organized sports. Since the passing of Title IX of the Education Amendment Act of 1972, there has been remarkable progress in correcting the terrible bias against girls and women in scholastic sports programs. A long way remains but a fairer, if not equal, attention to women in sports is one of the great educational successes of recent times.

I think there is an interesting parallel here between gender bias in the classroom and in the sports arena. I said that emphasis on language in the classroom is not gender-biased. To have voice in the classroom is at least as important to women as to men. True, the women have been mostly silent and often overlooked in classroom practice. But in every classroom subject women can hold their own, even if the evidence may never be conclusive whether girls are generally better at some subjects, boys at others.

Performance in the sports arena is a similar case. Women have not been present anywhere near as much as men. A call to recognize the importance of sports in teaching may seem biased against women. But the physical education of the human body is at least as important to women as to men. Women may never match men in some highly valued sport’s roles (for example, linebacker), but in other sports with criteria of grace and elegance women may be generally superior. In any case, what Plato once again wished for his upper-class guardians — equality of opportunity in sports — may finally be coming about for young people in the near future.

Chapter 9

Teaching Morally, Teaching Morality

This last chapter returns to the theme of the first chapter: the moral dilemma inherent to teaching. The intervening chapters have laid out the elements for a solution to that dilemma. If one is attentive to the several forms of teaching and the language appropriate to each form, it is possible to teach morally. Only after that is it possible to move on to teaching morality. If teaching were itself an immoral activity, it would be absurd to ask how to teach morality. In this chapter, I summarize the case for teaching morally. I then turn to the teaching of morality in the various forms of education. And for the most challenging test of teaching morality, I offer a final section on classroom instruction in morality.

Before proceeding to the necessary distinctions for teaching morally, teaching morality, and teaching morality in the classroom, I look first at the twentieth century’s attempt to deal with morality under the rubric of “moral education.” For much of this century, “moral education” has meant a set of techniques that would supposedly facilitate the moral development of children. During the past decade a vigorous reaction has set in, critical of the vacuity of moral education. This new “moral education” is concerned with character, virtue, and good behavior.

It would be difficult not to feel some sympathy for this recent movement. Who is not in favor of good character and well-behaved children? For more than a decade, Gallup polls have shown 80–90 percent of parents in favor of a moral education that would develop character and encourage the practice of virtues. Schoolteachers, it should be noted, are nowhere near so enthusiastic. Are they just shirking their duty? Or could it be that while the parents are right in thinking that morality is about good character and virtuous behavior, schoolteachers are also right in sensing the limits of the classroom for such education?

The key to progress here is an understanding of the forms and languages of teaching. In the current cries for reform there is very
little evidence that the issue of teaching is being examined. An earlier phase of moral education — typified by the “values clarification” of the 1960s — tried to avoid anything that would smack of teaching. The recent reaction simply assumes that if character, virtue, and good behavior are what we want, then we just get someone to teach these things (“Tell them what is right”). I have argued in this book that we need a richer meaning of teaching than is usually assumed. At the same time, we need a carefully limited and precisely focused purpose for classroom instruction. The question of morality is the great test for both points.

“Moral education,” as a single term with a single referent, was born at the beginning of the twentieth century. Not that the adjective “moral” was a stranger to the term “education.” But for the most part, the phrase “moral education” would have sounded redundant. Education since the time of the Greek philosophers was assumed to be a moral undertaking. In the founding of the U.S. public school, for example, morality was a dominant concern. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, however, the rise of the sciences and the decline of religion led to the conviction that education was becoming amoral. Two opposite corrections were possible. One was to add a remedy called “moral education”; the other was to rethink the moral character of all education.

It may seem that because of the complexity and special circumstances of our era we need something called “moral education.” Nonetheless, one must also reckon with the possibility that “moral education” obscures the questions of teaching morally and teaching morality. The attempt to create an addition to education that deals exclusively with moral problems reinforces the presumption of the amoral character of education. An adequate reform movement would probably get rid of the phrase “moral education” so as to examine morality in education itself. Most of all it would have to examine the possibilities and difficulties of teaching morally and teaching morality.

A reform movement that is unacquainted with the past is doomed to be merely reactive. Why did a moral education, dismissive of terms such as character and virtue, arise in the first place? The impression is sometimes given that a few radicals in the 1960s brought about this whole problem. The story is much longer and more complicated.

The roots of the moral-education movement go back to the early stage of modernity. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, many people hoped that science and religion could work together. The division of the work was that the intellectual class would live by science and the masses would continue to believe the myths of religion. The flaw in this arrangement was that education was placed on the side of science. As education advanced along with science, religion was bound to retreat. The foundation of morality in most people’s lives was outside or even opposed to education.

At the middle of the nineteenth century, the study of moral philosophy, with its strong Christian overtones, was still the crown of education in many colleges, the course often being taught by the college president. However, moral philosophy was on one side being crowded by its partner, natural philosophy (empirical science), and on the other side it was being shaken by the troubles of moral theology. A crisis in the religious foundations of morality emerged earlier in Europe than in the United States.

Emile Durkheim is one of the inventors of the term “moral education.” In his book of that title, published in 1900, Durkheim described the experiment that was underway:

We decided to give our children in our state-supported schools a purely secular moral education. It is essential to understand that this means an education that is not derived from revealed religion, but that rests exclusively on ideas, sentiments and practices accountable to reason only — in short, a purely rationalistic education.

Durkheim was referring to 1880–1900 for the launching of a purely rationalistic education in France. In contrast, John Dewey during the same period in the United States had plenty of religious elements in his writings.

Dewey’s book itself has some misgivings about a purely rationalistic education. He was aware that people have never lived by reason alone and probably never will. The moral life is shaped by the power of a community to inculcate discipline and provide guidance for attitudes and practices. Durkheim thought that the family is “an inappropriate agency” for a completely rationalistic education; but “the task of the school in the moral development of the child can and should be of the greatest importance.”

Durkheim locates the verb “to teach” with the school’s reflection on the needs of society: “To teach morality is neither to preach nor
to indoctrinate; it is to explain." What he is in flight from is obvious enough in this statement: preaching and indoctrination. While Durkheim wanted no part of that kind of teaching, he was trapped into using these practices as a reference point for his only alternative: explain.

The history of religious bodies reveals many other ways to teach morality than by indoctrination and preaching. The religions teach mainly by story, example, and ritual. Durkheim's reduction of "to teach = to explain" has the unfortunate effect of giving over most of moral education to processes other than teaching. And in moral education subsequent to Durkheim, even the small part accorded to teaching (that is, explaining) morality has often been denied.

Jean Piaget is the other twentieth-century giant in the origin of moral education. Like Durkheim, Piaget assumes the intellectual bankruptcy of religion as a moral foundation. The title of Piaget's book, The Moral Judgment of the Child, indicates the clear and narrow focus of his moral education: judgments made by children. At the beginning of the book, he announces in one sweeping statement: "All morality consists in a system of rules, and the essence of all morality is to be sought for in the respect which the individual acquires for the rules."

If one accepts that this is the meaning of morality, then the preeminent task is to have children reason and judge properly. The child discovers the rules through interaction with other children, but morality is not mainly a communal affair; it is about the individual and his respect for rules. Moral education thereby moved from the sociologist describing group behavior to the psychologist describing structures of the individual mind.

Piaget expresses strong disagreement with Durkheim for retaining a morality based on "authority." Piaget rejects the preeminence that Durkheim gives to the school community. He particularly objects to the premise that "the schoolmaster is the priest who acts as an intermediary between society and the child." Adults in general and schoolteachers in particular tend to get in the way of the child's development of moral judgment. Experiencing a game with rules intrinsic to the game is the kind of prod that the child's judgment about justice requires. "Teaching," as Piaget uses the term, has little part.

The child who has begun to reason about rules goes through two stages: the first in which rules are thought to be eternally fixed and externally imposed; the second in which rules are seen to be devised by the community for the service of its changing needs. This second

stage of autonomous judgment follows upon the capacity to grasp the concept of equality and a concomitant ability to react emotionally to problems of inequity.9

After Piaget documents in exquisite detail this movement to autonomous judgment, he admits there may be further stages that are not within his purview. As an individual passes from childhood to adulthood, other moral categories, such as care or compassion, may become central.10 Piaget quotes a precocious 13-year-old who, when asked why he did not hit back after having been hit, replied, "Because there is no end to vengeance."11 Some people (and many nations) never grasp that moral insight. It comes from a moral education not restricted to abstract ideas of equality.

Lawrence Kohlberg, whose name became almost synonymous with moral education in the United States, thought that it was logical to try to stretch Piaget's categories beyond where Piaget had firmly anchored them. Kohlberg used to describe his work as "putting patches on Piaget."12 Beyond the merely conventional morality that Piaget suggests can be reached by most adults, Kohlberg postulated a "postconventional" morality, in which the individual goes beyond the observance of rules to a more universal stand. Like Durkheim and Piaget, Kohlberg begins with the rejection of a "revealed morality" that he assumes to be the Christian basis of moral education.13 As in Piaget, the alternative lies in discovering the structures of the mind and the way to facilitate passage from one stage to another.

In 1978 Kohlberg wrote a brief essay that expressed doubt about the whole system.14 His great hope of a decade earlier for moving students up the ladder to "principled reasoning" had not been realized. The simple fact struck him forcefully that little boys are prone to lie and cheat. Perhaps for some of the population, Kohlberg mused, a little indoctrination might not be such a bad thing. After two decades of attacking religions' use of indoctrination, Kohlberg toyed with the enemy's word.

Describing the effect of Kohlberg's musings, James Rest wrote that for a Kohlbergian it was similar to the first mate hearing that "the captain of the ship has just jumped ship and is headed on another boat in the opposite direction."15 But then everyone, including Kohlberg, seemed to go back to the business of measuring stages. The collections of Kohlberg's papers, published in the 1980s, show few glimmers of doubt that moral education equals moral development, and that moral development equals the child's power to reason about moral dilemmas.
of education over against an approach in the classroom. That is, most schooleachers would not vote against character education but they need some distinctions for understanding the classroom’s contribution to educating character.

Kilpatrick contrasts two possible courses that might be taught in elementary grades. The first course would deal with dilemmas in which there are no right or wrong answers; teachers would be nonjudgmental and allow students to develop their own value systems. The second course would make a conscious effort to teach specific virtues and character traits; the teacher would express strong belief in the importance of these virtues and encourage students to practice them. Kilpatrick expresses disdain that a majority of schooleachers, when asked to choose between these two courses, prefer the first. As a classroom instructor, I would certainly choose the first over the second — if those were the only two choices. The first would probably have little effect while the second would undermine the work of the classroom. But this choice is a false one; neither the first nor the second describes an academic course. The direct object of instruction in a classroom cannot be “specific virtues and character traits.” That is not to deny that education is concerned with virtue, character, and good behavior; but appropriate distinctions have to be observed.

Within the new moral education, the failure to make any precise and consistent distinctions is manifest in the way “teach,” “teaching,” and “teacher” are used. So long as teaching is assumed to be what schooleachers attempt to do in classrooms, then morality and education cannot be properly related. Today’s reformers persist in giving over the name “teacher” to those who properly do only one limited form of teaching. Looking back nostalgically on the past, Kilpatrick writes, “The idea that the parent is the first and foremost teacher was taken seriously; teachers acted for the parents as trustees of children’s education.” A moment’s reflection shows that Kilpatrick does not take seriously his own statement that the parent is “the first and foremost teacher.” The second half of his sentence (“teachers acted for the parents”) contradicts the fact that the parent is a teacher at all. In many books the pious claim that parents are the most important teachers is denied in the next paragraph. Kilpatrick’s feat is to put the contradiction in one sentence.

The point may seem minor. Doesn’t everyone know what “teacher” means in such statements? The answer, I think, is no. Discussions on
Teaching Morally

I began this book by referring to feelings of moral uneasiness about the act of teaching. I cited examples of a widespread suspicion that teaching cannot be done morally, that it is an unethical act. The problem is not surprising if one starts consideration from the typical image of teaching that has dominated modern educational theory: an adult schoolteacher, a child learner, and a subject matter between them. The schoolteacher, most often a woman, is seen as the agent of a system that wishes proper truths to be known. The student is seen as an unwilling child, compelled by law and social custom to be on the receiving end. The curriculum or subject matter is taken to be what some group thinks every youngster should know.

The moral conflict inherent to this image leads to endless wrangling over issues that are not likely to relieve the underlying conflict. Students periodically rebel against the oppressive power of their teachers (even though the teachers themselves may feel powerless). In recent years the rebellion has often been against the choice of writers included in the textbooks and the (classroom) curriculum. But even the most determined attempts at curriculum inclusivity leave various groups feeling oppressed. I

My own way of addressing the problem of teaching morally has been to step back from classroom teaching to examine what teaching means in more ordinary situations. Unless these other kinds of teaching are taken seriously, schoolteachers will inevitably be asked to do more than is possible and other than what is ethically defensible. The fundamental meaning of "to teach," as to show someone how to do something, does not immediately connote any moral conflict. Teaching is a special kind of gift that calls forth a personal response. If a gift is not received it turns out to be not a gift but an attempted gift. Coercion is a sign that we are not dealing in gift exchange, that is, something both freely given and freely received.

The most comprehensive teacher is the whole universe, which offers gifts each day. The human being can receive the gift of learning from ocean and desert, mountain and tree, sunlight and star; or the human being can refuse to be taught. The individual human can refuse to learn (or be taught), although it is a refusal to accept one's human nature as the preeminently teachable animal. Individuals can diminish their own humanity, but if most of the human race takes this attitude toward air, water, topsoil, forest, and earth, then the human race will eventually discover that a refusal to be taught is not a long-term option. "Liberation from the soil is not freedom for the tree," wrote Tagore. Liberation from being taught is not freedom for the humans.

The potential for moral conflict has its beginnings when we pass from the universe to the human community as the teacher. Here, the individual human being cannot reject being taught, any more than the human race can reject the sun. To be a human being is to be in the relation of teaching-learning with the human community. The difficulty, however, is that "the human community" is never available. At any particular time and place, what we find are incomplete and imperfect representations of community, for example, one's family.

We do not quibble about the limitations of our community when we are born to this mother and this father. Before one can start raising questions about the deficiencies of one's family, clan, tribe, or nation, one has to have received life and the basic skills to survive. The particular community in being itself says, Here is how to eat, how to speak, how to protect yourself from the cold, how to make things. No one complains that he or she was taught to eat food rather than have the freedom to ingest poison.

The moral problem of teaching emerges fully when an individual steps forth and is called "the teacher." The authority on which this step is taken is an issue that can never be fully resolved. No one gets appointed as universal teacher, a teacher of all things to all people. Anyone who wishes to play the part of teacher must examine the conditions under which he or she can legitimately teach. Who did the appointing and for how long? What is this teacher appointed to teach? Who are the prospective students?

The answers to some of these questions depend upon the teacher listening to the prospective students. Most particularly, the teacher has
to ascertain whether the potential learners are actually ready to learn.
Clear signals have to provide an affirmative answer that the students
are ready at this time, in this place, to learn this skill. That is why times
and places have been designated to indicate acceptance of the teaching-
learning situation. If someone walks across the threshold of a classroom,
that is a signal of a willingness to learn in one clearly specified way for
fifty minutes or two hours. The classroom consent is no more and no
less than to expose to critical examination one’s written and spoken
words on an agreed-upon topic.

The learner’s consent is to one or a few forms of teaching. Each
institution has specified limitations that protect the learner’s right to
privacy. In a classroom, the learner has a right not to be bombarded
with speech not generally appropriate for the classroom. The learner in
a church congregation or the client in a therapist’s office has consented
to other forms of speech. A moral crisis arises when institutions overstep
their respective boundaries.

Freedom is always a bounded situation. A person exists with a physi-
ical body and a psychological makeup that are a precipitate of the past.
At each moment the choice is to consent to what is offered or to say
no. Sometimes saying no makes available other possibilities; sometimes
the no is all that the exercise of freedom means right now. Over against
large institutions (banks, business corporations, post office, city hall) the
individual can feel powerless. We do not really expect to win individual
games with large foreign powers, but we become dispirited if they run up the score. Children feel much of the time that they are being
had. Even when adults try to be nice, children are so outraged that
kindness can seem condescending.

Protests against teaching are usually a protest against the unfair dis-
tribution of power that many young people (and some older people)
feel. They want a say in how their lives flow. The school is a place that
often focalizes resentment, even though the school is usually less repres-
sive than many other institutions. With a few basic changes, students
in school can come to see that the school is more on their side than
against it.

Very few young people really wish to run a school, but most of them
do wish to have some choices in school. Those choices involve space,
time, and the forms of learning. Why cannot schools allow students to
move between the school’s two main areas of learning, choosing to con-
centrate on one or the other? Why cannot every student be invited to

contribute to the design of courses? Such suggestions may sound like
prescriptions for chaos, but any movement in the direction of increased
choice can be cautious and measured. The principle of respect for a stu-
dent’s choice should be immediately and clearly affirmed. Young people
are likely to be patient if they know that the adults are serious about
moving in the direction of increased freedom.

In school, a teacher should not have to be confronting students daily
in a conflict between the right to teach and the freedom to learn. The
validation of the teacher’s work should not rest entirely on each teacher
establishing it. The environment and the community should supply the
context for supporting the teacher’s role of authority. The professional
schoolteacher has a license to teach, the freedom to do whatever seems
the best way to go at teaching-learning. This license is the basis for
trust, without which no teaching takes place. If a teacher regularly vi-
olates this trust, he or she quite literally loses the ability to teach —
which is why asking classroom instructors to teach character traits or
specific virtues is seriously detrimental. In contrast, the schoolteacher
who uses the license responsibly has a right to the support of school
administrators, parents, business people, politicians, religious leaders.
When the moral authority of a teacher is evident, students learn not by
being subservient but by being cooperative.

There are many situations, of course, in which the potential learner
cannot foresee what is coming. He or she consents on the basis of
trust in the teacher for getting the process started. If the teacher in
a classroom, gymnasium, factory, or church turns out to be unreason-
ably demanding or a total fraud, there need to be escape hatches for
the learner. Even the most trustworthy of teachers needs places along
the way to renegotiate the learner’s original consent to join the process.
The moral character of teaching-learning never reaches a place so se-
cure that it is invulnerable to corruption. However, the moral universe
of teaching does not have to be reconstituted every day. Unless there is
evidence to the contrary in particular situations, to teach is a morally
good activity.

Teaching Morality

This section explores what happens when “moral” is moved from a qual-
y of teaching to the object of teaching. I propose that some kind of
morality is always being taught in the activity of showing someone how to live. The explicitness of the concern with morality can vary greatly. In the classroom, for example, every academic subject has a moral dimension, though often it is best kept implicit. However, morality itself can be conceived as an academic subject and then morality becomes the explicit object of classroom teaching. This concern of teaching morality in the classroom is the final test of what teaching morality means; it can also be taken as the final test of what classroom teaching is. Both of those aspects of teaching morality in a classroom are treated in a final section below.

The teaching of morality follows a path similar to teaching morally. That is, we can start with the universe as a whole. The world and all of the great forces within the world teach both greatness and limitation to human aspirations. The human race can also take lessons about good and bad activity from their next of kin in the animal world. At another level, the human community has a moral wisdom that the individual must confront in learning morality. A particular human community, however, introduces questions of authority, place, age, and historical changes. Thus, when a human individual presumes to teach morality, he or she is subject to challenge. Does any individual have the right to teach morality? How can anyone claim certainty for the morality that is taught?

I said earlier that the modern flight from religion unfortunately entailed a flight from all but the most rationalistic form of teaching. The resulting loss was especially grievous in the area of morality. If moral principles, standards, and practices are not taught, the moral life suffers. Calls to reverse this trend often appeal to authoritarian strains that in the long run will fail. Trying to hammer home a moral code is not the way to teach morality.

One of the striking things to learn from traditional religions is that the teachings do not constitute morality in our sense of the word. Instead, the teachings are about small rituals and ordinary practices that do not seem to have moral content: how one dresses and wears one’s hair, what one eats and drinks, when one is silent and to whom one speaks, when the time is for sleep and when the time to awake. These are the disciplines that create communities of moral people. Describing Jewish religion, Wayne Meeks writes that “the rabbis begin with what good men in stable communities do.” That starting point is similar to Aristotle’s, but while Aristotle moves toward clear and logical principles, the rabbis pursue individual instances and thinkable exceptions. “They rarely generalize; they exemplify.” With only slight variation, that statement could be made of all the religions: they teach morality by exemplifying life in a virtuous community.

A commandment, therefore, is not an abstract principle but a statement of address. The commandment is a boundary within which life goes on. If one regularly lives by the minor commandments, one will not find the major commands burdensome. When “exhortation” is required, it is to a community that already knows what it should be doing but has strayed from its duties. An individual may stand up and do the reminding from within the group or the reminder and correction may have to come from an outside standard of judgment — not usually a universal law, but a more comprehensive tradition.

Each of the forms of education described in chapter 7 teaches morality in its own fashion. Family, classroom, job, and leisure can be examined as teachers of morality.

Family relations teach morality every day. The lesson varies according to whether the learner is a 2-year-old only child, a 16-year-old oldest of seven, a 30-year-old parent of three, or a 65-year-old grandparent. Children, however young, are morally educated by routines of daily existence. Long before a child can reflect upon rules of conduct, the child’s moral future is profoundly influenced.

The strange phrase “family values” has achieved widespread use in recent years; it seems to be a code word for one set of political beliefs. There is no package of “values” that automatically comes with a family. What the family almost always provides is the basis of both good and evil in an individual’s life; that is, the family is the primary moral teacher. As I have repeatedly pointed out, the customary usage of “teach” and “teacher” denies this fact. Not surprisingly, the economic and social policies of the country (not withstanding the rhetorical flourishes about family values) reflect a belief that families do not teach and that parents do not need support as teachers.

When moral education is equated with moral reasoning, very young children disappear from the map of moral education. John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau had one of their sharpest disagreements over the reasoning powers of the child. Rousseau thought children should be shielded from reasoning as long as possible, experiencing at first the limits of things. In twentieth-century moral education, Rousseau would seem to have carried the day. Young children are assumed to be in-
capable of moral reasoning. In Piaget's vocabulary, young children are “pre-moral”; they obey rules but are incapable of reflecting on those rules.25

It is doubtful, however, that Rousseau would recognize what he helped to create. He would applaud the realization that large doses of reasoning should not be demanded of young children. But Rousseau insists that "the education of man begins at his birth."26 Everything done to the child has a moral effect. Children are shown a way of life that they absorb very early. Later they may rebel against it and try to change it, but they cannot entirely discard it. Even John Locke, with his belief in the boy's reasoning powers, devotes the first thirty sections of his book on education to the child's health and bodily nurture. In Locke's four main parts of education, virtue comes first; after that comes wisdom and breeding; finally comes learning.27

The child is obviously vulnerable to being miseducated. We have lately become more aware of the violation called child abuse, including abuse of a sexual kind. Rousseau — out of his personal experience — was one of the first writers who began the expose of child abuse.28 Other writers quickly followed. We might think there was a sudden rash of child abuse in the eighteenth century. On the contrary, that century was the beginning of the end of child abuse, even though we have yet to bring about that end. The eighteenth century's great contribution was to name the reality and make it visible.29

One of the tragic aspects of child abuse is its self-perpetuating character. Those who are beaten up early in life usually learn their lesson well. Surely, breaking the cycle of child abuse should be central to education in morality, but the issue is simply beyond the boundary of what the twentieth century, either earlier or more recently, calls "moral education." Children are taught by what they see, hear, touch, and taste. To care for a child and show love teaches care and love. To abuse a child sexually or otherwise is to teach a devastating lesson in violence.

I will postpone until the end of this chapter the classroom teaching of morality. But I take note here of the way that schools in other ways teach morality. As in the family setting, the school does most of its teaching by example. The school can be looked upon as a moral community that shows how virtue is practiced. The school community differs from the family community by having a wider range of examples. Morality is taught in a school by the example of other children and by the adult lives of administrators, classroom instructors, coaches, coun-

selors, and janitors. The chief barometer of what the adults are teaching the children is how the adults interact with each other.

Even a small school has a degree of impersonality that sets it in contrast to the family. Durkheim and others believed that the impersonal is not always negative. It can be a helpful aspect of moral learning. A child needs the experience of being treated as the most important person in the world; the child also needs the experience of being one among many important beings. School can be a place of fairness, decency, and respect even when hundreds or thousands of pupils are passing through the doors. Providing safe spaces where youngsters are left alone is a way that schools teach a meaning of leisure that has some moral depth. Encouraging and respecting good work, whatever the school activity, is a way to teach a moral meaning of work.

At least once a year the New York Times has a story headlined, "U.S. Schools Put New Stress on Teaching of Moral Values,"30 or something akin to that. The new stress has been going on for quite a few years. Perhaps there has been progress from the time when values were only being "clarified." If the schools are recognizing a responsibility to teach values, that could be a great improvement. However, I think it is still unclear what it means to teach values.

"Values" is an abstract term that is presumably a name for a collection of desirable qualities: honesty, responsibility, compassion, courage, friendship, and the like. Such lists of values do not generate protest in the name of dishonesty, irresponsibility, or cowardice. Everyone seems agreed on the value of teaching values. But this quick and easy consensus indicates that all the hard questions have been avoided.

I would not belittle an increased awareness on the part of school staff about how their attitudes and practices affect students. The concern is certainly praiseworthy if it translates into schools being places of honesty and responsibility, and school staff being friendly and helpful. In addition, the school should encourage and support students who are helpful to each other or helpful to people in the school's service program. I do not think the recognition has to be with external rewards.

In one New York Times piece, "Teaching of Values in U.S. School," an example of instilling values at one school is "secretaries and cafeteria workers pass out coupons worth twenty-five cents in the bookstore to children who are friendly and polite."31 What the school is actually teaching by such a practice may be something different from friendliness and politeness; perhaps how to make money from acting (at least
"acting" in the sense of pretending to be) virtuous. Nevertheless, at least the question of "teaching values" is being put in the right arena, namely, the curriculum of the school rather than the curriculum of the classroom. Individuals are taught to be honest by the example of people in honest communities. For children, the school is a central community of their lives, and the school in its total environment of physical space, temporal arrangements, and human interaction is a main teacher of morality.

A person’s job is also an important teacher for nearly all people, especially after they leave high school or college. The kind of work we do and the way we do it shape our way of life. It is morally debilitating not to be able to have a job, that is, tasks that involve intelligence, skill, and training, and which contribute to society’s functioning. Money does not have to be involved, although money is often a sign that the job is valued and the laborer is respected. Whether or not money is involved, recognition and appreciation of one’s efforts are intrinsic elements in the job being real work.

Some jobs wear people down; those jobs that are physical drudgery or mindless repetition teach very little moral sensibility or passion for justice. But most jobs have at least some spark of possibility for being reshaped into work of friendliness, helpfulness, and social improvement. Bank tellers, toll collectors, elevator operators, postal workers, taxi drivers, train conductors and at times anyone else, can turn bitter and crusty at the limitations of their jobs. Or the way the job is done can teach a lesson about human community and service to fellow human beings.

There is often a strong moral fiber to people in the laboring class who do jobs that are inadequately paid but are necessary for society’s running. Getting up in the morning and going off to a job (sometimes within the home itself) takes a discipline of life that is reinforced by doing the best job one can. The reward looked for is not wealth but a decent life for one’s family or for friends whom one is supporting. In almost every job there are both good and bad examples one can learn from. One’s moral development depends on how one responds to both teachers.

An increasing number of workers call themselves "professionals." The term sometimes only means the claim to more money and more control of one’s work. Both of these benefits are in fact part of modern professions. However, the benefits are granted because of a more strin-
throughout life, and especially in the older years, carry people down one of two moral paths. Either they become more egocentric in their interests, turned in on their own problems. Or else, they turn toward greater compassion for human and nonhuman life. The liberation from means-to-end thinking can release in older lives a care for other older people who are worse off, and a concern for the young who share a similar position of vulnerability.

Older people often share a conspiratorial friendship with both young children and teenagers. The young and the old often find that they can teach each other about transitions into new life. Sometimes parents and children are locked too closely together; the grandparent has a helpful degree of objectivity. For the child the grandparent paradoxically represents vitality, even in the face of approaching death. The quiet center of retirement’s leisure activity seems to be almost contentless, but it is really a revelation of the harmony and unity that morality moves toward.

**Teaching Morality in Classrooms**

In this final section, a separate consideration is needed for the classroom’s part in teaching morality. Two challenges are raised by this issue. What light does teaching morality in a classroom throw upon teaching anything in a classroom? How does the classroom’s part in teaching morality relate to the teaching of morality in and by other educational settings?

Contemporary advocates of character and virtue almost never examine how limited classroom instruction is in this area. They seem to treat literature as illustrations of virtue: choose literature on the basis of which virtue is to be “taught.” In contrast, throughout much of the academic world there is a widespread belief that it is impossible—or at least academically illegitimate—to teach morality in a classroom. Concerning the teachability of things in a classroom, a spectrum is assumed that has mathematics and physical science at one end; there is no debate that physics and calculus are teachable subjects. Moving away from that end of the spectrum, we can locate literature, history, human sciences as also teachable. But for many people, religion and morality go off the scale. They are thought to be too private, too subjective, too lacking in definite answers.

A first clarification needed is that “morality” is not an adequate name for indicating the academic form of teaching morality. The academic subject is probably best indicated by the term “ethics.” In previous centuries, terms such as “moral science” or “moral philosophy” have served this purpose. Today the term “values” seems to be assumed by some people, but I do not think that the case has been made that “values” is the name of an academic subject. “Ethics,” like “morality,” began as a term to describe human activities, rather than teaching—learning about these activities. However, ethics has a long history as part of philosophical inquiry.

What is worrisome when people dismiss the possibility of teaching morality/ethics in a classroom is not what they assume about morality, but what they think “to teach” means. An understanding of the teaching of morality/ethics might help to clarify what it means to teach anything. If teaching in a classroom consisted of telling people what is so, then teaching morality/ethics would be a violation of the pupil’s right to privacy, conscience, and freedom. The question is whether the main confusion pertains to teaching morality/ethics or to teaching mathematics, science, literature, and history.

The classroom, I have previously argued, is not a place for telling people the truth. It is a place for a peculiar kind of conversation—ultimately a conversation about the nature of conversation. The person who is teaching turns the words of the conversation back on themselves. Every question asked, every problem raised has ambiguity built into the formulation. But the ambiguity in the words is not limitless. Through sustained conversation we can hope to narrow misunderstandings even if we cannot reach complete agreement. To teach morality is to be skeptical of any yes or no answer to a complicated problem. The teacher’s job is to be certain that there are enough voices in the discussion and that the terms of the dispute are carefully reflected upon. This process bears little resemblance to what is characterized as “value-free inquiry.”

In contrast to academic teaching as conversation, consider this statement in Stephen Carter’s *The Culture of Disbelief*:

> It is difficult to resist the impression that some educators simply feel uncomfortable with stating a clear and simple value—they seem to believe that in some way, by telling students what they should do (instead of telling them how to do what they want to do) they are engaging in a form of pedagogy best avoided.
I think that "telling students what they should do" is indeed a form of pedagogy best avoided. The classroom teacher has no business telling people what they should do, beyond stating the rules of civility in classroom behavior.

Carter's alternative to telling them what they should do is contained within the parentheses: "telling them how to do what they want to do." I would guess he intends that phrase to be caricature or sarcasm. Actually, it is close to stating the classroom's task. As formulated, however, I would not accept either of his alternatives. The underlying problem here is the assumption that to teach is to tell, that classroom teaching in particular is the use of a form of speech in which teachers tell students what is true and what is false, what is right and what is wrong.

Carter wants students "to be told that abstinence is a good and desirable thing." I would not tell students in a classroom that (sexual?) abstinence is a good and desirable thing. I agree that teachers should not be telling students that abstinence is a bad and undesirable thing. But the academic alternative to both "tellings" is to bring students into the conversation from which the teacher's own opinions and beliefs have emerged. At the end of that conversation, the student may or may not agree with the teacher. The teacher's success is reflected in whether the student has a better understanding of the issue discussed. To teach ethics is to show a student how to use a language of morality that can improve his or her understanding.

A procedure that is sometimes employed with ethics courses is the case study debate in which the student takes sides.59 As a technique to get students involved, there is some merit to the approach. But if the result is that the pro and con sides simply dig in deeper to defend their respective opinions, the classroom's potential is dissipated. In a few cases (capital punishment, nuclear war), the yes or no is clear-cut. On ideas of euthanasia, abortion, sexual codes, bigotry, there is probably more agreement than is evident in most debates. If the classroom does not supply a better understanding of what these questions mean, our politics will get hopelessly stalemated. Other issues (feminism, multiculturalism, environmentalism) are not case studies at all but complex movements overlaid with various ideologies. Taking sides on these issues is likely to generate more heat than understanding.

The ethics teacher, like all classroom teachers, has to have two points of view: the first is that the position he or she puts forth is true because it draws upon the richest strands of human history and geography. The second is the view that the position stated is deficient because formulations can always be improved. This dual perspective always applies in the classroom: a certainty that one has some hold on the truth and a certainty that one cannot state the whole truth. What the teacher says in conversation is asserted as not false and not empty, but there is always more to learn for the teacher as well as the taught. The ethics teacher is no worse off here than the science or art teacher; perhaps the ethics teacher is a little better off in having to acknowledge the duality.

An individual teacher need not have numerous perspectives; the textbook and the computer should supply these. There are indeed numerous perspectives on feminism, peace, pollution, poverty, and so forth. At some moments in life it may seem distracting to have more than one perspective. There is nothing wrong with "peace now," "a woman's body is her own," or "gay pride" on a banner at a rally. However, when an emotionally charged issue shows up in the classroom, no orthodoxy can be left unchallenged. In a classroom, every formula on every topic is open to criticism.

Take an extreme case. A school curriculum Facing History and Ourselves is in wide use throughout the country; it concentrates, though not exclusively, on the Holocaust.60 In 1986 it was refused funding by a federal agency. The rumor was leaked out that the refusal was based on the fact that the curriculum did not give Hitler's side. This rumor was confirmed in 1995 when Newt Gingrich tried to appoint the evaluator, Christina Jeffrey, to be historian of the House of Representatives. Jeffrey had written in her evaluation, "The program gives no evidence of balance or objectivity. The Nazi point of view, however unpopular, is still a point of view and is not presented."61 When that statement was made public it was met with scorn and disbelief. Actually, there was a valid point to be made here, but Jeffrey's phrasing of the issue as "balance or objectivity," as well as Hitler's view being "unpopular," was naïve and misleading way to make her point.

A curriculum that would provide moral symmetry to Hitler and to the victims of the Holocaust would be nothing short of obscene. Nonetheless, the classroom is a place to examine every viewpoint, even Hitler's. Otherwise, the mode of discourse is preaching, rather than academic criticism. The classroom's contribution to preventing future holocausts is understanding, which involves getting inside the minds of
everyone involved in the Holocaust. There is a time for memorial services, for protesting bigotry, for preaching love, for legal restraints on neo-Nazis. When the time for ethics class comes, the relevant question is, Do you understand?18

We can start asking five-year-olds, "Do you understand?" but it would be unwise to offer an ethics course in elementary grades. Like religion or psychology, ethics is a very difficult academic subject that should not be attempted before many other subjects have been studied. However, ethical questions can surface in every subject of the classroom curriculum. When enough ethical issues have appeared in their historical contexts and practical situations, the strands can be gathered together for reflection on the subject of ethics itself. To teach ethics is to provide the language to think clearly, comprehensively, and consistently about the moral life.

Simply dealing with language may seem to be an ineffective way to get at morality. Is not the point of teaching morality to produce better people? The knock against teaching ethics is similar to the general complaint against classroom instruction: all talk and no action. With morality the accusation becomes most acute. What is the point of knowing Aristotle's analysis of friendship if it is no help to making friends? I have previously cited Aristotle saying that the way to become virtuous is to grow up in a virtuous community. That might seem to imply that studying ethics is a waste of time, or at least not a help to being moral. Yet, Aristotle gave us our word "ethics" in the naming of two books that provide instruction on the subject.

The key here is not to neglect the rest of education in morality when one directly attends to the (classroom) teaching of ethics. If the rest of a person's education is effective, the teaching-learning of ethics will make a moral contribution to that education. However, if one's education in morality is generally deficient, the teaching-learning of ethics is not likely to reverse the process or substitute for every defect. Aristotle produced his books on ethics for people who were already virtuous and wished to become more so.19 A classroom environment may counter some deficiencies but the teacher of ethics cannot expect to produce care, love, kindness, discipline, and honesty by teaching ethics.

The ethics instructor hopes to contribute to the improvement of the human race, but signs of moral uplift cannot be demanded of this pupil at this moment. When classroom instruction is aimed at something other than the understanding of spoken and written language, it fails to do what it is set up to do and what usually will not be sufficiently done elsewhere.

As is true of other classroom instruction, the ethics teacher works with the language of the student set within a conversation of the wisest minds available. The choice is not between talk and action. The real choice is what kind of talk? Talking is a kind of action; the most appropriate action in a classroom is academic criticism. The ethics teacher has to insist on this focus. The temptation is to slide the ethics classroom into storytelling, lecturing, and preaching on one side, or else toward therapeutic opinionating on the other side. Either "I know what is right and I will tell them so" or — more likely in U.S. schools — "Let's all express our views and feel satisfied at the end of class." Teaching ethics means finding the formulas or inarticulate fragments that students have, and trying to improve that language.

The teacher of ethics has a modest position in the teaching of classroom subjects. He or she is likely to be left alone with what is assumed to be an innocuous endeavor. Of course, if the ethics teacher starts teaching revolution or carrying out lab experiments in sexual relations, the course will draw attention because of the misuse of the academic setting. It can happen, however, that the ethics class, precisely because it is doing its job, can conflict with the society around it and even the school that houses it. The questions raised in ethics class about power relations, justice, and bias are potentially embarrassing for any institution. Both school administrators and ethics teachers should be aware that conflict is inherent to the situation. Good will on both sides can ameliorate — though not eliminate — conflict.

Take the case of a particularly sharp tension: a military school. John Keegan, our premier historian of warfare, describes teaching in a military college. He calls the vocational side of the student's education "formation," which "aims, if not to close his mind to unorthodox or difficult ideas, at least to stop it down to a fairly short focal length." Keegan says there is also an academic side, "which aims to offer the student not a single but a variety of angles of vision; which asks him to adopt in his study of war the standpoint not only of officer, but of private soldier, non-combatant, neutral observer, industrialist, diplomat, relief worker, professional pacifist — all valid and documented points of view."20

Keegan is describing a history course, but the ethical dimension is obvious. The better the historian does his or her job, the more unavoid-
able are the ethical questions. Keegan’s final statement — that all the views are valid and documented — presumably means only that they exist and can be studied. But what happens if the student officer gets persuaded by the viewpoint of the “professional pacifist”? Is being persuaded of the validity of pacifism a proper education for the man whose formation has everything to do with leading soldiers in battle?

The inference one might draw is that if the academic part of the student soldier’s education were adequately developed, it might cause a crisis for the profession. This crisis, it should be noted, is not peculiar to the soldiering profession. Suppose law students really examined the value of a lawyer’s work from all perspectives? What if land developers started looking at land from a variety of human and nonhuman perspectives?

My concern here is not the morality of soldiering, law or land development. It is rather that we are all in the same position of being trained to act in certain ways before we can think out for ourselves how to act. That is our “moral education” when we are very young. Academic instruction can only come later to examine, not necessarily reject, our prejudices.

Ethics has to challenge assumptions in our family life, career, and leisure activities. Teaching ethics, instead of being off the end of the spectrum of academic subjects, is the logical consequence of teaching anything in a classroom. Similarly, in relation to the overall teaching of morality, the classroom teaching of ethics is a modest part of the whole project, but it is what keeps education in morality from becoming either neutral techniques or conformity to rules. Education, with or without the adjective moral, has to improve human life, including the relations of men and women, adults and children, and reshape for the better the human relation to the nonhuman world.

Conclusion

This book has tried to answer a single question: What is the meaning of “to teach”? The argument has necessarily been circuitous. I have proceeded by testing out a beginning meaning of “to teach” to find whether it would both open into diverse kinds of teaching and gather that diversity into a consistent whole. There cannot be a definitive proof that the argument is valid.

When describing academic criticism in chapter 6, I said that the most apt metaphor is a legal one: the teacher advocates a case before a jury. The listeners may or may not be convinced by the argument. This book is written in the language of academic criticism (with occasional help from other forms of speech) and the reader is a jury member. In my final summation, I would like to present a comparison between a first meaning of “to teach” that has dominated books in modern education (I will call it Meaning A) and a second meaning that I have argued is preferable (called here Meaning B).

I have not claimed that Meaning A (“to teach is to explain”) is false or useless. It has an appealing clarity within a system of modern ideas on education. Meaning B (“to teach is to show how to live”) does not contradict Meaning A; it provides a context for understanding how Meaning A became dominant but why it cannot take us far enough. One way to describe Meaning B is to say that it is a wider, broader, or more general meaning. I would resist such a description. I have not so much tried to expand the meaning of the term as to expand the conversation about that meaning. My method has been retrieval rather than invention. My task has not been to broaden the meaning because the meaning is already there, although participants in a particular conversation may not be aware of it.

Meaning B is not a general or abstract meaning that is out of touch with practical realities. On the contrary, my aim has been to start with a particular, precise, and practical meaning, one that is strong enough to bear a variety of forms. The search here has not been for a general