

Recently when I purchased groceries at a chain store, the clerk mistakenly charged me for only one of two articles. What should I have done? Should I have called her attention to the error or ignored it? Many of us would say without hesitation that I should have pointed out the mistake, for that was the honest thing to do. Others would say, remembering a study of chain store errors, that I should have kept the extra article.

A few years ago, a study showed that on balance the mistakes made by chain store clerks favor the corporation. Should I have returned the article and further increased the gains of the corporation, or should I have kept it? Some will still insist that honesty is honesty, that it is a principle and not a statistical balance sheet. Others will hold that the article should have been kept, for the principle of honesty in this new context has lost its meaning and must be redefined.

The Social and Moral Predicament

This simple case points up today's quandary when we try to shape our actions by moral principles from the simpler world of individual enterprise, self-sufficient families, and person-to-person associations. We are now caught up in a network of impersonal associations—multinational corporations, huge bureaucracies, megalopolitan areas, and a welter of changing social circumstances—that dwarfs personality and hides, if it does not destroy, personal identity.

In this new context, we are affected by actions of others we do not see, and by our own actions we affect others beyond our reach in space and time. Old values and principles give us pause, for in a world where the problems of conduct daily become more complex and tormenting, to follow them is often to become immersed in controversy and frustrated in action. Witness a few conun-

drums: Should there be a death penalty for murder? Should an afflicted person have the right to die? Should abortion be legalized? Should abortion for the poor be paid from public funds? Should homosexuals have the same rights as others? What rights should students have? What restraints should be placed on individuals and corporations in the interest of environmental protection? What rights should the elderly have? These aspects of our social life were until quite recently tightly moored by taboos and traditional principles of conduct, but they have broken loose and are adrift in a sea of moral controversy, litigation, and political rhetoric.

The Simple Precepts Are Still Valid

This is part of the world in which children are growing up and for which acceptable rules of conduct are being slowly but surely formed. But there is another part—person-to-person relationships—in which the historic virtues hold with the same persuasion as of old. We still believe, among other things, that promises should be kept; that the innocent should not be punished; that one should treat others as he or she would like to be treated; that children ought to honor their parents; that one should be honest and truthful.

A world in which these principles were no longer honored would be intolerable. They represent not only the ways in which human beings should react toward one another, but also the moral grounds on which the unsettled and perplexing aspects of our lives can be worked out in terms of new principles of conduct suitable to the emerging character of society.

Behavior Supersedes Moral Knowledge and Judgment

These precepts were once instilled mostly by the home and the community, and reinforced by

the school. In too few cases are they instilled today. They were quoted as maxims at the end of stories, and each child learned to write by copying them. In time, these formal procedures were condemned by pragmatism and by various forms of behaviorism. They were replaced by the theory that the child learns right conduct, not by studying the rules, but by situational induction. The school was to be an "embryonic typical community" where children were to learn to live rightly by living rightly. Moral behavior was thus given a higher priority than moral knowledge.

In the current social predicament, the view has emerged that what is needed is a clarification of values by identifying and thinking about them, forgetting all the while that no one proceeds by clarification alone. The clarification of values is only an aspect of the discipline of judgment required to deal successfully with the perplexities we face today.

Need for a New Discipline of Judgment

We must have a new discipline, a discipline in the procedures of practical judgment.

Note first of all two kinds of judgment: factual and practical. With certain information, we can judge that the pressure in a pneumatic tire will increase as its temperature increases. This is a factual matter, in the sense that it is true. In the other kind of judgment, we must decide what we ought to do or what ought to be done about a situation involving others.

One of the chief differences between these types of judgment is that the judgment of practice involves the character of the judge. We know what a person is like by the judgments he or she makes. After due deliberation, if a person decides that the place of women is in the home, by that decision we know something about that person's character. But, after considering the facts, if the same person concluded that the pressure in a pneumatic tire increases with temperature, we

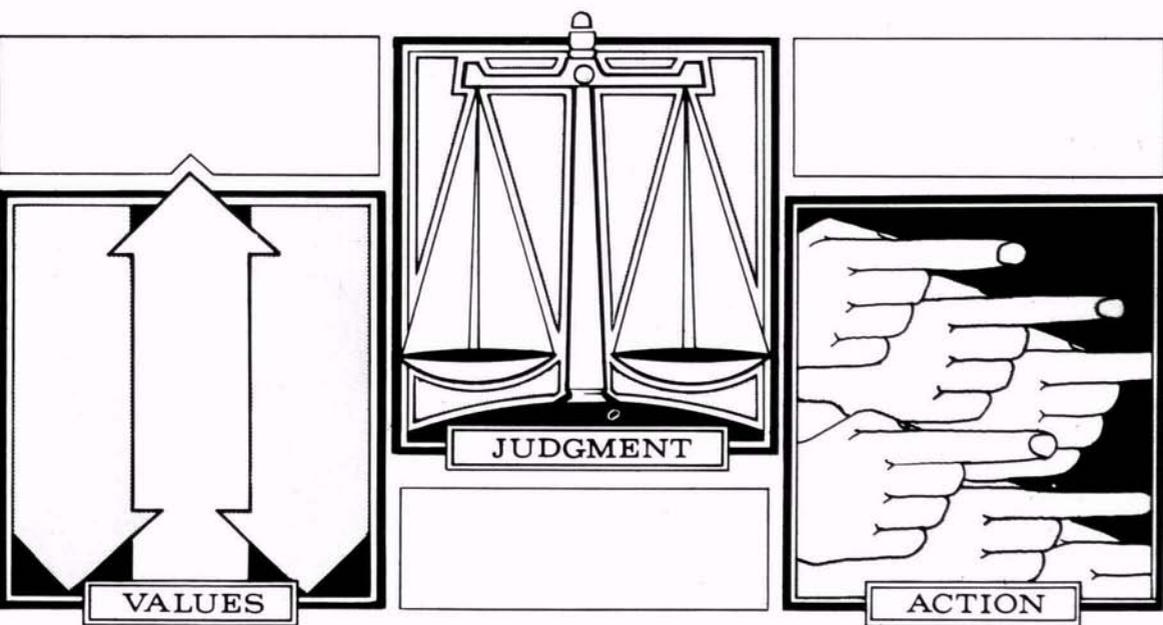
would thereby gain little, if any, knowledge about him or her as a person.

Moreover, it is important to note that the judgmental arena is not a theatre in which the judge merely reveals himself or herself, but a matrix within which the judge's character is being examined, tested, and formed. As individuals engage in the judgmental process, they not only express but also shape themselves as human beings.

Another difference is that the judgment of practice entails personal commitment. We cannot decide that the women's rights amendment should be adopted and remain indifferent about it. Of course, we can verbalize an opinion about it without feeling any commitment to do anything. But we cannot think through the issue and make a favorable judgment without supporting the amendment whenever the opportunity to do so occurs. In sharp contrast, we can be totally indifferent whether the pressure in a pneumatic tire increases with temperature, although we might have gone into the matter thoroughly. In short, we do not feel any commitment to see that the pressure in the tire does increase, for that is a phenomenon that requires no action on our part.

For over half a century, the educational program has emphasized the discipline of factual judgment. We have attempted to teach students to define problems, formulate and elaborate hypotheses, search for facts, and decide whether a hypothesis is true or false. This emphasis upon factual judgment is not to be depreciated, for a technological society's very existence depends upon widespread understanding of these judgmental procedures as well as discipline in them.

Problems of human association, however, are becoming more and more demanding on us as well as on our institutions. These problems require discipline in the procedures of practical judgment, procedures that not only take the facts



into account, but also require a person, as a judge, to look at the norms of human conduct and to examine them in his or her own soul, to assess them as part of his or her own character and understandings as a human being. This means that in the final analysis his or her integrity is an end toward which involvement in the judgmental procedures moves him or her. An educational program suitable for these times, a program to prepare the individual, if only in some small measure, to meet the predicaments of today must necessarily emphasize a curriculum that provides for extensive experience in the judgmental process.

Adults and Youth Must Together Acquire the Discipline of Practical Judgment

Much is being said nowadays about the need for moral and civic education. There can be no

doubt about the necessity for such education, especially in a society in which the norms of conduct are rapidly eroding. Not only the youth, but adults as well, are bewildered by the decay of moral norms, creating problems that the school alone cannot hope to prepare the youth to meet. The time has come for a joint effort between the school and the adult community, an effort to provide an adult context for civic and moral education. The school can sensitize youth to the procedures of practical judgment, but it cannot provide situations in which the procedures as an instrument of social deliberation and action can be mastered.

Some members of the teaching profession would withdraw students from any contact with unstable conditions in the social community. The youth must be "protected." Something can be said for this view in the early years of schooling. But at the upper levels, it becomes completely in-

National Curriculum Study Institutes

Spring 1978

Moral Education: Teaching Materials and Application Strategies

April 17-18, 1978, Anaheim, California
(Grand Hotel)

Professor Lawrence Kohlberg's research on the stages of cognitive moral development offers some challenging approaches to answering the dilemma of what should schools do about teaching values and morality. This institute is designed for classroom teachers, curriculum specialists, supervisors and department heads, and college professors teaching methods courses, who are interested in Kohlberg's theory and who wish to learn how to lead moral discussions and prepare teachers to do likewise.

Consultants: *Edwin Fenton* (Institute Director), Director, Education Center, Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; *Linda Rosenzweig*, Senior Research Associate, Education Center, Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; *Ann DiStefano*, Coordinator, School-Within-A-School, Brookline, Massachusetts.

Registration must reach ASCD by April 3, 1978.

Parent Participation in Education Decision-Making

May 1-2, 1978, Alexandria, Virginia
Holiday Inn Old Town

Increasingly, educators are recognizing the need for parents to be actively involved in curriculum development and other aspects of the educational process. Parents and community people have invaluable contributions and leadership potential to offer in such areas as defining the goals of education, identifying community resources, making the community a more effective partner in the educational process, and evaluating the impact of education on youth. This institute will use a workshop format and conferees should come prepared to be active participants.

Consultants: *Delmo Della-Dora*, (Institute Director) Professor of Education, California State University, Hayward, California; *Carl Marburger*, Senior Associate, National Committee for Citizens in Education, Columbia, Maryland; *Sally Newman*, Director, Teaching-Learning Communities, Ann Arbor, Michigan; *Miriam Clasby*, Associate Professor of Educ., Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts; *Carol Tice*, Director, Teaching-Learning Communities, Ann Arbor, Michigan; *Kenneth Erickson*, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Redford Union School District #1, Detroit, Michigan.

Optional background material packet at special price—\$6.00.

Registration must reach ASCD by April 30, 1978.

----- NCSI REGISTRATION FORM -----

- Moral Education (April 17-18, 1978, Anaheim, California)
 Parent Participation (May 1-12, 1978, Alexandria, Virginia) @ \$6.00

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adequate. Others would leave the door open, but they would take advantage only of an occasional situation. This position, like the preceding one, is unsatisfactory. The discipline of practical judgment cannot be left to opportunism; it must be definitely planned for. And the planning must go beyond the school itself.

There is need now, as never before, for youth and adults to engage in joint deliberation about pressing personal and social problems. In that joint matrix, they should look at the norms of human conduct, reexamine them in the depth of their own feelings, and assess them not only in terms of the new and perplexing conditions of today, but also as part of their characters and understandings as human beings. This means that teachers, adults, and students should become engaged together in a thorough study of the moral problems that confront the people. In the course of doing so, they develop the kind of characters capable of identifying a situation, examining it not only in terms of facts, but also putting their desires and values on the table together with relevant norms for examination, criticism, and judgment. Then, when judgments have been made, courses of action should follow. This is a sort of process in which students' characters can be socialized, in which students in reaching a judgment mold their own integrity and character. Is that too much to demand of the adult community? Is that too much to ask for our youth? [E]



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