

# Religion in today's school

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moral  
education

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C65  
V6  
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v.4  
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QCSE

Gouvernement du Québec  
Conseil supérieur de l'éducation  
**Comité catholique**

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*"Can you tell me, Socrates, whether virtue is acquired by teaching or by practice; or if by neither teaching nor practice, then whether it comes to man by nature or in some other way?"*

Plato: Dialogue with Meno

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**foreword**

This document is a translation and adaptation of the fourth volume of the "Voies et Impasses" series, published by the Catholic Committee of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation of the Province of Québec<sup>1</sup>. These studies were undertaken as part of the Committee's mandate to advise the Minister of Education and to set up rules in regard to Roman Catholic religious and moral education in Québec's elementary and secondary schools.

With this fourth volume, the Catholic Committee hopes to stimulate reflection on the school's contribution to moral education. In a field where issues are widely debated, the Committee is trying to establish guidelines for moral education and to highlight its essential aspects. It is concerned with what "being moral" means, or rather how one becomes moral.

The Catholic Committee believes that this document, insofar as it attempts to clearly state the basics of all moral learning, can serve to enlighten the moral education already included in Catholic moral and religious instruction. As moral education leaves no one indifferent, this publication is intended for all educators whatever their field or function might be. The moral growth of young people is among the basic challenges of all education.

For this translation, certain passages of the original French version are omitted and others are slightly modified due to recent changes and to cultural differences. In order to facilitate comparisons between the two versions, paragraphs are numbered in sequence and the corresponding numbers in the original French text are given in brackets.



*"The moral training of individuals in a society that is developing as fast as ours cannot be left to chance."*

Robert Cliche

# 1. the role of the school in moral education

1.[15] Given the importance of moral education, there is a strong urge to turn immediately to the school to see what is being done, to remind it of its task or even to pass on to it another responsibility. As if the school were the principal and only setting for moral education. As if it were normal to always refer to the school the challenges of society. As if the school were a crutch for helpless families in a lax society. With this approach, it is easy to misconstrue and ill-define the role of the school in moral education. It would be a mistake to have the school assume a task which others shun. It would also be a mistake to rely too heavily on what it can do, even in a complementary way. The school cannot be given alone the challenge of the moral education of the young. It was Chesterton who wrote: "We do not know what is right, but we want to pass it on to our children."

## A limited role

2.[16] Let it be clearly stated that in moral education, the role of the school is limited. Limited, because the students spend only one fifth of their time at school. Limited, because in this area, families have a dominant and irreplaceable role, especially when it comes to the basic experiences which affect the moral personality: autonomy and confidence, loving and being loved, punishment and reward, freedom and responsibility. Limited also because while the school can teach young people to appreciate radio or television, to react to the constant barrage of information, to develop a critical attitude towards "conventional wisdom", the school has no control over these agencies. And finally, it is limited because of the many factors or events which hinder or paralyse the educational activity taking place in the school itself. Just think, for example, of the effects of anonymity in a large building or of labour disputes on the moral education of the young.

## An implicit role

3.[17] Moral development takes place in the school in **implicit** and subtle ways. Whether we like it or not, the school will always be a setting where certain values, certain attitudes, certain behaviours are favoured while others are disapproved. No school is neutral where morals are concerned, neither in its educational project nor in its approach. By its very nature, it conveys messages: cleanliness is next to godliness; learning is fun; marks count; history and literature are unimportant; a diploma above all, and so on.

4.[18] Educators too convey messages. For example, one who says: "I just inform. I'm non-directive", has already stated a position which contains several

value judgments but which, in practice, can shift. Everyone knows that what actually happens in school often counters or belies noble declarations of principles and policies. Acknowledged or disguised, the moral influence which filters through is often more determining than that which is explicitly called moral education.

### **An explicit role**

5.[19] The school also has an **explicit** and specific role to play in the moral training of the young. Just as it seeks to develop their intellectual and physical abilities, so it must be concerned with their moral development. It is not sufficient for graduates to have their High School Leaving Diploma; they should be aware of their responsibilities as persons, as well as the tasks and opportunities given to each citizen, to all mankind. Young persons cannot ignore the rights and obligations, the threats and promises facing individuals and society. The school has the duty to stimulate their moral conscience and to give them the opportunity and desire to deal with questions that affect their own personal growth and the interests of mankind as a whole.

6.[20] The moral aspect definitely belongs in the school. In attempting to define its aims, the Québec school system proclaims that it is concerned with the whole person: body, spirit, the male and female identity, the will to be successful in life. Moral education is included in this global undertaking. It implies a will to meet the expectations and needs of children and adolescents in their moral learning. What is the difference between good and evil? Where does truth lie? Where is deceit? Have I the right to do such and such? How can I be happy? How can I learn about the human condition? Why prohibitions and rules? How can I assess the consequences of my actions? In all these matters, young people do not expect the school to dictate to them what to think, what to say, what to do; but they would feel rather let down if the school were not concerned with this aspect of their personal growth and did not help them to come to terms with it.

### **Expectations of the milieu**

7.[21] Families and society rely on the explicit contribution of the school to moral development. Of course, these expectations must be rightly understood: often, even the best of intentions are ambiguous. Some persons advocate moral education with the only hope that it will lead to more discipline, curb sex and drug abuse and produce law-abiding citizens. In spite of these short-sighted views, the school must recognize an appeal from the general public. It even becomes more pressing each year. Just as previously society voiced the need to prepare competent graduates capable of joining the labour force, now society requires competent graduates to have acquired also a sense of responsibility as partners in society. Perhaps people are beginning to

realize that in our complex world, primitives in terms of ethics are dangerous beings to have around. We may be equally discovering that investments in people are as profitable as investments in technology.

### **A function of the whole school**

8.[22] The school must deploy all its resources to achieve its purpose in moral education. Moral education is not just a "subject" or a "course" assigned to so-called human development specialists, or to some "service". Nor can it be merely blocked into one or two periods of moral instruction in the timetable. It is part and parcel of every subject and of all school activities including the organization and pursuance of the educational process itself. It is the direct concern of everyone: teachers, counsellors, department heads, students, support staff, administrators. In a word, the responsibility of moral education lies with the whole school community.

9.[23] Here, partitions are impossible: when it comes to moral education, the whole school has to be involved. It is first of all the spirit and the character of the school that have an intangible but determining moral influence. The same holds for the numerous relationships that develop within the institution: between students and teachers; between students from different sociological and cultural backgrounds; between boys and girls; between different age groups; between academic and technical-vocational groups; between more able students and students with learning disabilities. Also to be considered is the impact of the form of discipline as well as the methods of promotion and control, used in the school.

10.[24] Let us carry this question a little further. It is the whole educational process which instills a mentality, a spirit, and values. What principles of education underlie educational activities? Does the approach stress competition which creates rivalry and individualism in the school, or rather does the approach promote cooperation and participation thereby turning the school into a cradle of community life? These questions have a serious moral bearing and they challenge the entire set-up of the school: the separation of students into sectors and streams; the way of evaluating what is learnt; the treatment given to the handicapped; and so forth. Undoubtedly, the school imparts values; it is important to be aware of this fact and to attempt to identify them.

### **A specific function**

11.[25] In addition to what has just been mentioned, the school has its own privileged means to contribute to the moral growth of young people. It is called **moral instruction**. Just as one can teach how to read and write, how to take a motor apart and put it back together again, there can also be courses which teach young people how to reflect on their motivations and behaviours, on

their values and value judgments; on moral issues debated in public, on the meaning of laws and duties, on fault and punishment, on good and evil. These topics are dealt with in a **teaching situation** blocked into the student's timetable; they are at least as important as multiplication tables and chemistry formulas. The following chapters will define the aims and content of moral instruction. For the time being, this can be noted: whether it is a program based on a humanistic perspective, or whether it is a part of the religious instruction program, the aim of moral instruction is to help pupils to reflect on their human journey and their social relationships.

**part  
one**

Moral development is a form of education, and as such, can be viewed as **learning**. It is a **complex journey** which young persons undertake as they grow and experience life. It is a **varied learning process** comprising basically five major components which will be examined in order:

- learning moral judgment;
- discovering the basic human rights and duties;
- learning how to make moral decisions;
- the maturing of desires;
- learning how to act.

All through this learning process, children or adolescents will learn how to manage their life, how to clarify their motives and reasons for living, how to act appropriately in their environment and to be happy.

## **2. a varied learning process**

12.[26] Just what is "moral education"? The meaning of this expression (and its equivalent "moral training") needs to be clarified because it is often equivocal and ambiguous. This task is not easy because the two components of the expression refer to two vast areas: the field of education and the field of ethics. Both of these areas are very controversial and in many ways booby-trapped. When discussing these topics, everybody has his or her own pet theories and convictions and, in more subtle ways draws upon his or her own experiences and recollections.

13.[27] This is particularly true for morality. We all know how this word takes on different meanings. For some, it is automatically synonymous with barriers and controls; it evokes the time when moralism was all intrusive and it brings back memories of wounds that are still smarting. For others, the concept of morality refers to something positive: it evokes the idea of sure and necessary reference points for human conduct. For others still, morality is an outmoded concept that they have replaced by the only rule that the liberated ego follows: "I do what I want". More examples could be given, but that is not what is important. The point is this: if we are going to succeed in clarifying the status and content of a moral education program, clear-mindedness and serenity are required. All those concerned must agree to examine with impartiality the present situation and the suggested orientations. A certain detachment is necessary, regardless of one's position at the outset. Without this lucid effort, without some critical distance, all discussion on moral education will go around in circles, and be confused and fruitless. This document is attempting first of all to suggest the attitudes necessary to broach in a serene and constructive manner the subject of moral education in our schools.

### **The starting point: the experience of the young**

14.[28] Children and their day-to-day experiences are the starting point and the focal point of all efforts in moral education. Every day, there are experiences that can be called moral, at least in the sense that they are "opportunities" for moral growth. Each day, children relate to parents, brothers and sisters, friends and neighbours. Each day, they must confront various situations, react to events, accept or decline invitations, live with the consequences of their choices. Each day, they learn something new, observe various behaviours, come into contact with their "elders", be they the principal, youth leaders or teachers. Each day, they meet up with restrictions and regulations, just as they set up their own rules for games or for their dealings with others. Each day, they decide, act, judge or are judged. And they grow up... seven years old, eleven, fifteen. As their vision of the world broadens, their personal inner world deepens. Their personality and freedom mature. They dream, they call into question, they make plans.



15.[29] Moral education is rooted in childhood and adolescent experiences. It is not deduced from some abstract ethics, nor from a ready-made treatise. It is founded on the experience of children and it follows their growth and development until maturity. Without this foundation, moral education would be empty, a mere intellectual exercise. Pupils who do not succeed in grasping the reality of their lives during the moral instruction course will get nothing out of it and will soon end up bored. Ethics is a practical reflection on human existence. Moral education must begin with the pupils, with their personal options, their choices, and their specific moral dilemmas.

16.[30] Once this has been clarified, the question is what goal is to be achieved. What kind of person do we want to fashion? What are the characteristics of a morally mature adult? How does a young person grow to moral maturity? By what ways? Covering what steps? These are mankind's long-standing questions on ethics, on human persons and on their destiny. Since we are especially concerned with the moral growth of young people, these questions bring us to consult the works and studies dealing with moral education. They have been quite numerous in recent years. On this, two major observations will be made.

### **A complex reality**

17.[31] The first observation is this: moral education is not an easy task. There are many aspects to be held together. A moral personality has many traits and must possess many abilities. Therefore, concern for the moral education of young persons requires an interest in the many facets of their being. Moral education can never be reduced to a few simple slogans, nor to the latest teaching fads. This must be noted, because there is a tendency to want to simplify things and to hold to a single aspect or a single method. "All we have to do is to teach them to be self-sufficient." "We just teach them good manners." "Moral development is teaching them to respect themselves and to respect others." More than trite expressions and quick-fix formulas, moral education is a complex, multi-faceted task.

### **Five essential components**

18.[32] The second observation is this: though not all authors use the same categories, though there exist distinct schools of thought, on the whole, five essential components recur constantly in one form or another. These five components seem to constitute the very core of moral education:

- moral judgments;
- principles, norms and values;
- autonomous decision-making;
- drives and desires;

- the moral act itself.

When dealing with moral education, the question of the development of moral judgment and conscience inevitably crops up. There is also the question of the principles and values on which moral judgments are based. And then, the awakening of a sense of free and responsible decision-making. And how moral actors take charge of their drives and desires. And the act itself, that is, the specific action and continuous right conduct. These five major aspects determine the field proper to moral education.

### **Five directions of learning**

19.[33] With these components as educational aims, moral education becomes a varied learning process, expanding simultaneously in several directions:

- to enhance moral judgment;
- to discover norms and principles;
- to make choices and take decisions;
- to integrate drives;
- to get the action done.

The task of moral education then consists in this: urge young people to take these five paths and help them progress. Hence, they will be able to gradually acquire the basic aptitudes that form the moral personality:

- the ability to make moral judgments;
- the ability to refer to norms, principles and values which are internalized;
- the ability to make free decisions and to set goals in life;
- the ability to integrate and to channel the affective domain;
- the ability to live up to their intentions and choices.

20.[34] Is there a need to establish a progression and sequence between these components? The question is still open; in any case, it will not be discussed here. We are simply noting that the five components form a whole and they constitute the dynamics of moral education. In other words, moral maturity develops along five paths; it requires the integrated development of these diverse abilities. None of them can be left aside without the risk of creating serious distortions in the moral learning process. These five aspects must be retained as necessary criteria to balance and evaluate programs and teaching strategies in moral education.

### 3. learning moral judgment

#### Stages of moral development

21.[35] "How many times have I told you not to do that?" Frustrated parents and educators often utter that statement when children and teenagers take so much time to understand. It is not really that youngsters do not want to understand nor are they all that absent-minded. There are certain things that they do not **yet** understand or cannot **yet** do, just as there are things that they have already heard and done, but now refuse, because they claim they are too old for that. There are stages in moral growth which one goes through gradually. Physical growth occurs in the same way: before walking, a child begins to creep; before being able to speak clearly, a child mumbles. No need trying to rush things: one has to learn to accept things as they are. So it is in moral education. One must know the stages of evolution of the child and the teenager as well as the moment they are ready to take another step in the moral learning process. And never forgetting all the while that human persons, young or old, are fallible.

22.[36] Two names stand out among the authors who have studied the question of stages in moral development: Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg. Those interested in moral education cannot ignore the principal findings of the research of these two psychologists. It is worth noting here, even if only briefly and summarily, the major stages they have identified in the development of the moral conscience.

#### From heteronomy to autonomy

23.[37] Jean Piaget, a professor of experimental psychology at Geneva, has studied for more than forty years, the development of language, intelligence and moral conscience in children<sup>2</sup>. Observing children at play, he analyzed how they came to perceive the rules of their games. He also explored the development of moral judgment with regards to stealing, lying, fairness and justice. He concluded that there exist two major phases in the moral development of children between the ages of six and twelve.

24.[38] While they are still very young, children go through a phase where rules and laws are external to themselves, almost sacred, determined by the authority of elders. For example, laws or rules regarding respect of property, theft or lying are not considered by the child as means of assuring harmony in the family or in society; they are orders which must not be violated because they come from adults who are considered as demigods. In this stage, the source of morality is completely external to the child: it is the **heteronomous** stage.

25.[39] Children move progressively to another phase. Gradually, they begin to see rules and laws as the result of a decision and therefore worthy of respect, not so much because they come from authority, but especially because they are necessary and useful forces for group interaction. Step by step, children internalize their morality. They learn to discover within themselves the principles by which they are governed, and to appropriate the laws and rules which are imposed. They enter the **autonomous** phase.

26.[40] To illustrate how children learn about rules, Piaget analyzes the "rules of the game of marbles" perceived at different ages. Children between age one and two merely handle the marbles according to their desires and motor habits; their movements are not determined by rules. Between two and six years, children observe the games of their elders. They try to imitate them, they begin to notice that there are rules to follow. But they play by themselves, not really with others. They are still very self-centred. Even in a group, each one plays alone, oblivious of the others.

27.[41] Between age seven and ten, children enter the stage of "incipient co-operation". From there on, they enjoy really playing with others, trying to outmatch them. Hence the concern for mutual control and a code of rules. They observe these rules scrupulously and demand as much from their playmates. No question of breaking the rules: they are inviolable. Around eleven or twelve, children begin to make their own rules. Anyone who has watched a group of children of this age try to organize a game of baseball knows that they can spend more time picking the teams and determining the rules than actually playing. To them, the rules are necessary for the activity to work well; they must be followed if one wants to be fair, but they can be changed at will if there is a consensus.

#### **From externalization to internalization**

28.[42] Lawrence Kohlberg, an American psychologist at Harvard, is doing research which furthers and completes Piaget's studies<sup>3</sup>. From his observation of a group of 50 young people between the ages of 10 and 28, whom he met every 3 years for a period of 20 years, Kohlberg determined various stages of development in moral judgment.

29.[43] Kohlberg's method is relatively simple. Here, for example, is one of the dilemmas that Kohlberg proposes: in Europe, a woman was near death from a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid \$200 for the radium and charged \$2,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money but he could only get together about \$1,000, which is half of what it cost. He told the

druggist that his wife was dying, and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said, "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." So Heinz got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife. A whole series of questions follow, trying to assess the stage of moral development. Did Heinz do right? Was he allowed to steal the drug? If Heinz is arrested, should he be sentenced? Why? And so forth...

30.[44] Through this technique of dilemmas and sub-questions, Kohlberg, and the same holds for Piaget, is not trying to evaluate the behaviour itself. Rather he hopes to discover the reasons that lead to such or such an action. To assess moral maturity, one cannot only consider actions, one must also know the motives that caused a person to act one way rather than another. If only external behaviour is observed, the basic moral process will not be perceived. For example, a child and an adult walk through a store. Both refrain from stealing something tempting. In both cases, the behaviour is the same. Morally correct. However it is the reasons evoked to justify the behaviour that indicates the degree of moral maturity. If the child explained that he or she did not steal "because my mother forbade me to" and the adult "because I was afraid of being caught", one sees that these two responses are not at the same level of morality. The reasons given to justify an act indicated the degree of moral maturity.

31.[45] Here is a brief summary of the six stages of moral judgment that Kohlberg has identified. One should not quibble over technical terms; it is more important to notice the moral progress that is described. According to Kohlberg, every individual on the way to moral maturity follows a common path consisting of three levels: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional, each sub-divided into two stages.

**Stage 1: Pre-conventional morality**, based on fear of punishment, blind obedience. "I behave properly because I'm afraid of being punished."

**Stage 2: Pre-conventional morality**, directed toward instrumental relativity. "I behave properly because it brings satisfaction."

**Stage 3: Conventional morality**, directed toward harmony with others. "I behave properly to please others and win their esteem."

**Stage 4: Conventional morality**, directed toward law and order. "I obey because 'the law is the law'."

**Stage 5: Post-conventional morality**, directed toward the common good. "I observe the law, because it is there to ensure the welfare of society and the respect of human rights."

**Stage 6: Post-conventional morality**: based on moral principles. "I behave according to universal principles of justice and respect of individuals, as required by my conscience."

One of Kohlberg's important conclusions is that children cannot skip over a stage: they can only grasp the motivation and reasoning of the stage immediately above the one where they are. Here is a typical case. When seven year old children refuse to share their toys or crayons, it is useless to try and convince them by arguing that there is more joy in giving than receiving. This moral saying requires a high degree of maturity. It would be preferable to suggest reasons from stages 2 or 3: we share to make the other person happy, or so that we get along better. This is true for many moral principles that children grasp progressively and in sequence.

32.[46] In spite of recent critiques<sup>4</sup>, Piaget's and Kohlberg's studies can enlighten certain aspects of moral judgment which is an important but not exclusive part of moral learning. They stake out the moral path, so to speak, that young people must travel even though it is clear as Kohlberg shows, that not everyone necessarily attains stages 5 and 6. Their studies offer a scientific base for a rational and serious approach to the development of moral conscience.

## 4. discovering basic human rights and duties

33.[48] In their moral growth, youngsters are not alone in their quest for the moral good. They are part of a family, a people, a history. Moral learning is not confined to the privacy of the individual conscience. It takes place in and through interaction with an environment, be it family, society or culture. Early in life, children perceive the demands made by their parents; then they discover rules and values harboured by society and culture. It is an essential part of the task of moral education to assist young persons to gradually open their conscience to the calls and reminders that come from without to enter the world of persons and things to be respected. A conscience is thus born in dialogue with other consciences that challenge them, guide them, propose choices and values, invite them to excellence. Only a conscience in dialogue, constantly disposed to openness, is a living conscience.

### Rules and Laws

34.[49] A prerequisite for moral learning is a correct disposition with regards to laws, prohibitions, rules, customs, principles particular to every group, every society. In early life, rules and laws appear to be sacred; not because of their content, but because of the authority behind them. One must not steal or damage trees in the park "because mommy said not to" or "because a policeman is watching". Gradually children discover that the authority of the law derives primarily from the value that it must safeguard and support. From then on, laws and norms do not impose themselves as arbitrary orders, but as indispensable conditions for the co-existence of several liberties. Stealing is not permitted, because it undermines relations between people; destroying the environment is attacking the planet, our sole dwelling place. Seen from this angle, laws and customs, far from being dampers or old-fashioned, are seen as the result of a long patient quest for humaneness.

35.[50] One of the tasks of moral education is to help young people to become aware of the moral evolution that brought humans to formulate a certain code of rules and laws. For the most part, each generation lives on the legacy of the previous generations. That is fortunate. We do not have to begin anew every day by inventing the wheel or shaping a fork. The value and usefulness of these inventions must still be appreciated. Thus, laws and principles are valuable standards which indicate how to live values. They are useful for directing human life. In the physical order, laws are not merely a system of given standards, but also springboards for scientific progress. Until Newton discovered the law of universal gravity, humans deplored not being as free as birds. By strapping wings to their backs, they could attempt to fly at the risk of crashing to the ground. Now that the law of gravity is known, man can fly the Concord and even go to the moon. In the human and social order, rules and laws can also in their own way produce or mark great leaps of civilization.



## The charters of Human Rights

36.[51] During their studies in moral education, young people must come into direct contact with those "milestones" where the accumulated wisdom of mankind and of history expresses itself most clearly. Such is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948. This Declaration establishes, for our times, the essential objective conditions for human dignity and is the basis of a desire to live together among nations. It is, and rightly so, a universal reference point on what makes or breaks a human person, on what unites or divides peoples. Other documents which prolong or complete this Declaration can be included. Such are the Canadian Declaration of Human Rights and the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms<sup>5</sup>.

37.[52] According to the spirit of these declarations, human life should be seen in its totality, that is, in the complementarity between the individual and society. Individual rights and social rights are both complementary and interdependent. Though not complete, here is the essential content of universal rights:

### *Individual rights*

Individuals are equal in dignity. Each one has

- a right to life and to a decent existence;
- a right to personal freedom, to leading one's life as responsible for oneself and for one's acts before the Law and before one's conscience;
- a right to the security of person;
- the right to property;
- the right to marry and to found a family, with its inherent freedoms;
- the right to pursue one's moral destiny according to one's own conscience;

### *Civil rights*

Every human being has

- the right to freedom of expression and research;
- the right to take an active part in politics;
- the right to association, the right to form professional corporations, unions and political parties;
- the right to an independent tribunal;



- the right to religious freedom ;
- the right to work and to freely choose one's work ;
- the right to a just salary ;
- the right to receive through education the heritage of human culture ;
- the right to receive help from the community in hardship, unemployment, sickness and old age

*The State also has its rights:*

- the right of each State, large or small, to freedom and to peaceful development ;
- the right of peoples to self-determination ;
- the right to live free of strife or terror ;
- the right to the observance of oaths and to the sacredness of treaties.

### **The duty to promote human dignity**

38.[53] This list of rights establishes clear guidelines for the moral journey of each person. A list of corresponding duties, those of individuals and those of society, could also be added. Even if rights are more frequently referred to, these universal duties are just as indispensable for living together. For example, obligations with regards to truth, justice and peace ; the obligation of all citizens and their leaders to the common good ; the exclusion of violence in a society whose laws depend on the will of the majority of its citizens ; respect for past history and the environment.

39.[54] Throughout history, human rights and duties have constantly evolved. They may vary during certain periods or even disappear for a time. It would be simplistic to think that acquired rights last forever. In a document on human rights, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches writes: "It can be rightly said about human rights, that at the present time, the only thing that is universal is their violation."<sup>6</sup> Indeed, it seems that, on a worldwide scale, open or hidden violations are increasing rather than decreasing. Human rights are a heritage of civilization whose value and fragility the young and old must learn to appreciate. These rights have to be protected.

40.[55] As man evolves, the awareness of human rights can increase and lead to new benefits. Through the course of history, new rights have been added to former ones, though not without much hardship and searching. For example, the right to a just salary was gained by limiting the right to property. The right of association was denied to trade unions during the French

revolution for fear of a return to the abuses of the guilds of the Middle Ages. In every age, improvements are possible and should even be sought. In moral education, care should be taken to explore new areas which society is opening to the conscience and which young persons especially are discovering through their involvement in current events. It is particularly appropriate to make them aware of the social challenges which call for moral reflection and which concern the survival of humanity. For example, these three new frontiers require a moral effort: 1) the rights of man and woman seen as interdependent and equal in dignity; 2) the rights and duties with regards to the physical environment, to the responsible utilization of natural resources; 3) the rights of future generations and one's obligations to one's offspring. These rights have to be developed and acquired.

### **Being morally creative**

41.[56] In the most unusual of tasks, as well as in the most ordinary everyday duties, the moral agent has to be creative. There will be no moral education by simply repeating previous acquisitions. As history moves on, a re-interpretation of rights and duties is necessary, with regard to present needs, to the stages of human development (childhood, adolescence, youth, maturity) and with regard to present possibilities. Moral education is not merely a memorization of universal principles and laws; it is also creativity.

42.[57] Moral education cannot simply consist in having young people submit to a regime of established laws and rights. It would be a very poor and deplorable objective if moral education were to produce mere performers and silent observers of law and order, or docile conformists without any critical or creative abilities. Such a legalistic and moralizing trend was frequently found in certain educational approaches. It is not enough to teach children to obey orders. It is not even enough to lead them to an exact understanding of laws and their meaning. Another step, a more decisive one, remains to be taken. A step that will allow one to emerge progressively as a responsible person, capable of contributing to the establishment of new norms; a step that leads to the threshold of moral maturity.

43.[58] Consequently, young people must be able, not only to read instructions, but also "to blaze their own moral trail". There is no detailed moral map that can be given them. In this period of great mobility, it is easy to be off the beaten track, having to find one's way. Like tourists in unknown territory, having to use their imagination and sense of direction, all the while using a map. The map of Spain is not Spain itself, but it is very useful to the traveller who wants to save time and energy!

44.[59] The moral ideal to be proposed to young people cannot be limited to reproducing established models: it must urge them to create better ones. It has already been said: norms are important in ethics, but they are not ethics. It is a sign of growth to be able to appreciate their value; it is also a sign of

growth to test them, to perfect them, and if need be, to transcend them. A moralist, with a good sense of humour, suggested this rule about rules: "First, rely on them, because they bear the collective moral experience; but also beware of them, because the intuitions of the past do not necessarily meet the requirements of the present."

45.[60] This creativity referred to is not to be mistaken for moral subjectivity which is characterized by a strident call for the freedom of the individual and a rejection of all external moral standard. We have insisted on the necessity to review the basic human rights and duties with an observant and creative conscience. This does not sit well with those who want to establish their own code of ethics according to their fancies and to circumstances, an ethics based on personal preferences. In principle, this position leads to the disintegration of all ethics. In practice, it often brings back, in modern guise, the old libertarian ethics of selfishness.

### **The basis for Human Rights and Duties**

46.[61] We have not yet discussed the basis of human rights. What concept of the human being are they based on? What philosophy do they follow? So broad a question cannot be dealt with within the scope of this brief document. It cannot be left aside though. It is like the submerged part of an iceberg. The concept of the human being underlying the moral education to be given young people will be explicitly dealt with in a later chapter. For the moment, two points are mentioned. First of all, in Catholic moral education, it is evident that the Christian vision of human beings and their rights will be adhered to. According to the spirit of Catholic ethics, human rights are derived from the indisputable value of each person. They are founded on human "nature", which is not conceived as something static, but as the key or ideal formula for personal development. In the last analysis, these rights are rooted in the biblical faith in God the Creator, who is "the source of movement, of life and of being" (Acts 17:28).

47.[62] Secondly, in the humanistic type of moral education, human rights are considered as practical convictions upon which people of all walks of life can agree. Of course, each one will want to explain or justify them according to one's personal ideology, philosophical tendency, cultural background and experience. But as Jacques Maritain noted: "It would be futile to seek a common rational justification for these practical conclusions and rights. If we do, we run the risk of imposing an arbitrary dogmatism or being stopped cold by irreconcilable differences." People can agree on these rights as long as they are not asked why. It is when they ask "Why?" that the argument starts. Maritain added this note which can constitute the basis for moral education. This practical meeting of minds "is very little, undoubtedly", but "it is enough to undertake a noble task, and it would already be enormous to become aware of the mass of common practical convictions."<sup>7</sup>.

## **5. learning how to make moral decisions**

### **The problems of choice**

48.[63] Modern society offers individuals a wide range of possibilities, but at the same time it imposes a narrow specialization of roles. People are thus confronted with difficult choices. It is perhaps young people who are under the most pressure to make these choices and yet the most disconcerted by them. Quite early, they are required to choose from various trades and professions. A recent course and career selection booklet listed 380 professional specialties given in high schools, colleges and universities, each specialty leading to a selection of careers. At the secondary level alone, the professional terminal course comprises 16 specialties leading to some 150 trades. How does one choose at age 15 or 16? How can one make a free and lucid decision? When it comes to choosing a trade or profession, young people can sometimes count on their parents and guidance counsellors. But what about other decisive choices that they must make in so many other areas.

49.[64] Various life styles beckon them. Studies, current events and travel all open new horizons. They face important and radical options. "What life style do I choose? My parent's and my family's? Or that of transient nomads? What kind of friends should I have? Just how far can I go in untried experiences? Do I need good marks and a diploma? Should I stay in school? What values should I hold to?" It is hard for a young person to choose in a world where mobility is so great and ways so diverse. It is especially difficult to settle on one's identity, to choose for oneself, when anchorage is so scarce and guides so unsure. The uncertainty of many teenagers, their refusal to think of the future and their various escapes can be explained in part by their inability to take up these pressing and vital challenges.

### **Learning to make decisions**

50.[65] The task of moral education here is clear: helping young people to learn how to make rational and responsible decisions. To live in this world, young persons need to become very good at making liberating decisions and autonomous choices. An old proverb says that to choose is to give up; but that is only a half-truth. To choose is not only eliminating various possibilities, it is also taking a decisive step and going to the end. To decide is to stop going around in circles, to take a decisive route and explore its many possibilities. Moral education will allow one to discover that there is more enjoyment in doing what was freely chosen than letting oneself led by force of circumstance, tradition or habit. Moral life requires a spirit of decision, the desire and the urge to determine one's destiny.

## **Trial and error**

51.[66] Practice makes perfect. We learn how to make decisions by deciding. Moral education therefore requires sufficient freedom to allow young persons to really make choices and to live with the consequences whether favourable or not. Of course, such action has its risks. A young mother tells this story: "My two boys had been saving their money for some time. They decided that they wanted to buy a toy gun which cost them \$10.00. It broke when they first tried it. I had rather they bought something else. I could have stopped them from buying the gun, but they had to learn to choose and benefit from their experience." Granted, there is always some waste in learning. Learning is generally achieved by trial and error, success and failure. Errors are unfortunate, but since they cannot all be avoided, they must be positively integrated into the total learning process.

## **Beyond conformity and rejection**

52.[67] As they are learning about personal choices, young people should be encouraged to overcome attitudes of conformism, rejection or rebellion. One who passively conforms to the ideas and customs of one's environment and group has not attained moral maturity. By the same token, one who rejects one's heritage too vehemently shows that one is not yet liberated. To be the opposite of one's parents and family surroundings is a negative way to establish one's identity. In the life of adolescents, rebellion and rejection may be a necessary means by which they free themselves from certain influences and may open the door to their own originality. They reflect a necessary break and, at the same time, a transition to a conscientious self-control. Moral education should see that this transition really takes place and leads to true autonomy. There is always the possibility that a young person remains at the level of rebellion and rejection, especially since non-conformity has gained recognition as a life style. Adolescents have to be more discerning. Those who congratulate themselves too quickly for their supposed emancipation only prove one thing: they are slaves of the latest fashion. Moral maturity reaches beyond stereotypes, old or new.

## **The duty to seek information**

53.[68] Real and wise choices presuppose good information. Accepting the first assumption that comes along is not really a choice. This is why, for example, Sydney Simon in his system of values-clarification, stresses the need to broaden the scope of ways and means. A choice requires a good assessment of what is at stake and of what the foreseeable consequences will be. This means that one has to seek advice, do some personal research, individually and in a group. This duty to gather information is part of the wider duty of each person to search for truth and to search for it with others.

## **Not an easy discernment**

54.[69] Discernment and choice remain difficult. Options are never black and white. In matters of ethics, it is practically never yes or no, all or nothing. Nobody has all the facts, no one is aware of all the angles; and yet, choices must be made. They must be made with a coefficient of uncertainty, in the gray area of human choices. "Every choice is partisan and by the same token an exclusion of other possible goods. No one can do good without some evil side effect, even with the best of intentions. It is impossible to safeguard the recognized and desirable values all at the same time: no one can brag of having made the best moral choice possible."<sup>8</sup> This statement will often dishearten teenagers who want everything to be crystal clear: moral life is risky and ambiguous. If one tries to be too careful, one never crosses a street.

## **Selecting a fundamental option**

55.[70] Underneath the many choices a person makes, there gradually appears, as a leitmotif, a basic tendency, a sort of life-thrust that polarizes and directs one's decisions. Moralists call this a "fundamental option", that is, an option that matures gradually in the depths of one's being and progressively shapes the external aspect of one's morality. This option rests, in the final analysis, on one absolute that establishes itself as the centre of one's life and which gives a thrust, a general direction to all of one's existence. This absolute is known by different names: goodness, justice, power, service, success, love, pleasure, perfection. The moral quality of life depends in a large part on the fundamental option. Nobody would think of placing on the same pedestal persons seeking their own personal advancement and those who hunger for justice: their option sets them apart. This is evident in a moment of truth, when decisive choices are made. Who would dare say that Hitler, Einstein and Bonhoeffer resemble one another? It is not just a matter of preference, opportunity or circumstances. All choices cannot be equally upheld. The importance of the fundamental option at the source of choices becomes evident in moral education.

56.[71] Attention to the fundamental option should be especially shown during adolescence. This is precisely the time when teenagers begin taking their life in hand, and giving it direction. They know that their choice will set the course of their life. Moral education cannot be limited to questions of moral judgment and of proper behaviour; it must help young people to clarify the values that are beginning to take shape and stand out in their minds; it must also help them to spell out an option that is too often implicit, unidentified, or poorly acknowledged. Moral education, because it is a learning process, does not attempt to juxtapose each and every value; rather it encourages young people to cultivate values budding in them and to resort to them to pull their life together. The "values-clarification" method can be used to detect the first hints of an option, the first attempts at organizing values according to importance. In the same way, the reflection which ethics proposes on destiny,

meaning and happiness can be quite enlightening. In moral education, there cannot be too much emphasis on the importance of this thrust, this movement that keeps young people evolving, and in which they gradually design the meaning of their life. For, in the final analysis, what a young person wants most of all, and especially physically, is **to grow**.



## 6. the maturing of desires

57.[72] Desires and emotions certainly play an important role in moral behaviour. People perceive what is good and make choices not only with their intelligence, but also, and perhaps especially, with their heart, with their feelings. Jung compared the conscious and rational dimension in human beings to the reflection of light that appears on a billiard ball, while the remainder of the ball, that is, the whole ball, represented the unconscious and the irrational harbouring drives and desires. If moral education were limited to judgment and moral choices it would only scratch the surface of one's life. The inner and deeper life of feelings and emotions would be neglected. Indeed, a great part of the moral learning process is to harmonize the conscious and the unconscious, to establish a practical balance, though unstable and precarious, between reason and passion, mind and heart.

58.[73] It is not easy to descend into the zones of affectivity. Educators hesitate to advance in that direction for several reasons. They fear to tackle the area of the life of desires, because the workings and mechanisms of affectivity are less familiar and more obscure. They are afraid of having to speak of discipline and sacrifice to young persons who seem uninterested in such things. They also fear this topic might awaken and reveal in themselves dormant conflicts, unhappy experiences, shaky convictions. These difficulties are real, and call for concern; but they are not a reason for moral education to remain at the cognitive and informational levels, and to leave the affective domain and the instincts aside.

### The function of desires

59.[74] Modern psychology highlights the role of desires in personal growth. Desire is a vital force, biological as well as psychical, which creates a tension at the core of one's being and seeks satisfaction. Some examples are the desire to possess, the desire to love and to be recognized, the desire to understand, the desire to produce, the desire to grow up, the desire to assault, the desire for security, the sexual desire. These are life's basic forces. Though there is nothing rational about them, desires can be channelled to make life really fruitful.

60.[75] "Desire is the driving force of morality. It is therefore essential that efforts in education do not stifle desire; should this occur, ethics would no longer be possible, because there would be no more vitality. When drilling for oil, the diggers build a whole network of canals and reservoirs so that the gushing oil will not be lost in the sands; but the oil must gush out, otherwise the whole enterprise is useless and lifeless. It seems to us then essential that prohibition be directed, not against the desires themselves, but against their abuse. Desires must be nurtured, not destroyed." <sup>9</sup>



## The meaning of effort

61.[76] This channeling of desires certainly requires some effort. Educators and young people must understand that this effort is not meant to stifle desires, but to allow them to express themselves in a satisfactory manner. Effort and restraint are basically meant to serve desires. They enable desires to express themselves in a harmonious and satisfactory way rather than in an unbridled fashion. Restraint is "the metamorphosis desires must agree to in order to survive; develop and be in touch with reality in a more satisfying manner".<sup>10</sup>

## The role of prohibitions

62.[77] The maturing or shaping of desires follows the road of prohibitions, correctly presented and understood. A child wants to touch the stove, but mother warns: "Don't touch, you'll burn yourself!" I want that object, but I have been told: "Thou shalt not steal." I have an eye on another person, but there is a commandment between us: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife." No society, no human group can survive unless the desires of some are assessed against the desires of others. This is made possible through the mediation of prohibitions.

63.[78] In his book *Jusqu'où iront-ils ?* (How far will they go?), Jean Le Du has rightly described the role of prohibitions (which he calls "*interdits*" in French): "what is said (*dit*) between (*entre*) desire and reality." He explains that we could imagine a world without "*interdits*", an ethics where nothing would be said between desire and reality. "A form of utopia can be found in certain publications of high schools (in France) advocating complete sexual freedom and absolute hedonism. In this case, one presumes that desire, by coming into contact with reality, produces knowledge. For example, little children could touch everything, carry out their discovery of the world unbridled. They may burn themselves or put their finger in an electrical outlet. This brush with reality would teach them much more than long talks about not doing that again."<sup>11</sup> Hence, desire without prohibitions would produce knowledge.

64.[79] Le Du notes that there is an element of truth in this example: i.e. that reality teaches quite differently and more eloquently than prohibitions. Once they have burnt themselves, children know for the rest of their life that they should not touch a hot stove. But no society can ignore the cost of this kind of learning by direct contact with reality. It stands the chance of being costly and ruthless. The desire for possession would only be taught by financial disaster; the sexual drive, by rape or physical exhaustion; and the desire for violence, by murder. It becomes evident that education is an attempt wherever possible to avoid these disastrous and sometimes irreparable casualties. This is why the mother interjects between her child's desire and the hot stove a prohibition

(in French: **un interdit**): "Don't touch!" And society interjects between one's desire for violence and others a prohibition (**un interdit**): "You will not commit murder." Education is a short-cut.

65.[80] Prohibitions represent (make present) the reality against which desires would otherwise collide. Henceforth, it is not with reality that desires clash, but with the prohibitions that represent (i.e. make present) reality. One learns then, not by a disastrous contact, but by a statement which can be considered a symbolical social reality. The benefits of this operation are clear: desires are spared from circumstances that would destroy them; the physical, social and cultural reality is spared from violence that would destroy it in the long run. Prohibitions are thus the statements that stand between (**interdit**) desire and reality so that neither will be destroyed.

66.[81] In moral education, it is important to help young people to reach a happy balance between their desires and the prohibitions imposed on them. The tension between desires and prohibitions should not lead to a repression of the desires nor to a denial of prohibitions, but to an adjustment between desires and prohibitions which are useful to young people and help them progress. This adjustment, which fluctuates and must constantly be revised, requires an exact understanding of prohibitions and also a constant revision of the values that are proposed often by negative formulas ("Thou shalt not kill", "thou shalt not steal"). Young people also need enough space to express their feelings and desires, enough freedom to experiment with the inevitable risks involved.

### **Self-discipline**

67.[82] In conventional education, a whole battery of "virtues" was used to train the will, the impulses and desires. The virtue of **prudence** directed the intelligence in its search and choices. The precise function of moral virtues was to guide feelings. The virtue of **fortitude** was necessary in difficult situations to overcome resistance; the virtue of **temperance** against temptation and pleasure; the virtue of **justice** for human relations. Today, "virtue", which used to be the key word in moral reflection, has taken on all sorts of connotations, and has been challenged by the social sciences which have revealed the complexity of desires in the depths of the human person. If the use of this word is tricky, the moral task that it tried to express still exists. The reality of drives is still there.

68.[83] Moral education will always be concerned with developing **aptitudes** and **abilities** which channel the will and make it easier for desires to express themselves satisfactorily. Moral education tries to instill a liking for values, an inclination to want and to put into motion the requirement of personal development and human dignity. Its aim is to enable young persons to command and direct their talents and drives, to take charge of their life, to control themselves and their environment. That takes skill and mastery.

## **7. learning how to act**

69.[84] Moral education can never be reduced to an intellectual game nor to a repetition of noble principles about what is good and what is right. The truth of moral judgment is verified by the truth of our behaviour, by the truth of actions which are coherent and consistent with principles. No need to insist: everyone knows that it is possible to proclaim beautiful principles while behaving immorally. To avoid such a dichotomy, moral education must help young people to develop the ability to act according to their choices. In fact, moral education is, above all, teaching how to act.

### **An active undertaking**

70.[85] This means that, in practice, moral education will make room for experimenting, for activities, for projects where young persons can really test and experiment their moral know-how. This requires an active approach. Not only must it rely on the past experiences of young people, it must also create new learning situations and experiences which will enrich and broaden the young person's life. Moral education can take the form of research assignments, talks, data analysis, and group discussions. But it will also take the form of workshops so that young people can really try out those abilities which are characteristic of a moral person. In a way, it can appear to be a sort of training or exercise where everyone, according to his ability, learns to apply the process of "observing, judging, and acting".

### **Learning in and through action**

71.[86] It is not enough to provide learning activities and attention-getters. In moral education, learning takes place especially through action. It takes a lot of practice to become good at high jumping; by repeating honest acts, one becomes honest. Being in concrete situations, in activities tailored to their capabilities — whether in class, in the school or out of school — young people can develop habits in a setting where the crux of moral actions will come to light. At the heart of an activity, rather than during a lecture or fictional exercise, one can discover from within the callings and challenges of moral conduct: the complexity and risks of the slightest commitment, the inevitable presence of diversity and conflict of values, the necessity to clarify goals and means, hesitations before obstacles, the conditions for communication and solidarity, attitudes in cases of success or failure.

72.[87] It is also in action that the need for the wherewithal to face situations is best felt. Action shows young people the need to acquire certain indispensable aptitudes for the practice of ethics. For example, the ability to organize a concerted action with a follow-through; the ability to find information and to

benefit from near-by resources; the ability to detect temptations of escape or evasion, the ability to overcome obstacles, the ability to rise above mistakes, conflicts and failures, the ability to communicate and to demonstrate creativity. From these examples, it is clear that moral education does not attempt to give young people a bag full of ideas and principles where they would find for the rest of their lives ready-made answers to their moral problems. It rather tries to train and equip them so that in the unpredictable situations, they will direct their lives autonomously, that is, act and react as responsible and creative moral beings.

### **Knowing how to assess one's behaviour**

73.[88] Living morally requires above all the ability to review one's behaviour and to evaluate it. Moral education must prepare young people to examine and evaluate their conduct in a lucid way. To evaluate one's behaviour is to make a value judgment about it; establish a connection between a definite act and the fundamental option of one's life; accept the consequences of one's actions; learn from these consequences how to improve one's behaviour. We know that young persons are affected by the perception or judgment of their parents, teachers, and peers. Gradually however, they should be able to look at themselves; be able to construe their own life and not only repeat or negate what others around them say. Indeed, they should be able to profit from the advice, counsels, and criticisms they receive; but the last word is theirs; they cannot avoid the responsibility to interpret their own life, free of external influences whether they be favourable or unfavourable.

### **The meaning of failure**

74.[89] An important aspect in the awakening of responsibility in young persons is accepting their errors and failures; it is a necessary part of education and self-acceptance. This also holds for social faults which everyone shares as a member of society. It is important that others and society accept to pardon the guilty party and to allow for a new start. This is particularly evident in the case of rehabilitating prisoners, but equally true in the life of every person. The ability to renew oneself is a basic characteristic of human beings. In the context of Christian faith, failure can be called sin, and forgiveness becomes mercy and healing.

75.[90] Moral education should give young people the means to assess themselves and come to a better understanding of themselves. This holds more particularly for adolescents who, in their search for identity, are often quite confused about themselves. The different approaches of moral education offer a series of techniques and exercises capable of helping young people to acquire a sound and enlightened judgment on themselves, their behaviour and the basic direction of their lives.

**part  
two**

After this review of the five major components of moral learning, we will now examine how they can be effectively taught and learned in schools. We will successively deal with:

- the concept of the human being that underlies moral education;
- moral education contained in the Catholic religious instruction programs;
- the approach and methodology;
- the contribution of the whole school to the moral education of young people.

## **8. the concept of the human being**

76.[91] A first question has to be clarified. It was alluded to at the outset and brought up again in the discussion of basic human rights and duties. The question is this: what concept of the human being will moral education be based on? The answer to this question is very important. The five components discussed so far are like a keyboard on which different tunes can be played. All depends on the desired tonality and key. In our case, all depends on the idea that we have of the human being, and on the model openly proposed or secretly endorsed by the teacher. What tone should moral education have? What should its inspiration be? Specialists in ethics ask: What will its meta-ethical basis be?

### **The proliferation of models**

77.[92] There are many theories of the human being; "models" are numerous. In the past, there was the classical model, derived from Greek thought; the gentleman, at the time of the renaissance; the rational model, during the time of Voltaire and the French revolution, of Locke and the deists in England and America. Today, there are the models of scientific and technological humanism; the marxist model; the existentialist model, proposed by thinkers like Sartre, Camus and Heidegger; the theological model, which sees the image of God in each person; the ecological model, which places the person in the order of physical and chemical processes of the universe; the behaviourist model, in which any person can be "conditioned" like an animal; the Freudian model, which views the person as subject to biological drives and passions; the biological model, which stresses the continuity between animal and human behaviour (Morris, Ardrey, Lorenz); the counter-culture model with hippies and nomads; the hedonistic model which proclaims comfort and pleasure as the only certainties.

78.[93] This simple list, which is far from complete, shows the great variety of models, certain of which are complementary while others are clearly opposite. It also shows that the concept of the human person evolves with time and with the progress of science. It suggests that any model runs the risk of becoming one-dimensional. It is not easy to strike a happy medium between one's freedom and determinisms, between one's animality and spirituality, between one's individuality and sociality.

### **A choice to be made**

79.[94] It is not possible to describe these different models much less discuss or compare them in this document<sup>12</sup>. Our intent is evidently more modest and also more practical. With such a variety of models in moral



education, a choice has to be made. Will it favour one or other of these models? And if so, according to what criteria? On the other hand, should young people be exposed to all models and left to choose the one that suits them? This is what will be discussed now.

80.[95] In the case of Catholic moral education, it is clear that biblical faith and the long standing Christian experience should determine and inspire the concept of the human person. However, that statement does not resolve the question. The concept of the human person prevalent in the Christian community is itself subject to change. One need only observe the changes in Catholic morality in recent years. These were due undoubtedly to a return to Gospel sources and to the spirit of renewal of the Second Vatican Council. These changes were also caused by the emergence of a new concept of the human person, or at least of a renewed vision of persons and their relation to the world. This vision grew out of a feeling of close solidarity between Christians and the rest of the human family with whom they share anxieties and hopes, defeats and victories<sup>13</sup>.

81.[96] The phrase "Christian vision of the human person and of the universe" refers to a series of very real insights and convictions taken from biblical revelation, but it does not necessarily correspond to a definite and final portrait sometimes made. Among Christians, there are various tendencies and attitudes based on different views of the world and of the human person. The Christian concept of the human person and of the universe does not have exactly the same meaning for everyone. It is therefore worth the effort to clarify, even for Catholic moral education, the underlying concept of the human person.

82.[97] In the case of moral education based on humanism, the fundamental human rights and duties provide a good starting point. It should be noted that at the United Nations, no attempt has been made to enunciate the premises of these rights, because no agreement would have been possible. Does this mean that in a class with students who are in the process of fashioning their moral life-style, the same procedure should be followed? We do not think so. First of all, moral education cannot be neutral. We might as well admit it from the start and not pretend that objectivity is attainable. Moreover, it is not desirable for moral education to be a residue of practical conclusions without any rationale or basis. It need not necessarily be inspired by Catholicism, but it must be inspired by a "faith". It must be founded on a **human creed**, on a certain **faith in human persons**. Otherwise, it runs the risk of being vaguely eclectic or very evasive. It should be something other than a moral kaleidoscope, reflecting all positions and opinions. Parents and pupils want moral education that has substance.

### Faith in human nature

83.[98] We propose that moral education be devised and drawn up according to the model of responsible persons. We will outline four basic characteris-



tics of human persons and their self-awareness. These characteristics were common to the different models and images previously alluded to. Though they derive from them, they transcend schools of thought and ideological barriers. While only an outline, the following descriptions present a common faith in human nature<sup>14</sup>.

a) *A being-on-the-way*

84.[99] A human being is a **being-on-the-way**. This means that persons evolve and develop by being a part of history, their own and mankind's. But it means even more. This expression indicates that human beings fashion themselves by their own efforts, that they can extend themselves with instruments produced by science and technology, that they change themselves according to their own self-image. Human beings are not ready-made; that is what makes them human. A mineral is classified once and for all according to a formula. So with animals, whose reflexes can be predicted and stimulated. Human beings are born inefficient; they must fashion themselves. Of course, at the outset, human beings are given a certain starting-point; but from there, they develop their personality and attempt to surpass themselves. They are beings in the making ("**un être en projet**"). Their true nature is ahead of them. They are open beings, open to the indiscernible, open to transcendence.

85.[100] This first characteristic leads to the affirmation of a kind of mystery in human persons. They surpass the universe of objects; they cannot be reduced to a particle of the universe, to "a handful of cosmic dust". This "open" concept runs counter to other concepts that are "closed". For example, it precludes a deterministic vision; also a static concept of human nature, seen as a pre-packaged entity, all set to go. On the other hand, the open concept does not mean that human life is in a state of flux, chaos or disarray. There is order, direction and structure at the heart of this living force. It is distinct from absolute relativism and radical subjectivism.

b) *A being-in-the-world*

86.[101] Today, human persons see themselves in terms of **being-in-the-world**. For phenomenologists, this expression means that humans can exist as personal beings only in relation to the world. Human beings have a bodily existence. Their body is not external to themselves; it is not an appendage to the self. Human beings form an indivisible whole. It is in their embodied self that a certain osmosis between themselves and the universe takes place. All through life, they establish bonds with the world. This is why death is so shattering. They absorb the world. In a way, they are at one with the world.

87.[102] This new awareness of one's being-in-the-world differs greatly from the idealistic and spiritualistic concepts which, since Plato, have so profoundly

affected Western thought. By giving prominence to the intellectual and spiritual dimensions, these concepts often minimize the bodily condition and its relation to the world and to time. Contemporaries today no longer accept the dual view that clearly separates body and soul, natural and supernatural, the world and the afterworld. It is not that they want to exclude what Fourastié calls the "surreal" (*surréal*) which designates moral values, the "laws" of nature, transcendence; they want to grasp this "sur-real" at the heart of reality, as something more real than reality, as the truth of truth. This new vision has the merit of being more in tune with actual experience, but it also has its risks. If, in reaction to platonic views, it went to the other extreme, it could well end up denying all transcendence and affirming only one's total immersion in this world. This seems to be the pitfall that awaits hedonism which asserts the sole rule of utmost pleasure and the sole value of the present moment.

c) *A being-with-others*

88.[103] Human beings are essentially relational. They need others to exist and to survive, and also to fulfill themselves. It is through contacts with others that they discover themselves. To see oneself as a personal "I", everyone needs to say and to hear a "thou" and a "we". Human beings are made-by-others and made-for-others. Their sexuality is a sign of this, written in their flesh. In our world which has shrunken and has become a "village", this perception of human interaction and interdependence has become paramount.

89.[104] This discovery or rather this rediscovery of human solidarity follows a long period during which a strong individualistic mentality prevailed in economic and social life, in education, and even in moral and religious instruction. Today, it is unthinkable to consider human life only in terms of personal success, or to assert individual rights without restriction. Rather, the emphasis is placed on achieving and maintaining a balance between personal fulfillment and social advancement, between individual and social virtues, between personal freedom and collective rights. However, one should not denounce liberal individualistic thought only to swing to a new over-simplification which would be just as stifling. For example, radical socialism is as crippling as anarchic liberalism. Being-with-others implies a dual responsibility: respecting the dignity of the human person and working towards more just social structures. It is yearning for the full development of the person in a humane society.

d) *A free and creative being*

90.[105] Finally, contemporaries define themselves as **creative and free agents**. By their actions, they fashion themselves and reveal themselves to themselves and to others. They have within themselves the need to create and to produce. So much so, that passiveness and idleness literally destroy

them. Félix Leclerc sings in one of his ballads: "The best way to kill a man, is to pay him to do nothing." All human actions are ambiguous; by them people can make or break themselves, beautify or destroy their surroundings. But through these ambiguous actions, people use their freedom which is their basic characteristic.

91.[106] This fourth characteristic underlines the practical and concrete aspects of human existence and human choices. In other words, human persons in the past gave priority to abstract thought and it was Descartes who stated as first principle: "I think, therefore I am." Contemporaries today propose that we should say: "I act, therefore I am". They define themselves by what they accomplish. Here again, let us not harden our positions so that distortions or dichotomies appear. For example, it is evident that human beings are diminished when they are reduced to mere producers. In the same way, if the distinction between theory and practice, thought and action is too pronounced, there is a danger of blurring the perspectives on persons and their actions which are always indicators of intentions.

92.[107] It is evident that these four characteristics do not give the complete portrait of the human being, but a sketch from which moral education can draw. They form a **nucleus of convictions** around which it should be possible to establish a consensus. At least, it allows us to suggest the model of the responsible human person and to give it a significant content.

### Becoming responsible

93.[108] In our view, the basic aim of moral education should be to help young people mature as responsible persons. Becoming responsible is to be able to respond. This is the primary meaning of the word which comes from the Latin "**respondere**" (answer, reply) and "**abilitas**" (ability); in other words: response-able. But what is the human person responsible for? and to whom?

94.[109] To become responsible is to gradually take charge of oneself, to give a personal response to the numerous calls that echo in one's conscience.

- It is **to respond for oneself**. This means to govern one's life, define a life style and seek to achieve it in spite of fluctuation and change. It is a commitment for the present and the future before oneself and before others and in the case of a believer, before the Other.
- It is **to respond for one's actions and their meaning**. That is, to endorse one's actions and to be held responsible for them, without denial or evasion, whatever the consequences. Responsible persons do not only answer for past actions; they are also prepared to answer for the meaning they give to their future conduct.
- It is **to respond to others and with others**. To become responsible is to try to find a place in the complex network of relations with family,

milieu, people, past, physical surroundings and with the spiritual world. Responsibility rests on the ability to perceive the calls and expectations of others, to accept the tasks and duties that arise from social life, to contribute to the well-being of all. To become responsible is both "to answer for", that is, to vouch for oneself and to pledge oneself to the world, and "to answer to", that is, to give an answer to persons and situations that challenge every person.

### **The rationale of this option**

95.[110] There are three major reasons to justify this option of moral education using a learning process centred on responsibility. First of all, responsibility is an essential characteristic of human maturity. Whatever developmental theory one subscribes to, the ability to respond for oneself and to others in an autonomous and dependable way is readily seen as a major characteristic of an adult personality. Moral education designed to assist a young person grow to maturity is on solid ground with this option.

96.[111] In addition, in our pluralistic and open society, a sense of responsibility is more and more necessary. "The more we call for an open society, for an exploration of all possibilities, the more the need for levelheadedness and responsibility increases; the more freedom becomes difficult and exciting, and the more the possibilities of error increase, the more a critical conscience and means of evaluation must be acquired."<sup>15</sup> Choosing a model of responsibility is appropriate in a society which constantly changes the rules as the game goes on. In this case, the rule requires that responsibility increase with freedom. Otherwise, there is a risk of simply substituting the tyranny of prohibition and taboos for the more subtle tyranny of unmitigated freedom and immediate desires.

97.[112] Finally, the model of the responsible person corresponds to, and is even grounded in, the Judaeo-Christian tradition. As will be seen in the following chapter, the ethics of this tradition is founded on the call of God and the response of the human person according to the basic pattern of responsibility. It can then be held that a humanistic moral education, which attempts to develop a sense of personal and social responsibility in young people can foster its specific objectives without contradicting the Catholic stand on moral attitudes. More can be said: humanistic ethics and Christian ethics journey together on the long road to discover the demands of responsibility. So much so, that between the humanistic ethics of responsibility and the Christian ethics, harmony is not to be sought from without, but should be developed from within, as in a musical score.

## **9. moral education in the catholic religious instruction program**

98.[113] In schools recognized as Catholic, moral education is given mainly within the framework of the religious instruction program. Moral education is integrated into the program as an essential and necessary component. This is not a recent addition. In the past, the catechism began with lessons on the articles of faith contained in the Creed and then developed the whole Christian ethics from the Commandments of God and of the Church. Contemporary catechetics no longer resort to the division between creed and morals, but it still tries to provide a complete moral education according to the spirit of the Gospel.

99.[114] This point may seem evident, but it is still worth noting. Indeed, when it comes to choosing between Catholic moral and religious instruction on the one hand, and moral instruction on the other hand, some people suddenly seem to forget that Catholic religious instruction is also concerned with moral teaching and, in fact, does include moral teaching. This, in turn, causes much confusion when it comes to exercising the option between Catholic moral and religious instruction and moral instruction. For example, some parents prefer not to choose religious instruction for their children so that they may receive moral principles... as if Catholic religious instruction contained no such thing! Or again, others suggest that a "Catholic moral program" be designed to counterbalance the humanistic moral program... as if the existing religious instruction program was useless on the level of moral teaching or proposed an ethics which was not Catholic! To dispel this confusion, let us repeat that moral educational objectives are a necessary part of Catholic religious and moral instruction. This moral education, which is inspired by the Gospel and the teachings of the Church, is a true moral education for contemporary youth.

### **An active faith**

100.[115] It is important to grasp the originality of Catholic moral education. It is first of all faith in action. Christians cannot escape the human condition; they must accept the same duties and tasks as every one else. In this sense, it has become almost commonplace to hear that Christians do not have their own ethics, that is, the Gospel is not a new code of precepts to be added to human codes. Saint Thomas Aquinas observed that the New Law "taken from the doctrine of Christ and the Apostles only added a small number of precepts to the natural law." He quotes this from Saint Augustine: "God, in his mercy, wanted the new religion that he gave us to be a religion of freedom, because he reduced it to a small number of external practices."<sup>16</sup>

101.[116] Christianity is not a more refined brand of humanism, a brand of ethics more perfect than others. It is first and foremost faith and adherence to

a Person: the crucified and risen Jesus. It is a "walking in the footsteps of the Lord" in the full sense of that phrase. When Jesus calls someone to come and follow him, his call is not primarily at the level of ethics, but at the level of faith, that is, a personal encounter, an adherence to his Person.

102.[117] Faith in Jesus brings about a change, a "conversion" that can turn around one's whole life as can be seen from the experience of the first disciples. It stirs (or at least it should stir) every fibre of human life. Though quite real, this stirring is not easily described in few words. Faith gives a "new meaning" to life. It is like a "light" shining from within upon experiences and situations. It is like an "instinct" enabling one to advance even on dark paths. It is like a "rumour", like an "echo" revealing unknown depths in the heart of reality. It acts as a "force" that awakens and beckons. It compels one to take "a second look" at things, at society, at life, at the human person, at God. A second look also at ethics, all ethics. Though the Gospel is not an ethics in itself, it undeniably proposes a very specific perspective from which a believer reviews and reinterprets all human conduct. In this age of pluralistic morality, this point is worth noting. Through the ages, Christians have had to process many concepts of the human person and many systems of ethics. Faced with the variety of moral options, the same task of Christian discernment awaits believers today.

103.[118] There exist many publications dealing with ethics and the Christian approach. These can be used to study the Gospel perspective on morality<sup>17</sup>. This is the first place to look. In the framework of this discussion, we will limit ourselves to the contribution of the Gospel with regards to the Christian concept of the human person as alluded to in the previous chapter. How can Christians enlightened by the Gospel, re-interpret the vision that contemporaries have of themselves? What can they find when guided by their faith?

### **The Catholic vision of the human person**

104.[119] Biblical faith confirms, enlightens and broadens the insight that human persons have of "**being-on-the-way**". It reveals to the believer what constant and inexpressible excellence they are called to. Biblical faith affirms that History has meaning and that human life is more than "an absurd episode in the midst of oblivion" (Nagel). Mankind and cosmos are moving toward "a new earth". The head, the risen Jesus, is the first born of creatures, the first to attain full human stature (Col. 1:18). Christians define human nature by looking forward, filled with hope. We are children of God, says Saint John, but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed (1 Jn. 3:2).

105.[120] Christians also see themselves as **being-in-the-world**, but this expression has an intensity all of its own. Their belief in creation tells them that human beings are born from the earth and from the breath of God. Placed in the garden of the universe, they are the caretakers of their own well-being



and that of generations to come. Believers know that God so loved the world that He became flesh. This belief in the incarnation is the foundation for their profound esteem of earthly realities, their sense of the dignity of every human being, their respect for the body destined to resurrect, the value of their work and creativity in a world called to enjoy the glory of the children of God (Rm. 8:21). Faith lifts the human person above the dichotomy between body and soul, material and spiritual, human and divine. Because they believe in the incarnation, Christians are inclined to view the deity not as something above or outside of creation, but as mysteriously present at the heart of creation. Carl Jung, the psychologist, in many of his writings on religion, claims that the divine abides in the depths of the unconscious<sup>18</sup>.

106.[121] For Christians, **being-with-others** is rooted in the benevolence of a God who is Father of all human beings. Thus all humans are brothers. And each one, sensing that he or she is personally loved by God, can love in return and seek ways to further the well-being of others. "Love one another as I have loved you. Whatever you did to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me." (Jn. 15:12 and Mt. 25:40) A strange and almost incomprehensible identicalness! The commandment of love gives a new spirit to all human relationships. Christian ethics can never shrink to narrow individualism. The Gospel calls for a vision of fellowship and communion. So much so, that love, the supreme Christian virtue, encompasses all in the quest of justice and peace on the personal, social, and universal levels<sup>19</sup>.

107.[122] Finally, in the light of Christian faith, the human person appears eminently as **a free responsible being**. Faith is a call, an invitation. Each person must respond in love. This dialogue between God and the human person, this call and this response are a wonderful affirmation of human freedom and of the respect that God shows towards this freedom. In the past, at Sinai, Yahweh established an alliance with a people liberated from slavery in Egypt. Jesus was referring to freedom when he said to his disciples: "Come, follow me" and to the rich young man: "If you want to be perfect..." Biblical faith also underlines that human beings are neither the measure of all, nor the author of good and evil. They are answerable to their conscience and to God, accountable for their activities, responsible. True freedom, according to the Gospel is that of the faithful and creative steward, that of the son, prodigal or loyal, who knows that his Father trusts him<sup>20</sup>. Christian freedom and responsibility are absorbed in love which formally determines Christian behaviour. The Spirit of Love engenders responsibility in a marvelous impression of freedom. Can one be more responsible (to the point of being attached!) and freer than when one loves?

108.[123] This overview shows how the Christian faith in a certain sense engenders "the new man". Saint Paul uses this phrase to express the "newness" that faith in the risen Christ produces in the life of the believer. It expresses something else: the new man, in the biblical sense, seems to have certain connections and resemblances with the images of the new man

emerging in the secular sphere. Without trying to establish artificial parallels, we can observe both evident contrasts and possible comparisons. This brings us to make the three following observations on Catholic moral education.

### **Distinctive features**

109.[124] In Catholic religious instruction, **the Gospel basis for moral life** must be underlined as well as the characteristics that stem from that basis. On this question, catechetics has already evolved and taken important steps away from moral education too dependent on moral philosophy and the aristotelian concept of the human being. There must be evidence that the biblical influence is not confined only to text-books, but is really integrated into teaching itself. This inspiration can be lost in drawn-out group discussions.

110.[125] The dynamic link between moral learning and the Christian faith should be stressed. Faith is not an accumulation of truths and principles that can be applied automatically or mechanically to the various situations of life. It offers above all a vision which enables one to penetrate the hidden core of things. Through its symbols and rites, it puts the believer in touch with the farthest reaches of his existence. To use a current saying, it gives meaning to life by illuminating all reality from within. That is why faith inspires and strengthens every aspect of moral learning. It refines and supports the conscience. It notices all human needs, even the smallest need of the least of the brethren. It attracts and polarizes choices and desires. By giving the assurance that Love holds the world together, it enables man to live in confidence, to love and to work at making the world a better place. Without this attitude, everything else is hypocrisy: "Anyone who says, 'I love God', and hates his brother, is a liar." (1 Jn. 4:20). Catholic religious instruction should contain and manifest the specific contribution that faith makes to every moral effort.

### **Common features**

111.[126] The common features between the moral quest of Christians and that of other persons should also be considered. In the manner the Church of Vatican II tried to grasp the "joys and hopes, the sorrows and anxieties" of mankind, Catholic religious instruction should help young people to **discover the common tasks** of each and every human being simply because he or she is a human being. Thus, it is not by repeating in good times and in bad times: "love one another" that young people will learn what justice is all about and how to achieve just goals. It takes more than a sprinkling of biblical quotes every now and then. It takes a patient effort to see the living situation and its demands, a real search of common duties, a real confrontation with the Word of God, read and re-read together. This is basically the route proposed by catechetics using an approach termed "interpretative" or "anthropological". Providing this approach is not distorted or discontinued at some point.



### Highlighting the objectives of moral education

112.[127] Finally, let us point out in a more general way, that Catholic religious instruction must **emphasize more clearly the objectives of moral education**. Basically, these objectives are present, but perhaps too obscurely and implicitly. At the levels where the program has a more specifically moral content, that is, Elementary III and VI, Secondary III, IV, V, the inspiration is thorough and the content substantial. In practice, however, it can be asked whether the methods and learning strategies are really adequate. Using current research and the numerous methods being developed, the new program should give more visibility and support to the moral education endeavours within the framework of Catholic religious instruction.

## 10. approaches and methodology

### A learning process

113.[162] As has been said, moral education is a learning process. Therefore, the stages of a true learning process must be followed. This notion is widely subscribed to by educators today<sup>21</sup>. The learning referred to here is the growth which occurs in the whole person, and not only in the mind, or in the memory, or in manual ability. This growth occurs in an atmosphere of relationships between the "learner", the teacher, and the work group in surroundings fostering significant experiences and discoveries, an environment which teaches and edifies. If this holds for the more usual learning processes like language, arithmetic, sports, or music, it holds even more in the moral life.

114.[163] It is generally accepted that a learning process has three steps. A phase of **exploration**: the time to look, to observe, to research, to inquire, to inform. A phase of **reflection**: the time to judge, to interpret, to criticize, to go deeper into it. A phase of **actualization**: the time to act, to take charge of oneself, to commit oneself. Whatever priority is given to the three components of this triad, three observations must be made: 1) No stage can be omitted; 2) the moment of criticisms or interpretation is the pivot between exploration and expression; 3) the learning process is complete only with self-determination when the learner's creativity is exercised with freedom and autonomy. In moral education, the teaching and learning process must go through these phases.

### Not a conditioning

115.[164] The specific nature of this process clearly appears when compared to other processes that are sometimes suggested: conditioning, modelling or laissez faire. In the first case, desired rules and behaviour are imposed by authority on young people. Stress is placed on clear and unchanging principles, on a sense of discipline and obedience; punishment and rewards are given an educational value. However, too much insistence on the respect of rules or the disapproval of behaviours judged to be unacceptable, has its risks: other major aspects of moral education such as the necessary interiorization of principles and some indispensable leeway for experience and creativity are overlooked. Moral education risks degenerating into a sort of conditioning. The authoritarian process creates more often than not robots and rebels: robots that are well built perhaps, but whose mechanism quickly comes apart in the turmoil of life; rebels who spurn the truths that we try to give them and who are often unable to overcome the stage of negativeness and adolescent rebellion. Of course the learning process has a part of repetition and habit forming, but it is more than mere conditioning or indoctrination.

### **Not a modelling**

116.[165] The learning process is also different from education based exclusively on a model or example. Moral education would then merely become a sort of modelling. "Do as I do... Follow your parents' example... See how so-and-so acts..." Imitation can, of course, be a positive process and the phenomenon of identification plays an especially important role in the moral growth of young people, even if they often go out of their way to be the opposite of the proposed models. It has already been stated however: moral education cannot be content to produce carbon copies of established models; its aim is to prepare moral agents who are both heirs and inventors. Imitation is effective in a stable society which has definite models, but it is inadequate in a society like ours which has only passing models. For example, in this unending parade of stars, which one deserves to be held up as a model? Previously, the names and deeds of great persons were inscribed in stone and bronze. Today's idols are like falling stars on a television screen: they are no longer immortalized in statues; they are printed on posters, large and flimsy.

### **Not laissez faire**

117.[166] There is a third process proposed, sometimes strongly, by those who turn their back on the authoritarianism and the models of the past. They claim that children and adolescents should be free from all influence so that their autonomy might be fully respected or because their personal effort in learning is highly valued. They cry repeatedly: "Young people should decide for themselves." "Live and learn." To all practical purposes, this leads to laissez faire, which can sometimes be true respect for freedom, at other times, indifference or just plain surrender. There is a shift from an ethics, which had an answer to everything, to an ethics that no longer has any answers and does not even dare to raise questions. Young people are sent off alone and without provisions to seek norms and values on which they could structure their lives. No more pointing the way: everything is left to improvisation and freedom. As if all road work need be halted to protect the environment.

118.[167] This laissez-faire attitude is perhaps the most harmful to young people. It is not as innocuous as it seems. This standoffishness imperceptibly conveys the message that values have little importance or that adults have no sense of purpose. Both of these assumptions have serious repercussions on the development of young people. They are already distressed enough by being alone in their quest for identity. They are disheartened by not being challenged to more than an acceptable mediocrity. They are disturbed by adults who have nothing to say to them, no vision to share with them. The laissez-faire attitude, under the guise of freedom and permissiveness, is really a subtle form of disrespect: it insinuates that whatever they do, the actions and fate of young persons are of no importance to anyone but the young persons themselves.

119.[168] What three words best describe the spirit that should reign in a moral education class? We suggest: respect, empathy, modesty. **Respect** which transforms our way of looking at ourselves and others, by revealing that everyone is equal in dignity. **Empathy** which is the ability to sense the feelings and needs of others as indicators of similarity and solidarity among persons. **Modesty** which keeps one from thinking too readily that one is already mature or adult. A smattering of anthropology should preserve one from such illusions. Fourastié humorously wrote: "It is only in some hundred thousand years, maybe even in a million years, that we can foresee the advent of an adult humanity."

### Methods in moral education

120.[169] Methods and techniques in moral education are numerous and they quickly become popular. Suffice to mention Kohlberg's method, centred on moral judgment; Wilson's method, which analyses the moral process; the "values-clarification" method, which tries to assist the individual in unravelling or shaping values that he seeks; the "decision-making" method, which as the name implies, centres on the decision making process. Generally a whole battery of techniques and educational aids accompanies these methods. Each method tries to stress a particular aspect of moral education; but under new labels, they usually reformulate the sound intuitions of moral education.

121.[170] One must know how to profit from these methods in teaching. So much the better if they improve moral education and make it more active. In teaching a second language, language laboratories are the "in" thing; in medicine, there is no hesitation to use the latest treatment methods. When it comes to moral development and moral health, we have to go beyond simple improvisation.

122.[171] However, these methods are simple devices for moral education: they are not "morality" itself. They suggest strategies; they do not propose content. Methods are concerned with the "how" of moral education and stop short of the more fundamental question regarding the content of moral education itself. These methods should not be transformed into objectives, nor should they inhibit the user. Such would be the case, for example, with certain methods which presume that all choices are equally acceptable and that anyone can choose anything providing that he follows the correct technique. In practice though, there is no clear division between method and content. It is not possible to teach young people how to make a moral judgment without reference to a moral content and the establishment of a scale of values. However a method can be followed without subscribing to the underlying theory.

## 11. the contribution of the whole school

123.[172] At the beginning of this study, we stated that moral education could not be considered a "subject" or "course" assigned to a few specialists in the social sciences. This sort of partitioning seems unfeasible, because where moral education is concerned, the whole school is involved. In closing we want to return to this idea without minimizing what has already been said on the pertinence and importance of moral instruction. Moral education is not acquired mainly, at any rate not exclusively, in moral or religious instruction classes. There is no doubt, for example, that a laboratory experience or a basketball game can be as important in learning responsibility as a specifically moral or religious activity. The laboratory has a specific contribution: it creates a sense of seriousness about the project and draws attention to things and to the nature of things. The same applies to sports which can instill a sense of discipline and team effort, and which teaches how to accept victory and defeat, how to recognize and admit an ability better than one's own, and so on. And so it is with all activities that can contribute in one way or another to moral education. Everything in school life contributes in actual fact to moral education.

124.[173] All subjects taught are thus directly involved, as well as the whole teaching staff, non-teaching personnel and administrators, because all of school life is permeated with a definite moral influence, even though it may be subdued. This influence filters through courses and activities. It is present in relationships between students, between students and teachers, between teachers and administrators. It is present in the school organization itself and especially in the division into sectors (general and professional). It is present in the prevailing educational theory: competitive and individualistic or participatory and communal. In short, whether we like it or not, the school imparts values and value judgments: it approves certain attitudes and disapproves of others. This influence must be admitted to evaluate and direct it.

### School ties

125.[174] To be productive, a school must develop in its students a sense of belonging. Students who do not feel that they are active members and part of the school community will not feel bound by its purpose, rules and discipline. The sense of belonging always occurs when one's interests and abilities are recognized by those around us. This is the experience that young people seek: at school they want to be associated with a stable and identifiable group; they want to be able to discuss their problems with their educators, they want to be involved in stimulating assignments and projects; they want the necessary help with their studies or with personal and family problems.

## **A place to learn about responsibility**

126.[175] The whole school, in its teaching philosophy and in its operation, must encourage learning about responsibility. "I feel like an object. Everything is decided without us." When young persons describe their school in this way, one wonders how responsible persons will develop there. Pupils often blame the school for not calling upon them to take part or to provide initiative. They feel "programmed" and they resent petty rules. In one school, a code of ethics was imposed at the beginning of the year. The pupils had no part in its preparation. Unfortunately, the code was a bone of contention which disrupted the school for months. Conversely, a regulation was successfully adopted in another school because students, teachers and administrators worked together to prepare it.

## **The question of discipline**

127.[176] When discussing the general influence of the school on moral education, the question of discipline cannot be ignored. Undisputed in the past, discipline is the subject of much discussion in today's school. In the unending debate between authority and freedom, the solution is neither to ease up nor to tighten discipline. Discipline is not an end in itself, but it is indispensable to community life and to the pursuit of a *modus vivendi* accommodating various freedoms. It can only be present and accepted if it is defined and seen as a necessity for a collective undertaking. A series of rules and constraints must be applied by pupils, teachers and administrators who together have shared in the preparation. This is a major learning experience for young people: getting accustomed to understand and respect the rules and constraints that emerge from communal life and its common endeavours.

128.[177] Many people are calling for a return to strict discipline in the classroom, as if it were the miracle-solution to all the trouble in the schools. "Bring back discipline and the kids will work harder!" In fact, effort stems from desire, not force. It stems from motivation, a will to take part and cooperate. How come young people, with so much energy and drive, are often so unmotivated in school? Could it be that the proposed aims seem useless to them? Or are the adults in front of them unconvincing? In our uncertain and permissive society, young persons are often disappointed with adults who have nothing to offer. As they observe an increasing number of educators and parents unable to say "No!" when circumstances warrant it, or to say "Yes!" unreservedly to values, young people do not feel sufficiently challenged and supported in their quest for being and inner growth.

## The place of values

129.[178] If it is going to stimulate the moral growth of young people, the school must recognize more openly the indispensable place of values in education. Our schools are full of scientific truths, objective truths as they are commonly referred to. But scientific truth is not enough to live by. Reasons for living and values that give meaning to life are needed. Values are not taught; they must be incarnate by persons. Young people must be in touch with persons who know what friendship and solidarity are; who prize faithfulness; who do not determine success by wealth; in short, persons who respect intelligence and identify their preferences.

130.[179] Under the pretext of respecting freedom and pluralism, the school often becomes inconsistent and relativistic in matters of values, as if everything were a matter of opinion, as if all choices were of equal value. In a school that is incoherent in values, it is difficult for young persons to establish their own personal coherence. It is not only individuals who must assume the role of definers; the institution itself must revise "the logic of values", point the way and become a leader. "No wind blows for the ship that has no destination." (Montaigne)



**conclusion**

The reflection that we have just presented is not a treatise on ethics, but a series of theoretical and practical observations to deal with moral education in the school. It will fulfill its purpose if it inspires people to reinforce what is already in the process of being accomplished and to give them an incentive for all the tasks that remain to be done.

Admittedly, many issues were dealt with summarily. Others were not even raised. But in the vast field of moral education, one must resist "that terrible urge to be complete" (Alain).

This reflection must go on, first of all, by resorting to practical experiences in moral education for and with young people. If the educational process is well thought out and well evaluated, then the real questions will be raised and perhaps better solutions found.

This reflection must go on also in moral research, which is becoming more intensive in our day in many areas of social life, but especially in the economic and ecological spheres. Strangely enough, it is economists and ecologists who have become the most serious and effective proponents of respect for nature, the reasonable use of resources, organic growth, a sensitivity to the ecology, and an ethics of human and technological progress. Through nature and through our environment, we are in the process of rediscovering that there is also an ecology of human beings. An ecology of their desires, of their needs, of their behaviour, of their heart, of his spirit.

Moral education arises out of the ecological concerns of human persons and of society.

# references

- (1) Up to now, the Catholic Committee has published five volumes of the series *Voies et Impasses*:  
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- (2) Among the many works of Jean Piaget, see especially *The Moral Judgment of the Child*. New York: The Free Press, 1965; *Judgment and Reasoning in the Child* (1928), reprinted by Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977.
- (3) Kohlberg, L., "Stages of Moral Development as a Basis for Moral Education" in Beck, C., Crittenden, B.S., and Sullivan, E.V., *Moral Education: Interdisciplinary Approaches*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971, pp. 86-88. See also J.-M. Samson: "L'éthique, l'éducation et le développement du jugement moral" in *Cahiers de recherche éthique*, No. 2. Fides, 1976, pp. 16-20; Duska, R. and Whelan, M., *Moral Development, A Guide to Piaget and Kohlberg*, New York, Paulist Press, 1975.
- (4) Cf. for example, Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice. Psychological Theory and Woman's Development*, Cambridge, Mass. & London, England: Harvard University Press, 1982; Donald M. Joy (ed.), *Moral Development Foundations: Judeo-Christian Alternatives to Piaget — Kohlberg*, Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1983.
- (5) *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, United Nations General Assembly, December 10, 1948; *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*, United Nations General Assembly, November 20, 1959; *Declaration of Human Environment*, United Nations, Stockholm, 1973; *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Ottawa, 1982; *Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*, Québec, 1976; *Young Equals in Rights and Responsibilities*, Québec, 1981.

- (6) World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *Ecumenical Statement on Human Rights*, London 1976, cf. *Church and Society*, vol. 69 p. 36-37, Nov.-Déc. 1978.
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- (9) Le Du, J. *Jusqu'où iront-ils?* (How far will they go?), Paris: Chalet, 1974, pp. 148-149.
- (10) *Ibid.*, p. 156.
- (11) *Ibid.*, p. 150.
- (12) See: Haring, B., *Toward a Christian Moral Theology*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966; Fourastié, J., *Essais de morale prospective*, Paris: Denoël; Greeley, A., *The New Agenda*, New York: Doubleday, 1973, pp. 175-200.
- (13) See: Milhaven, J.G., *Toward a New Catholic Morality*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1979; Oraison, M., *Morality for Our Time*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968; Haring, B., *Toward a Christian Moral Theology*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966; see also the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, of the Second Vatican Council.
- (14) This section is largely inspired by John Macquarrie, *Three issues in Ethics*, New York: Harper and Row, 1970.
- (15) Oraison, M., op. cit.
- (16) *Summa Theologica*: I-II, q. 57, art. 4.
- (17) See Rahner, K., *Theological Investigations*, vol. 1-, Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1961-. Lacroix, J., in *Morale humaine, morale chrétienne*, Semaine des intellectuels catholiques. Paris: Desclée, 1966, pp. 102-108. Simon, R., *Fonder la morale*. Dialectique de la foi et de la raison pratique. Paris: Seuil, 1974. Aubert, J.M., *Vivre en chrétiens au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, volume 1, Paris: Salvator, 1976.

- (18) See J. Dourley, "Carl Jung and Contemporary Theology" in *The Ecumenist*, September 1974; and also C. Jung, *Collected Works*, volume 9, "Christ, a Symbol of Self", p. 40.
- (19) See Lk. 1:79 p.; 12:51; Jn. 14:17; Eph. 2:14.
- (20) See Mt. 25:14-24; Gal. 4:6; 5:13.
- (21) On the learning process, see articles in the journal *Le Souffle*, January 1975.

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