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The Mind Values Meaning above Knowledge;

Narrative and Moral Education

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Abstract

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The present study is designed to outline the approaches towards moral development and moral education over the past four decades, and to show how the findings of second-generation cognitive science compel a re-thinking of the role of narrative and narrative thinking in moral education. Examined also, are the psychological and philosophical assumptions that underpin and lend substantiation to these findings. Narrative, as an essential instrument for moral education, is now on the way to being rehabilitated, by virtue of the emerging trend to apply the narrative method of autobiographical mythology, or personal narrative to moral education. Through the increased implementation of this process, it is envisioned that the cognitive-developmental, rationalistic view of moral education will be supplanted by other cognitive models, with their implications for moral development and moral education, of a nature closer to the way human beings make meaning of experience.

Résumé

L'être humain accorde plus d'importance à la signification qu' à la connaissance; la narration et l'enseignement des sciences morales

L'esprit humain accorde plus d'importance à la signification qu'à la connaissance. Cette étude porte sur l'évolution des sciences morales et des modèles de développement connexes au cours des quarante dernières années. Elle vise à démontrer comment les conclusions de travaux de recherches portant sur les sciences cognitives de deuxième génération se sont traduites par le remaniement de la narration et de la réflexion narrative. Elle se penche également sur les théories psychologiques et philosophiques avancées à l'appui de ces conclusions. Indissociable des sciences morales, la narration est en voie de regagner ses lettres de noblesse en raison de nouvelles tendances qui favorisent l'application de l'approche narrative à la mythologie autobiographique. L'utilisation accrue de cette approche devrait se traduire par la disparition graduelle des méthodes axées sur le réalisme et le développement cognitif au profit de modèles cognitifs qui correspondent davantage aux mécanismes d'interprétation de l'expérience humaine.

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God made man because he loves stories.

(Elie Wiesel, cited in Keen & Valley -Fox, 1973)

This is what fools people: a man is
always a teller of tales, he lives
surrounded by his stories and the
stories of others, he sees everything that
happens to him through them; and he
tries to live his own life as if he were
telling a story.

(Jean-Paul Sartre, cited in Keen & Valley -Fox, 1973)

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Narrative and Moral Education

Introduction

When the great Rabbi Israel Baal Shem-Tov saw misfortune
threatening the Jews it was his custom to go into a certain part of the
forest to meditate. There he would light a fire, say a special prayer, and
the miracle would be accomplished and the misfortune averted. Later,
when his disciple, the celebrated Magid of Mezritch, had occasion, for
the same reason, to intercede with heaven, he would go to the same
place in the forest and say: 'Master of the Universe, listen! I do not
know how to light the fire, but I am still able to say the prayer,' and
again the miracle would be accomplished. Still later, Rabbi Moshe-Leib
of Sasov, in order to save his people once more, would go into the
forest and say: 'I do not know how to light the fire, I do not know the
prayer, but I know the place and this must be sufficient.' It was
sufficient and the miracle was accomplished. Then it fell to Rabbi Israel
of Rizhyn to overcome misfortune. Sitting in his armchair, his head in
his hands, he spoke to God: 'I am unable to light the fire and I do not
know the prayer; I cannot even find the place in the forest. All I can do
is to tell the story, and this must be sufficient.' And it was sufficient
(Keen, 1970, pp. 82-83).

This study is born from the recognition that morality and values are

essential to education. It results also from the perception that there is an

increasing dissatisfaction with approaches to models of moral education that

are purely rationalistic. Johnson (1993) discusses how this rationalistic bias is

grounded in what he calls "The Moral Law Folk Theory," which he

summarises in the following way:

> Human beings have a dual nature, part bodily and part mental. It is our capacity to reason and to act upon rational principles that distinguishes us from brute animals. The free will, which humans possess but animals do not, is precisely this capacity to act on principles we give to ourselves to guide our actions. Therefore, our freedom is preserved only in acting on principles our reason gives to us. There is a deep tension between our bodily and mental aspects, because our bodily passions and desires are not inherently rational. That is why we need reason to tell us how we ought to act in situations where our action may affect the well-being of ourselves and other people.
>
> Reason guides the will by giving it moral laws - laws that specify which acts are morally prohibited, which are required, and which are permissible. Universal reason not only is the source of all moral laws but also tells us how to apply those principles to concrete situations. Moral reasoning is thus principally a matter of getting the correct description of a situation, determining which moral law pertains to it, and figuring out what action that moral law requires for the given situation (p. 7).

Because we have, for a long time, lived with the belief in the primacy

of reason, we may feel reassured by it. In fact, it is only a one-sided approach

to life and understanding our experiences. Quite disconcerting, however, is to

witness how prevalent this type of reasoning still is. Not only does it

continue to inform moral absolutism, as it did in the past, but it now also

informs moral relativism and the demand for the return to certain

traditional forms of moral education. By moral absolutism, we mean the

perception that there is only one moral code of behaviour, which exists objectively and separate from any context. Within moral education, moral absolutism operates as indoctrination. The reason we suggest that this type of reasoning also informs moral relativism, the apparent opposite of moral absolutism, is that moral relativism is really nothing more than a reaction to moral absolutism. It is the replacement of absolutes with value relativity, where there is a reluctance to espouse any universal standards of good and bad, right and wrong. "To avoid saying that what is right is whatever is actually commended whenever and wherever anyone happens to be" is the difficulty that may inevitably lead to "unbridled individualistic idiosyncrasy" (*A Dictionary of Philosophy*, 1979, p. 303).

Perhaps this is one of the reasons why, in the preface to his book, Johnson (1993) mentions that a great many people still believe that the most pertinent way out of our present moral confusion is to clarify the ultimate moral principles or laws that ought to govern our lives and to learn how to apply them rationally to the reality we encounter every day (p. ix).

Vitz (1990) also finds that "contemporary approaches to moral development and moral education emphasize propositional thinking and verbal discussion of abstract moral dilemmas" (p. 709) over other types of thinking. Both these scholars, together with others (Bruner, 1986; Gilligan, 1980; Sarbin, 1986; Spence, 1982; Tappan and Brown, 1991; Tulving, 1983; and Witherell, 1995), consider that this position ignores the advances made by

several disciplines - cognitive psychology, developmental psychology, linguistics, neuroscience and anthropology - all of which study the nature of mind and reason and which, combined with philosophy, are known as the cognitive sciences. These sciences are beginning to recognise the importance of corporeal, social, and cultural dimensions of cognition (Johnson, 1993). They also acknowledge *narrative thought* as a major form of cognition that is qualitatively different from abstract propositional or scientific thinking, albeit equally valid (Vitz, 1990). Flanagan (1991), for example, has examined many of the changes that will contribute to a radical rethinking of morality.

For psychologists Charles and Anne Simpkinson, we live our lives immersed in stories, some of which, because they move us deeply, change us and bring us closer together, can be called "sacred" stories. Sacred stories, which are not exclusively told by the world's religions, get us thinking about what is important; they communicate through symbol and metaphor deep truths about the mysteries of life. They are associated with our inner experience of "ultimate concern," which should be understood as representing the axis of feelings, values, and intentions that directs and motivates what we think, feel and do (Simpkinson & Simpkinson, 1993, pp. 1 & 12).

For Keen (1970), the philosopher, because the narratives that surround us, and of which we partake, no longer have a mythic consensus, it is important that one author/ise one's own story, by searching for the

foundations of one's individual identity and dignity in the intimate, idiosyncratic elements of one's own experience. According to this vision, each of us must discover the principles without which we could not be (pp. x, xix & 2). Keen calls this quest for identity "autobiographical mythology."

It is my contention, as it is that of the afore-mentioned scholars, among others, that the recent findings of cognitive science are of the greatest importance to the investigation and conceptualisation of moral development and moral education. In chapter one, I will present an overview of the different theories of moral development and moral education, over the past twenty to thirty years, which contrast with the emerging, more student-friendly, *poststructuralist* or *postmodern* approaches. In chapter two, I will outline the recent major psychological contributions to the further understanding of the psychological complexity of moral experience. Chapter three will deal with an alternative approach: narrative and moral education. It is my belief that narrative, and particularly autobiographical narrative, as posited by Keen (1989), is germane to the cultivation of moral imagination, without which there can be no moral life and therefore no way to educate morally or ethically.

Chapter One: An Overview of the Approaches to Moral Development and Moral Education

1.1. Values Clarification

The valuing process and clarification model was posited by Louis Raths in the late 1960s, as a remedy against authoritarian leadership (Kirchenbaum, 1992, p. 774). Raths would have us apply critical thinking skills (through the use of reason) in the determination of values. According to these scholars, values must be chosen freely, from alternatives, after consideration of the consequences. They must be cherished, publicly affirmed and acted on repeatedly. This process should be applied in the determination of goals or aspirations, personal issues such as love, friendship, sexuality, work, loyalty, etc., and social issues such as poverty, racism, and others (Hersh, Miller and Fielding, 1980, pp. 74, 76, 78-79).

According to this model, what is desirable is total value neutrality on the part of the teacher and no confrontation, in whatever milieu the clarifying of responses takes place. Here it is assumed that it is possible to examine ideas, decisions, feelings and actions as propositions divorced from the context in which those examining them, experienced them.

Values clarification made an important contribution by legitimizing value-laden and moral issues as appropriate for schools and by emphasising the importance of independent thought and the right to be different

(Kirchenbaum, 1992, p. 772). Hersh, Miller and Fielding, however, identified quite a few problems, in their appraisal of this model. There is, primarily, difficulty in distinguishing between what are moral and non-moral values, since they are both equivalent issues, and preference does not imply a moral question. The problem is further acerbated by the raising of value conflicts and how to deal with them, as for example the case of the Vietnam war. It can be argued that, in this instance, the decision to bomb or not to bomb could both have lead to peace. Last but not least, is the problem of values and ethical relativism, as in the arbitrary use of authority because of differing opinions (Hersh, Miller and Fielding, 1980, pp. 78, 94-95).

Kirchenbaum (1992), a founder of the values clarification model, now considers that the best approach to moral education would be an eclectic one; a marriage between the conservative and the progressive methods: inculcating and modelling values, as well as preparing young people for independence, by stressing responsible decision-making and other life skills. He proposes that the whole community be involved (p. 775). He also believes that there is a time to moralise to children and a time to listen to their wisdom.

1.2. Lawrence Kohlberg versus Carol Gilligan

By far one of the most influential theories in moral development and

moral education has been that of Lawrence Kohlberg (1975, 1980, 1981, 1984). Expanding upon Piaget's (1948) empirical research on the moral thinking of children, Kohlberg developed the notion of two moralities: a morality of constraint (heteronomy) and a morality of cooperation (autonomy). According to this developmental psychologist, moral judgment goes through a developmental sequence from heteronomy to increasing autonomy with stages. The stages are *structured wholes*, since individuals at any given stage will be supposedly consistent in their judgments. They also form an *invariant sequence*, since they are not reversible, and are also *hierarchical integrations*, since they presuppose that lower stage thinking is integrated into the next stage. Moral growth is ensured through a movement toward greater autonomy, whereby autonomous judgements would be made on the basis of the principle of universal justice (Morris, 1994, pp. 31-32). According to this theory, each new stage represents a more adequate way of dealing with moral problems, since it represents a more balanced understanding of justice. For Kohlberg, moral judgments are to be grounded on objective, impersonal or ideal premises; justice, understood primarily as fairness, being the organising principle that can best solve competing moral claims (Morris, 1994, p. 33).

As regards the application of Kohlberg's developmental theory to education, he deemed that the aim of moral education was development. In his opinion, the role of teachers was to "stimulate development toward higher stages" of moral behaviour, "where one's thinking is more just and

more autonomous" (Morris, 1994, p. 34). Kohlberg's approach offered an alternative to the extremes of indoctrination and moral relativism. There is in this procedure neither the imposition of absolutes, nor the promulgation of neutrality to the point of indifference. Instead, the objective is to foster a process of natural, ethical development through incremental stages of moral deliberation (p. 34). Kohlberg (1974) considered his approach non-indoctrinative, because

> it aims to stimulate the student to take the next step in his own development through a natural sequence. It rests on the natural tendency of the student to prefer the highest stage which he can comprehend - a preference which has been shown to hold regardless of the prestige or authority of the teacher or counsellor (p. 115).

Opportunities for moral deliberation are provided through hypothetical moral dilemmas, with two conflicting ethical claims, which call for students to take position and justify it. Their reaction would indicate their level of moral development. Possible moral growth would come from the students' questioning of their assumptions and stances. The premise is, that whatever conflict would exist between their and alternative, more ethical reactions, indicative of a higher stage of development, could lead to their transition into a higher level of moral action (Morris, 1994, p. 32).

It is interesting to note, however, that Kohlberg (1971) also criticised values clarification for its inability to move beyond the clarification of a person's values. He rejected the notion that values clarification, alone, could promote responsible decision making (p. 35).

Kohlberg's theory has been challenged. Holstein (1976), for example, found that responses to moral situations do not unambiguously place subjects at a particular stage. He also found that males and females differ systematically in their judgments. Fishkin, Keniston, & MacKinnon (1973) determined that the level or stage of a person's moral reasoning is dependant on the particular moral dilemma that the person responds to. According to Guindon (1985), the moment "one realizes that the reduction of morality to justice is one of Kohlberg's main philosophical assumptions, it becomes obvious that the meaning of his sequence of stages loses much of its validity for a *comprehensive* understanding of moral development" (cited in Morris, 1994, p. 38), and by inference, education.

The most penetrating appraisal of Kohlberg, however, was made by his colleague Gilligan (1977, 1980, 1982). For Gilligan, whose theory is centred around a complimentary ethic of care, Kohlberg's ideas rested on the Western value of individualism, disregarding cultures which prise the community or the family more highly. Gilligan also considered Kohlberg's theory to be gender biased, by virtue of his research. She argued "that moral development theory must integrate the voice of relationality if it is to build a holistic vision of moral maturity. It must integrate justice and care, rationality and relationality, autonomy and attachment" (Morris, 1994, p. 40), because, according to her study, women see "morality through categories of love and responsibility" (p. 39).

Gilligan's findings are of great importance to a narrative model of moral development and education, since, in an ethic of responsibility, we are not primarily *makers* but *responders*. The ethical self is a player in an interaction, and morality is situated within a context of human relationship. Because a contextual understanding of morality is, in this case, fundamental, narrative must be returned to moral discussion (Gilligan, 1980). What is called into question is the very "idea of formal decision-making as the central metaphor of moral life" (Morris, 1994, p. 41). By restoring narrative to moral reflection, Gilligan's research underlines the importance of contextuality and meaning to moral understanding (p. 42). The full implication of Gilligan's work remains to be determined, yet, like a pebble thrown into a pristine lake, it continues to reverberate in unimaginable ways. Suffice it to say, that it was her work that set the stage for the recent interest in narrative and moral education.

1.3. Liberal Values and Education

Another approach to moral development and education which relies heavily on the primacy of rationality is that which informs the values of liberal education. As Halstead (1996) points out, these can best be understood in terms of the fundamental values of liberal societies, which are freedom, equality and rationality. Although they are shared by all proponents of

liberalism, liberal values are to be found in a wide range of perspectives from conservatism to certain forms of socialism (pp. 17-18). In the context of Halstead's view of liberalism, there are three fundamental liberal values. The first one is individual liberty, or the freedom of action and freedom from constraint in the pursuit of personal needs and interests. The second is equality of respect for all individuals, meaning non-discrimination on irrelevant grounds. The third one is consistent rationality: the underpinning of decisions and actions on logically consistent rational justifications, which exclude arbitrariness and reject the uncritical acceptance of dogma. It is the interaction between all three of these values that provides the foundation for the just resolution of conflict and the rule of law (pp. 18-19).

After general consensus on the above points, liberalism then suffers divergence of interpretation. There are some who believe that *good* is of prior importance and that actions are therefore justified in terms of their consequences, and those for whom *right* is of primary significance and actions and decisions justified in terms of a set of moral duties. Within the latter perspective, there are some who emphasise equality of opportunity, known as the libertarian approach, and others who emphasise civil and moral rights, social welfare and meeting the needs of the least advantaged: the egalitarian position (Halstead, 1996, p. 19).

"The vision of education which these values encompass has come to dominate western educational thinking" (p. 23). It is a vision inherited from

ancient Greece, where education involved the development of the mind and the cultivation of knowledge for its own sake, and from nineteenth-century luminaries like Newman who avidly believed in the humanising influence of the liberal arts. It has as its very centre the development of the rational mind (p. 23). According to this model of education, the fostering of rationality in children requires that they be taught critical thinking and openmindedness, so that any taking for granted of the truth of ideas that cannot be shown objectively to be true is automatically ruled out (Halstead, 1996, p. 23). It is not difficult to surmise how this insistence on rationality, because it fails to take into account the affective and conative dimensions of meaning-making, would fail to provide a child, educated under such a precept, with a balanced sense of personhood. Experience does not only involve the intellect, it also involves the emotions. When we experience something, we remember not only the facts, but the feelings brought about by the experience. Comprehension of, or the meaning we make of what happens to us depends upon prediction (Smith, 1985, p. 72). What is meant by 'prediction' is an "internally consistent model of the world, built up as a result of experience, . . . and integrated into a coherent whole as a result of continual effortless learning," feeling and thought (p. 73). Prediction, then, in this sense, is an assumption "of what the world is like" (p. 73), and

> is the basis of all our perception and understanding of the world; it is the root of all learning, the source of all hopes and fears, motives and expectations, reasoning **and** creativity. . . . [It] is all we have; there is

nothing else. If we can make sense of the world at all, it is by interpreting events in the world with respect . . . [to this assumption] [emphasis added] (p. 73).

The significance given to acquiring personal autonomy, to the degree it is advocated, can also be seen as a further indication that not enough attention is paid, by this approach, to human emotions and desires (pp. 24-25). Gilligan's research, which has already been discussed, corroborates this criticism of autonomy, at the expense of any natural attachment.

Liberal education has been criticised by many different ideologies, including postmodernism (see Aronowitz and Giroux, 1991; Carr, 1995). There are some, within liberalism, who want what is taught to reflect economic relevance and the requirements of industry, and those who want it to promote personal autonomy and the pursuit of truth (Halstead, 1996, p. 27). That there is obvious disagreement between these perspectives - market values versus human values - bodes ill for the advancement and implementation of the *liberal* approach as a definitive one in moral development and moral education This notwithstanding Peters' (1966) contention that education is liberal education (cited in Halstead, 1996, p. 23).

1.4. Character Education and Traditional Values

Riding the proverbial pendulum in its opposition to relativism, we

find scholars like Lickona (1993) and Kilpatrick (1992) who advocate the return to traditional values in moral development and moral education. The reason that is given for this return is the perceived deterioration of the moral fabric of our public lives. Lickona (1993) refers, in this regard, to the 1992 report of the National Research Council of the United States, which states that the nation of America was, in that year, *the* most violent of all industrialised nations (p. 6). The extent of the problem concerning the conduct of American youth, for example, has been conclusively documented by Wynne and Hess (1986).

Lickona begins his article by giving his readers a brief historical overview concerning the goals of early character education. In his interpretation, the aim of this type of education was to help people become smart and to help them become good through discipline, the example of teachers, and daily school curriculum in honesty, love of neighbour, thriftiness, hard work and courage. The rest of the article deals with the possible reasons for the decline, in our time, of character education.

The main culprits appear to be, for him, Darwinism and the evolution metaphor, the arrival in America of the philosophy of logical positivism, the personalism of the 1960s, the pluralism of American society, and the secularisation of public life.

The evolution metaphor, Lickona argues, led people to see all things, including morality, as being in flux. Positivism asserted a radical dichotomy

between facts (which could be scientifically proven) and values (which were considered expressions of feeling, devoid of objective truth). Morality was made to seem a matter of personal value judgment, not a subject for the public arena (Lickona, 1993, p. 6). In fact, this is quite in keeping with Johnson's moral law folk theory, previously discussed as the prevalent mode of reasoning.

By emphasising individual rights, the personalism of the 1960s, a relativist stance, celebrated, among other things, Lickona continues, the subjectivity of the individual. It supported freedom over responsibility, delegitimised moral authority, eroded belief in objective moral norms, weakened social commitments and fuelled the socially destabilising sexual revolution (p. 6).

Because of the increasing pluralism of their society, Americans were also faced with the question of whose values should be adopted and taught to the majority. The secularisation of public life led the public schools to retreat from their once central role as moral and character educators (Lickona, 1993, p. 6).

Values education was not abandoned but took on new constructs: values clarification and Kohlberg's discussion of moral dilemmas, both of which favoured the subjective over the objective (pp. 6-7). Values clarification, in this article, "failed to distinguish between personal preference (truly a matter of free choice) and moral values (a matter of obligation)" (p. 7).

Lickona (1993) joins his voice to others, as has been previously shown, in criticising Kohlberg's theory for its narrow focus on moral reasoning, which although necessary, Lickona does not consider sufficient for the development of good character (p. 7).

Lickona (1993) also considers that schools have a major role to play in the teaching of values to those who do not receive them at home, due to the breakdown of the family (p. 9). Teachers are called upon to act as caregivers, models and mentors and to create, among their students, a moral community (p. 10).

What is significant about Lickona's proposition is that, although his perspective is different from that of those who advocate a narrative approach to moral education, he understands the necessity for a holistic outlook in dealing with issues of moral development. For him, good character must encompass the cognitive (rational), the emotional (the bridge between judgment and action), and moral action (p. 10).

Kilpatrick (1992), while advocating the return to traditional values and character education, considers that stories and similar narratives give young people a common reference point and supply them with a vast assortment of good examples to follow (p. 129). By so doing, he is part of the emerging trend towards finding that moral development and moral education are best undertaken through narrative structures, whether their source is external or internal. Unlike courses in moral reasoning, or isolated moral dilemmas,

"stories with the juice squeezed out of them" (p. 132). Narratives illustrate what we believe to be right and wrong. Furthermore, they help to anchor our children in their culture, its history and traditions (p. 130). They move the listener deeply and profoundly (p. 138). In Kilpatrick's view, they are the *sacred* stories of Simpkinson and Simpkinson (1993). Or, as the writer Flannery O'Connor put it, "A story is way to say something that can't be said any other way. . . . You tell a story because a statement would be inadequate" (cited in Kilpatrick, 1992, p. 132).

The basic premise of Kilpatrick's (1992) point of view is teaching by example (p. 138). He rejects the utilitarian system of ethics that was a product of the British enlightenment, whereby the rightness or wrongness of acts depended on their usefulness in maintaining the social status quo of the day. The attitude of the enlightenment, concerning morality, was not to do away with it, but to make it more secure by disentangling it from what was perceived as the irrational in human beings (p. 132). The problem is, of course, how to establish the moral of the story without the story (p. 131).

Moral issues are, for Kilpatrick, human issues. We must see correctly before we can act correctly. Many of the moral issues of life are apprehended through observation, and much of moral law consists of premises about human conduct which cannot be arrived at through reasoning alone (p. 133). Many of the ethical principles we subscribe to seem reasonable to us only because they are embedded within a vision or worldview we hold to be true.

Moral transformation, which is in a sense the aim of moral education, is usually accompanied by a transformation of vision (p. 134). When we consider that stories are one of the main ways by which visions of life and the world are conveyed, and a vision, in turn, may be defined as a story about the way things are in the world, then it would seem that moral principles make little sense outside the human context of stories (p. 135) "Stories make it a little harder for us to reduce people to factors in an equation" (p. 137), unlike values clarification and its dilemmas in which the hypothetical characters only exist for the sake of an intellectual exercise (p. 138).

Kilpatrick (1992), like Johnson (1993), urges us not to ignore the role moral imagination plays in moral development (Kilpatrick, 1992, p. 142). There is also a similarity between his belief that some of "our 'sacred' memories may find their source in stories" (p. 143) and Charles Simpkinson's (1993) understanding of what makes meaningful stories sacred. Most importantly, however, Kilpatrick (1992), reminds us that

> most cultures have recognized that morality, religion, story, and myth are bound together in some vital way, and that to sever the connections among them leaves us not with strong and independent ethical principles but with weak and unprotected ones. What 'enlightened' thinkers in every age envision is some sort of progression from story to freestanding moral principles unencumbered by stories. But the actual progression never stops there. Once we lose sight of the human face of principle, the way is clear for attacking the principles themselves as merely situational or relative. The final stage of the progression is moral nihilism and the appeal to raw self-interest (p. 143).

Kilpatrick (1992), cites several authors in support of his position.

Among these, he refers to Bruno Bettelheim, Robert Coles, Jerome Bruner, Theodore Sarbin, Donald Spence and Paul Vitz. In his book, *The Uses of Enchantment* (1975), child psychologist Bettelheim argued that fantasy is a vital source of psychological and moral fortitude. During the 1980's, Coles published two of three books (*The Moral Life of Children* and *The Call of Stories*) recounting the essential role stories play in the life of children and adults alike. The Harvard scholar, Jerome Bruner, who earlier, through *The Process of Education*, helped arouse interest in critical thinking, began, by the mid-eighties, to "worry that 'propositional thinking' had been emphasised at the expense of 'narrative thinking:' literally, a way of thinking in stories. In *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, Bruner suggests that it is this narrative thought, much more than logical thought, that gives meaning to life" (cited in Kilpatrick, 1992, p. 136).

Other psychologists, whose theories concerning propositional and narrative thought, *semantic* and *episodic* memory, *left* and *right hemisphere* processing and *digital* versus *analog* cognition, which will be presented later in this study, arrived at similar conclusions. The impact of these determinations on ethical development are revolutionary and demand a radical rethinking of our outlook on moral development and moral education.

Although Kilpatrick (1992) agrees with the idea that it is narrative thought that gives meaning to life, there is still, in his view, the perception

that narrative is supposed to take us to a specific place. When talking about film as an example of story, from which we can derive moral inspiration, he is clear in affirming that it does not "leave the viewer much room for ethical maneuvering. It is quite clear who has acted well and who has not" (p. 139). From an ethical diversity perspective, which is desirable in a pluralistic society, this statement appears to be a little too directive. Moral life is more ambiguous and open-ended. That a narrative moves us in a certain direction, and a certain direction only, is restrictive, and leaves no room for interpretation. Kilpatrick's (1992) claim that "the moral force of a story or film is the force of example" (p. 141) is particularly disquieting when considering issues of truth and diversity, and their interaction. Even moving beyond individual, relative perspectives, examples of truth in the eyes of one collective beholder may differ substantially from those in the eyes of another.

1.5. The Postmodernist View

Carol Witherell (1995), M. Tappan and L. M. Brown (1991) are some of the major proponents of the power of the story and narrative as tools of the moral imagination. Similarly to Kilpatrick (1992), Witherell (1995) is of the opinion that stories invite us, not only to come to know the world and our place in it, but also to consider what we know, what we hope for, who we are, and what and whom we care about. Narrative can also help us understand

the moral complexities of the human condition and enables us to join in a conversation of sorts, by imagining and feeling what others experience (Witherell, 1995, pp. 40-41). Where she differs from Kilpatrick, is in her desire for the sharing of meaning and the building of collective bridges between people.

Through stories, we can observe the possible consequences of certain human actions without ever actually having to experience them ourselves. The benefits of such "living laboratories" are immeasurable, since, in the case of disastrous action, we would not be placed in the position of having to rectify what can no longer be remedied. We could learn, instead, from the new insights such opportunities afford us. They are many. The literary world is replete with heroes and heroines who have experienced, in as many ways as it is possible to experience, the length and breadth of the human condition.

Witherell (1995) sees teaching through narrative as an exercise in "becoming the friends of one another's minds," providing all written and oral forms of dialogue are taken seriously as texts and are shared among all (p. 42). Like Vitz (1990) and Keen (1970, 1989, 1994), she favours personal narrative, since, in her view, it helps us to understand the moral fabric of our lives. Self-narrative can be used, also, as "an interpretive method for making meaning from the predicaments and possibilities that compose a human life" (pp. 43-45).

It is Tappan's and Brown's (1991) work that best represents a post-

modern approach to narrative. Before addressing the prevalent frame of mind concerning reason and how cognitive science changes ethics, I wish to examine in more detail what it is exactly that these scholars propose.

For both Tappan and Brown, narrative is a fundamental human activity. It transcends all barriers. Everything we find necessary to recount exactly as it happened, we present as a story. The incidents portrayed in this story are given a certain meaning by being placed in a particular narrative context. Whyte (1981) writes, "narrative might well be considered a solution to a problem of general human concern, namely, the problem of how to translate knowing into telling, the problem of fashioning human experience into a form assimilable to structures of meaning that are generally human" (cited in Tappan and Brown, 1991, p. 175). According to this view, it is only by telling stories about our actions and placing them, therefore, in the context of the ongoing narratives of our lives, that we give meaning to them and make them our own (p. 175).

Much as Lickona did later in 1993, Tappan, in 1987, had already posited a three-dimensional conception of the nature of moral experience: the cognitive domain, translated as what one thinks, the affective domain: what one feels, and the conative domain: what one does in response to the former. The conclusion to be reached from the interaction of these three dimensions is that it is "virtually impossible to distinguish between the thoughts and feelings that lead to actions" (p. 176) and that a "a real poverty is bred"

(Bruner, 1986, p. 69) by making too sharp a distinction among them (Tappan and Brown, 1991, p. 176).

Turning to the relationship between narrative and moral development, Tappan and Brown (1991) are of the opinion that people

> develop morally by 'authoring' their own moral stories and by learning the lessons in the stories they tell about the moral experiences in the lives. . . . Authoring, in this view, entails more than simply recounting a series of events in a temporal sequence; it involves telling a *story*; constructing a *narrative*. . . . As such, it also entails *moralizing*; imbuing a story or narrative with moral value, thereby asserting or claiming moral *authority* on behalf of an individual's own moral perspective. The attainment of authorship, as expressed in the moral story (or stories) an individual tells, indicates, therefore, that she has claimed authority for the moral thoughts, feelings, and actions that comprise the psychological dimensions of her moral experience (p. 180).

This perspective is not new. Already in 1977, Keen wrote of the importance of telling one's own story. His belief in this autobiographical method is now stronger than ever (Keen personal communication, July 17, 1997). In the preface to *Your Mythic Journey* (1973), authored with Anne Valley-Fox, he writes:

> We gain the full dignity and power of our persons only when we create a narrative account of our lives, dramatize our existence, and forge a coherent personal myth that combines elements of our cultural myth and family myth with unique stories that come from our experience. . . . Whoever authors your story authorizes your actions. We gain personal authority and power in the measure that we question the myth that is upheld by 'the authorities' and discover and create a personal myth that illuminates and informs us (p. xiv).

By creating our own personal myth and authoring our own story, we claim authority for the moral stances we take.

What does it mean to claim authority for our moral thoughts, feelings, and action in the context of a moral story we tell, and why is such authority valuable to us (Tappan and Brown, 1991, p. 180)? It means clearly expressing and acknowledging our own moral perspective. It also means honouring what we think, feel and do, individually, with respect to what should and should not be done. Finally, it means assuming responsibility for our moral actions, and for acting on behalf of our moral perspective. This sense of moral responsibility is important because it is linked directly with our sense of moral identity and authenticity. It is valuable because how we *author* our lives, through articulating who we are, influences what we think, how we feel and what we do. It enables us, therefore, to grow (pp. 180-182). Such authorship, and the possibility we have of developing our moral outlook, is most clearly expressed in the stories the self tells about its own moral experience. The reason for this is that

> when an individual tells a moral story about an experience in his life, he must necessarily *reflect* on that experience. . . . Consequently, such reflection also entails *learning* from the event narrated, in the sense that the individual has the opportunity to consider what happened, what he thought, felt, and did, and how things turned out. . . . . Authoring, furthermore, is enabled and encouraged by just such a reflective consideration of one's experience in the process of narrating a story of moral conflicts, because to claim authority and assume responsibility one must be fully aware of the consequences of one's thoughts, feeling, and actions (p. 182).

What is the evidence that such authorship has taken place? As far as Tappan and Brown (1991) are concerned, it is when of each of us can

demonstrate that we claim authority for our particular moral attitudes and that are ready to assume responsibility for acting according to our individual perspectives (p. 182).

Witherell, Tappan, Brown, Keen and Valley-Fox differ from Lickona and Kilpatrick in that they favour the personal voice over objective text. What this means is that the meaning of experience and the exploration of identity are made through personal narrative. Life and reality are recreated through individuals and their ties to each other. Objective text does address universals of the human condition, but it lacks the capacity for interaction and the ensuing growth that follows from getting to know oneself and others.

Chapter Two: Traditional Rationalist Theory and Why Cognitive Science Changes Ethics

2.1. The Subservience to Rationalism

As mentioned earlier, Johnson (1993) coined the term moral law folk theory to encompass "the restrictive, negative, rule-governed character" (p. 31) of the moral reasoning most of us have been brought up to practice, based on some form or other of traditional rationalist theory. This type of ethical rationality assumes that morality is a matter of reason. "Whether the moral laws come from divine reason or from human reason alone, they can be rationally discovered and applied to concrete situations" (p. 22). What we forget, however, is that "a rationalistic theory of this kind is but a rational reconstruction of our way of dealing with the kinds of social, political, and moral problems we have tended to encounter in our recent history" (p. 24). It is really just a mythology like so many others.

We owe this nontheological defense of rationalistic ethics to the german philosopher Immanuel Kant who gave us, in his works, the most comprehensive formulation and defense of such a morality of reason (p. 22).

In Johnson's (1993) opinion, the core of Western moral tradition, in its theological and nontheological versions alike, is moral *law* , and "law *induces* or *restrains*, by virtue of the *force* of reason" (p. 29).

According to the Judeo-Christian tradition, divine commands can be

distinguished by whether or not they express divine reason. Only those that express divine reason are regarded as issuing in divine law. Human reason (that spark which is God's image in us) is capable of grasping or participating in divine reason, so that all humans have access to the fundamental principles or moral laws that are binding on all rational creatures. The central focus of this picture is reason's capacity to be practical, that is, to give principles that are meant to guide our acts of will. Once reason becomes the locus of moral reflection, then theological grounds for law become superfluous, at least with respect to humans' duties to one another and to nonrational creation. Reason becomes autonomous, or self-governing, and we are left with a purely rationalistic ethics based on the Moral Law folk theory.

The deep human appeal of this Moral Law folk theory **lies in our desire for moral order and control** [emphasis added] (p. 30).

It was expedient, in the late eighteenth-century, by virtue of the Industrial Revolution and its ensuing ideology, to render reason autonomous and to divorce it from theology. Kant's idea was to "maintain moral absolutes and ultimate foundations without grounding them in the will of an 'other' (namely, God)," and the only way to do this was to hypothesise a transcendental *Universal Reason* (Johnson, 1993, p. 25). What he did, in fact, was to replace divine reason with universal reason and to translate divine moral laws into universal moral laws of practical reason. Being made in God's image became possessing universal reason and free will. "Treating oneself and others as unique creatures 'made in God's image' translates into 'respecting rational nature, whether in ourselves or others'" (p. 25). Most importantly of all, the "Judeo-Christian emphasis on purity of heart and 'inwardness' is translated into an emphasis on correct willing that overcomes an external influence (such as passion) and that is not based on

contingent consequence, which may be out of one's control" (p. 25). What this means, is that we are primarily a rational ego with corporeal form which has desires and inclinations that conflict with our freedom and reason, and that must, therefore, be made to conform with the dictates of rationality (p. 26).

2.2. Second-generation Cognitive Science of Reasoning and Moral Understanding

The most important contribution made by the cognitive sciences in recent years is the relevant and quite revolutionary findings about human conceptualisation and reasoning. The easiest way to understand the distinction between different modes of perception and thinking is to place them side by side, following Jerome Bruner's (1986) proposal that "mental life is characterized by two qualitatively different modes of thought," each providing unique ways of arranging experience and of constructing reality (Vitz, 1990, p. 710). For Bruner (1986), there are, therefore, *propositional thinking* and *narrative thinking*, which, though complementary, are irreducible to one another and differ in the following way:

> Propositional thought consists of logical argumentation aimed at convincing one of abstract, context-independent truth; . . . that is, this mode of thought aims at theoretical, formal interpretation, a general abstract paradigm for gaining understanding. By contrast narrative thought presents concrete human and interpersonal situations in order to demonstrate their particular validity. It is a description of reality, and it is a way of seeing that aims at verisimilitude. The story mode

requires imagination, an understanding of human intention, and an appreciation of time and place. . . . Narratives focus on people and on the causes of their actions: their intentions, goals and subjective experience. . . . [He] also reminded us how central the properties of character, setting, and action are to the narrative mode. . . . Indeed these contextual specifics with their emotional impact are so important that literature achieves its power ' through context sensitivity,' . . . whereas paradigmatic thought, which is concerned with propositions demonstrating logical or scientific universals [are] separated from any emotional or specific context (Vitz, 1990, p. 710).

Based on these findings, it is easy to see how models like Kohlberg's version of moral development may fail to respond to much of a child's mental life, since a child's understanding of moral issues is presented, in this instance, as being "an interpersonal, emotional, imagistic, and story-like phenomenon" (p. 711).

The findings of other scholars like the social psychologist Sarbin (1986) also demand a dramatic re-thinking of moral development. For Sarbin (1986) a story or narrative can be used "as an organizing principle for human action, . . . since the tendency for humans to interpret even simple perceptual experience in terms of basic narrative categories is very strong" (Vitz, 1990, p. 711). Sarbin's (1986) research led him to believe, emphatically, that people usually interpret their life as a story or narrative and that it is practically impossible not to think that way. The moral choices one makes, for example, are informed by the understanding one has of the relevance between a certain moral issue and one's insight into the story of one's own life. Self-narrative, or autobiography, according to Sarbin's view, can either be self-constructed in

conformity with one's personal mythology, to borrow Keen's (1973) idea, or patterned on someone else's life, like that of an adopted hero (p. 711).

According to Vitz (1990), Robinson and Hawpe (1986) also suggested the importance of narrative for moral education, by arguing that

> where practical choice and action are concerned, stories are better guides than rules or maxims. Rules and maxims state significant generalizations about experience but stories illustrate and explain what those summaries mean. The oldest form of moral literature is the parable; the most common form of informal instruction is the anecdote. Both forms enable us to understand generalizations about the social order because they exemplify that order in a contextualized account. . . . Stories are natural mediators between the particular and the general in human experience (cited in Vitz, 1990, p. 711).

Arguing for the primacy of self-narrative, at least in the field of psychoanalysis, Spence (1982) was of the opinion that "successful psychoanalysis in actual practice involves the active construction of a story about the patient's past that allows him or her to make narrative sense out of life" (cited in Vitz, 1990, p. 711). Considering that one of the goals of moral education is to help students make sense of their lives and the moral choices they make, the active construction of a story about a person's past or experiences could also benefit students in a similar way as it benefits patients undergoing psychoanalysis.

Continuing with my investigation concerning the contributions of second-generation cognitive science to moral development and education, and how there are two qualitatively different modes of thought, I now turn to

the findings of the psychologist Endel Tulving (1983) concerning two different

kinds of human memory: semantic and episodic memory. "Semantic

memory is involved 'with the knowledge of the world and is independent of

a person's identity and past,' whereas episodic memory consists of 'the

recording and subsequent retrieval of memories of personal happening and

doings'" (cited in Vitz, 1991, p. 711). Tulving's distinction is very close to the

distinction between propositional and narrative thought, in the following

ways:

> Semantic (propositional) memory is organized conceptually, whereas
> episodic (narrative) memory is organized in time; semantic memory
> refers to the universe, whereas episodic memory refers to the self;
> semantic memory is verified by social agreement, and episodic
> memory by personal belief; semantic memory units consist of facts and
> concepts, whereas episodic memory units are of events and episodes;
> the content of semantic memory is something one knows, but the
> content of episodic memory is something one remembers (Vitz, 1991,
> p. 711-712).

As Vitz points out in his article, in conformity with the research of

Bruner (1986), Sarbin (1986) and Tulving (1983), "it is clear that to the extent

that people interpret moral issues in the context of a personal narrative, their

moral life is operating in a qualitatively different realm from any

propositional" theory (Vitz, 1990, p. 712). This has incredible ramifications for

the defense of a narrative approach to moral development and moral

education.

Other research that substantiates the link between narrative and ethics,

is the differentiation between right and left hemisphere mental functions, as

regards its close relationship to the two modes of thought that have been previously discussed.

Vitz (1990) refers, this time, to the work of Tucker (1981) and Buck (1984) concerning right and left brain processing.

> The right hemisphere is associated with spatial, imagistic representation in which sensory or cognitive elements are synthesized into wholes - a kind of *syncretic* thought; it is also implicated in general emotional processing. Left-hemisphere processing, in contrast, 'is associated with analytic ideation and a linear, sequential mode of processing' (cited in Vitz, 1990, p. 712).

Narrative conceptualisation, therefore, belongs to right hemisphere cognition, since it involves imagistic and affective imagination. This appears to be similar to the type of imagination that Johnson (1993) so ardently defends, and calls moral imagination.

The concept of analog and digital cognition, and the difference between them serves to further corroborate the notion, that although complementary but irreducible to one another, the two modes of thought that comprise our mental life are very different. In Vitz' (1990) appreciation,

> analog psychological processes involve sensory and perceptual experiences, that is, mental representations that have an underlying physiological analogy to . . . [an] external stimulus. . . . [whereas digital] cognition [is] based on symbols or codes with no physical similarity to what they symbolize . . . (p. 712).

The difference between analog and digital psychological processes, and their implications for moral perception, are best understood if we take analog cognition, Tucker's (1981) syncretic cognition, or Bruner's (1986) narrative

thinking, to mean *knowledge by acquaintance*, and digital cognition, Tucker's (1981) analytic cognition, to indicate *knowledge by description* (Vitz, 1990, p. 712).

It is interesting to note, that in philosophy, knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description signify different ways of knowing. *Collins Dictionary of the English Language* (1986) gives a wonderful definition of this variance. Acquaintance is, in philosophy, "the relation between a knower and the object of his knowledge, as contrasted with knowledge by description" (p. 13).

This form of acquaintance with reality is very similar to Buber's philosophical position, expressed in his work *I and Thou*. The basic premise is that there are two different attitudes of which we are capable. What Buber (1958) calls I-Thou refers to "a relation of reciprocity and mutuality between subject and subject," as opposed to the relation, "involving some form of utilization or control" between subject and passive object (*A Dictionary of Philosophy*, 1979, p. 50). As Keen explains in one of his earliest works, *An Apology for Wonder* (1969), what Buber (1958) meant by this meeting between subject and subject, is that the second subject, the "other which we encounter in wonder, is a presence rather than an object, . . . as it involves us in a total cognitive and emotive response" (Keen, 1969, p. 26). Again, this distinction is essential to our understanding of the fact that ethical perception and moral growth involve perception, imagination, emotion, and response within the

context of our being and our experience. If we respond to an object, a situation, or a difficult choice as a thou, in a narrative way, then we will gain insight from it in an very different way than if we respond to it as a problem or an it (p. 26). There will be, in the former instance, an engagement with what absorbs us, vital to our moral development because it involves us personally, which would not otherwise exist. The ethicist, Daniel Maguire, in his book *The Moral Choice* (1978), describes this kind of knowing as "an event in which the knower both receives and gives" (p. 408).

As to the conclusions of other philosophers, particularly those who provide philosophical support for the psychological articulation of concrete or analog experience, the ideas of MacIntyre (1981) and Meilaender (1984) are of particular interest. They both partake of the opinion that morality is grounded in personal emotional interaction with reality, and in embodied, nonabstract experience. They argue that "what a person will see in a moral situation depends not on moral rules but on what a person cares about" (cited in Vitz, 1990, p. 713). What the aim of moral education should be, then, is to develop in children of all ages, not only the ability to care, but also how to care. Caring obviously involves affect, compassion, empathy and metaphoric reasoning. It involves also practical reasoning that is a type of thinking that, according to Perelman (1979), uses imagination and narrative, and is as reasonable a basis for rationality as is formalism (Vitz, 1990, p. 713).

As previously mentioned, another philosopher who deals extensively

with the impact that second-generation cognitive science has on moral imagination and moral development is Johnson (1993). He is of the opinion that what we have recently "learned about human conceptualization and reasoning bears directly on the specific case of moral reasoning" (p. 8). He begins his exploration of these findings with the examination of what, following psychological nomenclature, is known as the *theory of prototypes*. First, Johnson writes about the classical, essentialist view, followed by the discoveries of the proponents of second-generation cognitive science.

The classical theory of categories and concepts, he argues, proposes that every concept or category is presumably determined by an assortment of necessary and sufficient attributes a thing must posses if it is to be included within that category. The so-called empirical scientific disciplines have discovered that most categories used by people are not actually characterised by a collection of attributes. Instead, people tend to define categories by identifying certain typical members of the category, and then identifying other atypical members of the category by how they differ in diverse ways from the typical ones. Because there is rarely any group of essential and sufficient features exhibited by all members of a given category, our everyday impressions are neither consistently, nor unvaryingly, arranged (p. 8).

Moral rules, on the other hand, require an essentialist structure, similar to the above, "in which concepts defined by sets of necessary and sufficient conditions directly fit states of affairs that exist objectively in the

world" (Johnson, 1993, p. 9). Since most of our moral problems arise because of unclear, or unusual circumstances, "we cannot, therefore, simply determine the features of a situation, find the relevant concepts under which it falls, and apply the relevant moral law to get one definite imperative for our action" (p. 9). We cannot be expected, either, to simply look in our inventory of learned responses, find one that fits, and apply it, since we are for ever faced with conflicts regarding the best choice for any given situation, for which there is, often, no one prescribed answer. This is precisely one of the problems Hersh, Miller and Fielding (1980) found with the valuing process of the Values Clarification model.

Addressing the issue of *frame semantics*, another psychological term, Johnson (1993) writes that linguists have discovered that we give meaning to our utterances and our perceptions through the larger frames or schemata, which is their context, that we create to better understand the situations we encounter. Terms such as *point-guard, dunk*, only mean something to us because of their function within a complex *basketball* schema. These schemata are not in any concrete way, an objective part of the situations they allow us to understand, but rather, they are notional frameworks that result from our experience and that we apply in our understanding of the situations we are faced with. We are presented, by any situation that confronts us, with different possible frameworks for contextualizing, within our experience, what is happening to us, and apprehending its significance. Each of these

frameworks, in turn, "supports different ways of reasoning about the situation" (p. 9).

In ethics, this means that there are countless possibilities for us to place anything we are faced with within the different frameworks of our experience. Each possibility will produce a "different moral consequence, depending on which way we frame the situation" (Johnson, 1993, p. 9). What this means, is that how we react, when faced with the necessity of making a moral choice and understanding the moral requirements of the situation, is really a question of interpretation and imagination.

Johnson (1993) then turns his attention to one of the most important discoveries for the rethinking of moral development, and for the rehabilitation of narrative as a, if not *the*, most valuable aspect of any approach to moral education. This discovery of unfathomable significance centres around *metaphorical understanding*, about which Johnson writes:

> Contrary to traditional views of meaning, concepts, and reason, linguists and psychologists have shown that our conceptual system is, for the most part, structured by systematic metaphorical mappings. In general, we understand more abstract and less well-structured domains (such as our concepts of reason, knowledge, belief) via mappings from more concrete highly structured domains of experience (such as our bodily experience of vision, movement, eating, or manipulating objects). Language, and the conceptual system that underlies it, does not give us a literal core of terms capable of mapping directly onto experience. Instead, it is based on systems of related and interlocking metaphorical mappings that connect one experiential domain to another (p. 10).

The existence of conceptual metaphor in our ethical understanding is

devastating for the essentialist view of morality, which considers it a manifestation of irrational imagination. "If our fundamental moral concepts turn out to be metaphorical, then it would be impossible to have determinate, univocal applications of the moral rules that contain such concepts" (p. 10). It is precisely the metaphoric nature of our moral understanding that enables us to make pertinent moral judgments. Like others before him, Johnson (1993) recognises the impracticality of having a set of rigid moral rules to be adhered to in all similar circumstances. Metaphor, explains Johnson,

> enters our moral deliberation in three ways: (1) It gives rise to different ways of conceptualizing situations. (2) It provides different ways of understanding the nature of morality as such (including metaphorical definitions of the central concepts of morality, such as will, reason, purpose, right, good, duty, well-being, etc.). (3) Metaphor also constitutes a basis for analogizing and moving beyond the 'clear' or prototypical cases to new cases. It gives us constrained ways to pursue these metaphorical extensions. It thus allows us to learn from experience in a way that is necessary if we are to grow in our moral understanding (p. 10).

It is as if metaphor allows us to expand our network of experience, by enabling us to accommodate the new without too much disruption or trauma to ourselves. Furthermore, it permits us to feel empathy, by granting us the opportunity to imagine, from someone else's perspective, or from the perspective of something else, how it feels to be that someone or something else.

Much in the same way as Johnson, Maguire (1978), referring to the

relational aspect of experience, affirms that

> when knowable reality comes before us, it is not just simply ingested. To be received into knowledge, that which becomes known must be related to the already known. In that sense, knowledge is relational; we know by relating. When an object or situation becomes known, it is brought into a community of other knowns.
>
> Things are not stored up like photographs that do not relate to other photographs kept in the same drawer. To be known is to be related, to be set in a meaning-giving, already familiar context. The experience of meaning derives from seeing things as fitting into and relating to the over-all universe of our knowledge. Even if something new is known, it is given meaning, and it makes sense only when we see that it somehow relates to the already known. . . . **What this means is that the mind values meaning above knowledge** [emphasis added] (Maguire, 1978, p. 410).

The fact that the mind values meaning above knowledge is one of the most important distinctions for the re-evaluation of the role of narrative in moral life.

The findings of second-generation cognitive science have bearing, also, on what is known as *basic-level experience*, which is of importance in the advocacy of a narrative approach to moral development and moral education. We have seen, that for the essentialist view, all categories are equal as they apply to experience. This new view considers that there are different levels of conceptualisation and experience, and that they do not all share the same priority. "Concepts applying to those 'basic' levels of experience will achieve priority in the way we organize and structure our conceptual system." (p. 11). It can be claimed, for example, that when it comes to certain needs, particularly those identified by Abraham Maslow (1943,

1954): physiological needs (hunger, thirst, rest, etc.), safety needs, and belongingness and love needs, to name but a few, they all form part of a shared, universal experience. They may manifest themselves and be taken care of in different ways, but they are endemic to the human condition, of which we all partake. In answer, therefore, to the advocates of moral relativism, this conclusion shows that there are constraints on the interpretation and response to experience. To those who fear anything but absolutes, this control mechanism protects us from "moral anarchy, where anything goes" (Johnson, 1993, p. 11).

For Johnson, also, there is "abundant empirical evidence that narrative is a fundamental mode of understanding, by means of which we make sense of all forms of human action" (p. 11). One of the most interesting functions of narrative in our moral appreciation of individual experience is the way that, through narrative, we may "project possible solutions to morally problematic situations" (p. 11). This projection concerning the role that fictional or historical narratives may play in preserving us from actually acting out potentially dangerous life scenarios, because they enable us to experience them vicariously, has already been mentioned.

Johnson joins his voice to many in the desire for the rehabilitation of narrative in moral development, and by inference, moral education. No doubt influenced by scholars such as Elridge (1989), whom he alludes to, narrative is not, in his understanding, "just an explanatory device, but is

actually constitutive of the way we experience things. No moral theory can be adequate if it does not take into account the narrative character of our experience" (p. 11).

Chapter Three: Narrative and Moral Education

3.1. The Nature of Narrative

According to Whyte (1981), the word narrative derives from the Latin and refers to a relationship between "knowledge and expert practice" (Gudmundsdottir, 1995, p. 24). From a structuralist point of view, what we understand narrative to mean and to encompass today refers "to the structure, knowledge, and skill required to construct a story" (p. 24). Furthermore,

> story and narrative, in everyday language, are taken to refer to the same thing: accounts of action usually involving humans or humanized animals. A story has characters; a beginning, a middle and an end; and is held together by a series of organized events, called plots (p. 24).

For Northrop Fry, the story form represents "a collection of relational models by which what would otherwise be nothing more than a series of mechanically connected events can now be connected substantially and morally" (Gudmundsdottir, 1995, pp. 24-25). This is idea is very much in keeping with Maguire's (1978) reference to the relational aspect of experience.

A narrative, in this instance, can be shown to have two parts: story, which includes the events, settings and characters, etc., and discourse: the telling or expressing of the story. The presentation of the story, fictional or non-fictional, can be either in spoken or written form, or in theatrical form, including mime and dance, providing that the end product be an organised

text - a narrative (Gudmundsdottir, 1995, p. 25).

A more useful definition of narrative, however, and one which has particular pertinence for education, is the one proposed by Herrenstein-Smith (1981). She sees narrative as being embedded in human action, and as "a series of verbal, symbolic, or behavioral *acts* sequenced for the purpose of 'telling someone else that something happened'" (Gudmundsdottir, 1995, p. 25).

Narrative, or the telling of something that happened, because it has been shown to be the natural process of human thought and the way we construct meaning out of reality, is probably as old as human speech. There are, dating from as far back as 2000 B.C., a number of early examples of stories, or fragments of story, in texts from ancient Egyptian, Chinese, Sumerian and Sanskrit (Pellowski, 1977, p. 3).

Sir Laurents van der Post, a South African writer who, throughout his life, was in close contact with the Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert, discovered, over time, that story, for this very ancient tribe, had an altogether spiritual dimension and "kept them intimately in touch with the creative forces in the universe" (Simpkinson & Simpkinson, 1993). Listening to narratives was, and remains, for the Xhosa and Zulu children of South Africa, an accepted part of their social life (Pellowski, 1977, p. 47). Although this practice has come down through the generations, it is obvious that it

maintains much of its original form. As Keen (1970) explains:

> Preliterate man lived in a world which received its intellectual, religious and social structure through the story. Each tribe had its own set of tales, myths, and legends which defined the metaphysical context within which it lived, gave a history of the sacred foundation of its social rituals, and provided concrete models of authentic life. Membership in the tribe involved retelling and acting out the shared stories which had been passed on from generation to generation since the beginning of time. . . . Archaic man sought to avoid the profane and to live in the realm of the sacred. . . . The telling of stories was a way of justifying and sanctioning those values which were essential to the preservation of the community (p. 87).

In our own country, there is evidence of the rich body of literature that has been produced, over their history, by native Canadians. Petrone (1988; 1990) attests to this in her preface to *Native Literature in Canada: From the Oral Tradition to the Present*:

> Over the past two decades the trickle of writing by native Canadians has become a flood as more and more natives have found their voice and achieved publication of fiction, drama, poetry, memoirs, and journalism, recording the multitude of problems that have affected them in their place and time and revealing a distinct Indian aesthetic in drawing on the narrative and lyrical traditions of their past (1990, p. vii).

Another of her books, concerning Inuit literature "traces the evolution in Canada of Inuit writing in English from an oral literature of a non-western culture, through transitional stages of varying degrees of acculturation, to its modern expression" (Petrone, 1988, p. xii).

Petrone (1990) considers that one of the reasons native Canadians produced narratives was to record the problems they faced. Indeed, the

literature of social protest has been extensive throughout the history of humankind. This is better understood if, borrowing the definition of narrative from Herrenstein-Smith (1981), we include within the term literature, all kinds of oral and written forms: speeches, poems, essays, etc. *The Cry for Justice: An Anthology of the Literature of Social Protest* (Sinclair, 1963), is replete with such examples, illustrating humanity's stand against injustice.

Religions, also, have used narrative, not only to promote their religion, but to explain, through stories, the principles of their doctrine. We have as one examples of this, the lesser known writings of Chuang-Tze (c. 100 B.C.), which "are full of parables, narratives, and short tales of all kinds" (Pellowski, 1977). In Christianity we find the parables of Christ. The *exempla*, classic fables or popular anecdotes to which a moral is added, were also used as the basis of Christian sermons, along with the parables of Christ. The oldest known examples of this are to be found in the homilies of Saint Gregory the First (c. 600) (p. 69).

Further examples of the teaching stories can be found in the Sufi tradition, where many masters, such as the renown Jalaludin Rumi, Attar of Nishapur, Saadi of Shiraz and the metaphysician Ibn El-Arabi, relied exclusively on this form for their teaching (Shah, 1990).

Narratives, then, can either be spoken, as those belonging, for example, to the oral tradition of native peoples, or written, as those found in fictional

and non-fictional, written accounts of all description. What is important to

keep in mind is that we are constantly surrounded by stories.

> Newspaper, radio, and television feed us a daily diet of news;
> friends and co-workers tell us how their weekends were spent;
> parents punctuate their children's days with bedtime stories;
> grandparents fondly recall family history over holiday meals;
> ministers weave parables into their Sunday sermons; and many
> spend leisurely hours indulging in murder mysteries, romance
> novels, sitcoms, or Hollywood's latest film offerings (Simpkinson
> & Simpkinson, 1993, p. 1).

That the telling of stories - the telling of something that happened -

ever developed into a way of life and permeates, with enduring prevalence,

the very fabric of our lives even in our present time of discontinuity, is

supported by many theories. Pellowski (1977) considers:

1. That it grew out of the playful, self-entertainment needs of
humans.
2. That it satisfied the need to explain the surrounding physical
world.
3. That it came about because of an intrinsic religious need in
humans to honor or propitiate the supernatural force(s) believed
to be present in the world.
4. That it evolved from the human need to communicate experience
to other humans.
5. That it fulfilled an aesthetic need for beauty, regularity, and form
through expressive language and music.
6. That it stemmed from the desire to record the actions or qualities
of one's ancestors, in the hope that this would give them a kind of
immortality [and that they would be emulated by present and
future generations] (p. 10).

Odes, lyrical poetry, songs, plays, situation comedies, the plethora of

published books, films, videos, even invitations to dinners and manners of

celebration, all attest to the playful side of humanity. Myths and legends, on

the other hand, although they entertain, were the product of the need to explain the physical world and converse with the supernatural (see Joseph Campbell, 1972). Teaching stories, and other narratives of all kinds, addressed the human need to communicate experience to other humans and promulgate the example of a lifestyle that would ensure survival. "The story [has always] served the diverse functions of philosophy, theology, history, ethics, and entertainment" (Keen, 1970, p. 87).

3.2. Narratives of Others

In respect to moral development and moral education, the first fundamental question is whether narrative, autobiographical or other, can serve to help us grow morally. The second question addresses the issue of whether self-narrative is preferable, in the accomplishment of this goal, to the narratives of other people. Narratives produced by others than the self, but listened to, watched and read by the self can be called *other-narrative*, as opposed to autobiographical writing or speaking, which is known as self-narrative.

Although narrative as a means of moral inquiry fell into disrepute, first because of the Enlightenment and its emphasis on reason, and second because of its link to the long persisting tradition of character education, and the related fear of indoctrination, there have been, throughout human

civilisation, strong positions in favour of combining narrative and ethics.

It is perhaps to Sir Philip Sidney, and his *An Apology for Poetry* (1595), that we owe the greatest debt regarding the connection of *poetry*, meaning narrative, to ethical deliberation and attitudes. Poetry, and thus narrative, as a *speaking picture*, is, according to Sidney, a better teacher than moral philosophy or history, since it is also a better agent for leading men to act virtuously, (read ethically) (cited in Kapplan 1986, pp. 108-109). He argued that poetry, in the broadest sense of the word, can move people to virtuous action better than philosophy, since it combines the precepts of one with the examples of the other, and, in addition, uses all the pleasurable devices of art to make instruction palatable (p. 109). This contribution, on the part of Sidney, - the pairing of the pleasurable experience with the learning experience - enabled a new awareness, regarding the importance of storytelling as a means of presenting possible truths or their alternatives, to emerge. This parallels Charles Simpkinson's concept of the sacred story, which deals with our experience of ultimate concern. Ultimate concern has been previously understood as being the axis of feelings, values, and intentions that directs and motivates what we think, feel and do.

Even Vitz (1990) considers that the link between education in virtue and the use of stories should not be dissolved, "because a major purpose of many stories is precisely to exemplify good and bad character, virtues and vices in practice" (p. 717).

There are in novels, for example, as there are in personal narratives, countless opportunities to browse through the vast and varied accounts of different authors and the characters they created, in an attempt to examine the problems their human condition forced upon them. It is also possible, through this form, to observe how varied and problematic are the solutions to these predicaments, and with what difficulty, as in real life, accurate decisions are arrived at. Literature, as one of the narrative forms, is perhaps the greatest repository of human memories, feelings, ideas, analysis and responses that exists. Every culture is composed of people who think and who react to their environment and their experiences. The novel is mentioned because it is really a protracted story. Also, because all the students, at the secondary level of education, spend a significant part of their time in the reading and analysis of novels. It is hoped, presumably, that students will not only acquire knowledge about the books they read, but will also benefit by vicariously living the experiences of characters who do not greatly differ from themselves. "Unlike many of the stories we meet elsewhere, those we read and hear in school are usually designed to do us good. The assumption is that we will be better off for having heard or read them, changed in ways that are both beneficial and enduring" (Jackson, 1995, p. 4).

The novel, as an extensive recounting of events and their ultimate meaning, seems to be an adequate, if by no means the only, stage on which to depict the unfolding of the tragedy or comedy of an individual's encounters

with life. The length of the novel enables its author to present his or her concerns to their full extent, with all their inherent complexity, and to their inevitable conclusion. Kilpatrick (1992), as was discussed in chapter one, is a present day promulgator of the use of this type of stories and histories to counter what he calls *moral illiteracy* (p. 129). He considers that these narratives are totally unlike courses in moral reasoning, because they make us aware of the "human element in morality" (p. 132).

Poetry, on the other hand, because it is the most encapsulated form of storytelling, is also a powerful tool for moral transformation. Once all the words are recognised, the abundance of images and ideas they produce so literally bombards the mind, not only quantitatively but synchronously, that moments of epiphany are often the result. These moments are potentially transformative, usually towards a form of inner revelation.

In what way, then, can the narratives of others contribute to moral growth and the development of ethical awareness? One of the answers is that there appears to be, in other-narrative activity, of which novels are but one manifestation, a movement from the particular to the general. This is so, inasmuch as it is concerns of a universal nature that are being addressed by each writer individually, and concerns of this nature are of import to the process of moral deliberation. The human condition appears to be a universal one, and the problems that need solving, quite similar, whether in the mind of a Russian, an Englishman, a Canadian or a Cambodian. Narrative is a

universal enterprise. It is common to us all. All of us have stories to tell about our, and subsequently, everybody's moral dilemmas.

Other-narrative not only shows us an array of possible ethical stances, from a point of view other than ours, but it also deals with the application of moral values to the infinite realm of human experience.

Jackson (1995) suggests that students are encouraged to study stories of one kind or another because so many of those "stories do not simply *contain* knowledge, *they are themselves the knowledge we want students to possess*" (p. 5). As an aside, a question that comes to mind is obviously whether we have the right to decide for others the knowledge they should or should not possess. This kind of imposition could be construed as a form of indoctrination. Knowledge, here, is to be understood not as information, but awareness and consciousness, gained by experience. The advocates of self-narrative, as we shall see further on, consider that it is up to each of us, as individuals, to discover what knowledge we already have, what knowledge we wish to possess, and what knowledge we wish to make our own.

The epistemological function of stories appears to be linked, in one way at least, with a sense of community. "Our sense of being part of a community is established, at least in part, by our shared *knowledge* of a set of well-known stories. Lacking that knowledge, a person is unable to participate fully in the social community to which he or she belongs" (Jackson, 1995, p. 5). It cannot be denied that we are all aware of the shared history of our particular culture

that produced the *collective unconscious*, to use the Jungian term, which allows us to function within it. What is known as culture shock is precisely the ignorance of, and the need to become acquainted with the canons of the new culture we adopt as our own. In a sense, this shared body of experience is like a language that is known to all. A person who fails to know that canon will also lack the understanding each of the informing cultural myths "gives to related events and to the more broadly encompassing stories" in which it is embedded (p. 6). Someone, for example, who knows nothing about the early situation between New France and Britain, shortly after the colonisation of Canada, is not in a position to understand where the desire of some of Quebec's citizens for sovereignty stems from.

Although it is true that for the majority of students, their first encounter with such renowned characters as Jacques Cartier, the Hobbit, Huck Finn, Macbeth, Mussolini, Cinderella, and Robert Frost - each set in its own story, and with narratives of why rivers run downstream, turtles lay eggs, and slavery ever occurred, happens in school, this is problematic (Jackson, 1995, p. 6). Apart from the disagreement concerning what stories to include in the curriculum, there are other problems. The main one centres around the type of knowing that is prised more or less highly by a given community. The argument between what Newman called *Useful Knowledge* and *Liberal* knowledge (Abrams, 1986, p. 1014) is at least as old as Aristotle. In spite of the fact that we are somehow expected to be acquainted with the shared myths of

our respective community, it is interesting to note that, just a few years away

from the turn of another century,

> a person unable to read or write or figure, or who lacks what today are
> sometimes called 'marketable skill,' is looked upon my many as being
> far worse off from the standpoint of getting by in our society than is
> one whose only deficiency is lack of knowledge of our country's
> history, let's say, or of the plot of this or that Shakespearean play
> (Jackson, 1995, pp. 6-7).

Equally interesting, as a teacher, is the fact that even after a certain number of

years of schooling, many adolescents still lack the general knowledge one

would expect them to acquire, if through no effort of theirs, at least by the

osmotic influence of having sat in classrooms where such knowledge was

available, if not availed of.

Narrative is under siege in most educational systems, as are most

humanistically-oriented studies, because of the supposed belief that more

skill-oriented subjects will solve the problem of the amorality of the world.

The problem is, that skill-oriented subjects fail to address the *humanisation*

of the learner. Ethical development is liberation in process. After the

Brazilian pedagogue, Freire (1994), who took a stand against the illiteracy

(read oppression) of his people, the process of humanisation - authentic

liberation is "a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon

their world." (p. 60). Furthermore, it is only through communication that

human life can hold meaning (p. 60).

What the prevalent attitude fails to take into consideration, also, is that

stories can often be

> credited with changing us in ways that have relatively little to do with knowledge per se. They leave us with altered states of consciousness, new perspective, changed outlooks, and more. They help to create new appetites and interests. They gladden and sadden, inspire and instruct. They acquaint us with aspects of life that had been previously unknown. In short, they *transform* us, alter us as individuals (Jackson, p. 9).

In examining which type of narrative, other-narrative or self-narrative, is more conducive to our moral growth, and more effective for the purpose of moral education, which is ultimately to humanise, the following can be added to what has already been said about the impact of other-narrative on the listener or reader. According to Danto (1985), a story, "is about each reader who experiences it" (cited in Jackson, 1995 p. 11). In his opinion, because it is possible for us to see part of ourselves in what we hear or read, it is reasonable to think of literature as a type of mirror,

> not simply in the sense of rendering up an external reality, but as giving me to myself for each self peering into it, showing each of us something inaccessible without mirrors, namely that each has an external aspect and what that external aspect is. . . . It is a mirror less in passively returning an image than in transforming the self-consciousness of the reader who in virtue of identifying with the image recognizes what he is. Literature [a body of stories] is in this sense transfigurative, and in a way which cuts across the distinction between fiction and truth (cited in Jackson, 1995, p. 11).

What this appears to mean is that through the identification of the self with the characters and events of the oral or written texts, and from our apprehension of the meanings displayed in the narratives as a whole, we gain

a deeper insight into who we really are. In the instances where we are transported by what we hear, see or read, we become the narrative, as it were (Jackson, 1995, p. 12).

3.3. Self-narrative

Yet, this experience still leaves something to be desired. Other-narrative is not authored by us, and, therefore, we cannot claim authority for the moral thoughts, feelings, and actions that comprise the psychological and moral dimensions of the author's moral experience (see Tappan & Brown, 1991). Somerset Maugham in his introduction to *Of Human Bondage* (1971), supports Tappan's and Brown's conclusion, when he affirms that

> the author writes to disembarrass himself of painful memories; he is not concerned with the reader, but only with his own liberation. Any communication he has to make to the reader is adventitious. It may well be that he attaches significance to certain things which are not significant in themselves, but only to him and because they happened to him (Somerset Maugham, 1971, p. vi).

What happens to us, then, is what really counts, in terms of our moral development and the moral education we may wish to confer on others. As Keen (1993) was so quick to discern:

> We are the first generation bombarded with so many stories from so many 'authorities,' none of which are our own. The parable of the postmodern mind is the person surrounded by a media centre: three television screens in front of them giving three sets of stories; fax machines bringing in other stories; newspapers providing still more

stories. In a sense, we are saturated with stories; we're saturated with points of view. But the effect of being bombarded with all of these points of view is that we don't have a point of view and we don't have a story. We lose the continuity of our experiences; **we become people who are written on from the outside** [emphasis added] (p. 28).

The problem of looking to other-narratives for help in our moral deliberations, is that they replace "the world of primary experience" (p. xviii): the first-hand experience that we have of our own lives. Very much like M. Tappan (1991), Keen, as far back as 1970, "suggested that everyone had to author/ize his or her own story" (p. xix). From Keen's perspective, which differs slightly from Tappan's, the reason for this was his personal conviction that story is "a basic tool for the formation of identity" (Keen, 1970, p. 86).

What Keen advocates is the necessity for each of us to find out who we are and what our story is. For him, the conundrum is simple. Without story, there is no continuity in our lives, and without continuity, he contends, there can be no relationship to others and no commitment to anything (p. 28). Since the "old stories, the great stories, are gone" (p. 29) and the idea of a unifying force or divine intelligence "no longer governs the way we organize our lives" (p. 29), it is up to all of us to find out, individually, what myth it is that each one of us lives (Keen, 1970, p. x). Keen goes on to explain what he means, by developing his idea of the discontinuity of postmodernism and where that leaves us.

The new metaphor which reflects modern experience is *the happening*. . . . Although there are causes for events, there are no reasons. Nowhere in nature or history does the modern intellectual find

evidence of a guiding mind which gives coherence to what is still, erroneously, called the uni-verse. . . . It is up to the individual to give his own life meaning by creating a project to which he may give himself (p. 94-95).

What our traditional ancestors were doing in telling stories, was attesting to the unity of reality and reiterating the confidence he had that the measure of existence was such that it was possible for a human being to embrace all of its meaning (p. 97). Until recently, "the keystone of personal identity was participation in the shared stories legends, and myths of a tribe, nation, cult, or church. The past, present, and future of the individual were bound together by the memories and hopes of a people to which he belonged" (p. 71). Since much of this has now been lost to us, however, we must find something else to trust. Keen's conviction and encouragement come from his own experience. "I have found it necessary," he writes, "to search for the foundations of my identity and dignity in the intimate, sensuous, idiosyncratic elements of my experience. I have had to discover the principles" (p. 2) which make me who I am. "To remain vibrant throughout a lifetime," he adds, "we must always be inventing ourselves, weaving new themes into our life-narratives, remembering our past, re-visioning our future, reauthorizing the myth by which we live" (Keen & Valley Fox, 1973). By conducting this search for his personal identity and the meaning of his life, Keen returned autobiography to the realm of theology, philosophy and morality.

In a recent conversation I had with Keen, he told me that he feels, now, even more strongly than he did when he wrote *To a Dancing God* (1970) and *Your Mythic Journey* (1973) about his approach to story. Because of the richness of his conversation with me, I have quoted the entirety of our discussions on particular issues.

While Carl Gustav Jung starts with the idea of certain archetypes, certain required stories that one has to have in order to have a fulsome psyche, Keen's perspective is much more individual, more idiosyncratic and more specific as regards the stories that in-form each of us. It is from here that springs his concept of autobiography which, for him, is very different from mythology. The basic distinction, he told me, is this:

> When we are born, nature gives us a certain kind of biological hardware, but every society then starts plugging in software disks which are its myths. You are a Navaho, you are an American, you are a man or you are a woman and you belong to the Snake clan or the Keen clan, and then all the stories that go along with that, they tell you who you are before you have even asked the question "Well, who am I?" For me, the beginning of an autobiography begins when I ask the question, "Who am I?" This is who my father said I was, my mother said I was, the Presbyterian Church said I was, American culture said I was, but who do I say that I am? And then I begin to have to sort through all of the myths that I have been given, many of which are unconscious. I have to raise them to the conscious level. And at that point, then, I begin to sift through those that are serviceable, that do fit me and those that don't. I begin, then, to construct my own story, or as I prefer to call it, my own autobiography. I do not call it a mythology, because I believe that where mythology is actually working, it is largely unconscious (S. Keen, personal communication, July 17, 1997).

Autobiography becomes of the greatest importance for Keen, because, in his view, stories are not outside of us. Its not even that we are immersed

in them. He considers that human beings are not biological animals, they are

biomythic animals. "I think it is the most incredible mistake," he says,

> to think of us in terms of continuity of other animals, because the fact
> that we're narrative animals changes the structure of our brains. It
> literally changes our endorphins and our chemistry and our biology. I
> use the word "in-formed". We're literally in-formed by stories. I think
> that the work of Wilhelm Reich about character armour is very crucial
> for showing us that. If you have a fascistic society, it will produce a
> certain kind of body, posture and body armour that will affect the
> whole biology of a person. This is one of the strongest points where I
> differ from a lot of other people. It is not that we are first of all natural
> animals, biological animals, and then that we have myths, or that we
> are even immersed in myths, no, we are biomythic, and I use the word
> in the absolute strongest sense to deny that we are natural animals. As
> with the example of the old wild child experiment, if you take a
> human being away from any kind of mythology or culture, that entity
> does not become human, literally does not become human. It is
> human only in the way that it begins to be in-formed by certain stories,
> shaped by certain stories, and then reshapes those stories to fit its own
> life experience. The structure of the brain is changed by our
> experiences. It changes our biology. It changes the dendrite chain, it
> changes the way that we associate. There are large parts of the brain that
> are not structured when we come into life. The story creates a form
> within the individual which is biological, not just an idea in our head,
> so each culture shapes the biology. The structure is created by the
> experience, by the story and by the narrative. A myth or story is the
> systematic, unconscious information that governs the form, the
> behaviour and the feeling of an individual or of a culture. (S. Keen,
> personal communication, July 17, 1997).

3.4. Educational implications

One is tempted at this point to question the relevance between this

perspective and moral education. Similarly to Tappan, Keen considers that it

is only when one has sifted through the stories about oneself that are

serviceable, separated those that fit from those that don't, and begun to construct one's own story - "the tailoring of one's philosophical suit", that moral education begins. Moral development occurs when one is prepared not only to author, but also to take responsibility for the stories and the narrative of one's life (S. Keen, personal communication, July 17, 1997).

For Tappan (1991), as has been mentioned, the issue of authorship has even greater moral dimensions. The questions, for him, concern "the emergence and manifestation of *moral authority*" (p. 6):

> How do individuals . . . come to claim authority and assume responsibility for their moral thoughts, feelings and actions? When faced with the question, "What is the 'right' thing to do in this situation? - what enables [us] . . . to *authorize* . . . [our] thoughts, feelings, and actions in response to that situation (p. 6)?

Tappan's (1991) aim is to replace *moral autonomy*, the cognitive-developmental approach to moral development with *moral authority*, which requires a narrative approach to moral education. In his earlier works, Keen (1970) would have schools introduce a course offering each "student an opportunity to write his autobiography, to experience the way in which he remembers the past, is aware of the present, and projects the future, and to reflect upon the myths and models which have influenced his life-style" (p. 71). This would enable the student to remember the most important events of his life, pleasant and unpleasant, and to explore, from what happened and what impression remained, what those events mean for the student's present

self.

In order for this to take place, permission must be granted, by the audience, for the student to tell her story. This means that the audience must be willing to share their own personal stories as well (p. 72).

Before attempting to explore memory, however, there must be a focus on the present. Questions , such as the following, which enhance a sense of the present, may be used: "'At this point in time how do you feel about yourself and the significant people around you?' 'What do you like, dislike, about yourself?'" (Keen, 1970, p. 72) "What convictions do you live by?" "What is the most important thing to you today?" These questions will help students focus inwardly.

"In exploring the way memory preserves and creates the past, the central question the individual needs to ask is: 'How did I come to be as I presently am?'" (p. 73). A way to begin to answer such a question is by focusing on what may have hurt us the most in our past experience, and how we feel about it; what the events were that elicited gratitude in us; what kind of people did we look up to and try to emulate, and by examining the decisions we were responsible for taking (p. 73).

We have all, I am sure, been ensnared by daydreams, and are more than happy to indulge in projections of the future. However, "after charting the outer limits of the fantastic futures which are desired, we need to introduce a note of realism" (Keen, 1990, p. 73). Questions that address the

near future could look like this: "What will you be doing ten years from now, if everything goes according to plan?" "What kind of a person will you be?" "What will you look forward to in five years?" (p. 73). Questions of this nature fashion the bond between hope and action. "Once the integral relationship between awareness, memory, and anticipation is grasped, the unity of life style begins to emerge, and the story a person is telling with his life unfolds. Identity is discovered" (pp. 73-74).

Personal mythology involves asking the questions that we no longer have answers for but which, in one form or another, were asked and answered by mythologies from all over the world. "'Where did I come from?' 'Why is there something rather than nothing?' 'Why is there evil in the world?' 'What happens to me when I die?' 'With whom do I belong?' 'What are my duties, obligations?' "What is taboo, and what should I avoid?' 'What is the purpose of my life, my vision?' 'Whom should I imitate, [and why]?' (Keen & Valley-Fox, 1973, pp. xv-xvi) are the perennial questions we must ask and answer, if we are to give meaning to our lives.

For Tappan (1991), the use of narrative in moral education is absolutely essential, especially moral "education designed to encourage children and adolescents to claim authority and responsibility for their moral thoughts, feelings, and actions" (p. 19). Whereas Keen's approach focuses primarily on authorship of the self expressed through narrative, in the aim of rendering our experiences intelligible and meaningful, Tappan considers that

authorship of the self can also *develop* through narrative (p. 19).

> When an individual . . . is enabled or encouraged to tell a story about her own real-life moral experience, two related things happen: First, because constructing a narrative necessarily entails moralizing, based on a particular moral perspective, hence telling a moral story also provides an opportunity for her authorship (and authority) to be expressed. Second, telling amoral story necessarily entails reflecting on the experience narrated, thereby encouraging her to learn more from experience - by claiming more authority and assuming more responsibility for her thoughts, feeling and actions - than would be possible if she were to simply list or describe the events in question. Consequently, authorship (and authority) is both expressed and developed through opportunities to tell one's own moral stories (Tappan, 1991, pp. 19-20).

A symbiosis between moral authority and responsibility must be established and maintained, however, and authorship and authority must be constructed in authentic dialogue between self and other, so that they be inspired, at all times, by compassion and respect, in order to avoid any abuse of authority (p. 20).

How, then, are students to tell their moral stories? Burke (1931) advocates the use of detailed and thorough interviews, "designed to evoke stories of moral experience" (cited in Tappan & Brown, 1991, p. 185). Through this method, authorship is intensified, since an understanding and absorbed listener provides the ideal audience for the interviewee to tell his story (p. 185). Essays and journal entries, that focus on the critical moral decisions students have had to take during their lives, also help them to identify and recognise their moral perspectives, while supporting "the gradual emergence of authorship" (p. 185). Lastly, much can be learned from having students

produce and perform their own moral stories.

Although Moral and Religious education provides an ideal context for moral development through all or any of the afore-mentioned methods, other subjects, such as Drama or History also provide excellent opportunities for self-expression and an awareness of the unity of shared experience and identity. English Language Arts teachers, especially those involved in non-directive forms of teaching and learning, also provide an optimal environment for self-narrative or autobiographical mythology. The important thing to keep in mind, is that the environment must be caring and accepting and special attention must be given to the interpretation and the channelling of the stories and emotions that arise.

Conclusion

In tracing the evolution of the different approaches to moral development and moral education over the past few decades, what emerges is a sort of values continuum, along which each theory appears to fall. At one extreme of the continuum is the view of values as a set of subjective criteria for making judgments. What informs this view, as has been demonstrated, is the relativist certainty that no set of values can be shown to be better than another. At the other end of the continuum is the perception of values as absolute, applying everywhere and at all times. Removing itself from this dichotomy, are the schools of thought which consider that it is imperative that we move beyond these positions to a more natural way of perceiving experience and making meaning of reality.

The findings of second generation cognitive science encourage the idea that we are narrative, or biomythical beings who, because of the inseparableness of our rational and non-rational ways of thinking and perceiving, must author/ise the texts of our own lives. It is, to my way of thinking, a wonderful thing that we need no longer belittle feelings, intuition, creativity, or be forced to treat them as something shameful, to be conquered and suppressed at all cost. This research is liberating because it is now possible to ground approaches hitherto considered scientifically questionable on solid scholarship. If we see moral education as an attempt to

introduce the notion of ethicality into the lives of children, then this work supports the empirical belief of pedagogues like myself, that teaching through story, of others or of self, is one of the most effective ways to elicit personal growth and moral transformation.

I have attempted to write about the different aspects of narrative. Whether one feels that autobiographical writing is more conducive to moral growth than omniscient or third person narratives, what is evident is that humanity has been expressing itself and attempting to explain reality in varying narrative modes for a very, very long time.

Schools are full of stories. Every social sciences and humanities text-book is a narrative. The anthologies we use in the English Language Arts classroom are replete with stories. The leap of faith that must now be made, and is being taken by courageous teachers everywhere, is to transfer the responsibility of learning from the teacher to the student. Non-directive approaches such as cooperative learning are being adopted. It is, however, in the teaching of English that great strides are being made. Scholars' concerns, in this field, with reader-response or meaning-making through writing theories, for example, can be likened to the emerging literature on narrative and moral education. Greene (1980), for one, believes that our life experiences shape and are shaped by our ways of using language. She also contends that language and the language arts exist to mediate between our awareness of ourselves, simultaneously, as individuals and as communal

beings. Another scholar in the field, Emig (1983), argues for the heuristic role of writing. A comparison between these emerging literatures would probably lead to a most interesting study.

Why is narrative important in moral education? Simply because, as Maguire (1978) so aptly put it, "the mind values meaning above knowledge" (p. 410).

Since "we are storytelling animals" (Keen & Valley-Fox, 1973), what better way to gain insight into ourselves and to improve upon what needs to be improved than by telling our own story; that story that cannot be told by anyone but us.

As a secondary school teacher of four years, I have witnessed, myself, how eager the majority of my students always are to share their personal stories. Unfortunately, not many opportunities are afforded them, during the school-day, for the verbal or written expression of **their** concerns. If it is true that they engage with texts authored by others, occasions for personal authorship are few and far between. Their voices, more often than not, are silenced rather than allowed free reign.

Although I have literature to thank for the moral guidance I received throughout my life, I have come, by virtue of this study, to recognise the importance of authoring and authorising one's own life story. It is obvious, a posteriori, that self-narrative derives its strength from the primary experience of all who engage in it. Furthermore, a narrative approach to moral

development and moral education appears, to me now, to be the most desirable way to help young people come to a better understanding of themselves, to face their moral dilemmas with more empowerment, and to assume full responsibility for the ethical positions they call their own.

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