Seeking Community in a Divided World

Identifying the Moral Principles Common to American Life

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The material world is a network of relationships; a web of relations between various parts of a unified whole. ... Life is understood and exists through mutually consistent relationships; the consistency of this interrelatedness determines the structure of the entire web.

—Fritjof Capra, *An Uncommon Wisdom*
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PREFACE

We live in a democratic nation that influences the political and economic welfare of many other nations. Thus, understanding personal and national values is both common sense and necessary. Without this understanding, ethical behaviors will be lost in a cultural pluralism that has no moral foundation. Awareness is perhaps the first step we take in acknowledging our beliefs and values. When we voluntarily use our beliefs and values in the public forum to support our views, the behaviors they recommend require public scrutiny and reconsideration. In an open society, when we apply our values publically, we release them to the assessment of others (Dacey, 2008). Our values and their assessment are the scaffolding upon which objectivity and impartiality are built.

Moral self-evaluation is important as we are challenged to extend our moral applications to include cultural and religious diversity acknowledging their importance in the makeup of our democratic culture. A shared morality is needed because it is important to decrease violence in the world and live in peace and harmony with one another.

Understandably, all societies have core values that they call the “common good.” In promoting civility where individuals and nations recognize their shared values, we are challenged to acknowledge the core values of others. This will be difficult. Our conversations with others will be meaningful to the extent they are infused with dignity and mutual respect. When they (whoever they are) join the conversation with the same attitudes, we are optimistic that a shared foundation of moral values can be found for sustaining all humanity.

This will include the franchised and the disenfranchised, the powerful and those who lack political and economic power. Without apologizing, our purpose is to avoid the extreme view whose purpose it is to coerce values into a preconceived shape. Also, we propose to avoid radical individualism which espouses a personal “morality” only. What is needed is a sensible pluralism that recog-
nizes the integrity and dignity of our shared humanity. Unlike the
word “human,” “humanity” is a word with a host of moral impli-
cations including care, dignity, and benevolence.

Our goal is to develop a “a moral human ecology,” our rela-
tionships to one another and to our mutual physical surroundings.
From this perspective, morality is inclusive, emphasizing human
rights and dignity for all people, respectful of diversity, and con-
sequence-sensitive. This does not mean that morality is simply
about ends only, about consequences and results, but it doesn’t
deny the consequences of our behavior as morally important.
Those who emphasize consequences only believe that if something
(an idea, value, or an action such as war) works to their precon-
ceived goals, then it should be valued—that the ends always justi-
ifies the means. This line of thinking entails an ethic of reciprocity.

Ends and means are always and constantly related; sometimes
in conflict. Even in times of war the violation of the rights of pris-
oners, especially by a nation that espouses human rights, is using
immoral means to pursue what is deemed to be moral ends—to
prevent war and violence. The goal of morality is to protect and
enhance the well-being of all persons. The means for accomplish-
ing this goal are complex and require moral reflection and consid-
eration and persistent evaluation. Our personal and shared values
will constitute the ground floor of this dialogue.

WILDING IN AMERICA

Charles Derber (2007) speaks to this idea in his book The
Wilding of America. Derber defines “wilding” as “an antisocial
self-centeredness made possible by a stunning collapse of moral
restraint and a chilling lack of empathy” in American society. He
says, “Wilding is individualism run amok, and the wilding epi-
demic is the face of America’s individualistic culture in an ad-
vanced state of disrepair. . . . In its degraded form, it encourages un-
restrained and sociopathic self-interest.” In their study of youth
document and support the thesis developed by Derber that there is
a morally disabling element in all societies to which legal, educational, and punitive attention must be given.

Brian Orchard (2011) spoke to this issue with reference to one’s so-called “moral compass.” He said, “By placing ‘moral’ in front of compass, we evoke a clear picture of mental processes that point a person in a particular direction in life. These processes are consistent and true indicators upon which personal belief and action can be based.”

Morally deviant behavior is a fact of life. Brian Orchard says, “But while both the concept of a moral compass and the definition of morality are simple and clear, the concept of what constitutes morality is not. One person’s moral compass may not point in the same direction as another’s as far as right and wrong conduct and belief are concerned.” Orchard believes we all have moral capacity, and that this capacity is tempered by time, place, and circumstance; thus, morality and moral values just may be relative with no hope of finding any common ground. Orchard then provides the following account:

A recent article in The Los Angeles Daily News serves as a good illustration. Written by reporter and columnist Tony Castro, the article was titled, “The Moral Compass Suddenly Goes South.” The clear implication is that society is generally going in the opposite direction of acceptable moral and ethical standards. The author makes a superb case based on the recent actions of notable public figures—starlets and celebrities who operate outside and above the common laws of society, sports superstars who see themselves as immune to prosecution, and politicians and religious leaders whose moral compass examples raise serious questions about right and wrong. Yet when it comes to the point of drawing a solid conclusion, the author covers his tracks by quoting two experts—John P. Crossley Jr. whose expertise is religion and social ethics, and James Kellenberger, ethics and morality professor at California State University. Crossley diffused the case by pointing out that there has always been immorality and what we see today is no different than any other time in human history. Kellenberger claimed that because more information is available today there is a perceived increase in immoral behavior due simply to better observation and publicity. In claiming that the moral
compass is facing south, Castro fails to define where north is. And so an excellent opportunity to educate his readership goes begging.

**A SHARED MORALITY**

For some, our proposal to identify a common moral foundation is idealistic, but we believe it remains a normative necessity in an otherwise morally confused and disjointed world. We agree with John Rawls (2001, 2002), who, in his *A Theory of Justice*, expresses hope for an overlapping consensus of all major political and religious ideologies for a reasonable moral pluralism supported by public reason. Rawls defines “reason” as that which people with different ideas and beliefs could agree upon and that we would be able to endorse by asking whether this (whatever action is being debated) is something that we can live with given the difficulties of judgment, past pluralities of society, and its resulting political culture. The fact of pluralism gives rise to overlapping and inconsistent values that often cause conflict; thus, we re-emphasize that an open society necessitates sharing and assessing the moral standards by which we live.

To the degree that societies are “open” is the degree to which their citizens are willing to talk and negotiate what it means to be a morally-based culture. Recently, in the *Institute for Global Ethics Newsletter*, John Ragozzine (2008) wrote,

> As our nation emerges from several decades of determinedly values-neutral education; efforts to weave ethics and integrity into the fabric of education still meet skepticism. The arguments against it are as varied as they are trite. Aren’t we already doing this? Isn’t all ethics relative anyway? Are you saying my child is unethical? Are you trying to impose your values on my family? Whose values are you trying to teach, anyway?

Ragozzine concludes,

> Ours is an age of inordinate moral confusion. Every day’s headlines report big-picture dilemmas with no clear solution: international terrorism, regional warfare, global warming, energy
shortages, corporate scandals, nuclear proliferation, and endemic corruption. At a more granular level, this bewilderment appears in a litany of national and local ethical lapses, where values are subverted, integrity is abandoned, and moral courage is given short shrift. ...little wonder, then, that parents are searching for schools where character matters, where values are in focus, and where moral reasoning and ethical behavior are central to the educational culture. Parents often find those qualities in the nation’s private schools, so many of which are deliberately trying to achieve a culture of responsibility, respect, honesty, fairness. A central aspect of the appeal of private education—a key reason that parents willingly pay for an alternative to what, in North America, is available free in every community—lies in the commitment of private education to developing students of character.

Charles Derber is aware of this and reminds us that the wilding epidemic points to “the need for all of us to become practitioners of the art of social healing.” As teachers, we begin with our students. Our purpose is to help students understand both their personal and community values, the values of others, and then suggest how these might be extended into a wider context of community, national, and global civility. A significant part of our purpose is to help students achieve moral clarity. To accomplish this task we must place personal values in a larger context of morality and everyday ethics with the goal of developing more civil families, institutions, and communities. This goal is what some call a narrow, but important role of ethics. A wider view extends this conversation culturally and interculturally into the moral commons of the global community. A person who is committed to intercultural communication understands the importance of keeping culture-specific ideas and beliefs in perspective when interacting with people from differing cultures. Understanding and respect will provide a foundation for moral reasoning that encourages discussion and dialogue about what we deem important in our lives, nation, and world.

Ronald C. Arnett (2006) supports this ideal and makes a pragmatic case for civility as a conversation for negotiating personal, institutional, and national differences. He says, “We live in a time in which ethical standpoints that traditionally have undergirded discourse are in contrast, dispute, and disruption. Dialogic
civility is an interpersonal metaphor grounded in the public domain and in a pragmatic commitment to keeping the conversation going in a time of narrative confusion and virtue fragmentation.” Concentrating on ethical problem-solving and decision-making is a constant reminder that we live in a globally shared world, a world that at times can be violent, confusing and disruptive. A global ethic, sometimes called *cosmopolitan* (Antonio, 2008), is an extension of our personal and community norms with regard to how nations ought to function in relationship to each other and to global politics, society, and the economy.
INTRODUCTION

Recognizing the role that values, beliefs, and morals play in our culture is vital to sustaining civil communities and nations. Living within a pluralistic culture means an evaluation of our values, is necessary. Awareness precedes thinking, and thinking implies responsibility for our choices.

Our discussions of moral behaviors and civility acknowledge that value shifts, variations in moral commitments, and human conflicts have occurred because we have been unable to find shared moral ground. Some say we never will, admitting that provincial values are personal, community, or cultural absolutes. Others point to the randomness of human behavior which is not predictable. Nassim Taleb (2007) has underscored how to act under conditions of incomplete information is the highest and most urgent human pursuit. When cultures interconnect economically, socially, and religiously, these circumstances leave us in a hopeless morass of confusing and often conflicting opinions.

Opening our minds to all modes of thinking and to views that are different from our own is important for understanding the diversity of values. This is an inner moral task, and should be an ongoing dialogue between us and others. The challenge is difficult, but the need is great. One person who caught this moral vision is Dr. Lewis Zirkle who created SIGN, Surgical Implant Generation Network. The mission of SIGN is to promote equality of fracture care throughout the world by providing free orthopedic implants to poor patients in developing countries. SIGN and Dr. Zirkle not only provide free orthopedic implants, but takes them to these countries and teaches surgeons there how to use them.

Dr. Michelle Foltz, author of A Leg to Stand On, says of SIGN and Dr. Zirkle, “For Lew, this … was … just the right thing to do. The physical reality of metal implants is easy. You can pick one up, lay it next to your leg, and see where it could be of value, but the thought that someone would dedicate their time, energy, and fortune to an idea for the simple reason that it is ‘just the right
thing to do,’ probably sounds a bit insubstantial to most people.” But through his trust, time, and teaching, Dr. Lewis Zirkle has created a worldwide community of surgeons, engineers, and volunteers that is ongoing and compliments his moral vision of serving poor people around the world with his time and talents.

CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER

Three kinds of overlapping conversations dominate our discussion of values. For the sake of clarity they need to be talked about separately. As we become acquainted with these areas, our conversations can easily integrate all three.

First: We begin by examining our basic value-assumptions and the principles that guide our lives. We will be challenged to put them in a broader context of American identity and then in the context of global pluralism. With the emergence of Islamic terrorism, understanding as well as action is needed. We then need to rank these values in degrees of personal, community, and even national importance and highlight those values we share with others. This is one step leading to moral consensus in a globally shared world.

Several strategies guide this conversation:

1) We will be challenged to clarify, explain, and support our assumptions and provide reasons for their acceptance by others.

2) Also, the requirements of tolerance and civility obligate us not to attack or critique the sources (family, church, beliefs, etc.) of another’s values, only to judge their means, intent, and consequences as they affect human behavior.

3) On the other hand, once we use our values publically we unhinge them from our private world and provide an open forum for discussion and reflective consideration by others. An attitude of openness and respect for diversity will enable us to move forward in becoming identifiable ethical communities.

4) Finally, verbal clarity is important. Words used in their cultural context often vary in meaning. Seeking a shared ground for
understanding values and morals entails an honest dialogue between persons, organizations, and nations. Following this prescription will be challenging, but without it our shared vision of a moral human ecology cannot take root.

Second: We move forward by articulating the moral principles that we can generate from our shared values. It follows that our discussions will involve searching for not only moral principles, but moral consistency as well. Moral principles include the following:

1) Principle: We should strive to be people of good character.
2) Principle: Because we are all different, we should have a right to hold and express our personal values.
3) Principle: We should care for one another.
4) Principle: We should always treat others with dignity and appreciation.
5) Principle: Love your neighbor as yourself.
6) Principle: We ought not to discriminate against others but value their individual rights and personal dignity.
7) Principle: All humans have the same inalienable rights; namely, the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
8) Principle: We ought to promote the greatest good for the greatest number.
9) Principle: We ought to always try to understand the views of others and be more tolerant of human diversity and differences.

Third: We begin articulating the rule-making power of moral principles. The application of our moral beliefs usually occurs in a rule-making form, sometimes in law. Our families have rules and so do our schools. Thus, moral principles provide both guidance and sanctions that help stabilize communities. In our families, schools, and workplaces, moral principles become the ethical rules by which we live. They are used to judge behavior as good or bad, right or wrong. Consistency is important. A lack of consistency renders personal, social or institutional moral judgments arbitrary,
without foundation or merit. These rules will have a personal flavor, but we must encourage students discover values they share in common with others, values that community-building power.

**A LIFE OF CIVILITY**

Our overall purpose is to assist with the discovery of a morality that includes civility as a means to reaching our personal goals. We have learned that it is better to be inclusive in our definition of civility rather than narrow and exclusive. Courtesy, politeness, manners, and civility are all forms of other-awareness. Being civil means weaving restraint, respect, and consideration into the fabric of this perception. Civility is a form of gracious goodness toward others. It entails an active interest in their well-being, including the well-being of communities and the living environment. Ideally, civility is the actualization of morality within and between persons, communities, societies, and cultures. It requires vigilance and ongoing conversations between people and between nations.

Seeking a shared morality entails the extension of civility to a much wider humanity than just our own culture. It entails a moral ecology of persons, all persons. Yet, our values will be communicated with personal and cultural speech. Before opening this dialogue, we are challenged to cleanse our cultural lenses of their biases. We are compelled by our own humanity to search for values that emphasize human rights, integrity, respect for persons, and human dignity. Noting the difficulty of this responsibility, being moral and being civil are difficult mental and social behaviors.

Social isolation and social fragmentation can be destructive (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008). Being alone as persons or isolated as nations can be unfavorable to our moral health. Isolation usually ends up in finger pointing and attitudes of superiority. That human beings should communicate and come together in moral unification seems a natural predilection. When social cohesion and civility are eroded, trust and a social isolation are often the results. A society that is disconnected creates the urgent need to work con-
sciously and deliberately to build stronger human bonds with every opportunity.

As Emerson (2008) so aptly wrote, “Every man takes care that his neighbor shall not cheat him. But a day comes when he begins to care that he does not cheat his neighbor. Then all goes well. He has changed his market cart into a chariot of the sun. What a day dawns, when we have taken to heart the doctrine of faith! to prefer, as a better investment, being to doing; being to seeming; logic to rhythm and to display; the year to the day; the life to the year; character to performance; and now have come to know, that justice will be done us; and if our genius is slow, the term will be long…”

In a global world we are neighbors to everyone and should, as Emerson said, change our own market carts into chariots of the sun. Committed people are those who will bring about moral change. Mitch Album (2008) – an American best-selling author, journalist, screenwriter, playwright, radio and television broadcaster and musician – has said, “The way you get meaning into your life is to devote yourself to loving others, devote yourself to your community around you, and devote yourself to creating something that gives you purpose and meaning.” On the other hand, people whose values are restricted to the immediate with little knowledge of the past and who maintain a shallow outlook for the future have limited moral growth. They live their lives on the surface and give little thought to issues of moral meaning and purpose.

Those who read this book are invited to open discussions of morality, ethics, and civility in their schools, homes, and professions. Our purpose is to challenge you to give serious thought to what you value in yourself and what you value in others. For this reason, we have included at the end of each chapter discussion questions and ideas for engaging others in a values-focused dialogue. Also, at the end of each chapter there are suggested readings. The reader may include other books and readings in this list that will enhance their values’ discussions.
If this book is used in study groups, these readings and others can become a foundation for a more in-depth study and quality dialogue. President Obama recently said that we need to move forward with the task of seeking and identifying common values, and just not at home, but across all nations and cultures. This effort will have peace-making potential and requires the attention and efforts of everyone. But we should do more: we should not only identify our common human values, but live them through our work and in our families and among our friends. The model on the following page provides a graphic overview of a moral human ecology, the central feature of which is maintaining continuous dialogue among people and nations about the moral features of human rights, justice, and everyday behaviors.
A MORAL HUMAN ECOLOGY

**Personal Value**  
*Purpose:* to identify personal values, value differences, and value choices  
*Question:* Am I free to believe anything I want to believe?

**Cultural Identity**  
*Purpose:* to identify the moral principles common to American life  
*Question:* Are there common principles that can guide the moral life?

**Justifying Our Purpose**  
*Purpose:* to define and give reasons for a shared moral universal view of morality  
*Question:* Why should I be moral?

**The Moral Community**  
*Purpose:* To define and support a universal moral ecology  
*Question:* Is a common morality defensible in a global world?

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**Moving Toward a Local, National, and Inter-cultural Moral Human Ecology Through Continuous Dialogue**

**Dialogic Civility:**  
*The Art of World Community-Building*

*Purpose:* to make a connection between our values, moral principles, ethics, and civil behaviors  
*Question:* How do I connect personal values and morals to local and world community-building (civil) behaviors?

**Key Idea:** Unity in Diversity  
- Will take time to apply solutions to problems  
- Wide-spread applications  
- Allows for individuality and flexibility in problem solving  
- No one sub-group is allowed to dominate  
- The end product rarely satisfies everyone  
- A highly contentious system  
- All are required to compromise at some point (moderation)  
- The process facilitates living together
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Understanding Personal Values

A PATH TO UNDERSTANDING

The path to understanding morals and the importance of civility begins with the examination and assessment of significant personal values, as well as the values espoused in the ethical practices of businesses, governments, churches, and other social and political organizations. But this is not the whole story. Ethical principles represent behaviors that need to be modeled. One cannot purport to be ethical without living an ethical life. This is both a personal and community responsibility.

Ethical responsibility extends outward and hopefully has a global impact. The outward extension of ethics is sometimes called “cosmopolitanism.” Gillian Brock and Harry Brighouse (2005) observed, “As a thesis about responsibility, cosmopolitanism guides the individual outwards from obvious, local obligations, and prohibits those obligations from crowding out obligations to distant others.” Thus, cosmopolitanism “highlights the obligations we have to those whom we do not know, and with whom we are not intimate, but whose lives touch ours sufficiently that what we do can affect them.” The assumptions made by cosmopolitanism do not negate individual values; they only remind us of our extended moral obligations.

Cosmopolitanism is an idea that is able to guide our discussion of ethics and civility. Many will argue that their values are person-
al and private, and indeed they are. They will say that they are free to believe anything they want to believe, and that’s true also, at least in a democracy. These are significant freedoms in democratic cultures and important to our dignity and selfhood. Given the value of personal privacy, we are able to explore and experiment with our motives, fears, and weaknesses without being inhibited by the risk of public failure or censure. Issues of conscience and religion will obviously fall into this personal and private sphere. In 1893, David D. Field wrote, “We of this country made it an article of organic law that the relations between man and his Maker were a private concern, into which other men have no right to intrude.” Most of us agree with Field, but there is more to be said on this subject.

On the other hand, whenever we (especially parents, teachers, ministers, government officials, and politicians) voluntarily present our personal or religious views in public argument as reasons for our choices, we must be prepared to provide reasons that support them. Others will judge us as we venture into public debate. In these conversations, the sources of our beliefs should not be questioned, only their value in the public square. The exchange of beliefs and ideas is the way we move forward as a culture.

We are convinced that it is the capacity for empathy that lies at the heart of our humanity and moral vision. Empathy necessitates the valuing of pluralism by rejecting the single-minded view that whatever values I deem important are to be forced on others, without exception. Empathy is an inner human capacity that allows us to affix value to others, and not just any kind of value, but moral value—dignity, respect, and equality. When supported by empathy, morality embraces freedom, human worth, and compassion, and it identifies with those who are less fortunate and are encapsulated within more primitive economic and cultural practices.

Isaiah Berlin has observed, “The basic categories (with their corresponding concepts) in terms of which we define men—such notions as society, freedom, sense of time and change, suffering,
happiness, productivity, good and bad, right and wrong, choice, effort, truth, illusion (to take them wholly at random)—are not matters of induction and hypothesis. To think of someone as being human is *ipso facto* to bring all these notions into play; so that to say of someone that he is a man, but that choice, or the notion of truth, means nothing to him, would be eccentric: it would clash with what we mean by ‘man’ not as a matter of verbal definition...but as intrinsic to the way in which we think, and...evidently cannot but think.”

For Berlin, our moral beliefs are “among the building blocks of human consciousness,” of what it means to be human. The question is asked, “What is human about humans?” and answers will always include our ethical capacity, our capacity for reason, and our religious beliefs. These are the generators of the moral point of view.

Our rational capacity needs to be emphasized because of its importance for personal and global communication. Among other things, reasoning that is ethical will include the following:

*Honesty*, which means we typically say what we really think and can be trusted to mean what we say we mean.

*Rationality*, which means that we take efficient means to our ends being as logically consistent as possible. This also indicates that we are prepared to accept the implications of our views as they apply in other instances. When we are rational in this way, others know what to expect from us and we know what to expect from them.

*Evidence*, which means that it matters how our reasons link up with the real world or don’t. Publically variable evidence provides for an open and transparent society and world.

*Feasibility*, which means that our public proposal is realistic, in line with what we know and is known; that it is not based on a private belief or something that is commonly impractical.
Legality-morality, which means that our actions are in accord with our laws and ethics, and that they provide a level of expectation for those within and those coming into the society.

Revisability, which means that we should be prepared to entertain objections, criticisms, and changes.

**AN OPEN SOCIETY**

We sometimes apply our values without thinking. They are for the most part ingrained and habitual. Values are applied within our social relationships and in the community where personal traditions and habits continue to dominate our lives. Issues of consistency will always be with us. The benefits of “an open society” will cause us to rethink our most cherished values, their importance and unimportance in the larger domain of the school, community or nation.

An open society is a welcoming society. It is also a critical society – morally critical of itself and others. It is a society that seeks to enlarge its vision of morality and persons. This is conceivable a moral ideal, but because there are degrees to “being open,” and because all people differ, no person or society will un-critically accept all the ideas and values of others.

Many will continue to feel that their values are personal and private. This view is supported by Karl Popper (Bryan, 1973) who said: “The general guiding principle for public policy put forward in The Open Society is: ‘Minimize avoidable suffering’ followed by: ‘Maximize the freedom of individuals to live as they wish’.” “An open society,” said Popper “is one that is free to critique and re-evaluate itself.”

**Minimal Standards**

So we emphasize and recommend “openness” as a first step in seeking a shared morality among friends and diverse people. This openness recognizes “the minimum standards” of well-ordered societies and institutions. These include the following:
• **Negative injunctions:** Rules against murder, lying, deceit, torture, oppression, and tyranny, and

• **Positive injunctions:** Rights requiring democratic political forms, religious toleration, and legal equality for women and other minorities.

Most of the time these standards are expressed as moral maxims such as “Do not kill” and “Love your neighbor as yourself.” In some cases they are written into law. Recognizing the moral maxims that guide our lives is essential as new ideas/situations emerge and needs arise. With few exceptions, our personal values can be expressed as negative or positive injunctions.

Finding shared values’ agreement is both a diplomatic and sensitive task. This remains a moral ideal in a values’ differentiated world. Different societies are apt to apply their traditions to moral values revealing a cultural diversity that must be understood before effective dialogue can occur. Yet, some think that there are some values and beliefs that have possible application for all people. These include justice and freedom for all people; liberty of conscience for faiths other than one’s own; wiping out genocide wherever it exist; and the right to take part in the government of one’s country. Basic human rights, although based on the moral principle of the freedom of persons, may also become legal rights, i.e., rights that require embodiment and examples in a specific legal framework to support and explain them.

**Moral Actions between Nations**

John Rawls (1993) wondered how justice might be extended to cover issues concerning the moral relationships between nations. He did not argue for a universal application of the principles of justice across national boundaries, only for a respectful relationship between nations as *representatives of peoples*. Rawls understood this as contractual implying a continuous give-and-take among and within cultures. His value lay in the idea of reciprocity.

The fact of value pluralism indicates that different cultural meanings must be interpreted, understood, and agreed upon as we
speak with others. Legal frameworks are for the most part nation or state specific and will sometimes hinder cross-cultural value communication and commitment. Democratic societies should be diligent in aligning both law and moral principle, especially those that protect and enhance the freedoms and dignity of its citizens. This will become more apparent as nations seek common values across cultural and national boundaries.

By the end of the 20th century, ethicists had begun to address this problem. The default position in this conversation is that national boundaries have significance and legitimacy. We are reminded that ethics is about responsibility (Sypnowich, 2005; Scheffler, 1997) and not only to our friends and families, but a responsibility to our communities and even to our nation. We are responsible to treat others with fairness, honesty, and respect. When we behave in this way we will be known as persons of integrity.

Many will disagree, but to interact within a global world critical evaluation, moral understanding, and thoughtfulness are essential. We perhaps need to exercise tolerance and respect for differing cultural practices, values, and world views. This can be difficult for many cultural practices are situated along the seam of violence, genocide, and mutilation. Hopefully, among most nations and cultures, we will discover values we share with others and, with these, the foundation for sustained civil interactions.

CLOSED SOCIETIES

Closed societies are problematic because they are supported by two fallacies (Dacey, 2008):

The Privacy Fallacy occurs when we think that the values and beliefs we use in public discourse cannot be critically discussed by others. We assume that because matters of conscience are private in the sense of being unforced and unlegislated they are also private in the sense of personal preference. But is the public sphere a “conscience-free zone”?
The Liberty Fallacy claims that we’re free to believe anything we desire to believe without any consequences. There is an inner connection here to the Privacy Fallacy. Somehow, the democratic principle of freedom of belief has mutated into an unthinking assumption that matters of belief and opinion don’t really matter; but they do. Choosing not to interfere with the freedom of others, some have supposed that values are immune from critical public inquiry. Yet, when our values are applied in the public square, we open ourselves to public scrutiny and criticism. Self-reflection and social adjustment will be required.

In his book, Political Liberalism, John Rawls defended the “ideal of public reason” according to which discussions of fundamental political questions should appeal to beliefs and values that are acceptable to all reasonable citizens (Hittinger, 1994). Although Rawls’ discussion of ethics did not venture into global waters, his insights remain valuable. Presumably, we also desire wherever possible, to have our personal values protected so that we may converse with others about the vital questions of meaning, identity, ethics, and truth. This idea can be extended to nation-to-nation conversations, but we should understand this will not be easy or without fear and claims of one nation bullying another. There will be barriers to this global dialogue, but our determination to communicate across national and cultural boundaries has understandable moral potential.

MANAGING CONFLICT

Conflict is a fact of our lives. The issue is not that conflict occurs, but how to manage conflict in civil ways. In their book on group theory and skills, authors Johnson and Johnson (1975) insightfully remind us of the importance of effective conflict management. Accordingly, a high level of cooperation is required to resolve ongoing quarrels and differences. To maintain social cohesion there is a key factor which they underscore; namely, pos-
sessing a shared moral foundation upon which we can base cooperative behavior and conflict resolution.

Johnson and Johnson recommend the following sensible steps for personal and group self-reflection:

- Agree on goals and guidelines before discussing the conflict
- Have everyone to say how they feel about the situation
- Have each person restate the idea or position expressed by others
- Continue bringing feelings and issues into the open
- Redefine the issues and begin working on a solution
- Summarize points of agreement and disagreement
- Be sure all persons and all relevant information are brought into the discussion
- Keep the discussion from being dominated by a few
- Constantly state and restate positions for clarity while indicating the progress being made
- Produce new alternatives that encompass the views of everyone in the group, thus avoiding stalemates, poor compromises, or neglecting unpopular viewpoints
- Actively search for differences, disagreements, questions, and avoid letting someone give in to group pressure with a clear picture of the consequences

Following this advice will be a learning process in which patience and objectivity are required for the continuance of open dialogue. Sensitivity to the needs of others is also needed. A willingness to share our views and listen to different views, and being motivated to make steady improvement in our behaviors leading to community civility is an ongoing effort and responsibility.

John Dewey’s (1916) ideal of the self-critical community of inquirers has significant consequences for discussions of value, social reconstruction, and the revitalization of the moral community. Dewey viewed humans as “craftsmen” making selective responses to their environment. He mentions that our behavior and choices can be blind, motivated by impulse, convention, or rigid
habit, or they can be intelligent, which leads to even more intelligent ones.

In a practical way, we give birth to ourselves in our relationships with others. Effective person-to-person communication connects values, conduct, and reasoning with the assumption that we all are responsible for our behavior. Civility, at its core, is conduct informed by reason and intelligence. With some diligence, settling personal and group issues civilly can be infused into our network of relationships. This will add meaning and moral depth to our lives, reduce conflict in our personal relationships, and go a long way in creating more peaceful and cooperative social environments. Thus, conflict resolution with an “eye” on the values and needs of others is essential to community-building and maintaining civil societies.

Links to Social Behavior

Deena and Michael A. Weinstein (1976) stress the importance of tradition and experience as transferors of essential familial and community values. This involves (1) an awareness of our feelings and the feelings of others; (2) ongoing interactions with others; (3) awareness of the values we share with others; and (4) our ability to generate new pathways to open communication with others.

These four actions are the basic links of social behavior. They can take us beyond ourselves to an involvement in interrelated groups and organizations. As nations of individuals, this also occurs on a much broader scale. Our innermost thoughts are drenched in cultural experiences and values, traditions and habits. We are political to the core, but must reach beyond these artificially created boundaries. This means wrenching ourselves away from our provincially-focused way of looking at the world, becoming involved in critical self-understanding (and perhaps cultural/national critical understanding), and lifting our heads above our immediate moral horizon to see the world anew (Hester, 1995).

Self-disclosure in Relationships
As individuals struggle for identity and selfhood a positive communication climate will support dialogue and honesty. When we are understanding and set positive examples, others will usually follow our lead. As this occurs, the creation of beneficial interaction-conditions is possible where only negative ones once existed. Of course this is an ideal dialogic situation which requires reflective attention, maintenance, and patience.

John T. Wood comments (1976), “I am afraid to be who I am with you. I am afraid to be judged by you. I am afraid you will reject me. I am afraid you will say bad things about me. I am afraid you will hurt me. I am afraid, if I really am myself, you won’t love me—and I need your love so badly that I will play the roles you expect me to play and be the person that pleases you, even though I lose my self in the process.”

No one is exempt from this malady. The tragedy of this fear is twofold: first is the pain and loss of freedom and belonging that comes from trying to hide who we are and mask our true selves. The other is the loss of those effective relationships necessary to resolving everyday moral dilemmas. These losses make an honest discussion of values virtually impossible. They also limit our ability to reach across familial or social boundaries with respect, compassion, and benevolence. They make ineffective our voice in the moral commons.

There is a deep level of disclosure that lies close to our hearts. Here we reveal and discover opinions about people, issues, and events. These ideas reflect where we stand on a particular question or problem. They provide a clearer picture of whether conversation has any potential meaning or whether a values conflict has any potential for being resolved.

We move closer to self-identity when we share feelings and emotions. Feelings lie at the core of who we are. When feelings are shared, it is important to be nonjudgmental and move the discussion in the comfort zone of those involved. This will be a struggle as we are prone to assert ourselves and hold fast to entrenched values. If we cannot find our personal comfort level or
identify that of others, maybe the discussion is moving too quickly and some may even feel they are being ridiculed or not heard. Judging the speed and depth of the conversation is vital to the health of the discussion. Sometimes we are guilty of moving too quickly into someone’s emotional space. Awareness is our ally. Without finding a comfort zone, our dialogue about values and ethics will be disappointing, for honesty and the value of sharing will probably be compromised.

CONCLUSION

Positive values are essential to the vitality of communities and organizations. Perhaps one of our moral responsibilities is to show others a better future and give them hope. A positive, self-enhancing discussion of values and ethics will move us in that direction. In his book, Jefferson’s Children, Leon Botstein (1997) says, “Without an environment of hope and optimism, nothing we do…will help. The reason for this rests in the influence that hopelessness has on our sense of time. It shortens our vision.”

It is a truism that we should not grow at the expense of others, and we don’t have to. We stress the importance of this value both for individuals and nations. Community life necessitates respect, tolerance, and goodwill. Being closed-minded, critical and maintaining a values-superior attitude is relationship destructive. We can help others learn that they are important to their communities, schools, and above all else, to their families. We can reveal both purpose and the confidence to plan our future and live it, but not at their expense. As Emerson (2009) said, “People seem not to see that their opinion of the world is also a confession of their character… Men of character like to hear of their faults; the other class do not like to hear of faults; they worship events; secure to them a fact, a connection, a certain chain of circumstances, and they will ask no more.” As George Santayana (1968) so aptly noted, “Our
character is an omen of our destiny, and the more integrity we have and keep, the simpler and nobler that destiny is likely to be.”

When we share our values and morals, we are sharing a vision. Modeling ethical behaviors and living them authentically, also means sharing an inspired vision of the future with our friends and colleagues, family and loved ones. Talking about value issues in a positive and constructive manner can be an uplifting experience that provides community cohesion and civility among groups of people.

Following are some beliefs found to be positive and constructive. They have value in the moral commons as a foundation for dialogic civility:

• We can live harmoniously by combining personal satisfactions and self-development with significant work and other activities that contribute to the welfare of others.

• We will develop faith in others if we have faith that they can tap their own power to solve difficult problems.

• Individual uniqueness unfolds quite naturally as we express respect for the abilities, as well as possibilities, of others.

• Each person has intrinsic moral and intellectual worth and we should look upon them as natural and good.

• We do not have to grow at the expense of others. This does not mean that we are all alike or should regard each other as so. Rather, it means that each of us has the ability to reach out creatively beyond our own physical and mental boundaries and maintain an ethical consistency and integrity in our own lives.

• Most people are naturally open and responsive to their environment. In our talk about values, we can tap into this resource and involve them in open discussion and dialogue, model positive behaviors, and encourage their growth and development.
• Finally, most people are naturally creative and the more they learn and practice ethical behaviors, the more likely they will behave ethically throughout their lives.

READINGS


IDEAS FOR DIALOGUE AND DISCUSSION

1) Distinguish between personal, societal, and common (global) values.

2) Demonstrate consistency in value decision-making.

3) Make inferences from one value dilemma to similar social situations.

4) Identify the implications for value choices.

5) From identified personal and social values begin the construction of common moral principles that are applicable to all human beings.

ACTIVITIES

1) List ten of your most important values. Prioritize your value selections from the *most important* to the *least important*, and then select the top five values based on their prioritized list.
Ask which of these top values have potential for uniting family, friends, communities, and nations.

2) Arrange these top ten values under one of three headings: personal values, cultural values, and values that can be recommended cross-culturally. Give examples of each value and the reasons for including it in one group or another. If one of the headings has no value listed with it, then an explanation needs to be provided for its absence.

3) Secure a copy of the Bill Of Rights from the U.S. Constitution. Read the Bill of Rights and then answer: “Are there values within these rights that I could not live without?” Were any of your top five values found in the Bill of Rights?

4) Read the following story (Hester, 1988):

JANUARY 28, 1986: Before the unthinkable happened on that cold January day in Florida, they were the elite’s elite, American astronauts, operating in that strange, unforgiving stratosphere where only several hundred humans have ever been. With space flight becoming virtually routine, the astronauts came to be seen as near flawless as robots. The explosion of the space shuttle Challenger on January 28, 1986, changed all that.

As one student remarked, “I didn’t think that spaceflight was all that dangerous. I thought it was just another job.” In one single tragic moment, all of that was changed. Now the astronauts have suddenly become as fragile and vulnerable as earthbound mortals.

In the grief, confusion and anger that followed the tragic explosion, the shuttle program lost its innocence. After a four month investigation, a presidential commission concluded the catastrophe was “an accident rooted in history,” that is, NASA’s acceptance of growing risks in trying to meet an increasingly ambitious schedule. As astronaut Captain Frederick Hauck remarked, “Although the technical problems were
coming faster than the solutions, the launch dates remained firm. Then, Challenger exploded."

Hauck went on to remark, “Morals were not involved in the Challenger accident. I don’t think anyone willingly subverted the system within NASA.” The question of moral responsibility is an important question. It is a question which you and I confront almost everyday and a question which we wish we could ignore. The curse of men is that they know of good and evil. Whether they will or not, men will be judged as moral agents and condemned for their failures. We know too much to be considered as innocent as beasts in the fields.

**ANSWER THE FOLLOWING**

- Are people accountable for their actions even when their actions were not intentional?
- Were morals an issue in the Challenger disaster? Explain.
- Was NASA acting immorally when it did not inform the astronauts about the unreliability of the O-rings in the solid rocket booster? Explain.
- Just because there is no such thing as zero risk in the space business, should NASA have informed the astronauts of the O-ring problem and let them decide to fly or not to fly?
- Was the manufacturer of the solid rocket boosters acting immorally when they downplayed the danger of the O-rings because of profits to be made or lost? Can industries and businesses act morally and immorally as corporate entities?
- The question is one of “moral responsibility.” How is “moral responsibility” to be defined?
5) Of the values we have discussed, which ones would you consider as foundations for moral behavior. Give reasons for your choices.
2

SEEKING OUR IDENTITY

SEARCHING FOR AMERICAN IDENTITY

The search for American identity begins where we are – in our own communities, schools, churches, homes, and political institutions. In this chapter we recognize that more and more religion has become a force in public life and students need to be aware of how their religion or the lack of religion affects their values. It has become important to identify America not only as a great experiment in democracy, but as a moral enterprise.

Religion and Morality in America

The variety of religious beliefs in the United States surpasses the nation’s multitude of ethnicities, nationalities, and races, making religion another source of diversity rather than a unifying force. With the advances in immigration from both Spanish speaking countries and from the Far East, America, which was once thought of as a cultural/moral melting pot, may have become more like broken shards. This is true even though the vast majority of Americans – 76 percent – identify themselves as Christian. It remains that 16 percent of Americans are unaffiliated with any faith, and one-third of these self-identified Christians are unaffiliated with any church (Caplow, et al, 2009).

These differences and the politicalization of religion during the second half of the 20th century have led to multifarious con-
licts among and between religious groups, which continues to spill over into national and international political tensions. Even though religion wields extraordinary influence in public affairs, it remains a rich reservoir of values, principles, and ideals, and a powerful source of conflict and violence as diverse sacred and secular traditions collide.

Religious Differences

Since September 11, 2001, religious news and religious controversy have been constants on American airwaves, newspapers, and books. From Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code* (2006) and the controversy that surrounded its interpretation by the political insurgence of the Christian Right, editorials, books, and talk shows have highlighted the religious differences found among the American public.

For example, in the fall of 2004, Larry King (2004) host of *Larry King Live*, asked a panel of religious leaders why they thought there is so much anger, hate, and horror in the world. He wondered about the world’s seemingly ignorance of morality and human dignity. This panel included Deepak Chopra, religious radio personality Dennis Prager, Reverend R. Albert Mohler, Jr., President of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Dr. Maher Nathout, scholar and advisor to the Muslim Public Affairs Council.

In the middle of this discussion, King mentioned that religion has been singled out as the cause of the world’s moral problems and not the cure. The answers coming from the panel ranged from “our ideas of God are based on primitive ideas,” to blaming secular ideologies and beliefs for the widespread murder and torture of individuals worldwide. One panel member said that it is a mistake to single out religion as the only cause for world conflict. Perhaps there remains an underlying political motive, one based on power rather than dialogic civility, for sustaining the cultural war.

As this debate was taking place, several significant stories about religious conflict appeared in American newspapers. The first came from the Associated Press in New Orleans and an-
nounced, “School Board in Prayer Dispute.” A federal lawsuit to stop the local school board from having Christian prayers at its meetings found both sides citing First Amendment rights in arguing their stands. In this case, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) represented a parent who contended that prayers at Tangipahoa Parish School Board meetings violated constitutional separation of church and state under the First Amendment. The ACLU added another complaint about using religious music during meetings. On the other side, members of the school board argued that “free-speech rights allowed them to have the public prayers.” They cited another case in which the United States Supreme Court upheld the right of legislatures and other “deliberative bodies” to permit such prayers. The attorney for the school board appealed to tradition to support his case for allowing prayer at the school board meetings.

Another incident reported by the American press was a planned marriage rally at Hickory Motor Speedway in Hickory, North Carolina. Civic leaders and church members from different denominations throughout North Carolina came together on September 25, 2004 at the speedway to support “the traditional definition of marriage as the union between a man and a woman.” The event was advertised as a “We Are United Rally” and promoted its purpose as wanting to educate people about the issue of same-sex marriage and provide information on participating in the national rally in Washington, D.C., on October 15, 2004.

Also, in 2004, the Associated Press reported that the Gorham, New Hampshire School Board had approved a high school senior’s after-school Bible study classes, pending review by the school attorney. Liz Woodward, who planned to study biblical counseling at Lancaster, Pennsylvania Bible College, told the school board she needed to hold weekly classes at her school for a required senior project. The school board was concerned about the First Amendment issue of separation of church and state. The board debated the request at length before voting unanimous approval so long as those attending have parents’ permission and an
adult supervises the classes. The high school principal reported that the legality of the Bible classes was researched and found to be within federal law because attendance is voluntary and it is an after school activity.

In the same year, University of North Carolina’s Chancellor James Moeser “excommunicated” a Christian fraternity with an evangelical Protestant theology because it teaches that sexual activity ought to be limited to marriage between a man and a woman (UNC, 2004) Moeser noted that this standard obviously excluded extramarital and homosexual conduct, which is an espousal of traditional Christian morals. Moeser referred to a 2001 policy statement on “nondiscrimination,” which affirmed no discrimination in employment decisions or educational programs based on age, sex, race, color, national origin, religion, or disability.

The university had adopted an internal policy on non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation which figured into this decision. It was added, the report said, to ensure that only relevant factors are considered and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied. Notably, Chancellor Moeser exempted from its operation outside organizations, including the federal government, the military, ROTC and private employers. In 2003, the fraternity in question – AIO – came up for renewal of its official status to make sure that it complied with “university policies on non-discrimination,” including the one on sexual orientation. Based on their rules and consciences, AIO members decided that they could not admit students who disagree with their religious tenets and who are unwilling to adhere to traditional standards of sexual morality. They said that this would go against the fraternity’s stated purpose. Jon Curtis, assistant director for student activities and organization went forward and pulled the plug on the AIO, a decision that was affirmed by Chancellor Moeser on August 12, 2004. AIO sued the university on August 25, “claiming violation of its rights to freedom of association, speech, and religion.”
The opinion of some was that this is a case study in secular intolerance. Lawyers argued that Moeser ignored the central role that religion and morality have played in America, and where these conscientious students fit into that history. They also explained that in Moeser’s world, “traditional Christian religion does not exist.” These issues clearly represent an overlapping of moral and religious-ethical values, as well as secular values, a conflict of ideals that continues to percolate, often unnoticed, in American society. The question persists as to whether the secular impulse in American culture can co-exist with the variety of religious beliefs that populate the 21st century American cultural landscape.

**RELIGIOUS CONFLICT**

The church is not only a religious institution, but also a social institution with a moral purpose (Warner, 1993). During the Civil Rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s, both African-American and white Christian churches organized to combat racial inequality. In these decades, some churches stood against the increased concentration of wealth and power in America. Peace churches (the Brethren) vigorously opposed the arms race and the Vietnam War. In 1985, The Universal House of Justice, the supreme governing body of the Baha’i Faith, published a statement “to the peoples of the world,” proclaiming “the promise of world peace.” Although the Baha’i Faith believes that humankind has evolved to a stage of peace, they also claim, that large numbers of people believe that religion is irrelevant to the modern world. In their view, man-made ideologies, designed to save society from moral evil, is the source of much human conflict.

Evangelical Protestants have also opposed the Supreme Court’s ruling against prayer in public schools. Catholics and evangelicals have found themselves on the same side of the Prolife movement against abortion. These prophetic stands—both left and right—have precipitated prolonged debates, volatile rallies, political battles, and even violence between opposing forces, all in the name of “morality.” Again, these issues, along with homosexual
marriage, reappeared during the 2008 presidential election and in 2009, in California. Separating the political from the moral and religious in these arguments remains troubling. By the summer of 2009, eleven states had recognized homosexual unions as legitimate, certainly a sign of some changes in the values of Americans.

The existence of conflict in the interaction of society’s major institutions means that religion and politics, both with claims to moral authority, are changing in America. New churches—some as small storefront congregations and others as large community-based and innovative groups—have been formed to fulfill important personal functions that traditional religions are no longer fulfilling as new human needs have emerged. New, religion-oriented educational institutions have been developed and are attracting a K-12 student body from families who desire their children to be educated in schools that profess both an academic, moral, and religious purpose. And these congregations are drawn from across the body of different denominations and from the Catholic Church (Adler, 1993).

Moral education with an emphasis on character, civility and with an unspoken foundation in the Christian religion is also on the rise. Approximately 12 percent of American children are being educated in private schools, 80 percent of which are of some religious affiliation. Also, approximately 630,000 children are being educated through home-schooling. A 1992 Gallup poll showed that 70 percent of Americans support choice in education, and that Christian parents “have been the vanguard of the educational choice and parental rights movement.” These figures document a cultural- or values-shift in America, and the public schools have been one of the battlegrounds.

A New Paradigm

Social theorists are divided on their explanation of the growth of religion in America that occurred in the second half of the 20th century. For most of the 20th century, secularization theory was the dominant theoretical view of religion in the modern world. “Secularization” refers to the process of the separation of state and
church. In most of the Western world there has been at least sufficient separation that people are capable both of living their lives apart from direct interference on the part of religion and may choose among various religions without suffering civil disabilities.

In spite of the appearance of overwhelming evidence for the secularization thesis, Hadden (1995) and Warner (1988) argue that secularization theory does not adequately explain the increase in religious affiliation, especially in the United States. Although the time from 1850 to 1950 was a time of rapid secularization and modernization, church enrollment continued to grow immensely. Hadden and Warner support the theory of religious economy, which attributes the growth of religious affiliation in the United States to the disestablishment clause of the Constitution. They concluded that by radically separating church and state, religious pluralism has been and is being encouraged. Today, the United States has the largest number of religious groups in the world (Kosmin and Lachman, 2001).

Important Moral Issues

Different interpretations of religious conflict point to different causes. Robert Wuthnow (1989) has written that religious conservatives and liberals disagree not only about religion but also about the role of government in public life. He says that many of the most hotly debated issues of the past several decades (e.g., civil rights, women’s rights, homosexual rights, military and social spending, abortion, pornography, school prayer, and the teaching of creationism) arise out of differences rooted ultimately in their two ways of viewing God and the world. Amalgamated with these differences are important moral issues:

1) The first is a conservative public theology that champions strong traditional morality, strong national defenses and a heady brew of free enterprise. It claims that its authority comes from a literal interpretation of the Bible and has the goal of returning America to biblical ideals “on which it was
founded.” What conservatives have not done is identify and express these “Biblical ideals” in a moral language that includes the views of other religious groups. This leads one to suspect that the hidden purpose of the Christian conservative movement is not advancing morality in everyday affairs, but proselytizing others to their religious faith and political doctrines.

2) The opposing view is a liberal public theology and puts forward a more relativistic code of personal morality. This code includes a cooperative multilateral spirit in foreign relations and strong government initiatives capable of infusing norms of social justice into the capitalist mind. The liberal view is also biblically oriented, but projects its view as cultural wisdom rather than divine revelation, thus opening the door for dialogue on issue-specific moral concerns to take place.

Stephen R. Warner (1993) suggests that it is theology or religious belief, not politics that unites conservatives, and that their political views are diverse and vary in much the same ways as those of the general public. He also perceives religious liberals as united not by religious doctrine but by an optimistic and socially responsible attitude. He calls this a “worldly morality.” The research provided by both of these scholars continues to inform contribute insights about religious differences, conflicts, and politic-religious involvement as they endeavor to untangle issues of politics, religion, and America’s moral identity.

America’s National Identity

Samuel P. Huntington (2004) places religious conflict in the United States in the larger context of changes occurring “in the salience and substance of American national identity.” He makes the observation that “salience,” or projection, is the importance that Americans ascribe to their national identity compared to their many other identities, and “substance” conveys what Americans believe they have in common and distinguishes them from other nations and cultures.
With reference to “substance,” Huntington says that race and ethnicity have largely been eliminated as Americans are accustomed to seeing their country as a multiethnic, multiracial society. He notes that this isn’t the way it has always been nor is it the way it might continue. For example, since the terrorist attacks of 9/11/01, many Americans have begun to re-emphasize race and ethnicity in an effort to tighten their conception of what it means to be an American. One of these emphases is stressing that “real” Americans adhere to Christian beliefs and values.

The Anglo-Protestant culture, says Huntington, has been central to American identity and was crucial in defining the American Creed. The first American Creed was articulated by Thomas Jefferson and read, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

The American Creed makes two monumental claims: the first is that the individual is the sovereign unit in society and the second is that the removal of artificial and arbitrary restraints on individual freedom will release unprecedented amounts of energy into the world. The liberated individual will, in effect, interact with his fellows in a harmonious scheme that recovers the natural order and allows for the fullest realization of human potential.

In 1918, another, broader American creed was written as a result of a nationwide contest. It said, “I believe in the United States of America as a Government of the People, by the People, for the People; whose just powers are derived from the consent of the governed; A democracy in a republic, a sovereign Nation of many Sovereign States; a perfect Union, one and inseparable; established upon those principles of Freedom, Equality, Justice, and Humanity for which American Patriots sacrificed their Lives and Fortunes. I therefore believe it is my duty to my country to Love it; to Support its Constitution; to obey its laws; to Respect its Flag; and to defend it against all enemies.”
Noticeably, there is no mention of God in this version of the *American Creed*. It was intended to be a brief summary of the American political faith founded upon documents and events fundamental in American history and tradition (Hutson, 2005). Its intentions seem as moral as they are political—an expression of American democratic principles.

**Religious Pluralism in America**

In the context of religious conflict, the Anglo-Protestant culture—in its many variant forms—has been central to the *American Creed* and subsequent American identity. It is what Americans believe they have in common and what distinguishes them from other people. Understandably, the *American Creed*, like the Constitution itself, has adapted itself for many decades to cultural changes and major events in American life.

Since the passing of the 1965 *Immigration Law*, the American culture has been embattled on both the political and religious fronts. A new wave of immigrants from Latin America and Asia, the popularity of multiculturalism and diversity, the spread of Spanish as the second American language, the Hispanization trends in American society, the assertion of group identities based on race, ethnicity, and gender, the impact of diasporas and their homeland governments, and the growing commitment of community and government leaders to cosmopolitan and transnational identities continue to challenge traditional American values.

In 1986, Peter L. Berger (Cargan and Ballantine, 1994) observed that the results of the U.S. Constitution amendment, “that there will be no law establishing a particular religion,” created not only religious pluralism but also, moral pluralism in the United States. He concluded that this amendment resulted in religious conflict because religious pluralism necessitated political efforts to enforce particular moral beliefs, many with religious implications. Berger pointed to three religio-political controversies: (1) The civil rights movement, (2) The antiwar (Vietnam War) movement with its various Left-leaning offshoots, and (3) What he calls the
“bourgeois insurgency” with the anti-abortion movement at its core.

There is also data to support the movement of evangelicals from the lower economic class in American society and away from what sociologists have called society’s “economic margins.” Young Americans who are driving this trend are generally not products of a “religious ghetto” nor are they fundamentalists; rather, they are the “new faithful” who have been exposed at every turn to America’s broader, pluralistic culture (Campbell, 2002). The new faithful tend to be highly educated and worldly-wise and can be found in the most diverse cities and at some of the most demanding secular colleges. Many of the new faithful tend to be campus leaders and are intellectually serious. Berger finds that all three of the movements which he mentioned are characterized by a “moral fervor sustained by religious certitude.”

**CULTURAL WAR**

Conflicts within religious groups are not as pronounced politically in American society as conflicts between religious groups and other social and government agencies, but are culturally important nonetheless. Between 1950 and 2001, major denominations tended to return to more traditional (conservative) religious practices. In his examination of this period, Theodore Caplow and his research associates found that with respect to doctrine or belief, there is little difference between Protestant denominations. The largest change during the last half of the 20th century has been between sacramental and evangelical denominations.

Caplow admits that this distinction is not absolute and recognizes a charismatic revival among Catholics, Episcopalians, and Lutherans. Although Methodists have begun promoting a mega-church concept complete with seven-day a week activities and praise services, which have evangelical nuances, Caplow also points out that some Methodist services today have a more sacramental tone. One asks if this represents a change in theology or is
it just a means of “identifying” with known methods to gain new members.

Caplow found that evangelicals are more reactionary than mainline churches. He concluded that the effects of the liberal drift in the mainline churches and the conservative countercurrent among evangelicals and fundamentalists have stimulated political participation by churches and church-related organizations. Caplow also discovered that at both extremes of the liberal-conservative spectrum in religion, linkages are being developed between conservative and liberal political groups that have the potential for changing the religious and political landscape of American life.

James Davidson Hunter’s *Cultural War, the Struggle to Define America* (1990) was published in 1991 and to some extent has been brought up-to-date by Dale McConkey’s “Whither Hunter’s culture War? (Shifts in Evangelical Morality, 1988-1998 – Statistical Data Included,” 2001). The purpose of McConkey’s paper was to examine both the current state of the culture war and its precipitating trends. He asks whether evangelicals have been softening their traditionalist moral positions on issues like women’s roles, homosexuality, nonmarital sexuality, birth control, abortion, suicide, and euthanasia. In his lengthy and comprehensive report, McConkey addresses three fundamental questions: (1) Are evangelicals leaving the socioeconomic margins of society? (2) Is evangelical morality becoming more liberal? And (3) Is the culture war dissipating?

For his analysis and conclusions, McConkey utilized data from the 1988 and 1998 *General Social Surveys*, which showed that evangelicals are capitulating on some – though not all – arenas of moral conflict, and said, “The cultural tension between evangelicals and religious progressives remains strong.” He also explained that “evangelicals will likely continue to experience a cultural tension with the larger culture, but this tension is not likely to result in anything resembling warfare.”

Subcultures and Religious Identity
Both Hunter and McConkey discovered that religion survives and can thrive in a pluralistic, modern society by embedding itself in subcultures that offer satisfying, morally orienting collective identities which provide members meaning and belonging.

Hunter believes that a cultural schism has now divided each major faith tradition and has divided the United States into two camps:

1) **On one side** of the divide are the orthodox, those who are committed to “an external, definable, and transcendent authority.” Evangelical Christians are the dominant group in this camp, though traditional Catholics, orthodox and conservative Jews, and political allies like the Christian Coalition and the National Right to Life Committee can also be included.

2) **On the other side** of this divide are the progressivists – more often than not called “liberals” – who share the tendency to re-symbolize historic faiths according to the prevailing moral assumptions of contemporary life. These include most of the mainline churches that comprise the World Council of Churches, as well as secular organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union, People for the American Way, and the National Organization of Women.

The tensions and conflicts within religion and between religious groups and secular organizations are an ongoing reality. In 1998, Florida preacher, the Reverend James Kennedy, of the Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church and the *Coral Ridge Hour* television program, said that the time has come to reclaim America for Christ (Hallow, 2004). He also commented that America will self-destruct if laws in the United States have no correlation with the laws of the Creator. The only hope, according to Kennedy, is to make America righteous again by reclaiming it for Christ through grassroots Christian activism.

While many will agree with Kennedy’s words, Christian Smith (2008) has asked, “To what extent do the views and commitments of people like James Kennedy actually represent those of
the tens of millions of ordinary American evangelicals?” and “Are most evangelicals really committed to defending an exclusively Christian America?” and “Are American evangelicals in fact hostile to religious and cultural pluralism?” and finally, “How do most evangelicals think about America’s past and envision its future when it comes to issues of national cultural identity and moral diversity?”

To answer these questions, Smith conducted more than two hundred personal interviews with evangelicals on the subject of “Christian America.” He revealed a surprisingly diverse range of perspectives on the matter. He found that evangelicals are not unanimous in their opinion that America was once a Christian nation and that about 30 percent were uncertain whether America was ever a Christian nation. Altogether, about 40 percent of those interviewed either denied or somewhat doubted the idea that America was once a Christian nation. Smith was quick to point out that many of them answered otherwise on the Religious Identity and Influence telephone survey. Smith concluded that a significant minority of evangelicals do not possess a strong image of a Christian American past.

Loss of Christian Identity

Samuel Huntington explains that several scholars in the 1980s and 1990s advanced the idea that America is losing its Christian identity due to the spread of non-Christian religions. These scholars documented the growth of Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, and Buddhists in American society. With their growth, the idea of religious diversity has shattered the paradigm of America as an overwhelmingly Christian country with a small Jewish minority. But does this destroy the idea of America’s moral identity or just shift it to a new moral plurality?

Huntington also indicates that some scholars have suggested that public holidays should be adjusted to accommodate this increasing religious diversity and that Easter and Thanksgiving should be replaced with a Muslim and Jewish holiday. But he does not believe that increases in the membership of some non-
Christian religions have had any significant effect on America’s Christian identity. He says, “Americans are still a Christian people, as they have been throughout their history.”

Reflecting on America’s religious identity, Russell Shorto (2008) says, “At least some of the problems that the Western world confronts today, as it grapples with such forces as militant Islam, have to do with the fact that the modern Western world has a split personality: it is confused and divided over the relationship of reason and faith, whether there can be a relationship or whether the one supplants the other. In simplistic form, the United States, where religion is still a strong force in both public and private life, maintains the moderate Enlightenment tradition—a moderate modernity—and Western Europe, which has largely abandoned organized Christianity, has tended to follow the radical path.” And although the American Revolution was influenced by the moderate wing of the Enlightenment, which emphasized order, harmony, and a balance of faith and reason; and although Jefferson made deism part of the nation’s fabric when he appealed to ‘the laws of nature and nature’s God’; by the second half of the 20th century it was evident that evangelicals had begun to battle this notion and reclaim America for “the God of the New Testament.”

Religious controversy is nothing new in America. Some believe that this is part of the price for living in an open, democratic society. Albert J. Raboteau (2005 in the Boston Review noted that American democracy offers religion an opportunity and American pluralism provides it with a challenge. Pluralism means a respect for difference and implies tolerance for the views of others. It rejects relativism in values but seeks to understand the values people of different faiths share in common. Pluralism challenges Americans to experience its religious values and attitudes, and the beliefs of others with respect, dignity, and an unabashed freedom to choose. One can conclude that the three major biblical faiths that dominate the American religious scene – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – have an underlying ethic that, when exposed to critical inquiry, have within their creeds, moral ideals that can be shared
successfully within the moral commons if and only if their metaphysical claims and orientations are set aside and their shared moral ideas are accentuated.

**CONCLUSION: A NEW MORAL VISION**

A major concern of moral thinking is to identify the relationship among our moral beliefs, religion, politics and law, especially constitutional law, before we recommend alternative solutions to important social problems. We understand that we live in a morally pluralistic society and that moral and legal consistency is vital to the political health of the country. A first step in this process is to examine the moral premises of American culture. About this, Robert Reich (1987) comments, “Without a set of common moral assumptions we would have no way of identifying or categorizing problems and possible solutions.” This does not imply the standardization of morality or the death of individualism, only that we are challenged to identify moral assumptions that can unify humanity and consistently guide our behavior and decision-making when immersed in moral conflict situations.

Reich has confidence that there is a common morality story that identifies who Americans are and what they want for one another and themselves. He believes that this story… “is a tacit subtext of our daily conversations about American life” and that “it permeates both American conservatism and American liberalism.” In his book, *Tales of a New America*, Reich presents four basic moral premises that, when interwoven into the American character, define who they are.

1) The first is “the flight from other cultures” and depicts America as a beacon light of virtue in a world of darkness, “a small island of freedom and democracy in a perilous sea.” Underlying this morality is the belief that America is uniquely blessed, the proper model for the hopes and dreams of others. Accompanying this view is a fear that our liberties are fragile; our
openness renders us vulnerable to exploitation or violence from extreme national and international forces.

2) The second premise is the “rejection of central authority.” “This,” he observes, “is the story of the little guy who works hard, takes risks, believes in himself, and eventually earns wealth, fame, and honor.” This is the story of the self-made person—who lives hidden within each of us—and who is self-reliant and uncompromising in his or her ideals.

3) The third moral premise stressed by Reich is the “benevolent community.” It is the story about how people and communities help each other. This tale is about self-sacrifice, community pride and patriotism—about American generosity and compassion toward those in need. This is the story relating to “freedom, democracy, and fairness;” about “responsibility, productivity, community, family, and work itself.”

4) In Reich’s fourth moral premise, “The rot at the top,” he says that this is a tale of corruption, decadence and irresponsibility among America’s power elite. This story is about abuses of power— in governments, corporations, board rooms, churches, and school houses. It’s about checks and balances, antitrust laws, and the government’s support of labor unions, faith-based initiatives, farmers, and those who claim to be farmers. It’s about CIA depredations, White House scandals, and corporate transgressions. For Reich the moral is clear: “Power corrupts, privilege perverts.” Reich’s warning is that one must avoid “extremes” on both sides of the secular and religious spectrum. The Christian and the Muslim fundamentalists and the over zealous secular humanist or the avowed atheist, and even the Israeli and the Palestinian must come together in the moral commons, seekers all, with a unified moral human purpose. Humanity asks nothing less.

Reich calls these four moral stories “American myths,” but myths that give historical definition to the American character. He calls for a new vision, a collective vision inside and outside the
country. He says, “Personal competence, dedication, and pride in accomplishment—those splendid traditional American virtues—will continue to matter a great deal, but to an increasing extent they are forged and have effect principally in the context of collective endeavor.”

Oscar and Lillian Handlin, in their analysis of American social and cultural life (1994) testified to the religious and secular associations that reflected the patchwork-character of American society. They observed that these “…habits of association could also turn into potent political tools to expand the members’ capacity to act.” The challenge now has become “…how to create the kinds of organizations in which people can pool their efforts, insights, and enthusiasm without fear of exploitation.” Relying on all of our cultural strength—religious and secular—he challenges Americans to utilize their capacities for innovation, adaptation, and fairness to rebuild their economy and corporations into a society that redefines their core problems and points them toward new solutions.

**READINGS**


**IDEAS FOR DIALOGUE AND DISCUSSION**

1) In your own words, write down what you think really identifies American values; that, separates them from all other na-
tions and cultures. Discuss your ideas with a group of friends. Compare and contrast what you have written with what they have written.

2) On the 2004 “Larry King Live” broadcast, many reasons were given why the panel thought America’s moral identity had fallen into decay. These included the following:

- There is so much anger, hate, and horror in the world.
- We are ignorant about morality and human dignity.
- Religion is the cause of the world’s moral problems and not the cure.
- Our ideas of God are based on primitive ideas.
- Secular ideologies and beliefs are to blame for the widespread murder and torture of individuals worldwide.

Discuss these responses with your group. Do you agree with what was said? Do you have another perspective about America’s fallen moral identity?
ETHICAL APPLICATIONS

In 2008, the Institute for Global Ethics posted an article which is significant for those concerned with seeking a shared morality. With the Institute’s permission, we have excerpted it for the purpose of discussing “ethics” in a context of global awareness. It is entitled “Daschle and the Moral Commons” and was written by Rushworth M. Kidder. Following is an excerpt from the article (2009):

To see why this idea of the commons matters, go back to ecologist Garrett Hardin’s famous 1968 article, “The Tragedy of the Commons.” “Picture,” Hardin wrote, “a pasture free and open to all. Each herdsman understands that overuse would eventually destroy the pasture. But each also knows that if he himself added even one additional animal, the personal benefit would be significant. The damage from that one animal, spread widely among his fellow herdsmen, would be incremental and unremarkable. But the benefit of raising another head would flow solely to him, and it would be recognizable and immediate. If rational self-interest were all that mattered, Hardin concluded, any herdsman would add as many animals as possible, precipitating a tragic destruction of the commons.”

“These days, there aren’t a lot of physical commons left. Most public goods — oceans, atmosphere, wilderness, airwaves — have become regulated lest, under Hardin’s sentence, they be destroyed
by perfectly rational overuse. But we still retain some powerful moral commons. We still possess spaces in which the moral law reigns supreme, unhampered by rule or regulation and open to anyone who wants to use them. For most citizens, these moral spaces embrace some of our deepest and most sacrosanct concerns: whom we choose to love, how we elect to worship, where we decide to live, whether we will have children, what kind of education we’ll pursue. On these matters, the law is silent.”

“As with all other commons, the moral commons require constant vigilance to maintain. Aristotle sounded that warning. ‘That which is common to the greatest number,’ he wrote, ‘has the least care bestowed upon it. Everyone thinks chiefly of his own, hardly at all of the common interest; and only when he is himself concerned as an individual. For besides other considerations, everybody is more inclined to neglect the duty which he expects another to fulfill’.”

“Carelessness, neglect, a self-focused individuality — those are tough charges from the old philosopher. That’s not what we thought leadership — from Daschle or anyone else — was all about. His story gave us a window into a world in which, taken to its logical extreme, voluntary tax compliance slips away, no moral standard exists to temper rational self-interest, and the moral commons shrink into mere regulation. We didn’t want to be led down that cow path. No wonder his case still bothers us.”

For those whose ethical values have only personal meaning (perhaps familial and national) and application, Rabbi Irwin Kula (2006) comments:

“At the same time, we must be careful not to simply say that since everything is partially true, nothing really matters, as if there aren’t standards of right or wrong. Yes, in every view there is a partial truth. But not every view is equally true. There are standards of right and wrong, gradations of truth. I’ve heard so many people use the phrase “This is my truth” or “that’s your truth” as a way to defuse conflict and stifle discussion. This relativism is just lazy absolutism. It makes the claim that in effect we each have our own absolute truth, and so anything goes; why fight the fight? This spineless and limp relativism is as frustrating as hostile know-it-all absolutism. Both halt the search for truth.”
“It’s not that we shouldn’t have opinions and perceptions, passionate feelings and beliefs. We should argue with and criticize those views we believe to be wrong. No idea or insight should be either automatically accepted or totally dismissed. Even extreme opinions have an important role in society: They probe the middle, ensuring neither moral inflexibility nor flabbiness. When we engage in serious dialogue, within ourselves and with each other, our worlds expand; our truths are refined, and we can incorporate the truths of others, finding new positions and even shared ethical visions.”

Certainly our values deeply define “who” we are. They are engrained in habit and tradition about which we not be fully aware or are not willing to discuss. Kula says “When we both hold and question our truths we become lifelong learners rather than absolute knowers—as well as more interesting and much easier people to be with. Not seduced by certainty, we can be open to the truth.”

An open dialogue requires that we reconsider those views we believe to be wrong and that no idea should be either automatically accepted or totally dismissed. Kula reminds us that even extreme opinions “probe the middle, ensuring neither moral inflexibility nor flabbiness.” Openness demands assessment, assessment in context. Not all social change is positive or moral. There are multiple facets to it including a high sense of personal responsibility, independent initiative, responsible judgment, voluntary communal and civic bonds as well as self-serving behaviors and perhaps disregard for the good of the community. Although American individualism can be a problem, it too has a collectivistic bent in that it is dependent on shared and cooperative beliefs and actions. To harness this energy for global applications will be a great task.

**THE IDEAL OF A SHARED MORAL WORLD**

We are challenged by our moral responsibilities. The choice is ours and from this choice we wring from life both meaning and possibility. Life’s meaning is discovered in our relationships with
others, in our ethical lives. Morality – the moral point of view – is revealed in the way our personal welfare is connected to a “universal respect for persons” regardless of race, creed, color or religion.

Theologian Rudolf Otto (1967) says of Immanuel Kant’s assertion, “Now I say that man exists as an end in himself, is the most significant of all ideas that were ever pronounced in the domain of ethical enquiry…an idea moreover which reason can accept and respect.” Kant’s is a positive formulation of the moral point of view. He believed that we are free to make our own moral choices, act upon them, and are held responsible for them.

Kant had faith in human reason to guide our dialogue. He reasoned that moral principles…

• Are necessary assumptions that support all moral experience,
• Are an affirmation of faith in the dignity and freedom of all humans, and
• Regulate our motives and behaviors toward others.

Thus, from Kant’s perspective, the moral point of view asks that we settle our differences on the belief that every person values happiness and self-consciousness and that every person deserves our respect and understanding. From this view we are able to generate such ideas, principles of justice, respect for persons, and fairness. We believe these values capture the essence of what it means to be “human.”

Enlarging the Boundaries of Morality

We enlarge our moral boundaries with the assumption that there are some shared standards of value, of morality, to which all persons have reasons to adhere in their self-regarding conduct and dealings with others. People, as we know, form judgments about the variety of social interactions they experience. They evaluate norms, practices, and social arrangements and accept them by the manner in which their rights are respected and the level of freedom and autonomy they are accorded.
The coordination of common interests and acting in morally consistent ways is without a doubt of great importance, but coordination is not the standard to which moral or even legal rules are directed. Conflicts of interest within communities are bound to occur. When interests conflict, how do we balance our choices for the good of the community? How do we make morally significant choices in the context of everyday life?

We can make real community possible by individuals voluntarily behaving in ways that are civil. The fundamental rules of morals are few and specific: do not kill, injure, disable, or inflict physical pain or disease on any others who have also observed this same restriction in relation to others; do not lie, cheat, steal from anyone, and be helpful to some degree. These appear to be rational prescriptions grounded in the very nature of our humanity. We learn from our parents and teachers that moral rules are useful because they constrain us from doing what, in social circumstances, is going to lead to what anyone can see to be obvious evils. Responsibility entails a reconsideration of our personal views in light of the needs of others. This reconsideration will be measured by moral criteria as well as the pragmatic needs and workings of society.

Compassion, empathy, and commitment are attitudes that reflect our intentions. They are learned early in life and point to the necessity for moral education, beginning at home. Indeed, this is a moral quest whose objectives are as significant as the solutions that are offered. Of course, for those who belong to a faith community, this may not be enough. We are compelled to acknowledge that our beliefs do inform our behaviors and in this way are included in the foundation of our moral outlook. Even the Golden Rule was an underpinning for Kant’s principles. Being sensitive to this situation is necessary for understanding and teaching the point of view of morality in a “faith-imbued” society.

Simon Blackburn (2001) warns that fewer and fewer of us are sensitive to principles of morality and “the surrounding climate of ideas about how to live.” He points out that the workings of the
ethical environment are strangely invisible, but that it shapes our identities in many observable ways. Hitler once said, “How lucky it is for rulers that men cannot think.” Hitler was perhaps unaware of the culture of ideas that allowed him to come to power and flourish. His culture had been permeated with the idea that not all humans have moral value and thus do not deserve moral respect. This is essentially an immoral idea.

Our awareness of the dominant ideas in our culture and in ourselves and our use of reason in making moral decisions is a poignant reminder that moral balance can become a reality in our lives and in and among diverse communities. By coupling kindness, equal consideration of others, and compassion with reason we will be able to achieve balance and moral stability, and diminish violence among civilized people and nations.

**A SHARED MORALITY**

Our challenge is to understand the importance of the moral point of view. We also need to understand our own moral stirrings by identifying the well-springs of our motivation and feelings that move us in self-centered as well as other-centered directions. Important as well is acknowledging the diversity of rules (norms) that support our everyday lives and those that govern the lives of people who are culturally different from us. Ethics can be disturbing and we probably will never reach complete understanding and consensus on ethical issues. Yet, the quest for a shared morality will continue to stimulate us and move us in that direction.

Substantially important is that a shared morality is justified if and only if it provides the best explanation of a world characterized by moral civility and is practically useful. The ultimate aim of our dialogue is finding a shared ground in which our ethical principles can take root. Our ground will obviously be saturated in tradition but is lifted out of our habitual ruts by our commitment to reconsidering the traditions and values of others.

Retired judge John T. Brock of Mocksville, NC agrees, “All values, however, culturally conceived are subordinate to the ulti-
mate moral imperative that life must endure” (2005). He observes, “…the record and history of our past is an integral and essential part of the process by which we devise and fashion our common morality. Above all else it is important to recognize that we human beings do in fact possess a common morality and this common morality is to be found not only in that record and history but in ourselves as well.”

Relativism

Richard Bernstein (1983) notes, “There is no substantive over-arching framework in which radically different and alternative schemes are commensurable.” Echoing the view of Karl Popper that the choice between competing theories is arbitrary, since there is no such thing as objective truth, Bernstein is espousing both a moral and cognitive relativism. Steven Pinker responds to this problem by explaining that from this view we have no grounds to criticize or punish others no matter how barbaric, because “we have our kind of morality and they have theirs.” He says, “And the whole enterprise seems to be dragging us to an amoral nihilism, in which morality itself would be demoted from a transcendent principle to a figment of our neural circuitry.”

Pinker says, “Perhaps we are born with a rudimentary moral sense, and as soon as we build on it with moral reasoning, the nature of moral reality forces us to some conclusions but not others.” It is “building on it” and “moral reasoning” that is our concern. For this reason, we challenge both teacher and student to understand the value of morality, of open dialogue with those who differ with us, and the importance of seeking a common ground to settle our differences.

Ethics is a domain of preference and choice and, according to Aristotle it takes education and practice to become morally virtuous. And, thus, we come full circle, back to the core of morality that lies not only in what we do, but in our motives and reasons for doing it—those inner principles of good will, of acting out of a sense of duty and law, and of respect for others and the culture in which we and they live.
Moral Education

The role of moral education has civil and community importance. John Ragozzine provides some hints for those who wish to introduce ethics to students or adults in school or the workplace when he say that we should give inclusive and wide-ranging attention to ethics and values. His examination of moral education led him to several conclusions:

1) That much class work observed or described in this study involves the development of critical thinking skills mostly through collective learning between students and teachers. In Schools of Integrity, faculties model a passion for reasoning and for ongoing, highly collaborative work.

2) That building and sustaining of relationships fuel learning and ethical development.

3) That cultures of trust encourage ongoing, honest feedback.

4) That teachers and school administrators are keepers of the moral compass. They should not minimize the importance of their jobs in developing cultures of integrity.

5) That school heads that seem most effective in this regard are the genuine truth-seekers. Those who view deep learning as life’s primary enterprise build commitment to ethics and values in everything they do.

6) That across all the schools that he studied, leaders, teachers, and students demonstrated a common zeal for new intellectual territory; and while critical thinking often led discussions in unpredicted directions, faculties embraced this opportunity instead of shying away from it. Teachers dedicated to truly participating as learners in their school community welcomed the opportunity for discovery alongside their students.

7) That teachers are the primary resource for professional learning growth.

8) That students are integral drivers in school improvement. The sincere interest from adults results in strong student participation and collaboration across the school culture.
9) That schools which teach ethics, reasoning, and learning view poor choice-making as yet another opportunity for growth. Teachers, who were a part of this study, serve as vibrant, literal enactments of the commitment to the values, community, and truth-seeking that moral education requires.

Ragozzine advises teachers to “explain that ethics is not easy and does not happen overnight. When faced with a task as daunting as changing the ethical culture of a school, people may have an easier time getting started if they recognize and appreciate their accomplishments, rather than focusing on what is lacking.”

Thus, teaching ethics ought to be a positive task, an affirmation of the moral worth of others and one’s self, at all times and in all places. It rests on a moral integrity that is perhaps the foundation of education in America and provides the reason and motivation for what teachers and schools do. These same lessons should be applied in homes, workplaces, and other institutions that operate in the public sphere. Nations too should be well advised to listen to Ragozzine as they interact within our global inheritance.

**THE DILEMMA OF THE SELFISH PERSON**

People learn to measure success by wealth and possessions; they learn to be competitive rather than cooperative; business life forces them to think of others as rivals; power rather than honesty, cooperation, and fairplay is usually the norm. The goals of the self-centered person are sometimes employed to justify using any means possible to achieve a goal. The banking crisis of 2008-09 is an excellent example where greed and the hurry to make quick profits caused a world financial crisis.

Students will ask, “How can reasons for being unselfish be given that a selfish person will accept?” But this is a false dilemma. It is a question of persuasion and not of reason. It will take more than reason to persuade a selfish person to behave unselfishly. Our moral commitments do not originate in reason. We may even have to demonstrate to the selfish person that unselfishness is
in his or her selfish-interest. Persuasion can take many forms, but for the selfish individual, reason will not work.

E. J. Dionne (2005) makes the point that we all hold views about morality. He quotes Arthur Miller’s character, the Rev. John Hale, from *The Crucible*, who says, “Though our hearts break we cannot flinch. There is a misty plot afoot so subtle we should be criminal to cling to old respects and ancient friendships.” Set at the time of the Salem witch trials, Dionne concludes that Miller “knew the impossibility of sharply dividing the political from the moral and the public from the personal.” Although Miller admonishes us to stand up to dangerous majorities, he also offered a “withering moral critique of an empty individualism that saw no connection between personal actions and a common good that he believed existed.

Dionne concludes, “Miller’s genius in appreciating the dark side is precisely what enabled him to celebrate the human struggle against it.” And Miller understands human frailty created one of the great ethical imperatives of his work: the demand that respect be offered to other human beings despite their shortcomings.” Miller was aware of the corruption of the strong and insisted upon the dignity of the weak, as Dionne says, “Human beings, not some abstract, undifferentiated humanity, were the stuff of Miller’s drama.” Miller agrees that some can be trained to forget themselves and to act for the benefit of others; that some people can be trained in behaviors that appear unselfish or even selfless. Perhaps this is the task of persuasion, for not all people think rationally or of others.

Patience, Commitment, and Clear Judgment

Many will have to be persuaded and, thus, the expansion of our moral lives will require patience, commitment, and clear judgment. The struggle to overcome our self-centeredness will always be with us. This reminds us again of the words of Aristotle who warned: *That which is common to the greatest number has the least care bestowed upon it.* For Aristotle one of our gravest mistakes is not attending to those moral values that we share and
that have within their power and meaning, community building capacity.

Good reasons for a shared morality only require that we give explanations that are consistent with our ideas about the dignity and worth of human life. They should be spoken in clear and consistent language and with sincere intentions. There is no moral substitute for reconsidering our views in light of the views and needs of others. The Golden Rule is instructive here: we should care for our friends, neighbors, and those in distant places based not merely on what’s in it for us, but on human dignity, and because we also want them to care for us.

Albert Schweitzer pointed to personal commitment and the relationships we hold as ways to realize our true value. He said, “The first step in the evolution of ethics is a sense of solidarity with other human beings” (2005). Indeed, morality’s purpose is to promote human equality and dignity, as well as happiness and human civil growth. It is both individual and collective. Intentions are important and we must speak rationally and consistently about behaviors that are vital to communities and societies. What counts in the long run is our inner commitment to be good people. A major goal of morality is to help us avoid hurting others. Defining the principles definitive of the moral point of view is an ongoing responsibility of people as they continue to interact in a changing world. All of these views are insightful, but none of them is complete in itself.

There is a personal nature to morality that cannot be denied. The purpose of an open society is to share and listen to the views of others, not to be coerced into blind obedience. Dialogic civility is open-ended and morally purposeful. It welcomes new ideas and begs to evaluate old ones.

Reflective Open-mindedness

A moral human ecology parades no absolutes in front of people, but it strongly recommends giving consideration to human rights, dignity, and integrity. Without these values, there seems to be no morality involved at all. The Council for Research in Values
and Philosophy recently wrote, “Global times now endow – and challenge – us with a broad diversity of cultures and civilizations. Correspondingly a progressive deepening of human concerns reaches beyond what is clear and distinct to what is of meaning and value, and beyond what is universal and necessary to the free human creativity of diverse peoples. As a result it now becomes ever more manifest how persons and communities, working cumulatively over time, have generated their cultural traditions. In the present context of global awareness these two dimensions of breadth and depth of the human spirit now combine to open new sources for the human self-understanding. This provides the need and opportunity to ‘rethink philosophy’ in order to enable it to be correspondingly more inclusive and profound” (2009).

Adam Smith (2009) identified the moral commons as that which belongs neither to us or our neighbor, but to the “impartial spectator,” and he argued that the voice of the impartial spectator is the voice of conscience. Some have said that this is the voice of “common sense” and others, the accumulation of “common wisdom.” At this point names aren’t important for this is the voice within that sees others as us and puts neither above the other; a morality, perhaps expressed differently by others, but pointing to a shared moral humanity.

Many have yet to understand that human relationships, connectedness, can be an untidy business, but it is within the arena of human attachments that we find more about who we are and the importance of dignity, equality, and fairness within our human space. As emotions intensify, we should perhaps underscore the commonsensical suggestion of J.S. Mill that good things are to be promoted and bad things minimized, and that the appropriateness of our actions depends on the extent to which they succeed in bringing this about. The assumption is that an open society with an inclusive education for its youth, based on a culture of conversation and respect, cannot survive the toleration of intolerance, intimidation, and violence. The change we wish to see in the world must begin inside of us.
CONCLUSION

The difficulty of developing moral principles about which everyone can agree is caused in part by our cultural and religious differences and strong family values. The abuses of human dignity we see in our own nation and around the world convince us that a shared morality is not feasible and generates within us a feeling of hopelessness at the prospect of a unified moral humanity.

We find it much easier to call for religious revival and to enroll people in a church, mosque, or synagogue. We have learned that this has limited moral value and energy. It narrows our outlook, limits our moral capital, and fails to lift us to the horizon of moral possibility. It disconnects rather than unites people in a common moral purpose and in the search for shared moral ground.

A starting place may be to revisit the concept of “the moral point of view” from which we can, together, specify a comprehensive set of basic moral principles upon which there is agreement. Small steps like these, plus dialogue and negotiation, are a beginning and in this beginning we may learn the importance of give-and-take, of settling on that which we together believe important, and of giving up trying to apply our uncommon values to a common humanity. A moral decision-making process may then be defined as an attempt to optimally implement a balance of these principles in given circumstances. Both the religious-minded and the moral secularist need to leverage recognized moral principles for the betterment of humanity.

W.D. Ross (1930) suggested that moral issues could be understood as conflicts between certain duties, which could be expressed as clear and sufficient principles, but which are not absolute rules. Also, these may be described as “moral presumptions,” to be followed unless there is a justifiable reason not to. Eight such principles, together with brief annotations, have been suggested by David Resnik (1998). These principles will help us identify both the moral features of the moral community and civility, and are essential to the ideal of a moral ecology of persons:
Non-malificence: Do not harm yourself or other people.

Beneficence: Help yourself and other people.

Autonomy: Allow rational individuals to make free, informed choices.

Justice: Treat people fairly. Treat equals equally, unequals unequally.

Utility: Maximize the ratio of benefits to harms for all people.

Fidelity: Keep your promises and agreements.

Honesty: Do not lie, defraud, deceive or mislead.

Privacy: Respect personal privacy and confidentiality.

Morality is both personally and socially important. The principles suggested by Resnik are a starting place for our discussions of building moral communities and a morally civil world. Important is acknowledging that morals not only originate within a person and require personal attention, but are also community and group specific and necessitate attention and consideration by groups, businesses, and nations. We continue this discussion in the next two chapters by first reviewing the history and foundations of community and then by promoting the ideal of a moral community through behaviors we have come to acknowledge as civil.

**READINGS**


**IDEAS FOR DIALOGUE AND DISCUSSION**

1) Examine the following statement and discuss its meaning openly: “We cannot do violence to others without doing violence to ourselves.”
   - What assumptions does this viewpoint make?
   - What viewpoint do you think this statement is criticizing?

2) List ten personal values that you think are important and ten social values that you think necessary for well-functioning groups or society. With a friend or a group of friends who have also made a list of their values, complete the following:
   - Circle those “common personal values” you or your friends believe are consistent with or are part of “the point of view of morality.”
   - Finally, there should be a list of personal and social values left to which many adhere. Allow each person to select what they think are the most important of these and prioritize them from the “most” to the “least” important and give reasons for your choices.

3) Discuss the following quotes from the Mother’s Service Society. What is your reasoned opinion about them?
   - “The social organization consists of a single interconnected fabric. The threads and the weave of the fabric are formed by the multidimensional interaction of social activities, organizations, institutions and values.”
   - “The ultimate determinants of the power of social organization are the values of society.”

4) Use one or more of the following as a theme for a “position” paper:
- Do our ethical obligations extend to all people?
- Do our ethical obligations extend to the environment?
- Do our ethical obligations extend to animals?

5) Do you agree with the quote by Albert Schweitzer below? Why? Why not?

“Ethical affirmation of life is the intellectual art by which man ceases simply to live at random and begins to concern himself reverently with his own life, so that he may realize its true value. And the first step in the evolution of ethics is a sense of solidarity with other human beings.”
An Oglala Sioux holy man (1988), Black Elk, understood the importance of his moral connection with a world beyond himself when he prayed, “Hear me, four quarters of the world – a relative I am! Give me the strength to walk the soft earth, a relative to all that is! Give me the eyes to see and the strength to understand, that I may be like you. With your power only can I face the winds.”

Black Elk’s perception of “community” captures the global sense of our common humanity and our innate connection to each other. He possessed a “wholistic” view of community that included all people and all natural living things.

This wider view is one we believe forms the foundation of a moral human ecology. There is another sense of community we call the “narrow” view because it limits our morality socially and spatially to perhaps the family, the community, or even the nation, but tends to exclude those of different faiths, cultures and nationalities. In the narrow sense, one can be ethical and lead a decent life, but to be moral, we believe, one must adopt an inclusive view of humanity and human concerns.

Moral Communities

The word “community” – which derives from the Latin word com (meaning ‘with’ or ‘together’) and unus (the number one) – provides a key to moral understanding. Even the early Christians
called their gatherings “community” (Koinonia) to define their “belief-relationships.” Community is foundational and gathers our beliefs and values in harmonious associations. Communities are the building-blocks of culture. Importantly, T.S. Elliot’s (1968) Elliot views culture as an extension and expression of a people’s ultimate values. He believes that if community is destroyed the possibility of developing a genuine culture may well be destroyed with it.

Insightfully, Wordsworth (2005) also speaks of the meaning that lies deep within human consciousness and of values that bind one generation to another – loyalties and the imaginative sympathies which affirm that all men are of one race and further, that “the living and the dead are of one race too,” when he wrote:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Thanks to the human heart by which we live,} \\
&\text{Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,} \\
&\text{To me the meanest flower that blows can give} \\
&\text{Thought that do often lie too deep for tears.}
\end{align*}
\]

Indeed, literature, religion, and even philosophy remind us that “community” is more than an indiscriminate crowd, for crowds comes together purely at random. “Community” is also more than a society (a group of individuals related by function). People in a society find it mutually profitable to live in cooperative, beneficial relationships.

The literary critic Cleanth Brooks says that community is “a group of people held together by common likes and dislikes, loves and hates held in common, shared values.” He continues his explanation of social stability by saying, “Where there is a loss of shared values, communities may break down into mere societies or even be reduced to mobs. The loss is ominous, for when men cease to love the same things, the culture itself is disintegrating.”

Richard N. Goodwin (1974) in Reflections: The American Condition, comments, “Indeed, community is built and maintained through value-connections and personal relationships the loss of which, whatever the compensations gained economically or elsewhere, is a genuine loss and threatens [its] fabric.” Brooks adds,
“Change has come—and of course is still coming—but the questioning of old attitudes and values is a powerful stimulant to observation, memory, and cogitation. If the loss of the old provokes in some no more than the irritation at being disturbed, it sends others back to an examination of their first principles. If the new constitutes a challenge to the old ways, in the philosopher and the poet the old may offer a counter challenge to the new.”

Moral renewal and the reconsideration of our views are necessary in an ever-changing world. No one is asking that we give up our faith or our patriotism, only to think of others, both near and far, as morally important. This will be difficult for some. It requires diligence, patience, and even may put some of our entrenched ideas at risk. Like those from different races and cultures, we too wear culturally biased lenses. We all have prejudices that must be given up if constructive moral dialogue is to occur. What we learn from others will benefit not only us, but the whole of humanity.

Meaning and Community

We learn then that we can never grasp the totality of our global environment and that we are never disengaged from it. On the other hand, we are not just passive reflectors of history and tradition; rather, we are actors creating and recreating history and the milieu of human associations. We acknowledge our biases, but understand that this is our starting point, our mooring to what has been discovered and what has worked in communities and nations of communities. This is where we begin, not end. Continual study and dialogue will keep us from being “disorientingly free-floating” (Tarnas, 1991). Within community we do not reject our personal values, but evaluate them in light of the values of others. We are challenged to discover within ourselves and within others values that we commonly share and there situate our common morality.

Community is relationship oriented, and, according to Kevin Cashman (1998), “Relationships are the bridges that connect authentic self-expression to creating value.” Thus, community is the human contextualization of value, meaning, and purpose.
Community also defines who we are and specifies the arrangements for human achievement. Poet Robert Pinsky’s insights into culture and community remind us that it is within community, and ourselves, that we recognize and come to terms with the “stirring of meaning” (2002) whose power is social as well as psychological. He believes that literature and poetry provide creative insights, often emotional, that awaken meaning within us; that meaning is a communal phenomenon embodied within a culture’s forms of literature as it communicates the significance of community to us.

Steven Pinker deepens ideologically the idea of “meaning through community” with the concept of “meaning as community”—the idea that community embodies an “emotion that prompts people to share and sacrifice without an expectation of payback,” and that it may even be rooted in needs of self-interest and bare the stamp of narrow-mindedness. He augments this notion by observing that we are able to communicate feelings beyond family to others because our “interests are yoked, like spouses with common children, in-laws with common relatives, friends with common tastes or allies with common enemies” (2002).

Pinker’s suggestion of “meaning as community” deepens our appreciation of human relationships and moves us to extend this paradigm globally. Of course, there are dangers in this idea because not all of us are motivated by moral principles and behaviors, nor read literature, poetry, or philosophy. We are time and again fooled by some who are more interested in personal rather than group or community goals. The selfish person lives in a “user” environment in which needs of the “self” are always of primary interest.

When we attach the idea of moral integration to “community,” our values become common values, those produced in the throws of relationship-building; those we can extend to others through “dialogic civility.” Our responsibility is to flesh out those values that have relationship potential inside our local communities and outside to others. We are sometimes trapped by what we think is real and the methods of arriving at that knowledge. These can be
barriers to understanding and sharing those values that have civility-making potential. We live as it were in a cognitive cocoon much of which is of our making and which has community and cultural tentacles. Flexibility and courage will be needed for applying moral behaviors in the global world. In the words of the *Tao Te Ching* (2005), “Whatever is flexible and flowing will tend to grow; whatever is rigid and blocked will wither and die.”

A Moral Ecosystem

The idea of crossing the barrier of community and culture and recreating—as it were—a wider community of moral fellow-travelers is a challenge the world has yet to meet. We are limited by experience which says that “our” community is a “place” where we live and interact daily with others. This ignores the reality of “community” as expansive and fluid, as not just here, but a humanly diverse phenomenon. To envision this idea requires widening our logic beyond that which is only deductable and foundational, to perhaps a new paradigm included in the idea of “ecosystem.”

Physicist Fritjof Capra (2002) says that the value of human dignity and ecological sustainability are the ethical basis for reshaping globalization. Capra emphasizes that “ethics refers to a standard of human conduct that flows from a sense of belonging.” When we belong to a community, he observes, we behave accordingly. We emphasize that this is a moral ideal and normative challenge for experience has taught us that moral deviance is a present and ongoing reality.

Thus, we will not understand community thoroughly in the language of cause and effect: “if we design this program then they will respond in that way.” The core issues and problems associated with community – poverty, crime, education, violence, etc. – must be addressed in a language of *values*: “we should do this; decent people must strive to live that way.” For Capra, the value of human dignity and ecological sustainability form the ethical basis for reshaping globalization. This is a normative challenge.
To find these answers, we must possess the will to examine ourselves: how we live, and what we believe and value. And this self-examination will necessarily involve all of us, not only those who have been economically or racially, or otherwise marginalized. Self-examination will significantly enrich the concept of “moral community.” If we view our broadened idea of morality as a moral-system’s ecology, then we can logically focus on the interactions and transactions of people and nations with each other and how it affects the world’s human and physical environment as the locus of our concern. Noting that not all humans or human nations will act morally all the time, a moral human ecology will also function as a corrective system, reminding us of our moral purposes.

Human activity bears the stamp of moralities and acknowledging our global dependence is a first step in seeking a moral global community. It is here that the moral point of view will find its richest ground for application as it centers on respect for others. Respect is the objective, unbiased consideration and regard for the rights, values, beliefs and property of all people. Respect provides the following benefits for persons and the community:

- Community collaboration among individuals, families and organizations
- Healthy relationships — relationships which promote mutual understanding and consideration
- Tolerance toward others and moral responsibility
- Fairness and trustworthiness among individuals and communities

**ORGANIC SOLIDARITY**

Emile Durkheim (1915) asked, “What bonds people to one another?” He compared the relationships among members of primitive tribal groups with people in newly industrialized, bureaucratized societies and discovered that in primitive tribal groups peo-
people are forced together through geography and a lack of alternatives where there is automatic interconnection. Durkheim believed he had found the key to social integration—"the degree to which members of a community or a society are united by shared values and other social bonds." He called this mechanical solidarity.

Durkheim’s findings are important for developing values that can be shared inside and outside the community. The degree to which mechanical solidarity impacts a group, the more difficult it is for them to extend their moral consciousness to others. As societies get larger, their division of labor becomes more specialized. People are performing various tasks, which results in mutual dependence, since the work of each person contributes to the well-being of the whole group. Durkheim called this organic solidarity, which was not based on similar views, but separate activities that contribute to the overall welfare of the group. As a result, modern societies and communities are able to tolerate many differences among people and still manage to work as a whole.

Organic solidarity is the force that extended shared values to a larger and more widening community. A similar viewed is shared by Philip Selznick (1994) who has suggests that the birth of a “community depends on the opportunity for, and the impulse toward, comprehensive interaction, commitment, and responsibility.” This reveals the moral aspect of communities that is contained in their laws, religions, and unwritten rules of participation.

Robert Nozick (1990) adds to the idea of Organic solidarity with the observation that “the greater the diversity that gets unified, the greater the organic unity; and also the tighter the unity to which the diversity is brought, the greater the organic unity.” Thus, there is hope that a moral human ecology, made up of a diverse people and a pluralism of views, will have intrinsic value to the degree the interacting human and social variables achieve unity of purpose and behavior.

Nozick concludes, “In wanting ourselves to be of value and our lives and activities to have value, we want these to exhibit a high degree of organic unity…We want to encompass a diversity
of traits and phenomena, uniting these through many cross-connections in a tightly integrated way, feeding these productively into our activities.” He continues, “Value is not the only relevant evaluative dimension. We also want our lives and our existence to have meaning. Value involves something’s being integrated within its own boundaries, while meaning involves its having some connection beyond these boundaries…To seek to give life meaning is to seek to transcend the limits of one’s individual life…connecting with things so as somehow to incorporate these things, either within ourselves or into an enlarged identity.” Nozick’s view of “organic unity” adds moral depth to Durkheim’s idea of “organic solidarity” for they both agree that human choice, purpose, value, and meaning are forces for strengthening community morality.

A moral human ecology or community is a metaphor expressing the organic composition of humanity. It implies the naturalness of human moral connection and the need for persons and communities to listen and hear the views of others. But none of this is “fixed” by nature and neither is it permanent. We understand that a moral human ecology requires the purposeful efforts and people, communities, and nations to activate this moral energy.

The loss of moral connection and meaning causes deep pain. Human relationships are a natural propensity of human beings often destroyed by the artificial arrangements of modern living—states, nations, international packs, etc. Meaning is found in intimacy and we struggle to find significance in our expanded world of organizations, communities, and nations. Meaning is both moral and dialogic. Life without the social tissue of human connection is impersonal, incomplete, and frustrating. Morality’s birth, we believe, lies in our relationships with others, thus, we need to extend the dimensions of our moral connections.

Michael Lerner (1996) comments that “all people deserve to be cared for and cherished, and that the world should be “far more responsive to our ethical and spiritual needs.” He advises that we should not be naive about our response to others because there is a shadow side to all of us. Speaking about this phenomenon, he
Anyone who has witnessed the violence of the twentieth century will rightly resist any theory of human reality that seems to deny the role of cruelty and evil. But this recognition ought not stop us in our quest to develop the psychological, social, and spiritual tools that might allow us to take steps toward decreasing the pain in this world.”

GLOBAL TRENDS AND THE COMMUNITY

The early 21st century witnessed a number of global trends affecting urban and community planning. These included the following:

1) The process of urbanization—people migrating to cities will continue exacerbating the already difficult situation of the worlds’ crowded urban areas.

2) Information and transportation technologies will allow people in any part of the globe to be in contact; however this may also reduce the feelings of belongingness to a specific place, reducing commitment to work on urban or community problems.

3) International boundaries will diminish in importance as the flow of information as goods, services, labor, and capital increasingly ignore national boundaries. For example, migration of Asians to cities around the world will continue and will have an impact these regions, including trade and travel between nations.

4) Beginning in the 1980s, there was a transition in labor to “knowledge” workers. Economies will increasingly rely on brainwork, including invention of new technologies, rather than on brawnwork of older manufacturing; thus, the gap between the haves and have-nots is likely to continue.

5) Conflicts between cultural and political groups, including religious and political extremists, will continue to affect urban and community life.
6) McDonaldization—creation of a consumer world dominated by major Western food, music, fashion, and entertainment—will continue even as we see an increasing diversity of people within Western nations.

A fully realized community will have a rich and balanced mixture of all these six elements. We are today challenged to expand our idea of “community” and, thus, enlarge the range of personal value application to include those of different cultures and habits. Critical thinking, negotiation, and continued dialogue with others will be required, as well as a willingness to respect those who differ with us as common ground is sought. A valuable part of this dialogue will be a local as well as global discussion of group rights and individual rights. This is an important part of the moral equation.

There is nothing illogical or demoralizing about seeking a shared moral ground within national and global diversity. Acknowledging the community dimensions of the global world will help reconstruct a more unified and shared moral point of view that is both functional and achieves our goal of a moral human ecology.

The towering moral problem of our age is the problem of community lost and community regained. A genuine community is inclusive and its greatest enemy is exclusivity. Groups who exclude others because of religious, ethnic, gender or more subtle differences are diminishing their qualities as moral communities. We live with heterogeneity and must learn to design communities to handle it. When we scratch around in the values supported by Biblically-based faiths – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – we find moral values that have communal significance. When “faith” differences are fleshed out, these values will be found to also support a moral community, although some will hold on to their faith-based beliefs and refuse to acknowledge this. Unlike religious or even secular extremists, we must admit the communal value of these beliefs. Using shared values will aid our expansion of “local community” to “global community.”
We conceivably are trapped by our own socialization and by our own logic that says developing common values is not possible. Thomas Friedman (2007) distinguishes three broad trends that emphasize this and, which he says, will alter our participation in the global community:

1) As a nation, since 9/11/2001, we have put up more walls than ever and, in the process, we have disconnected ourselves emotionally from many of our natural allies and neighbors.

2) A slow developing trend is a “dumb as we wanna be” mood that has overtaken our political fights for as long as we want and can postpone shoring up and solving long overdue problems this country faces.

3) Another trend that may hold out some hope is the trend toward “nation-to-nation building at home”. In spite of all our problems, American is still exploding with innovators and idealists.

This third emphasis is important because as we share our interdependence and moral value in our own communities as to how the basic roles (behavioral proscriptions and prescriptions) will be distributed, nothing prevents us from extending this outward to include more than “us.” Plurality necessitates an extended ethic. Selznick states in The Moral Commonwealth that “pluralism is an essential part of communal democracy.” He goes on to suggest that the quality of democracy depends on the vitality and diversity of group life. This should give us hope that the insights of Kant, Nielsen, and those who espouse a cosmopolitan view are today exciting a paradigm shift in the way we think about the world.

ETHICS AND THE MORAL COMMUNITY

In 2005, Bob Clifford (2005) observed that “…aggrieved groups around the world have portrayed their problems as human rights issues.” He went on to point out that although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was widely conceived, “for the most of its history a limited set of civil and political rights have gar-
nered the bulk of international attention and resource.” He notes that in many cases, efforts to develop new rights have met resistance from not only national bodies, but from businesses and powerful economic and religious interest groups. Many believe, Clifford observed, that if we advocate for a human rights proliferation this may cheapen their traditionally provincial values and concerns, even civil and political rights. But will it? Given the international economic crisis of 2008-2009, it seems that selfish-interests have replaced such moral values as honesty, responsibility, and fairplay, and it just may be time to revisit the idea of globally shared ethics. Honesty, responsibility, and integrity are the same, East and West.

Given this international situation, we believe that shifting into a global world of commerce and travel makes it more desirable to reposition our values in the direction of advocating certain common moral principles, as opposed to remaining encapsulated within our personal or national values only, and developing new ways to optimally achieve this goal. A world that shares common human values and rights will be committed to an open discussion of problems and choices; it will move from the narrow confines of exclusively capitalistic goals, goals that fragment people into groups and nations by their economic accumulation, to a world that takes into consideration the needs of the disenfranchised as well as the franchised. This would also minimize the probability of provincialism on social and political issues. It would therefore be an ideal world, one that is relatively free of the currently prevalent petty prejudices of race, color, religion, political party, and nation, and maximize ethical application in the sphere of human rights.

Consequently a moral human ecology will be a world where people begin to see themselves a part of the human community and not stumble over the business of depriving others, especially those that are regularly deprived of their basic human rights. A world beset with the ideal of a moral human ecology will presumably be one in which we can live out the idea of unity within diversity. This will be a world in which we give up the economic
idea – let the buyer beware – which originated in our ancient past and to which many still adhere. Rather, it will be an environment in which both buyer and seller are aware of their moral responsibilities and the necessity for honesty and fairness in the workaday world. This remains a difficult challenge requiring patience, respect for cultural differences, and the ability to negotiate the treacherous waters of global politics.

A moral human ecology is an ideal, but many today are promoting it as a way to help all humanity achieve the best life possible for them and others. Individuals in that ideal world will not be taken in by reductionistic approaches to knowledge or value or fall in the trap of confusing subjective experiences with objective reality, such as “revealed” truth or the myth of the so-called “American Way.” A moral human ecology will be a world defined by cooperation and accommodation. It will be a world where ethical principles are applied not only to individuals, but to organizations, businesses, and governments; a world in which no one is exempt from moral responsibility.

We are under no illusion that the paradigm of a moral human ecology will ever come to pass. There are a variety of value orientations operative in our world, each screaming for absolute status and each demanding that we live according to their dictates. Also, the presuppositions and biases of our own culture and times limit our ability to conceptualize and understand the views of others. Thus, we are challenged by our personal and cultural individualism to shift “civility” from its community and national orientations to one that is global.

The struggle to actualize this moral ideal may be the great adventure of life, but one we cannot afford to ignore. Education—worldwide—will play a role in this process. From our public and private schools to our community colleges and universities, this ideal needs articulation as a required part of the ongoing curriculum. The global world, the so-called “flat earth,” that we now inhabit calls for our commitment to a moral human ecology. This is our reality whether we recognize or desire it or not. It presupposes
a desire to belong to that community and recognizes the tension between radical individualism and community integration. Rousseau was correct in affirming that the effort to reconcile this tension is the foundation of morality. Perhaps our problem is not one of what should be but rather of what is and what can be?

Moral Obligation

A moral community then is a group of people drawn together by a common interest in living according to a particular values-set or moral philosophy. It consists of all those people, institutions, faiths, governments, and the environment worthy of moral consideration. If something is worthy of moral consideration, in Kant’s view, it is something that imposes upon us a moral obligation by the nature of what it is. We have a moral obligation to these entities whether we want to or not. True, we can choose to recognize or ignore our obligations, we can choose to acknowledge or deny their importance, and we can choose to live up to them or not, but we cannot choose to have them.

Bob Clifford suggests four steps for applying moral principles globally:

First, politicized groups ought to frame long-felt grievances as normative or rights claims.

Second, they should also seek to place new rights on the international agenda, chiefly by convincing gatekeepers in major international human rights organizations to “adopt” and promote them.

Third, human rights organizations and transnational advocacy groups ought to promote new norms to states and key international bodies.

Finally, whether or not formally enacted, new norms (moral principles) require implementation in local settings.

These procedures will require a great deal of creative energy, of loosening the strings of our provincial biases and moving ahead with our vision of a moral world to guide us. It is as Kevin Cash-
man said, “leadership from the inside out.” In Cashman’s masterful book on leadership he understands that “we lead by virtue of who we are,” and that “as we learn to master our growth as a person, we will be on the path to mastery of leadership from the inside out.” He asks, when will we wake up to our values and purpose? When will we wake up to our vision? When will we start leading from our core values? The reality is that our moral beliefs and actions literally create our reality; they are the lenses through which and by which we interpret the world. Cashman believes that they are transformational, that when we believe, we become.

We have endless possibilities and must remain open to new ways of living and experiencing. In this there is some foundation of hope for a moral future. Productive thinking about global morality will unfreeze our individual and culturally entrapped biases and relieve us from essentially rigidified approaches. For many of us, values have attached themselves to our lives almost unknowingly and, especially, uncritically. We were born within a family and culture with a history and traditions created by time and social/religious involvements. Thus, our values lie buried within and beneath layers of social acculturation. It will require not only mental effort to define and distinguish these moral values from others, but courage to bring them to the table of critical reflection and dialogic interaction.

Charles Darwin (1874) advanced the idea of globally shared ethics when he said, “As man advances in civilization, and small tribes are united in the larger communities, the simplest reason would tell each individual that he ought to extend his social instincts and sympathies to all the members of the same nation, though personally unknown to him. This point being once reached, there only are artificial barriers to prevent his sympathies extending to the men of all nations and races.”

Also, Robert Axelrod (1985) offered an example of how similarly beneficial social compacts can self-organize in the real world. He tells the story that “in World War I, in certain districts in which they were left in place long enough, soldiers who faced one anoth-
er in the front-line trenches evolved an ad hoc policy of ‘live and let live’. On their own and in direct defiance of their officers, the enlisted men on the front lines said, in effect, ‘What’s the point in my shooting one of your buddies, if all it means is that you will retaliate and shoot me or one of my buddies?’ Neither side was capable of launching a decisive attack for which wearing down the other side might yield an advantage. So the men acted spontaneously.”

Axelrod explained the procedure used: “The first step was an informal cease-fire at suppertime. Eventually, this extended round the clock, meaning that they fired only the minimum number of rounds necessary to placate their officers. Snipers put on displays of marksmanship—firing patterns into opposing ramparts—to demonstrate the degree to which they were holding back, thus encouraging the other side to appreciate their restraint and to follow suit. Officers from the command center had to offset this spontaneous reciprocity by continually rotating units along the front.”

**CONCLUSION**

Our exploration of the moral community and a broad concept of civility leading to a moral human ecology is an ideal or paradigm that’s beginning to make sense to many people. Thus we continue to advance this idea. A moral human ecology will be, as Collins (1995) pointed out, “a set of societies that are linked together but are relatively autonomous from what lies outside the set.” Nevertheless, the more our energies are directed toward this goal the higher we have climbed the ladder of mankind’s moral progress.

Our vision then is a moral one and one that extends beyond our present understanding and the realities of our world. Many see the need for such a paradigm and we recommend it as an ideal to guide people, communities, and nations. In the next chapter we
will continue this discussion but phrase it in terms of a *culture of civility*. Our purpose is to expand local concepts of morality into the moral commons of the global community and redefine the idea of “civility” to include not only our day-to-day interactions with others, but the moral interactions of nations with other nations and businesses within the global marketplace.

**READINGS**


**IDEAS FOR DIALOGUE AND DISCUSSION**

1. What is your vision of a “moral human community”? Write your vision in one or two paragraphs.

2. Does the concept globalization as “seeking shared values” encourage or discourage the development of communities? List 3-5 values you think can be share globally and give reasons for your selections. Within groups of 3-4 students, compare & contrast your list with members of your group. Through dialogue and discussion, build a group list of these values and be prepared to share with the class.

3. Discuss this statement in your groups: “Present-day communities are losing their moral connectedness.” Within your groups, provide reasons that both confirm or reject its validity.
For all the interest generated in ethics and morality in the last half of the 20th century, Americans—perhaps others—remain fragmented about answers to moral issues. Given the magnitude of political experimenting that has transformed national boundaries, there is more confusion today than clarity. Admittedly, there is a conflict that reflects a deep divide in today’s American culture and in the world. The many issues in the Middle East, including nuclear proliferation, require attention and peaceful resolution. Headway needs to be made in identifying foundational American values and values that we share with other nations. And we ask, do the boundaries that we set up between us and others, between one group or nation and another really stand up against our common humanity when tested?

Our belief is that the resolution of this conflict requires both civil communication between persons and commitment to ethical beliefs—a dialogic civility founded in a personal experience that reflects our need to push moral civility beyond local boundaries through continuous dialogue. It is a conversation among people with diverse views about the human condition and willingness to come together and seek moral solutions. This was the point made in our discussion of the moral community. Now we move forward to explicitly ground this view in dialogic civility. A pathway to
this purpose is to link human to human, nation to nation, and culture to culture in an envelope of shared values.

Understandably, the idea of “global ethics” and “universal civility” doesn’t fit the emotional or mental frameworks of the past. Peering into the future, past theories and beliefs are of little consequence. Fundamentalists – religious, secular, and intellectual – are holding on to their entrenched beliefs. Individualists want a subjective, person-centered ethic that has meaning to them only. We are aware of the tentacles of relativism. Multiculturalists say we must respect all cultures, ignoring the fact that these too have evolved and are evolving. Change is our constant reminder that the future is bleeding into the present more quickly that we can comprehend.

“No crisis is deeper than a crisis of belief,” says Russell Shorto (2008). He tells the story of the impact of Rene Descartes’ Discourse on Method, which appeared on the streets of Paris, Rome, Amsterdam, and London in 1637. In this seventy-eight page pamphlet, Descartes became the father of “modern culture”—“Everything that came before it is old; everything that came after it is new.” Layers of tradition, from Aristotle to Jesus and from Aquinas to William of Occam, were shown as flawed—a paradigm shift in value and knowledge appeared that ushered in the modern world. And although Descartes ushered in centuries of debate about the relationship of faith and reason as pathways to knowledge, in recent years this debate has faded as new examinations of the relationship of reason, faith, and morals have begun to unravel their intimate connection.

Religion is a part of our lives and informs our behavior as much as and possibly more than reason. And although religion – especially Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – remain, for the most part, tied to ancient texts and contextualized meanings, our hope is that a reasoned faith and an open mind will be able to achieve a balance between the past and the present to provide a more clearly articulated moral view that does not strain under the pressures of belief and dogma. Thus, we open the door to a collective con-
sciousness, to a way of life that doesn’t give up its uniqueness, but both respects human difference and celebrates our shared values as human beings, and that does not ignore the stained-class window of history tinting and giving form to our cultural particularities, but honors the essential humanity we all share.

We certainly face a crisis of global proportions. This crisis not only involves religious fanaticism, the violence and sickness in major parts of Africa, and warring factions in most every nation, and it is not simply a crisis between faith and reason or the secular and the religious. Perhaps it is a crisis between “self and others,” or between “relativism and absolutism.” But these do not capture the full meaning of what we feel in the first decade of the 21st century. It is a crisis involving the meaning of democracy, its inherent values, and its applications to other nations.

We ask, “Is democracy merely a stage in human evolution, and will a new stage emerge that will help usher in a more ethically sensitive world? Shorto says, “If the West is heading toward some kind of crisis, it’s worth asking ourselves a few basic questions. Modern society as we normally define it—a secular culture built around tolerance, reason, and democratic values—occupies a rather small portion of the world, and there are signs that it is shrinking. Is modernity the inexorable force of progress that we tend to assume? Is it a mere moment of human history that is fast fading? If it is something to value, how can we discover it, separate the good and the bad in it, make it relevant and vital?”

Shorto asks, “What, thought, in the early twenty-first century, is the face of modern humanity? What are its features? In what direction is it looking?” And we also ask,

“What is the face of humanity?
“What is its great light?”
“Is it religion, or has religion factions divided us and become a force of chaos and despair?”
“Is it reason, but can reason alone tell us how to live in harmony and peace?”
“Are we capable, guided solely by the light of reason and experience, of perfecting the good life on earth and of freeing the minds of humanity from the bonds of ignorance and superstition?”

Generally, reason can organize our thinking, help us resolve difficult problems, and when applied to the physical world, is a system of discovery and prediction (science and epistemology). But we have found that neither reason nor science are effective means for understanding human meaning.

Like Shorto, we recognize that the ideals of democracy, individual liberty, and civility are not necessarily spreading around the world; that they may indeed be more fragile and temporary that we are willing to admit. Shorto provides the following evidence for his concern: There is the religious camp with its entrenchment in tradition and authority; the secular camp ruled by democracy and science; and another, which may simply be called “moderate,” which argues that the scientific and religious worldviews aren’t truly inconsistent and that perceived conflicts have to be sorted out.

We are conscious that reason alone cannot generate moral behavior or civility among people. Neither can religion, for many theologies are burdened with their own personal theologies and biases. On the other hand, there are those who find support for morals within religious belief and have approached life with reason and civility. So we again ask how we should organize our communities and societies. What purpose should guide our path? And what powers lurk out there that can affect us and how do we deal with them?

On the other side, those who rely on reason and shun religion have closed themselves into a cavity of scientific fundamentalism where all things except logic and “objectively” verifiable truth are rejected. We believe these are artificial barriers to common sense, to ethical reasoning, and to building a foundation for a civil world. Shorto says, “The task, which could be impossible to achieve, but is there any alternative but to try, might be translated into Hiroshi Harashima’s terms: to move away from ‘line humanity’ and put
faith in the oldest of communication technologies. Then, maybe, members of opposing camps could meet anew, seeking out signs of trust in another person’s face.”

And so we make a case for “dialogic civility,” which itself relies on face-to-face and nation-to-nation communication. Practically speaking, our search is for a possible intersection where human need and moral purpose can unite diverse groups and nations with shared moral understanding, tolerance and respect.

THE CASE FOR CIVILITY

Experience teaches us that we gain insight only if we are receptive to it. Our effort has been to learn from others, use commonsense and reasonableness in our discussions, and locate civility at the apex of moral community-building. From the point of view of morality, civility includes respecting others, their contextual purposes, ways of life, and traditions. Respect also entails “trust,” “integrity,” “dignity,” “tolerance,” and “responsibility.” Simply put, “civility” is a broad moral category useful in applying shared moral principles in a diverse and plural world. It also is communication sensitive; therefore, we should ignore the modern myth-makers who talk only about our differences. Referring to our differences is not morally productive. Such an emphasis only separates and divides and situates life in a moral vacuum. This breakdown of moral communication is unable to sustain our society much less a moral human ecology.

Understanding “communication”—the dialogic—is a major theme of this chapter. In referring to moral principles we are not suggesting that moral concepts and principles are somehow universal because they are the givens of human nature or handed down from God. Our understanding is perhaps more pragmatic than metaphysical. This view rests on the notion that the thinking person can forage from his/her religious beliefs or secular understanding what moral principles are needed for promoting human flourishing.
So we learn from our Enlightenment progenitors and bundle their ideas with those founded in our religious heritage, and there seek moral views that have universal appeal. Ours is perhaps a more down-to-earth task that takes into account where we’ve been as a culture, who we are now, and, more importantly, where we want to go. Civility, we acknowledge, is something we discover on our way to living the best that we can live. It is what the moral community has prepared us to express. It is neither a given in a logical argument or a statement of religious belief—although it could be. It is practical, rational, and intuitive.

Joe Jaworski (1996) says that “civility” “is the call to service, giving our life over to something larger than us, the call to become what we were meant to become—the call to achieve our vital design.” When we acknowledge this meaning, we recognize that civility is an indication of a life imbedded with moral principles. It is our moral purpose, that home within us, that place where our values and spirit reside, which is enlarged because of our care for others.

Writing in *The De-Moralization of Society*, Gertrude Himmelfarb (1996) comments, “Today’s moralists have [a] far-away, fanatical glint in their eye—‘telescopic morality,’ we might call it. Telescopic morality disdains the mundane values of everyday life as experienced by ordinary people—the ‘bourgeois values’ of family, fidelity, chastity, sobriety, personal responsibility. Instead it embodies a new moral code that is more intrusive and repressive than the old because it is based not on familiar, accepted principles but on new and recondite ones, as if designed for another culture or tribe.” Himmelfarb is correct, “Telescopic morality has the effect not only of distancing the new morality from the old; it also distances moral responsibility from the moral agent. We have become accustomed to the transference of responsibility from the individual to society—from the criminal to the economic and social conditions that are the presumptive causes of his criminality…The individual thus functions not as an independent, responsible moral agent but as a surrogate for gender or race.”
Civility increases human value as it enlarges our moral surplus. When we align our work and commitments with this greater purpose, we will discover energies and potentialities within us that we did not know we possessed. The reality of civility is that it is a form of self-expression that creates value for those around us. This is the path we seek, but it is not our goal. Inclusive meaning and purpose have disappeared from many of our lives in favor of short-term goals, immediate self-gratification, and pretentious religious groups asserting their superiority over others. Our goal, in the long run, is creating a moral human ecology that is engrained within every person. This moral purpose will uplift all people, us included, as it enlarges our moral horizon.

Civility extends morality beyond us and beyond our community. The National Civility Center comments, “We are passionate in our belief that communities can provide a better quality of life for all citizens in a more effective and efficient way. Our work is focused on the development of better tools for capacity building and helping individuals and institutions to be strong champions for improvement in their own communities.” This is our purpose as well, and if we use “community” as a paradigm for moral change, then we are able to extend this idea to encompass the human community.

**BEHAVIORS THAT DEFINE “CIVILITY”**

The following keys to civility are promoted by the National Civility Center:

1) Trust, which defines the quality of a community’s relationships and levels of reliance between people and across its institutions.

2) Creating a culture of learning, discovery, and shared purpose.

3) Engaging people who are dedicated to community values and community improvement.
4) Finally, dialogue is essential to moral communication. It “is an equal and free give-and-take between individuals, and a means of sharing one’s hopes and dreams and allowing “the commonality of these hopes and dreams to create a common sense of purpose.”

Although we locate our values first within our families and communities, there is a need to evaluate them and extend them outward to others with the idea that we are not holders of absolute truth and that listening and tolerance will aid dialogic civility. To help us move forward with extending our civility, the following practical ideas will be of help:

- Staying open to new ideas, relationships, personal growth opportunities, and strategies enables us to keep weaving stronger and more complex fibers into our community fabric.
- Understanding the freedom that comes from remaining open will help us manage and sustain our efforts.
- Embracing the idea that our community will always be a work in progress.
- Bringing unity to community by developing a shared moral vision.
- Reframing our thinking about racial, cultural, and ethnic differences. If we fail to do so, we will be condemned to remaining exactly the way we are.
- Understanding the change process. If we are isolated and believe change comes only to others, we miss the totality of its collective impact. Beliefs, actions, and events are all interrelated.
- Improving the community is comprehensive and involves civil/moral growth. Leveraging our community strengths for sustained improvement expands our vision and connects it to others in meaningful ways. When we leverage every resource around our shared goals, we can truly make a difference.
- Asking the right questions frames our dialogue for improvements in civility. Everyone needs to understand and buy into
the ideas surrounding community improvement. Telling people how to act or feel will not work nearly as well as finding the questions that will lead them, one at a time, to their own discoveries.

- Developing new, young, diverse leaders is important for communities. The power of leadership must fall into hands of the many, not the few.
- Being accountable and in compliance with various regulations and goals is valuable for community unity.
- Acknowledging an intentional plan for community improvement will not guarantee a community’s security. The real threat to our way of life lies inside our society, not outside.
- Building capacity within community organizations is the essence of community-weaving. Capacity building starts with a recognition of the potential that exists within all people and organizations—a belief in possibilities.
- Building relationships and raising levels of trust is also important to community-weaving. There are few examples where people have been successful without the support of the community.

Tolerance and Respect

Healthy democracies depend in large part on the development of democratic civic cultures and tolerance plays a key role in this development. From a practical standpoint, some people would agree that thoughtful behavior and common decency are in short supply, or simply forgotten in hurried lives of emails, cellphones, and multi-tasking. Because tolerance and respect are important to dialogic civility, we pause here to highlight their essential features.

“Tolerance” is what some call an “actively contagious idea” that will assist us with the development of our ethical/civil lives. Tolerance can become a building-block of virtue and character which includes living a life with dignity and purpose and valuing a principled-centered life enriched by dialogue and refined by reason and fair-mindedness. This is often referred to as “integrity.”
Tolerance is often misunderstood. Many believe that if we are tolerant of those who differ with us, then we are saying we agree with their ideas and beliefs. In schools, “zero-tolerance” has become the norm, meaning that for certain violent offenses, there will be no allowable deviations from school rules and standards. These are more narrow views of tolerance and are usually applied in limited, possibly threatening situations. From the moral point of view, and when defining “civility,” being tolerant of others means being open-minded, understanding, and non-judgmental. Tolerance also means showing respect for the rights, opinions or practices of others, being respectful of their right to hold their views, and being fair-minded, kind, and patient. “Tolerance” also includes sympathy and consideration for beliefs or practices differing from or conflicting with one’s own. Thus defined, tolerance is a component of character-building and civility.

Interestingly, the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance, which was adopted and signed in Paris by UNESCO’s (the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) 185 Member States on 16 November 1995, qualified tolerance not only as a moral duty, but also as a political and legal requirement for individuals, groups and States. UNESCO positioned tolerance in relation to the international human rights instruments drawn up over the past fifty years and emphasized that “States should draft new legislation when necessary to ensure equality of treatment and of opportunity for all groups and individuals in society.” It is an attitude of openness and respect for the differences that exist among people; that is, tolerance ought to be applied to, among other things, ethnic and religious differences, to gender differences, and to people with physical and intellectual disabilities.

Ethical Character

Much we have said so far is essential for building ethical character. Below are some additional behaviors often cited as characteristic of civility or “civil virtues.” When modeled within the community, they become effective means for teaching others and
avoiding uncivil behaviors. They are the essential values that define us as moral persons:

**Respect** is an ethical value that recognizes each person as having intrinsic value or worth. When we acknowledge the uniqueness and creativity of others, we are also acknowledging their dignity and self-worth.

**Responsibility** means that we develop our own lives with the purpose of not just modifying our behavior by improvements of our own design, but that we help preserve the integrity of human life – the life of others and the environment. Responsibility means living a morally sound life, one characterized by civility and purpose.

**Integrity** is living a life characterized by moral consistency. Consistency is important for it defines the essence of integrity – it means steadiness, reliability, regularity, and above all, trustworthiness.

**Friendship** is an essential behavior for community development. The Greek thinker Zeno said that a friend is “another I.” Truly, a friend is someone who cares about us. Cicero called such a person “a second self.” A friend is one who knows our faults, yet cares for us anyway. One of the most positive ways of building character in children is stressing the importance and qualities of a caring friendship. Caring demands respect and is enhanced by integrity. Such words as “devoted,” “faithful,” and “trustworthy” are associated with caring.

**Empathy** is the ability to imagine oneself in another’s place and understand the other’s feelings, desires, ideas, and actions. It is a word modeled on “sympathy.” Empathy begins with love, and continues with caring, optimism, helping others, and hard work.

**Self-respect** is having respect for one’s self and a regard for one’s character. Therefore, self-respect is the cornerstone of virtue; it means having a sense of one’s own dignity or worth. Re-
spect means accepting our limitations along with our successes in life. When we respect our inner-self, the evaluation of our efforts by others adds to our personal self-appraisal and value.

**Honesty** means that a person is committed to living a life dedicated to truthfulness. In the context of human communication, people are generally said to be honest when they tell the truth to the best of their knowledge and do not hide what they know or think. Also, apart from being truthful, honesty is generally thought to involve abstaining from unfair behaviour, such as stealing or cheating on a test. The importance of honesty, truthfulness, and fair-mindedness as components of civility speak to the meaning of “trustworthiness.” Because my value fixes what behavior should flow from me and your value fixes what behavior should flow from you, trustworthiness will help bring ethical harmony to our families, schools, and communities. Also, honesty should be a central feature of nations as they interact with each other. Dialogic civility will not progress without it.

Equality and diversity go hand-in-hand. The true application of ethical diversity is to bond across lines of difference. In order to achieve such diversity, we are required to explore who we are—our personal values, our family and community values, and how we get along with people who are different.

**Fair-mindedness** is also a necessary community-building behavior. Fair-mindedness means that we live our lives as people of good will that we work in positive ways for the betterment of our families, schools, and communities. It also means that we recognize the standards for sharing and our obligation to share with others. It means, cooperation, reciprocity, giving, and receiving.

**BENEFITS OF CIVILITY**
Stephen L. Carter comments, “Civility involves the discipline of our passions for the sake of living a common life with others...” Included with this idea is the ethical notion that we should each yield something of our own feelings and desires in order to accommodate others. Some have identified “diversity” as a negative value, but recognizing the importance of diversity and the essential humanity encased in diverse cultures is an important step that can move us forward morally.

Carter, who frequently writes about religion, rightly perceives that the danger in our jettisoning civility as a social value is not merely that the culture becomes coarser and less pleasant, but that we lose the lubricant that helps the engine of democracy run more smoothly. He provides reasons that a democracy should value civility:

1) Civility enables us to hold the respectful dialogues without which democratic decision making is impossible.

2) Civility reminds us of the following: (A) that in a democracy all of our actions must meet the test of morality, and (B) that our ability to discipline ourselves, to do what is right rather than what we desire, is what distinguishes civilized from uncivilized behavior.

3) Our adherence to standards of civil behavior serves as our letter of introduction to our fellow citizens, thus helping to build community.

4) By treating each other with the respectful civility that our shared humanity requires, we help make bearable the many indignities and frictions of everyday life.

We agree then that “civility” is not only a broad moral category, it is one that has constructive implications as it supports and sustains the moral community and enlarges our vision of a moral human ecology.

To achieve the goal of building a foundation for civility we need to stress the virtues needed for this endeavor: the moral
energy, the widening sense of social responsibility, the insistence on the maximum viable scope for freedom and initiative, and above all the readiness to take whatever risk needs to be taken for the sake of building a civil world.

All of us must become teachers and models of civility. Our work must be cooperative and intentional. If we have agreed to live by the moral point of view and the principles it entails, then our role as caretakers of this legacy has the potential of lighting a moral flame in others. Without sensitivity to the moral possibilities of life, we are bound to a selfish isolation, where putting one’s interests and needs first and ignoring those of others is destructive and perhaps disingenuous. We are challenged to revise our common sense understandings and move forward with greater boldness and assurance to a broader, more universal view.

**DIALOGIC CIVILITY**

Our discussion now brings us to an idea known as “dialogic civility.” Dialogic civility provides a workable structure for our discussion of both the moral community and interpersonal communication. It is a duel metaphor involving communication and ethics and their joint application to the global community. Dialogic civility seeks, among other things, local, national, and global spheres of moral interaction where diversity is honored and shared moral perspectives are sought.

Its goal is dialogic—to keep the conversation about morality, civility, and the moral community going in an age of local and global diversity. We believe this practice has potential for enriching life more meaningfully through others. Fritjof Capra (1996) provides a summary of “dialogic civility” and the “civil society” as an arrangement “...of organizations and institutions...that form an interface between the state and its citizens...based on respect for human dignity, the ethics of sustainability, and an ecological view of the world.” Dialogic civility entails public respect between persons that genuinely meets our historic moment and is maintained through purposeful communication and moral resolution. It
is a foundation for a moral human ecology, which refers to the essential or organic nature of human moral interaction.

Dialogic civility is deeply grounded in the conviction that responsible interaction makes change and alteration possible. Ronald C. Arnett and Pat Arneson (1999) comment that “dialogic civility calls us to public respect as we work to co-constitutively discover the minimal communication background assumptions necessary to permit persons of difference to shape together the communicative terrain of the 21st century.” They believe that if enough people begin to communicate honestly and civilly, then “the story of communication in the twenty-first century would be one that guided difference, diversity, and discourse under the arm of respect and caring for the other.”

While engaged in this dialogue, we should maintain both self-respect and respect for the views of others. The purpose is not to reassure us that our views are “right,” but to use prudence and commonsense noting that we can intimately connect with others because we share a common humanity. Today there exist no specialists in the task of integrating diverse moral views. This process requires some structure which permits meaningful conceptualization and dialogue to take place. It also requires the breakdown of boundaries between diverse moral views.

No longer can we be thought of as living in comparative isolation and we cannot produce global civility in a methodological vacuum. Perhaps the problem is not one of what should be but rather of what is and what can be. Our structure, our method, for this adventure is dialogic. It is a frame of reference with ethics, community, and communication lying at or near its foundation. Our attitude toward this idea is important because civility begins with each individual and attitudes are predispositions to actions.

Stephen Carter believes that extending ethics into the community – to become a civil society – presents us with a most compelling question: “How are norms that are not laws enforced?” It seems reasonable to suggest that most norms must be self-enforcing. We must conform even when the likelihood of punish-
ment is relatively small. The idea that both norms and laws are obeyed mainly because of a fear of negative sanctions (punishments) has been largely refuted by recent empirical research. When norms have the force of law, violations may involve legal sanctions. However, most norms are not laws and they are enforced, to greater or lesser degree, through community pressure, where violators are made to feel that their status as members is in jeopardy. A sense of community and its obligations and responsibilities is a highly valued norm, a kind of super-norm that suggests conformity to community standards. This has a common sense moral appeal. Without such a commitment, many will live in fear of their neighbor and of authorities, first because community behaviors will be inconsistent and second, because they will be unsure what will happen if they are found violating community standards. Moral consistency embodied in law is highly prized, but, even more than this, is a moral consistency that is voluntarily maintained.

Where Civility Begins

Civility begins or should begin in the family which is the basic institution in society. According to Carter, the student of civility should understand family not simply as an entity, but as an ongoing activity of loving and intimate sacrifice. Thus, for Carter, the heart of the family is not something people are but something they do. Carter interprets the Christian message of family as a place where we die to the self. Thus, by taking on the responsibility of marriage and children, one accepts the impermanence of this life and the irrelevance of personal desire as one’s sole motivation for behavior. The family, as a place of love, is also a place of duty, a place where our obligations to others takes precedence over our pursuit of self interests. Like all good things, civility builds on itself. Children who see their parents willing to set aside their own concerns and interests for the larger good of the family and community are far more likely to do the same when they reach adulthood.
Assumptions about the world and the behaviors and ideas we think are right and wrong are reinforced continuously by our family, friends, teachers, and by our religious and spiritual commitments. We are often unaware of the origins of our values and at other times we are not fully aware of their background assumptions. Also, it goes without saying that the less we understand about our values the more likely we believe that they are the only “right,” “natural,” and “normal” ones. This strengthens our belief that other people should adopt the values we think are worthy. It is natural to fear the breakdown of tradition and the values we have relied upon.

Richard Goodwin (1974) has pointed out that the attitude of individualism is “so powerful that we still look on bonds as restraints; on values as opinions or prejudices; on customs as impositions. The remaining structures of shared experience—the ties that make it possible for people to live with and through, and not merely alongside, one another—are assaulted as unjust obstacles in the way of liberty, as impediments to the free assertions of the self.”

Cleanth Brooks agrees, “…the individual’s attempt to throw off every kind of restraint has developed through a logic of its own from a liberating to a destructive force which, by dissolving the community, has left the individual alienated and robbed of his humanity.” Goodwin reminds us that Plato, in The Republic, asserts that the greatest good is the “bond of unity” in which “there is community of pleasures and pains”—in which “all the citizens are glad or grieved on the same occasions of joy and sorrow.”

Carter highlights a set of fifteen principles that should guide us in rethinking and possibly restructuring personal civility:

1) Our duty to be civil toward others does not depend up whether we like them or not.

2) Civility requires that we sacrifice for strangers, not just for people we happen to know.
3) Civility has two parts: generosity, even when it is costly, and trust, even when there is risk.

4) Civility creates not merely a negative duty not to harm, but an affirmative duty to do good.

5) Civility requires a commitment to live a shared moral life, so we should try to follow the norms of the community if the norms are not actually immoral.

6) We must come into the presence of our fellow human beings with a sense of awe and gratitude.

7) Civility assumes that we will disagree; it requires us not to mask our differences, but to resolve them respectfully.

8) Civility requires that we listen to others with knowledge of the possibility that they are right and we are wrong.

9) Civility requires that we express ourselves in ways that demonstrate our respect for others.

10) Civility requires resistance to the dominance of social life by the values of the marketplace. Thus, the basic principles of civility—generosity and trust—should apply as fully in the marketplace and in politics as in every other human activity.

11) Civility allows criticism of others, and sometimes even requires it, but the criticism should always adhere to basic tenets of civility.

12) Civility discourages the use of legislation rather than conversation to settle disputes, except as a last, carefully considered resort.

13) Teaching civility by word and example, is an obligation of the family. The state/nation must not interfere with the family’s sincere effort to create a coherent moral universe for its children.

14) Civility values diversity, disagreement, and the possibility of resistance, and therefore the state/nation must not use educa-
tion to standardize its children or restrain their intellectual competence.

15) Religions do their greatest service to civility when they preach not only love of neighbor but resistance to wrong.

Carter remarks, “These rules suggest the possibility of judging the civility not only of ourselves, as human beings and citizens, but of the country we have inherited and are (one hopes) laboring together to improve. One might reasonably ask, for example, how we as a nation treat the worst off among us—people whom, under the command to love our neighbors, we are instructed to love. As Richard John Neuhaus has pointed out: ‘It is not Marx, but a biblical insight that a society is judged along its fault lines, that we are judged by our relationship to the vulnerable, to the marginal, to those whom many view as expendable.’ And so civility provides a standard by which to judge not only our personal but our national morality and our global morality.”

Arnett and Arneson suggest that there are two sources for modern day moral cynicism: (1) a cultural emphasis on radical individualism, which prioritizes the self over others; and (2) an abandonment of a once assumed collective identity in favor of alignment-fragmented social groups, which has led to the belief that there is little one can be sure of and that true knowledge about the world is impossible.

They steadfastly insist on the importance of the common good, of a commitment to an “us” as well as a “me.” This, they say, requires a commitment to dialogic civility, which requires respect for topics, others, multiple perspectives, and the given historical moment.

Opinions on many vital issues differ because our basic value assumptions differ. These differences make communication difficult but the dialogic purpose is to work through our differences and seek shared moral understandings. We come to each other from different faiths and from different economic statuses. Our languages are different and our cultural habits vary. All of these and more make us who we are, as they color our personal values.
and tint our opinions with personal biases and assumptions. Thus, when we look at the world around us we can never be sure whether the hues we observe are actually there or whether the coloration of facts and events reflect the tint in our own “glasses.” The problem is, as Plato foresaw, that this tint may be the only reality some are capable of knowing.

The assumptions framing dialogic civility may be summarized as follows:

1) Interpersonal communication must reclaim the public domain as the major part of communicative interaction in an age of diversity.
2) Respect for the public domain requires a metaphor that reminds us of the public arena—dialogic civility.
3) Responding with an opposing view calls us to attend to the stories and values of others with respect and responsibility.
4) Dialogic civility keeps the conversation alive in a postmodern culture that lacks meta-narrative agreement.
5) Dialogic civility provides a guiding story for interpersonal interaction that includes the following:
   - Listening to the other and the historical moment
   - Avoiding the impulse of domination
   - Recognizing that what happens “between” persons is of ethical importance
   - Calling for the communicative presence of voice and body in order to magnify understanding
   - Using historically appropriate face-saving
   - Finding meaning in the midst of narrative disruption
   - Adhering to an ethic of care
   - Connecting to a community of memory
   - Willing to find ways to mend broken covenants.
6) When a setting for dialogue is agreed upon, a narrative of dialogic civility can guide communicative action.
In conclusion, Arnett and Arneson note that “Dialogic civility is ultimately a reminder that life is best lived with concern for self, others, and sensitive implementation with the historical moment, while consistently reminding us that our communicative actions have public consequences that shape the communicative lives of many people.”

A communication ethic lives wherever there is common agreement among persons about the knowing and/or the doing of practices that protect a given sense of the good. “With multiple views of the good and multiple common sense understandings of the good, such a world is more akin to a patchwork quilt than a single sewn sheet of cloth.” The metaphor of “patchwork quilt” unites many small understandings of common sense into places where there is agreement about what is good. To deal with the decline of the commonness of common sense we must embrace what we consider the central notion of communication ethics for the 21st century—learning. A situation-based common sense suggests that we must learn together as we seek to promote a given sense of the good.

CONCLUSION

A moral human ecology seeks the appreciation of agreed upon moral values that enhance and support human welfare and flourishing for all people. This relies on both common sense and conventional wisdom, but as we know, different cultures express human need variously—some of the major issues revolve around survival issues such as acquiring food and water; others have issues of violence and genocide. But these are the extremes and man’s inhumanity to man cannot be totally recounted here. At its core, human survival is in need of moral understanding and the activation of civil and moral behaviors as a foundation for possible change.

To be successful we must recast this conversation from one of clashing values only and issues of cultural relativism to one of “constructive challenges.” Civility has in the past been on the
sidelines of ethical discussions, and we can agree that its role has been neglected. As we have incorporated strands of insights from moral theorists and sociologists, we agreed that civility – this unfocused value – can no longer be ignored. We can’t speak about ethics and moral behaviors without talking about community, issues of morality exposed by human need, and the moral role that civility plays in this equation.

The moral future we envision and the various moral strands we have pulled together in this writing have recognizable parallels, cultural furrows tilled by those who understand the moral needs of humanity and the moral dimensions of our common experience. Without this constant and continuing practice of moral correlation all criteria of moral meaning go out the window. We have been enlightened and now is the moment that moral civil behaviors should become the substance of our dialogic conversation with others.

The tone of our moral priorities provides a normative (prescriptive) recommendation rather than an argument about truth claims and over indulging in issues of ethical justification. We cannot separate moral principles, the standards of the moral community, or civility from grassroots moral behavior. At the same time, we are committed to reason, consistency when drawing conclusions, and critical assessment. Our purpose is perhaps more personal and persuasive. We are seeking moral change in persons and in institutions, and among national governments. As we extend the notion of civility globally, we are compelled to remember that civility, like morality, is first centered within the person. E.A. Burtt (1965) explains, “[the] fact is that the way in which a person is known makes a difference to the way he changes…He will be, in some measure, a different person because of it… True understanding of a person is gained only through the positive, response to his presence. Only when one’s interaction with him becomes an active participation in his growth toward fulfillment can one come to know his full self, because only in the medium of such a response is that full self coming to be.”
We have focused on the practicality of moral growth and moral wisdom as rationally informed and lodged in human need. We are challenged to use this knowledge to communicate with others. Communication lies at the heart of dialogic civility. Arie de Geus (2002) has said, “Decisions grow in the topsoil of formal and informal conversation—sometimes structured…and sometimes technical…and sometimes ad hoc.” It is an ongoing process of conversation which has the ability (and responsibility) of bringing moral life into the community—the world community. Individuals, organizations, and governments can empower their friends, associates and national partners through the dialogic process because it facilitates their flexibility, creativity, and learning potential, and also enhances their dignity and humanity.

Avishai Margalit (1998) has commented that when the intentions of people, institutions, and society become promoting good for all people, it creates growth in self-respect and does not ask people to compromise their integrity. As we seek a shared moral humanity, a safe world in which to live out our lives, these hidden or unexposed values can also isolate us from others. Left ambiguous and cognitively unrecognized, and kept quietly within, they are conceivably the source of an unyielding attitude blocking the furtherance of the moral conversation and the source of our inability to work with others. This is not an issue of individualism or of moral rhetoric, but goes to the heart of character formation.

A moral human ecology remains a challenge, but it is a constructive challenge. Sorting through our values and finding those that we share with others, may necessitate putting greater emphasis on standards and principles we once thought unimportant or unnecessary. Yet, we can be assured that seeking a shared moral commons will confirm these principles – bit by bit – as our interactions and involvement with those who share diverse views continues. We can conclude that a moral society or culture does not act disreputable to those in its orbit. This is its distinguishing mark and is based on the principle of tolerance and
the assurance of dignity and freedom even to the marginalized diversity that it shares.

**READINGS**


**IDEAS FOR DIALOGUE AND DISCUSSION**

1. Do you believe that tolerance is a necessity in a democratic society? What is your definition of tolerance?

2. Define the concept of “civility” as a moral doctrine and explain how tolerance and dialogue support this ideal.

3. Evaluate the importance of freedom of religion in a democratic and open society. Do you believe that the faith-based initiatives of the federal government have violated the doctrine of separation of church and state?

4. Make proposals for how people can live together with diversities and differences.
EPILOGUE

Our objective in this book has been to develop a workbook for teachers and students as a background for eliciting discussion about morals and ethics. Within these pages we have also developed a moral framework that is applicable to individuals, communities and governments; a framework that promotes human flourishing the world over. In a general way we have identified the core moral components for this endeavor. Little effort has been made to apply them to moral conflict situations – either personal situations or those with national implications. We believe that this effort defeats the purpose of open and sustained dialogue about those values we normally share with others.

The great challenge is to look ourselves in the eye and there find the source of our own moral strengths and weaknesses. Chest thumping about the American way and systematic blindness to our own condition are of no value. We understand the fragility of human life and the propensity of many to yield to perceived authority. We must reassess our own values and those of our nation: will we continue to be driven by ambition, power, and self-interest, or will a new American character emerge, one based on duty and responsibility, moral integrity and virtue?

For many, an open mind is a dangerous mind for it tends to bring in new ideas and recast them with fresh understandings. The challenge will be to change our individual and collective values as these values relate to our own families, communities, and nation. This will be difficult for those who are tied to traditions and habits that limit the human spirit and see only one way to do things. Many of us remained entrapped in our own prejudices.

With the resurgence of character education in our public schools, the up swing of religious fundamentalism and a renewed emphasis on ethics in politics and the work place, Kishore Mahbubani (2011) believes that American politicians, as leaders in this quest, “should be prepared to make the ultimate political sacrifice in order to speak the truth.” He explains, “The American
political system has become so badly clogged with special interests that it resembles a diseased heart…The fact that the American body politic cannot conceive of the possibility that its clogged political arteries could lead to a catastrophic heart attack is an indication that American society cannot conceive of failure. And if you cannot conceive of failure, failure comes.”

This “learning” is perhaps our greatest strength, one that gives purpose and meaning to our national lives. “Meaning” is important, and we believe, as does Abraham Joshua Heschel (1976), that “life is not meaningful to us unless it is serving an end beyond itself, unless it is of value to someone else.” And although individualism implies separation and independence from others, our humanity entails the desire for meaningful connection. Thus, meaning may be the key to our moral energy in that it is fully supplied by our service to humanity. To dispel the crisis of radical individualism and distorted political messages, we need to recognize, as did Lerner, that “the self is in need of a meaning which it cannot furnish by itself…to be human is to recognize a categorical obligation to an objective moral task of world repair.”

In an interview with Andrew Young (2007), former ambassador to the United Nations, the following question was asked: “What experiences in your youth account for your sense of connection to the natural world?” Mr. Young gave the following answer: “...when I lived in south Georgia, when I had troubles and decisions to make, I went through the woods and prayed and fasted. I know if we protect and revere this world, it will feed all of us and clothe all of us and house all of us. But if we exploit it and degrade it, it will be like what King said about race relations—either we learn to live together as brothers or we perish together as fools.” As Avishe Margalit (1998) has written, “A decent society is a nonhumiliating one...a society in which every person is accorded due honor.”

Morality and moral civility are not only individual choices, but community and national choices as well. As a people we can sit on the sidelines of cultural and global change or we can become
active participants and be the change we wish to see in others. This remains a difficult task for many are still burdened by provincialism and are covered by the blanket of their moral biases, while others sit on the margins of cultural and societal change waiting for someone else to step up. Moral leadership is an arduous task. The challenge is great, but to hesitate and do nothing is an option we must ignore.

A civil society, a civil world, is the rich ecosystem of independent people and their free associations in churches, businesses, labor unions, and governments. Its purpose is to morally influence life outside of state control in a freely initiated give and take where earnest views are heard and evaluated. It does not seek to squelch individualism, but to build moral cohesion; and it doesn’t seek power or control but maintains an open ear to differing points of view. We genuinely believe that our extension of morality to others, even those across the boundaries of oceans and national identities, entails dialogic civility. It is as Jenna Killian Carter wrote as an eight-year old second grader:

“We can all come together – work really hard – save the earth; and make things so much better.”

REFERENCES


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