Toward a Holistic Framework for Moral Education

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Abstract
Society is in turmoil that can be termed a moral crisis the result of dogmatic materialistic worldviews. A more holistic framework for moral development based on the tripartite theory that considers cognitive, affective and conative domains and capacities is presented along with some guiding principles as an answer to the needs of the modern world. The psychomotor domain is also considered in its role as a vehicle for manifesting moral behavior that can be also be used as part of a model for more holistic development.

After decades of being submerged in worldviews, conceptual frameworks and educational systems that promote the idea that reality is material and that happiness and well-being are based upon our physical welfare, more holistic views and their roles in society have been denigrated and marginalized. The modern Western materialistic ideology has grown to so dominate the worldviews of non-Western nations that no voice was left to seriously challenge its hold on modern thinking (*One common faith*, 2005). Though material prosperity has increased exponentially, human happiness has not. As the materialistic views are failing to deliver their long promised benefits, people are again turning to moral purpose and spiritual meaning in their search for happiness, justice, peace and connection (*One common faith*, 2005).

The current crisis in this time of global transformation is in the final analysis a moral crisis. Any reform efforts that fail to address the underlying moral issues of this crisis are doomed to failure. Part of the problem lies in the confusion that surrounds morals and morality and how to engender them. In addressing that problem, the question of how to rise above specific religions and religiosity to find a moral foundation common to all people needs to be answered.

One answer is to look to the essential moral teachings that are found in common in the major world religions. We must separate the false, dogmatic, superstitious and divisive perversion that have been introduced into religion from the life giving and soul inspiring parts that have been the well spring of the great world civilizations. Another answer is to call together a convocation of the world's religious leaders to agree upon those moral standards and teaching to which they all could subscribe.

A more holistic approach that includes moral education will increasingly become a concern of societies, parents, governments and educators searching for answers to the problems that beset them. We are now at a turning point. We can cling to the ineffective, materialistic dogmas and doctrines of the past or cast them aside for more holistic conceptualizations better suited to the requirements of this age (*One common faith*, 2005). The resulting moral disorientation threatens the well being of our individual, community and institutional lives.

Introduction

Most education today can be characterized as material education--that which relates primarily to the physical self and the physical world. This materialistic view of the human race assumes that we are no

more than animals, and that the overriding goal of life is the satisfaction of our animal needs. It encourages materialism, competition, elitism, division, disunity, injustices and a limited and limiting view of human reality and possibilities. Modern materialistic education has failed to appreciably lessen conflict, violence, instability, hate, prejudice, oppression, greed, hopelessness and multiple violations of personal and collective human rights to the extent needed in our global society.

Morals are the principles that guide behavior. These principles change from time to time and place to place. What may be appropriate or beneficial at one time or circumstance, may be destructive and harmful at another. As a result, morals are seen as something relative, and, as such, up to the person or culture who must ultimately decide what is right and wrong. When outsiders try to impose moral standards on those who do not subscribe to them, conflict, violence and wars can ensue.

<div align="center">Tripartite Theory of the Human Mind</div>

The tripartite theory which involves the cognitive, affective, and conative domains of the human mind has again gained credence in the latter part of the twentieth century. "The distinction between cognition, conation, and affectation, is convenient and historically well-founded in psychology though it should be regarded as a matter of emphasis rather than the partition. All human behavior, especially including school learning and achievement, involve some mixture of all three aspects," (Snow and Jackson,1993, p.). Goleman's (1995) definition of emotional intelligence includes all the above domains: "to refer to a feeling and its distinctive thoughts, psychological and biological states, and range of propensities to act (p. 289)." These aspects influence one another.

A holistic framework for moral education depends upon and is conditioned upon mental activities of cognition (related to knowing, intellect, epistemology, thinking), affection (related to valuing, emotion, aesthetics, feeling) and conation (related to striving, volition, ethics, willing). Regarding cognition, affection and conation as the basic elements of the human mind can be found in the writings of Plato, from the writers of the Enlightenment such as Kant and Leibnitz and from more recent work by Wundt and May (Johnston, 1994). It was popular among psychologists until behaviorism and materialistic philosophies, which disregarded what could not be seen and measured, became the dominant approach and view point in the early 1900's.

Of these three domains, conation has been the one most left out of many popular theories of learning, especially those based on behaviorism and limited cognitive processing approaches. This view is reflected in a recent *New York Times* article on morality in primates.

> The impartial element of morality comes from a capacity to reason, writes Peter Singer, a moral philosopher at Princeton, in "Primates and Philosophers." He says, "Reason is like an escalator — once we step on it, we cannot get off until we have gone where it takes us."

> That was the view of Immanuel Kant, Dr. Singer noted, who believed morality must be based on reason, whereas the Scottish philosopher David Hume, followed by Dr. de Waal, argued that moral judgments proceed from the emotions. (Wade, 2007)

In this paper their manifestation through the psychomotor (related to behavior, actions, skills, doing) domain will also be considered as it seems an important component of a holistic framework in general and it adds depth to the conception of moral education.

Moral education is affected by each of these domains and their respective taxonomies of learning objectives. We need knowledge, desire, will-power and physiological capacity to develop morals. The knowledge of right and wrong alone may not change our feelings, skills or will to act. Even when right

and wrong is clear, the valuing, psychomotor controls and moral commitment may not be sufficient to translate that knowledge into action. When it comes to moral education, the affective, psychomotor and conative domains must be considered along with the cognitive, as these are necessary in the moral process. Morality needs balance, nurturing, exercise and caring to fully develop.

Cognition, affection and conation can also be applied to the hierarchical stages of moral development as described in Table 1. Each of the domains described below will be affected by the level of moral development. An individual's thinking, feeling and acting will depend on the stage of moral development achieved. A good educational strategy is to help move from one stage to the next.

Cognitive Domain and Capabilities

The taxonomy of the cognitive domain (Bloom et al, 1956) divides knowledge into ascending levels of complexity that can be related to moral education. These levels, ordered from lowest to highest, are recall, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Recall is to remember or recognize, comprehension involves understanding, application requires the ability to make use of knowledge in practical situations, analysis involves the ability to break down knowledge in to its component parts, synthesis is the bringing together of parts of information to gain new understanding and evaluation is the ability to judge the value of the relevant facts and issues. Some scholars have added creativity as a level that transcends the others and that all levels can be applied to four kinds of knowledge: factual, conceptual, procedural and metacognitive (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

Some cognitive moral capabilities include being able to progressively
   1. know right from wrong.
   2. understand why and how people behave morally.
   3. apply moral principles in action.
   4. analyze personal and societal moral values.
   5. synthesize the various principles that apply to moral problems.
   6. evaluate moral solutions to real problems.
   7. create multiple solutions to moral issues.

The basic moral cognitive challenge and goal is to "know thyself". Learning about our strengths and weaknesses so we can deal with them effectively is a fundamental charge to all individuals. Learning from our experiences and those of others past and present helps us develop a moral framework. Being able to think critically, constructively and creatively to solve the problems of life is a necessary cognitive moral capability.

The basic moral standard for the cognitive domain is truth. According to philosophy, there are five basic ways of knowing or determining truth:
   1. Senses and experience
   2. Reason, logic and empiricism
   3. Tradition and tested wisdom
   4. Inspiration, intuition
   5. God
Each of these ways is limited and fallible. If we employ as many of the ways as possible, they become checks on one another. We should be ever and systematically expanding our frameworks for determining truth. Consultation with others on all important matters to investigate the truth from all angles is a potent tool.

A central guiding truth in developing a holistic framework is an appreciation and understanding of the essential oneness of humankind. The concepts of unity in diversity and reciprocity become keys to

understanding our world. Through our increased contact and interchange with diverse peoples with diverse thoughts, attitudes and lives we are better enabled to develop a more holistic worldview.

Affective Domain and Capabilities

The affective domain (Krathwohl, Bloom, and Maisa, 1964) has five hierarchical levels with several sublevels. The lowest is receiving, which merely requires the person to be aware, accept the input, and control attention. Next is responding, displaying new behavior from experience; then valuing, being involved or committed; organization, changing the value system to accommodate new values; and finally, characterization by value, behaving consistently with the new value.

Some hierarchical affective moral capabilities might include the following:
1. showing awareness of moral principle or situation
2. reacting to a moral encounter
3. develop a commitment to moral beliefs or actions
4. operate within a system of values that relate to and accommodate other values
5. show a consistent pattern and framework of new moral standards or values

Moral feelings are engendered by beauty that can be found in relationships through love, harmony and unity; in our actions through moral behavior and in nature through its goodness and balance. The affective domain centers on love and its various manifestations in our lives. Love is the foundation and moving force for all emotions (Diessner, 2002). Happiness is having love or our loved one or thing near to us and well cared for. Sadness is the opposite. Moral affective development should lead to happiness of the individual and others. One must overcome lower loves or passions and cultivate higher loves and attractions that lead to interconnectedness, service, reciprocity, caring and cooperation.

Sternberg has a tripartite theory of love that suggests the three elements in love are passion (motivational), intimacy (emotional) and commitment (cognitive). He describes how any one or a combination of any two of these elements result in a limited form of love, but all three are needed for what he terms consummate love. His formulation mirrors the three elements treated in our tripartite approach to a holistic framework for moral education.

Conative Domain and Capabilities

Conation is vectored energy with both direction and magnitude. It refers to volition in relation to cognition and motivation in relation to affection. Conative capacity is defined as "the enduring disposition to strive" (Brophy, 1987, p.40). People strong in conation are enterprising, energetic, determined, decisive, persistent, patient and organized (Giles, 1999). Some elements of this domain would include making a decision, setting goals, making plans to achieve goals, commitment, perseverance and evaluation of effort. Some subcategories could include the developing of will power by thinking, deciding, doing for oneself, carrying on in the face of difficulties and seeing challenges as opportunities for growth. Discipline, conscience, confidence, trust, faith and love are other areas that will influence one's volition and motivation.

The taxonomy of the conative domain has five stages: perception, focus, engagement, involvement and transcendence and twelve steps or sub stages that are cyclical: 1. recognize need, problem, challenge or opportunity, 2. set goal, 3. brainstorm alternatives, 4. assess risks, 5. select strategy, 6. get your act in gear (visualize), 7. organize, 8. make it happen, 9. push on, 10. wrap it up, 11. ooo & ah! (evaluate), 12. purpose/long range direction (Atman, 1982). These stages and steps can be further categorized as aspects of planning, acting and reflecting. Assagioli (1973) has posited six stages of willing that correlate closely with Atman's: 1. purpose (evaluation, motivation and intention), 2. deliberation, 3.

choice/decision, 4. affirmation, 5. planning/programming, and 6. direction of the execution. Snow and Jackson (1993) developed a provisional taxonomy of conative constructs that is also useful in understanding conation: 1. achievement motivation, 2. self-regulation, 3. interests and styles of learning, 4. self-related and 5. other-related.

Using Atman's five stages, we can describe how conative capabilities might apply to moral education.

1. Have a moral purpose and direction that can be applied to experience
2. Set moral goals
3. Decide what is right and how to accomplish it
4. Take initiative to do good
5. Commit wholly to moral behavior, seeing through to completion, transcending obstacles and limitations

Psychomotor Domain and Capabilities

The psychomotor domain is primarily concerned with the development of physical skills that can be applied to moral skill development in our actions and interactions with others. Taxonomies in this domain have been less studied and basically move from reflexive to highly skilled movements. We will use the one developed by Simpson (1972). The lowest level, perception, involves using sense organs to obtain cues needed to guide motor activity. The next higher psychomotor level, set, refers to being ready to perform a particular action. Guided response, performing under the guidance of a model, involves imitation and trial and error. The fourth level, mechanism, refers to being able to perform a task habitually with some degree of confidence and proficiency. The fifth level is complex or overt responses and the sixth is adaptation, using previously learned skills to perform new but unrelated tasks. The seventh and highest level of the hierarchical list of objectives in the psychomotor domain is origination, the creating of new performances after having developed skills.

Psychomotor capabilities that could be applied to moral education are
1. sensing cues needed to guide moral activity
2. moral readiness to act
3. imitating moral behavior through trial and error in various situations
4. being able to act morally regularly with confidence
5. moving moral behavior to a higher degree of proficiency
6. using moral skills in new situations
7. originating new moral performances

Moral actions and ends depend upon physical means. Though one may have the knowledge, desire and will to act morally, one must ultimately put those capacities into a physical expression. This domain is closely related to the conative domain. As a result, it is a moral responsibility to care for your physical well-being as it is the vehicle for morality.

Conclusion

Moral development involves the body, mind and spirit and how they are manifested in action through cognition, affection, conation and physical action. If teachers are to be able to create just and caring classrooms and help develop the full range of their students' capacities, they themselves must possess the knowledge, desire, skills, fortitude and moral competence to do so. Education should foster love, nobility, high ideals, morality, service, responsibility, kindness and respect for others. Teachers are to be models of holistic education, exemplifying the virtues they seek to inspire in their students, including open mindedness, understanding, love, truth, humility, kindness, tolerance, justice, honesty, fairness,

courage, wisdom, trustworthiness and caring. Holistic education can contribute to the transformation of our quickly shrinking and flattening world to one where peace, happiness and prosperity are available to the generality of humankind.

Such a holistic framework is an antidote the narrow materialistic worldview that is in ascendancy today. If educational systems are to contribute to the solutions, rather than contribute to the problems our society faces, then curricula of truth, love and service should constitute its moral foundation and framework. The materialistic frameworks have failed to appreciably counter the growth of hatred, prejudice, greed and oppression that lead to a breakdown of institutions and social systems. A more holistic framework will help shape the culture and beliefs of people so they can develop their potentialities to contribute to the well-being of society. It can create and nurture learning, just and harmonious communities within its institutions.

Just as the human being is a complex whole made up of many diverse parts that need to work together as a unified whole to be healthy, so too are our educational institutions. Those institutions can build the necessary relationships upon which a healthy community and world are based and create a more promising future. By developing our cognitive, affective, conative and psychomotor faculties we can become empowered to build that future. We can transform our own minds, hearts, wills and skills to build a healthier world. Once we have the knowledge, attitudes, values, habits and desire, we can take the responsibility to make this world more healthy and whole.

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