The Critical Moral Classroom: An Approach to Teaching Values

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THE CRITICAL MORAL CLASSROOM
AN APPROACH TO TEACHING VALUES

A Thesis Presented
by
Brian Daniels

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies, University of Massachusetts Boston, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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THE CRITICAL MORAL CLASSROOM
AN APPROACH TO TEACHING VALUES

A Thesis Presented
by
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ABSTRACT

THE CRITICAL MORAL CLASSROOM
AN APPROACH TO TEACHING VALUES

December 1996

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In this thesis the proper place and instruction of morals and values in public schools is considered from an historic, and social view. A pedagogical approach to teaching values in the classroom, which is based in critical thinking, is offered as a resolution to the stalemate regarding morals and values in schools that is a result of competing cultural forces.

In the historical review chapter I make a case that America’s public school teachers have always been charged with the moral development of their students and that this charge has been primary over much of our history. The chapter concludes that teachers today have lost that voice or that it has in some way been silenced.

In the next chapter I review forces outside of the classroom that impact school policy and teacher’s willingness to engage in moral issues. Considered are cultural changes, the power of the religious right, the courts, liberal responses, and the impact on educators of professionalization.
The next chapter is focused on a pedagogical approach to the challenge of teaching values in the classroom called, the critical-moral classroom. This approach synthesizes a holistic vision of classrooms, strong sense critical thinking skills, the application of the “Golden Rule” to thinking, and the prophetic voice in education. The critical-moral classroom is suggested as a way to restore a moral voice to teachers by thinking about morals and virtues, as opposed to naming what is moral.

This approach frees the teacher from many of those external forces that have silenced teachers’ moral voices and offers a reflective approach to the classroom. The critical-moral classroom offers teachers of all disciplines a platform from which to address their own moral development and that of their students.

I close with conclusions and observations about the concept of the critical-moral classroom and reflections on the importance of individual teachers considering their role as moral leaders in their classrooms.
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My deep appreciation to Larry Blum, one of my first professors at the University of Massachusetts Boston, and my advisor for this thesis. His questions always led me to further thinking; his criticisms were invitations. Thanks also to Delores Gallo whose willingness to accept me into her over-enrolled Creative Thinking Course set me on this path. Her careful reading and unflagging support were nourishment. Thank you also to Brother Paul Feeney for his willingness take a chance on a teacher he didn’t know, in an unfamiliar environment, and to so enthusiastically serve as reader of this thesis.

My twenty-two years in education are filled with colleagues I admire and emulate. I cannot take credit for this work without mentioning them in general, and in particular important friends: Ralph Fucillo, Connie Borab, and John Mullen.

I have been blessed by thousands of young voices in my life and I thank each of them for their part in this work. I owe a particular debt to members of the Class of 1997, St. Clare High School, who as sophomores were willing to enter into a new way of learning. My friends, you taught me well.

Finally to my wife and friend, Cindy. The night we met you made me feel special and that continues to this day. Thank you for all of the nights you spent sitting alone while I worked, and for each time you challenged me to go further.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

We therefore presumably stand, at the very least, upon the threshold of the postmodern epoch, or, to paraphrase Nietzsche, with one foot beyond the world of modernity. ... our transitional situation allows us to understand the recently concluded modern epoch from the outside, or beyond ... as we are at the threshold of some new epoch, with, so to speak, one foot in the air, we are still free to decide the direction in which to move.

Richard Paul, *Teaching Critical Reasoning in the Strong Sense*

As a society we are very much in a time of transition. The sun is setting on the period of the unchallenged reign of rational thinking and liberal philosophy, yet no single school of thought has yet emerged to define the period dubbed the “postmodern world.” The moral direction of our society and moral development in our schools have been caught in this vacuum. The tried and previously successful indoctrination of liberal ideals honoring individual achievement, cold objective rationality, and the success and reward of the fittest, have been, or are fast being, discredited.

The United States, according to many, the mostly finely honed expression of these ideals, stands alone atop the hill of nations, yet to some it feels like a hollow victory. Leadership has been passed to a generation raised under the threat of nuclear annihilation. A generation who in their childhood huddled in school corridors during air raid drills, learned that everything that could be created by the rational mind, was not good. Residents of the most overfed and over marketed society on earth must literally step over the homeless and the starving, to enter the towering shrines of the society. Right and wrong hang like effigies, swirling in the hot currents of rhetoric, set in motion by lawyers
and preachers more intent on personal glorification than on any notion employing blind 
madame Justice’s scales or the unconditional love of a caring Creator.

There is a struggle in our society over values, especially the place of morals and 
values in schools, and this struggle creates an atmosphere in which schools are left 
without moral direction and the nation’s teaching staff allows its moral voice to be stolen, 
or silenced, for fear of offending one or another view. Educators often adopt a safely 
removed silence with regards to moral virtue, even on daily issues of moral importance, 
because of the firestorm swirling around the publicity inflamed issues related to sexuality, 
and drugs.

The current failure of our schools to define and promote morally acceptable 
behavior and attitudes is widely reported with each morning’s newspaper. Cadets in all 
of the nation’s elite military academies have been expelled in disgrace, with violations 
ranging from cheating, to sexual and racial harassment, to murder. Uninvited intruders at 
parties, when asked to leave, respond by returning to the scene with reinforcements and 
attack the guests. Violence is the most likely cause of death for urban youths under 
twenty-five, and despite a multimillion dollar education efforts, illicit drug use continues 
to flourish, especially among the young, the poor, and members of marginalized racial 
groups.

The situation can seem bleak but I am not without hope. There is a solution 
within our grasp. There is a force in our nation with the ability, the position, and the 
talent, to turn our society toward a new understanding and practice of life’s oldest 
articulated moral philosophy, “Do to, and for, others, as you hope they will do to and for 
you.” The evangelists with the power to bring this simple phrase into daily use are not 
the politicians, stained by scandal, or those holding the pulpits, preaching to an ever 
dwindling crowd already convinced of the absolute right of their own view, but our 
nation’s teachers.
Teachers can enable change at a pace that presidents can only imagine. They hold a position which offers more direct and immediate impact than any politician enjoys. Teachers need not admit lobbyists or difficult Congress members into their rooms. Teachers can create an environment in their classroom without legislative approval or Supreme Court review. They can start our society down a new path any day they choose to slip back into the cloak of moral leader that is historically theirs to wear.

I suggest a new model for moral leadership in the classroom which I call the critical-moral classroom, a term I first encountered in Melinda Fine’s book, *Habits of Mind*. (Fine 1995, 9) This work deals with the struggle over values in America’s classrooms. Fine focuses in particular on one program, *Facing History and Ourselves*, an approach that makes use of the Nazi Holocaust of European Jewry, as a vehicle to examine one’s own prejudices and inconsistencies. I have employed *Facing History* techniques and materials in class units with high school juniors and found Fine’s description of the *Facing History* classroom as being “critically-moral” compelling. This term best described my own thoughts and experiences with regards to morality and values in the classroom.

David Purpel, who has written extensively about the question of morals, values, and education has a clear vision of what teachers have been, what they have become, and what they might be. In his book *The Moral and Spiritual Crisis In Education* he reaches back to Socrates to remind us of how powerful education and its practitioners are, and how a society can fear them.

Education, if one is to believe educators, has enormous power which not only has the effect of aesthetic exhilaration but of inducing fear. The most powerful metaphor of this paradox is seen in the remarkable trial of Socrates in the fifth century B. C. E. which literally reflects the life and death significance of education. Although Socrates tries rather disingenuously to soft-pedal the importance of simply asking people to clarify what they are saying, his prosecutors are very much aware of the potential of such a process to undermine a contemporary and entrenched cultural consciousness. It is important to note that
literally hundreds of Athenian citizens voted to execute Socrates, that this was a community decision and not one imposed by a tyrannical and feared ruler. (Purpel 1989, 7)

Purpel has set the stakes in education very high. I agree with his estimation. Teachers will certainly not be forced to imbibe hemlock, but the society itself sips at the deadly brew if schools are failing to challenge students to a higher moral awareness. Later in his book in a related passage, Purpel says, “We are, alas, a very weak profession, captured in part by our difficulty in admitting to our condition. I believe, however, that we are not weak by chance and that our weaknesses reflect the culture’s basic ambivalence about the power and the value of education.” (Purpel 1989, 101)

I believe that the critical-moral classroom model will help educators to admit to their weak position, and after critical reflection will empower them to retake the inheritance of Socrates. I am not referring to the canon of Western civilization but the passion that would send a man to his death for his beliefs. Purpel puts it to teachers directly. “It is time for educators to end their naivete and coyness about their social and moral principles, not only as part of their professional ethic but as a way of deepening and enriching the quality of public dialogue on education.” (Purpel 1989, 11-12) I believe that teachers have the power to change the direction of this society, an ability that has been historically recognized.

In this paper, my interest is in addressing just one classroom and one teacher at a time. I am convinced that the power of Socrates and great teachers like Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, Gandhi, Einstein, and King can inspire every classroom where the teacher is ready to commit to a truthful and critical examination of each teaching moment and use each moment to broaden not only the intellect of each participant but to sharpen each’s moral vision as well.
Overview

Educators must confront their awesome responsibilities and must give up their retreat into the myth of political neutrality based on a pseudoscientific conception of their work. Education surely requires knowledge of the learning and maturation process, knowledge of content, language skills, rhetoric, technique, and interpersonal relationships. However these are necessary but not sufficient requirements for a true educator. What is required in addition to this knowledge and these skills is a commitment to a vision of who we are and what we should be.

David Purpel, *The Moral and Spiritual Crisis in Education*

My thinking on the critical-moral classroom is a synthesis of my own experience of twenty-one years teaching in high schools, the changes that I saw in my own teaching and students in the last several years as I brought a different vision to my teaching, and the insight gained from a broad spectrum of writers listed in my bibliography. I must also credit many of my colleagues for their stimulating ideas and my fellows in Critical and Creative Thinking who through their own stories have broadened my view.

In the second chapter, I will review the history of morals and values in American classrooms, highlighting historical periods and the corresponding classroom approaches to moral development. I will briefly review the heavy influence of Christianity, the gradual separation of church and state, the co-mingling of democratic and moral principles, the emergence of child-centered approaches to moral development and current research and philosophical writing about moral education. This chapter will establish the precedent for the moral voice in American classrooms.

The third chapter will concern itself with an overview of the forces that appear to be silencing today’s classroom teacher’s moral voice. The fractured nature of school constituencies, the power of the religious right, the liberal response, and the impact of the courts will be discussed along with the impact that the professionalization of education has had on teachers and the place of morals and values in the classroom.

The last chapter will present the elements of the critical-moral classroom. This includes a new vision of classroom, the establishment of critical thinking as primary, an
exploration of a particular voice in the critical-moral classroom, the prophetic voice, and a discussion of the critical-moral classroom in practice.

I often refer to David Purpel's book, *The Moral and Spiritual Crisis in Education*. Purpel is a professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Cultural Foundations at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro and has authored several books on morals and education. I also make extensive use of the ideas presented in Margaret Wheatley's, *Leadership and the New Science*. Wheatley is a management consultant and a former professor of management at Brigham Young University. These two works seemed to most eloquently summarize much of my reading and I owe the authors a great debt.

I do not think I would have been able to come to a new vision for my classroom without the stimulus of the creative thinking courses I have enjoyed here at the University of Massachusetts/Boston. While I have concentrated on the place of critical thinking in this paper, it is only because of the freeing experience of creative thinking that I have been able to see beyond the daily details of teaching, toward a new vision.

Delores Gallo, professor in the Critical and Creative Thinking Program at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, in an essay titled, "Educating for Empathy, Reason, and Imagination," addresses what I feel is a false dichotomy between critical and creative thought.

The common polarizing differentiation made between critical thinking and creative thinking is deceptive, since it often leads one to see creative thinking as the discrete opposite of rational thought. It minimizes the contribution of necessary evaluative, convergent, critical processes to effective creative production and similarly obscures the import of the speculative, divergent, imaginative processes to effective critical thought. (Gallo 1994, 47)
In this paper I will use the term critical thinking repeatedly. I never intend its use to be exclusive of creative thought, but instead intend that creative thinking will always be a welcome partner.

**Morals and Values**

Teaching is a fundamentally moral enterprise in which adults ask and require children to change in directions chosen by adults. Understanding teaching in this light confronts a teacher with potentially unsettling questions: By what authority do I push for changes in the lives of these children? At what costs to their freedom and autonomy? Where does my responsibility for these young lives begin and end? How should I deal with true moral dilemmas in which it is simply not possible to realize two goods or avoid two evils? How much pain and discomfort am I willing to endure on behalf of my students? How are my own character flaws affecting the lives of others?

Muriel Bebeau, *Journal of Moral Education*

Moral education is a broad term that might be defined differently by each individual. I offer my definitions with the hope that it will help to clarify my purpose.

In general terms, morality is the way we live out the values we hold. I view morality as relationship. Morality is relationship first between the individual and his or her own conscience, then the individual and any other person he or she might interact with, and finally the individual and the society. A person’s behavior and attitudes should naturally reflect his or her beliefs about the nature of humanity and what is most important in life.

In a school, morality is values-in-action. Schools are ripe with relationships and each moment offers an opportunity for moral action and thought. The teacher’s role with regard to morals and values is the same as with curriculum content. The teacher is to add to the student’s breadth of knowledge and view.

I understand and support the notion, that morality in the public school must be separate from religious morality. It must be more than nonsectarian. In our political system, as it is defined today, moral questions in a public school setting do not have a
religious nature. Moral values in schools are not a reflection of any particular faith but leave room for thinking stimulated by all particular faiths. Morality in schools as I am considering it, is also not about discipline or punishment, or even about rules or regulations. These are separate issues in my thinking.

In this paper, I have used the term morals and values interchangeably. While a case could be made for a more careful differentiation, for my purposes I see them as so interdependent that no such line needs to be drawn. I do not make a case for particular values, but this should not be interpreted to mean that I do not hold particular moral views. I am interested in thinking morally rather than in particular moral thoughts.
CHAPTER 2
HISTORICAL REVIEW OF TEACHING MORALITY IN SCHOOLS

Puritan education started with the A, B, C's, taught according to their particular Christian faith. Love and fear of God enlivened the classroom in the New World and the moral dimension of religion has continued to direct and mold American schools through much of U. S. history. The primary architect, the daily laborer in the rocky field of moral development, is the classroom teacher. Theorists and directors, overseers, and benefactors might claim the wheel that steers the moral course, but it is the teacher who is the surgeon, nurse, and therapist to the patient, the emerging person, the child, about to take center stage as an adult.

Morality In Colonial Education

The Puritans may have turned to the natives for advice on farming and feeding themselves but when it came to feeding their souls they needed no direction. Martin Luther's reformation, which would help to create the Pilgrims of Plymouth, had left them with no question as to where to turn for moral direction and what their children would need to ward off the mastery of Satan: a Bible, and the ability to read it. "The prince of darkness is shrewd enough to know that where languages flourish, there his power will be so rent and torn that he cannot readily repair it." (Martin 1923, 18)

Martin Luther had argued that the church had drifted from scriptural truth because it had isolated the people from scripture by refusing to publish the Bible in local languages, and that the people had to read the scripture if they were to guard against
repetition. Children, therefore had to be educated and the teacher had to guard against
the natural evil that dwelt in children, a Calvinist tenet of the time. Thus the teacher,
along with the parents, became the moral guide for the evolving youngsters.

Less than 20 years after the first charter was granted to the Massachusetts Bay
Colony this Calvinist philosophy led to provisions being made for publicly supported
schools. The governing law stated,

It being one chief project of Satan to keep men from the knowledge of the
scripture, ... to the end that learning may not be buried in the graves of our
forefathers in church and commonwealth, the Lord assisting our endeavors:
Sect. I. It is therefore ordered by this Court and the authority thereof; that every
township within this jurisdiction, after the Lord hath increased them to the
number of fifty households, shall forthwith appoint one within their towns to
teach all such children, as shall resort to him, to write and read... (Carter 1824,
8-9)

The law added very strict requirements for the teachers that would be hired.

This court doth commend it to the serious consideration and special care
of our overseers of the college, and the selectmen in the several towns, not to
admit or suffer any such to be continued in office or place of teaching, educating,
or instructing youth or children in the college or schools, that have manifested
themselves unsound in the faith, or scandalous in their lives, and have not given
satisfaction according to the rules of Christ. (Carter 1824, 10)

The laws that governed these first immigrants to the American shores clearly
charged education and educators with a moral role. The tenor of the charge, and the
primary location in law, would lead one to believe that the moral charge to education was
in fact the primary reason for its support. In a religious society dominated by a singular
faith, this was an agreeable direction for the schools to take, and teachers undoubtedly
reflected and inculcated the clearly defined, commonly-held, strict and narrow moral views of the colonists.

**Education and Morality in the New Nation**

After the American revolution, the new nation of states, faced a more complicated relationship between education and morality. The founding documents of both states and nation clearly separated religious denominations and civil authority. The Massachusetts constitution adopted in 1780 reflects this change, referring now to virtue: “Wisdom and knowledge, as well as virtue, diffused generally among the body of the people, being necessary for the preservation of their rights and liberties; and these depend on spreading the opportunities and advantages of education in the various parts of the country, and among the different orders of the people...” (Carter 1824, 23) The blatantly Christian focus of the Puritans was replaced with the notion of virtue and clearly linked with the values, rights and liberties, of the new country. This early connection of the moral education of the youth to the success of democracy is a theme still heard today. As the Puritans had feared Satan’s power through ignorance, so the republicans believed the possibility of a return to monarchy was enhanced, if the populace remained educationally and morally ignorant.

It would be nine years before the Commonwealth of Massachusetts empowered the noble aims of this constitution with an education bill. When the bill was written the moral character of the teachers to be hired was once again a prime consideration.

Whereas the Constitution of the Commonwealth hath declared it to be the duty of the General Court to provide for the education of the youth; and whereas a general dissemination of knowledge and virtue is necessary to the prosperity of every State, and the very existence of a Commonwealth:

Sect. 1. Be it enacted ... shall be provided with a grammar schoolmaster, of good morals, well instructed in...

Sect. 4. Be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid. That it shall be and it is hereby made the duty of the president, professor and tutors of the
University in Cambridge, preceptors and teachers of academies, and all other instructors of youth, to take diligent care, and to exert their best endeavours to impress on the minds of children and youth... the principles of piety, justice, and a sacred regard to truth, love to their country, humanity, and universal benevolence sobriety, industry and frugality, chastity, moderation and temperance, and those virtues which are the ornament of human society, and the basis upon which the republican constitution is structured. And it shall be the duty of such instructors to endeavour to lead those under their care ... into a particular understanding of the tendency of the before mentioned virtues, to preserve and perfect a republican constitution... (Carter 1824, 25-27)

There is no hidden agenda here. The founders of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts clearly spelled out the moral mission of the schools and teachers. Teachers thus empowered were in a strong position and under great pressure, to perform as charged. The question for us today is are the professors and teachers of this period still so charged, and if so, how can today's teaching force “lead those under their care” toward virtue?

Democracy was the new religion of the free states and education was clearly linked to the security and benevolent nature of the Commonwealth, or so argued Daniel Webster at a Massachusetts Constitutional Convention where he said:

For the purpose of publick instruction, we hold every man subject to taxation, ... We regard it as a wise and liberal system of police, by which property, and life, and the peace of society are secured. We seek to prevent ... the extension of the penal code, by inspiring a salutary and conservative principle of virtue and of knowledge, in an early age. We hope to excite a feeling of respectability, and a sense of character, by enlarging the capacity, and increasing the sphere of intellectual enjoyment. By general instruction, we seek... to purify the whole moral atmosphere; to keep good sentiments uppermost, and to turn the strong current feeling and opinion, ... against immorality and crime. We hope for a security, beyond the law, and above the law, in the prevalence of enlightened and well principled moral sentiment. We hope to continue, and to prolong the time, when, in the villages and farm houses of New England, there may be undisturbed sleep, within unbarred doors.... We do not, indeed, expect all men to be philosophers, or statesmen; but we confidently trust, that by the diffusion of general knowledge, and good and virtuous sentiments, the political fabric may we secure, as well against open violence and overthrow, as against the slow but sure undermining of licentiousness. (Carter 1824, 49)
Webster's trust in the power of education to create and maintain the public peace and prosperity is eloquently presented here and is still used as an argument for educational funding today. As a major author of school texts, and a singular influence on the nation's schools through these texts, the strong moral vein in education of that period continued to be promoted. The echoes of Webster's words can be heard but faintly in today's funding debate as new prisons abound and hundred year old school buildings beg for paint or, more realistically, the wrecker's ball. It is a sad but true observation that Minister Farrakhan made before those assembled in Washington for the Million Man March, that the newest buildings in each city he visits, are prisons and professional sports facilities.

The 19th Century Moral and Education Reborn

Nineteenth century education was dominated by the Massachusetts reformer, Horace Mann. Mann's views and influence are well known, but some of the other motivating forces for school reform shed further light on the moral mission of public schools and the teaching force.

Massachusetts had maintained a legal relationship with the Congregational Church until 1833, paying ministers and recognizing the church as the official religious affiliation of the Commonwealth. When this practice came to an end the moral anchor of the state was unclear, and it is at that time that Horace Mann became Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education. (Fraser 1979, 28)

Mann's vision of the Common School as a place not for the common people but a place that the people would have in common, is the next step in the secularization of teaching morality in the nation. Mann claimed that a common learning experience would help to meet the growing challenge that immigration posed to a singular American point of view. The Common School would give each new member of the American social
Mann understood that even though the church was out of the schools and
disconnected from the state, morality and virtue were still the foundation of education.
He also knew that Christianity certainly was not chased out the door with the
Congregationalists. “In this age of the world, it seems to me that no student of history, or
observer of mankind, can be hostile to the precepts and doctrines of the Christian religion
... The Bible is the acknowledged expositor of Christianity. In strictness, Christianity has
no other authoritative expositor. The Bible is in our Common Schools, by common
consent.” (Fraser 1979, 36)

The teaching force was again given the order to bring moral direction to the
reinvigorated schools and was commanded to do so by word as well as deed. “...the
school committees are sentinels stationed at the door of every schoolhouse... to see that
no teacher ever crosses its threshold, who is not clothed, from the crown of his head to
the sole of his foot, in garments of virtue.” (Fraser 1979, 32)

In his dissertation on the school question in Massachusetts, 1870-1890, Martin
Benjamin commenting on both the public and parochial school voices debating morality
in the schools said, “One thread that seemed clear from all of the discussions regarding
moral education was that, in the final analysis, the moral example of the teacher would
determine the extent to which moral precepts might be communicated to the student.”

(Benjamin 1987, 167) The importance of the teacher's moral example is clearly emphasized here.

As the century drew to a close, the moral lessons of the classroom were less reliant on the Bible and blatant references to Christian values and more likely to reflect a growing secular morality built around virtue. Children were learning of kindness from this verse:

True worth is in being, not seeming;
In doing each day that goes by
Some little good, Not in the dreaming
Of great things to do by and by.
For whatever men say in blindness,
And spite of the fancies of youth
There's nothing so kingly as kindness
And nothing as royal as the truth.

(Benjamin 1987, 169-170)

Pressures from newly emigrating religious groups in the second half of the 19th Century caused Horace Mann's efforts to create a religion in the schools, devoid of denominational association, but full of Christian direction, to crumble under pressure of competing religious views. Catholics objected to the use of Protestant translations of the Bible and Protestant prayers, while non-Catholic Christians had no use for Catholic tradition and Papal teaching as a moral guiding force.

Massachusetts citizens came to realize that the inclusion of any religion seemed an impossibility, but that moral education was a necessity and could effectively be taught without it. Most came to believe that the teacher in the classroom was the most effective vehicle for insuring that students were exposed to sound moral values. Consequently, the education given to the prospective teachers, at least in the normal schools of the state, was heavily weighed with information about moral instruction. (Benjamin 1987, 171-172)
At the end of the century the teacher still held the most important role in moral education in the nation's schools. The centrality of the teacher's place would be severely challenged in the next century.

The First Half of the Twentieth Century

The twentieth century became the era of schools. The industrial revolution called for workers that were trained merely generally in attitude and habits than the apprenticeship educational system could provide. Factory jobs were simple and easy to learn, requiring no long apprenticeship training, but workers needed to be socialized to the system, to know how to get along with others, to be flexible, take on new jobs over a career, and to have good work habits. Schools took on a powerful role in the formation of the new worker.

John Dewey, the predominant voice of education at the turn of this century states, "It is commonplace of educational theory that the establishing of character is a comprehensive aim of school instruction and discipline." (Dewey 1944, 346) His philosophical premise with regards to education was that it must address the whole child. The whole child must of course include the moral character as well as physical and intellectual development of the student. Dewey's view of the schools put the teacher, once again, in the role of moral model. He writes, "A narrow and moralistic view of morals is responsible for the failure to recognize that all the aims and values which are desirable in education are themselves moral." (Dewey 1944, 359) Speaking about all of the desirable aims of education and life Dewey writes, "...education is not a mere means to such a life. Education is such a life. To maintain capacity for such education is the essence of morals." (Dewey 1944, 359-360)

Dewey's view of education as a life experience blurs the moral charge for teachers. It removes it from an explicitly stated part of the teaching contract, to a more integrated, and thus less easily isolated, observed, and measured, realm.
The Bible and its secular versions had been replaced as a primary teaching tool with reading series and textbooks. Dewey claims separate teaching of morality was of little use anyway, lending itself only to the power of dictators.

Moral education is practically hopeless when we set up the development of character as a supreme end, and at the same time treat the acquiring of knowledge and the development of understanding, ... as having nothing to do with character. On such a basis, moral education is inevitably reduced to some kind of catechetical instruction, or lessons about morals. Lessons 'about morals' signify as a matter of course lessons in which other people think about virtues and duties. It amounts to something only in the degree in which pupils happen to be already animated by a sympathetic and dignified regard for the sentiments of others. ... As a matter of fact direct instruction in morals has been effective only in social groups where it was a part of the authoritarian control of the many by the few. ... To attempt to get similar results from lessons about morals in a democratic society is to rely upon sentimental magic. (Dewey 1944, 354)

Dewey's influence was huge. This was a period of enormous growth in education, especially on the secondary level, and most schools adopted, at least in name, some part of John Dewey's philosophy. Moral education became a part of the natural development of the student and was believed to be a part of the natural role of the teacher. Cracks in this system are easy to see. It was difficult for a teacher to be a moral influence while teaching in school systems that were segregated by race, economically disadvantaged by design, and were part of a society that had created and used weapons capable of destroying all that the teacher and his or her students might explore. The moral voice of the teacher, once featured soloist in a chorus of homogeneous voices, was fast succumbing to the competing calls of industrialization, urbanization, and specialization.

Through the century schools grew in number, especially high schools, and attendance grew. The average number of years of formal education increased as did the number of high school graduates. In 1890 seven percent of high school age children were
in school and only one percent would go on to college. In 1970 ninety percent of high
school age children were in school, and the majority of traditionally aged college students
were in some kind of educational program. (Bellah, and others 1985, 146) The centrality
of schools in U.S. society by the middle of the century is undeniable, and if one accepts
Dewey’s influence as pervasive, so one must accept the impact the teacher continued to
have on the nation’s morals. The children in these schools were spending more time with
teachers and less time in family based educational experiences.

The Post-War Modern Era

The growing dependency on formal education in the latter twentieth century and
the increasing number of working parents, one parent households, and high level
corporate and professional positions that demand large time commitments from
employees, means that the teacher becomes an even more important voice in a child’s life
today. In many cases today teachers are the most regular adult contact that children have.
This might be even more true for teenage students with jobs.

Signs of the growing public reliance on formal education, and thus teachers,
abound. The number of years spent in school has continued to increase with the addition
of kindergarten and preschool programs. The school day and year are both longer, with
further extensions pending at this time. Many school buildings are open until six in the
evening for after care programs, adding up to three hours to the average six hour school
day. There is also an increase in teacher or coach directed sports, clubs, and social
events. Some of this additional time is spent in less formal settings than traditional
classrooms offer, and involves even more social contact with teachers by students. In all
of these settings the child’s moral view is being influenced and directed by non-family
members, teachers.

The current era has seen an increase in research-based programs for moral
development in educational settings, and the emergence of specialists and special
programs in schools to address moral and value concerns. Counselors with a variety of specialties are available to students, peer mediation teams help students work out differences, antismoking and drinking groups abound, and questions regarding sexual ethics are often assumed to be part of health curriculums. Several layers of administrators handle behavioral problems, and a teacher's moral suitability to teach is more likely to be measured by his or her familiarity with a psychologically based moral development system than by any examination of the moral tenor of his or her life.

Courses in teacher preparation programs that focus on morals are likely to concern themselves with theorists like Lawrence Kohlberg, Sydney Simon, Carol Gilligan and Paolo Friere, who are current representative writers on the subject of morals and values in schools, rather than on the personal moral development of the teacher in training. These theorists represent a shift in the power center from teachers laboring in the schools, to outside experts. While their work is widely reported, hotly debated, and unquestionably important, I wonder what impact on the daily direction of classrooms their work has. No school system that I am aware of for instance, hires teachers based on their knowledge of, or allegiance to, the ideas and directions of any one of these researchers and writers. I am sure that we would find most public teaching forces to be filled with adherents to all four of these moral philosophers' views, some of which are in competition with another. It is apparent that large numbers of school systems have not adopted specific moral development programs based on the current research or designed their school system from start to finish around a single moral philosophy or theory.

The scope of my work here does not allow for a review of Kohlberg's, Simon's, Gilligan's, or Friere's work. My interest here is not in the theorists, but in teachers. This limit should not be seen as a rejection of their work, just as the mention of them is not an endorsement. I have gained great insight from all and would have criticisms of each.

In *Moral Dimensions of Teaching*, Garry Fenstermacher in the chapter titled, "Some Moral Considerations on Teaching as a Profession" reports that the current
literature around professionalization of teaching is nearly devoid of talk about the moral nature of teaching, the moral duties and obligations of teachers, and the profound importance of teachers to the moral development of students. It is as if the moral dimensions of teaching were lost, forgotten about, or—to put the best possible light on the matter—simply taken for granted.

School administrators today are more interested in the knowledge prospective teachers have of their subject areas, than in their moral views. “The rhetoric of the professionalization of teaching is grounded primarily in the knowledge base of teaching, not the moral base. Therefore, it is a rhetoric that clusters around notions pertinent to knowledge, such as expertise, skill, competence, objectivity, validity, and assessment.” (Fernstermacher 1991,132-33) Morality in today’s schools has taken on a professional and separate nature and teachers have fallen silent on the issue.

Conclusion

In conclusion to this historical overview I believe that today's teachers, while still charged with the responsibility to attend to the moral development of their students, are much less likely to see themselves as actively involved in that aspect of student life, especially in the secondary schools. Teacher preparation, certification, and retraining focuses on pedagogical skills and content knowledge with little attention to development of the moral voice. Politicians, researchers, and theorists talk about moral education today, but teachers rarely do. The moral nature of a teacher's classroom is not included in yearly teacher evaluations or is it part of the drive to professionalize education.

Teachers seem to have lost, or at least to have backed away from, the moral voice that was historically theirs by definition. In the next chapter I will consider some of the outside reasons for this silencing of the teacher's moral voice.
And shall we just carelessly allow children to hear any casual tales which may be devised by casual persons, and receive into their minds ideas for the most part the very opposite of those which we should wish them to have when they grow up? We cannot. Then the first thing will be to establish a censorship of the writers of fiction, and let the censors receive any tale of fiction which is good, and reject the bad.

Plato’s Republic

The question of why a significant recognition of the teacher as moral guide has been deemphasized is important for one to consider before examining the critical-moral classroom as a vehicle for reestablishing this voice. Limits on the moral voice in education today are complex and beyond the scope of this paper, but a basic examination is necessary to illustrate why a values list approach to moral development in schools has been stymied and how a thinking system approach might help to avoid some of the roadblocks.

Cultural Forces

The teacher’s moral voice has been silenced because of the confluence of a number of factors and forces. Educational leadership in many districts has been crippled or redirected because of the fragmentation of school constituencies. A diversifying population has meant conflicting needs and demands on districts. The rise of single issue pressure groups often impact school decisions and fear of their power can lead to abdication of the moral voice. The drive by teachers for professional standing has
partially redefined what teachers do, and has minimized their role in value development. Christian fundamentalism and the enormous power of the religious right have unrelentingly attempted to influence school policy and direction nationally. The reaction to this pressure by liberal elements in our communities and the courts has further polarized the issue.

Schools and teachers, unable to reduce the cacophony of conflicting voices, and bombarded by popular culture’s moral vision of self-fulfillment and materialism, have been silenced. Teachers feel isolated in their classrooms, afraid to offend students, parents, and administrators, so they choose to address fewer and fewer controversial subjects. It is in the teacher’s best professional interest to remain above the fray, or withdraw from the contest altogether.

David Purpel comments on the lack of leadership from educators. “The public is trying to grasp what is fundamental to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and in response educators give them more standardized tests; the culture yearns for meaning and hope, and the schools suggest more homework and a longer school year.” (Purpel 1989, 22) It appears teachers are unwilling or unable to address the fundamental moral questions.

Public Scrutiny

Schools attract a large amount of public scrutiny. Some past experience in the educational system is nearly universal for Americans. Their experience, or the memory of it, leads many non-educators to have very firm, and arguably informed opinions, about what schools do well and what they do poorly. Schools are also big, if not the biggest, budget items in most cities and towns.

Politicians having learned that voters have an interest and an opinion about education have turned their focus on schools. School reform has become politically driven. State mandates fiscally strap locally controlled schools, and elected school
committees are being relieved of their duties by court appointed guardians who charge that these school boards have failed at their task. Washington, D.C. schools are a recent example where elected leadership has failed and been replaced with court guardianship.

Fractured School Constituencies

School constituencies are often fractured by groups with competing needs and may in many cases include natural opponents. One problem in funding schools is the difficulty school boards face pleasing competing interests. Schools are predominantly funded by local governments and these governments depend on property taxes for income. Schools are often viewed by those who do not have school age children, as providing a service only for those residents with children, while the entire community pays the bill. In a period of swelling retired populations who are on fixed incomes, this perceived inequity creates an understandable generational rift. The more pronounced difference in moral values across generations, exasperates the conflict.

Many of these retired people see themselves as being forced to pay the bill for schools, and then having to suffer the social consequences of the schools’ perceived failure to teach values as they had learned them. The parents of the students want parental values supported in schools. Students bring yet another view of moral values, one which is heavily skewed by the influences of mass media and popular culture.

The generation gap shows itself even within the school age population. Parents of elementary school children have different concerns for the moral direction of their children than do high school parents whose children are living with different fears and temptations. Many of the glamourous moral issues that grab the headlines, as well as the time and energy of school boards, are not issues in elementary classrooms, but are pertinent only on the secondary level. This difference leads to competing constituencies even within the school population.
Diversity and Multiculturalism

The new ethnic and racial diversity of our schools also sets up potentially divisive groups. The word different is often used to mean bad or wrong, and schools are not immune from this confusion. Schools and teachers, because of ignorance or design, often find themselves under scrutiny by members of this more diverse population for their continuation of school traditions, the use of ethnically offensive language, or sexist or unfairly restrictively rules. Fear of inadvertently offending students or parents sometimes silences teachers. Minority groups have used the courts in recent years to open closed school doors and to reject restrictive policies that appear to be directed at their ethnic or racial traditions and or values.

The protection of individual rights has led to a number of decisions that overturn school rules. The unfortunate response of many educators is, “We can’t say or do anything to students anymore.” State statues mandate universal education, limit expulsions, and seal juvenile criminal histories.

Critics would claim that certain approaches to multiculturalism are to blame for this decay. Diane Ravitch, former professor of the history of education at Columbia and assistant secretary for education research and development under President George Bush, identifies what she calls the “particularist approach,” as being especially destructive. She says, “Multicultural studies taking the particularistic approach, which seeks to ‘raise the self-esteem’ of minorities, is based on lineages of ‘blood’ and ‘race memory’ and has the potential for fanning ‘ancient hatreds.’” (Gaddy 1996, 127) Multiculturalism can strengthen a community and its moral view, but it can also fracture.
The Moral Atmosphere of the Times

The changes in the moral attitudes of our nation in the second half of the twentieth century impacts the place of morals in the classroom. Many of the long admired exemplars of moral values have been discredited. Government, business, police, and church leaders continue to publicly fall into the moral abyss. Faith in these institutions is shrinking and schools by association are added to this guilty list.

It is no longer clear in our society who holds the right answers. Differences of opinion in political life which used to be treated with civility now open the door to character assassination and overweening self-interest. "The key question is 'Who now decides what is right, true, or good? Whom do youth respect?' Traditional authorities no longer automatically command respect and obedience for increasingly more Americans." (Heath 1994, 40)

Religion

What many might consider to be the natural voice for moral concerns, religion, is also evolving in the current era. The religion of one's youth or family is no longer the determining factor in worship. "... more and more Americans have become demanding religious consumers, sampling churches with a discerning eye in a quest for spiritual fulfillment," writes Diego Ribadeneira in a Boston Globe article titled, "Worshipers willing to shop around" [sic]. The consequence of this new discerning behavior is "that the long tradition of joining neighborhood congregations, or the church of one's parents, is rapidly disappearing." (Boston Globe, 17 November 1996, B1) Ribadeneira quotes assistant sociology professor at Dartmouth College, David Lee as saying, "In the old days, you could not choose your religion, just as you could not choose your family. One could drift away from the fold, but to join another was to threaten the social order." (Boston Globe, 17 November 1996, B6) This transition of the social order affects values and their place in schools.
While the United States has always protected religious freedom and diversity by law, the actual experience of religious influence was Judeo-Christian in nature, with a strong emphasis on the Christian. Christianity is not a single faith of course, but has expressed itself in America through a number of denominations that shared enough common theology to coexist peacefully. This common religious voice, Robert Bellah claims, is actually a "civil religion". (Bellah, 1984, 190)

Bellah describes the God of this civil religion with these words, "The God of the civil religion is not only rather 'unitarian,' he is also on the austere side, much more related to order, law, and right than to salvation and to love. ... He is actively interested and involved in history, with special concern for America." (Bellah 1984, 190)

Bellah credits the founding fathers with defining our civil faith and claims, "The words and acts of the founding fathers, especially of the first few presidents, shaped the form and tone of the civil religion as it has been maintained ever since. Though much is selectively derived from Christianity, this religion is clearly not itself Christianity." (Bellah 1984, 190)

This phenomena of not automatically adopting the faith of one's parents mirrors what is happening to moral values in the schools. The previous generation is not consistently recognized as the guardian of the moral light. There is no assumption that the light will burn for the next generation the same way that it shone for the last. The resulting problem is social disorder.

The importance of this notion of a unifying civil religion will make itself clear later in the chapter when discussion of the impact of Christian fundamentalism on the schools takes place. What is important to note here is that some claim that this unifying force is currently shattering. Robert Wuthnow, professor of sociology at Princeton University who writes about American culture and religion is one such voice. Wuthnow claims that despite references by politicians at major national events to God and Creator, civil religion has become deeply divided.
Like the religion found more generally in the nation's churches, it does not speak with a single voice, uniting the majority of Americans around common ideals. It has instead become a confusion of tongues speaking from different traditions and offering different visions of what America can and should be. Religious conservatives and liberals offer competing versions of American civil religion that seem to have very little of substance in common. (Wuthnow 1984, 197)

The fractured nature of the nation's religious voice is reflected in the schools' moral stance. The competing voices lead to paralysis and silence.

The Religious Right and Christian Fundamentalism

Seeping into the picture through the cracks of division and differing views is a very powerful voice, that of Christian fundamentalism. Fundamentalism is certainly not new and Christian fundamentalist attacks claiming education is amoral are not unique to our current period, but conditions at this time have added muscle to their views. The fundamentalist belief in the appropriateness of moral indoctrination and the absolute nature of morals and values, leads to conflict in communities that are not of a single mind.

Horace Mann was denounced as an, "atheist who was undermining the Bible," because of his claim to a nonsectarian educational view. (Gaddy 1996, 11) The Catholic clash with Protestants in the second half of the nineteenth century over Bible use and particular Protestant prayer, resulted in the growth of Catholic parochial schools, a result still in evidence today. Darwinism offended Christian fundamentalist views of creation and led to court cases that continue to be filed. The Supreme Court's use of the schools to change segregation patterns and the treatment of minority groups and women has further inflamed religious conservatives and fed into the current pressure by Christian fundamentalists on school systems and programs. (Gaddy 1996, 12-13)

Today's fundamentalist attacks on education are powered by a strong political groups with connections to the highest offices in the land. “The rise of fundamentalism
can be characterized as a revolution against modernism—the forces that caused rapid
cultural changes in American society.” (Gaddy 1996, 30) The battlefield of choice
against change is America’s classrooms.

Christian fundamentalism is represented by a number of groups, some with
national political and religious ties and others with more local roots. There appears to be
a network that shares information and funding, but the pressure on schools is not
coordinated from a single source. It is not my intent, nor is it within my scope, to list and
review each group, but some of the major players include Citizens for Excellence in
Education (CEE), the Christian Coalition, led by Pat Roberston, the Reverend Jerry
Falwell, Phyllis Schlafly’s Eagle Forum, and Educational Research Analysts led by Mel
and Norma Gabler.

Jerry Falwell, Phyllis Schlafly, and Pat Roberston’s public positions are widely
reported, but it is the lesser known CEE and its president and founder, Robert Simonds,
that has been more proactive. Mr. Simonds’ political connections go all the way to the
White House. He was appointed by President Reagan to the task force charged with
implementing the recommendations of the 1983 report, A Nation at Risk. (Gaddy 1996,
17)

These fundamentalist Christian groups concentrate on defeating educational
reform plans, textbook purchases, sex education classes, and particular science and
history curriculums. They were in large part responsible for the 462 challenges to
educational materials and plans recorded for the 1993-94 school year, the largest number
in ten years. (Gaddy 1996, 6-7)

These challenges are carefully planned and researched. In the exhaustive book,
School Wars, about the outside pressures on schools today, authors Barbara Gaddy, M.A.,
University of Denver, professor emeritus T. William Hall of Syracuse University’s
Religion Department, and Robert Marzano formerly of the University of Colorado, list a
number of examples of Christian fundamentalist tactics. These include overstating
problems in the schools, packing school board meetings, using free access and pupil
rights laws to cripple progress on educational planning, filing expensive and time
consuming legal challenges, and covertly electing conservative Christians to school
boards. Robert Simonds, writing with regard to the covert nature of the effort, in a CEE
publication, How to Elect Christians to Public Office, advises followers to be upbeat and
positive and to avoid any statements that might cause people to question a candidate’s
beliefs. (Gaddy 1996, 55-61)

Pat Robertson answering charges that Christian Coalition candidates keep their
full extent of their agendas secret until after election makes no apologies. “It’s like
guerrilla warfare. If you reveal your location, all it does [is] allow your opponent to
improve his artillery bearings. It’s better to move quietly, with stealth, under cover of
night.” (Gaddy 1996, 21) CEE claims to have helped to elect 7,153 school board
members in 1993. (Gaddy 1996, 61)

Christian fundamentalists undertake these attacks on schools and teachers because
they believe that schools have turned against Christian beliefs and are advocating secular
humanism as a replacement for Christian faith. “Christian fundamentalists... are fearful
that their children’s religious faith is being undermined because, they believe, the
majority of educational materials currently in use in public schools promote an anti-
Christian view of the world.” (Gaddy 1996, 9)

Jerry Falwell, writing in 1980, points to the lack of prayer in school as a
watershed change in moral education.

Until about thirty years ago, the public schools in America were providing
that necessary support for boys and girls. Christian education and the precepts of
the Bible still permeated the curriculum of public schools. The Bible was read
and prayer was offered in each and every school across our nation. But our public
schools no longer teach Christian ethics, which educate children and young
people intellectually, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. (Falwell 1980, 205)
Christian fundamentalist groups take advantage of the fractured nature of school constituencies to turn one group against another and to focus attention on their agenda. Teachers are fearful of becoming victims of witch hunts that seek out and charge teachers on flimsy evidence or hearsay with promoting homosexuality, Satanism, or abortion rights. Fearful of being misquoted and having their livelihoods threatened, many teachers have decided to withdraw from the fray. It is better for them to avoid any subject or decision that might open them to controversy.

Pressure from Liberals

Pressure from the liberal community, while less organized, also has a chilling effect on classroom moral atmosphere. Many liberal groups believe that, “Christian ‘extremists’ have a hidden agenda to take over public schools and that their efforts to bring public school materials in line with sectarian religious beliefs violate the principle of separation of church and state.” (Gaddy 1996, 8) This belief has contributed to increased vigilance on the part of groups like the National Education Association, the American Library Association, People for the American Way (PFAW), and the American Civil Liberties Union. They have defended a number of school districts from fundamentalist attacks and have often supported student rights suits. While some of this litigation is supportive of school policies, some is not. Increased litigation from any source leads to a perception of loss of control by the schools and teachers.

Liberal groups are on the watch for attempts to inculcate beliefs and values. This often puts them at odds with long established traditions in communities and rules and policies that support the status-quo. While most of the liberal groups mentioned would consider themselves to be pro-teacher, their pitched battle with the religious right often leaves teachers unarmed in the middle of the battlefield.
The Courts

Supreme Court rulings that enforce the separation of church and state have helped to keep tensions high. In the 1947 case of Everson vs. Board of Education Justice Hugo Black wrote, “The First Amendment has erected a wall between church and state. That wall must be kept high and impregnable.” (Gaddy 1996, 182) Liberals have used this ruling to eliminate most expressions of religious faith in public schools. Wary teachers and administrators have wrongfully interpreted it to mean that there should be no mention of religion in any circumstance. The confusion of moral values with religious values leads some to remain mute on the question of values, rather than risk the wrath of one group or another.

All of this has been exasperated by the explosion of information available to the average citizen. Today a small town school board race or referendum can be followed by newspapers and electronic media outlets around the country. This kind of attention leads many to believe that what is in actuality a perverse interpretation of law or belief in one isolated area, is instead a wave riding across the country, heading for every school system.

Paralysis

Caught in this vice of pressure, educators have decided to withdraw from the fray, especially on the secondary level. As Douglas Heath says, “Educators have not distinguished moralistic attitudes about personal and public issues, such as those about prayer, abortion, or nuclear power plants, from liberal education’s universal and intrinsic values, such as honesty and integrity. Fearful of community reaction, they ignore the former and do not vigorously assume responsibility for the latter.” (Heath 1994, 87)

Teachers know that it is impossible for them to please all of the constituencies that come before them. The authority of their position has been eroded in a society that is less
likely than ever to grant authority based solely on position, and the same is true for their administrators. Jobs hang in the balance, and teachers realize that a person is rarely criticized for things they don’t do or say, but are very often unfairly held accountable for those thoughts that are uttered.

The solution is silence. Turn over the moral voice to those who are fighting for it. Maintain order in the classroom, cover the syllabus, and turn in grades on time. Volunteer for an extracurricular activity or two and write letters so that students can gain coveted acceptance to institutions of higher learning, which just by their reputation, virtually guarantee the student a materialistically successful life. The success of schools and teachers is too often measured in SAT’s, college placement, and numbers of professional alumni and rarely on social questions about “liberation from hunger, disease, fear, bigotry, war, ignorance, and all other barriers to a life of joy, abundance, and meaning for every single person in the world.” (Purpel 1989, 30)

Professionalism

Professionalism has had a mixed impact on teachers and their moral voices, and since it is not an external pressure but an internal one, I have separated it from the other elements affecting education and moral values.

A profession requires benchmarks, a vocabulary, and evaluation tools, that can be used to prove to the general public that the job classification, teaching in this case, is indeed a profession. These tools must meet the scientific view that pervades society. In response to the drive for professionalism and the more technical demands on today’s classroom teacher, formalized teacher preparation in schools of education, and licensing or certification, are nearly universal requirements for educators, and are becoming even more stringent.
This trend toward professionalism is undoubtedly commendable, but there is a down side, a dark side. The immeasurable moral value of the teacher is marginalized, because it cannot be easily, tested, licensed or updated.

America's first teachers were hired for their moral position. The early documents discussed in the previous chapter placed the moral character of the teacher above any other preparation. In a small, homogeneous community morality was easy to measure and easy to agree on. In a school system with thousands of teachers who most often prefer to live in a community other than the one they teach in, the personal morality of the teacher is nearly impossible to evaluate.

A professional organization cannot afford to claim as fundamental to the profession an immeasurable skill. A professional association would be unable to negotiate for compensation for an immeasurable skill. Promotion or placement would have to be subjective if morality were an acknowledged requirement of the professional educator, a power no professional labor organization wants to put into the hands of management. An individual teacher may say to his or her administrator, “You know what kind of a teacher I am,” implies, “you know what kind of a person I am,” but a labor negotiator cannot speak in such personal terms.

Professionalism means that the moral dimension of teaching cannot be openly acknowledged. Oblique references are frequent, blanket statements abound, but, except for teachers who commit gross violations of the criminal code, little mention is made of teachers' moral voice. The power of caring that propels good teaching today, and is the modern translation of the Puritan emphasis on ethics, cannot be measured, so it is not recognized. Unrecognized, it cannot be empowered and reality denied, is demoralizing.
Conclusions

Sharp differences between values, beliefs, and priorities—in short, differences in world views—are making it difficult for teaching and learning to take place. Pressures on both sides are creating a crisis in education hitherto unknown in this country.

Gaddy, *School Wars*

Teachers have been both deprived of their moral voices and have surrendered them. The position that teachers find themselves in cannot be remedied by a return to an earlier era. The authors of *School Wars* report that a Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll found that 69 percent of the public believes that their communities could agree on basic values that public schools should teach. These were values such as honesty, supported by 97 percent, democracy, 93 percent, acceptance of diverse people, 93 percent, and moral courage, 91 percent. (Gaddy 1996, 210-211) How these moral values should express themselves is another question.

Psychology professor emeritus, David Heath, of Haverford College and author of *Schools of Hope*, finds in his research that teachers and students report that the common values listed above are not, by their own judgment, being practiced in their schools. He finds that only 41 percent of teachers and 31 percent of students think that honesty is prevalent, 32 percent of teachers and 16 percent of students acknowledge integrity in schools, and 16 percent of teachers and 23 percent of students believe that courage is practiced in their school environment. Heath concludes that large numbers of students “believe schools to be ethical wastelands.” (Heath 1994, 87)

Simply listing values will not help anyone to understand how to practice them. The real problem is in their practice. “Schools can be effective moral teachers when they represent communities that are morally homogeneous. The trouble is American society is no longer a morally homogeneous community,” so claims David R. Carlin, Jr., writing a commentary in *Commonweal*. (Carlin 1996, 7) He suggests the school could center its attention on “non-controversial” issues like, “fairness, honesty, courage, and respect for
others [as] good qualities, while unfairness, dishonesty, cowardice, and disrespect are bad." (Carlin, 8) The problem, Carlin claims, is in the details.

We all believe in fairness as an abstract principle, but what does it mean in practice? What does it mean, for instance, when applied to divorce? Or when applied to social policy questions, like affirmative action, food stamps, Medicare? Or when applied to abortion and euthanasia? If the essence of fairness is respect for the rights of others, then everything depends on what rights others actually have. But this question of rights, like sex, is highly controversial. Some people favor this list of human rights, some that list, others a third.

Maybe the schools will respond to this dilemma by saying: ‘Our fairness curriculum will teach kids not to cut in line and not to steal one another’s pencils; but we’ll take no stand on divisive questions like divorce, social policy, abortion, and euthanasia.’ But this is tantamount to teaching that fairness applies to small matters only, not to big matters. (Carlin 1996, 7)

Carlin captures the problem that is inherent in a list approach to values. While recognition of common values is essential, areas of disagreement cannot be ignored. Teachers need a method of moral pedagogy that addresses issues on which there is agreement and creates an atmosphere for civil consideration of areas of disagreement. Moral pedagogy should leave room for difference in particular implementation of moral view and must honor any number of school constituencies or power groups. An effective moral pedagogy can not be indoctrinating, and should meet professional standards that are not dependent on personal values.

Schools need to teach a way of thinking morally, rather than trying to teach what thinking is moral. Adapting critical thinking skills and attitudes to the question of moral development is a place to start. What is needed is a way to empower the moral voice of our nation’s teachers. Not to put words in their mouths, but questions in their minds. I propose the critical-moral classroom.
What we need in education is a genuine faith in the existence of moral principles which are capable of effective application.... The teacher who operates in this faith will find every subject, every method of instruction, every incident of school life pregnant with moral possibility.

John Dewey, Moral Principles in Education

The critical-moral classroom is a place where morals and virtues are debated, modeled, rethought and renewed everyday in the context of whatever subject is being taught without adding curriculum or staff. The critical-moral classroom depends on the teacher maintaining a critical-moral vision and demonstrating that vision in the way he or she teaches, interacts, answers and listens. The critical-moral classroom depends on the teacher’s historically noted moral voice.

The critical-moral classroom must first be conceptualized by the teacher, arrived at after careful reflection on the nature of teaching beyond subject content. This reflection is fundamental and goes far beyond the questions swirling around educational reform today. David Purpel suggests that,

Educators must reflect on how they have contributed to major structural failures like persistent unemployment and poverty rather than focus on their inability to lower the dropout rate or keep schooling costs down. Educators must confront our moral failure by seriously considering the relationship between the realities of hunger, poverty, and misery and the nature of existing educational programs. (Purpel 1989, 106)
This reflection leads to a way of being with students that gives them a model of what relationships can be. When this model has a firm hold on the classroom, students add their voices to its direction, molding it to fit the needs of their generation.

The critical-moral classroom does not rely on a particular dogma or theology but instead assumes that most people, given the opportunity to see life through broader and less hostile lenses will, upon reflection, choose a path that honors their own well being and that of those who surround them. A variety of belief systems can coexist in the critical-moral classroom as long as each individual is willing to critically examine the impact of their personal beliefs on others.

The teacher's role is key. The teacher must create the moral-field that compels the classroom and protects it from egocentric behavior and from those who have only experienced abuse and do not trust that life could be otherwise. The teacher's model of applied critical-moral thinking must be as firm as the rocky Maine coast, worn smooth by the pounding water, but never surrendering.

The Elements of the Critical-Moral Classroom

The critical-moral classroom has four major components, interlocking puzzle pieces, that demand the presence of the other if the picture is to be complete. First is an understanding of the holistic nature of natural relationships and environments as defined by the new sciences, particularly quantum mechanics and the impact of this view on classroom relationships and environments. I believe that classrooms can be more successfully managed recognizing these natural patterns and using them to create fields that set probable parameters for student interaction, but do not dictate student behavior, attitudes or beliefs. This issue being of a fundamental nature I will explore it first.

Second is the adoption of critical thinking skills as the "regulative ideal" by which all pedagogical methods and curriculum are evaluated. (Siegel 1988, 46-47) Critical thinking must be the guiding pedagogy in the critical-moral classroom and is a
"necessary condition for education." (Siegel 1988, 52) I will explore how I define critical thinking and its use and relationship to moral development and values.

The critical-moral classroom somehow needs to be set above the din of the information explosion. A third component is a specific voice in the critical-moral classroom, the prophetic voice. David Purpel and others shed light on this unique visionary view which chastises, challenges, and offers renewal all in the same moment.

Lastly I will focus on the teacher. The fuel of schools is ideas and teachers control the gateway to the city of ideas, the classroom. It is the teacher, the individual without regard to status or academic discipline, who has the power and ability to hold the pieces together and be both creator of, and participant in, the critical-moral classroom.

**Relationships, Classrooms, and the New Science**

The tiny room was bristling with ... equipment, unknown and exciting enthusiasm. Some molecules are carriers of an electrical dipole, they behave in short in an electrical field like minuscule compass needles: they orient themselves, some more sluggishly, others less so. Depending on conditions, they obey certain laws with greater or less respect. Well, now, these devices served to clarify those conditions and that inadequate respect. They were waiting for someone to put them to use.

Primo Levi, *The Periodic Table*

Moral education in an age of information explosion must be centered in an environment which recognizes the pollution of the moral stream with any number of carcinogens capable of killing moral thinking. Moral education needs a protected place where the potentially deadly personal decisions today's young people face, can be examined, probed, and figuratively tasted, without harm to body, soul, or psyche.

The educator interested in developing a critical-moral classroom is challenged to build just such a protected place in his or her classroom. The teacher needs to understand that it is difficult for students to discern a moral voice over the din of moral transgression.
and indifference. The educator should take a lesson from the natural sciences that clearly show us a world in relationship. Today's moral educator must create a field for moral dreams.

Fields in the Critical-Moral Classroom

All organizations are controlled by invisible fields as powerfully as our sun holds the earth in orbit, or lunar activity dictates marine conditions. From my earliest days teaching, I recognized that the absence or presence of a particular student would greatly impact any lesson plan I might have. The time of day of the class meeting or the classroom space held equal sway over my plans. At times, I felt as if unseen forces were at work. Why did a lesson plan work so well with one group, and completely fail to do the job with another?

In my second year teaching I was the unwitting victim of field control. Assigned to teach religion in a biology lab, I quickly admitted to myself that I offered minimal competition for student attention to the defrosting shark whose cold stare bore through me as it lay on the lab bench behind me. The fish owned the room. It was obvious that there was a lot more going on than my lesson plan that day and I came to realize that this was just as true for days when there was no fish in the room. Years later Margaret Wheatley gave me the words that described my own classroom observations.

Wheatley synthesizes her popular knowledge of the new sciences; especially quantum mechanics which takes a holistic view of creation, with her understanding of management practices in her book, Leadership and the New Science. Wheatley's book led me to think that the principles which she illuminates could be applied to classrooms, and especially to the difficult problem of how to teach values and morality in a secular school system. I started to think of morals as a field or a force as it is identified in science. "Many scientists now work with the concept of fields - invisible forces that
structure space or behavior. I have come to understand organizational vision as a field – a force of unseen connections that influences employees' behavior...” (Wheatley 1994, 12-13)

I knew that unseen connections often ruled my classroom. In my early years teaching, I was most often controlled, and more than occasionally victimized, by these fields. On rare days, I would create the moment, “teachable moments” is what we called them, and control the field myself. My lesson plan always shone on those days, and I proudly credited my plan. After several years of teaching, I had an experience helping to generate a field, “organizational vision,” that altered my view.

Creating and Guiding the Field

On a Friday afternoon in March of 1978, two colleague/friends and I, drove from the school where we worked in south suburban Boston, to Brewster on Cape Cod. We arrived and stumbled out of the car, stunned by the beauty and excitement of the turreted carriage house that stood before us. Set behind a rolling lawn and atop a rise that overlooked Cape Cod Bay, the scene was postcard-perfect.

The priest in our department had arranged for the use of a facility and we had planned our first weekend retreat with students who were in their junior year in high school. Our priest/collleague had joked about the old rundown house we’d find waiting for us. Filled with trepidation about the conditions we might find when we arrived, we had set off with the car packed with food for the three days.

Standing outside pinching ourselves, we were approached by the religious order caretaker of the property who resided in the mansion that stood beside the carriage house. “I’ve been expecting you. The house is open. Take good care, and do good things,” he said as he disappeared, not to be seen until we were packing to leave.

Too excited to unpack, we ran around the building, in and out of the big living room, spacious meeting room, sunny breakfast setting, and the maze of second floor
bedrooms. The space was fantastic, and we recognized its importance to our plan. If we had nothing else, we had this space.

We finally calmed down and set about the task of incorporating this fabulous space into the “organizational vision” of field we were creating which our students would enter when they arrived a few hours after us. We removed extra light bulbs from fixtures and comfortable throw pillows were scattered on the floor. We assembled a ring of tables so that all the participants might share a meal as one community. We hung newsprint on the walls with titles that suggested sharing a thought, complemented by a marker on a string to facilitate any desire to write. The living room was designated for this session, the meeting room for that activity, a walk planned under the night sky, and note made of the perfect place to view the sunrise.

We were recognizing and honoring the importance of space as an element in the retreat field we hoped to create. It wasn’t enough that it was beautiful, it had to do its part, it had to work with us. This might seem obvious, but often events or meetings are ruined by and the lack of heat, poor light, or bad chairs. The people responsible for these events probably had good plans, but they separated the plan from the space, failing to recognize the field. They chose a Newtonian view, a view that recognizes parts as separate, and a view that often dominates secondary education as evidenced by separate academic disciplines and a growing disregard of students artistic and physical development.

We had a written plan. We had our movies and songs, our stories and prayers, and when the students arrived the elements combined to create the field for our weekend together. The field that would guide the weekend grew out of our friendship and trust of one another and was solidified in the circle we shared with our students. We invited them into this experience with our words of introduction which centered, not on the limits of rules, but on the possibilities of being. The field then took over, guiding us to experiences that were far beyond our planning.
We found ourselves on Sunday afternoon, shaken by the power of the weekend. Having lived, worked, slept, eaten, and recreated together, we had been held by the field of our dreams to recognize the relationships, celebrate the friendships, admit to our humanness, and surrender to the field at work in our space. On Monday, we returned to school and in a follow up meeting students and teachers agreed that it just was not the same back there.

It would take me many years to realize that the field we had created on retreat that made so much possible was something that could be duplicated at school in my classroom. For many years I focused my efforts on the other teachers, trying to talk them into embracing my vision—with the emphasis on the MY. I assumed that responsible adults had to create and control any positive field in a school environment. I wanted schools to change. It seemed impossible to accomplish what I wanted to accomplish in my classroom, while so many others around me continued to promote a Newtonian vision, keeping clearly defined departments and disciplines, class periods of identical length, and students isolated from one another and from their teachers in neat rows lined up along the handy grid formed by twelve inch commercial floor tiles.

I insisted on defining the vision for everyone. The vision of education I had so easily captured overlooking Cape Cod Bay, was not proving to be universal, and I ignored the possibility of it being particular to my own space. Not having the foundational relationship with the entire faculty that existed with my retreat colleagues I was a lone voice who enjoyed outsider status, but whose voice and vision was easily swamped by the majority.

Several years ago I returned to the classroom full-time after seven years of being involved in development work for my school. When I closed my classroom door that year, I realized on a more profound level that this was MY classroom, MY space, and that this was the field that I could organize and charge as I thought appropriate.
What the other teachers were doing faded in importance as did my need to control other teachers. I redefined my need to be the controlling force in relationship to students. Control was no longer a meaningful word in my classroom vision. I turned my energy instead to sculpting and recreating the space, and the fields that would occupy that space.

What mattered in my professional life happened in this room, not in department meetings, faculty meetings, union negotiation meetings, or in the principal's office, guidance counselor's office, or superintendent's office.

I didn't have the words at that time, but I wanted my classroom to be a quantum universe, where every word and action held meaning and the moral nature of my task—teaching—was always atop the agenda. I now believe each teacher can build a moral field in his or her own classroom, and carefully charge and maintain that field. Students will react with, and in the field, and in turn, in all the other fields created in the school by each teacher. The interaction of a number of moral fields guided by similar, but not necessarily identical thinking, would lead to a general moral vision that would define the entire school community, from quantum classroom to quantum school. The universe explodes outward from the center.

A moral vision, created by the participants, would certainly have great influence. If one thinks of morality and values more in terms of vision and less in terms of rules or specific dogmas or beliefs, the possibilities for classroom and beyond swell. Wheatley gives us a view of the potential for this sort of vision.

If vision is a field, think about what we could do differently to create one. We would do our best to get it permeating through the entire organization so that we could take advantage of its formative properties. All employees, in any part of the company, who bumped up against that field would be influenced by it. Their behavior could be shaped as a result of 'field meeting,' where their energy would link with the field's form to create behavior congruent with the organization's goals. (Wheatley 1994, 54)
The moral lessons of the school and the values that are alive in each and every classroom would be based on the relationships present in those rooms and in that building. The wide variety of relationships created by diverse individuals with a common commitment to critical-morality would create an atmosphere where inculcation of any point of view would be difficult, and respect for diversity would be a primary building block of the system. Margaret Wheatley writes about the power of that potential.

“Several years ago, I read that elementary particles were ‘bundles of potentiality.’ I have begun to think of all of us in this way, for surely we are as undefinable, unanalyzable, and bundled with potential as anything in the universe. None of us exists independent of our relationships with others. Different settings and people evoke some qualities from us and leave others dormant. In each of these relationships, were are different, new in some way.” (Wheatley 1994, 34)

What is a classroom if not a bundle of potentiality: potential in all spheres; intellectual, emotional, and moral; all human potential. The teacher’s challenge is to create relationships and settings in which this potential can unfold, not in an absolutely predetermined direction, but instead according to the probabilities calculated by the teacher-created field, and the interaction of the participants in the field. This would be a classroom where free will could be celebrated and valued, not blunted and silenced. In nature, chaos theory reflects this kind of a pattern in which, “Fluctuations, randomness, and unpredictability at the local level, in the presence of guiding or self-referential principles, cohere over time into definite and predictable form.” (Wheatley 1994, 133)

This is what I had first observed on retreat in Brewster. The potential of each individual was honored and encouraged to blossom in a unique way, yet a viable general direction and attitude was maintained so that the group could function as well as the individuals. Clearly identifiable moral questions were plentiful that weekend, from how we should treat one another and divide responsibilities and work, to sexual ethics and family conflict. In a system directed by absolute rules, many of the topics we broached
would never have come to the table for fear of judgement and condemnation in accordance with “absolute rules”. Those topics that were considered would have been discussed in a debate atmosphere leaving some participants feeling as if they were the winners, and others the losers, while few minds or lives would have been changed.

In Brewster the retreat planners had trusted one another and the participants enough to leave room for everyone’s input. We sat as equal participants sharing lives, dreams, disappointments, and joys. The strong relationship between the planners had empowered each of us to lower our need for personal control and allow the field to develop as the group needed it, not as any one of us envisioned.

The transference of this experience from retreat to classroom was not as great a leap as I had long imagined it to be. The major stumbling block was loneliness. In my classroom I was alone, at least that is how I saw myself. I had to do it all, make every decision, plan every moment. There was no one to turn to for assurance, input, direction, support. No reciprocal relationships that involved me. Rethinking the classroom and its relationships I recognized that it was full of people, students, who, given the appropriate field, could and would supply the reciprocity.

I knew that any activity that was student-suggested or designed usually garnered more attention and support from the students. Mark Tappan and Lyn Brown, co-directors of the Education and Human Development Project at Colby College recognize the power that student-authored moral direction holds. “When students author their own moral narratives and share them both with other students and with teachers, they assume authority and responsibility for their thoughts, feelings and actions.” (Tappan and Brown 1996, 106) Why not design a moral pedagogy around this idea. The critical-moral field must be seen as dynamic and the participants in the field, teachers and students, are always engaged in recreating it, perfecting it. The natural interaction of individuals within the field and their impact on the field itself would produce a level of student authorship.
I believe that the power of natural relationships as described here, offers the any teacher envisioning his or her classroom in a quantum manner, an opportunity to impact education far beyond the expectations of a conventional classroom. I now turn to critical thinking and its place as the "regulative ideal" of the critical-moral classroom.

**The Meaning Attractor: Critical Thinking**

To be uncritical is to be unaware of the human character of our culture, to see the world's condition as 'natural' or inevitable and one's particular condition as a function of uncontrollable forces. To be uncritical one has to be ignorant of the historical processes and of the nature and significance of knowledge.

David Purpel, *The Moral and Spiritual Crisis in Education*

In the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) report, *Breaking Ranks*, which calls for reform of the American high school, the authors list a set of values that they claim all high schools could agree on and support. "The high school community, which cannot be value-neutral, will advocate and model a set of core values essential in a democratic and civil society. ... This means that schools must unabashedly teach students about such key virtues as honesty, dependability, trust, responsibility, tolerance, respect, and other commonly held values important to Americans." (NASSP 1996, 30)

This list could certainly serve any classroom teacher well and some might see it as an appropriate framework for dealing with morality in classrooms. I was struck by its force and clarity and found myself nodding in agreement. After further consideration I started to think about the values that were not on the list, the situations that might not be covered by these virtues, and the interpretation of these values in practice. Where were courage, love, hope, and generosity and which were the most important? The power of lists is in their initial impact; their failure is that they can never be complete and much of their value is lost squabbling over application.
While a list of values should certainly be part of the thinking of any teacher engaging the critical-moral classroom concept, a list is too limiting to be the guiding force for the critical-moral classroom. Students when presented with a list, directly or by implication, will interpret the list to include all that is required of them. This thinking is built into our current school design. The moral field in a list-defined classroom would then become a checkoff of items, rather than a critical-questioning of thinking or action. The individual would then have the list as an excuse for any holes in his or her moral thinking.

What is needed for classroom moral development is more than a list. We need a path on which we practice the values on our personal list. I offer critical thinking as the director of the critical-moral field, the path that compels the critical-moral classroom. I propose that critical thinking be the “meaning attractor”, as Wheatley calls it, the defining force in a particular field. The “meaning attractor” acts as the enforcer, not in a deterministic, absolute sense, but in a more general way. Like clay thrown on a potter’s wheel which stays in place because of the precise speed and direction of the wheel, so those who come in contact with the “meaning attractor” stay in place, but the actual vessel that will rise out of the clay is in the hands of the potter. The potter in this case is the individual in relationship with the critical-moral field. The relationship is the forming agent.

Critical thinking is a superior “meaning attractor” because its proper use can embody any particular list of virtues or values, while leaving room for those that might not be listed. Critical thinking taken as a path allows each individual flexibility in determining how a value will be expressed in his or her life. The question of how courage or love, trust or dependability is practiced, does not require public debate and sanction when critical thinking is the guiding principle. The debate is internalized using critical reflection on the primary moral question, How would I react if this were being done to me? The “Golden Rule.”
In University of Massachusetts/Boston philosophy professor Lawrence Blum's book, *Moral Perception and Particularity*, he considers the way that courage is expressed by two Holocaust rescuers, Oscar Schindler, and Magda Trocmé. He notes the deep differences in their moral behavior, motivation, and histories. (Blum 1994, 67-89)

Blum notes that Schindler first came to save Jews because cheap Jewish labor was good for his business. As he gains a better understanding of the Nazi killing machine his motivations become humanitarian rather than utilitarian. Trocmé, by contrast, helped to save thousands who fled during the war to her French village simply because they needed saving. The village, Le Chambon, was recognized as "the safest place for Jews in Europe", and Magda's husband André thought of her as a "person who cares for others on their own terms, not in order to parade her own virtues..." (Blum 1994, 74) Professor Blum comes to the conclusion that one is no less courageous than the other despite the very different ways that courage is exemplified in their lives before and after the war. (Blum 1994, 67-89)

This is a perfect example of the way critical-moral thinking would act as moral catalyst. Within the limits of a critical thinker there are a variety of ways to be courageous, not one single way dictated by the teacher. It is in thinking critically about an action that the individual comes to understand what courage is. Speaking in front of the entire assembled student body takes no courage for some students, volunteering to answer a question in class is an act of extreme courage for others.

Wheatley has great faith in the power of the "meaning attractor", and recognizes the freeing power of this vision of management. Critical thinking offers emancipation because it is not dependent on another's direction or list of rights and wrongs but depends on the critical consideration of the thinker. This freedom is one of the exciting aspects of the critical-moral classroom. There are always a number of solutions possible using this vision; they may just not have been discovered as yet.
When a meaning attractor is placed in an organization, employees can be trusted to move freely, drawn in many directions by their energy and creativity. There is no need to insist, through regimentation or supervision, that any two individuals act in precisely the same way. We know they will be affected and shaped by the attractor, their behavior never going out of bounds. We trust that they will heed the call of the attractor and stay within its basin. We believe that little else is required except the cohering presence of a purpose, which gives people the capacity for self-reference. (Wheatley 1994, 136)

Wheatley’s words, applied to the classroom, become a pallet from which springs an exciting scene where a number of activities with different goals and elements can be addressed all at one time, the “cohering ... purpose,” deeper understanding, careful consideration, a better world. To the outsider, such a classroom might appear chaotic in the way a beehive appears, but to those in the “basin” of the “meaning attractor,” the relationships and goals are very clear. The teacher in this picture is free to move between groups, to give particular, and extended attention as it is called for, without worrying about the students who continue with other choices, self-directed. The notion of “self reference” is important when considering the potential for change in the society beyond the classroom or school.

In their interaction and in their relationships, the students would practice the values alive in the critical-moral field. The “meaning attractor”, critical thinking, and the attendant critical-moral questions would keep those values within its parameters. There would be no need to limit the field to the few values that Breaking Ranks claims that we as a society can agree upon; instead the critical-moral field, guided by the precepts of critical-moral thinking would embrace and create practical expression of all the listed values and likely yield many others.

As an example I offer a class discussion on materialism. One student said she would certainly never die for anything material. Another quickly responded that she would, “Die to save my clothes. I am nobody without them.” Some students quickly denied her point saying, “No you wouldn’t.” or “You shouldn’t think that,”, but then the
critical-moral field took hold and students started to process the comment through the speaker’s understanding of self, and realized that their own understanding of self was not universal. These students brought the discussion back to values, asking her how she defined herself and what brought meaning to her life. They quickly established that clothes were her most powerful sign of who she was. Then they addressed how the student might rethink this view. A list approach to this topic, (i.e., life is a higher value than any material possession), would have limited thinking and certainly would never have invited this student to think about herself in a new way.

**Critical Thinking and Moral Thinking**

The idea of critical thinking in the classroom is certainly not novel or unique to me. Some would claim that without critical thinking there is no education going on, “...insofar as the purpose of schools is to educate, this task logically cannot be accomplished without critical thinking. In short, critical thinking is a necessary condition for education.” (Siegel 1988, 52) The potential for moral education using the process of critical thinking and the application of the “Golden Rule,” “Do to others as you would have them do to you,” is enormous. If critical thinking is already taking place in the classroom the application of critical-moral thinking only requires one additional question, What if your thinking was applied by another to you?

Muriel Bebeau, writing in the *Journal of Moral Education* claims, “Teaching is a fundamentally moral enterprise.” (Bebeau 1993, 313) David Purpel writes, “Serious education... has a way of forcing continual confrontation with our basic moral commitments...” (Purpel 1989, 8) Critical education by its nature, can easily support a critical moral view by simply considering the moral perspective along with all other perspectives. The strength of the critical-moral classroom is in the recognition of the holistic nature of the moral development problem. Morals are not separate from academic disciplines.
Critical thinking is the appropriate “meaning attractor” for the critical-moral classroom for four reasons. First because of the nature of critical questions. They leave room for complex thinking, multicategorical thinking. Second, as I view strong sense critical thinking, it leads to action and moral thinking cannot be separated from moral action. Thirdly the reciprocal nature of critical thinking invites a deeper bonding of ideas and thinker. This kind of critical thinking becomes a way of being, which is a goal of moral development. Lastly critical-thinking is relational. It develops between people; it is not given from one to another. Moral indoctrination is a great fear in moral education that can be avoided with the proper use of the critical thinking process.

Adam Niemczynski writing in the *Journal of Moral Education*, summarizes the critical-moral view saying, “Instead of aiming at forming individuals according to the life ideals of church or state, education should have as its goal the creation of moral individuals—people who are willing and able to treat each other as equals, and who are willing and able to feel compassion towards one another. The means of moral education is a compassionate balancing of the perspectives of all participating parties....” (Niemczynski 1996, 112) The application of critical thinking skills to all actions and considerations, assures a place in schools for this “compassionate balancing.”

This kind of commitment to critical-thinking goes beyond a set of tools, or an approach, and becomes a way of being. The critical question that powers the critical-moral field and embodies the basic premise of morality is: Would I want it done to me this way? Would I want these words addressed to me in this tone? Would I want to be thought of in this way? Would I want to be referred to in this way? The “Golden Rule” is the guiding principle for critical-moral questions. This starts with the way good morning greetings are exchanged and doesn’t end until the last comment is added to the day’s pile of corrected material. Every student idea, question, suggestion or protest must first pass the scrutiny of this critical question. The same is true for the teacher.
Some definition of critical thinking and description of its application in the moral sphere is called for and I offer it here. Critical thinking is not a magic, previously unknown, human talent, just come to light in recent years and now presented as panacea for all that ails education. Critical thinking is the time honored use of reason and reasons in thinking. Socrates was a critical thinker, and while some would now minimize his teaching as sophistry, his intent went beyond proving a point or winning an argument. His use of critical thinking came out of his religious beliefs and his devotion to the democracy of Athens.

Socrates strongly believed that virtue could be taught, that the proper function of education is to teach virtue, and, moreover, that the appropriate pedagogy of such an endeavor is one of critical examination of conventional thinking. ...Socrates integrated his pedagogy into an educational orientation as it emerged from a social and sacred vision. Critical thinking was not seen as an esthetic or economic concern but as also having political and religious significance. We are apt to think of the Socratic method as a metaphor for detached, logical, probingly critical thought, but we must remember its religious and political context: Socrates was devoutly religious and a strong supporter of democracy Athenian style; he felt even at his execution time that his educational efforts were necessary to sustain those beliefs and institutions. (Pupel 1989, 78)

Socrates' use of questions to help his students clarify their thinking is well known, but critical thinking goes beyond asking and answering leading questions.

Robert Ennis, one of the founders of the current critical thinking movement and a professor of the Philosophy of Education in the department of Educational Policy Studies, at the University of Illinois, emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills so that thinkers, correctly access statements. (Siegel 1988, 5-6) Ennis urges thinkers to be clear, focused, think holistically, consider alternatives, be well informed, be aware of biases, and be open-minded. (Ennis 1987) His emphasis is on the skills and their practice, which is not necessarily linked to self-examination by the thinker.
Ennis' strong emphasis on skill development has left him open to criticism by others in the field, notably Richard Paul, director of the Center for Critical Thinking at Sonoma State University, and the author of a number of books aimed at critical thinking in the curriculum. Paul labels Ennis' approach to critical thinking as critical thinking in the weak sense. He describes it as weak because it is not focused on content or application, but instead on ability to manipulate critical skills. Paul says, “Current methods, as I conceive of them, often inadvertently encourage critical thinking in a weak sense. The most fundamental and questionable assumption of these approaches is that critical thinking can be successfully taught as a battery of technical skills that can be mastered more or less one by one without giving serious attention to self-deception, background logic, and multicaategorical ethical issues.” (Paul 1992, 137)

Paul concerns himself with what he calls critical thinking in the strong sense, the approach that I favor for the critical-moral classroom. Strong sense critical thinking starts with an examination of the thinking of the thinker. What are the thinker’s prejudices, eccentricities, socioeconomic realities. Paul does not contend that the thinker can overcome all of these thinking prejudices but that true critical thinking attempts to keep them in perspective. He describes strong sense critical thinking this way:

Reasoning is an essential and defining operation presupposed by all human acts... when we, ... analyze and evaluate arguments important to us, we do so in relationship to prior belief commitments. The best we can do to move toward increased objectivity is to bring to the surface the set of beliefs, assumptions, and inferences from the perspective from which our analysis proceeds, and to see explicitly the dialectical nature of our task ... Skill in analyzing and evaluating reasoning is skill in reciprocity, the ability to reason within more than one point of view ... since vested interest typically influences perception, assumptions, reasoning in general, and specific conclusions, we must become aware of the nature of our own and other’s engagements to recognize strengths and weaknesses in positions. (Paul 1992, 143-145)
The notion of one individual reasoning within more than one point of view is key to the critical-moral classroom. The use of reciprocal reasoning would create a common bond between individuals and groups that might have differing views. Appropriate use of reciprocal reasoning would include the thinker asking him or herself the question, “Is this how I would want to be treated or regarded?” The thinker who employs reciprocal reasoning, the critical thinker, would be privy to a deeper insight about the thinking of the other, and thus a better understanding of how the reasoning would affect the other. The strong sense approach goes far beyond logic, reasoning, and clarification. The strong sense approach injects the thinker and his or her knowledge and values, into the question.

The application of strong sense critical thinking creates the potential for the development of empathy, an understanding of the other through his or her point of view. Empathy is a condition “with both a cognitive and an affective dimension; it includes the ability accurately to perceive and comprehend the thoughts, feelings, and motives of the other to the degree that one can make inferences and predictions consonant with those of the other, while remaining oneself.” (Gallo 1994, 46) The power of reciprocal thinking, which is a first step toward empathy, to influence moral thinking, is enormous. Empathy takes the critical-moral thinker beyond the cognitive. “Empathy expands the breadth of perception or range of emotional experience. Empathy does not intensify emotional response; it broadens it.” (Gallo 1994, 46) When you understand the others as they themselves do, you are much more likely to view any moral decision you make with regard to them through their lens rather than your own. The thinker would be much less likely to choose a path that would hurt the other. Application of the “Golden Rule” is nearly automatic.

Regarding empathy, Gallo suggests that “it can predispose the individual to more effective reasoning by increasing one’s engagement with the issue and one’s motivation for producing a fair judgement.” (Gallo 1994, 49) The impact on moral reasoning jumps out. The more engaged the individual is, the more likely the judgement will be fair.
The notion of critical thinking that I am recommending as “meaning attractor” for the critical-moral classroom then is very personal, recognizes individual biases and, most importantly respects conflicting views. The goal of this kind of critical-thinking is not winning the point, but understanding one’s self, and the other. David Purpel calls the teacher in the critical-moral classroom to the level of personal commitment necessary. “Socrates was not teaching ‘critical thinking’ or ‘cognitive development’; he would not be interested in coaching the debate team—he was rather a religious and political leader who took his convictions so much to heart that he was willing to give his life on behalf of an educational process he thought would enrich and sustain those beliefs.” (Purpel 1989, 80)

The commitment of one’s life does not have to translate into the loss of life, but the closer the teacher in the critical-moral classroom can come to this commitment, the stronger the meaning attractor and the more powerful the critical-moral field of influence. The teacher is the exemplar. The teacher’s commitment to a critically considered life will energize the critical-moral field.

Steven Brookfield in his book Developing Critical Thinkers, mirrors much of what Richard Paul claims, defining critical thinking as, “calling into question the assumptions underlying our customary, habitual ways of thinking and acting and then being ready to think and act differently on the basis of this critical questioning.” (Brookfield 1987, 1) This becomes critical-moral reflection if the thinker considers the “Golden Rule”, and is tuned to the relational impact of his or her thinking.

Brookfield also offers a more philosophical, but no less powerful view, that complements the practical definition offered above. This is an important view for the critical-moral classroom which must be a place where the status-quo can be challenged. “One alternative interpretation of the concept of critical thinking is emancipatory learning. ... emancipatory learning is evident in learners becoming aware of the forces that have brought them to their current situations and taking action to change some aspect
of these situations.” (Brookfield 1987, 12) Moral development should include moral action and Brookfield recognizes that action as starting with the individual.

The critical-moral classroom offers freedom, through reflective thought, from any number of morally crippling views that students may have adopted such as self-hatred, racial or ethnic biases, or any ism, from sexism to ageism. Freeing students through critical self-reflection empowers them to more creative consideration of moral challenges while binding them to the guidance of the critical-moral field. This yields an atmosphere in which teachers and students are actively engaged in challenging their own habits of mind and heart, exploring their personal context as well as the social context of material, ready to work at solutions, and reflecting on the nature of the work that is happening in the classroom.

I believe the very process of thinking critically in the strong sense, with an unswerving awareness of the relational nature of thinking, is the moral component of critical thinking. The reality of the process will lead participants to a less prejudiced, more empathic, and open view. The emancipatory nature of critical thinking acts as a guardian against moral indoctrination while its tendency toward empathy helps the critical-moral thinker to avoid moral callousness.

When the teacher maintains the critical-moral field with the question, “Is that how I would want to be treated?” the moral development, direction, and view of the critical-moral thinker is refocused from self, to universal issues. The critical-moral classroom does not hold as its goal a particular solution to moral dilemmas, but instead a view that there are moral dilemmas, and imbedded in the process of critical-moral thinking is a path which can lead to a resolution of these conflicts in such a way that the thinker would not be adverse to having the solution applied to him or herself.
Richard Paul lists the traits he assigns to the critical thinker. I believe that these are traits that a teacher considering the critical-moral classroom approach should foster in him or herself and adapt to his or her classroom. They offer a framework to each teacher as he or she starts to consider how their own moral field would vibrate, would explicate and model critical-moral thinking. The critical moral thinker is always tempering these traits with consideration of the "Golden Rule." These traits are compelling forces in the critical-moral field. It is through the expression of these traits that the field is maintained and through the interaction of individual expressions that new moral insights and directions are created.

"Independence of mind is the disposition and commitment to autonomous thinking, thinking for oneself." (Paul 1992, 152) The teacher must make careful consideration of the pressure within a school community to conform their own thinking to the group's thinking. One example would be if a teacher were to support all teachers in their decisions because of the authority of position, not the legitimacy of the decision. The same question must be considered with regard to administration and professional organizations.

Independent thinking can be lonely in an organization but the critical-moral field will be affected if students sense that decisions are being made in order just to please forces outside of the classroom. I offer a trite but true example. I move my classroom furniture frequently, sometimes several times a day. There is occasional pressure from other teachers to be "more consistent." Comments like, "It doesn't matter to me but what happens if you're out and the furniture is all confused. What will a substitute do?" The field must be maintained for the good of the group as absolutely as possible, and when pressures to conform are unavoidable they should be noted to the group.

"Intellectual curiosity is the disposition to wonder about the world." (Paul 1992, 152) All teachers should have as a primary trait a natural and unquenchable intellectual
curiosity. The departmentalization of education has led to a narrowing of the world view as it relates to one person’s place in education. The critical-moral teacher needs to be informed about and engaged in a world view despite academic discipline. As an example, the study of democratic process, in particular consideration of elections, must not fall only on the shoulders of the social studies teachers. Mathematicians, foreign language teachers, and literature teachers are no less touched by the political world.

"Intellectual courage is having a consciousness of the need to face and fairly address ideas, beliefs, or viewpoints toward which we have strong negative emotions and to which we have not given a serious hearing." (Paul 1992, 153) This is the courage to be unsure of what we are so sure of. This is a leap for many teachers who have been programmed to "always know the answer" and for students who expect to find that true of their teachers. Moral questions require the most courage of all.

"Intellectual humility is awareness of the limits of one's knowledge." (Paul 1992, 153) Understanding that it is possible for a teacher to be surpassed in knowledge, especially in a particular area by any one, or all of, one's students. If learning is a universal good, then allowing students to teach the teacher, is an educational enterprise.

"Intellectual empathy is having a consciousness of the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others in order to genuinely understand them." (Paul 1992, 153) This must start with those people and positions that one most deeply disagrees with. Empathy is a much higher calling than sympathy, compassion or understanding. Empathy requires that the individual sees and feels as the other sees and feels. Once achieved, it frees the intellect to challenge on a much deeper level, one that betrays the intimate knowledge the speaker has of the subject. Intellectual empathy is a key to critical-morality and a guiding force for the critical-moral field. This level of familiarity with our opponents makes it much more difficult to treat them in an improper way.
“Intellectual integrity is the recognition of the need to be true to the intellectual and moral standards implicit in our judgements of the behavior or views of others.” (Paul 1992, 154) In the critical-moral classroom, nothing vibrates louder or more clearly in the field than a lack of integrity. Students have a sense for false concern and hypocrisy in others, especially in those older than themselves. It might be a special gift of the young, designed to hold a mirror to the generation that holds the reins of power. Integrity must be primary.

“Intellectual perseverance is the willingness and consciousness of the need to pursue intellectual insights and truths in spite of difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations.” (Paul 1992, 154) The critical-moral classroom does not come into being overnight or without frustration and failure. It does not depend on a pep talk, but on a way of being. Students will challenge the moral field of the classroom with their own moral fields, built around experiences of abuse, loneliness, and meaninglessness. Students will not respond to the critical-moral field until they have proven to themselves that it is going to last, that it will be there for them everyday. The best way to prove to someone who sees themselves as unlovable that they are lovable, is to love them, no matter what evidence they offer to support their unlovableness. The teacher in the critical-moral classroom must persevere.

“Faith in reason is confidence that, in the long run, one’s own higher interests and those of humankind at large will be best served by giving the freest play to reason.” (Paul 1992, 154) The absolute power of reason is currently under attack by those who have rightly identified a neglected view: the importance of relationship and caring. I do not believe one negates the other. Reason as defended here is multilogical, relational, and includes the affective component of empathy. Is caring without reason? Reason can be redefined it to include the best of the feminist view. There is room in reason for empathy and caring. Reasonable people always recognized that.
“Fair-mindedness is the willingness and consciousness of the need to treat all viewpoints alike. This is the ability to reason without reference to one’s own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one’s friends, community, or nation.” (Paul 1992, 154) I have included Paul’s definition of the trait of fair-mindedness, despite having severe reservations about his choice of words, because I believe the concept is too important to pass by. Perhaps a more detailed examination of how I interpret what he is saying will resolve the problem.

I do not claim that all viewpoints are alike, but that those who hold these viewpoints do deserve equal consideration. I am sickened by outrageous claims that the Holocaust never happened, or was much less severe than history has presented it. Yet I feel compelled to entertain those who make these claims, and through them the claims themselves, if I am to have even a glimmer of a chance of changing a person’s thinking. My dismissal of the outrageous does not quench my student’s need to understand why some people think this way. I hope this is what Paul means by “alike.”

I also take exception to Paul’s use of the phrase, “without reference to one’s feelings or vested interests.” Taken literally he is asking a duck to forget that it is a duck, a most unreasonable and unfair request. I choose to interpret Paul as asking the duck to remember that we are all not ducks. The fair-minded can, and must, be aware of their vested interests; in this way they can keep them in perspective and in check. The unreasonable claim is to have no vested interest, no point of view. These are the people who are leading either unexamined lives or are intent on deceit.

Fair mindedness might be the toughest challenge for the critically-moral educator who is likely to have strong moral and value viewpoints. To give full respect to the outrageous experiments of the young is a taxing adventure. When a student realizes that his or her view has your respect, not necessarily your support, then he or she can listen to the possibility that he or she may have chosen a faulty path. They have the opportunity to emulate the teacher-modeled open-mindedness.
The critical-moral teacher must be cognizant that students are primarily learners and participants in a much broader world than the one defined by the particular academic discipline covered by the syllabus. Students often complain that teachers do not recognize that they have lives. The critical-moral teacher does more than recognize this circumstance, he or she uses it, and promotes a broader definition of what life involves. Without global awareness in the classroom the critical-moral field is narrowed and individuals or groups that might be harmed by particular thinking or action would not be considered because their needs would fall outside the classroom view.

This narrowing of view can sharply reduce input and warp moral reasoning. I have often heard students respond in discussions about global poverty with well meant questions and comments like, “Why don’t they just get jobs?” or, “If the kids work harder in school then their nation will catch up with ours.” The lack of a global view is obvious here and when it is added the moral reasoning quickly shifts. A simple explanation of the physiological fact that an undernourished child is less able to learn, quickly turns the critically active mind to a new set of questions.

For example, in a math class, why solve equations for meaningless \( x \) when real life numbers, abound. Why not use wheat harvest per acre, loaves of bread per bushel of wheat, humans sustained per day, per loaf of bread. Why use second and third hand accounts of world issues when first person narratives abound? Why not include consideration of broader ecological issues like sustainability when considering student parking areas, lunch programs, or proms? (see Orr 1992, 85-152)

The global nature of education must be a key concept in the critical-moral classroom. This presents difficulty given the design of most secondary schools along departmental lines defined by academic disciplines.
Most of today's classroom teachers are products of this design and have crafted their own academic growth around this construct. A major stumbling block to the critical-moral classroom is the difficulty the teacher will have in admitting for consideration topics that might at first appear to be outside of their academic speciality. The splintered nature of secondary education must be addressed in the critical-moral classroom. Margaret Wheatley relates this problem to the Newtonian nature of our understanding of the natural world. “This reduction into parts and the proliferation of separations has characterized not just organizations, but everything in the world during the past three hundred years. Knowledge was broken into disciplines and subjects, ... and people were fragmented—counseled to use different ‘parts’ of themselves in different settings.” (Wheatley 1994, 27)

The quantum world we now recognize as natural is cracking those Newtonian foundations, yet the structures built atop them still stand. The critical-moral classroom teacher must recognize and deal with this inconsistency. Failure to do so will flag for students a crack in the integrity of the field.

The Prophetic Voice

The teacher as prophet does more than re-mind, re-answer, and re-invigorate—the prophet educator conducts re-search and joins students in continually developing skills and knowledge that enhance the possibility of justice, community, and joy. His concern is with the search for meaning through the process of criticism, imagination, and creativity. Such a role (as Socrates found out) is in fact seriously threatening to those fearful of displacing the status quo. Most importantly the educator as prophet seeks to orient the educational process toward a vision of ultimate meaning.

David Purpel, *The Moral and Spiritual Crisis in Education*

The critical-moral classroom calls for a particular voice, a new voice, with ancient roots. The vocabulary of, “What is,” is insufficient for building a more reasonable, just, and caring society. The critical-moral classroom must be a place where what can be is as often considered as what is. The natural sciences have learned to communicate using
new language to explain and understand the quantum world. The communication revolution is characterized by a new lexicon of often unwieldy terms, but words that communicate exact meaning for those caught on the incoming tide of cyberspace. The critical-moral classroom is in equal need of its own communication style.

Robert Kennedy’s vision and voice have been repeatedly characterized in contrast to most men’s with this George Bernard Shaw quotation, “Some men see things as they are and say ‘Why’? I dream of things that never were and say, Why not?” This is the prophetic voice. “Why not,” is the prophetic question. David Purpel writes eloquently on the subject in his book, *The Moral and Spiritual Crisis in Education*. He says the prophetic tradition is “a tradition that insists on crying out against discrepancies between what we value and what we actually do.” (Purpel 1989, 80)

To have integrity the critical-moral classroom must be a place where teacher and learner can admit that things are not as we might wish them to be, or are not as some would have us believe, but that things can be changed. The prophetic voice rings with an independent curiosity about the nature of life, a curiosity guided by an empathic understanding of reason and does not fear the truth. The prophet is inspired to new vision by admitting to the problems of the day.

The prophet as here described is not a seer, not one who holds his, or her self, as the possessor of superior knowledge of the future offering bits and scrapes of this knowledge as proof of power and advanced ability. Such a person is a performer, a charlatan, or maybe even a mystic of great ability, but not a prophet. A prophet deals with the real world.

*The prophet seldom tells a story, but casts events. He rarely sings, but castigates. He does more than translate reality into a poetic key: he is a preacher whose purpose is not self-expression or the ‘purgation of emotion’ but communication. His images must not shine, they must burn. The prophet is intent on intensifying responsibility, is impatient of excuse, contemptuous of pretense.*
and self-pity... [The prophet is concerned with] wrenching one's conscience from the state of suspended animation. (Heschel 1962 cited in, Purpel 1989, 81)

( emphasis in Purpel)

The prophetic voice is not simply an ancient whisper heard through the filters of a variety of religious traditions, but can be heard today, though much too rarely. Martin Luther King sitting in a Birmingham jail saw beyond his bars, chastised, but held out the possibility, and the promise of redemption.

One day the South will know that when these dispossessed children of God sat down at lunch counters, they were in reality standing up for what is best in the American dream and for the most sacred values in our Judeo-Christian heritage, thereby bringing our nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in their formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. (King, Letter From a Birmingham Jail 16 April 1963)

Nelson Mandela sat in a South African jail for twenty six years, his solemn presence screaming to the world of the difference between South African promises and South African reality. Yitshak Rabin could see possibilities beyond the mountains of difference that lay between his counterpart, Yasser Arafat, and himself, so with great pain and difficulty he shook the hand of his long time enemy.

The prophetic voice is the voice of new possibilities. As a prophet Moses was “able to imagine what had hitherto been thought of as impossible—a vision of liberation.” (Purpel 1989, 84) The teacher in the critical-moral classroom cannot be satisfied with just preparing lessons that explore what has been, or what is, but must challenge students to think just as seriously about what could be.

The prophets see reality clearer than the rest of the population, and because of this insight, they are able to envision a future that is attainable, a future that is within human grasp, but beyond our sight. The prophet goes much farther than talking about desirable
qualities or hoped for improvements. The prophet believes a new world is possible and challenges and leads others to believe the same. "Moses came to see that he could best lead his people to the promised land by teaching them the skills required to make a just world, a notion reechoed by John Dewey four millennia later in his concept of education as the process by which we can engage and make a world." (Purpel 1989, 125)

The voice of the possible must be the voice of the critical-moral classroom. Students are too often defined by what is impossible, that which is not allowed, those things said to be beyond their reach. For example certain college doors are slammed shut on high school sophomores whose "cumulative-average" determines and limits their future choices. Ravaged family lives play a never ending back beat of defeat and despair in a some student’s ears while educators too often pick up on this base line of failure and sing the final damning sentence in perfect harmony with social agencies and public safety officials. Schools preach unconditional love, acceptance of all who pass through the doors without concern for race, gender or creed, and then condemn some for failure to learn as they define learning, or failure to accept the limits imposed by this system.

In classrooms where it is increasingly difficult for teachers to compete with the barrage of audio and visual stimulation that students are exposed to, the prophetic voice offers the teacher a unique sound and look. I’m sure the prophet Job was difficult to ignore as he sat atop his pile of garbage outside the gates of Jerusalem and proclaimed his message. Today’s classroom teachers cannot sink into the everyday voice, because that voice is being overwhelmed. Like Job, Moses, King, and Rabin, the teacher in the critical-moral classroom needs to speak with a moral vision and authority backed by daily action in his or her classroom. Support for this demanding work comes from the knowledge of the influence of their vision and daily actions on the lives of their students.

The prophetic voice is the public address system of the critical-moral field. It is in the regular messages of hope, delivered within the examination of sometimes despairing reality, that the critical-moral field is formed to action. The prophets of
history have been able to summon armies. These armies ate at the lunch counters of their choice, rode buses, taking any seat, and endured the meaningless torrents of water cannons, because the critical-moral field carried them on.

The Critical-Moral Classroom in Practice

Teachers who understand their impact as moral educators take their manner quite seriously. They understand that they cannot expect honesty without being honest or generosity without being generous or diligence without themselves being diligent. Just as we understand that teachers must engage in critical thinking with students if they expect students to think critically in their presence, they must exemplify moral principles and virtues in order to elicit them from students.

Garry D. Fenstermacher, The Moral Dimensions of Teaching

The critical-moral classroom is a place where the teacher is part of, not above, the learning process. It is a place where every word, or look, is an acknowledged part of the learning process. It is a place where the teacher exemplifies the behavior and values needed in a nurturing society, by practicing them with the students that he or she works with.

The critical-moral classroom is engaged in the world; it is not separated by academic definitions or artificial barriers between life and school. The world must be part of the classroom and education as Richard Paul suggests.

By immediately introducing students to [these] more global problems in the analysis and evaluation of reasoning, we help them more clearly see the relationship between world views, forms of life, human engagements and interests, what is at stake (versus what is at issue), how the question of what is at issue is often itself at issue, how the unexpressed as well as the expressed may be significant, the difficulties of judging credibility, and the ethical dimension in most important and complex human problems. (Paul 1992, 142)

The critical-moral classroom is never the ivory tower. The long arm of reality, the reality of the newspaper, the reality of the participants’ homes and neighborhoods, the
reality of the injustice and justice that exists in both schools and society must be recognized and celebrated. The world is the classroom, especially as the World Wide Web ties the global village even closer together. The teacher in the critical-moral classroom cannot pretend to him or herself or to his or her students that the particular scene outside the classroom window is universal.

The Critical-Moral Environment

The teacher in the critical-moral classroom is required before entering the classroom to reflect critically upon how his or her actions, rules, habits, goals, demeanor, and attitude will affect the moral field of his or her classroom. This process should not be entered into lightly. It is difficult to step back from one's actions, especially for those teachers with years of experience, and ask, “Would I want to be taught this way?,” and then answer that question through the eyes of each student, the most successful, the least successful, and those that hold their own. Taken seriously, this is a daunting task. The teacher ready for the critical-moral classroom will probably not be able to offer an unqualified yes to this question, but will instead commit to trying. This means committing oneself to re-asking this same question as many times a day as sanity allows. It means reflecting on each class period past, ready to change lesson or plan, presentation, or goal.

I could offer long lists of teacher behaviors and habits that the critical-moral teacher should consider, but I would surely commit the sin that I hope this approach will avoid, limiting thinking to my agenda and narrowing available solutions through definition of the problem. If a teacher is unable to find ample questions for extended reflection, then the teacher has not adopted the critical-moral mindset.

Reflection alone does not change the world. Mystics, monastics, and prophets, must return from the mountains and the deserts to face the difficult realities created by those who have built golden idols in their absence, or by those today mindlessly
worshiping the flickering video screen. Teachers are no less responsible nor can they be any less involved. David Purpel again offers us Moses. “Moses is not only a dreamer who shares his dreams but a leader who urges his people to dare to make the dream a reality. He arouses, he energizes, he leads, and, moreover, he participates in the long and arduous process of creating a new community ...” (Purpel 1989, 85)

In the classroom, the critical-moral field starts to take shape before the students even arrive. Teachers must ask: “Where will I as teacher sit and how does my physical place in this room affect the critical-moral field of my dreams? Where, and in what configuration will my students sit, and who will decide that? If I were each of them, how would I want this decision made? Does my classroom offer a setting that recognizes the relational nature of the venture, is it in a configuration that will allow for easy input that can become as Wheatley called it the "basin of the meaning attractor?"

Each teacher will answer these questions differently. I could claim that a particular classroom’s physical environment will produce predictable results but in reality, I can say only that it produces these results for me. I do not offer formulas for success here because I believe that it is the formulas that have robbed us of the thinking. It strikes me as odd that the majority of secondary classrooms are set in rows with a separated space for the teacher, when so many different things are supposed to be happening in those classrooms. The benefit to the critical-moral environment is that the questions are asked. The teacher in the critical-moral classroom will see that students in rows can be very appropriate seating when a clear view of board space or a visual presentation is needed. One wonders what this arrangement says to the participants in a group when we ask them to share what they think, a person’s most intimate possession, while seated in such a configuration that they are talking into the back of another’s head.

Materials and texts are often beyond a teacher’s control, but that does not relieve the critical-moral classroom teacher from considering the impact of the condition, scarcity, or content of these materials, on the class and on the moral field. When
inconsistencies develop between the critical-moral field and the reality of the physical
limits of budgets and materials, they must be acknowledged.

For example, a teacher saying, “I know these books are battered, and because of
their age do not reflect our current experience, but we can correct those deficiencies by
calling attention to them. Please remember, you are deserving of better,” creates a
completely different moral atmosphere than the announcement, “Please take a textbook.”
The critical-moral classroom teacher acknowledges as foundational that the classroom is
not a perfect place, but it offers a constant vision of a better place, a place with new
books, new ideas.

Questions in the Critical-Moral Classroom

Questions are the heart of learning and are no less important in the critical-moral
classroom. Questions should pump through the critical-moral classroom, nourishing the
thinking of all participants. Questions may at times stall content consideration, but they
never cripple learning. Teachers in the critical-moral setting must be ready to welcome
all questions, and once the field has been established, the questions will come as students
regain the inquisitive voice of their childhood.

In the critical-moral classroom all questions are good questions, especially those
that challenge educational design and implementation. In the critical-moral classroom,
there are only talented students. In the critical-moral classroom, there are no unvoiceable
points or opinions, only improperly phrased statements. In the critical-moral classroom
every student needs to know that he or she has value, has voice, has power.

Questions often have a chilling impact in the classroom. I know of many students
afraid to ask questions in fear of judgement by their peers and unfortunately too often in
fear of judgement by the teacher. Questions can often hang in the air until their burden is
so heavy someone offers an answer just to end the pain. In a critical-moral model
questions are the fuel that powers the system. There can never be too many, they can’t be too far afield, they should never be judged. Their quality is inherent in the asking.

This presents a challenge for the teacher in the critical-moral classroom, laboring in all likelihood in a traditional school setting where material has been assigned by academic discipline and course content. The critical-moral classroom cannot be a place where some questions are silenced with the excuse that they don’t belong in this particular class. This attitude will damage the critical-moral field. Students will recognize the inconsistency, and the power of the field will be diminished.

The teacher in the critical-moral classroom must develop ways to entertain all questions, while focusing students on assigned material. One solution is to admit that all questions cannot be answered in this class, but they can be asked. Another strategy acknowledges the quantum nature of the classroom by recognizing relationships that exist between most subjects and tying the seemingly unrelated question to the material at hand. Thirdly a teacher might set aside a small percentage of time each week for any questions on students’ minds. The teacher must be up front with the limits of time, but should offer this minimal time consistently.

The vital view here is that questions are good, and that student questions are best of all. As David Purpel suggests, “it would make a lot more sense if we teachers and students swapped the roles of who asks and who answers the questions.” (Purpel 1989,153)

The teacher in the critical-moral classroom, while welcoming questions, should not fall into the classroom trap of believing that he or she must answer every question asked. When the teacher takes that role, the relational nature of the moral field is disrupted and answers become terminal; thinking stops, and potential solutions are lost. Margaret Wheatley warns, “We have a hard time with lack of clarity, or with questions that have no readily available answers. We quickly find our way out of these discomforts, focusing on one element, coming up with a solution, and pretending not to
notice the questions we’ve left hanging.” (Wheatley 1994, 109) The hanging questions are probably the real questions, and they should not be minimized by the need for clarity or closure on the part of student or teacher. Moral and value questions will most often be found in this category.

Evaluation in the Critical-Moral Classroom

The area of evaluation and grading is crucial because so much morality can be inferred from the way that its power is used. The teacher in the critical-moral classroom will soon find him or herself with a difficult pedagogical question: Do grades damage teaching? I have found this to be one of the most difficult aspects of the critical-moral classroom. Grading pressure is enormous and comes from every part of the school community: parents, other teachers, administrators, computer services technicians, and the most powerful voice, students.

As each term ends and I translate eight weeks of relationship into a letter grade, I can feel the damage to the critical-moral field. I find my students the week before grades close, and the week of report cards, allowing their thinking to fall more under the influence of that almighty letter. I struggle to maintain the view that it is the process that really counts, while I hold the power of the grade. The hypocrisy of the position is always damaging.

The damage can be minimized, and while I will not take time here to explicate my strong belief that this system must change, I feel that the damage to critical-morality by our current grading system cannot be overstated. The desire for change does not solve the immediate problem for teacher in the critical-moral classroom though.

The solution lies first with the teacher, who must reflect with a critical view, on his or her grading policies and approaches and continuously update and reconfigure them in accordance with the students at hand and new insights. The teacher must be able to defend his or her grading decisions to all parties, but most importantly to him or herself,
if the grades he or she gives are going to have a positive impact on the moral field. The reflective question should be, “Would I want to be graded this way”?

Reflection completed, grading policies need to be proudly published, and freely explained and discussed at the start. Student input should influence the weight of individual elements involved. Grading cannot be removed from the classroom agenda, and students must have an equal opportunity to evaluate the efforts of their teachers. This is a frightening thought for educators that I would like to consider for a moment.

Teachers are most often formally evaluated by administrators who view only a very small sample of their work, or informally by parents or other teachers whose views are almost always secondhand. Would any of us rely on the evaluation of a movie reviewer who had seen only one quarter of one percent, about fourteen seconds, of a ninety minute film, while another reviewer was present for every moment? Would you prefer the opinion of someone who knows someone who saw the film? I think not.

The NASSP report *Breaking Ranks* clearly calls for student evaluation of teachers as part of teacher evaluation. “Students will evaluate teachers and instruction on an ongoing basis in a variety of ways, providing regular feedback with regard to how effectively student learning goals are met.” (NASSP 1996, 560) The teacher in the critical-moral classroom who creates opportunities for students to evaluate classroom success will gain a wealth of knowledge, and I believe in most instances, a huge amount of ego reinforcement. They will also strengthen the moral field because they will be able to say yes, to the question, Would I be willing to be evaluated this way? Teachers inviting serious student evaluation of their teaching by students will find that many of their own questions about grading will be answered in the process.

Daily evaluation procedures must also fall under the critical-moral eye of the teacher. Great care must be taken in the critical-moral classroom to avoid any hint of inconsistency. If the teacher is claiming that all student questions are good, and that all students are talented, but is only granting credit for display of certain talents, then that
teacher is violating the moral field. A student who tells wonderful stories and offers insights in class discussions, but is a slow or weak writer, is being lied to when his or her grade labels him or her a failure. If the teacher in the critical-moral classroom is going to claim that the grades given have any meaning, the teacher must work at evaluating the whole person. David Purpel warns us of the danger of grading being the deciding factor in classroom design: “Although we are aware of the individuality of knowledge, of the value of group study and interaction, and the importance of students sharing their ideas, we actually discourage these educationally sound practices because they interfere with the practice of individual grading.” (Purpel 1989, 32)

A critical-moral classroom cannot survive, and worst justify, a grading system that labels some students losers unless that is the lesson that the teacher wants to teach. We cannot hope to build a society in which all have a productive and dignified place if we teach in our schools through our grading system that, this is not the way it is. Grades are indeed a great danger to the critical-moral classroom and to the moral development of our society. David Purpel offers this compelling warning. In this winner-loser culture,

... we congratulate ourselves for helping people to compete fairly (if not equally), for creating the conditions for the competition to be held and for offering enormous rewards to the ‘winners.’ Unfortunately, it also means that we continue to both produce and ignore ‘losers.’ Freedom has come to mean license for the powerful rather than liberation for the weak; equality is seen as the privilege of competing rather than the right to dignity; individualism has come to mean greed rather than moral autonomy; and community has come to be oriented around terms of class rather than terms of humanity. (Purpel 1989, 16)

John Dewey clearly addresses the perversion of the moral goals of grades when he wrote, “Any conditions that compel the teacher to take note of failure rather than of healthy growth give false standards and result in distortion and perversion. Attending to wrongdoing ought to be an incident rather than a principle.” (Dewey 1909, 15-16)
Transformation and the Critical-Moral Classroom

The critical-moral classroom is transformative for teacher and student. I am not speaking of a transitory moment or a tack taken as the wind changes. I speak of something that happens continuously in class and moves beyond into the rest of the school day and, most importantly, into the students’ lives beyond the confines of the artificial society we call school; transformation that moves into our lives.

The transformative nature of the critical-moral classroom is the key to changing a society that has lost touch with its natural relational construction. Students and teachers who labor in the critical-moral “basin” do not shed the experience when the bell rings and the artificial class period ends. The process becomes a part of the person’s thinking and is taken and applied in the next classroom, or at home, and in the community. The critical-moral classroom is not about teaching a skill, but about a way of being. “The conception of critical thinking being offered here is as much a conception of a certain sort of person as it is a conception of a certain set of activities and skills. When we take it upon ourselves to educate students so as to foster critical thinking, we are committing ourselves to nothing less than the development of a certain sort of person.” (Siegel 1988, 41)

Take Siegel’s words a layer deeper, beyond intellectual understanding, to that deeper part of an individual, the part that defines the kind of person he or she is. The part that defines how they will look at violence, respect divergent views, view poverty, value children, share responsibility, listen, and be optimistic. All of these elements of the moral view are alive and in play in the critical-moral classroom.

If we could establish the critical-moral view in just half of the nation’s middle and secondary school classrooms, imagine the numbers who would soon flood the colleges, and then business, and before long government. One day, we would realize that our society had taken a turn, a turn toward a moral life that we could be proud of. The day of the change would not be clear, but the change would be obvious. Just as many lament the
moral decay of our current period and wonder when it happened, many would praise the
tumaround and credit any number of forces. When that day comes they need look no
farther than their teachers

I would like to close with just one personal example. I offer it not with the hope
that others will recreate the moment, because I know that this moment belonged to those
of us in the room that day. I do not hold it up as the crowning or defining moment in my
thinking about the critical-moral classroom, because I hope never to narrow this idea to
any one event and to continue the process for a lifetime. I do not hold it up for personal
aggrandizement, because I know that thousands like me in classrooms next to mine and
around the country have had similar, and possibly more powerful experiences. I offer it
as an antidote to the venomous stories used against education and educators by those
whose primary mission is to control minds.

In the first semester of my journey to a Master’s Degree in Critical and Creative
Thinking, I was first starting to practice consciously some of what I have written about
here. I was blessed that year with three classes of sophomores who were truly unusual in
their openness and eagerness, and in the personal pain that they had suffered in their
young lives. I often marveled that more than a handful of them were able to get
themselves to school each day, never mind be prepared and excited.

One of the three groups was especially open to the alternative evaluation
techniques I was using, and had shown me that group work in class could produce
stunning results. We had read our work to one another, we had performed illustrative
skits, we had told each other stories, taken quizzes and tests, and written reports. Their
posters and work covered the walls, and they often commented on, and asked about work
produced in other classes. Other teachers had asked on several occasions what I was
doing in class because their own classrooms had been a buzz about what was going to
happen that day in my class or what had just happened. I was proud, and considered
myself lucky to have such exciting students, but I had no sense of where it could go.
One morning, there was a fight in the corridor before school. It was the sophomores. There was no teacher in the immediate area, and it was ugly. A teacher did finally appear, and it was stopped, and disciplinary action, appropriate by school rules, was taken. When my favored class arrived later that morning, I learned that tensions were very high. My active classroom was suddenly struck nearly dumb. I asked as usual if there was anything they wanted to start with, ask about, or comment upon, before we started. Blank stares was all I got, and then a single hand. I called on Wendy.

Mr. Daniels, I'd like to ask the class a question, cause I'm not sure if I did the right thing this morning, and I know a lot of people are beefing with me and talking about who went and got Ms. Abbott during the fight. Well, I went to get her, cause it looked like one of the girls was goin' to get really hurt, and well, I know that got some people in big trouble, but, well, I couldn't just stand there, everyone was just standin' there watchin'. I don't want to be a snitch. I've taken and given some good beatin's, but, well I want to know if you guys think I'm a snitch, if you guys got anything to say, cause I'm the one who told.

It flashed through my mind that this was not the time or place. That the fight was over, and it was best to move on, impose the penalties, and make sure that everyone knew we just didn't tolerate that kind of behavior. I thought about lauding Wendy with platitudes for being courageous, virtuous, and right. Then I realized she wasn't talking to me. She was asking her classmates.

Looking to them I could see sides being chosen, turf being staked out. There was silence. "Doesn't anybody have anything to say?" Wendy asked again.

One of her classmates raised her hand, a young woman who spoke rarely, whose comments were sometimes harsh, and who was obviously angry.

My friend got suspended cause of you, and I was really mad at who ever snitched, and I've been talkin' a lot about gettin' whoever it was, but inside, I wish I could have done what you did. I don't think I ever could, but I wanted to. I'm angry, but I didn't really want anybody to get hurt.
The tension that had paralyzed the room cracked. Hands went up faster than I could recognize them. Each told her story of moral paralysis that morning, of the pressure not to go for help, to egg it on. Each ended, saying they wished they could have taken Wendy’s path.

We talked; we connected our feelings and experiences to history and to the real world we lived in. Students talked about being on subway platforms and knowing that trouble was about to start but not being able to break out of their bystander mentality, so they told no one, despite wanting to and knowing that it was the right thing to do. Others related similar examples of moral paralysis related to fighting neighbors, abused children, and friends slipping into dangerous or illegal behavior. I offered a more universal view, noting how the same kind of behaviors can be observed in bad police officers being protected, government officials looking the other way, and social hatreds being tolerated because the attitude was, “They aren’t my people,” or, “It isn’t my business.”

We “wasted” the period on the fight, some would say. I would argue we learned about how people live together. No lesson I could ever contrive about perpetrators, bystanders and rescuers could even approach the power of this example from our own lives.

Wendy solidified the critical-moral field of our dreams for the rest of the year with her question. She stopped on her way out to thank me for the chance to speak. I asked her why she had decided to bring it up in our class, and she answered, “You said it was all right to ask anything.”
Any closing remarks I might have about the critical-moral classroom are tentative because philosophically I view critical-morality as an idea or project that will continue to evolve and develop. I am hopeful that it will continue to grow in my own work and that of my colleagues who have accepted the challenge of addressing complex moral issues, whatever subject they teach. This paper is certainly no more than a brief outline of the possibilities in the arena of classrooms and their moral dimensions.

Observations

Teachers

When I hear teachers criticized, I often think of this passage from Pat Conroy’s best selling novel, *Prince of Tides*, in which the main character’s sister has just suggested that he, “sold himself short,” by becoming a teacher. This comment is directed at too many teachers too often by well meaning people. The main character answers his sister saying, “There’s no word in the language I revere more than teacher. None. My heart sings when a kid refers to me as his teacher and it always has. I’ve honored myself and the entire family of man by becoming one.” (Conroy 1986, 557)

I do believe that teachers, my colleagues, are up to the challenge I have outlined in this work. As I noted earlier, David Purpel says that we educators, are a “weak profession.” He goes on to add that “What is maddening is that although we have been constituted to be weak, we are nonetheless brutally criticized by the culture for the..."
consequences of our weakness. ... Teachers are asked to perform at very high-level tasks of profound importance and yet are given resources that are absurd and insulting.”

(Purpel 1989, 101) My experience in the critical-moral classroom has led me to be more vocal and demanding about the expectations put on teachers and the resources and support that are available. Teachers who reflect critically on their classrooms will add discernible volume to those voices asking for a more in-depth commitment to education in our country.

While I understand the importance and point of Purpel’s words regarding educators, it is Conroy’s words that give me sustenance. Pat Conroy gives me the moral courage to open-mindedly consider our (my) weakness.

**Teaching**

The concept of the critical-moral classroom is an invitation to a different vision of teaching possibilities, not a prescription, and that difference excites me. One thing that is very clear to me as a result of my reading, experience, and reflection, is that each individual teacher must make the commitment to morals in his or her own classroom on his or her own. The strength of the moral field starts with the strength of the commitment of the teacher. This is not a program that should be adopted by school administrators and then required of teachers.

This paper has led me to think a great deal about the place of philosophy in education. I took the required course in philosophy of education as an undergraduate and at the time it meant very little to me. Perhaps this is a course that should be required after five years experience, a part of the renewal of certification process. I am convinced now that the philosophical questions that my classroom presents are the most meaningful and the most important if we are to expect something more than just content knowledge from our students.
My time in my own critical-moral classroom has been very rewarding, but I must warn colleagues, it has not been easy. Like Jaime Escalante, the subject of the film *Stand and Deliver*, there have been days when I returned home exhausted. My mind on fire with the day’s events. I was unable to give my family the attention that they deserved. Done right, this can be consuming work. I have not found the perfect balance between caring and distance. I’m not sure there is one. The commitment is enormous, but some of the rewards are commensurate. I am sure that teachers all over our nation receive notes like this one, notes that recharge and reinvigorate.

This year you helped me to see that I am Julie Carty. Not Annmarie’s sister or someone’s daughter, but I am me. That itself is so wonderful a gift. ... You made me feel like a special person and the only way I can repay you is by doing the same someday. Thank you for treating me like a human being. (Thank you from a graduating senior, 1996)

What more could a teacher hope for than a student who is committed to repaying their teacher in such a miraculously transforming way. If you, the reader, owe a teacher a note like the one above, send it. They need it, and the debt is long overdue.

Values

Moral values in public schools in a diverse culture is a complicated problem. I recognize that more now, than when I began this work. I am heartened by the amount of thoughtful and forward looking literature that I have reviewed preparing for this thesis. I am disheartened to think that the words of these authors are not reaching those who need to hear them the most—America’s teachers. I am afraid that while the academic thinking and writing is primary for change, it is lost if only the converted consider the results.

I have stubbornly resisted in this thesis any listing of values that I teach or model in my classroom and I have just as adamantly promised myself that I would not author a
list for others to consider. I have included the list that is found in the NASSP report *Breaking Ranks*, and cannot argue with any item found there. I refer readers interested in values lists to Thomas Lickona, a most thought provoking writer in the area of character education. In an article titled “Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education”, published in the *Journal of Moral Education*, Lickona writes, “Character Education holds, as a starting philosophical principle, that there are widely shared, objectively important core ethical values—such as caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility and respect for others—that form the basis of good character.” (Lickona 1996, 95) Again I cannot argue.

Douglas Heath examines core values and other specific values and adherence to these values in several places in his book, *Schools of Hope*. (Heath 1994) Gaddy, Hall and Marzano also consider the question of core values in *School Wars*. (1996, 207-211) All of these authors offer core values that I can find no fault with. Jonathan Kozol calls his readers to consider values in many of his works. Kozol is less likely to produce a list, but his personal observations about values in practice, especially in *Amazing Grace* (Kozol 1995) and *Savage Inequities*, (Kozol 1991) have helped me to reflect on my own values and values in my classroom.

Critical thinking demands open-mindedness and a respect for rationality and these are traits that I think must be practiced in the critical-moral classroom. Many of Richard Paul’s traits of the critical thinker that I included on pages 57 to 59, could be reconsidered as a kind of values list. I am in no position to claim them as universal or as being core values, but I know the traits are important to the functioning of the critical-moral classroom.

I will agree to the universal need of one particular value in the critical-moral classroom that the teacher in this work will find often tested, moral courage. Teaching is a counter-cultural enterprise in any period because teachers are preparing a new generation for what is to come, not what has been. In the current moral environment
teaching is clashing with culture more often and in more meaningful ways. Swimming against the tide, to save the drowning swimmer is an act of courage. Teachers in the critical-moral classroom exemplify that courage everyday.

**Limitations**

Any written work is limited in scope and that is true for this thesis. I acknowledge that the ideas offered here could be seen as general and open to interpretation but I do not see this as a short coming. The written or spoken word is rarely beyond interpretation and any words applied to education can only cover the students of today, so the scope is changing with every new class. I can only hope that my work here does lead to interpretation and further exploration, for that is the shared work of the critical-moral classroom.

**Scope**

Given the constraints of this paper I was unable to offer a detailed address of the issues surrounding educational reform. I want to state that while I believe that the critical-moral classroom offers great promise, educational models need more than a few new ideas or a little tuning up. Tinkering with instructional minutes and requiring more standardized testing of both teachers and students, will not assure delivery of the education that our students need for their future success. I agree with David Purpel when he laments that recent educational reports are not suggesting a “fundamental reconceptualization of the schooling process”.

The public is once again given the distinct message that schools and education can make serious changes without parallel changes in the basic conception of schooling and in cultural beliefs. Hence, attention is directed to the more modest issues of class electives, schedules of testing, length of the school year, and mode of funding rather than to issues of moral numbness, spiritual alienation, social justice, nuclear armaments, and terrorism. (Purpel 1989, 3)
These questions need to be addressed by educational reform if we are to be successful.

A retiring colleague who had started his career as a math teacher, went on to become the superintendent of a public school system, opened and ran his own private academy, and had finally found his way back to a final year in the math classroom said to me, “There are very few jobs in my lifetime that would have changed as little as mine has over a career spanning more than forty-five years. I started with a textbook, and I pretty much ended with the same thing. That makes me worry for the future of education.” We need to update the model.

I am sure that a complete review and consideration of the relevant literature in the area of cognitive psychology and psychological development would offer profound insight for the critical-moral classroom. I know from my own experience that psychological literature and research has helped me on many occasions to understand what is happening in my classroom. In my reading I found a number of practical applications of critical thinking in the classroom that were supportable by research in the area of cognitive psychology. Of special interest was the use of dissonant views as a powerful teaching and learning tool. I would invite any critic recognizing this shortcoming to take up the challenge and write this missing chapter.

Moral Relativism

I am sure that many readers will worry about moral relativism creeping into the critical-moral classroom. That fear is grounded, but I do not believe it is inevitable. Those people who hold absolutist moral positions that they insist are universal and that every person must share in the exact same way, will reject the critical-moral classroom. For them there is too much room for diversity of acceptable position. I believe diversity to be a strengthening experience. I think the person who truly and deeply challenges his or her own beliefs on a daily basis and gives fair consideration of divergent beliefs, will be much better served by their beliefs when they are challenged from without. Steven
Brookfield writing in *Developing Critical Thinkers* explains commitment from the critical thinker’s point of view.

Critical thinkers are wary of individuals who claim either universal truth for themselves or access to some rarefied and otherwise inaccessible fount of wisdom. This is not to say that critical thinkers avoid commitments to beliefs. The point is this commitment is informed; we have arrived at our convictions after a period of questioning, analysis, and reflection. Being reflectively skeptical of universal rules or divinely ordained givens is not the same as being completely cynical about making any commitments in life. (Brookfield 1987, 21)

I agree with Mark Tappan and Lyn Brown, that a postmodern moral pedagogy “must be fundamentally *dialogical*, not monological in nature.” (Tappan and Brown 1996, 106) I think today of the just departed Joseph Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago and his last public attempt to bring dialogue to dissenting Catholics on issues of sexuality, women’s role in the Church, and hierarchical leadership. Bernardin was sure enough of his position to invite the opposition into the house. Many other church leaders rejected the idea with the remark, “There is nothing to talk about.” If that is true, there is no hope of resolution. I wonder if it is the strength of their own convictions that they are protecting.

If the price of dialogue is the risk of relativism, then I suggest it is a price the critical-moral thinker must pay.

**Conclusion**

I close with a summary citation from David Purpel, whose words seemed so often to capture my own. Purpel inspires, while he chastises and challenges, a true prophetic voice. Purpel says,
It is clear that important public dialogue on the relationship between education and meaning over the years has not generally been conducted widely and intensely. We educators have for the most part been able (willing) to separate our concern for education from our discussion of our most serious and profound matters. What is the meaning of life? How do we relate as a family, a nation, a people? What is a just and fair way of distributing rights and responsibilities? How do we make appropriate moral choices? The irony here is that such questions are quintessentially reflective ones—areas that require knowledge, insight, understanding. (i.e., an educated mind). However we tend in our fragmented and highly differentiated society to equate education with particular institutions and processes which are, if at all, only vaguely linked to deeper social, cultural, economic and political matters. (Purpel 1989, 5)

I call on educators to join me in looking beyond the desks and chairs and the papers and the textbooks, to join me in creating dialogical communities, to join in asking the questions that matter most. Addressing the things that matter will give us all so much more energy to ask the little questions of the day.

This paper has convinced me more than ever that teachers are not using the great power that is at their disposal. Educators are a sleeping giant. The human family needs teachers to shake off their silence. The moral voice has been the teacher’s voice since the first schools were opened on these shores. Teachers clear your prophetic voices, the human family needs you as much as ever.
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