based on our own sense of being, to be

responsible. Or not. Two important parts of his idea of responsibility are: (1) we are able to choose irresponsibility yet we freely choose responsibility, and (2) we choose responsibility not out of obligation to other, but rather because we exist...we acknowledge our being (Doll, 2002). For Doll, the relationship that inspires responsibility is that of our being within all creation: our relating to other humans, the earth, the universe, and the cosmos. Crucial to Doll's thought, though, is the idea that one is not responsible to other in the traditional sense of duty to other or for other. It will be seen how sharply his thoughts in this realm contrast with Weil's (2006). Doll intends to avoid any sense of domination in his consideration of responsibility. In so doing, he proffered a responsibility without allegiance to other. The idea of sacrificing oneself for other—for putting the needs of others before one's own needs—is to be avoided within Doll's ethic. Thus the entire principle upon which not only Christianity but also many other religions' ethics are founded (a love so great that one is willing to sacrifice one's self for it) is replaced by an ethic in which a centering on oneself easily results. This is a risk Doll was aware of and willing to take.

The educational mission that results from this perspective is the recognition of the paradox of "free" choice. It is free in that it is not imposed from the outside (like Grace or Spirit), but it is developed internally in recognition of the tremendous mystery of creation (Doll, 2002). We relate to creation, we become with creation, and as a part of relating, being, and becoming, we freely choose responsibility. It is paradoxical because we are only free in so much as we choose responsibly, yet we are free to choose irresponsibly. This ethic, based on one's sense of relation to creation (ecology), and based on a post-modern scientific perspective, does not translate into moral imperatives. Yet it assumes a great deal of optimism in the human

condition. For humans to realize this ideal of responsibly choosing the good, it will take a highly conscious, educated population of humans. Perhaps that's the special responsibility he suggested that educators have. It is, in any case, an enormous burden for the human race to undertake, without the support of a religious metanarrative.

Doll did not go so far as to specify exactly how this would translate into a curriculum in his paper on spirituality, yet based on his book, one might make some suppositions as to how a teacher would communicate with students about morals, ethics and spirituality. First and foremost, it would be incumbent on teachers to recognize the value of transformation and emergence of ideas. Thus there would be an expectation that the idea of responsibility and the recognition of the *mysterium tremendum* would require a lengthy time frame, as opposed to a few weeks' worth of discussion and consideration. Furthermore, he stated explicitly that any faith we may have should be based on doubt—the feeling of complete certainty and eternal rightness must be replaced with a respect for the particular and individual truths of the moment. This means that the individual student's needs and self-organizational abilities must be respected and accounted for. There is no one right way to teach all students. Process, especially rooted in cultural, linguistic, and hermeneutical norms, is more important than product for Doll, and our ultimate context is community. Yet any sense of responsibility is ultimately based on one's self freely choosing (with reference only to one's self) rightly.

Doll offered a complex idea of morality, and one that may not be available to most students for most of their school lives. Once they have fully understood it, though, there is certainly room for developed, multifaceted moral and spiritual lives, relationships, and education.

Interestingly enough, Doll felt the need to maintain a sense of faith and spirituality within his educational paradigm. “If we have a faith,” he stated, “and I hope we do...” he continued (Doll, 1993, p. 60), at which point he showed a very human need for belief and grounding in something that is somehow beyond us. Weil based her belief on a somewhat Christian conception of God, Buber on more Hebrew conception of God, and Doll on a mystery to be found in the awesomeness of creation realized within each individual.

Yet it is not necessary to make such transcendent theories in order to consider the moral nature of education and the contemporary state of schooling. Apple (1990) is a contemporary American curriculum specialist who sees the educational process as inherently moral in nature; he is concerned with the morbid values of the dominant culture. His contention is that it is specifically through education that these dangerous values are furthered.

### *Apple*

Apple contended that American public schools serve to form the consciousness of students such that America’s prevailing social, cultural, and economic inequalities are perpetuated, unchallenged; America’s schools are agents of “cultural and ideological hegemony” (Apple, p. 6). Education reproduces disparities; it both creates and recreates an ideology that serves the dominant powers and affords them an ideal form of persuasion in which there is no need for overt control mechanisms. Thus the schools participate in the process by which the rich stay rich and well educated, and the poor stay poor and under-educated. This takes place at three levels: (1) through the school as an institution, (2) through the curricular content choices of schools, and (3) through the educators themselves. For Apple, the morals of the entire endeavor

must be questioned and critiqued, for it was driven by powerful cultural influences that did not stop to assess “whose values?” were being promoted.

A truly hegemonic system appears to have control over one’s understanding of culture and ideologies, over one’s interpretation of every day experience, and over one’s entire sense of reality. As a set of meanings and values, it determines our understanding of our everyday life. It is moral in nature; it defines what is good, bad, and the actions that correspond. It amounts to a system of control, and because it is so encompassing, it determines power relations in political, economic, and social spheres.

Apple (1990) contended that one way that this hegemony is perpetuated is through the distribution of knowledge—through education. Thus the moral nature of schooling is rooted in the power to determine the distribution of knowledge. Apple contended that schools’ daily activities offer not only an overt curriculum (addressed below), but also a ‘hidden curriculum’ that works to further the existing power structures. As part of this hidden curriculum, knowledge and the language of learning tends to be couched in apolitical and neutral terms. This supposed neutrality hides the fact that it is actually questions of morals: political and economic powers that determine the cultural value placed on different educational experiences. Apple exposed this pretense of neutrality through Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* (cultural rules and behaviors that result from them), and cultural capital. These concepts are not neutral, for they are determined by the dominant classes; children of middle class families are necessarily favored and children of lower classes are necessarily excluded. Schools, in their hidden curriculum, select for cultural capital and thus the upper and middle class children are tracked into the most valuable (economically viable) classes. This perpetuates the unequal distribution of resources, knowledge,

power and control in the society (Apple). If there are fundamental inequalities at the heart of the system, the system is fundamentally immoral.

The second, and related, way in which schools perpetuate the political, social and economic status quo is through the overt curriculum. The determination of what knowledge is of most worth is done within a specific set of beliefs—an ideology, or perhaps within a hegemony. The very idea that education should be differentiated for students of different abilities, that a few elite should be prepared to be leaders, and the rest trained to be followers, should be recognized as a moral question, stemming from an attempt to create cultural homogeneity and stability within the society (Apple, 1990). In recognition of the moral nature of these issues, Apple would have us ask the following questions: “Whose knowledge is it? Why is it being taught to this particular group, in this particular way? What are its real or latent functions in the complex connections between cultural power and the control of modes of production and distribution of goods and services...” (p. 156).

Thus both the overt curriculum and the hidden curriculum work together to provide hegemony within the culture. The overt curriculum does so through the high cultural value it places on the sciences. This can be seen as politically determined in at least two ways. The first is the way in which the ‘neutral’ language of the sciences was used as a form of social control (Apple, 1990). When it became politically incorrect to recognize ethnic and class differences within the educational community, these disparities came to be discussed ‘scientifically’ in terms of abilities and hierarchies of intelligence. Thus the same students were excluded from the higher tracks of classes, but rather than admitting it was due to racial biases, the discrepancies became couched in scientific terms.

The second way a stress on the sciences has been used to perpetuate the existing societal values is in the positivistic treatment of the discipline. Apple (1990) viewed science from a Kuhnian perspective: as an evolving discipline, in which scientists work within certain paradigms until these ways of understanding their theories no longer works due to anomalies, puzzles, and crises in their investigations that cannot be explained within the existing paradigm. At that point, a sort of revolution takes place within the scientific community and the old vision is pushed aside by a better explanation (Kuhn, 1962). This process is not one in which absolute truths are being determined, or even one in which one single paradigm is being compared with 'nature.' During these revolutions, two (or more) competing paradigms struggle to gain the commitment of the scientific community (Kuhn, 1962). There is conflict involved, which leads to rich questioning and a critical perspective on the existing outlook. Apple embraced this paradigmatic model of science. He compared it to the prevailing positivistic model in which scientific principles are taught (1) as a true reflection of the natural world, and (2) as if there were no dissention in the development of the theories. Apple held that the paradigmatic perspective is superior; it necessitates a critical perspective, while the positivistic attitude leads toward quietism and acceptance of existing standards. The overt curriculum ignores the struggle and strife implicit in the development of ideas and encourages uncritical acceptance of knowledge as *given*. Apple pointed out how both social studies and history are open to similar critical perspectives, yet also taught in a vein that ignores the conflict and struggle involved in their development. Thus the positivistic perspective, with its focus on acceptance and acquiescence, furthers the hegemonic structure of schools.

It is not only the hidden and overt curricula that continue the hegemony through the schools, but the educators themselves also participate in the process. This is a crucial consideration in terms of this present study. For according to Apple, it is the school community—teachers, aides, administration and faculty—who actually implement the curriculum. Apple (1990) believed that educators' minds are saturated with the existing cultural values and mores, which they both consciously and unconsciously pass on to their students. Apple pointed out how the “negotiations of meanings” in a classroom is a “critical phase in the socialization of children” (Apple, p. 52). Unfortunately, though, Apple contended that there is not much *negotiating* going on in classrooms. He used the example of the first days of school in a particular Kindergarten class. The most important skills the teacher expected were sharing, listening, putting things away, and following a routine. He then listed the many faults of this teacher, including the fact that the students had no part in organizing their materials and could not participate in structuring their daily events. He criticized the teacher for expecting such socialized behavior as diligence, cooperation, perseverance, quietude, obedience, and participation from the students. The problem with this teacher (who was widely respected in her school community), and most others as well, was that rather than focusing on content and meaningful experiences for children, she focused on socializing the children in accordance with prevailing notions of acceptable behavior. The focus, then, was on creating obedient automatons who unthinkingly responded to the teacher's rules and regulation.

Apple (1990) believed we could and must work against the educational, cultural hegemony that has developed over the years. In order to remedy the tendency towards hegemony, he suggested we focus on programmatic changes in how we present information to

students. A focus on the moral dilemmas encountered by scientists, for example, and a Kuhnian perspective (one that suggests that science is not so much about which theory is more “true,” but rather which is more useful and elegant and which will best serve us until another, more useful and elegant theory is proposed) toward science are good starting points for an open, critical perspective that might help avoid social, ideological and cultural reproduction. In the social studies, the role of conflict in the evolution of the human condition is worthy of time and attention. It is also necessary to allow students hear the voices of historically excluded groups, such as women and ethnic groups, in a critical curriculum. In an attempt to overcome the sociological hegemony, Apple suggested students be more involved in and more controlling of the daily activities of their school lives. This may help students become more aware of “their own conditionedness and freedom” (Apple, p. 101). Finally, and perhaps most importantly in terms of the educators themselves, the teachers, administration and especially the curriculum specialists must ask certain questions, such as, “What is the latent role of the linguistic and logical structure of technical, efficiency, and ‘scientific’ perspective in curriculum and in general?” “How do these categories and forms of consciousness serve as mechanisms of social and economic interest,” and “Are real, or abstracted, individuals ‘helped’ by these interests?” (p. 105). These and other questions are some that Apple feels are crucial to ask as one attempt to create a truly moral educational system.

Not everyone, of course understands the problems of our educational system to have arisen as a result of a political and cultural hegemony. Takaki (1993) warned us of inequalities based primarily on socioeconomic questions. These questions, once again, are fundamentally moral in nature.

## *Takaki*

One of the reasons there is so much concern about the nature of education as a moral endeavor is because the educator deals with the most vulnerable groups within any sociological grouping: children. Takaki, the grandson of Japanese immigrants in Hawaii, demonstrated how children of certain ethnic groups suffered most from the history of US education, in which unquestioned and unbalanced educational ethos offered systematically inferior educational opportunities to children of color. Takaki (1993) described the segregated schools for Mexicans, blacks, and Japanese children, in which the children were trained to become obedient workers. The aim and purpose of the system created for children of color, according to Takaki, was to create a docile workforce—one is reminded of Foucault's observations. The exclusion of these and other ethnic groups from higher education resulted in the systematic elimination of these groups' participation in our country in any but the most perfunctory ways.

Takaki quoted a northern free black person who said, "The colored people are...charged with want of desire for education and improvement, yet if a colored man comes to the door of our institutions of learning...the lords of these institutions rise up and shut the door" (Takaki, p. 107). The fact that these barriers to education were largely based on race and color can be seen by the ease with which the Irish Americans, who suffered a great deal of prejudice when they first arrived in the country due to their poverty and numerousness, could attend college and be assimilated into the educational system with much more ease than the immigrants of color. Takaki quotes Lowell, the president of Harvard in the early 1900's, as saying that the Irish should be welcomed at their school, for they are a part of [his] own race and can be assimilated rapidly. He contrasted the Irish with the Indians, Chinese, blacks, and even the Jews, who were

so culturally dissimilar that he could not consider them as partaking in his “theory of universal political equality,” and thus should not be allowed to attend the University (Takaki, p. 161).

If it is true that the type of educational system that developed in America diminished the probability that an individual be seen as anything but a member of a predetermined group, and that some such groups would receive a significantly inferior education, then we must be prepared to address such inequalities and critique the values that allowed such a system to develop. Another philosopher of education who was concerned about education’s obligations toward those who have been disregarded in the past is Spivak.

### *Spivak*

Spivak (2003), an Indian literary critic and theorist, wrote about pedagogy in subaltern communities. She suggested that humans are humans precisely inasmuch as they answer to an outside call. In her writings about human rights and pedagogy, she spoke of each human being as “defined by the call of the other” (p. 182). Spivak said that her project began with two begged questions: the assumption that it is natural to be called by the other, prior to will, and that we are responsible for subaltern cultures (albeit in her particular sense of responsible). For she is careful in her use of the word responsibility. Responsibilities, she hoped, could be shared by all. Yet responsibilities are (1) not linearly related to rights, and (2) not meant as the duty of the stronger toward the weaker. This calls to mind some of Weil’s (2006 ) discussion about obligations. One is responsible because one is called by the other, so the responsibility is to the other not as something to be transformed to look like me, but rather as someone from whom I must learn in order to teach. It was through a particular apprenticeship of teaching, through a pedagogy in

which teacher becomes student, that we could begin to mend the torn fabric of subordinate cultures. Levinas (1989) referred to wounds and outrages as that which incarnates the self; Spivak referred to the need to weave and suture the results of such injury. Rights and responsibilities should not be thrust upon subordinate cultures from above, they must be learned from below. Spivak meant this very literally. One must, for example, learn (well) the language of the rural poor in order to teach them. And the best educators should learn from their students and teach in accordance with what they have learned. An educator, said Spivak, “must learn to train teachers by attending to the children...It is through learning how to take children’s response to teaching as our teaching text that we can hope to put ourselves in the way of activating democratic structures” (p. 217). Once again, the relation between recognizing responsibility to other and acting thereon is primary in her pedagogy.

Spivak’s (2003) call for teachers to learn from their students may well have been influenced by Freire (2003). Freire spoke of the educator’s temptation to view the impoverished as unable to think, to want, to know. The humanist and educator, according to Freire, must trust in the people and examine his conscience regularly in order to enter into communion with the people. This process actually demands a “profound rebirth,” through which the person truly dedicated to the education-revolution takes on a new form of existence (Freire, p. 61).

### *Freire*

For Freire, a Brazilian who had experienced poverty and hunger as a child, humanization is both human kind’s central problem and human kind’s vocation. Yet in Freire’s developing country, dehumanization was perhaps more evident than humanization. He described the

Brazilian world in terms of oppressed and oppressors, both of whom suffer the dehumanization inherent in oppression. It was the job of the oppressed, though, to lead the struggle toward a more human existence. The oppressor, dehumanized by his dehumanization of others, could not be expected to participate except through force. Because of his Hegelian and Marxist influences, the relations in which people exist are distinct from those expressed above. People are by nature relational, but the relation is one of dialectics. The oppressed exist in relation to the oppressors as their antitheses. Thus without the oppressed, the oppressor could not exist (and vice versa). To fully understand the nature of this relation, Freire believed it was the teacher's role to work toward the conscientization (*conscientização*) of the people. In other words, people are not aware of their role as responsible to the other until the feeling is awakened in them through teaching.

Freire (1970/1993) believed that the aims and purposes of education should be a sort of revolution. He referred to the societal groups in Marxist terms as the oppressors and the oppressed. He held that both groups are manifestations of dehumanization, and both must participate in developing a pedagogy that should have, as its primary goal, liberation—the humanization of all people. This humanization required the radical posture of “enter(ing) into the situation of those with whom one is solidary” in an effort to become “beings for another” (Freire, p. 49). Freire criticized the “banking method” of education (in which unquestioned values of the oppressors are poured out from the teacher's head into the student's mind) as reinforcing oppressed people's perception of themselves as fatalistically determined. Freire called for problem-posing education, in which the people subjected to domination fight for their own emancipation and determine the content and methods in conjunction with their teachers. All throughout the process, they continually ask, “Why?” While this is not an individualistic

prescription, it cannot take place without the recognition of one another as individuals. It requires a personal and intimate encounter. It requires one to dissolve the boundaries imposed by membership to a group. It necessitates the recognition of the other, in Buber's terms, as "thou" (Buber, 1947/2002).

Of course the very question as to whether students are capable of sharing in the determination of curriculum matters is a moral question, as is whether they are capable, even in relation to a teacher, of stepping outside their boundaries and asking the right questions. And are the teachers, even in relation to students, capable of stepping outside their own preconceived value system such that they can question how the education process should proceed? Some might say that it would depend on how the educator herself understood the purpose, substance, and practice of a curriculum.

### *Foshay*

Foshay's (2000) curriculum theory was based on the three-dimensional interactions of a matrix. The dimensions were defined as the *purpose*, *substance*, and *practice* of a curriculum (p. xv; p.2). The purpose, substance, and practice of a curriculum all have questions of an ethical nature embedded in them. Foshay asserted the *purpose* dimension of his matrix was comprised of the following aspects of the self: (1) intellectual, (2) emotional, (3) social, (4) physical, (5) aesthetic, and (6) transcendent. He defined the *substance* dimension as (1) mathematics, (2) science, (3) history or social studies, (4) language and literacy, (5) writing and composition, (6) foreign languages, (7) arts, (8) vocational and technical, (9) co-curricular, and (10) school culture. Foshay stressed that both the *substance* and *purpose* of curriculum might vary from

school to school depending upon culture and values of the school. He might have added that they could also vary within the same school as the dynamics of the school change over the years.

The final dimension, that of *practice*, was universal according to Foshay (p. 2). This dimension included: (1) evaluation, (2) cost, (3) governance, (4) circumstance, (5) when, (6) how, (7) why, (8) what, and (9) who should be educated. The complexity of the matrix becomes apparent when one considers the possible interactions among the components, which Foshay himself recognized as amounting to 145,800 possibilities. Some of the interactions would be meaningless and not worth attention, but most, according to Foshay, “actually take place as one teaches” (p. 3).

The primary ethos that Foshay put forth in his curriculum matrix was the development of the self—the individual child. This can be viewed in contrast to the perspectives offered earlier by Weil or Buber, in which the self was seen as always in relation to others. Foshay (2000) began his matrix explication with the transcendent dimension of the self. Foshay defined transcendence as “the experience of connectedness with something greater than what immediately appears” (p. 18). Foshay challenged himself and the reader by relating the concept of the transcendent self (from the *purpose* dimension) with the subject of mathematics (from the *substance* dimension). While some people may experience the transcendent self in an aesthetic appreciation of art, music, literature, dance, or nature, and others may experience it within a religious context, it may be a stretch to find a transcendent moment in a math class. Yet Foshay reminded us that the history of mathematics is replete with leaps of the imagination in attempts to “go beyond what is immediately perceived into a long series of transforming theories about reality...to *transcend* reality...to *beyond* common sense” (p. 22). Foshay continued his

discussion and convincingly described how astonishing and deeply human the study of mathematics can become if treated as a subject with a purpose: that of reaching the transcendent self. It is interesting to note that even here it is not the relational aspect of the self with the transcendent that is stressed, but rather the self as an identity with individual growth potential that is most essential.

In the remainder of Foshay's (2000) discussion of his matrix, he continued weaving the different aspects of the self into various, sometimes-unexpected portions of the curriculum. He showed how teachers could develop the physical self through literature, the emotional self through considerations of social studies, the intellectual self through problem solving, and the social self through collaboration and other peer-building classroom activities. He demonstrated how each of the various aspects of the self could be developed through engagement with traditional subjects in the school curriculum.

Foshay's (2000) matrix theory's values were focused on the development of a fully human, deeply thoughtful person at the center of the educational process. He believed that each and every aspect of the curriculum should serve to create and uncover aspects of the developing self. He argued convincingly that the development of this self could be accomplished through the multiple, complex interactions he postulated in his matrix. While this perspective is valuable and worthy of consideration, its very strengths may belie its weaknesses.

By placing self-actualization so centrally in his theory, Foshay (2000) subjugated the relational nature of the individual. He recognized that the self has a social aspect, and spent a chapter suggesting ways to develop it as it interacts with both academic subjects and peers. The topics he treated here were: (1) cooperation and competition, (2) moral development, (3) peer

relations, (4) empathy and sympathy, and (5) similarities and differences among individuals. Yet this exploration was one-dimensional: it considered the social self *from the perspective of the individual*. The theme here remains the same: what is the individual's gain from social relations? Placing the individual at the apex of the curriculum matrix minimizes the extent to which humans are deeply social creatures, and defined as much by their social environment as by their "self." The view of humans as primarily social beings dates back as far as Aristotle, who suggested that humans are naturally social creatures. It is developed more richly in contemporary ideas such as Bandura's social cognitive theory, which posits a triadic reciprocal causation among self, society, and behaviors (Bandura, 1997). For Bandura, personal agency and autonomy can only be understood within the context of a social situation—the self is inextricably related to the environment and behaviors (its own as well as others').

Foshay's focus on self realization may also ignore the individual's obligation to attempt to step back from "self" and to critically question social rules, values, and mores. The aspect of critical questioning is one that is vital to the educational process, as we have seen in the writings of Apple (1990) and Freire (2003). For Freire, one must struggle to transform the oppressive relationship implied in traditional teacher-student relationships in order to become more fully human. Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed calls for both the oppressed and the oppressors to critically reflect on their roles in the dehumanization implicit in historical reality. Thus, the addition of "(7) the critical self" to Foshay's purpose of the curriculum, could add additional depth to the matrix.

While Foshay's (2000) theory offers numerous opportunities for fertile discussion of the many values and morals implied in curriculum and education, the curriculum matrix seems to

lack certain concepts brought up by other philosophers we've recently encountered. It would benefit from a component of critical thought within the numerous matrix interactions (as suggested by Apple and Friere). It could also benefit from a deeper, more fully developed social dimension, in which the individual is recognized as a primarily relational being (along the lines of Buber and Weil). The recognition of a student as a relational being suggests a particular way of relating. Several recent philosophers of education have considered exactly what that should look like. Among those are Noddings. Noddings proposes a relationship based primarily upon care.

### *Noddings*

American curriculum specialist Noddings' educational philosophy is known as "care theory" (Flinders, 2001). That in itself suggests an ethos. She challenged both philosophers and educators, "What is the basis for moral action?" Unlike the utilitarian response (based on anticipated consequences) or the deontological response (based on principled reasoning), Noddings proposed that "natural caring," the care a mother has for a child, is the basis for moral action. Ethical caring leads to a state of being in relation, a state of receptivity, of engrossment, and of reciprocity. When principles such as "equity" and "fairness" are considered, they can only be understood from the perspective of a subject, *a person*, with whom dialogue and relations are a necessary part of the equation.

As a result of Noddings' use of maternal, feminist voices in a field traditionally dominated by patriarchic terms such as "justification, fairness, justice," she was challenged to meet rigorous standards of analysis without compromising the spirit of her ideology. She met

this challenge by doing several things: (1) consistently acknowledging views opposed to her own, (2) defining her approach as one emphasizing relatedness and receptivity as opposed to purely gender issues, and (3) proposing that care theorists strive for enlightened understanding and conceptual knowledge as opposed to proving moral truths. Flinders (2001) defined Noddings' educational philosophy as "transformationist," as she proposed transforming the structures of teaching and schools into places of caring and ethical growth of individuals. She critiqued the traditional liberal education (proposed by theorists such as Mortimer Adler) as one based on a narrow concept of humans as primarily rational creatures. Her own experience raising ten children with diverse learning needs was a key source for her concern that education be broadly conceived, responsive, and caring for the needs of individual students. Noddings' care theory harkens back to the core of both Weil's and Buber's insights and articulates what most teachers sense at a deep level: teaching is about forming relationships, and it is the bonds that form between teacher and student, much more than the subject matter, that affect the essence of the child.

This chapter was intended to demonstrate the numerous ways in which recent philosophers from distinct backgrounds, ethnicities and genders (American, Indian, French, Christian, Jewish, male, female) have viewed the moral nature of education and the complexities in the role of the teacher as moral agent.

## CHAPTER 5 LIMINALITY AND SIMONE WEIL

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;  
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,  
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,  
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,  
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,  
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance. (Eliot, *Burnt Norton*, II 16-21)

Before we finally turn to the most important question of this study, “How does a teacher, especially one rooted in a particular religion, best serve her students in her role as a moral agent?”, there is one additional concept that must be considered. Early in the process of determining a topic for this dissertation, I wrote out some of my deepest concerns about my own role as a moral agent in the secular classroom. I started with the acknowledgement that my personal sense of morality comes primarily from my religion, the religion into which I was born. I had recently experienced a conversion to a deeper faith within my own religion. So I had lived the maxim that faith chooses you; you do not choose it. The faith that chooses you, the faith to which I refer, is the type we hear Isaiah speak of when God says to him, "You...I have called my servant,/... I have chosen and will not cast off—/Fear not, I am with you" (Isa 41:9-10). One does not simply turn away from such a call, despite one’s professional inclination. And so I find myself regularly questioning how it is that an educator with a strong faith, working within a secular institution, can balance these two demands: the ultimate respect for the ‘otherness’ of students who claim to have no transcendent beliefs whatsoever, no belief in a particular source of

morality outside themselves, and her role as a moral agent consciously guided by system of ethics developed within her faith.

In typical Christian fashion, I envisioned my dilemma as a cross with a vertical element and a horizontal crossbar. The vertical element stretched up to represent my relation with my Church, with my tradition and ultimately with my God. This vertical bar was deeply rooted within the rich earth of my faith. The horizontal bar was my relation with my students, with my colleagues, with those outside my faith whom I respect and love as they are, yet at some deep level, with whom I long to share the beauty of my tradition. This is the tension inherent in the role of the faith-filled educator: we have obligations both to share and not to share. Our obligation to share comes from our belief in the truth of our faith; our obligation to remain mute comes from the secular society, whose development we witnessed in the past chapters, and who sets limitations on religious behavior in the public realm. Thus the educator with a strong faith finds herself stuck, immobilized, and pinned at the center of the crossbars. But it is *not* the still point Eliot referred to, for there is no dance. Quite the contrary: I am often left feeling that I have failed in what should be my most important jobs. I have failed in both directions—I can only go up and love my God more by going out and loving others, and I can only go out and really love others by somehow (and this is where it gets complicated) living out my faith in God with them.

I looked to several specifically Catholic writers for ways to approach this dilemma, and though I found a great deal of Catholic material that encouraged freedom of religion and openness to people of all faiths (Murray, documents from the Second Vatican Council and papal encyclicals), I did not find the same struggle in these writers that I faced on a daily basis reflected in my perusal of those writing. There was a certainty in the writings of the Church

Fathers and Saints that I lacked. That, I suppose, is why they are Church Fathers and Saints and I am a high school teacher in a secular school. Around this time a couple of my professors mentioned Simone Weil. Their comments intrigued me and convinced me to read some of her writings.

What first struck me about Weil was that she was an educator and philosopher whose writings, regardless of the immediate topic, were driven by questions of morality. This can be seen in surprising details, such as her exhortation that mechanical engineers shift their focus of design from factory machines that are merely technically proficient to machines that take into consideration the “moral well-being of the workmen” (Weil, 2002), as well as larger contexts, such as her cry that the State, as “a cold concern which cannot inspire love, but itself kills, suppresses everything that might be loved” is a source of “moral torment” to which we are all exposed (p. 114). Weil was willing to suffer for others and often provided sustenance for the needy out of her own meager earnings as a teacher. Weil needed to live the “good life” as demanded of her by her convictions, and all along she struggled with intellectual honesty and faith. Finally I noted that she herself lived, especially in the last and most productive writing years of her short life, with a tension. I immediately responded to the tension I sensed in her works.

Weil, who was born to Jewish parents and ultimately came to have a great deal of love for the Catholic faith, never actually converted to Catholicism. She presented many reasons for not doing so. In what is referred to as her first letter to her spiritual guide, a Catholic priest named Fr. J. M. Perrin (with whom she discoursed regularly for just under a year and then continued to converse through letters), she stated that one of the reasons for not entering the

Church was her belief that God wanted her to remain outside the Church. She suggested that she couldn't help wonder whether "God does not want there to be some men and women who have given themselves to him and to Christ and who yet remain outside the Church" (Weil, 1951, p. 6). As she understood it, by not entering the Church, she would not have to separate herself from the "immense and unfortunate mass of unbelievers," which she was certain would happen if she were to enter the Church. She longed, rather, to go among people of all races and classes and be in solidarity with them, to merge into one of them, and to remain indistinguishable among the crowds.

And so she found herself, like the cross I mentioned as symbolic of the Christian faith-filled educator of today, "at the intersection of Christianity and everything that is not Christianity" (Weil, 1952, p. 32). She realized that she "(has) always remained at this exact point, on the threshold of the Church, without moving, quite still, *έν υπομένη* (in patience)" (p. 32). Weil, waiting in patience, was (like me) in search of Eliot's still point. The extent to which she found it is perhaps debatable, but this chapter will begin to explore one particular aspect of her mode of being in the world. I remain highly conscious that there are many ways of understanding Weil's work. My focus on this one particular facet does not intend to be a comprehensive portrait of Weil's opus. It proposes to serve, rather, to illuminate Weil from a view that has not been explored and that may well serve as one possible response to the dilemma of the faith filled educator and how she best can serve her students as a moral agent.

It is the image referred to above, that of willingly remaining in stasis while recognizing that she is occupying a place that calls for transition—consciously remaining on the threshold, that most struck me and drew me to Weil's work as a source of meditation for faith filled

educators. For educators from a strong faith background, too, regularly find themselves in this liminal realm between two worlds, drawn to both and yet unable to fully enter either. This undefined space may offer a certain amount of flexibility to Weil and to educators. It does not exclude insofar as one can glance into the space on either side of the threshold, behold the occupants, be present to the occupants on both sides of the threshold, and yet withhold judgment. It sounds rather ideal, at first glance. But it may be risky, for it is a suspended space. It lurks *between* worlds that offer security and structure. It is a shifting terrain that is betwixt and between societal expectations. Whence one's sustenance in such an area? How long can one exist in liminality without making some sort of a choice? It is hoped that a careful study of Weil's works can help us respond to those questions and ultimately shed some light on the most important question of this study: how does today's faith filled educator best serve as a moral agent for her students?

### *Liminality*

Because several of her most personal letters written later in her life struggled with the concept of choosing the interstitial space between the Church and the rest of the world, and because so much of her previous life was spent either pushing borders and exceeding limits (bounding through a doorway) or exhorting patient expectation (remaining on the threshold), this study of Weil will focus on her as a character whose very existence was often on the margin of being. Although Weil's writings exhort us to act and to serve and to respond to others, and although she herself strove to do so in many different ways (which we will see shortly), it will be argued here that Weil lived much of her life in the *limins*, in the passageway between two

separate worlds. This space in the threshold allowed her a degree of non-conformity that will be explored as a source of freedom and openness for Weil. It is in the light she sheds on the moral conversation in terms of her liminality that Weil will be considered in this study. And so before we continue with our exploration of Weil's ideas, it is necessary to spend a few moments considering the intriguing concept of liminality.

### *Van Gennep*

Van Gennep, an anthropologist from the turn of the Twentieth Century, noted a need for regeneration within societies. As a result of his observations of various cultural traditions of renewal, he posited a tripartite typology of what he coined the "Rite of Passage" as associated with rituals (van Gennep, 1960; Gaillard, 2003; Carson, 1997). This typology consisted in rites of separation, rites of a transitional stage, and the ceremonies that brought the subject forth into the new world (van Gennep, 1960). Van Gennep posited that as a result of these rituals, society not only fostered transitions from one stage of life to another, but also protected the existing structure of the society from internal and external stressors. The types of processes that demanded this ritual renewal—these rites of passage—were pregnancy, childbirth, childhood, departure from childhood, puberty, betrothal, marriage, and death. Additional rituals would be necessary for territorial transitions (Carson). He came to refer to the stages of the rites of passage as preliminal, liminal and postliminal. Van Gennep chose the word liminal as a reference to *limins*, the Latin term for threshold, a "gap between the ordered worlds where almost anything could happen" (Waldron, 1994). Van Gennep suggested that during these transitional times, one

“finds himself physically and magico-religiously in a special situation for a certain length of time: he wavers between two worlds” (in Carson, p. 99).

He seemed to have chosen the term *limins* partly due to the existence of the literal portals in Africa and other locations that were created as independent monuments with both architectural value and ceremonial significance. He also acknowledged the existence of such portals in Shintoism and Taoism in the Far East, in Assyro-Babylonia, in Egypt, and he included the Roman Arch of Triumph as a western example (van Gennep, 1960). Van Gennep suggested that such portals and the associated acts related to crossing thresholds have a universal significance that cuts right across cultural boundaries and time periods.

### *Victor Turner*

The importance of the liminal in a culture was further elucidated by the work of a mid Twentieth<sup>th</sup> Century anthropologist, Victor Turner. Turner spent his early years of study in the field in Africa, developing his ideas about society as a process, a “field of forces and conflict, whose contradictions are expressed and redressed in social drama” (Ben-Amos, 1984). Turner’s earliest work focused on what he termed social drama as a manner of resolving conflict in an African community (Deflem, 1991). After many years of studying African cultures, Turner came to believe that ritual is religious and furthermore that a religious perspective corresponds with the nature of reality itself. Turner suggested that he learned from the Ndembu people in Africa that “after many years as an agnostic and monistic materialist I learned...that ritual and its symbolism are not merely epiphenomena or disguises of deeper social and psychological processes, but have ontological value” (in Deflem, 1991). As a result, a great deal of Turner’s later work focused on

ritual, the personal and societal transformations that accompany ritual, and the relation of ritual and religion.

Turner deepened Van Gennep's categories and focused on the intermediate phase of ritual, the liminal. Waldron described Turner's concept of liminality as the point at which the ritual subject experiences the ambiguity of existing between fixed points of classification, as being structurally invisible, as being in the midpoint of a status sequence. There is, then, a sense in which the liminal subject stands outside the norms and expectations of a society and can choose to embrace alternative social structures. Yet there is risk involved in stripping oneself of social structural status and remaining as part of the interstitial space suggested in liminality. The subject exists as a "no longer/not yet," they are neither living nor dead and both living and dead (Deflem, 1991). Some concrete examples of this "no longer/not yet" and "both living and dead" concept will be seen in an exploration of thresholds found in a particular western text at a later point in this section.

The relation of Turner's idea of liminality to Weil's way of being in the world will be illuminated after considering another aspect of liminality. Turner distinguished three phases of liminality itself: the first related to the communication of the sacra (use of masks, relics and other things that are shown), the second consisted of the exaggeration and distortion of those very same sacra leading to the third stage, a point at which there was a simplification in the social relationships such that all social and cultural distinctions disappeared among the ritual subjects and the only remaining structure was the absolute obedience of all the (now equal) subjects to the authority of the ritual instructors. It is here in this second stage that a feeling of comradeship or community among the liminal subjects is formed. Turner called this "Communitas" (Deflem,

1991). During this experience of passing from structure to structure, Turner said that “Communitas is almost always thought of or portrayed...as a timeless condition, an eternal now, as a moment out of time or as a state to which the normal structural view of time is no longer applicable” (in Waldron, 2004). Communitas in rituals refers to liminality, marginality, interiority, and equality, where subjects are treated as equals to one another and where a bond of “humankindness” reigns between them (Deflem). We will come to see how this concept of equality among people, this breaking down of societally imposed distinctions, was very important to how Weil lived her life.

#### *Additional Thresholds Examined*

Because this concept of liminality is crucial to this study, I was curious to discover the ways in which thresholds may have been used in the western culture, aside from the obvious rite of passage in which the groom carries his bride across the threshold of their new home (or the hotel room on the honeymoon) to complete the public rite of the marriage ceremony in the United States. I turned to one of the most influential and widely available sources of western tradition to explore the threshold concept myself. I performed a search in the Judeo-Christian Bible for the term “threshold.” For ease of accessibility and to ensure a speedy search, I used the electronic version of the Holy Bible offered on the Questia website for my source.

In this unscientific search in the Holy Bible (Revised Standard Edition), using the Questia online website’s search engine, the word “threshold” appeared 21 times in the text. Of these 21

times, 11 of them simply referred to a person's occupation as "keeper of the threshold."<sup>1</sup> I did not focus on those particular instances, as they referred mostly to a person. I suspect, though, that we could learn more about thresholds in exploring the character who was guarding it. Nevertheless, I went on to examine the allusions to thresholds in which a specific location was referred to. In the remaining ten references to thresholds as *an actual location at which some event took place*, one of three patterns was evident. There was either an enormous sense of holiness to the space (in 5 of the references), or there was an inherent danger there (in 3 of the reference) or, at times, there was both this sense of sacredness and an implied potential for violence. Although it is recognized that this is not a scientifically rigorous exploration (there could be different translations in different versions of the Bible and these could change the results somewhat), for the purpose of this study, the particular online search was deemed generally representative of what could be expected in other translations and so was considered a viable exploration. And so, because this is a consideration of Weil's liminality from the perspective of an educator of faith, I will spend a few moments here considering more carefully the treatment of the liminal space references in the Bible.

One manifestation of the holiness of a threshold was suggested when the prophet Ezekiel was sitting in his home. He was seized by the hair and saw a vision of God and cherubim stationed outside the temple. As a man entered the temple to gather coal to scatter for purification purposes, Ezekiel said that "The glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherubim, upon which it had been, to the threshold of the temple. As the man entered, the cloud

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<sup>1</sup> in 2 Kings and Jeremiah

filled the inner court, and the glory of the LORD rose from over the cherubim to the threshold of the temple; the temple was filled with the LORD” (Ezekiel 10: 2-4). He then goes on to say that “Then the glory of the LORD left the threshold of the temple and rested upon the cherubim. These lifted their wings, and I saw them rise from the earth...” (Ezekiel 10: 17-18). This vision demonstrated the absolute sacred nature of the passage into the temple itself. It clearly demarcated the sacred space and distinguished it from the outside. The cherubim transport the glory of the LORD to the threshold itself. It is in passing through the threshold that the temple is filled with the LORD.

In addition to acknowledging the sacred nature of thresholds, Ezekiel referred to the potential peril to the unworthy people who approach a sacred threshold. He suggested the risk of profaning the temple by outside influences when he recorded God’s warning to him, “When they [the Kings Ahaz or Manasseh, who treated the temple as a private chapel and used it for pagan rites] placed their threshold against my threshold and their doorpost next to mine...they profaned my holy name by their abominable deeds; therefore I consumed them in my wrath” (Ezekiel, 43:8-9). These kings are so deplorable and full of pride that they were destroyed simply due to their attempts to locate themselves near a holy site. Both themes, that of the sacredness and that of implied danger can be seen in the latter selection from Ezekiel. Other instances of the potential for violence and a lack of set norms can be found in relation to thresholds in the Bible.

The next occurrences of thresholds I discovered were perhaps the most fascinating. For in each of the following three examples of the danger surrounding thresholds, deaths occur precisely at a threshold. The idea of the risks inherent in liminality, an idea that I believe is suggested here, is something we will consider in relation to Weil herself. To see how this is

demonstrated in the Holy Bible, we turn to the First Book of Kings. In this story, Jeroboam (a king who turned away from God's word) sent his wife off to consult with a prophet about their sick son. The prophet gave her the bitter news that their son would die because of the idolatry and wickedness of Jeroboam. And so, "Jeroboam's wife started back; when she reached Tirzah and crossed the threshold of her house, the child died" (1 Kings, 15:17-18). There, precisely at the threshold, the child died. Perhaps the choice the wife made in crossing the threshold—the choice of returning the son to the idolatrous king, where the son himself would be led toward the same destructive path as the king—was the death knoll of the sick son. The suggestion of the danger inherent in such space is evident. Crossing the threshold back into the world of the palace would have been a spiritual death, as the son would have ended up like his father, an idolater. The death on the threshold was merely a physical death, preferable in biblical terms to the spiritual death that awaited him on the other side of the threshold.

In a similar incident, in the first book of Samuel, an episode is recalled when the Philistines had captured the ark of God and put it in their temple beside Dagon, their own god. The next day, the god Dagon was found lying prone on the ground before the ark of the Lord. He was replaced, but once again was found, the very next day, "prone on the ground before the ark of the Lord, his head and hands broken off and lying on the threshold, his trunk alone intact" (1 Samuel, 5:4). In this case it is the death of the heathen god that occurs in the threshold. It is to be noted that perhaps the most important aspects of the pagan god—his head representing his ability to think and his hands suggesting his ability to act thereon—are found in the liminal space between the worlds of the old gods and the new God of Israel. It does not belong in the sacred

space of the ark; its power can get no closer than the threshold. It was crushed by the God of Israel and this will be evident to all who enter the holy space.

Finally, in what I find to be one of the more disturbing scenes from the Hebrew Bible, the end of book of Judges narrates the story of the Levite from Ephraim. It should be noted that these chapters from Judges, 19-21, both start and end with the same words in the verse, “at that time, there was no king in Israel” (Judges, 19:1; 21:25). This alone warns us of probable lawlessness and disorder. In this particular incident, a Levite’s concubine had been unfaithful to him, left him, and had returned to her father. The Levite intended to forgive her and take her back. He followed her home, celebrated with her father for several days until the girl’s father reluctantly allowed them to leave. As they were travelling back to Ephraim, they sought a place to spend the night. They entered the Benjaminite town of Gibeah and waited in the public square for an offer for lodging. One good man among them invited the Levite, his concubine and his servant in for the night. While they were dining, the evil townies surrounded the house and called the Levite outside, “that they may abuse (him)” (Judges, 19:22). Rather than send the Levite out, the one good man and the Levite offered the Gibeon man’s “maiden daughter” or the Levite’s concubine to the crowd. It is then stated that “When the men would not listen to the host, the husband seized his concubine and thrust her outside to them” (Judges, 19: 25-26). The men of the town abused the woman all night long. When she was finally released, she made her way back and collapsed at the entrance to the old man’s house, “where she lay until the morning” (19:26). The passage continues that “When her husband rose that day and opened the door of the house to start out again on his journey, there lay the woman, his concubine, at the entrance to the house *with her hands on the threshold*” (19:26-27, my italics). The woman was dead.

The story becomes more dramatic when the Levite put her body on his donkey and returned home. He then chopped his concubine's body into twelve pieces to send throughout the territory of Israel as a demonstration of the lawlessness of the Benjaminite tribe. The choice of an unfaithful concubine for this sacrifice is interesting; it is possible that the reader is intended to feel that God is meting out His judgment in her violent death. Yet we are also led to sympathize with this woman and her family. We see her at home at the start of the story, and though we don't hear a word from her, we see the depth of her father's love for her as he repeatedly invites her husband to stay and feast just one more night in order that her departure might be postponed. In that manner, the reader is sure to commiserate with the father when the news inevitably reaches him of the brutal death of his beloved daughter. The husband's violent and shocking reaction also results in the reader's compassion; only a man who was suffering tremendously could conceive of such a response. But the important part for the purpose of this study is the specific mention that the woman died with her hands literally on the threshold. This woman had seen both worlds: she, in her own past, had been a part of the world of the evil townies, she had been forgiven and tried to return to the world of her husband and the good Levite, but had been forsaken and sent back out to the evil world. Yet she returned to the threshold. What she entered there was her death, at least her physical death, yet as a result, her people entered into an agreement to band all Israelites together to teach the Benjaminite tribe a lesson (after which even the surviving Benjaminites were taken back into the fold).

The fact that thresholds are used in such dramatic ways in the Bible serves as additional evidence that they are, indeed, powerful symbols not only within numerous cultures that appear somewhat removed from our western civilization, such as the African and Egyptian communities

referred to in anthropologists' work mentioned above, but also within the roots of our very own western tradition. Thresholds both limit and delimit; they demarcate sacred spaces; they both open up and close, and they are spaces in which the normal rules of operation within a culture may be suspended. This may be life-giving, as seen in the narratives that present them as sacred spaces, or fatal, as demonstrated in the stories in which deaths occur upon thresholds. Thresholds were depicted in the Bible as the "no longer/not yet" and the "both living and dead" spaces that Turner defined in his own studies.

Having a better understanding of the concept of liminality, it is time to consider Weil and her addition to the moral conversation in education. As we enter into her thought, it will become evident how the concept of liminality illuminates her way of being in the world. We should keep in mind, though, that the anthropologists we examined described liminality as a stage of a ritual experience. Weil, it would almost appear, sought to live a great deal of her life in this liminal world of ambiguity and expectation. Deflem (1991) says that there was no apparent distinction between the life and work of Turner; one could say the same of Weil. A great deal of her life was the manifestation of the work of her mind.

### *Weil*

Weil and her thinking have been labeled in numerous manners. She has been called a "kind of neo-Platonic, Christian mystic, despite her Jewish origins" (Palmer, 2001), "one of the foremost thinkers of modern times" who, according to Miles, (1986), is just as likely to be portrayed as a "latter-day saint, an absurd absolutist or...(some other) stereotype with which every woman is familiar," a philosopher (and more specifically an existentialist philosopher), a

political activist (perhaps a radical), a sociologist, an anorexic, and a teacher. Marcel, an existential philosopher himself, warns against enclosing her thought into any specific category (Miles). Weil speaks to many people in language they can understand as a result of her breadth of interests, her depth of understanding and her attempts to discover relations among apparently disparate ideas and thoughts. Perhaps as a result of her very breadth (and certainly as a result of the incomplete nature of the journals that were ultimately published as her thoughts), if read scrupulously and unforgivingly, Weil's writings may be called inconsistent. This study attempted to ignore previous labels and looked instead toward the inconsistencies in her writings as evidence of her ongoing struggle toward truth and her liminal tendencies. Because the thesis of this paper holds that educators have something to learn from Weil's liminal approach to her life and teachings, this next section will carefully explore the many ways in which Weil lived her life with a certain degree of liminality. We will then consider exactly how today's faith filled educator can learn from her.

### *Liminal Patterns in Weil's Life*

For Weil did, indeed, live a life that required consciousness of thresholds, whether her intent was to wait patiently right upon the threshold, or push them back and explore their limits. The following sections will examine ways in which Weil's liminality can be seen in numerous aspects of her life, from the way she thought to the way she behaved to the way she worked to the way she dressed and even the way she died. Ultimately it will lead us to her thoughts and actions as a teacher that may help today's educator in her quest for how to best act as a moral agent.

### *Religious Liminality*

Several facets of liminality, including the suspension of cultural norms, the longing for limit experiences and the paradox of the open and closed can be seen in Weil's life and struggles. In the introduction to her collection of writings called *Gravity and Grace*, Thibon, a close friend of Weil's toward the end of her life, wrote, "(Weil) actually experienced in its heartbreaking reality the distance between knowing and knowing with all one's soul, and the one object of her life was to abolish that distance" (Weil, 1952, p. 5). Thibon expressed here Weil's position in the *limins*, in the threshold of a full assent to a particular way of knowing. This statement suggests what I will call religious liminality, an inability to enter into and fully trust a particular mode of religious thought. Weil found that both ways of knowing: rational/empirical and revealed/supernatural demanded her consideration, but neither in itself was sufficient. She longed for the type of surety that comes with "knowing with all one's soul," the type of knowledge that comes with revealed truths that one simply and fully assents to. Thibon described her as standing just outside both—neither was available to her. The one (intellectual assent) was not satisfactory to her because she sensed there was more to knowing than reason could offer, and the other (knowing with one's soul) was not yet within her reach because she could not give herself fully to a particular revealed tradition. As a result, she could not give herself fully to one or the other. She remained in liminality.

Additional evidence for her struggle between a rational and supernatural manner of understanding the world can be seen as well when Weil, late in her life, wrote to Schumann, "I am ceaselessly and increasingly torn, both in my intelligence and in the depth of my heart, through my inability to conceive simultaneously and in truth of the affliction of men, the

perfection of God and the link between the two” (Perrin & Thibon, p. 87). It is partly due to the question of human suffering (that she herself experienced physically due to intense migraine headaches) and a perfect God (who could eliminate suffering but does not) that she could not fully commit and submit her own doubts to a particular belief or disbelief. This struggle left her in the space just outside a full assent. She herself recognized that and continued,

a Christian cannot think this way. A Christian knows that a single thought of love raised to God in truth...is more useful, even for this world, than the most brilliant action. I am outside the truth, no human thing can transport me into it, and I have the inner certainty that God will transport me into it no other way than (through affliction). (Perrin & Thibon, p. 88)

Perrin, a Catholic priest who served as her spiritual guide, also acknowledged her perpetual stance outside norms and called it her “incompleteness.” He wrote that Weil, to his knowledge, never “felt that she had reached her goal, and...suffered deeply on account of her incompleteness” (p. 96). And yet we have the feeling that this stance, painful as it were, was consciously chosen. Weil says in a letter to Fr. Perrin that is referred to as her spiritual biography, “unless I am mistaken I should say that it is His will that I should stay outside (the Church) for the future too, except perhaps at the moment of death. Yet I am always ready to obey any order” (Weil 1951, p. 31). She identified herself as outside, she knew how close her thoughts were to a complete acquiescence, and despite the suffering this caused her, she chose not to cross the threshold.

### *Social Liminality*

It is not only in the religious realm that she experienced liminality. Thibon also reminded us, as he wrote about ten years after her death, that the people who knew Weil when she was alive had various and sundry things to say of her, few of which were complimentary. The very fact that people had such distinct views of her suggests that she was not operating within the expected social spaces. Even her social relations demonstrated aspects of liminality. “With the exception of a few rare admirers,” he wrote, “I must own that those who knew her in 1941 generally spoke to me of her as an anarchist, a visionary, and an impossible person—and I am deliberately softening the expressions they used. And now, these are the very people who flatter themselves that they discerned her genius and her heroism from the very first!” (Perrin & Thibon, p. 113). This perspective into other people’s view of her becomes fascinating when one considers what Carson (1997) said about people who are in a liminal space (he terms them “transitional beings” or “liminal personae”). He cited anthropologist Mary Douglas as saying, “Liminal personae nearly always and everywhere are regarded as polluting to those who have never been... ‘innoculated’ against them, through having been themselves initiated into the same state” (in Carson, p. 101). And so it should come as little surprise that people who themselves had not struggled in the liminal space of Weil should feel somewhat repelled by her own situation within the *limins*.

Weil’s very appearance demonstrated her unwillingness to fit into social expectations, which I term her social liminality. Her need to remain on the borders of a social existence evoked contradictory responses in those who knew her, one aspect of which was referred to above. Bataille, another acquaintance of Weil’s from the Communist party, described her as having an

“undeniable ugliness, but...also a true beauty” (Gray, p. 76). He went on to say she appeared asexual and that she both “pleased and terrified” those around her (p. 76). Thibon described her as awkward and stiff, and went on to speak of her “superb ignorance” of social canons in her appearance. He went so far as to call the feelings she first aroused in him “painful” (Perrin & Thibon, p. 116). They were painful to him precisely because he did not know where this woman, who defied defined social spaces, fit in his own world. When she met him he felt that he was “face to face with an individual who was radically foreign to all (his) ways of feeling and of life...(he) felt like a stranger in a strange land, faced with a new world and unknown skies” (p. 116). Fr. Perrin confirmed this feeling that she was outside the realm of traditional social roles when he wrote that she was “completely unaware of most of the customs and conventions of social life, from the art of dressing oneself to that of pleasing...her fate was that of Baudelaire’s swan—to be ‘like exiles, ridiculous and sublime’” (Perrin & Thibon, p. 4). He went on, as if conscious himself of her position on the threshold, that she was

at the same time above and below the level of normal activities, and the picturesque singularity of her person was at once the consequence and antithesis of the self-effacement and transparency of her personality. There was always the same opposition and polarity between them as between the flight and the walk of the albatross. (p. 5)

This portrait of her suggests that even in social settings, she felt no need to participate in what was expected of her. She was betwixt and between social convention and simply not willing to participate in them. And, as Carson (1986) explained, people in such a state are seen as dangerous to others because they are considered taboo; they need purification; they are in a state between order and disorder, form and formlessness, life and death.

Carson's insight into the need for purification for those in liminal spaces would make sense of Thibon's comment in the introduction to *Gravity and Grace*. Thibon wrote, "Impregnating the whole of Simone Weil's work is the driving force of an intense desire for inward purification which comes out even in her metaphysics and her theology" (p. 19). It may, as well, offer some insight into Weil's strict adherence to the virtues of obedience, chastity and poverty, the last of which included her continual tendency to deny herself comforts (including food) in order to offer them to others. What Gray interpreted as anorexic tendencies, I understand as an ascetic drive that was a result of her longing for purification. This would support the thesis that Weil sought purification because she felt herself at the liminal intersection of the definite and the indefinite. She saw the suffering of the cross as the intersection of "the world and that which is not the world," and she was willing to bear the cross of purity to accomplish this. Evil, she said,

is infinite in the sense of being indefinite: matter, space, time. Nothing can overcome this kind of infinity except the true infinity. That is why on the balance of the cross a body which was frail and light, but which was God, lifted up the whole world. 'Give me a point of leverage and I will lift up the world.' This point of leverage is the cross...It has to be at the intersection of the world and that which is not the world. The cross is this intersection. (Weil, 1952, p. 146)

### *Vocational Liminality*

Weil's first job, after graduating from the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* in 1931 with a degree in philosophy (she and Simone de Beauvoir were among the first women admitted) was a

teaching post in Le Puy, France. Weil was 22 years old. To the dismay of the people in the small town, who expected her to uphold the decorum expected of a young, respectable female teacher and fraternize only with people of her own social and educational status, she disregarded public opinion. She associated with the factory workers in the town where she was assigned to teach. She crossed gender, social and vocational boundaries as she both played and picketed with LePuy's workforce in solidarity for their cause. This behavior is representative of what I call Weil's vocational liminality. She attempted to live in the undefined space between the teacher and the worker; she flouted the societal norms and lived outside their structures and expectations.

It was not enough for her to socialize with the factory workers. In another demonstration of her need to push vocational boundaries and live on the edge of thresholds, and despite a teacher's salary that made it possible for her to live reasonably well, she refused to eat more than the rations of the unemployed and those on relief. She donated her own surplus food to the needy. When this was not enough of a sacrifice, she felt compelled to push the border of solidarity and to live the life of the worker: she wrote the Ministry of Education and requested a leave of absence from her teaching position that she might "research a philosophical essay concerning the relationship of modern technology...to the essential aspects of our civilization—our social organization [and] our culture" (in Gray, p. 81). She then found a job at a Renault auto plant, intending to fully experience the plight of the factory worker in order that she may write about it. She anticipated an existence as both factory worker and philosopher, but, as is often seen in her life, there is a sense in which she was neither. She was trapped in the middle.

Although it may at first appear that such an act was a step out of the threshold that separated the world of the teacher/philosopher and the worker, in order to become fully a factory

hand herself, it must be understood that despite her willingness to exist on the wages of the worker and to subsist on the food available to him—to love him by her “belief in the existence of (him) as such”—she nevertheless was still essentially distanced from him (Weil, 1952, p. 113). The director of the Renault plant eventually hired her (despite the fact that she was an inexperienced and rather clumsy woman) and agreed to shield her identity as an intellectual from her coworkers. This, however, did not bring her into the world of the workers in any deep sense. A mere glance at her hands and bearing revealed her social class to the keen eyes of the experienced factory workers and separated her from them (Gray, 2001). She was, though she tried to avoid the label, an academic from a comfortable family, who wanted to experience other ways of life, but never quite fit in. Though she worked for a year in various factories, she admitted that she found “very little real fraternity” (Petrement, 1976).

For she was, at this time, neither fully a worker nor completely an educator, despite the roles she played out. She communicated through letters to friends and wrote about the workers’ conditions as she worked in the factories. In one note she wrote, “I live in fear of not being able to meet the work quotas that one must attain to stay in the factory,” in another, “I fit into the environment like a fish in water, as you can imagine,” and in another, “...there are norms of speed, laid down by pitiless bureaucrats, that must be observed—both to avoid getting fired and in order to earn enough....I am still unable to achieve the required speeds” (Petrement, p. 225-6). And for most of the time she was in the factory, hoping to philosophize about her experience, she was too exhausted to think when she returned home from work. Exhaustion, she wrote, made her forget the real reason she was working in the factory. She was in the space in-between, neither able to function as an educator/philosopher nor as a worker. Her liminality in the factory

environment was heightened by the fact that she was a woman in a predominantly man's world. She keenly felt her dignity offended by not only the foremen, but also the other male workers, "due to the single fact that (she was) a woman" (in Gray, p. 92).

It is interesting to note that the time she felt most solidarity with the workers was not when she was actually working in any of the various factories in which she found employment during her months of factory work, but rather in the unemployment line when she was between the several jobs she held in the factories. Here, among other socially liminal coworkers, there existed a sense of fraternity. Gray (2001) cited a journal entry in which Weil wrote about her time sharing memories and reflections with the other unemployed workers in the unemployment line that, "For the first time in my life, no barriers, either in any class or gender differences" were felt in the presence of the others (p. 89). It should not be surprising that even this sense of camaraderie did not last long. For a few months later she was again in the unemployment lines, talking to the other unemployed men and women and at this point she wrote very consciously of her existence outside their world when she referred to herself as "a professor gone slumming amid the working class" (Gray, p. 94).

Similar comments can be made of some of her other vocational plans, such as her intent to head a brigade of nurses who would parachute into the front lines of the WWII battles being fought in France and care for the needs of the soldiers (Perrin & Thibon, 1953). With such plans, she was pushing convention and creating a space in which there were no rules or expectations. She was neither a nurse nor a parachuter nor a soldier in a battle. She existed outside each of these roles, yet could stay in a middle position and toward each of them in an attempt to efface herself and live for the other. This is reminiscent of Turner's stage of liminality called

communitas. Weil, both in her approach to the workers and in her longing to participate with the soldiers in their rations and risks, may have been driven by a search for the type of “spontaneous sociability, love for each other, sense of solidarity and equality...where utopian ideals and hopes for a better future can be voiced and alternative paradigms of socio-cultural structure devised” (Waldron, 2004). For in these experiences of communitas, as we saw described earlier in Turner’s work, society is envisioned as a composition of free and equal comrades who share values and ideals. Cooperative and egalitarian behavior is expected, and “everyday definitions of status and division are ignored” (Waldron). Such a time outside of time and outside of space would certainly have appealed to Weil.

### *Liminal Love?*

As may be expected, Weil lived out her love for others in the most paradoxical fashion. Her very expression of love itself and her devotion to other can be said to have been liminal. Thibon (1953) wrote of her personal interactions and said that she had a sense of isolation in her interior life that affected her relations with her neighbors. Weil was highly aware of others as people who really exist, as someone for whom she was willing to make great sacrifices and even as someone who was “*preferable to herself;*” however, he says,

she was very far from possessing to the same degree a sense of the person *as someone else*. She was inwardly founded on love like those volcanoes of the arctic region of which the lava is hidden under a covering of ice, but at the periphery she lacked that permeability and tenderness which enable us to know and love our brothers just as they are. (p. 121)

Thibon suggested here that Weil's disposition toward others remained somewhat closed. Even in her love for others, she remained at the periphery; she remained on the outside, at the threshold of the deepest types of relationships. It is most likely due to this that she never married. And yet despite this tendency toward liminality even in her relations with others, she did develop some close friends, three of whom were Perrin, Thibon and Bousquet.

### *Liminality and Suffering*

In May of 1942, in the year before her death, she wrote a letter to Bousquet and expressed some of her ideas. She expressed, at times directly, and at times only metaphorically, her sense of liminality in this note as well. Bousquet was a WWI veteran whose spine had been shattered, leaving him a quadriplegic. As a result of the depth of his suffering, Weil believed he had lived through affliction, a state of the body and soul that is so comprehensive and dramatic that it "takes possession of the soul and marks it through and through with its own particular mark, the mark of slavery" (Weil, 1998, p. 41). Affliction is violent; it uproots life and grips and attacks a person at all levels: socially, psychologically and physically. The afflicted person is degraded in every way possible. Weil herself had suffered affliction due to the intense and frequent pain that she described to Bousquet as emanating from the "meeting-place of soul and body" and which "(had) never stopped for a second" (p. 38).

When speaking directly of affliction, Weil referred to the existence of the threshold between what may be perceived to be affliction but is merely deep sorrow, and actual affliction itself. There is, she said, "both continuity and a separating threshold, like the boiling point of water, between affliction itself and all the sorrows which...are not affliction in the true sense" (p.

43). To know true affliction, one must experience it fully and completely in one's flesh, "driven very far in like a nail, and for a long time, so that thought may have time to grow strong enough to regard it...nailed down at a fixed point" (p. 35). The aspect of being nailed down, of experiencing immobility is crucial because it is here, once again, that the soul can grow as it attentively waits, in patience and in pain, for the seed of divine love: God. This waiting, once again, brings us to the idea of liminality. One belongs neither to this world nor to another world. One simply waits "motionless, in expectation, unshaken and unmoved by any external shock" (p. 35). For only thus can God come to find us. She reiterated this idea numerous times, including in an essay entitled "The Love of God and Affliction," where she wrote,

Our love of God should be like a woman's love for a man, which does not express itself by making advances, but consists only in waiting. God is the bridegroom, and it is for the Bridegroom to come to the one he has chosen and speak to her and lead her away. The bride-to-be should only wait. (Weil, 1998, p. 84)

And this liminal existence, this perpetual state of waiting, this existence somewhere on the bounds of life and death, of being and non-being, brings us to the final instance of liminality in Weil's life: her death.

### *Liminality and Death*

It should be clear by now that Weil spent a great deal of her life in a liminal space, between worlds, without clear boundaries, pushing limits and waiting on thresholds. One wonders, then, whether her very approach to life could have contributed to her early death.

She died in 1943 in a sanatorium in Kent, where she had been taken just before her death. She assiduously hid her illness (diagnosed as tuberculosis) from her parents and, despite her increasing weakness, she wrote them lengthy notes in a firm hand until a week before she died (Gray, 2001). Her refusal for food had increased in the weeks and months before her death, despite friends', doctors' and nurses' insistence that her nutritional deprivations were destroying her health. Although Gray wrote as if Weil were a classic case of anorexia nervosa, she admitted that Weil's death was not

any classical form of suicide, or even the kind of death many anorexics meet...her attitude seemed to be one of apathy and detachment rather than active self-destruction. It is possible that she was not so much depriving herself of food as communing with her compatriots through abstention, not so much seeking death as cultivating that stoic indifference she had long admired. (Gray, p. 208)

Unlike Gray, who found Weil's tendency to refuse meals and deny herself such indulgences as sugar (even as a child) suggestive of anorexia, I believe her refusal of food itself may be taken as another manifestation of her liminality and ascetism. Van Gennep (1960) wrote that the act of eating and drinking together "is clearly a rite of incorporation, of physical union, and has been called a sacrament of communion" (p. 29). The act of eating meals together forms a basis of family and community life. Seen as such, it is not so terribly odd that Weil did not fully participate in this act of communion. In her manner of eating, as well as so many other aspects of her life, she felt outside such complete union with others. She lived on the threshold.

During her stay in the hospital, she called upon a priest in order, she claimed, that she may explain to him the obstacles to her baptism. Weil, as close to death as she was, was still

trapped on the threshold. Fr. de Naurois, the priest who attended her, described her as “a wholly ready soul ...[which] was highly abstract and abstruse, of a rapid dialectic, and ...elusive.” He went on to say that she “would not accept any fixed starting points from which to advance or retreat” (Gray, p. 206). Such a statement supports the thesis of Weil’s liminality, for neither advance nor retreat is possible when one is living in liminal space.

Despite the fact that most scholars who write about Weil suggest that she never converted to Catholicism, there is some evidence that she did, at least, finally consent to baptism. Gray (2001) recorded that Weil assented to baptism by a friend of hers, Simone Dietz. A few days after Weil made a comment that suggested that she would like to be baptized if she were ever to fall into a coma and be left without a will of her own, Dietz, while Weil was still cognizant, baptized her with some water from the tap, to which Weil responded, “Go ahead; it can’t do any harm” (p. 207). Perhaps this detached response is the only response possible for a woman who so steadfastly opted for the world of liminality for most of her existence.

Gray (2001) suggested that Weil, in refusing food so frequently in her last weeks of life, chose death. Perhaps the very liminality that Weil had so long balanced had become overwhelming itself. In liminality, in not choosing, there was a sense in which she was choosing. Perhaps it is not possible to survive for extended periods in a truly liminal situation. Perhaps one is called to choose or be chosen. It might be tempting to believe that Weil, in not choosing, chose death.

## CHAPTER 6 WEIL AS MORAL EDUCATOR

Because this study is interested in Weil as a moral educator, it will focus on her writings that address related issues. Its intent is not to try to understand the entire extent of her writing and life. It is therefore understood that this particular representation of her thought will remain incomplete. The reader is directed to peruse her works for a more personal and complete encounter with this great mind.

Though there were many aspects of her life that suggested liminality, Weil did not question her role as a moral educator, nor did she question the ends of education or the ends of human beings. In a reflection about public freedom of expression written in her essay called “Human Personality,” she spoke of the ends of public education as a whole and said,

What is first needed is a system of public education capable of providing...that point in the heart which cries out against evil...with means of expression; and next, a regime in which the public freedom of expression is characterized...by an attentive silence in which this faint and inept cry can make itself heard.... (in Miles, p. 53)

Two themes that are critical to Weil’s understanding of education are introduced here: she was first passionately concerned about justice and the evils imposed upon the poor and afflicted and she secondly believed that an attitude of attentive waiting and openness to truth is both an important part of the solution and that which should be part of the educative process. Both of these were founded on a belief in a *telos* of human life that consisted in acknowledging what she referred to as our eternal destiny: the identical obligations we all have, simply insofar as we are human, and independent of any conditions. The idea of obligation as a transcendental *telos* for

humankind is developed in *The Need for Roots*; obligation is “coextensive with the eternal destiny of humans...not based on any convention...(and it) is an eternal one” (Weil, 2006, p. 5). These subjects will be evident in much of her writing and will be considered more in depth shortly.

Although Weil spent considerable time writing about her Christian concept of education, in true Weilian style, she also acknowledged the value that other ideas and other cultures add to the educative process. Weil (2006) began her work *The Need for Roots* with a statement, mentioned above, that starkly defined her own rootedness: obligations, she said, are primary to rights. Rights, then, are subordinate and relative to obligations. All human beings are bound by identical obligations, and an obligation exists toward every human being simply because they are human. Obligations are not based on convention; they are eternal, unconditional, and yet without foundation. Obligation, however, does have verification: universal conscience. This idea can be found in the most ancient of texts, across cultures and religions. All obligations stem from the fulfillment of the needs vital to humans. In Weil’s list of such needs she included order, liberty, responsibility and others. The most important, though, and least recognized vital human need is rootedness. Education has suffered from a lack of rootedness, or even worse, from being rooted in the wrong ideals (Weil, 2006). MacIntyre, as we have seen, would suggest that the lack of rootedness stems from the loss of the *telos* that were held by Weil.

Yet coming from the perspective of a universal acknowledgement of obligations and needs, Weil responded to questions related to teaching morals and values in schools by suggesting that,

We perceive more clearly what justice demands in this matter once the notion of right has been replaced by that of obligation related to need. The soul of a child, as it reaches out towards understanding, has need of the treasures accumulated by the human species through the centuries. We do injury to a child if we bring it up in a narrow Christianity which prevents it from ever becoming capable of perceiving that there are treasures of the purest gold to be found in non-Christian civilizations. Lay education does even greater injury to children. It covers up those treasures, and those of Christianity as well. (Weil, p. 91)

Here we see how the in-between position—the call for liminality—is suggested. A specifically Christian education itself is insufficient to express all the treasures of humanity, but to avoid Christianity entirely is just as destructive. There is the suggestion of an in-between space and a call to the educator to place herself between and offer to her students all that is Christian and all that is not, all at once. Neither world, in itself, is sufficient. Furthermore, there is recognition that there is a separation of cultures, of languages and of norms. It is this acknowledgement that calls for the choice of the *limins*.

And so for Weil, part of the solution is not to oppress discussions related to questions of morals or even of religions, but rather to allow free discussion about it, “no matter what genuine current of religious thought” (Weil, 2006, p. 93) because they all point towards the same ultimate source. And this, perhaps, is part of Weil’s genius and what we can learn from her. She held onto the concept of a telos, that concept that allows for a coherent moral position, but she did not try to limit it to her own particular vision of it. It is for reflections such as this that her Catholic friend, Fr. Perrin, later said of her that her beliefs formed a type of syncretism. He noted that she

attempted to create a system of her own in which “the main points were that all religious traditions originated in revelation, that the message was transmitted in legend or folklore, that we have to trace equivalences in all the different cults and teachings—in short, (she created) a syncretism founded on the revelation of God himself” (Perrin & Thibon, p. 58). As a Catholic, Fr. Perrin found the syncretism unsuitable and incomplete for the transmission of Truth. It is Weil’s use of this type of language, though, that allows for a sort of religious liminality. God is acknowledged as the source of revelation and thus of Truth, but in acknowledging the values of the various perspectives, one need not choose among them. One can remain on the border of the various ways of thought and have the freedom to lean more towards one or another as need be. This may be a helpful perspective for teachers in today’s pluralistic society. If, of course, it is indeed a viable position.

This is very close to the type of thought expressed some 45 years later by Taylor (1986), who, as a theologian at Princeton Theological Seminary and as a graduate of a seminary himself, wrote from within the Christian tradition but felt the pressing need to remain open to other. In his reflection on the ability of the Christian to exist in a liminal space in order to acknowledge and affirm the culturally other, he said that

(T)he Christ symbol expresses *and* creates Christian experience lived within, but at the margins of, at the *limen* of, its own cultural and linguistic worlds. The Christian’s liminal existence involves an affirmation of the culturally other and, ultimately, an affirmation of all those who are most severely marginalized, “made other” by the dynamics and structures of oppression. (Taylor, p. 37)

Of course Weil never saw the possibility of both entering fully into the Christian faith and existing in her liminal world that opened upon others of all faiths and beliefs. Perhaps if she had, she would have been more likely to convert. And again, to demonstrate both her attachment to the Christian faith and the slight repulsion towards it (that repulsion that kept her in her interstitial space), Weil said, “I adhere completely to the mysteries of the Christian faith, with the kind of adherence which alone seems to me to be suitable for mysteries; this adherence is made of love, not assertion” (Perrin, 1953). This statement suggests that Weil saw the potential for violence of some sort, which she called assertion, in the full assent to the doctrines of Christianity.

#### *Schooling and the Individual Educator*

Weil’s declaration and deep conviction that there is great value and richness in “all the immense stretches of past centuries...all the countries inhabited by colored races; all the secular life in the white people’s countries...all the traditions of these countries banned as heretical” can be seen in her essay on school studies (Weil, 1951, p. 32). Although there is certainly a heavily Christian influence, there are many other belief systems referenced in this essay as well. She referred to an Eskimo myth and she spoke, in language typical to her, about suspending thought, emptying self and detaching from the world. These phrases suggest both Stoic and Eastern influence. Thus the range of her influences is evident as she reflects on the goals and ends of education. She is very clear when she started off by suggesting that the *end* of everything done in school is not good grades or honors or even students’ own natural abilities or tastes. The end of all education is to help form in students the habit of attention that is required of prayer (Weil,

1951). According to Weil, “to make this (attention required for prayer) the sole and exclusive purpose of our studies is the first condition to be observed if we are to put (our studies) to the right use” (Weil, p. 59).

Weil began her essay “Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God” with the admission that hers is a Christian conception of studies, and yet we have already seen the various influences at work in her thought. The title of the essay itself stressed the above idea that ultimately prayerful attention and love of God usurped all other educational goals. To do so, to develop these abilities, the educator must train the students in the faculty of attention. All school disciplines are merely opportunities to develop the ability to attend. Part of learning to attend is learning discipline. This can be learned through things such as geometry, even for the student who does not like geometry. “If we have no aptitude or natural taste for geometry,” she suggested, “this does not mean that our faculty for attention will not be developed by wrestling with a problem or studying a theorem. On the contrary it is almost an advantage” (Weil, 1951, p. 58). It is an advantage insofar as it can demand even more discipline and more concentration to attend to something we do not find naturally appealing. She continued to say that even if we are entirely unsuccessful in solving the problem, and our experience of such apparently barren studies tells us otherwise, we have still enlarged our souls by simply concentrating all our attention on such a difficult problem. And ultimately there is “no doubt” that such careful scrutiny will bear fruit in our prayer life.

Weil compared the correct use of studies (always with a view to prayer) to the exercise of writing letters on paper. It is not the shape of the letters themselves that really matter; it is the idea you intend to convey. So the topic of study is not as important as the intention to increase

the students' power of attention such that they become better at prayer. This can be accomplished by encouraging the student to "take great pains to examine squarely and to contemplate attentively and slowly each school task in which (they) have failed" (Weil, 1951, p. 59). It is obvious here that another Christian concept is suggested: humility. The student should be willing to acknowledge how "unpleasing and second rate" the work is, without seeking the teacher's corrections. The student should seek to uncover, for himself, the origins of the faults he has made. Then, as seen much earlier in our review of Socrates' approach that sought to awaken in his students an awareness of their own ignorance, Weil suggested that when we recognize the stupidity of our mistakes in schoolwork, "a sense of our own mediocrity is borne in upon us with irresistible evidence. No knowledge is more to be desired. If we can arrive at knowing this truth with all our souls we shall be well established on the right foundation" (p. 60). Such, according to Weil, is the road to sanctity through the correct use of school studies.

The way in which this ultimately relates to liminality is in Weil's concept of attention. True attention is difficult to attain. It is more trying to the soul than fatigue is to the body. This struggle in the soul against true attention is compared to an evil; thus concentrated attention destroys evil. In order to attend, one must enter a liminal, interstitial, empty space, which can be seen when she says,

Attention consists of suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty, and ready to be penetrated by the object; it means holding in our minds, within reach of this thought, but on a lower level and not in contact with it, the diverse knowledge we have acquired which we are forced to make use of. Our thoughts should be in relation to all particular and already formulated thoughts, as a man on a mountain who, as he looks forward, sees

also below him, without actually looking at them, a great many forests and plains. Above all our thought should be empty, waiting, not seeking anything, but ready to receive in its naked truth the object that is to penetrate it. (Weil, 1951, p. 62)

This idea of remaining open and in-between is seen here when she refers to suspending our thoughts, looking both down and out but not at anything in particular, and simply waiting and existing in something that sounds like suspended animation—in the *limins*— as we await the truth of the object to penetrate our thoughts.

Attention, in its highest form, is directed at God in prayer; yet also vitally important is its potential to develop a love of neighbor in the child. Through the development of attention, the child learns to empty his or her own soul to contemplate the plight of another; to empathize with and relate to others. Anything to which we attend, whether it is a writing assignment or a math drill, will help us develop our powers to focus attention. This power is developed whether or not we succeed in correctly solving the math problem, and whether or not our essay is perfect. It is the discipline of openly and consciously attending that has value. All our active seeking will result in falsehood; only by waiting for gifts can they be obtained. When this attention is lovingly directed toward other, which was paradoxically lived out in Weil's own life, one can finally ask the miraculous question, "What are you going through?" It is then that this educational ideal of teaching to attend will have been successful. It is then that our correct approach to education may make us "better able to give someone in affliction exactly the help required to save him, at the supreme moment of his need" (Weil, p. 65). Knowing the story of Weil's life, understanding her need to push the boundaries to the extreme, one can only wish that someone had been educated properly at Weil's own moment of supreme need.

### *Conclusion*

And yet she has so much to offer today's educator. Weil (1951) suggested that schools should value curricula that teach ways of waiting on truths. Simply in speaking in terms of truth, of course, a morality and an ethos becomes embedded in the curriculum. She saw truths as available to students through things such as the theorems in a geometry problem, the text of a book, even the quality of wood being worked—students must open themselves up to the experience, remain attuned to the task, and await the resolution. For this to happen, the student must experience pleasure and joy in the work, for intelligence is led only by desire. These attentive, joyful school studies can lead to powerful spiritual effects, regardless of one's religious beliefs (Weil). The importance is not placed on the source of the belief so much as it is on the ends of the belief. Humans have, for Weil, as for Aristotle and for MacIntyre, a specific end. If this end, this teleology, is removed, the entire moral enterprise on which western culture was built for the last 2000 years becomes muddled. It is that murky morality that we face as educators today.

The beauty of Weil's liminal perspective is that although she does hold onto a very specific *telos* for humanity, she insists that teachers strive to open students to the variety of treasures of past and present human efforts. She exhorts us to teach patient and joyful attending to transcendental experiences. What is of most value is not the disciplines themselves, but rather what one learns through attending to the disciplines: a focus on "other," an outward looking disposition that values openness and love above all else. For Weil, this openness and love is ultimately most valuable when directed toward God, but its direction toward other people is crucial as well.

As such, Weil recognized the social dimension of human relations and the reality that groups, collectivities, also call for a careful articulation of their particular ethos. Because of her interest in the Free French party, her concern about the future of France, and due to the amount of time she spent reflecting on the nature of groups, a perusal of her position toward collectivities will help us toward our concluding thoughts. For what is a school, after all, but a collectivity?

### *Schools as Collectivities*

The primary question of this study has been how the individual educator can best fulfill her role as a moral agent in the classroom. Yet, as we saw in our treatment of various philosophers and curriculum specialists, the institution as a whole can either foster or discourage the development of teachers as moral agents. It is therefore imperative before our final remarks to view the school as a collective as it may have been seen by Weil. The school as an assemblage functions with implied answers to the very questions we stated at the start of this study, “What is unique about humans?” “How did we get that way?” “How can we be more human?” It is worth returning to these essential considerations here as we view the institution of the school itself, for the way in which a school answers those questions will affect the culture of the school and the treatment of its students. And so in the light of our contemplation of Weil, we will start with the first of my essential questions, “What is unique about humans?”

As mentioned above, Weil was passionately concerned about our obligation toward other humans. She lived her life in such a way that she willingly suffered with others and suffered for others. She did this because what she considered most unique about humans is the fact that we possess an “eternal destiny” (Weil, 2006, p. 5). It is as a result of this eternal destiny, she said,

that we have an obligation toward others. This obligation exists “for the sole reason that (one is) a human being;” this obligation “is not based on any *de facto* situation;” it is “not based on any convention;” it is unconditional and although it has verification (in its consistent expression in numerous ancient texts and our common conscience), it does not have foundation as such. It is simply recognizable—because we are human. Finally, she suggested, and to answer our first question, it is unique to humans. “Only human beings,” stated Weil, “have an eternal destiny” (p. 5). And there is one primary obligation (with numerous manifestations) that we have as a result of this uniquely human eternal destiny: respect.

We are obliged to respect humans and to respect their vital human needs, both physical and spiritual. The specifics of this are discussed in Weil’s *The Need For Roots*, a work written from London in the last year of her life, when her homeland of France was too dangerous a place for her, as a Jewess, to live. In it she offered suggestions to help to reorganize the Free French party after the Liberation. As such it is especially concerned with what she calls the collectivity, man’s need to associate himself with his country, his family, and other groups. A collectivity deserves respect, but only insofar as it is “food for a certain number of human souls;” it does not deserve respect “for itself” (p. 8). Far too often collectivities, rather than providing food for human souls, tend to “devour souls” (p. 9). We may recall that it was in part because she considered the Catholic Church a collectivity that she was wary of its potential power over her and thus she avoided full entrance into it.

There is an obvious sense in which a school is a collectivity. As such, part of our moral endeavor as an institution that Weil would point us toward is this notion of serving our students food for their souls, rather than existing as soul-devourers. To function as food for students’

souls, we must provide for their vital human needs. Here is where Weil may sound controversial and antiquated to our modern ears. But here is where I feel that Weil speaks as a person steeped in concerns that call us beyond today's confusion of demands toward a trust in traditions that sometimes reach back millennia and are best supported by what Weil refers to as a "common consent accorded by universal conscience" that is simply "recognized by everybody without exception in every single case where it is not attacked as a result of interest or passion" (Weil, 2006, p. 6). Here are the needs Weil distinguishes as "vital" to the human soul: order, liberty, responsibility, equality, hierarchism, honor, punishment, freedom of opinion, security, risk, private and collective property, and truth (Weil, 2006). Several of those words sound comfortably familiar in today's democratic society; several of them probably jangled your nerves. As a group, they may even appear contradictory at first glance. Weil would say that it is because the soul's needs are arranged "in antithetical pairs (that) have to combine together to form a balance" (Weil, p. 12). It is my contention that they offer a collectivity, such as a school, a rich and soulful rootedness that is hard to find in today's culture of moral confusion. While it is probably not necessary to address every single one of them in detail, I will consider some of them to help elucidate how it is that Weil understands their effects on an individual soul and then on the culture of a collectivity.

### *Vital Human Needs: Order*

And so we will briefly consider how several of these human needs could be implemented in a collectivity such as a school. We will start with order. When Weil refers to order as a vital need of the soul, she suggested that there should be no conflict inherent in the system that would

cause a soul to have to choose between two competing, strict obligations that are ultimately incompatible with each other. Order within an assemblage, for Weil, assures that the “texture of social relations is such that no one is compelled to violate imperative obligations in order to carry out other ones” (Weil, 2006, p. 10). She recognized the difficulties in creating such an order in a collectivity. “We cannot even be sure,” she admitted, “that the idea of an order in which all obligations would be compatible with one another isn’t itself a fiction” (p. 10). Yet it is imperative that we remain aware of the various obligations within a collectivity because this consciousness itself “always proceeds from a desire for good which is unique, unchanging and identical with itself for every man” (p. 11). The transcendental nature of Weil’s sense of good is evident in such statements.

But what would this order look like in a school? Perhaps it is easier to consider what some of the competing, incompatible obligations might be; disorder may be easier to imagine! Could it be, for example, that one of the reasons that cheating is so widespread is because of a lack of Weil’s concept of order in our schools? The competing, incompatible obligations that come most readily to mind would look something like this: students are expected, by and large, to get an education in order to get out of school and get a good job, make lots of money, and live the good life (mostly defined by material means). Yet students are not, by and large, intrinsically motivated to study school subjects that have no apparent or immediate benefit aside from the grade. The grade, of course, is necessary to get the job, etc. There may also be familial expectations for good grades. And so the competing obligations that students hear are: 1) get good grades if you want to make lots of money and 2) spend hours and hours studying subjects that have no interest to you. When confronted with such competing obligations, Weil said we

either have “recourse to lying in order to forget their (the competing obligations’) existence, or (to) struggle blindly to extricate ourselves from them” (Weil, 2006, p. 11). The lying that Weil refers to would be the cheating that appears so frequently in our schools. Students are expected to get good grades and they are expected to take prescribed courses that are of no interest to them, both obligations seeming equally important to succeed in the ways expected of them. And so they cheat.

Weil, of course, would suggest that it would take a very different way of viewing the ends of schooling to clarify the obligation. As her understanding of these ends has already been considered, we need not repeat them. Yet we could recognize how with her understanding of the purpose of studies, the above competing obligations would quite disappear. There would be more likely to be order in the school community.

### *Liberty*

The next of the soul’s vital needs is liberty. Liberty, to Weil, is the ability not simply to choose, but to choose among the rules necessary to function within a community (since rules are, indeed, a necessary part of any social grouping). Good rules, then, become important to the concept of liberty. Good rules must 1) be straightforward and sensible enough for the average person to comprehend both their ends and the reason for their existence. They should 2) be limited in number and stable, such that the mind need not waste time actually pondering them every time a decision must be made, and 3) emanate from an authority that is loved and respected by those for whom the rules are intended. Let us briefly consider the case to which this concept of good rules to choose from is manifested in most schools.

It seems unlikely that, if asked, most students would understand both the ends of every rule in their handbook and the reason for its existence, yet it is not entirely impossible that some students could, if pressed, come up with ends and justifications for most rules. Yet even if it were the case that the first condition were met, it is most unlikely that many schools would meet the second qualification: have a limited number of rules. Weil does not specify what is meant by a limited number of rules, but does say that the mind should be able to grasp them without much consideration. This, again, seems unlikely in today's litigious culture.

To get a sense of whether I was correct in doubting the extent to which public school rules conformed to Weil's ideals, I perused the public school student code of conduct my own county, a county in south Florida. Our student code of conduct is 66 pages long. Its rules are referred to as a behavior code and the handbook lists 35 such codes, some of which stretch over several pages, all of which include the disciplinary action to be taken if the rule is broken and many of which refer to an "Authority," which is the Florida Statute law code that would be broken if the action is not only forbidden on school property, but is also illegal. The typical rule looks like this:

**RULE 24. NARCOTICS, BEVERAGES CONTAINING ALCOHOL, AND DRUGS**  
(Elementary School, Middle School, High School, Dual Enrollment) A “Controlled Substance” means a narcotic drug, hallucinogenic drug, amphetamine, barbiturate, marijuana, counterfeit drugs, or any other substance defined as an illegal controlled substance in Chapter 893 of the Florida Statutes. An “Alcoholic Beverage” means beer, wine, liquor, or any beverage containing alcohol or an intoxicant of any kind. A student shall not possess, sell, deliver, use, transmit, distribute, solicit, conspire to sell or obtain or be under the influence of a controlled substance or an alcoholic beverage while upon school property or in attendance at a school function. Any student who agrees, plans, or conspires with another student or person to commit an act described in this Rule is guilty of conspiracy. Any student, who commands, encourages, hires or requests another student or person to engage in conduct violating this rule is guilty of solicitation. Possession of paraphernalia normally associated with the use of controlled substances is expressly forbidden. The manufacturing, possession, and/or use of fake identification or driver's licenses which are used to purchase illegal substances or alcoholic beverages is also a violation of this rule. This rule also applies to misuse or distribution of legal drugs whether prescription or over-the-counter and the use of any items in order to attain an altered state. See Appendix “D-1 & 2” Medication Authorization Form and Parent Letter for legally proscribed medication and over the counter drugs. School personnel have the right to confiscate any items included in this rule. School personnel have the right to search individuals, lockers and personal property when there is a reasonable suspicion that the individual may possess a items covered under this rule. Metal detectors and specially trained animals such as drug detecting dogs may be utilized in these searches. Search and Seizure: The Collier County School Board has initiated a philosophy of zero tolerance toward illegal substances for all of our public schools. As a preventative measure, periodic searches of our schools may be conducted. Drug detecting dogs will be used to locate drugs in the school building lockers, vehicles on school grounds and/or any other location on school property. Drug detecting dogs will not be used to search students (see search and seizure, pg. 47).

Disciplinary Action: First Offense: Use or Possession ...

Second Offense within same school year or Third Offense during school career: Use or Possession ....

First Offense: Selling, Soliciting, or being involved in a conspiracy or intent to sell or deliver -

First Offense: Possession of paraphernalia normally associated with the use of a controlled substance - ...

Resources for help with drug and alcohol problems...

Authority: F.S. 1006.08, 1006.09, 1006.09(9), 877.111, 893.03, 893.13, 893.135, 893.145, 893.146, 893.147

Figure 1: Code of Conduct Sample

Weil would first ask whether this rule were sensible and straightforward enough for the average student to readily grasp. While there is nothing strictly unintelligible about this rule, it is unlikely that your average student would read it, at least not as a part of a 66 page long code of conduct. Weil also suggested rules be more general than specific (though it is likely that the school board of our county has good cause for making such specific rules). The next qualification for good rules is that there be a limited number of rules. That is a difficult determination. Perhaps some would argue that 35 rules for a high school is not excessive. Others might suggest that 35 rules, many of which are as long (or longer) and specific as the above, is indeed disproportionate. Yet even if 35 rules such as this is not an unreasonable amount of rules, and even if this style of rule is deemed easily understandable to the average student, there is one last qualification of a good rule that must be considered. The final consideration that determines whether rules lead to a sense of liberty for Weil is the nature of authority whence the rule emanates.

Rules “should emanate from a source of authority which is not looked upon as strange or hostile, but loved as something belonging to those placed under its direction” (Weil, 2006, p. 13). Is it even possible to expect high school students to love the administration of their schools? Is it possible for high school students to overcome their indifference or even hostility towards the rule makers in their schools? Or is my belief that there is primarily a culture of indifference (at best) among high school students towards school administration a myth?

To answer this doubt of mine, I performed a search for articles that might quantitatively clarify high school students’ opinion of their administration. I found woefully little data on it. I found a great deal of information about how the administration perceives itself, I found

numerous articles about how college students (seen as consumers, as they pay for their education) relate to college faculty and administration, I found scores of articles about how administration and faculty view the students in the public schools and I even found several articles about the power of the relationship between individual students and teachers (perhaps the closest to what I sought). Yet the paucity of data about public high school students' attitude toward school administration is telling. It is an area that deserves closer consideration, if Weil is correct in her belief that for a sense of liberty in one's soul, there must exist a love for the source of authority in a collectivity. If there is indifference or hostility (as some, like me, may suspect is not uncommon among high school students), then the rules of the schools have lost their potential to be a source of liberty for the souls of the students. As such, one of the vital needs of our students' souls is not being met.

Because it seems intuitive even to us today that such concepts as responsibility and equality serve to feed the vital needs of our souls, I will not bother with additional elucidation of Weil's understanding of how they function. I will, however, spend a moment on her ideas about what she calls hierarchism. There has been a great deal of discussion about *telos*, or the ends of human nature throughout this work. This, once again, is a moment in which it becomes evident that such a notion is crucial for the coherency of Weil's sense of morality. For it is only because Weil understands humanity as having a teleology that is beyond the material aspects of this world that she exhorts us to embrace a sense of hierarchy as beneficial to our souls. Hierarchism is "composed of a certain veneration, a certain devotion towards superiors, considered not as individuals, nor in relation to the powers they exercise, but as symbols. What they symbolize is that realm situated high above all men and whose expression in this world is made up of the

obligations owed by each man to his fellow-men” (Weil, 2006, p. 19). So a sense of hierarchy is necessary because our superiors, our teachers and administrators, symbolize a universe that is ordered, in which humans are created beings and occupy a place that demands of them certain obligations toward other, created beings. Those who have authority over us should be acknowledged as serving specific obligations towards us, and we towards them. Of course Weil assumed that the superiors themselves remain aware of their symbolic function and it is only in accord with that role that they become “objects of devotion among their subordinates” (p. 19). Once the ends of humans become questioned, and once the order of rights and obligations becomes conflated, Weil’s position becomes tentative and is opened to potential abuses. So the importance of a clear teleology for a coherent sense of morals once again becomes evident.

### *Punishment*

The last of Weil’s vital needs of the soul that I will consider here is punishment. Today’s educational jargon has developed to the point that the word punishment is barely used. A student’s *issues* may need to be *addressed*, or we may have to encourage students to *rethink certain behaviors*, or students must suffer *consequences* for behaviors. But a demand for punishment as a vital need for a student’s soul is not likely to be heard in today’s disciplinary discussions. Weil, on the other hand, says, “Just as the only way of showing respect for somebody suffering from hunger is to give him something to eat, so the only way of showing respect for somebody who has placed himself outside the law is to reinstate him inside the law by subjecting him to punishment” (p. 21). Weil’s strong sense of teleology is once again evident here. Crime, the breaking of laws, is the result of man’s freely placing himself “outside the chain

of eternal obligations which bind every human being to every other one” (p. 21). And so, as a result, the punishment is necessary to reinstate in the offending individual a higher devotion to the good of the others, which will also be the good of the collective. Weil went on to suggest that the punishment must be in accord with the nature of the violated obligation, as opposed to the affect it had on public security. A good punishment will awaken in the punished a sense of justice.

It is, of course, unlikely that education specialists will begin discussing disciplinary measures in terms of punishment in today’s school culture. Only with a clear sense of the ultimate ends of humans being as a transcendental source against which rules and values and morals can be deemed as good and true, does it make sense to demand that students follow rules or be punished. Only within a specific teleology can punishment be seen as a “supplementary form of education, compelling a higher devotion to the public good” (p. 21). And we have no reason to believe that, as institutions, today’s schools could come to acknowledge any such teleological ends.

And so, before we conclude, we must bring ourselves back to our beginning and take one last glance at the driving questions of our study: 1) has education historically served as a moral endeavor? 2) Does education today have a moral end? 3) Should today’s educators consider this moral end to the educative process? 4) What should that end be? And finally, 5) how can today’s educators best play a role as a moral educator?

I hope that the answer to the first question has become clear beyond a doubt. Historically, education has indeed served to instill in children a particular sense of morals and has provided an answer to the fundamental question, “What does it mean to be a human?” In light of MacIntyre’s

addition to this discussion, we could probably rephrase that as, “What is the end of humans?” Although the specific responses to that have varied over time, so long as there was a distinct response available, the moral message sent to students remained one of clarity and specific direction. It was only when the teleological and transcendental understanding of man was lost that the message became muddled and led us toward our present course.

The response to the second question should be as evident: education today is every bit as much of a moral enterprise as it was when the ancient Hebrew people

gathered as one in the open space before the Water Gate, and they called upon Ezra the scribe to bring forth the book of law of Moses which the Lord prescribed for Israel...Ezra the priest brought forth the law before the assembly, which consisted of men, women, and those children old enough to understand. Standing at one end of the open place...he read out of the book from daybreak until midday, in the presence of the men, the women, and those children old enough to understand; and all the people listened attentively to the book of law....As the people remained in their places, Ezra read plainly from the book of law of God, interpreting it so that all could understand what was read... (Neh, 8:1-4a, 5-6).

Hansen (2001) could almost have been referring to the above scene when he said, “the bonds between (teacher and student) are intellectual and moral” (p. 10). Today’s teacher is still called to act with and draw out of each student some level of moral attentiveness. This moral attentiveness, according to Hansen, is evident when the teacher-student interaction leads the student to higher levels of consciousness, when the student becomes more sensitive to those

around him, and more aware of others' needs. Education, today, is every bit as much as a moral endeavor as it was in the past.

Our response to the third question, whether educators should consider the moral ends of education, should be as obvious as the first two. For if it is true that education both was and is inherently a moral endeavor, then the primary bearers of the enterprise—the teachers—must play their part with impunity. Teachers are called to acknowledge their roles as purveyors of moral messages, messages that are sometimes direct and clear, but just as often implied in classroom rules, structures, and even school administration. Not to fulfill this role is rejecting a fundamental component of the teaching experience; it is a moral stance in itself. “No other factor” than the individual teacher, “has greater weight in influencing the intellectual and moral quality of instruction” (Hansen, 2001, p. 20). Sockett (2006) interpreted a standard articulated by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) as addressing “the need to incorporate moral and ethical standards in the theory and practice of teacher education” (p. 7). The standard referred to teacher dispositions and conceptual frameworks; these dispositions are indirectly expressed through the teachers “work with students, families, and communities” (NCATE, 2002, p. 19). Sockett unapologetically stated that “the development of professional dispositions in a teacher is a process of moral education, given that teaching quality is primarily a moral, not technical, matter” (Sockett, 2006). He went on to proclaim that because the teacher’s role is so saturated with matters of morality, it is incumbent upon teacher education programs to educate teachers in various moral traditions, such that the eventual teacher can speak coherently about not only her own moral stance, but also about other traditions as well. This brings glimpses of Weil back into our picture.

Weil would agree that it is important to be cognizant of one's own position and to live in strict (even passionate) accord with one's beliefs; however, as we saw, that does not legitimate the exclusion of outside perspectives. There is a slight echo of this possibility of placing oneself on the *limnis* and maintaining a view, at least, into differing ways of understanding one's place in the world in Sockett's perspective. Sockett (2006) believed that the idea of moral autonomy "implies that individuals make choices about their moral lives and that those choices may entail seeing different aspects of the moral life through different moral emphases" (p. 20). Should teachers consider the moral end of schooling? If Sockett (2006) is correct in stating that the development of a succinct moral disposition is "*the core of professional teaching*" (p. 21), then it seems unfathomable that one would suggest otherwise.

The last two questions are intricately intertwined, and can only be discussed in relation to one another. They are also the most complex and controversial of our questions, as can be seen both by the vast amount of research seen in Chapter 2 and the wide variety of philosophical responses that were set forth in Chapter 4. Nevertheless, it is necessary to confront, one last time, the pressing questions, "What should the moral end of education be?" And, finally, "How can today's educators best play a role as a moral agent?"

Despite my deeply held convictions about such things, and despite the last several years during which I've struggled with and researched this concept, it feels uncomfortably presumptuous to present a response to what the moral end of education *should be*. We are taught today that it is not politically correct to speak for others when it comes to such considerations. Our understanding of morals, as MacIntyre (1984) pointed out, is driven by emotivism, the theory that suggests that "all moral judgments are nothing but expressions of preference,

expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character” (p. 12). If that is true, of course, then I have very little justification in suggesting what the ends should be. I can, at best, (and as pointed out earlier) say, “I approve of this; do so as well.” And yet, coming as I do from a perspective that acknowledges a very specific and very clear telos for humankind, I am brought back to one of my initial dilemmas, and I recognize that the only way for me, as a teacher with deep faith, to escape feeling pinned to the center of a cross that bifurcates the secular world of teaching and the world that revealed my own end (and what I take to be the end of every other human), is precisely to elucidate and live in my daily life in the classroom, just this moral end of teaching. In order to approach the final question, what should the moral end of teaching be, I will start with the former inquiry: how does an educator of faith approach her role?

How should an educator, and especially an educator already immersed in her own faith, live out her vocation? Weil, as we have seen, often referred to a transcendent telos for humanity (an eternal destiny), yet she also tells us, “As soon as we have thought something, try to see in what way the contrary is true” (Weil, 1997, p. 156). She approached life in such a way that she consciously sought to remain open to a variety of traditions. She lived in the space in-between, where there existed a creative tension that kept her from fully entering one space or another. Yet despite the liminality evident in her life, she herself remained a woman of intense integrity and powerful convictions.

“The mystery of the cross of Christ” she claimed, “lies in a contradiction, for it is both a free-will offering and a punishment which he endured in spite of himself” (Weil, 1997, p. 156). It is risky to choose among Weil’s aphorisms and try to suggest that one (or five) of them is more meaningful or insightful than any of the others. Many of her thoughts have come to us in such an

abridged manner partly because they were culled from her notebooks by Thibbon; they were not necessarily intended to be published as part of a complete philosophical vision. As we may expect, they often sound contradictory. But the above quotation, about the mystery of the cross and contradiction, speaks to this present study more than most of her quips. How should the individual teacher, already rooted in a deep faith, confront her role as a moral educator in a secular institution? It seems to me that to answer that, one must invoke this image, the very same icon that I envisioned at the start of this study and long before I had read a word of Weil, the idea of the cross and the contradiction implied. If indeed the mystery of the cross lies in something like a contradiction, as suggested by Weil, and the contradiction entails both a free-will offering and a punishment, then the first question is, “What is the free-will offering of the teacher?” and the second, potentially scandalous question, “What is the punishment?”

To respond, I will first point out that I approach Weil’s suggested contradiction as only an apparent contradiction; it is more appropriate to approach the cross as a paradox. Seen as such, the free-will offering and the punishment (though still perhaps scandalous) are necessary parts of the sacrifice that mutually strengthen each other and the overall significance of the cross, despite the apparent contradiction. And this, of course, brings me directly back to my own place, as a teacher, on that cross. I am up there of my own free will. The free-will offering entailed is my choice to teach in a secular school and be confined, in that role, to the expectations of the general public (and to some degree the law). Though I hope to act at all times in ways that demonstrate my commitment to my moral beliefs (guided by the teleology as expressed in my faith), I must be careful of how my words reflect that. When I share the roots of my own moral perspective, it is done so with a clear disclaimer, “This is how I approach this situation; this is

what my tradition teaches.” This statement is usually a part of a larger discussion in which students are encouraged to articulate their own positions about such matters. I also encourage students to share our classroom discussion with their parents and to seek the roots of their own tradition. I know that is important and I know that some students actually do come from traditions that offer a sense of teleology and thus a coherent moral message. And yet most do not.

And this, precisely, is part of the punishment. For as soon as I say, “this is what my tradition teaches,” I have implied precisely what I want to avoid and what I reject, namely, that pluralistic approach that MacIntyre (and I) believe leads to the relativistic moral muddle in which we find ourselves. For such a statement serves as an apology, or a disclaimer. It can be taken to mean, “This is what I believe; it is one among many truths available.” This may be, in some sense, what Weil was able to accomplish, but just as Weil herself suffered and may have lived in a state of anguish that hastened her early death, so, I would say, is the teacher with strong teleological convictions placed at the center of the cross every time she utters such qualifications of her own beliefs.

Of course she has an option. She can, as I am continually tempted, simply speak from the depths of her convictions and approach every situation openly acknowledging her position and the roots of it. And she would find herself, rather quickly, out of a job. As such, she would be entirely ineffective in her call to love students and to share, even at some unspoken level, her love of God with those around her. The teacher with a deep faith must, in this sense, see her teaching as a vocation, something she is called by God to fulfill. She must be willing to accomplish her vocation despite the feeling of being pinned to the cross. Because this is where

Weil's concept of the contradiction of the cross fails. The teacher with a vocation within the Christian faith may have to face her students from a position of liminality. She may have to place herself, at least within the confines of her classroom, in a space that looks into and acknowledges other ways of understanding the world. She must educate herself and open herself to the beauty offered by various ideologies that differ from her own. She should allow these different perspectives inform and strengthen her own faith. But she must remain embedded in her own beliefs, despite her inability to express them freely. This may be her free will offering—to remain in the secular institution despite its silencing effects on her. Her punishment may be the sense of failure she experiences as she wonders whether she can succeed in her vocation if she is not more direct in her approach. Again, this is her cross. Now, if Weil is correct that there is an actual contradiction in the cross, then there is a contradiction at the heart of the Christian teacher's position in the classroom. Such a contradiction would necessarily add to the moral *mélange* and could make it impossible for the teacher to function in the long run. Once again Weil's early death comes to mind.

This is where the specific Christian teleology offers the only solution. For the cross is not a contradiction. The cross is a paradox, as mentioned earlier, and this paradox results in triumph. The Triumph of the Cross is the ultimate promise of Christianity, the promise which did not seem to make up a part of Weil's teleology. If I am living out my vocation to teach in a secular school as Weil herself suggested we approach education, always with an eye toward God, then all of my struggles, my frustrations, my failures, my longing, even my silence becomes a part of my cross. But this cross ultimately brings me closer to God as it places me alongside of Him, sharing in His suffering. Sharing in His suffering ultimately leads to sharing in His fullness of

everlasting life as closeness to Him promises that something I say or something I don't say; something I do or something I don't do, just may open someone to His Truth. And that brings us to the moral end of teaching.

### *The Moral End of Teaching*

MacIntyre, though he recognized the state of moral chaos with which we are confronted, remained hopeful. Without suggesting that it would be an easy accomplishment, he did allow that it is possible to attain a high degree of epistemological confidence in the rationality of ones' morals such that a community could determine and clearly state what was meant by such phrases as "the good life," or "the good man." Consistency and clarity of moral language and concepts will result, he believed, if we can see the development of the concept of virtue in three stages: 1) the idea of what he terms a practice, 2) the narrative unity of a human life, and 3) full comprehension of the nature of a moral tradition. These three stages, when understood properly, provide us with both an historical account of virtue and a forward looking schema on which we can model our own account of virtue. As such we can be taught to distinguish among the confusing traditions and, most importantly, we may be convinced to embrace an Aristotelian-type morality. And so we will very briefly touch upon these notions in order to further our conversation, recognizing that in no way can I fully explicate them here.

A practice is "any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human

conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended” (MacIntyre, 1984, p. 187). At another point he says a practice provides “an arena in which the virtues are exhibited and in terms of which they are to receive their primary, if incomplete, definition” (p. 187). Examples of practice that he offered include chess (but not tic-tac-toe), architecture (but not laying bricks), and the work of historians, artists, scientists, and farmers. It is in part the complexity of the endeavor, and in part the degree to which it is possible to exercise virtues that qualifies an activity as a practice. He also makes a critical distinction about the goods to be attained by the practice. This is a distinction that is not directly expressed by Aristotle, but is implied by his work; this implication was noted and articulated by some of Aristotle’s successors, including St. Thomas Aquinas. The goods available through participation in a practice include internal and external goods. As we may imagine, external goods are worldly aspirations—fame, money, and other objects of competition. External goods are such that the more of them that I get as a result of my partaking in a particular practice, the less of them that are available to you.

Internal goods, on the other hand, are those goods that are first of all particular to the specific practice (i.e., the internal goods available to the lawyer are available only to lawyers as they function as lawyers), and secondly are recognized and evaluated only by those who themselves have participated in the practice (i.e., as a teacher, I would not be the appropriate person to recognize the internal goods of an engineer). The idea of internal and external goods as part and parcel of the concept of virtues is critical because it is through the attainment of goods internal to a practice that the nature of a virtue becomes evident and coherent. MacIntyre (1984) defined virtue as “an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to

enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goals” (p. 191). MacIntyre offered numerous examples from history and contemporary times that are worth perusing, but we must move on to his notion of narrative unity to complete our project.

The next concept, that of narrative unity, is closely related to the belief that there must be a cohesive *telos* which transcends the apparent arbitrariness of the human experience in order for any specific context of the virtues to thrive. MacIntyre (1984) argued that there is indeed a unity in human life that must be articulated in order to make sense of the virtues. This account, once again, will necessarily be truncated and incomplete, yet it intends to serve as a starting point. MacIntyre first denoted conversations and human behaviors in general as enacted narratives. He focused on the importance of intelligibility in one’s actions and statements. One’s words and actions must make sense or we will either find a way to make sense of it or consider it the ravings of a madman. This suggests that actions (conversations included) have an historical character. Only in this manner can we understand our own and others’ actions. We are all both actors and agents in our own narratives, and our own narratives are both somewhat unpredictable, yet somewhat teleological. In other words, “it is always both the case that there are constraints on how the story can continue and...within those constraints there are indefinitely many ways that it can continue” (p. 216). Man, said MacIntyre, is a storyteller at heart. This narrative concept of man requires recognition of two things: 1) “I am the subject of a history that is my own and no one else’s...” and am thus accountable for my own selfhood, and 2) I am not only accountable for my own selfhood, but “I am the one who can always ask others for an account, who can put others to the question” (p. 218).

This narrative unity becomes important when one asks the question “What is good for me?” for part of the response is centered in how each man lives out his narrative unity and brings it to a successful completion. This relates to the systematic understanding of the virtues because the answer to “What is good for man” is related to “What is good for me,” in that whatever it is that all the answers to the former question *share* are embodied in the latter.

The final stage articulated by MacIntyre (1984) is the recognition of a moral tradition that is both particular and universal. Each of us is born into a community, with an historical identity. Each of us “has to find (our) moral identity in and through (our) membership in communities such as those of the family, the neighborhood, the city and the tribe...but it is in moving forward from such particularity that the search for the good, for the universal, consists....yet particularity can never be simply left behind or obliterated” (p. 221). We are, each and every one of us, a bearer of tradition. The more we participate in practices, the more we serve as such bearers. And yet traditions, the best traditions, at least, are not seen as stagnant. Traditions should be vital and vitiated, specifically, by conflict.

It is interesting to note, as we each approach this last question with our own set of concerns and potential conflicts with what I may posit, that the final paragraph in MacIntyre’s chapter about Aristotle’s account of the virtues begins with the following remark, “The great Australian philosopher John Anderson urged us ‘not to ask of a social institution: “What end or purpose does it serve?” but rather, “Of what conflict is it the scene?”’ (p. 163). In this statement, MacIntyre demonstrated his acknowledgment that conflict is often that which helps us to clarify precisely what our ends indeed are. He later said that part of the answer to the medieval problems of creating and sustaining moral order were answered specifically by allowing for (and even

generating) conflict between sacred and secular institutions, between local and national ideals, between the Latin language and the vernacular. This conflict should be creative as opposed to destructive; it should serve to clarify, value, and redefine the virtues. It should serve as a moral education.

And so, acknowledging the risks and benefits of conflict, and considering today's state of confused and confusing moral utterance, I will posit what I take to be the moral end of education. The moral ends of education include the following: 1) the educator's embracing her role as moral agent, 2) the educator's helping the student to see him or herself as part of a practice as conceived by MacIntyre (1984), the internal ends of which Weil (1951) described as the development of the faculty of attention that, "quite apart from explicit religious belief...succeeds in making an effort...(toward) the sole idea of grasping the truth," the wish to gain knowledge over grades, the examination of the reasons and origin for their academic struggles within any given subject, and a sincere desire for, pleasure in, and joyful attitude toward their studies (p. 61). The moral ends of education continue as 3) helping the student to place him or herself in the narrative unity MacIntyre referred to as a critical part of a consistent moral scheme. Within this narrative unity, the import of a telos should be examined. And finally, the moral ends of education include 4) acknowledging the role of conflict within any moral endeavor, but recognizing that even conflicting ideas can only be discussed rationally within the confines of traditions and narrative unities. It is our moral responsibility to do those four things, abridged as 1) embracing our role as moral agent, 2) opening students to internal goods of an education, 3) centering students in narrative unity with a telos, and 4) remaining open to conflict. In such a way we can, at the very least, provide students with such tools to participate in the conversation.

### *Significance in a Concrete Curriculum*

The final consideration of this study centers on the significance of this reflection on a concrete curriculum in a secular setting. Two questions must be touched upon. One is how the individual educator of strong faith, guided by the principles expressed above, would actually live out her role as a teacher on a day to day basis. The second is whether there exists a way that a vision such as this could be instituted as a part of a school's practice. I will briefly examine both before closing.

What, then, would this educator look like? How would her day progress? Assuming that she had readily embraced her role as moral agent, how would she live out the other 3 demands as suggested above: opening students to the internal goods of an education, centering students in a narrative unity with a telos, and remaining open to conflict? Because the internal goods of an education, as expressed by Weil, are so distinct from those generally held by schools today (driven, as we saw, by a performativity principle), today's teacher would have to start by valuing, in her own classroom, the type of activities that are the ends of education as described by Weil. A teacher would have to assess not only the outcome of the math equation or the homework assignment, but the care with which the equation or assignment was approached. A teacher would not only grade the factual accuracy of the answer on a literature quiz, but also the depth of thought that went into the response. Several drafts of the same essay would be required, each time pointing out the mistakes in such a way that would help the student to "examine squarely and to contemplate attentively and slowly...the task in which (he) has failed...without seeking any excuse or overlooking any mistake...trying to get to the origin of each fault" (Weil,

2001, pp. 59-60). In a science lab, the outcome of the experiment would not be as important as the care with which each step along the way was approached. Depth of exploration would be valued more than breadth of coverage in a history class. Teachers would be discouraged from giving timed tests; they would be discouraged from setting deadlines that did not offer students plenty of time to approach a subject with great care and diligence.

Probably the most significant difference, and this is something that may not be practicable in today's secular ethos, is that in Weil's ideal educational world, the model student learns joyfully, for real learning is led by desire. "The intelligence," said Weil, "can only be led by desire" (Weil, 2001, p. 61). If there is neither pleasure nor joy in the studies, there will be no desire to study. Without some sort of desire for God (and again, it is important to recall that Weil's concept of God is broader than the traditional Christian concept of God), it is unlikely that our souls will be raised, it is unlikely that we will learn how to pay attention, and it is therefore unlikely that any significant learning will occur. But as soon as one truly desires God and "implores Him long, often, and ardently," then God "cannot refuse to come down" and possess the soul (p. 61). Then, with a soul possessed by God, one can find joy and desire to learn. "It is the part played by joy in our studies," she held, "that makes of them a preparation for spiritual life, for desire directed toward God is the only power capable of raising the soul".

The difficulties encountered in this type of language lead us to the next two exhortations: helping students to center themselves within a narrative unity with a telos, and remaining open to conflict. These become quite challenging; the narrative unity piece, especially, is that which brings the faith-filled educator to the cross. Narrative unity, for the Christian educator, is the story of Christ and our obligations to live a life centered on the values He offers us. As discussed

many times already, such direct discussions are not possible in a secular setting, leaving the educator somewhat silenced. What is certainly permissible, however, is the posing of the questions. Primary to the idea of narrative unity is the question of telos. It is the teacher as moral agent's role to encourage students to think about the concept of telos. There are certainly many ways this can and should be approached, many of which are embedded in the daily treatment of students as dignified individuals (precisely because of their participation in the Christian educator's own narrative, centered in self-donating Christian values). It can be addressed more explicitly by confronting students with the questions mentioned at the start of this study, articulated by Bruner: 1) what is unique about humans? 2) How did we get that way? And 3) how can we be more so? These three questions serve our needs because they encourage students to look deep within the human narrative for the first answer, back into our narrative for the second, and into the future for the third. Of course the specific answer that each student provides for himself may not be the particular response of the Christian educator. Yet this reminds us of both the necessary role of conflict and Weil's liminality. Openness to others' views is a crucial part of the educator's role, despite the conflict inherent in both the discussion (as various views are aired) and within the educator herself. The most important part of the process is the posing of the questions; on-going discussions of responses and possible positions should help the students to center themselves in a narrative unity with a particular telos.

It becomes incumbent on the teacher to have enough of an education in ethics that she is aware of the important questions to ask, and is able to lead a discussion about various possible responses. This, of course, suggests that teacher education programs must require teacher educators to take classes in ethics as a subject in itself, as well as a history of their own

occupation as one that was focused on the development of morals in the student. This should be required of any teacher in any field, such that the teacher can best fulfill her role as moral agent in the classroom.

A much more challenging question is how the educational institution can serve the teacher in her role as moral agent. Is there, for example, a way to create some sort of guide or curriculum that could clarify for a teacher the precise expectations of her? This guide could provide institutional support such that the individual educator did not feel as if she were struggling through this process on her own. It could be a school-wide clarification of how teachers at a particular school (or county or state...or even nation!) were expected to serve as moral agents. Although I would love to end this study with an optimistic and unqualified, "Yes!" to that question, my honest answer is much less hopeful. The reason for my hesitation is because of the source and complexity of the tensions inherent in this study.

The source of my tension is my deeply held religious beliefs. The complexity is made evident in the numerous other deeply held faiths that simultaneously exist in any school. It is unlikely that any specific proclamation by a school would be in accord with how I see myself in terms of my faith; I assume I could say the same about the people of different faiths. Of course I have spoken here of the ways in which we are all called to suspend our most deeply felt impulses at times, yet because our struggles stem from our faith, it is unlikely that a curriculum created by people centered in different belief systems would address most individuals' particular apprehensions. Unless, of course, schools had the luxury of engaging in seminar type discussions that serve to clarify how it is that teachers serve as moral agents; unless, of course, someone at the school could inform teachers of the history of ethics, and the history of their own profession

as one concerned about the moral development of the student. Unless the schools could provide, more specifically, the type of education I suggest should be a part of any teacher preparation program. Instituting and requiring school-wide participation in such a program, I believe, would offer teachers the language and tools to better function in their roles as moral agents in a classroom.

It is hoped, in this reflection upon the history of education as a moral endeavor and in this examination of the numerous and often competing contemporary perspectives of the moral state of the educational institution, that we have been reminded of our own call towards risk and others. Weil was driven by a catholic, ecumenical and rich concept of the good, she was willing live a great part of her life in the risky world of the liminal in order that she could reach out to all people at all times and as such she can serve as a model for educators who are passionate themselves about their difficult but critically important role of moral agent in the contemporary classroom. It is hoped that Weil's concepts and experiences as a teacher, combined with MacIntyre's insights into the nature of morals and virtues in today's society, have helped to further the ongoing conflict and conversation as to the role of teachers as moral agents.

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