

failure in moral education lies in an inadequate understanding of moral theory. A return to the great tradition will not solve this problem.²□

¹In my view the rejection of moral relativism is quite compatible with moral plu-

ralism, but that is a topic for another paper.

²For a fuller discussion of indoctrination and moral education, see my two articles, "Education and the Problem of Indoctrination," Proceedings of the Philosophy of Education Society, 1972; and "Is Value Education Possible?" Proceedings of the

Philosophy of Education Society, 1973.

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No Substitute for Critical Thinking: A Response to Wynne

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Wynne's article has several major difficulties: terminological, historical, prescriptive, and descriptive.

The terminological difficulties force us to ask: What does Wynne mean when he refers to a "moral value"? What does Wynne mean when he talks about "indoctrination" and "transmission"?

Unfortunately Wynne's accompanying bibliography does not include the works of either Rokeach or Feather. Had he consulted these authors, Wynne might have developed clearer prescriptions for teaching values in the school. Rokeach, for example, offers the following definition: "A value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence. A value system is an enduring organization of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance."¹

Rokeach's definition assumes that values exist in a fairly stable, hierarchical form. In other words, some values are consistently valued more highly than others. If the school is to be an instrument for teaching or indoctrinating values, it is going to have to exercise a high degree of selectivity to determine which values to convey. Moreover it must be able to (1) justify its selection of values to the community at large; (2) justify itself as the appropriate institution, or at least one of the institutions of choice, to convey these particular values, and (3) design an effective means to propagate them. These tasks are not simple, although unfortunately, in his desire to return to the practices of the past, Wynne

conveys the impression that they are.

As Feather points out, "... in Rokeach's definition ... values may refer either to modes of conduct or to end-states of existence—to means or to ends. The values referring to modes of conduct are called *instrumental* values, and they encompass such concepts as honesty, love, responsibility, and courage. The values referring to end-states of existence are called *terminal* values, and they include such concepts as freedom, equality, world at peace, and inner harmony."²

Throughout his article, Wynne confuses instrumental with terminal values. Thus, the school might indeed teach instrumental values it believes should be encouraged, such as honesty, obedience, or politeness, albeit not without many difficulties inherent in such teaching. Teaching terminal values provides major difficulties, however, since they represent end-states in individual preferences. Someone who rates a world at peace as the most desirable terminal value may have a completely different school agenda than someone who rates social recognition as a highly desirable terminal value.

If the schools are to provide moral guidance, they will have to deal with the question that, as Timothy J. Cooney claims in *Telling Right from Wrong*, goes to the heart of the problem: "What is morality?"³ Even if we could answer that unanswered question definitively, once we found the best morality, how should schools best teach it?

Assume for the moment that the schools follow Wynne's prescriptions precisely: they accept the notion of the great tradition in education, and they begin teaching patriotism. How do they distinguish among patriotisms? (It

might be pointed out that Wynne's description of the teaching of the great tradition by indoctrination characterized the German school system during much of its history prior to the Nazi takeover, and certainly during the Nazi era itself. One of the most shameful chapters in educational history is how German educators at all levels—from kindergarten to the best universities in the world—quickly, even eagerly, caved in to the Nazi madness.)

Let us assume further that, despite the school's strong efforts at indoctrination, some deviant, bright student happens to read what Mencken wrote. "I enjoy democracy immensely. It is incomparably idiotic, and hence incomparably amusing. Does it exalt dunderheads, cowards, trimmers, frauds, cads? Then the pain of seeing them go up is balanced and obliterated by the joy of seeing them come down. Inordinately wasteful, extravagant, dishonest? ... is rascality at the very heart of it all? Well, we have borne that rascality since 1776, and continue to survive."⁴

The bright student might ask his teacher, who is trying to indoctrinate him in the values of patriotism in the great tradition, the following question: "Sir," (we might as well imagine indoctrinating him in politeness as well as patriotism) "is Mencken being inherently and unequivocally unpatriotic when he makes these nasty statements about Americans? Should we even be allowed to read such material if indoctrination in the virtues of patriotism is the name of the game? Is patriotism unequivocally singular, or can people differ as to what constitutes patriotism, as people do about what constitutes religion?"

If I read Wynne aright, such questions would not be the springboard

for an in-depth exploration of the meaning of patriotism and its many possible manifestations, because it might lead to a "moral relativism," which so many people currently believe threatens the foundation of American society.

A Catholic student might mention that the American Catholic Bishops' notion of patriotism—with respect to the manufacture, storage, and use of nuclear weapons—appears to be different from that of every president since Truman. Furthermore, the American Catholic Bishops' position also differs from that of the French Bishops, who argued that the use of nuclear weapons, under some circumstances, might be justified. Which is the *true* patriotism? Is it unpatriotic to advocate unilateral nuclear disarmament?²⁵

Another student might mention that many American Nobel Prize winners, as well as other prominent American scientists, have pledged not to work on the Strategic Defense Initiative, even though our president has assigned it an extremely high national priority. Does the scientists' refusal to work on Star Wars constitute an unpatriotic act? Now that we are all part of the global village, does patriotism take on a wholly different cast than it did as recently as 50 years ago?

Wynne might run into additional trouble in inculcating patriotism if he examined the etymology of the term. The word patriotism comes from the fourteenth century argument used by the Franciscan philosopher William of

Occam to justify King Edward III's claim that taxes to defend *communis patria*—the fatherland—were morally superior to charity for the poor. William of Occam, Reagan, and perhaps Wynne would make up a nice troika.

Take the issue of school order and discipline. Another bright student might discover some of Stanley Milgram's work. According to Milgram, the problem is not that Americans tend to be too disobedient, but that in many instances they are far too submissive to inappropriate authority figures. What Milgram and many other social psychologists have discovered is that most Americans cannot distinguish between submission to appropriate authority figures and the appropriate time to rebel against inappropriate authority.⁶

Even granting that the present state of discipline and disorder in our schools is undesirable, Wynne's alternative may be even less desirable. Resurrecting the emphasis on external forms of discipline and giving primary control for punitive acts to the teacher or other authority figure may well create the conditions for a nation of Eichmans and Calleys, "good soldiers" who could claim innocence, saying, "I was simply doing my duty, following the orders of my superiors, your honor."

What of honesty? Surely the honesty-is-the-best-policy doctrine can be urged under all circumstances? Surely the school should have a simple, straightline approach to indoctrinating the moral value of honesty. And yet a bright student would probably ask,

somewhere along the way, "Was not President Eisenhower's lying about the U-2 spy plane to the Russian leader justified in the interest of national security? Are there not competing moral values in many life circumstances?" Yes, we need a great tradition in education, and schools need to transmit moral values. And yes, things could be far better in our schools than they are now. And perhaps even more important, things could be much better in our nation than they now are.

Nostalgia for the supposed golden age of education, in which moral values were inculcated successfully, will not solve the problems of the twenty-first century. What is appropriate is for schools to teach the application of critical thinking to moral problems in the appropriate context. □

¹Milton Rokeach, *The Nature of Human Values* (New York: The Free Press, 1973), p. 5.

²Norman T. Feather, *Values in Education and Society* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), p. 5.

³Timothy J. Cooney, *Telling Right from Wrong* (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1985).

⁴H. L. Mencken, *A Menckens Cyclopedia* (New York: Knopf, Vintage Press, 1982), p. 168.

⁵Eugene Kennedy, "America's Activist Bishops," *New York Times Magazine* 12 August 1984, p. 17.

⁶Stanley Milgram, "Behavioral Study of Obedience," *Journal of Abnormal Social Psychology* 67 (1963): 371-378.

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Fulfilling the Great Tradition Through Interpersonal Honesty: A Response to Wynne

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The cause and effect relationship that Edward A. Wynne establishes between values clarification strategies in schools and the increase in juvenile problems is tenuous at best. Any traits—honesty, diligence, obedience, patriotism, and the like—that schools attempt to cultivate necessarily interact with larger social realities beyond the schools.

This has always been the case. The advent of public schools, for example, which enabled increasing numbers of people to be educated, also caused them to see differently what their society's elite deemed virtuous. No longer would so-called virtues be used by the few to limit the access of the masses to full enfranchisement.

Prior to public education, some

people had attained or inherited positions that made them immune to public scrutiny and "testing." But educated people were able to use a free press and other forms of public probing to uncover the inconsistencies between pious public expressions and private deceptions. The results were Teapot Dome, Watergate, Abscam, and Koreagate. As a result, the public became

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