

**HUMANISTIC  
MORALS AND  
VALUES  
EDUCATION**

**Vince Nesbitt**

"The learned shall shine as brightly as the vault of  
heaven, and those who have instructed many in virtue,  
as bright as stars for all eternity."

Daniel 12:3

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## **A Debt to the Past**

“We are like dwarfs, seated on the shoulders of giants; we see more things than the ancients and things more distant, but this is due neither to the sharpness of our own sight, nor to the greatness of our own stature, but because we are raised and borne aloft on that giant mass.” (1)

Some eight centuries have passed since Bernard of Chartres acknowledged in these words his and his contemporaries' debt to the efforts and ideas of their forebears.

Man does not make truth, he uncovers it. The process is slow and laborious, a constant search for better answers to the same questions. From such hard-won ore we refine the precious treasure of unchanging principles. What man, isolated from the inherited wealth of his culture and religion, unaided by the principles teased out of the minds and lives of that “giant mass” of persons who went before him, can find for himself a set of moral values that will serve him faithfully through life? What child, by an unguided choice between conflicting actions, can find such a set of values, a morality to match that given by Him who claimed to be the sole teacher of humanity, Jesus Christ? (2)

## **Humanistic Education**

Yet this is what is proposed to us by “humanistic education”. The term is misleading; it refers not to “humane” education, nor to education in the “humanities”, but to education **according to the principles of Secular Humanism**. Secular Humanism is an elitism, proposing some quite inhumane solutions to social problems — abortion, infanticide, assisted suicide, “mercy” killing. Dillon MacCarthy notes (3) that “the misappropriation of that name (Humanism) by atheists was a masterpiece of psychological semantics.” Professor J. Charles Park of the University of Wisconsin makes an interesting

distinction, explained in the National Educator:

“When education exists to train people to accept ‘time honored truths’ — to understand the difference between right and wrong — that is traditional education. When education exists ‘to create independent thinking’ — that is Humanistic education.” (4)

The sometimes esoteric language of humanistic education is abandoned here for words that clearly express for “the man in the street”, for parents and those others who care for children what humanistic education really is — its “reductio ad suburbem.”

### **Secular Humanism**

The principles of Secular Humanism are clearly exposed in Humanist Manifesto I, published in 1933 (5) and Humanist Manifesto II, published in 1973 (6). These should be read in full by all who wish to understand (and perhaps especially by those who promote) humanistic education. A few excerpts may help to understanding of the general thrust:

#### **Humanist Manifesto I**

Though it refers throughout to “religious humanism” and “religious humanists”, this Manifesto denies the existence of God: “We are convinced that the time has passed for theism, deism .....” (7)

“Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created”. (8)

This life, for the Humanist, is all there is: “Religious humanism considers the complete realization of human personality to be the end of man’s life and seeks its development and fulfillment in the here and now .....” (9) “Man will learn to face the crises of life in terms of his knowledge of their naturalness and probability. Reasonable and manly attitudes will be fostered by education and supported by custom. We assume that humanism will take the path of social and mental hygiene .....” (10)

#### **Humanist Manifesto II**

“As in 1933, humanists still believe that traditional theism, especially faith in the prayer-hearing God, assumed to love and care for persons, to hear and understand their prayers, and to be able to do something about them, is an unproved and outmoded faith”. (11) “..... we begin with humans not God, nature not deity ..... **humans are responsible for what we are or will become.....** No deity will save us; we must save ourselves.” (12) “We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is **autonomous and situational**, needing no theological or ideological sanction. Ethics stem from human needs and interest.” (13) “The right to birth control, abortion, and divorce should be recognised. While we do not approve of exploitive, denigrating forms of sexual expression, neither do we wish to prohibit, by law or social sanction, sexual behaviour between consenting adults. The many varieties of sexual exploration should not in themselves be considered ‘evil’. Without countenancing mindless permissiveness or unbridled

promiscuity, a civilised society should be a **tolerant** one. Short of harming others or compelling them to do likewise, individuals should be permitted to express their life-style as they desire." (14) "..... a recognition of an individual's right to die with dignity, euthanasia and the right to suicide." (15) "People are more important than decalogues, rules, proscriptions, or regulations." (16) "**Innovative and experimental forms of education** are to be welcomed." (17)

Thus is briefly exposed the philosophy of Secular Humanism, which leads to a belief that man is sufficient unto himself, to "selfism", moral autonomy, the primacy of decision over reason, to subjectivism, and the primacy of opinion as the highest degree of certitude attainable. It may be good enough for atheists, trying to come to terms with a world without God, a life that ends in the grave. It falls far short of the Christian ethic, and is a defective basis for education of a Christian child.

### **Education for Social Change**

Humanistic education began in the U.S.A. in the progressive education movement, which dates from about 1905, and its founder is John Dewey, a pragmatist ("what works is good") and a Humanist (first President of the American Humanist Society, and a signatory to Humanist Manifesto I). He aimed to introduce into the U.S.A. National Socialism, later known in Germany as Nazism, which he called "Collectivism", and to use the schools as instruments of social change to bring this about. (18) Dewey changed the aim, content and methods of education in the U.S.A. In 1905 he organised, along with some Fabians, the Intercollegiate Socialist Society, which in 1921 changed its name to the League for Industrial Democracy, and this in turn formed in 1962 an action arm called the Students for a Democratic Society. The aim of the League was to put into the classroom teachers, into the pulpits preachers and into the trade unions leaders who were collectivists (reflecting the Fabian method). Early in the century, Dewey formed the Progressive Education Association, and the American Association of University Professors, also committed to the goal of collectivizing the U.S.A. (19) The schools were seen as essential to the task:

"Nothing less than thoroughgoing reconstruction is demanded, and there is no institution known to the mind of man that can compass the problem except education." (20)

Implementation of the plan was to be mainly through **social studies**, developed chiefly at that time by Dr George Counts.

### **Humanists in U.S. Education**

The following members of the humanistic education establishment in the U.S.A. are or were in their lifetime formally Humanists:

Horace Mann, introducer of sectarian education into the U.S.A., Dr George Counts, originator of social studies programmes, Dr Abraham Maslow,

promoter of Third Force Psychology, associated with the National Training Laboratories and the National Education Association, Jacob Moreno, who introduced psychodrama and sociograms, Dr Carl Rogers, Humanist of the Year 1964, who promoted the encounter method and introduced sensitivity training, Willard Mainord, psychologist, Dr Lester Kirkendall and Dr Mary Calderone of the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS), the latter of whom shared the 1974 Humanist of the Year award with Dr Joseph Fletcher of situation ethics fame. The following educationists were signatories to one or other of the Humanist Manifestos: Professor Theodore Brameld, Professor John Dewey, Professor Sol Gordon, John D. McClellan and Humanist of the Year 1972, Professor B. F. Skinner, the behavioural psychologist who wrote the book *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* in which he held that man was entitled to neither when his claims conflicted with those of society. He was willing to experiment with his own daughter, whom he raised for the first 2½ years of her life naked in a glass cage. (21)

To bring about the social changes desired by the “progressive educators”, children were to be separated from the inherited values of their culture, and especially of their parents: Paul Brandwein explains that

“..... children do not always choose their parents well, or their heredity, or their environment, or their proper moment in history.” (22)

In a report to the U.S. President, Dr John Goodlad, an educationist, supported this notion:

“..... the majority of our youth still hold the values of their parents and if we do not alter this pattern, if we do not resocialise ourselves to accept change, our society may decay.” (23)

Change, evolution are essential elements of the Humanist Philosophy.

### **Mental Engineering**

In the U.S.A., a new definition of education has appeared — “behavioural change”. In 1969, the following passage appeared in the journal of the National Education Association, the 1.8 million strong (1979) U.S. teachers’ union (24) “To-day’s Education”:

“..... education and schools, as they exist to-day, will change drastically during the 1970’s and will be modified almost beyond recognition by the end of the century..... the basic role of the teacher will change noticeably..... ten years hence it should be more accurate to term him a ‘learning clinician’..... intended to convey the idea that schools are becoming clinics..... to provide individualised psychosocial ‘treatment’ for the student, thus increasing his value both to himself and society.” (25)

This concept brought into classroom education the notion of the child as mentally ill, of the teacher as “healer”:

“..... if the classroom does not heal it has no teacher, only an

instructor.....” (26)

Educators before and after this time expressed themselves on this “mental illness” of children, according to the various points on which children do not comply with their own ideas of “mental health”:

John Dewey: “(Personal independence) often makes an individual so insensitive in his relations to others, as to develop an illusion of being really able to stand and act alone — an unnamed form of insanity.” (27)

Paul Brandwein: “Any child who believes in God is mentally ill.” (28)

Ashley Montagu: “The American family structure produces mentally ill children.” (29)

Dr Pierce of Harvard University: “Every child in America who enters school at the age of five is mentally ill, because he comes to school with allegiance toward our elected officials, toward our founding fathers, toward our institutions, toward the preservation of this form of government we have..... patriotism, nationalism, sovereignty..... All of that proves the children are sick, because the truly well individual is one who has rejected all of those things and is what I would call the true international child of the future.” (30)

The National Training Laboratories, run by the National Education Association, explains the use of psychiatric methods on children who are mentally well, aside from the above definitions of mental illness:

“Although they **appear** to behave appropriately and **seem** normal by most cultural standards, they may actually be in need of mental health care, in order to help them **change, adapt and conform to the planned society** in which there will be no conflict of attitudes or beliefs.” (31)

Humanist Manifesto I, you will recall, in its 11th affirmation states “We assume that humanism will take the path of social and mental hygiene.”

How is this “mental illness” to be remedied? We have seen that evolution, change form a basic part of Humanist philosophy, so humanistic education is devoted to change. Carl Rogers puts it bluntly:

“..... the goal of education is the facilitation of change.” (32)

In 1969, the U.S. Office of Education funded nine teacher education model programmes, with grants of one million dollars each to nine educational institutions and subsequent further funding which issued in publication from Michigan State University of “Feasibility Study: Behavioural Science Teacher Education Programme” (33) known as B STEP. One of its three major goals is described:

“Development of a new kind of elementary school teacher who..... engages in teaching as **clinical practice**..... and functions as a responsible agent of **social change**.” (34)

During the spring of 1974, according to the U.S. Congressional Record, the U.S. Office of Education gave a grant of \$5.9 million for 500 **change agents** to be trained at 21 universities throughout the country. (35)

A change agent has been described by Barbara M. Morris as "a person, organisation or institution that changes or helps to change the beliefs, values, attitudes or behaviour of people without their knowledge or consent." (36) When children enter school, the change agent must find out "where they are at" so that appropriate measures can be taken to bring them to the targeted "where they ought to be":

"In a sense, teachers are social engineers..... but it cannot be done without the previous steps of discovery and diagnosis as well as of goal-setting." (37)

This assessment having been made, the child's behaviour must be changed as rapidly as possible, whilst the mind is most plastic to change:

"..... the basic personality patterns may have been formed before children even enter school. They can be changed but the later that is postponed, the more difficult is the process." (38)

This difficulty of changing the child, as his age advances, from the "personality pattern" conferred by parents and home has led to pressure for access to children at ever decreasing age, from "two years old" (39) to "eighteen months (when) the brain is growing faster than it ever will again (and) is then also more plastic and most available for appropriate experiences and **corrective interventions.**" (40) The Report of the President from the White House Conference which met in Washington, D.C. in December 1970 made this statement:

"A day care programme that ministers to a child from **six months to six years** has over eight thousand hours to teach him values, fears, beliefs and behaviours." (41) (Emphasis added)

The Joint Commission on Mental Health, referred to above, proposed that

"The child advocate, psychologist, **social technician** and medical technician should all reach **aggressively** into the community, send workers out to children's homes, recreational facilities and schools..... assume full responsibility for all education, including pre-primary education, parent education and community education. Every child and youth in America from **conception** (nine months before birth) through age 24 are to be included." (42) (Emphasis added)

What are the "basic personality patterns", so feared that they must be changed?

"The child of suburbia is likely to be a materialist and somewhat of a hypocrite. He tends to be a striver in school, a conformist, and above all a believer in being 'nice', polite, clean and tidy..... He is often conspicuously self-centred. In all these respects, the suburban child patterns his



attitudes after those of his parents.” (43)

### **Programming Responses**

Techniques of behavioural change such as sensitivity training, role-play, game-simulations, psycho-drama and socio-drama were first introduced into the classroom for handling “disruptive youth”. They soon become extended to every child. (44) Developed by psychiatrists and psychologists, these are powerful tools designed to produce change in attitudes and behaviour, through programming responses. Children are subjected to mental stress through emotional involvement, with clear risks of psychological damage. Individual values may be exchanged for group values, and family alienation can result. (45)

This author warns also that school co-workers involved in the same sensitivity training group often reveal information which deteriorates any future working relationship between them. All doubt about the nature and intent of such methods should be dispelled by a description in a National Training Laboratories manual:

“(Sensitivity training) includes coercive persuasion in the form of **brainwashing** as well as a multitude of less coercive, informal patterns.” (46)

The process is often referred to as “Unfreezing, Changing and Refreezing”:

First phase **UNFREEZING**: doubt is created, the individual is sufficiently disturbed to motivate him and make him ready to change by (1) removing accustomed routines, information and social relationships; (2) undermining and destroying of all social supports; (3) demeaning and humiliating experiences to help the child see his old self as unworthy and begin to think about changing the way he thinks and acts; (4) rewarding the child for his willingness to change and inflicting punishment for unwillingness to change.

Second phase **CHANGING**: Presenting the direction of the desired change and the actual process of learning new attitudes by encouraging the child to identify with another person who has those attitudes. In curriculum guides, teachers are instructed to be a “model”. The child then learns new attitudes by being placed in a situation where new attitudes are demanded of him as a way of solving problems he cannot avoid. He is forced into a situation in which he is likely to be influenced to make a decision. He “discovers” new attitudes for himself, those which the teacher wishes him to “discover”. The teacher is the “facilitator, clinician or change agent”. In other words, the teacher is instructed to help students explore and develop their interests..... students analyze hypothetical situations of the future by defending or altering values. The student then responds to new experiences and information by being “willing” to alter or defend his value position and decisions.

Third phase **REFREEZING**: refreezing refers to the process by which the newly acquired attitude, or belief, has been automatically fitted into the individuals' personality. The teacher expects that from now on the student will accept these new attitudes, thus confirming the "refreezing" process. If the student does not "accept" this new attitude as his own basic belief, he is then "recycled" until he does accept it. (47)

After the process is completed, the student participates in "values grid" activities to compare early and later responses. Teachers of sensitivity training are required to submit themselves to the process. They then become programmed to the process, and identify with it. The same requirement applies for teachers of some conceptualised social studies courses, e.g. *Man: A Course of Study (MACOS)*.

This may explain why, when such courses are criticised from a position of fact and principle, teachers often respond as to a personal attack on them, sometimes quite hysterically, and without addressing themselves to the factual criticism made.

With this introduction to humanistic education as a background, we now pass to two aspects of values and morals education that fall into the same framework. They fall under the general headings of "affective" education, which deals with the domain of feelings, emotions, beliefs, attitudes, values and preferences, and of "cognitive" education, which is concerned with the gaining of knowledge, with recall or memory. (The third, "psychomotor" domain, with which modern educationists deal, is concerned with skills, with motor performance, with what the student is able to DO.)

### **Affective Values Training**

Professors Louis Rath, Merrill Harmin and Sidney Simon originated a movement in education called Values Clarification. It is identified as one of the many branches of "humanistic education" by one of the originators. (48) It has its basis in the philosophy of John Dewey. (49) It is promoted chiefly by Sidney Simon in the U.S.A.

"Necessity" for Values Clarification is argued from the claim that modern society, unlike past societies, is very complex and inconsistent, so that "traditional values" are unacceptable to young people or not able to be applied to their lives. (50) It is claimed also that traditional methods of teaching values by directly conveying the concepts of right and wrong, good or bad, and modelling virtuous behaviour by teachers and parents, are outmoded and ineffective. (Note the contrast with sensitivity training, where modelling occurs in the **changing** phase.) Children, it is said, are exposed to so many values to-day that they become confused. (51) Parents and churches have failed to convey values effectively. (52) People are stealing and killing; confusion reigns in the world; man is in trouble morally and socially. (53) On this rather naive and elitist basis proceeds a system of clarifying values.

## Values Clarification

The basic premise is that in order for a belief, attitude or action to be called a value, it **must** satisfy seven criteria. (54) These seven criteria **both define a value and describe the process of "valuing"**. (55) The value must be

1. Freely chosen
- CHOOSING 2. Chosen from among alternatives
3. Chosen after thoughtful consideration of the consequences of each alternative
4. Prized and cherished
- PRIZING 5. Affirmed publicly
6. Acted upon
- ACTING 7. Repeatedly acted upon

For something to be a value, therefore, according to the Clarifiers, it must be freely chosen from among alternatives, with full regard to the consequences of each alternative. The chooser must be happy with his value: "values flow from choices we are glad to make". He must be ready to affirm his value publicly, to defend it, act on it, and make it part of his life pattern. (56) Let us look at the elements of the process:

### 1. Choosing

This raises several questions. If all values are to be freely chosen, must not all values deriving from religion, family, and culture be set aside until clarified? What are the alternatives from which choice is to be made? Consider the following example from Sidney Simon's book *Meeting Yourself Halfway*: (57)

The population problem is very serious and involves every country on this planet. What steps would you encourage to help resolve the problem?

volunteer to organise birth-control information centres throughout the country

join a pro-abortion lobbying group

encourage the limitation of two children per family and have the parents sterilised to prevent future births.

(One alternative is to be selected by ticking a box.)

The alternatives are very restricted; the premise is not factual. "Every country on this planet" does not have an overpopulation problem, especially the countries of the Western world, which have an underpopulation problem. The world-wide Human anti-natalist movement makes a lot of unbased assumptions about population. The question is more one of proper and just use of available resources than of mere numbers of people. Much help can be given by developed countries without overpopulation "problems" but with capital,

physical resources and labour needs which can support migration, as well as providing immediate help with food, and techniques to improve food production. Again, it has been demonstrated that availability of contraception, and knowledge of its use, do not restrict abortion numbers, nor do people in highly populated, agrarian developing nations take kindly to pressures towards the use of abortion, sterilisation and contraception being brought to bear by organisations from developed countries, in the absence of adequate social services. The sole security of parents in their old age is often a son working in the fields to support them, standing between them and sometimes certain starvation. To assure this, in view of the high infant and general mortality to which they have become accustomed, they need two sons and hence must look to a minimum of four children, as half on average are daughters. In this uncertainty, they find it hard to accept reassurances about extending life expectations, and the desirability of less children.

Note the limited **number** and **variety** of options from which choice is to be made. The basis of the values system at which children are to arrive is so restricted that, contrary to what the values clarifiers claim, **the choice is not free**, but confined to a few related alternatives, with much the same values content.

## 2. Prizing

If “values flow from choices we are glad to make”, what of the values which impose upon us actions which we find do not make us glad? We must often abandon comfort-or pleasure for the sake of a greater good.

Again, it is seldom necessary, not always convenient and sometimes imprudent to affirm all our values publicly. John S. Stewart has warned that premature public affirmation or action can be a very dangerous thing to induce. (58)

## 3. Acting

All values cannot be consistently acted upon publicly or privately, as some take priority over others. It is necessary that our values be arranged in a hierarchy, and this is ignored in Values Clarification.

### What Values?

Stress is made on choosing values; **what** values are chosen is less important, as there are **no right or wrong values**. The methods “are not based upon the assumption that absolute goods exist and can be known”. Values are “relative, personal and situational. The main task of the approaches is not to identify and transmit the ‘right’ values, but to help the student clarify his own values that best suit him and his environment .....” (59) Recall the Humanist tenet of the primacy of choice. Process becomes more important than content. Indeed, in this procedure, process **is** content. Simon, in another paper of which he is coauthor shows his opposition to **any** standard of morality:

The schools must not be allowed to continue fostering the **immorality of morality**. An entirely different set of values must be nourished. (60)

This insistence on a “values neutral” approach falls down, as even to state that there are no values at all is to state a value.

Suppose a value has survived the seven-point sieve, yet is undesirable. How is this dealt with? The answer is interesting:

“What should be the reaction..... when a child chooses a value that is unacceptable to the majority? It is not impossible to conceive of someone..... deciding that he values..... thievery..... Our position is that we respect his right..... but we must often deny him the right to carry out the value to action..... we have to say ‘you may choose what you believe best, but some behaviour can’t be permitted because it interferes too much with the freedom or rights of others’” (61)

This statement exposes the weakness of a system which allows “free choice” of values, choices “we are glad” to make, respects our right to hold these values, but can deny the exercise of this right. Note the criteria of goodness of a value — acceptance by the majority, non-interference with the freedoms and rights of others (provided, of course, they don’t interfere with ours).

It is to be noted that the term “value” seems to embrace moral values and social conventions, giving them equal weight. For example, we find courtesy ranked equally with honesty.

How is the system carried out in the classroom? One widely used text — Values Clarification, A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students (62) — sets out 79 “strategies”. A few can be dealt with:

**1. The Public Interview:** The child “voluntarily” stands in front of the classroom, or sits at the teacher’s desk, whilst the teacher, from the back of the room, asks questions about his personal feelings, beliefs and actions. The student must answer honestly, or refuse to answer. He may end the interview at any time by saying “Thank you for the interview”. (63) Questions such as these are asked at Primary level:

Do you get an allowance? How many pairs of shoes do you have? Who bought them? Would you rather spend a day alone with your father or your mother? Does your mother have a cleaning lady? Did your parents ever talk to you about where babies come from? Is there someone you dislike a lot? Why? Have you ever stolen anything? Did you ever cheat on tests? (64)

Questions for Intermediate and Secondary levels include

What do you think you will do with your parents when they get old? What is your stand on the birth control pill? Are you likely to marry outside your race? Are there things you would not tell even your best friends? What kind of things? What disturbs you most about your parents? How do you feel about homosexuality? What do you think of a mother who

slaps her small son's hand for playing with his genitals? Can you tell your parents your personal problems? (65)

The arrogant invasion of privacy, and prying into family relationships are not excused by the student's freedom to refuse to answer a question, or to end the interview. To do either in answer to some of these questions would be equally embarrassing as an honest answer. Children are notoriously cruel to one another, and this "strategy" could give them plenty of ammunition. Home values are, in the word of Barbara M. Morris, "put through the meat grinder" in front of the rest of the class. (66) Young people in general accept the values of their parents on trust before they are able to defend them, and it is plain that these "strategies" are designed to shake students' faith in home values, consistent with the philosophy noted above (page 4).

Similar to the Public Interview are other strategies close to group therapy — Resent, Demand, Appreciate; Chairs, or Dialogue With Self; Assist Groups or Support Groups; Group Interview and Partner Risk or Sharing Trios. (67)

**2. Forced Choice Strategies:** In Values Continuum and Rank Order strategies children must honestly declare publicly where they stand on some questions about which few would ordinarily be willing to talk. For example, in Values Continuum on the question "How do you feel about pre-marital sex?" girls are requested to indicate, or stand in relation to a line down the centre of the classroom, where they would place themselves between "Virginal Virginia who wears white gloves on every date" and "Mattress Millie who wears a mattress strapped to her back". (68) In a mixed class, what a choice for a teenage girl to indicate! The teacher is instructed to eliminate the "middle of the road" position if it occurs too frequently, explaining "that it's rare in life to be exactly in the middle of an issue". (69) So much for free choice! The choice becomes a tendency towards being a "good sport" or a "prissy prig". What is not made clear is that any degree of choice from the centre towards Virginal Virginia is virtuous, from the centre towards Mattress Millie is sinful. The choice of position on the continuum is licit only in one direction. It is not a values continuum acceptable to a morally good person. How different from the teaching of St Thomas Aquinas that virtues stand in the mean (between excess and defect). What a price we pay for the public declaration phase of Values Clarification.

**3. Contrived Values Dilemma:** These survival dilemmas take many forms — kidney machine availability, limited resources in a lifeboat or fall-out shelter, etc. — but all deal with assessment of who of a number of people shall be killed, or allowed to die, on the basis of social worth. Let's take a look at the

Fall-Out Shelter Problem (70). The fall-out shelter has food, water, etc. enough for only six people. A larger number of people has taken shelter in it. The whole world is at war, and anyone left out of the shelter will certainly die. Groups of six or seven children are asked to select the six who may be **the only ones left to start the human race over again**. They select from the following: a book-keeper, aged 31; a clergyman, age 75; a female physician, aged 36, unable to have children; a Black militant, aged 20, no special skills; a retired prostitute, aged 39; a homosexual architect; a male law student, aged 26, and his 25 year old wife who has spent the last 9 months in a mental hospital and is still heavily sedated (they refuse to be separated); a girl aged 16 of questionable I.Q., who is a high school drop-out and pregnant.

Note that the “qualifications” determine choices, if expediency is the only rule, and the dilemma **sets this rule**, thus forcing the “choices”. Mercy and justice don’t get a look in, and the whole act is based on an assumption that people may be put out of the shelter and left to certain death, whereas a proper morality would choose that all should take their chances together, a fair chance here as all might be able to **survive** for three months on the prescribed resources — “enough space, air, food and water for six people for three months”. In any case, they must **try** to survive on it, no other moral solution is open.

Note also the questions the teacher is instructed to ask when final **group** decisions are reached:

How well did you listen to others in your group? Did you allow yourself to be pressured into changing your mind? Were you so stubborn that the group couldn’t reach a decision? Did you feel you had the right answer? What do your selections say to you about your values? (71)

We see here the cultivation of group values, the pathway to tyranny of majorities, and the probing into “feelings”, part of the continuing assessment of progress in conveying “value”. However, morality is not pursued in the order of feelings, but in the orders of **intellect and will**.

Discussion of how and why decisions are arrived at creates **doubt** in the minds of the children. Doubt, according to one researcher in values education, Milton Rokeach, is a **pre-requisite** for changing “core values” and personal behaviour, which he explains may be altered by certain programmed techniques. **Firstly**, a state of “dissonance” or psychological imbalance must be generated. **One way** to do this, he writes, is to expose a person “to conflicting attitudes or values held by persons who are in some way important to him.” (72) The peer group versus parents, for example? Values clarification, or values changing? Rokeach warns that

“we must now face up to the ethical implications that follow from the fact that it now seems to be within man’s power to alter experimentally another person’s basic values, and to control the direction of change”.

(73)

This is sometimes called “brainwashing” and the National Training Laboratories are not ashamed to use the term (see page 7 above).

## **Diaries**

Part of the assessment process is the keeping by students of diaries, assorted records that provide information about feelings and emotions, about parents and home life. They are usually private records, to which the teacher has privileged access. Examples are Religion, Male-Female Roles, Affectionate and Tender Feelings, Hostility and Anger, High and Low Points, Conflict, Budget, Politics, Who Comes to Our Place, Parents. Parents are unaware that they and the home are under surveillance by child and teacher on such items as how much is spent on food, clothes, liquor, entertainment, who calls and whether they are of the same colour, religion and politics as the family, what brings about conflict in the family, what arouses hostility and anger there.

## **Values Training Under Wraps**

The Values Clarifiers are aware that it would not be in their interest for parents to know what they are about:

“When the teacher closes the classroom door in the morning and is alone with the students, the real curriculum begins.” (74)

Sidney Simon relates that teachers have had “major success by closing their doors and doing things they believe in”. (75) When teaching at Temple University he “did it his way”:

I always bootlegged the values stuff under other titles. I was assigned to teach Social Studies in the Elementary School and I taught values clarification. I was assigned Current Trends in American Education and I taught **my** trend. (76)

Resistance is expected and anticipated:

“ . . . . eventually the time of reckoning may come with cries and community furore.” (77)

Pacesetters in Innovation, the monumental publication by the U.S. Federal Government states:

“Forces which block the adoption of new ideas will be identified and ways to overcome these forces will be explored.” (78)

How can the Clarifiers make less obvious the inevitable alienation of children from parents and community that comes from abandonment of the old and tried values? By teaching them to listen to, but not to heed their parents, to say one thing to them and to mean another:

“It is vital that the curriculum not be used to turn the children against their parents and the community, even if the parents and community stand against reason, freedom and equality. . . . We are teaching children to respect the speech of their parents and to understand that those speech patterns are the result of their parents’ past. We are teaching



children to be bilingual. . . . we help children. . . . understand what their parents' attitudes are and why they have them. . . . ." (79)

It is to be noted that parents don't have ideas, morals or values, but "speech patterns". This is the linguistic approach, that does not permit of knowing universal fixed truths, but only names rather than natures. It is an ancient error, nominalism.

### **A Constant Presence**

Values Clarification can pervade the whole of school life, surface in every subject. This is typical of humanistic education. Below are some examples of role-play situations used in schools in Maryland, U.S.A. (80):

**Role-play:** \* Being drunk and coming home to find your parents sitting in the living room with friends. How would you get past them without them knowing? (7th Grade English Class)

\* Coming home at 4 a.m. when you were supposed to be home at midnight. How would your parents react? (10th Grade Biology Class)

\* Your mother finding marijuana in your bedroom. (8th Grade English Class)

\* A boy with several years of schooling ahead of him is confronted by a girl he has been dating. She tells him that he is the father of her expected child, and she demands that he marry her. If neither professes to love the other, what should they do? (10th Grade Home Economics Class)

### **Appropriate to Christian Teaching?**

How does Values Clarification compare with traditional Christian teaching or morals? Cardinal Krol and the Catholic Bishops of Pennsylvania issued a statement on "Public Education and Student Conscience", labelling values training methods used in public schools in the middle 1970's as morally relativistic. Whilst the Bishops conceded that these courses "beyond question, have been introduced and implemented with great good will", they noted that "such programmes are themselves fraught with problems and dangers, to the point where some now reasonably fear that the cure may be worse than the disease." (81) The Bishops explicitly condemned Values Clarification and Magic Circle, a "talk-in" or group discussion, in which "the teacher gathers the children into a circle where they are encouraged to discuss personal feelings about one another, their parents, and home life. Family size, advantages and disadvantages, comparison of toys, vacations, and clothing may be aired. Family conflicts, anxieties, worries and fears are often revealed." (82)

The Values Clarifiers hold that "traditional values" are unacceptable (83) and that traditional methods of teaching values are outmoded. (84) They aim to help the child decide "whether he wants to stick to the old moral and ethical standards or try new ones". (85)

Christians seek to present to children the moral values of Christianity. It may well be that these values will be later abandoned, but it is the primary duty of

parents to present them to their children and to defend them as they are questioned, to explain, from the Christian viewpoint, why following them through life will lead to fulfilment in this life, and eternal happiness in the next. **It should be taught that some values are absolute, that virtues are always to be followed and that some acts are always wrong.** Contrast this with the method of Values Clarification that gives the choice of a set of values to immature children in a framework of no right or wrong answer, and by confronting them with moral dilemmas. It is true that duty to God involves obedience to the moral law which reason can discover by itself, as well as to those positive commandments God has revealed to man. It is true also that having discovered such truths by reason, it is helpful to pass them on to others who are as yet insufficiently mature or educated to arrive at them by reason, though they can later test them in this way. The Christian way is not to adapt values to the demands of the environment, but to apply to changing situations those unchanging principles that are the basis of morality.

### **Moral Autonomy**

In April 1974 the New South Wales Department of Education issued a statement of principles, *Personal Development in Secondary Schools*, which defined a major aim of education as attaining moral autonomy. (86) This statement also endorses the relevance of moral dilemmas in a personal development programme. (87) There are limits to self-dominion, and man is bound as much by his own rational nature as by divine positive law. The use of contrived and unrealistic "moral dilemmas" to test and develop moral reasoning in children can lead either to scepticism or confusion. It seems to be implicit in many of the dilemma situations set up that personal survival is preeminent, that evil may be done that good may result. Jesus teaches that to give one's life for another is to exercise the greatest expression of love. (88) St Paul condemns the notion that we may do evil that good may come of it. (89) There seem to be no limits to the lengths to which Values Education can be extended. Consider this statement from the Professional Development Committee of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation on the goal of Values Education:

" . . . . display a clear, consistent, and defensible pattern of judgements and actions based on a value system, and focussed on the universal needs of affection, respect, skill, enlightenment, **power, wealth**, well-being and responsibility." (Emphasis added)

Add to power and wealth, personal survival, the tyranny of the strong over the weak, racial, religious and age prejudice, and the emerging autonomous child is far from the Christian ideal. Yet these additions are the consequence of survival game strategies, if they have the apparently desired effect. There is no room there for heroism, no Captain Titus Oates going out into the blizzard to die, so that his companions might have a less slim chance of survival. There is no attempt there to insist that **no** occasion occurs on which one cannot avoid

**moral evil.** Sometimes the cost of choice of a moral good is high, in physical, social or economic evil, but these latter cannot be ranged alongside moral evil, to make the choice. Values Clarification is well summed up by Professor Alan L. Lockwood, University of Wisconsin:

If correct, my contention that values clarification embodies ethical relativism as its moral viewpoint is noteworthy for at least two reasons: First, a programme of value education which devotes its attention to questions of personal preference and desire presents a truncated and myopic view of morality. A programme which avoids the controversies associated with value conflict, conflict resolution, and moral justification trivialises the complexity of value issues in human affairs. Second, a values education programme which, perhaps unwittingly, is grounded in ethical relativism must accept the possibility that its students will embrace ethical relativism as their moral point of view — clearly an achievement of dubious merit.” (90)

### **Cognitive Morals Training**

Values Clarification operates in the affective domain. Cognitive Morals Education operates in the cognitive domain. Whereas Values Clarification sets out to clarify existent values, Cognitive Morals Education has as its aim the raising of children to higher levels of moral reasoning. However, it is still oriented to Values Clarification (91) and favours process over content (92). Chief among present-day exponents is Lawrence Kohlberg. Though founded in the philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Immanuel Kant, Kohlberg's theory of moral development has its historical roots, according to one review (93), in the developmental theories of Baldwin (94) and Mead (95). Dr Kohlberg acknowledges its genesis in the moral philosophy of John Dewey (the Humanist educator, father of American progressive education), as elaborated by Jean Piaget. (96) Piaget was for many years in charge of the J. J. Rousseau Institute in Geneva. In 1932 he published a book, *The Moral Judgement of the Child* (97), indicating the factors in moral growth, based on a study of only 20 children, aged 4 to 13. He arrived at four developmental stages of understanding, later refining these to three stages. His work was based in the child's understanding of **rules**. He saw most moral reasoning, especially in progress from stage 2 to stage 3, as being concerned with consequences rather than malice or motive, and quantitative rather than qualitative. Following on this work, Kohlberg studied 72 subjects, aged 10, 13 and 16, from middle-class and lower-class backgrounds. He exposed them to a series of moral dilemmas, designed to present “a conflict between habitual conformity to a rule or authority as against a utilitarian or ‘greatest good’ response to situational values and social value objects.” The results were contained in a doctoral dissertation, presented in 1958, the source of the above quotation. (98) Kohlberg confronted his subjects with moral dilemmas and probing questions, and analysis of the responses enabled him to postulate six stages of moral development, two stages on each of three levels, the

preconventional, conventional and postconventional levels. His scientific division is best substituted for clarity by his own summary (99) of the meaning of his six stages:

1. Obey rules **to avoid punishment.**
2. Conform **to obtain rewards, have favours returned** and so forth.
3. Conform **to avoid disapproval, dislike by others.**
4. Conform **to avoid censure** by legitimate authorities and **resultant guilt.**
5. Conform **to maintain the respect of the impartial spectator, judging in terms of community welfare.**
6. Conform **to avoid self-condemnation.**

Kohlberg claimed that these six stages represent a natural moral development process. He proposed that knowledge of such a progression could be used to **develop** moral growth. This could best be done by exposing students to dilemmas and conflicts for them to resolve. They are to be led to think **one stage above** their present stage of moral reasoning, Kohlberg seeing this as the limit of assimilation. As in Values Clarification, the method requires incessant probing to assess the students' thinking level. Moral growth is stimulated by thus "stretching" the student to a higher level of moral judgement, according to Kohlberg's ascending stages. The dilemmas and conflicts, often unrealistic and contrived, or based on conflicts within the home and with parents, are calculated to generate what Kohlberg calls "mental disequilibrium, necessary to the progression." The method is child-centred and child "liberating" away from "any vestige of traditional dogma, moral prescription, discipline, law and authority that might inhibit a free 'adult' and 'mature' response." (100) It is stressed that the method be non-indoctrinative, the teacher listening carefully to the child in moral communication. (101) Group discussion is carried out in a "values neutral" climate. It is assumed that there can be no wrong answers. The teacher, who has become a "facilitator" (a term derived from Carl Rogers) keeps the discussion going, and for more advanced students introduces some concepts of the next higher stage. "Growth, flexibility and openness" are keynotes. Dr Allen Roberts notes that such words belong in the vocabulary of pseudo-morality. (102) Kohlberg's assessment of his subjects was based on what they considered "fair", and he sees **justice** as the core of his morals system. Yet it seems that this is not what is generally understood by the term. For Kohlberg, principled moral reasoning at stage 6 is not incompatible with adultery (nor with pre-marital sex). (103) It is difficult to reconcile adultery with justice. Perhaps charity might have been a more effective core value, but Kohlberg sees no relation between charity and morality. (104) In this unification of the virtues into justice, Kohlberg relies on Socrates and Plato, but, as Craig Dykstra shows, Kohlberg misinterprets Plato, who saw the unity of virtues expressed in the unity of character of the good person, "so that whoever is wise, temperate, courageous, pious **and** just

is virtuous (or good)." (105)

### **Experience and Feeling**

Emphasis is on **experience** and **feeling**, in keeping with Kohlberg's Humanist approach. William James, the pragmatist, Humanist philosopher placed great value on experience:

"There can be no final truth in ethics any more than in physics, until the last man has had his experience and said his say." (106)

Certainly ethics in the cultural sense owes much to collective experience, but "final truth" owes nothing to experience, except in the **uncovering** sense. However this statement towers above the superficiality of what another Humanist, Ernest Hemingway has to say about feelings in relation to morals:

"What is moral is what you feel good after and what is immoral is what you feel bad after." (107)

By this standard, a warm shower could be moral, a surgical operation immoral. Feelings, as we have noted above, are no basis for moral judgement. This arational approach to morality is not new. John Hammes (108) notes

"Hedonism as a way of life is not new. Aristippus of Cyrene (435-355 B.C.) and his followers equated pleasure with happiness; they therefore considered feeling the only valid criterion of truth. (109) Later, Epicurus (341-270 B.C.) contended the morally right action to be that which produces the most pleasure . . . . The affective or "feeling" aspect of sexual intercourse is the same pleasurable experience for married spouses, adulterers and fornicators, and the emotional aspect of love may be the same in each case. . . . The use of feeling as a moral norm is but another variety of relativism."

### **What About Christianity?**

Where does Christianity stand in Kohlberg's scheme? Perhaps it fits into the first four stages: reward, punishment, consideration for others and obedience to authority with a **proper** sense of guilt are all correlates of Christian morality, though there might be some qualifications about stage 3. These first four stages make up the Preconventional and Conventional Levels. Stage four is the "law and order" orientation. Christian morality is based both on reason and on an externally given law, accepted on authority. However, St Thomas Aquinas tells us "the argument from authority based on human reason is the weakest, yet the argument from authority based on divine revelation is the strongest." (110) When man's reason appears to conflict with divine revelation, man must then "pay the homage of his reason to God." Kohlberg, however, will not accept precepts, and considers the Ten Commandments "morally pretentious". (111)

In stage 5, Kohlberg moves his subjects beyond Christianity, into the domain of voluntarism and Rousseau's social contract, obedient only to those they

have chosen to obey, liberated from "law and order". Feelings predominate as a guide to goodness. "This is the stage of Rousseau's naturally good man, whom civilisation had corrupted, but to whose primitive innocence our children have finally returned." (112)

In stage 5, according to Beverly Mattox

"The individual respects impartial laws and agrees to abide by them. The society agrees to respect the rights of the individual . . . . Aside from what has been democratically accepted, **morality is a matter of personal choice**. Moral issues are solved by the passage of laws based on general principles, e.g., 'The greatest good for the greatest number.' People at stage 5 believe laws should be changed when they infringe on human convictions. Persons at this stage choose to change laws rather than break them when such change is possible. When it is not possible, they may choose to disobey what they consider to be an unjust law and **willingly** (emphasis in original) suffer the consequences." (113)

The keynote of stage 5 is morality as a matter of personal choice. Recent years have seen attempts at "law reform" in those areas where human positive laws impinge on the moral order, e.g. divorce, homosexuality, abortion, euthanasia, suicide, the use of drugs, pornography and censorship. Noticeably prominent in this movement have been Humanist groups. However, it seems that moral issues will not be solved by the passage of laws which are subject to liberal interpretation in courts, beyond the intention of the lawmakers. St Thomas Aquinas defines law as "an ordinance of reason for the common good, made by him who has the care of the community, and promulgated." (114) the **common good** is often far from the Benthamite **greatest good for the greatest number**. Granted one may disobey an unjust law and take the consequences, but there is an obligation not to contribute to anarchy whilst striving to change such laws. St Thomas tells us that unjust "laws do not bind in conscience except perhaps in order to avoid scandal or disturbance, for which cause a man should even yield his right. . . . ." (115)

Stage 6 represents the "Ethical Principle" orientation:

"Conscience is the directing agent at this stage. Respect for each person's individuality is paramount. The values are believed to be valid for all humanity." (116)

Values which are valid for all humanity, whilst respecting as paramount each person's moral individuality are strange values indeed. They do not provide that "all humanity" embraces the unjust as well as the just, the dishonest as well as the honest, the unchaste as well as the chaste. They are therefore utopian and unrealistic, for they do not recognise that all are not virtuous and that all individual values are not positive, good values. John Hammes sees that proper formation of conscience in the Christian sense is absent from the Kohlberg model:

"We have observed that conscience embraces not only the innate

intellectual ability to discern moral good from moral evil, but also an acquired or learned content of what is morally good and what is morally evil. As the individual matures, therefore, conscience also matures, as a function of both innate intellectual maturation from childhood to adulthood and the study and learning of truths. The psychological aspects of moral development have been studied (Kohlberg 117) and adapted to Christian education (Duska & Whelan — 118). However, the judgement of what constitutes “high” and “low” moral maturity is **subject to the value system of the researcher**, and often the role of divine grace is ignored. (Hammes — 119). For the Christian, progress in moral development is attained by prayer, study of the Scriptures, and active service toward the welfare of one’s fellow man. The obligation to educate one’s conscience, however, should be apparent to everyone, not only to the Christian. To neglect this obligation is to deceive oneself.” (120) (Emphasis added)

The models in stage 6 are Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King etc.; Jesus gets no mention. And the result of this “moral progression”?

“After Stage Six, **the individual experiences despair**. He or she has developed principles of justice, yet is faced with an unjust world. Moral philosophy cannot solve the problem.” (121)

The striving for the autonomous, self-directing, fulfilled man for the future has terminated in despair, let down by the inevitable failure of all utopian systems which are based on a false notion of man’s earthly perfectibility.

### **Moral Advance or Decay?**

Kohlberg’s reported research marks the progression, which he states is a natural one, from an absolute (God-derived) to a common (society-derived) thence to a radical (self-determined and relativistic) morality. His system of moral teaching **promotes** it. Dr Allen Roberts observed such a progression in primary school curricula, in Australia, from an examination of over 100 documents published in the period from World War II to 1978. (122) He observed a similar progression in the morality expressed in official handbooks, by a random sampling of 68 handbooks published by universities and colleges, non-government and government. (123)

### **What’s Wrong with Kohlberg’s System?**

Though Kohlberg is not without enthusiastic supporters, he does not lack critics. He admits his system has shortcomings. (124) In an article in *The Humanist* (125) he acknowledges major errors in developing his moral education programme:

“My notion that moral stages were the **basis** for moral education, rather than a partial guide to the moral educator was mistaken”, he writes. He now realises that “The educator must be a socialiser teaching **value content** and **behaviour**, and not a Socratic or Rogerian process

facilitator of development. In becoming a socialiser and advocate, the teacher moves into 'indoctrination', a step I originally believed to be philosophically invalid. I thought that indoctrination was philosophically invalid because the value content taught was culturally and personally relative, and that teaching content was a violation of the child's rights. I thought indoctrination was psychologically invalid because it could not lead to meaningful structural change.

I no longer hold these negative views of indoctrinative moral education, and I believe that the concepts guiding moral education must be partly 'indoctrinative'. This is true, by necessity, in a world in which children engage in stealing, cheating and aggression. . . . ."

James Likoudis, whilst commending Kohlberg's honest reappraisal of his past work and research, comments on the irony that a renowned "guru of Moral Education" has only recently discovered what any good religious parent could have told him in five minutes or so. (126)

Where does Kohlberg stand, after such a devastating recantation? Beverly Mattox writes that he was "exploring a Seventh Stage, one which might be described as a 'Faith' orientation", as long ago as 1975:

"This stage involves a person's resolution of the question 'What is the ultimate meaning of life?'. . . . . In Stage Seven the individual advances from an essentially human to a cosmic point of view. . . . . Instead of self as the primary nucleus, the cosmos or the infinite becomes focal. . . . . Belief in a fundamental God, or independent reality is developed at Stage Seven. . . . . With this stage comes the moral strength to act on the principles of justice in an unjust world." (127)

This looks like a promising admission that trust in God is essential to leading a moral life, set apart from values encountered in an imperfect world. It does not seem yet to have penetrated to the promoters of Kohlberg's original theses, **which he now rejects**. When finally it does, and they go back to including God and moral absolutes in their teaching efforts, they will have wasted a lot of time for nothing, but what of the generation of children on whom these mistaken efforts have been spent?

From all sides, Kohlberg comes under criticism: (128)

"Even from the dilemma designers" say Thomas and Elizabeth Bender, "classroom discussions are not necessarily the long awaited magic formula for moral training. Donald Oliver, from his experience with classroom discussion of values oriented issues in social studies, pointed out the weakness of this methodology." (129)

A review by Kurtines and Greif, covering some 15 years of research and evaluation of Kohlberg's method, published in the Psychological Bulletin, failed to give support to it. In summary, these authors concluded:

"This article examines and evaluates the evidence supporting Kohlberg's



theory concerning the development of moral thought. A systematic review of the published research literature suggests that there are several conceptual and methodological problems with the approach. The problems include the derivation, administration and scoring of the model's primary measuring device; and the absence of direct evidence for the basic assumptions of the theory. On the basis of the review, it seems that the empirical utility of the model has yet to be demonstrated." (130)

Referring to this review, Professor Edwin Judge (131) laments the elevation of educational theories into fashions, and their systematic practice whilst still empirically unproven. Had the educational authorities in New South Wales waited just one more year before centring educational aims on Kohlberg's stages, he says, they would have had the advantage of a stream of critical reports of the theory.

Carol Jackson Robinson (132) joins others in criticising Kohlberg's insistence that his six stages form a sequence of **invariant** developmental stages, and that no one of them may be skipped in applying the method. "As this absolutism hardly follows from a very small and minor research project, I think we can forget about the 72 boys." The six stages having no discernible logical or psychological sequence, we can guess, says Robinson, that an educational process based on them cannot and does not proceed in a natural or organic way. This author further suggests that Kohlberg's stages were in fact constructed in reverse from what he saw as his end-point, the autonomous, self-realised child, a "process of art, not of morality." (133)

James Likoudis declares the entire Kohlberg process to be anti-family, anti-parent and anti-Church, encouraging social activism and revolution on the part of the new morally autonomous, "liberated from traditional social restraints". (134)

In the same paper, Likoudis makes some telling points.

1. Kohlberg's original test group of 72 boys, now reduced to 50, was used to both construct and validate this theory — a violation of scientific method.
2. Twenty years of research has produced little supporting evidence of an invariant sequential stage theory.
3. Kohlberg's stage scoring system is so complex and subjective, few psychologists are interested in testing his theory.
4. Kohlberg's 5th and 6th levels are products of his philosophical position, not his research. As a recent **Newsweek** article noted, Kohlberg is not so much interested in moulding his theory to man but rather moulding man to his theory.
5. Kohlberg's philosophical position excludes most systems of ethics having as their basis a transcendental religious outlook. . . . Another

negative aspect of Kohlberg's theory is its in-built elitism. Kohlberg asserts that only 20% of the population reach level 5 and 6 reasoning. . . . Directly flowing from this elitism is a second problem of stereotyping. Two recent popular magazine articles see the possibility of people being pigeonholed according to Kohlberg's levels — He's a level 2 thinker." (135, 136)

Likoudis refers to several mothers, who expressed opposition to a cognitive moral dilemma programme in one school, and were told they were "level 4 thinkers" (137)

The lack of claimed stage stability and progress received support in an article in *Psychology Today*, which points out an anomaly discovered several years ago by Kohlberg and his associate Richard Kramer, when they tested the stage levels of his original group of subjects. They found that many who had been at stage 4 in previous interviews had inexplicably reverted to stage 2, a revelation challenging the very assumption on which the theory was based, that stage change proceeds only upwards, to ever-higher levels. (138)

Craig Dykstra concludes that Kohlberg has discovered stages in the development of **social** reasoning, not moral reasoning, though Kohlberg, he says, would not admit the distinction. (139)

### **Similarities Between the Two Systems**

Though Kohlberg's cognitive approach is opposed to the affective approach of Values Clarification, they have much in common. Both are based on the premise that there are no right or wrong values, that values are relative, situational and consequential. Both share the identity of process and content. Both originate in a Humanist philosophy and aim to produce moral autonomy, without regard for an external authority whose values have not passed the test of the system. Aiming to convey to children values which they can apply to their lives, the best they could do, even if they did not suffer from the defects outlined above, would be to confer a set of Humanist values. These would fall far short of the Christian requirement. An empirical search for values by discussion between immature minds without authoritative guidance cannot produce much more than a **pooling of ignorance**. Both systems induce a psychological disturbance as part of their methodology.

### **Just a Useful Methodology?**

What of the argument to a possible syncretism:

"Christian educators can take the **methods** of Values Clarification and of Cognitive Morals Training and use them, purely as teaching methods, to convey Christian morality"? This might seem at first hearing to be a valid proposal, and indeed is the most common response elicited by criticism of these methods. However, it will not stand against what the originators of both systems have to say about how they work, and the implications that follow regarding any imposition of moral content.

## Critical Basic Defects of Both Systems

In Values Clarification “definition of a value is synonymous with the prescribed process for obtaining a value:” (140)

“Unless something satisfies **all** seven of the criteria. . . . we do not call it a value.” (141)

Any preferences not meeting all criteria are categorised as “value indicators”, including aspirations, beliefs, attitudes, interests, feelings, worries, activities and goals. (142)

The criteria for clarifying a value both **define** the value and **describe** the process of “valuing”. Both in Values Clarification and in Cognitive Moral Training **PROCESS IS CONTENT**. Here we have the Humanist tenet of the **primacy of decision**. It is not **what** is decided that is important; it **is** important that a decision has been made, that it is **your** decision.

## Moral Systems Need Not Apply

If a value must be freely chosen from among alternatives, any moral **system** is disqualified, as moral systems do not permit alternatives, being complete in themselves. A moral system presented to the process would become merely a set of value indicators from which choice is to be made, supermarket fashion, freely and without any guidance as to right or wrong answers. Only by a coincidence (against astronomical odds) could the moral system in its entirety survive the process. **Values Clarification cannot be used to teach Christian morality, or any other moral system.**

Similarly with Kohlberg. It is essential to his process that each stage unravel itself by confrontation with moral dilemmas and discussion in a **values neutral** climate. **Any injection of moral content would destroy the process.** Firstly, it would give some security in moral truth, thus removing the mental disequilibrium, deliberately induced by the method, which Kohlberg sees as essential to his process of moral development. Secondly, because in Kohlberg’s system no rightness or wrongness can be assigned to a student’s moral decision, because his reasoning is appropriate to his stage of moral development, introduction of moral content violates the stage theory. **Kohlberg’s method also cannot be used to teach Christian morality, or any other moral system.**

Values Clarification which began from and aimed to impart a complete moral system would not be Values Clarification. Kohlbergian Cognitive Morals Training which began from and aimed to impart a complete moral system would not be Kohlbergian Cognitive Morals Training. Values Clarification leads to moral autonomy by **definition**, Kohlbergian Cognitive Morals Training leads to moral autonomy by **process**, and in the words of Joseph J. Schwab.

“Autonomism canonises adolescent rebellion.” (143)

## **Responsibilities of Teachers**

Much is left to-day to principals of schools, and even to individual teachers in selection of teaching matter and methods, so that practice will vary from school to school. Where humanistic methods of education are used, it is largely because they dominate teacher education in the values and morals field, as well as in social studies (in fact, in a very large part of the school curriculum, as we have seen). Can teachers or education systems be blamed for taking up pedagogical fashions? Are parents, or grandparents simply old fuddy-duddies when they object to them? This is what humanistic educators would like to convey to their students. It seems reasonable to suppose that if teachers have brought to their notice the history and philosophic background of methods they are using, and if these cast any doubt on such methods, then they have a responsibility to investigate the claims made, and if they are found to have substance, to give serious thought as to whether they are justified in continuing with these methods.

## **Rights and Obligations of Parents**

Parents have the obligation, as well as the right, to ensure that powerful psychological methods are not being used in attempts to change the values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviour of their children, without the children's being aware of it. They have the right to have their permission sought **before** tests are made of their children on any subject (except basic academic skills or knowledge) such as psychological and attitudinal tests, evaluations, questionnaires or surveys, written or oral. They have a right to see a sample of such programmes, and to insist that they be not administered before written permission is given. They have a right to be advised of any classes which will use the techniques of values clarification, moral dilemmas, role playing, psycho-drama, sensitivity training, group therapy or group encounter methods, survival games and the extent to which they will be employed. They have a right to be given a list of materials — books, films, etc. — to be used in new programmes or programmes in which their children will be involved.

Rights are to be balanced against **obligations**:

- \* as parents, and thus as primary educators, to take an interest in their children's education, and not leave it all to the school. Educators have a right to assume a certain level of communication of Christian values **in the home**. If parents do not convey values to their children, especially religious and moral values, they are playing into the hands of humanistic educators who claim that they must teach these values **their way**, because parents have failed to teach them.
- \* to take an interest in the schools attended by their children, to support teachers in their efforts to form children for this world **and the next**, to teach religion and moral values throughout the curriculum and not in isolation. (Remember Values Clarification extends to many subjects in this way.)

- \* to have a relationship with these schools and the teachers, within which they can discuss educational methods in a pleasant and co-operative way. Teachers and educational systems are no more infallible than are parents.
- \* to insist that no programmes be instituted on an experimental or trial basis, where they entail risks to religious and moral values. An awesome warning has been given about such risks:

“(The school) cannot be compared to a laboratory, in which the risk of wasting more or less costly material is compensated for by the probability of a discovery: in the school every individual soul faces salvation or damnation.” (144)

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