

A Model for the Evaluation of Moral Education

Programs in moral education are often viewed as single events, taught in a particular grade at a particular time.

This is one way of looking at the issues of moral education, but it is also indicative of some of the problems of American education. Following are several typical comments. "Curriculum construction in the United States is generally conducted in a shockingly piecemeal and superficial fashion" (Zais, 1976, p. xi). Alfred North Whitehead makes a plea for unity within the curriculum in *Aims of Education*: "The solution which I am urging is to eradicate the fatal disconnection of subjects which kills the vitality of our modern curriculum" (in Raths et al, 1967, p. 93). Philip Phenix relates this point to the practice of education, saying, "All too commonly the teacher teaches a particular subject or unit within a subject without any reference to its relationship to other components of the curriculum" (1964, p. 3).

Realms of Meaning (Phenix, 1964) establishes a philosophy of the curriculum for general education (which is also the subtitle of the work). The arguments which are a part of Phenix's curriculum model provide the framework for an analysis of four approaches to moral education which are in common use in the schools today and which have been used by this author. The approaches under discussion are value clarification, moral reasoning, value analysis, and Philosophy for Children.

In order to accomplish this analysis, the following steps will be developed: 1) a brief summary of the six realms of meaning will be presented along with an explanation of the four dimensions of meaning in order to address the question, "How does moral education fit into general education?"; 2) a conceptual organization for moral education will be outlined, 3) an evaluation of the four approaches to moral education using the conceptual tools developed by Phenix in *Realms of Meaning* and outlined above will be presented, and 4) a short summary and comment will end the paper.

How Does Moral Education Fit into General Education

Philip Phenix, in *Realms of Meaning*, offers a structure for general education. This structure is divided into six realms or Kingdoms of Knowing. Each realm is divided into four dimensions. Both the realms of meaning and their dimensions will be briefly discussed as they place moral education within a framework for general education. Moral education can then be discussed within its appropriate context.

Phenix presents a comprehensive organizational structure which establishes the teaching of *meaning* as the major tasks for schools. Meaning is, according to Phenix, what humans strive for and one of the elements which defines the species nature of humans.



Human beings are essentially creatures who have the power to experience *meanings*. Distinctively human existence consists in a pattern of meanings. Furthermore, general education is the process of engendering essential meanings (Phenix, p. 5).

Meaning is divided into six realms, including symbolic, empiric, esthetic, synnoetic, ethic, and synoptic.

Realms of Meaning

Symbolic meaning consists of formal conventions containing both ordinary language and mathematics. This is the most fundamental of the realms of meaning, as all the other areas are dependent on it for their development.

Empirical meaning follows symbolic meaning within Phenix's scheme for organizing curriculum. The empiric includes the sciences of the physical world, of living things, and of man. Factual descriptions, generalizations, and theoretical formulations are its tools. It is based on observation and experimentation.

Esthetic meaning is the area for study which includes the arts. Meanings in this area are concerned with the contemplative perception of particular things, with unique meanings to the artist and the viewer of the work of art.

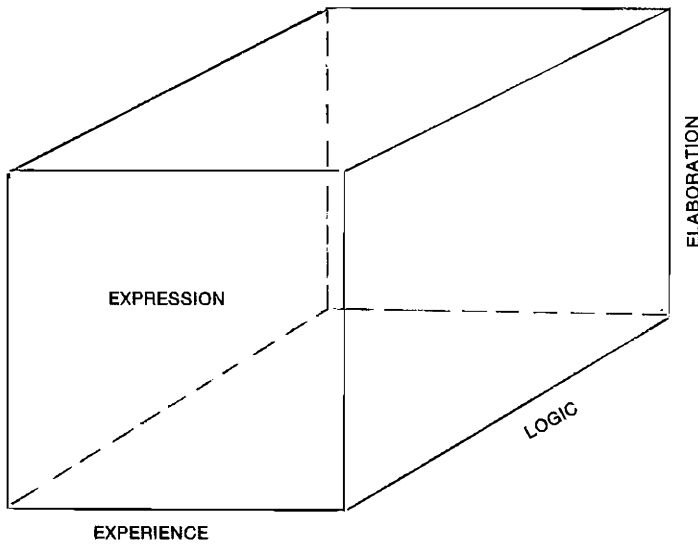
Synnoetic meaning, a concept which Phenix uses to embrace Michael Polanyi's "personal knowledge" and Martin Buber's "I-Thou" relationship, is the next area of meaning essential within the structure of a general education curriculum. Synnoetics is to knowing what sympathy is to feeling. A synnoetic meaning is one which is generated by the knower being sensitive to the object to be known.

Synoptic meanings are comprehensively integrative. History, religion, and philosophy are in this last realm.

Dimensions of Meaning

Phenix states that each of the realms of meaning has four dimensions. These are 1) experience; 2) rule, logic, or principle; 3) selective elaboration; and 4) expression. To better understand the nature of the dimensions and how they relate to each other and to each of the realms of meaning, we might imagine a cube with height, width, depth, and volume. Each of the dimensions is represented by one of these measurements. The cube below can represent any of the six realms of meaning.

Conceptual Organization of Moral Education



The realm of ethics, then, is *right action*. The central concept of this domain is *obligation* or what *ought to be done*. The "ought" here is not individual but a *universal principle of right* . . . all voluntary actions whatever are properly subject to moral judgement, regardless of how trivial or important, public or private, they may be, and regardless of any conventions by which morality may be limited in ordinary understanding. The ethical domain is not defined by what conduct is about, but by the fact of its being deliberate and subject to judgement of right and wrong (Phenix, p. 221).

The subject of moral knowledge may be divided into five areas: 1) human rights; 2) sex and family relationships; 3) class, ethnic, racial, religious, and vocational group relationships; 4) economic relationships; and 5) political relationships. The fountainhead of these is human rights, as all the other areas refer back to basic questions of human nature.

Moral knowledge, unlike other realms of meaning, has no experts in the application or practice of the behavior; empirical meaning, for example, is dominated by experts in specialized areas of study. These experts are persons who know more about the theory and the practice in their particular fields of knowledge; to be an expert means to know the theory because it helps the person to be a better practitioner. This is not necessarily true in moral education; the person who is more knowledgeable about the theory of ethics is not necessarily the most moral or ethical person. Theory does help in the teaching of ethical knowledge, however. A person who is an expert in moral knowledge is like a person who is an expert in the theory of art — it helps the person to be a good teacher but not necessarily a good artist.

Moral knowledge can be used to illustrate the cube and explain each of the dimensions. Experience is the first dimension which each of the realms of meaning has in common. It refers to the life of the mind, to reflection and self-awareness. A person who has an experience is at one and the same time object and subject, knower and known, agent and patient, observer and observed. "This duality is what enables a person to know anything at all. One knows something if he (or she) is at one and the same time distinct from and identified with what he (or she) knows" (Phenix, p. 22). To have an experience of moral knowledge, therefore, one acts and reflects on the action. If the action is not reflected on, it is mindless and not instructive. Others might judge the act as moral or immoral, but if it is not reflected on, it is not an experience for the person and therefore not an act which is meaningful.

Rule, logic, or principle is what divides the realms of meaning from one another. Moral knowledge is different from empirical knowledge because a different set of principles applies. Empirical knowledge depends on observation and experimentation while moral knowledge depends on universal principles of obligation. This logic is also what allows each realm to make a specific contribution to the understanding of a problem in its context.

Selective elaboration is simply the process of choosing from among all possible examples those meanings which have the most instructive powers — those which are most significant and which contribute most to the growth of knowledge within the realm. A moral might be an example.

Expression, the last of the dimensions of meaning, is merely the communication of the ideas found within the realm of meaning. If we are going to gain an understanding of the meaning of something, it must be communicable. Plato's *Apology* would be an example of this communication of ethical meaning.

Summary Chart

Six Realms of Meaning

- Symbolic** — Contains ordinary language and mathematics. The most fundamental of all realms of meaning.
- Empiric** — Includes the sciences of the physical world, of living things, and of man. Provides factual descriptions, generalizations, and theoretical formulations. Based on observation and experimentation.
- Esthetic** — Contains the various arts. Meanings in this realm are concerned with the contemplative perception of particular things as unique objects.
- Synnoetic** — Embraces what Michael Polanyi calls "personal knowledge" and Martin Buber the "I-Thou" relationship. This realm is to knowing what sympathy is to feeling.
- Ethic** — Moral meaning that expresses obligation rather than fact, perceptual form or awareness of relationships.
- Synoptic** — Refers to meanings that are comprehensively integrative. History, religion, and philosophy are in this realm.

Four Dimensions of Meaning

- Experience** — Refers to the life of the mind, to reflection and self-awareness. A person is at the

same time both subject and object, knower and known, agent and patient, observer and observed. This duality is what enables a person to know anything at all.

Rule, logic, or principle — Separates the realms of meaning.

Selective elaboration — Meaning is developed out of this; that is, not all knowledge is equally important.

Expression — Meaning is communicable.

Five Areas of Moral Concern

Human rights — Describes conditions of life that, it is believed, ought to prevail.

Sex and family relations — Relationships between sexes and among family members are ordered and considered.

Class, ethnic, racial, religious, and vocational groups — The rights and wrongs of intergroup relationships.

Economics — The distribution of wealth.

Politics — The distribution of power.

An Evaluation of Four Approaches to Moral Education

The four approaches to moral education under discussion are 1) value clarification, 2) moral reasoning, 3) value analysis, and 4) Philosophy for Children. Each approach is discussed according to its relationship to other realms of meaning, to the four dimensions of moral knowing, and to the five areas of moral concern. The strategy used is to compare each approach to the criteria established by Phenix rather than to compare the approaches to each other.

Value Clarification

Value clarification is the first approach to be explored. The proponents of value clarification would not agree that they are involved in moral education. They are also concerned with assisting students in sorting out their values and placing them in some sort of priority order. I contend that this fits into the broad area of ethics as defined in this paper, i.e., the realm of right action.

Value clarification is based on a seven-step process of reflection and action, namely 1) choosing freely, 2) choosing from alternatives, 3) choosing after consideration of consequences, 4) prizing and cherishing, 5) publicly affirming, 6) acting, and 7) acting with a pattern.

This process of valuing has certain built-in expectations for the student. First, the student is asked to choose, usually from a set of predetermined alternatives. This is usually done privately and often on paper. Although not usually presented in these terms, this is the *dilemma*. Next, the individual student choices are shared with teacher and classmates. Finally, a discussion follows. The strategies as presented in many of the books on value clarification assume that if students select a value or a value position from a list of values or value positions, they have thereby clarified their values.

With this short description of the value clarification approach to moral education, a discussion of the

relationship to the larger issues can be developed.

What is the relationship of value clarification to the other realms of meaning? Symbolic meaning is gained by understanding common language logic as well as symbolic logic of the subject under inspection. Value clarification uses little if any logic to generate knowledge about the values which are being clarified. The step in the value clarification approach which asks students to consider consequences is perhaps one facet of logical inquiry. This step is not well developed in any of the discussions on method nor are many strategies presented in the many value clarification books which provide the teacher or the student with much insight into how to fully understand the logical implication of any value choice.

Empirical meaning is likewise minimally developed. Factual description, generalization, and theoretical formulation are not called for. It may be the case that this type of meaning should come within the subject matter in which a value clarification exercise is being conducted. If that is the case, the context of the lesson might provide the student with experience in this realm, and to some extent this issue is addressed in *Value Clarification in Subject Matter* (Harmin, Kirschenbaum, and Simon, 1973).

Esthetic knowing is not even mentioned in any of the material that I am familiar with. Synnoetic meaning, though not consciously developed, is implicit in many of the exercises, as the student is asked to become sensitive to the ideas, points of view, and feelings of other students.

Finally, what is the relationship of value clarification to synoptic meaning? It appears that larger issues of religion, history, and philosophy are almost completely ignored, with the exception of two books by Brian Hall (1973).

What is the relationship of value clarification to the four dimensions of moral knowing? Experience is the first of these dimensions. Value clarification is strong in this area. Students are asked to reflect and to become self-aware. Many of the exercises enable students to be "object and subject, knower and known, observer and observed" (Phenix, p. 22). For example, one of the exercises asks the student to locate his/her position on a pencil and paper continuum and then to place him/herself on an imaginary continuum in the room along with the rest of his/her classmates.

There is little development of rule, logic, or principle, except for the valuing process. This process is the *principle* in value clarification. In all fairness the principle is well developed and essential to the strategies.

Selective elaboration is accomplished by means of the dilemmas and/or strategies. While expression is accomplished in the student discussions, its development is in the hands of the teacher and little assistance is given him/her in drawing out the richness of the arguments.

What is the relationship of value clarification to the five types of moral issues? Value clarification is rich in the variety of issues which have been developed for classroom use. It is easy to find human rights, family, racial, economic, or political dilemmas for classroom use.



Moral Reasoning

Moral reasoning is based on a set of dilemmas. These dilemmas are short vignettes concerning situations which have moral implications and which are open-ended. In other words, the stories may end with questions of the goodness and badness, the rightness and wrongness of the situation, and/or the method of solving the problem is left open for the students to decide. Moral reasoning is built around six stages. The stages, although not directly related to student role expectations, nonetheless play a part in determining the expected behavior of the students. Students are asked to give reasons for a position they support with regard to the dilemmas. They are asked what they think the person in the story should do and to support that decision with reasons. The stages of moral reasoning guide the discussion. If a teacher pays attention to the discussion, the stages become clues for asking clarifying questions.

What is the relationship of moral reasoning to the other realms of knowing? First, symbolic meaning is to some degree a part of moral reasoning. The six stages of moral reasoning are based on specific relationships among person, principles, and facts. A teacher who is skilled in reasoning and/or common language logic will elicit symbolic discussion from the class. The material, however, does not provide teachers with much help in this area.

The realm of empirics is given some consideration, but largely in non-specific ways. The emphasis on reasoning skills implies that students should focus on factual descriptions, generalizations, and theoretical formulation, but they are in fact given no help in developing these skills nor in the skills of observation and experimentation.

Aesthetics is a realm which is almost totally ignored. Synnoetics, the empathic relationship to the object to be known, is in part developed by the use of the

dilemma. Students do have an opportunity to expand this awareness to include the perspective of another person.

Synoptics, the comprehensive and integrative realm of knowing, is partially developed by the use of the six stages of moral reasoning. This use of the stages is not sufficient to develop a truly comprehensive or integrative approach. The dilemmas are ahistoric and stripped of context. This stripping of context restricts the power of the method to provide synoptic meaning.

What is the relationship of moral reasoning to the four dimensions of moral knowing? Experience, which refers to the life of the mind, to reflection and self-awareness, is well developed by moral reasons, as it was with value clarification. The dilemmas stimulate discussion and allow students to see themselves in the situation and yet remove themselves from the dilemmas and look at the situation from the outside. This fits the Phenix definition of experience quite well.

The second dimension of a realm of meaning is rule, logic or principle; each of them is represented by a stage of moral reasoning. The principles are clearly stated; the unresolved question is this: How do we as teachers assist students in applying the principle?

Selective elaboration and expression are accomplished by the use of the dilemmas and the classroom discussion.

With regard to the five areas of moral knowledge, i.e., 1) human rights, 2) sex and family relationships, 3) class, ethnic, racial, religious, and vocational group relationships, 4) economic relationships, and 5) political relationships, moral reasoning brings the discussion back to the central issues of human rights by focusing on all of these areas through a large variety of dilemmas and with the methodology of the six stages.

Value Analysis

Value analysis, as outlined by Maurice Hunt and Lawrence Metcalf in *Teaching High School Social Studies*, uses situations which are selected by the teacher, usually from a historical or contemporary controversy. A method for the analysis of values is clearly and carefully outlined in their textbook. Value analysis is a technique with specific expectations for the students and the teacher, both during the discussion and in preparation for discussion. The students are asked first to understand the nature of the problem; therefore they are asked to clearly define the problem by understanding its historic roots, the way all parties in the situation are affected by the problem, and how they affect each other.

After a definition of the problem is agreed upon, the next step is to look at possible solutions, paying special attention to consequences and relationships. Students are then asked to develop criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the policy or solution. These criteria are then evaluated by the students as to consistency, reciprocity, and means/ends relationships.

How is value analysis related to the other realms of meaning? Symbolic meanings are well developed in the value analysis approach to ethics. Common language logic and good reasons logic are central to the examination of issues with this approach. Empirical meanings are explored primarily through observation. The students are also, to some degree, asked to approach the solution to the problem under discussion in an experimental frame of mind.

Esthetics, as in the two approaches discussed above, is again mostly ignored. In the synnoetic realm, the student using the approach explored by Hunt and Metcalf is largely analytic with little, or at least less, opportunity to both identify with and look objectively at the situation under discussion.

The analysis of values in the synoptic realm is historical — grounded in history. The value issues are almost always discussed within their larger context.

What is the relationship of value analysis to the four dimensions of moral knowing? Students are encouraged to *experience* the ethical controversy under discussion by looking at the action and the consequences of the action from a number of points of view. This method allows for the greatest breadth of experience of any of the methods discussed so far.

The rule, logic, or principle which is most dominant in value analysis is the rule(s) of social science investigation. Rules from history, political science, and sociology are often used to uncover, present, and analyze data.

Selective elaboration and expression are both developed in discussion. The discussion usually focuses on a solution to a dilemma, such as the right to strike under specific circumstances, and students are expected to choose the most significant meaning (selective elaboration) and to present the arguments for that position (expression). In the hands of a prepared teacher this method works well with regard to developing the four dimensions of meaning discussed by Phenix.

Value analysis may not always offer the students a full range of moral issues. Although the potential for all areas is theoretically explorable with the tools of value analysis, their exploration is likely to occur in a social

studies class and be restricted to the course content of a particular subject and grade.

Philosophy for Children

Philosophy for Children is a set of materials, a method of inquiry, and an orientation to knowledge. A series of four novels and an instructional manual for each novel constitute the basic materials. The novels are written for elementary/middle school to high school students. The first novel, *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*, is intended for fifth or sixth grade students. The other novels can be read in varying sequences. There are enough characters in the novels to allow students to read roles, with each student in an average size class (18-25) reading a different role. The characters in the novels are not model students, teachers, administrators, or parents, if by model we mean persons who always do the correct thing. The characters are representative of different life styles and, perhaps more important, different styles of thinking.

The respect for different styles of thinking is central to understanding the method of inquiry used in Philosophy for Children. Thinking styles of students are honored in the novels, and teachers are expected to honor them in the classroom. Discussion and conversation are the key pedagogic tools. Students learn from each other, the teacher, and the instructional material by talking, by thinking out loud. The teacher assists the students in defining issues and in developing tools to understand the topics under discussion, but the discussion is student-centered and the topics are topics of student interest. Students are encouraged to *think about thinking* and provided the tools to aid their efforts. Logic is introduced to the students. Students learn the basics of formal logic, much of good reasons logic, and are introduced to inductive reasoning and many other tools of philosophy. In fact, over thirty different thinking skills are developed in the course of *Harry*, *Lisa*, *Suki*, and *Mark*.

"A sense of wonder" is the phrase which best describes the orientation toward knowledge which Philosophy for Children encourages. To use, expand, and develop this sense of wonder, children are led to explore new worlds and to rediscover old and/or commonplace worlds. Reasons, support, and evidence are required of students as they present their ideas, and *all* are encouraged to do so. Questions are welcome, and reflection insisted on. Students are given examples in the novels of children and adults who look at the world from different points of view, who objectify their environment in order to learn from it, and who learn by talking to others and by reflecting on their own thoughts. The models in the novels are also brought to life in classroom discussion. Inquiry is conducted within the community of the classroom. Students learn *from* each other and *with* each other. They inquire about real problems together. Answers are sought, but the emphasis is on the search more than on the product of the search.

With regard to symbolic meaning, the novels begin with common language logic as their mainspring. Harry discovers the beginning elements of Aristotelian logic. Empirical inquiry is developed in the novel by examples of student involvement and in the classroom

through discussion and teacher-directed exercises, which are presented in a comprehensive instructional manual. The esthetic realm is explored specifically in *Suki* and is to a lesser degree brought out in each of the novels. Synnoetics, or "personal knowledge," is modeled in the person of Harry Stottlemeier and in the invitation to the students to get into the "shoes" of all the characters in the novels by "role reading" and discussion. Ethical meaning is contextually presented in all its richness and not isolated dilemmas or exercises. Especially important is the point that it is possible to prevent problems and not be stuck in no-win dilemmas. Perhaps the greatest strength of Philosophy for Children is its synoptic quality; it is philosophic. It attempts comprehensive integration.

What is the relationship of Philosophy for Children to the four dimensions of moral knowing? Students experience ethical inquiry by reading about other students in the novels who are engaged in ethical issues, by discussion, and by problem analysis. Rule, logic, and principle are the stuff of Philosophy for Children. Rules of inquiry — shared inquiry in the classroom — are the most basic element of the program. Logic is also stressed both within the novels and in the classroom discussions, and principles are the "meat" of the discussions — principles of justice, fairness, and individual rights. The novels focus the attention of students on several major issues. Each novel has one or two major themes which are accented with many minor themes, or leading ideas. Expression is addressed through the classroom discussions of leading ideas and major themes.

Summary and Comments

Each method discussed has its advantages and disadvantages. First, let us look briefly at these for each approach to moral education. Then we will restate the strengths of each program or approach as it relates to the major focus of this paper, i.e., How does each approach to moral education fit into general education?

A summary table will show relative strengths of each approach on some basic components which guided the comments in the summary of each presentation.

	Value Clarification	Moral Reasoning	Value Analysis	Philosophy for Children
Materials available to teacher	++	+	+	++
Materials available to student	+	0	0	++
Need for training	minimal	great	great	great
Theoretical background	+	+	+	++

How do each of the approaches to moral education fit into general education? Raths, Harmin, and Simms' *Teaching Values* presents an argument for value clarification as an approach to addressing the needs of drifting and uncommitted students. This has remained the major focus and the strength of value clarification programs (as perhaps best exemplified by the work of Jay Clark). The fit of value clarification into general education was perhaps assumed but not clearly delineated. The arguments for the uses of value clarification address the problem of students, i.e., lack of commitment and drifting, without addressing the problem of the child in the school setting.

Moral learning, except in the Just Community Schools, falls into much the same category as value clarification with regard to its place within a total school context. In fairness, the Just Community Schools use a comprehensive approach which takes into consideration many of the ideas of Phenix regarding the importance of meaning for children in school. However, moral reason considered outside of the Just Community Schools appears to be an isolated program largely unrelated to the rest of the life of the school.

Value analysis addresses the social studies curriculum and, to the extent that it is confined within the walls of the social studies classroom, remains a small step in the integration of learning. The general method outlined in the Hunt and Metcalf book, *Teaching High School Social Studies*, is one which has application in all areas of the curriculum.

Philosophy for Children directly addresses the questions of meaning. Meaning is the major topic of *Philosophy In the Classroom* and of all the novels in Philosophy for Children. It is the only program under discussion which views education as a quest for meaning and therefore the only program which fits Phenix's criteria for placing moral education within general education.

Is This a Fair Comparison?

The author of this paper has examined and taught all of the above discussed programs. They were all chosen because they have provided stimulation and interest for both me and the students I taught. But I have also been looking for a comprehensive framework, one which is large enough to be flexible but rigorous enough to mediate against fad chasing. *Realms of Meaning* provides that framework for me. Given the philosophical nature of both *Realms of Meaning* and Philosophy for Children, it is not surprising to find Philosophy for Children with a strong rating when judged by Phenix's standards, but I believe the standards or criteria laid down by Phenix are valid. They pull together, for me at least, the major elements of education and schooling and provide a context for the various components of education, including moral education. These are standards by which I think all curriculum innovations ought to be judged.

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