Moral Exemplarity

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THE FIELD OF moral psychology and moral education has stagnated seemingly, because of the conceptual skew and biases of dominant models. These models provide a threadbare conception of moral functioning and ineffectual means by which to foster children's moral development. I have two primary concerns. The first is that the field has been overly focused on moral rationality because of the influence of the formalist tradition in moral philosophy and the cognitive-developmental tradition in moral psychology with their aversion to personality factors, which they regard as corrupting influences on the purity of moral reason. The second concern is that the field has been preoccupied with the interpersonal aspects of morality that regulate our relationships with each other while ignoring the intrapsychic aspects that pertain more to our basic values, lifestyle, identity, and character. In this chapter I advocate a new direction for the field, stressing the development of moral personality, character, and virtue—a new direction that will be illustrated through the study of moral exemplarity.

Foundational to the present enterprise is some shared understand-

ing of what is meant by "morality." Here I propose a working definition of morality and, in doing so, make explicit my own assumptions and understandings. I am quite aware of the recurrent controversies in moral philosophy regarding any such definition, and do not claim to have any resolution; I only intend to make clear my starting point. The definition is purposely broad, erring on the side of being overly inclusive rather than narrow. In my view, morality is a fundamental, pervasive aspect of human functioning, having both interpersonal and intrapersonal components. More specifically, it refers to voluntary actions that, at least potentially, have some social and interpersonal implications and that are governed by intrapsychic cognitive and emotive mechanisms.

There are a few things to note about this tentative definition. First, morality is clearly an interpersonal enterprise because it regulates people's interactions and adjudicates conflicts—it involves the impact of our behavior on others' rights and welfare. But morality is also an intrapersonal enterprise because it is integral to the how-shall-we-then-live existential question—it involves basic values, lifestyle, and identity. These intrapsychic aspects of moral functioning do have indirect implications for interpersonal interactions (as the above definition claims) because our values and moral character are played out in our relationships with others. The interpersonal aspects of moral functioning, with their focus on interpersonal rights and welfare, have been well represented in contemporary moral psychology and education but that has not been the case for the intrapsychic aspects. Dominant theories in moral psychology define the domain rather selectively and ignore issues of what has been pejoratively labeled private morality such as the development of the self and personal values.

The second thing about this definition of morality is that it claims that moral functioning is multifaceted, involving the dynamic interplay of thought, emotion, and behavior. Moral emotions such as guilt or empathy always occur with some accompanying cognitions, thoughts about one's personal values or one's interactions with others always entail some affect, and voluntary behaviors always have some basis in

intentions that determine their moral quality. The interactive nature of moral functioning has been destructively minimized by the major theoretical traditions in the field, each of which has regarded different aspects of psychological functioning as representing the core of morality—the social-learning tradition has emphasized the acquisition of moral behaviors through principles of learning, the identification-internalization (psychoanalytic) tradition has emphasized the operation of moral emotions and defense mechanisms through the dynamics of identification with parents, and the cognitive-developmental tradition has emphasized the development of moral judgment through individuals' construction of meaning. This artificial trichotomy—represented by these major competing traditions in moral psychology—obfuscates the interdependent nature of thought, emotion, and behavior in moral functioning and trivializes our understanding by an exclusive focus on some particular component that has been hived off. A more comprehensive and holistic appreciation of how these different aspects relate to each other is a pressing goal for moral psychology.

These competing perspectives in moral psychology have not been meaningfully integrated and are somewhat out of balance. Taking poetic license, I contend that contemporary moral psychology has been afflicted by *rational planexia*—a condition of wandering astray, of being pulled out of proper [planetary] alignment by the "gravity" of moral rationality. Moral psychology, like so many other disciplines within the social sciences and beyond, has been inordinately influenced by the legacy of the Enlightenment which, among other things, was concerned with establishing a rational basis for moral understandings and convictions to overcome the perils of ethical relativism. Note that this preoccupation with the rational foundations for morality supplanted the centuries-old ethical concern with moral virtues and character (the Aristotelian tradition), the concern that perhaps better accords with commonsense notions of moral life.

The dominant philosophical perspective girdling the field has been the formalist tradition, best exemplified by Immanuel Kant, with its

assumptions emphasizing individualism, justice, rights, and duties. Kant holds a dualistic view of human nature—reason versus passion—with rationality forming the core of moral functioning and personological factors (emotions, desires, personal projects, and so on) regarded with much suspicion, as corrupting biases to overcome if people are to attain to the standard of autonomous moral rationality.

Similarly, the prevailing psychological framework in moral psychology has been the structuralist cognitive-developmental tradition, exemplified by Lawrence Kohlberg, with its assumptions emphasizing the stage-like development of moral reasoning abilities. The structuralist tradition has not been alone in this cognitive emphasis. Psychology, in general, has been subjected to a veritable cognitive revolution as psychoanalytic and behavioral theories have been eclipsed by cognitive and information-processing approaches, reflecting the liberal optimism that arose in the period following the Second World War. Kohlberg can be credited with overcoming much of the philosophical naïveté of early research on morality and with establishing moral development as a legitimate field of psychological inquiry.[1] His model has dominated moral psychology for almost three decades, and perhaps rightly so, for his conceptual, empirical, and applied contributions have been monumental. Few would quibble with that claim, and even people who disagree with Kohlberg frequently rely on his theory as a foil. Their responses are often framed by the fundamental assumptions undergirding his model, illustrating its profound influence. Kohlberg's formalist and structuralist heritage led him to focus on moral reasoning development, assessed through individuals' cerebrated resolution of moral quandaries. He seeks to establish an account of moral development defined by reason and revealed through the developmental process. He argues that moral conflicts are best resolved through principles of justice

1. See L. Kohlberg, *Essays on Moral Development, Vol. 1, The Philosophy of Moral Development* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981) and *Vol. 2, The Psychology of Moral Development* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984).

and that such reasoning is auto-motivating, sufficient to compel moral action (here Kohlberg adopts Plato's two maxims, "virtue is one and its name is justice" and "to know the good is to do the good").

But these assumptions have hardly gone unchallenged: other competing conceptions of the good besides justice, such as care and community, have been advocated and the predictability of action on the basis of moral judgment is rather tenuous, pointing to the "gappiness" of moral life. Furthermore, Kohlberg's vision of moral maturity centers on principled moral judgment, an ideal ethical standpoint requiring abstract impartiality as we separate ourselves from our own personalities and interests to follow the dictates of universalizable moral principles—a vision of moral maturity that is rather psychologically barren and suspect. The philosophical constraints and psychological emphases inherent in Kohlberg's model have the inevitable consequence of restriction of perspective, a conceptual skew that results in a narrow view of moral functioning. Kohlberg was not entirely blind to the constraints placed on his model by the emphasis on moral rationality and justice, and he attempted to flesh out his theory in several ways, at least as much as his theoretical allegiances would allow; but the model could only be tweaked so far and its core emphasis on cognition and justice remained.

Other influential theorists in moral psychology[2] have also implicitly assumed the objectives of modernity and so can be similarly tarred and feathered for their emphasis on moral rationality and minimal attention

2. N. Eisenberg, "Prosocial Development: A Multifaceted Model," in W. M. Kurtines and J. L. Gewirtz, eds., *Moral Development: An Introduction* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1995); C. Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982); J. R. Rest, D. Narvaez, M. J. Bebeau, and S. J. Thoma, *Postconventional Moral Thinking: A Neo-Kohlbergian Approach* (Mahwah, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1999); R. A. Shweder, M. Mahapatra, and J. G. Miller, "Culture and Moral Development, " in J. Kagan and S. Lamb, eds., *The Emergence of Morality in Young Children* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987): 1–83; E. Turiel, *The Development of Social Knowledge: Morality and Convention* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

to moral personality, character, and intuition.[3] The alignment of the moral psychology field in general has been skewed by this pervasive emphasis on moral rationality in its application to interpersonal functioning.

This prevailing emphasis on moral rationality has eclipsed attention to other aspects of moral functioning and has belied the complexity of the moral life. The danger of this overemphasis on moral rationality is that it separates people from their own personalities and risks destroying their motivation to be moral—a situation that has been labeled moral schizophrenia.[4] A slightly different way to articulate this concern is to note moral psychology's preoccupation with the interpersonal aspects of moral functioning (justice, rights, welfare, care) and its relative neglect of the intrapsychic aspects that involve the characteristics of the good person and the good life (basic values, identity, integrity). Flanagan similarly critiques the marginalization of moral character in philosophy and argues convincingly for a more realistic conception of moral functioning and moral ideals—one that is psychologically possible for "creatures like us." Flanagan does not regard current ethical frameworks as very useful for informing moral action because they presuppose psychological functioning that is impossible for ordinary people ever to attain.

> Any moral theory must acknowledge that . . . the projects and commitments of particular persons give each life whatever meaning it has; and that all persons, even very impartial ones, are partial to their own projects. It follows that no ethical conception . . . can reasonably

3. R. L. Campbell and J. C. Christopher, "Moral Development Theory: A Critique of Its Kantian Presuppositions," *Developmental Review* 16 (1996): 1–47; J. Haidt, "The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment," *Psychological Review* (in press); D. K. Lapsley, *Moral Psychology* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1996) and "An Outline of a Social-Cognitive Theory of Moral Character," *Journal of Research in Education* 8 (1998): 25–32.

4. M. Stocker, "The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories," *Journal of Philosophy* 73 (1976): 453–66.

> demand a form of impersonality, abstraction, or impartiality which ignores the constraints laid down by universal psychological features.[5]

Thus, we hear increasingly frequent appeals to enrich the psychological study of moral development by integrating cognition with personality and character, thereby providing more holistic understandings of moral functioning and effective means to foster moral development. It is important to note that these criticisms of the rationalistic bias of contemporary moral psychology do not negate the essential role that moral reasoning plays; rather these concerns argue for a more full-bodied and balanced account of moral functioning that meaningfully includes moral personality and character.

New Directions for Moral Psychology: Personality and Character

The new direction that seems to be evolving in the psychology of moral development is the study of moral personality and character, an approach that has the potential to include both the inter- and intrapersonal aspects of moral functioning as well as encompass the cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. Similarly, recognition is beginning among moral philosophers of the need to constrain ethical theories by an empirically informed account of how people ordinarily understand morality, as well as by the psychological processes involved in moral functioning.[6]

What I advocate, and pursue in my own empirical work, is a two-pronged approach to developing such an integrated account of moral functioning: One approach examines people's conceptions of moral

5. O. Flanagan, *Varieties of Moral Personality: Ethics and Psychological Realism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991): 100–101.

6. See especially M. L. Johnson, "How Moral Psychology Changes Moral Theory," in L. May, M. Friedman, and A. Clark, eds., *Minds and Morals: Essays on Cognitive Science and Ethics* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996): 45–68.

functioning and moral excellence, notions that are embedded in everyday language and common understandings, the other the psychological functioning of moral exemplars, people who have been identified as leading lives of moral virtue, integrity, and commitment. These different empirical strategies should be mutually informative, providing convergent evidence regarding aspects of moral functioning that are operative in everyday life and should be incorporated into our theories of moral development and approaches to moral education and socialization.

Conceptions of Moral Excellence

Part of the impetus for examining people's conceptions of moral excellence is to address the skew that dominant models of moral psychology have introduced through various biases and prior assumptions. Philosophical perspectives have the inherent potential to limit and need to be checked against the empirical evidence yielded by ordinary understanding and intuition. At this juncture, moral psychology and education need to be more closely aligned with how people experience morality day by day than by the tight constraints of philosophical conceptualizations. My hunch is that a broad survey of conceptions of moral functioning may reveal some important notions that have been sidelined in contemporary moral psychology because of the encumbrance of philosophical and methodological blinders.

This new direction in moral psychological research is illustrated through the findings of a recent project in which I examined people's conceptions of moral excellence.[7] Although most theories of moral development accord minimal attention to definitions of moral exemplarity, Kohlberg did articulate an explicit vision of moral maturity—the attainment of dilemma-busting principles of justice—but as argued before, this view is an impoverished and psychologically barren one

7. L. J. Walker and R. C. Pitts, "Naturalistic Conceptions of Moral Maturity," *Developmental Psychology* 34 (1998): 403–19.

because of its focus on moral rationality. Regardless, there is scant empirical evidence for the elusive Stage 6 (universal ethical principles). We need a more compelling and full-bodied conception of moral excellence. My research on conceptions of moral excellence entailed a sequence of three studies (using free-listing, prototypicality-rating, and similarity-sorting procedures) and was intended to provide a handle on people's implicit notions and typologies of morality. Analyses identified two dimensions underlying people's understanding of moral maturity: a self–other dimension and an external–internal dimension. The self–other dimension incorporates some of the dynamics of the notions of dominance and nurturance (or agency and communion) as fundamental in the understanding of interpersonal behavior, and illustrates the tension between notions of personal agency and communion in moral functioning. The external–internal dimension reflects the tension between external moral standards and a personal conscience. This implies that moral maturity requires both sensitivity to shared moral norms and development of autonomous moral values and standards.

Analyses also identified clusters of attributes (or themes) in people's understanding of moral maturity. The principled–idealistic cluster reflects the importance of a range of strongly held values and principles and the maintenance of high standards and ideals—an acute and evident sense of morality. The fair cluster entails the notions of justice, principle, and rationality that reflect Kohlberg's conception of moral excellence, so naturalistic conceptions do include that component of morality. The dependable–loyal and caring–trustworthy clusters resonate with themes of interpersonal sensitivity and warmth. Thus, other-oriented compassion and care that entail helpful and considerate action, as well as the nurturing of relationships through faithfulness and reliability, are significant in notions of moral functioning. The confident cluster references the qualities of agency that are important in the pursuit of moral goals. The strong commitment to moral values and standards (principled–idealistic cluster) joined with a strong sense of self and agency (confident cluster) may contribute to the integrity that

is viewed as essential to moral maturity (has integrity cluster)—that the moral person is committed to action based on these principles, values, and ideals, and has the personal fortitude to do so.

Among the moral virtues emphasized here were notions of honesty, truthfulness, and trustworthiness, as well as those of care, compassion, thoughtfulness, and considerateness. Other salient traits revolve around virtues of dependability, loyalty, and conscientiousness. These aspects of moral character are foundational for interpersonal relationships and social functioning, but have received scant attention in moral psychology or have been relegated to an immature good-boy-girl mentality. Finally, the notion of integrity is at the core of the depiction of moral excellence. Integrity represents the connection between thought and action, but both the rationalistic and behavioral models of moral functioning have been unable to escape their own parameters and, thus, the notion of integrity has fallen into the void when instead it should be basic both to our understanding of moral psychology and attempts to nurture its development.

This notion of integrity and the development of a moral self is, however, receiving increasing attention in moral psychology and moral philosophy.[8] Blasi advocates the notion of a moral self that reflects how people conceptualize the moral domain and the extent to which morality is salient and significant in their self-concept and identity. Research with moral exemplars points to the exceptional merger of self and morality in their lives, with little distinction between personal and

8. A. Blasi, "Moral Understanding and the Moral Personality: The Process of Moral Integration," in W. M. Kurtines and J. L. Gewirtz, eds., *Moral Development: An Introduction* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1995): 229–53; G. G. Noam and T. E. Wren, eds., *The Moral Self* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993); V. A. Punzo, "After Kohlberg: Virtue Ethics and the Recovery of the Moral Self," *Philosophical Psychology* 9 (1996): 7–23; L. J. Walker and K. H. Hennig, "Moral Development in the Broader Context of Personality," in S. Hala, ed., *The Development of Social Cognition* (East Sussex, England: Psychology Press, 1997): 297–327.

moral goals,[9] and with self-attributions that predominantly include moral personality traits and goals.[10] Also in Blasi's model are the notions of personal responsibility for moral action and of self-consistency or integrity. Obviously, moral psychology requires a systematic empirical examination of the role of the self in moral functioning, as it has the potential to link the cognitive and emotive aspects of moral functioning to behavior. An example of such work is Bandura's research on the self-regulating affective processes that are sometimes deactivated in the context of one's own questionable conduct.[11] Given people's strong need to regard themselves as moral, Bandura notes the corrupting power of rationalizations in laundering evaluations of behavior to preserve this sense of the moral self (through reconstruals, euphemistic labeling, advantageous comparisons, displacement of responsibility). The greater self-awareness and self-consistency of moral maturity should help to inhibit such moral disengagement.

There are some difficulties with virtue ethics, in general, that need to be kept front and center as the field moves in this new direction. For example, a listing of moral virtues, such as was done in this study, represents an amalgamation of traits that would be impossible, indeed incoherent, for any one person to embody. At present, we little understand how these aspects of moral character interact in psychological functioning. Lapsley has noted that not all virtues are necessarily compatible: "Certain characterological blindspots might be the price one pays for cultivating excellences in other domains of one's life."[12] An

9. A. Colby and W. Damon, *Some Do Care: Contemporary Lives of Moral Commitment* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

10. D. Hart and S. Fegley, "Prosocial Behavior and Caring in Adolescence: Relations to Self-Understanding and Social Judgment," *Child Development* 66 (1995): 1346–59.

11. A. Bandura, "Social Cognitive Theory of Moral Thought and Action," in W. M. Kurtines and J. L. Gewirtz, eds., *Handbook of Moral Behavior and Development, Vol. 1* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1991): 45–103.

12. See Lapsley, 1998: 32.

illustration in this regard comes from Colby and Damon's study of moral exemplars who were identified largely on the basis of their commitment to moral causes (in other words, most were social activists).[13] Many exemplars expressed regrets regarding relationships with their children who sometimes seemed to lose out in competition with their parents' pursuit of social causes.

On a related theme, it also needs to be recognized that virtues sometimes have maladaptive, or at least morally questionable, aspects to their expression. Hennig and Walker used techniques of personality assessment to map the ethic-of-care domain.[14] We focused on aspects of the virtue of care where it has in some sense gone awry, being dysfunctional for either the carer or the one cared for. Self-sacrificial care can justify self-neglect and overinvolvement in others' lives, and thus compromise the quality of care undertaken. Another maladaptive pattern identified was submissive care, where care for the other is anxiously motivated by fear of negative evaluation and where one's self-expression is inhibited in deference to others' opinions. In other words, the virtue of caring can take on less than authentic manifestations. This is presumably true for most virtues, and moral psychology would be served well by a careful conceptual and empirical analysis along these lines of other moral traits.

It should be obvious that there may be no single viable prototype for moral maturity or ideal of moral character; indeed, there may be many different types of moral excellence and moral exemplars. My current research explores conceptions of different types of moral excellence that may reveal the clusters of virtues associated with different types as well as reveal the virtues that are seen as foundational to all manifestations of moral maturity. That there are many different types

13. See Colby and Damon, 1992.

14. K. H. Hennig and L. J. Walker, *Mapping the Care Domain: A Structural and Substantive Analysis.* Manuscript submitted for publication, University of British Columbia, 2001.

of moral exemplars is illustrated by the findings of a study where participants were asked to identify moral exemplars and to justify their choices.[15] A wide range of moral exemplars was identified, including humanitarians, revolutionaries, social activists, religious leaders, politicians, and so on. However, the most frequent categories were family members and friends. Many participants expressed an explicit distrust of the public persona of historical figures, preferring to nominate individuals they knew intimately and were better able to evaluate. There are a couple of notable things here: First, that a great diversity of moral exemplars was identified; and second, that many moral exemplars would not be considered well-known. Analysis of the justifications for these nominations revealed that actual moral exemplars are not typically described as having a full complement of moral virtues but rather are seen as embodying a smaller subset (think of Oskar Schindler vs. Martin Luther King vs. Mother Teresa), suggesting the need for us to understand better the complex interrelationships among these aspects of moral character and how they are manifested. Of course, these naturalistic conceptions of moral maturity need to be checked against analyses of the psychological functioning of actual moral exemplars. Do real moral paragons actually evidence the range of attributes derived from natural language concepts? It is to this complementary avenue of research that we now turn.

Psychological Functioning of Moral Exemplars

Another way to examine the development of moral character and personality is through comprehensive analyses of the psychological functioning of people who have been identified as leading morally exemplary lives. In a landmark study that frames our own research in some

15. L. J. Walker, R. C. Pitts, K. H. Hennig, and M. K. Matsuba, "Reasoning about Morality and Real-Life Moral Problems," in M. Killen and D. Hart, eds., *Morality in Everyday Life: Developmental Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 371–407.

respects, Colby and Damon studied a sample of people who evidenced extraordinary commitment to moral ideals and causes over an extended period of time.[16] Their case-study analysis revealed that these exemplars were not particularly distinguished in terms of principled moral reasoning, again challenging the dominant prototype for moral maturity, but they were characterized by other processes suggestive of various aspects of the moral personality, including: (a) active receptivity to progressive social influence and a continuing capacity to change, (b) considerable certainty about moral principles and values which was balanced by relentless truth-seeking and openmindedness (precluding dogmatism), (c) positivity and optimism, humility (with a disavowal of moral courage), love for all people, a capacity to forgive, and an underlying faith or spirituality, and (d) an exceptional uniting of self and morality, reflecting an identity that fused the personal and moral aspects of their lives (as noted earlier in the discussion of the moral self). They saw moral problems in everyday events and saw themselves as implicated in these problems and responsible to act. Despite these valuable insights, it should be noted that this was a small, select sample with no comparison group, the method was assisted autobiographical interview with no standard measures of psychological functioning, and the analyses were solely qualitative.

The value of analyses of the psychological functioning of moral exemplars in suggesting processes underlying the development of moral personality and character can be further demonstrated through the findings of another recent project, a study that we believe provides one of the more comprehensive assessments of moral exemplarity.[17] An exemplar group of forty young adults was nominated by social service

16. See Colby and Damon, 1992.

17. M. K. Matsuba and L. J. Walker, *Caring for Their Community: Study of Moral Exemplars in Transition to Adulthood*. Manuscript in preparation, University of British Columbia, 2001.

agencies because of their extraordinary moral commitment as volunteers, and a matched comparison group was also recruited. Participants completed several questionnaires and responded to a lengthy life-narrative interview. In an attempt to provide a comprehensive assessment of individuals' psychological functioning, the choice of measures here reflected McAdams' typology of three broad levels of personality assessment: (a) dispositional traits, (b) contextualized concerns such as developmental tasks and personal strivings, and (c) integrative narratives of the self.[18] In terms of dispositional traits, participants completed a questionnaire assessing traits reflecting the five fundamental factors underlying personality. Of the five factors, agreeableness and conscientiousness are considered the classic dimensions of character and thus most relevant here. Not surprisingly, the exemplar group was found to be higher on agreeableness than the comparison group, confirming that personality dispositions are implicated in moral action.

To assess the midlevel of contextualized concerns in understanding personality functioning, we included various measures of developmental tasks and personal strivings. It was found that, in contrast to the comparison group, the exemplar group was more mature in their identity, reflecting a stronger commitment to values and greater stability; they evidenced more mature faith development, reflecting the process by which they make meaning in life; and they used more advanced moral reasoning, confirming its critical role in moral functioning.

At the third level of personality assessment we examined themes in individuals' life narratives. Our expectation was that exemplars' life narratives would by characterized by more themes of agency and communion than would be evident for the comparison individuals. Our hunch was partly supported in that more agentic themes were found in exemplars' life stories. This finding resonates with the results of our

18. D. P. McAdams, "What Do We Know When We Know a Person?" *Journal of Personality* 63 (1995): 365–96.

previous study that identified personal agency as a salient dimension underlying understandings of moral excellence.[19]

In summarizing our research on moral exemplars, we found that variables indicative of all three levels of personality assessment distinguished exemplars from comparison individuals (despite matching on demographic variables). Yet, we need to keep in mind that moral maturity can be exemplified in different ways, and it is important for our understanding of moral functioning to determine what is distinctive about different types of moral exemplars as well as the common core. We currently have research underway along these lines. Once the field shows some sense of the psychological functioning of moral exemplars, the research agenda may then focus on the formative factors in the development of such moral character.

Applications and Conclusions

My premise in this chapter is that progress in moral psychology and moral education has stalled because of the conceptual skew of the models of moral development that dominate the field with their focus on moral rationality and aversion to personological factors, and the resultant psychologically barren conception of moral functioning. Furthermore, their emphasis has been on the interpersonal aspects of morality, while ignoring the intrapsychic aspects that pertain more to our basic values, lifestyle, identity, and character.

The new direction advocated here is intended as a corrective to this misalignment and stresses the development of moral personality, character, and virtue, a new direction that can perhaps best be instanced through the study of moral exemplarity. This approach has the potential to include both the inter- and intrapersonal aspects of morality because moral character and virtues are reflected in our relationships. It also has the potential to integrate the cognitive, affective, and behavioral com-

19. See Walker and Pitts, 1998.

ponents of moral functioning, because the notion of moral character is not so amenable to this psychological trichotomy and implicates all in its manifestations. This new direction resonates with recent appeals for the study of positive human characteristics and the experiences that foster such behaviors—what is known as the positive psychology movement.[20]

An initial two-pronged empirical approach to the study of moral exemplarity is described and illustrated. One approach is to examine conceptions of moral excellence, rooted in everyday language and common understandings, as an avenue to a broad understanding of moral virtues and ideals. The other approach is to examine the actual psychological functioning of individuals identified as moral exemplars, using the template of the most valid models and measures of human development. It is anticipated that these two approaches will yield convergent evidence regarding moral functioning and ideals; their points of divergence will require some rethinking of our notions. The beginning research along these lines has implications for our engagement in moral education with our children and youth. Perhaps pivotal is the need to sensitize children to the breadth of the moral domain and the moral implications of their values, choices, and actions. Morality should be considered a pervasive part of everyday life and should be front-and-center in our thinking. Making children more aware of the moral domain will facilitate the development of a moral identity where moral concerns become relevant to most things undertaken in life.

Moral education should also entail a critical discussion of moral virtues. Simply plastering the classroom walls with virtue labels will do little, if anything, to engender good moral character; rather, children need to appreciate the complexities and perhaps even the maladaptive aspects of many virtues such as honesty and care, and to struggle daily with how to exemplify these virtues. Some illustrations may help to

20. M. E. P. Seligman and M. Csikszentmihalyi, "Positive Psychology: An Introduction," *American Psychologist* 55(2000): 5–14.

demonstrate my point here regarding the complexity and shadowy side of many virtues. The virtue of honesty needs to be tempered by considerations of avoiding hurt to others, as when responding to grandma's query about whether you liked the sweater she knit for you (when the sweater is hopelessly out of style). Likewise, the virtue of care can be maladaptive when excessive caring for others is based on self-denigration and -denial and simply results in a resentful sense of obligation in others. Children need to appreciate that appropriate care depends on maintaining an authentic sense of self. Other virtues often also come into conflict, and those situations need to be carefully considered; for example, when loyalty to a friend is challenged by a teacher's interrogation about cheating in the classroom. The notion of moral exemplarity means that such moral examples are worthy of some emulation. Children need to explore the lives of a range of moral exemplars. Certainly, some well-known historical and publicly visible exemplars need to be examined; but also, the lives of local and personal heroes should be included. Here it is important that lives in all their fullness are examined, not just heroes' statements or actions, but rather the complexity of their personalities, the formative aspects of their experiences, and their weaknesses and struggles. It is important for children to recognize the diversity in moral exemplarity and to identify with a personal hero. Children should not simply cognitively study moral exemplars, but their involvement in moral action should be facilitated. The recent emphasis on meaningful community service involvement reflects this idea.

Finally, children need to struggle with underlying tensions in moral functioning, as were described earlier in our research. For example, one dimension underlying notions of morality is the self–other dimension that involves the notions of agency and communion. Here there is a need to balance the development of competency with interpersonal sensitivity, sometimes a difficult equilibrium to maintain in many moral situations. The development of children's commitment to moral values and their willingness to act on them needs to be balanced by openness

to new ideas and sensitivity to the perspectives and circumstances of others. The danger is that we can instill such a sense of personal agency and moral certainty in children that they run roughshod over others in their pursuit of their own moral goals. Another dimension underlying notions of morality is the external–internal dimension that reflects the frequent tension between shared moral norms and autonomous moral principles. Here again, children need to appreciate the occasional tension between respect for the moral values of one's community and the need to follow carefully considered individual moral ideals and principles. Certainly, there are many possibilities to consider and evaluate as we chart new directions in moral psychology and moral education.