

# Education for critical moral consciousness

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This paper proposes a lifespan developmental model of critical moral consciousness and examines its implications for education in childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Mature moral consciousness, central to negotiating the challenges of the 21st century, is characterized by a deepening lifelong integration of moral motivation, agency and critical discernment. The paper describes the evolution of moral consciousness through three levels; pre-critical consciousness (pCC), transitional critical consciousness (tCC) and critical consciousness (CC) and eight chronologically ascending psychosocial themes. It focuses on the first two periods and operationalizes the role of education in cultivating the four dimensions of moral motivation: a moral sense of identity, a sense of responsibility and agency, a deep sense of relatedness on all levels of living and a sense of meaning and life purpose. The paper proposes a re-envisioning of education in the direction of integrating mind and heart, developing both moral motivation and critical discernment and integrating these into optimal consciousness.

## Introduction

Without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness, nothing will change for the better in the sphere of our being as humans, and the catastrophe toward which we are headed will be unavoidable. (Havel, 1994, p. A27)

The nature of moral consciousness has been a central human concern for as long as humanity has existed. However, its comprehensive understanding and the implementation of this understanding into educational practices have become defining needs, as we recognize our interdependence on this shrinking planet and the complex problems we face as a human family in this age of turbulent transition to a global civilization (Marsella, 1998; Annan, 2002).

This paper presents a recently developed holistic model for the understanding of moral consciousness which seeks to integrate a range of discourses in moral psychology while enriching the understanding of mature morality by drawing on critical psychology, liberatory pedagogies and Eastern and Western spiritual philos-

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ophy. Mature moral consciousness, central to negotiating the challenges of the 21st century, is understood as a way of being, an optimal path of human development, which exhibits a wholesome engagement with meaning and positive change in one's social world and is characterized by ever-expanding circles of agency in the service of humanity. This moral consciousness was poignantly described by the Brazilian educator Paolo Freire (1973) as critical consciousness:

Men relate to their world in a critical way ... . And in the act of critical perception, men discover their own temporality. ... As men emerge from time, discover temporality and free themselves from 'today', their relationships with the world become impregnated with consequence. ... As men create, re-create, and decide, historical epochs begin to take shape. ... Whether or not men can perceive the epochal themes and above all, how they act upon the reality within which these themes are generated, will largely determine their humanization or dehumanization, their affirmation as subjects or their reduction as objects. ... If men are unable to perceive critically the themes of their time, and thus to intervene actively in reality, they are carried along in the wake of change. (pp. 3–7)

This author has subjected to detailed analysis Freire's definition of critical consciousness as the capacity to 'problematize' the natural, cultural and historical reality in which one is immersed and has studied the nature and dimensions of this capacity, its emergence and transformations in the lifespan and the life conditions that tend to foster or thwart its development (Mustakova-Possardt, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2003).

### **Cross-cultural interpretive analytical study**

The best thinkers of each age and culture, people as diverse as Rumi, Plato, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and Baha'u'llah, to mention a few, have highlighted the full range of aspects of this kind of consciousness. The path of optimal consciousness is manifested in an infinite variety of ways and degrees and people move through them in widely different time frames, which have a lot to do with their life circumstances. Regardless of where they are developmentally, these people always strike us as more authentic, independent minded and resilient human beings, individuals with presence and integrity, but not individualists. These people always stand out, and others are attracted to them and threatened at the same time, because these people fit no easy mould and are not guided by personal interest. These people's lives are about truth and service, both outdated and discarded words, but they are not moralists. If anything, they are lovers, lovers of humanity, lovers of life. Their hearts embrace and respond deeply to the human condition. Their minds powerfully cut through the rubble of detail and the smoke of words and reach for inner meanings, harnessing knowledge into understanding, never just caught in the trimmings of knowledge. These are people who, whether we love them or fear them, represent our best hope for ourselves, that hope which we do not even dare entertain.

In order to understand the nature of this way of being, this author sought the

intersections between a wide body of interdisciplinary literatures and empirical data analysis. The 5-year-long study (Mustakova-Possardt, 1996, 2003) relied on primary case studies (28 in-depth interviews) and secondary life histories (Gandhi, 1927; Colby & Damon, 1992; Bembow, 1994; Daloz *et al.*, 1996).

The US interviews represented a statistically selected sub-sample of Colby and Damon's (1994) study of midlife social responsibility, which was part of the MacArthur Foundation Research Program on Successful Midlife Development (MIDMAC).<sup>1</sup> The Bulgarian interviews were supported by the Dissertation Award of the Henry A. Murray Research Center for the Study of Lives. They consisted of an unrepresentative sample of four men and four women, five of them living in the capital and three living in a town in the heart of the country (Mustakova-Possardt, 1995). In 1995, when these interviews were undertaken, with the turmoil of the transition out of communism and the efforts to articulate free and conscious public and private choices in the context of a steadily globalizing world Bulgarian society had become deeply antagonized. Lifelong interpersonal connections were being torn apart, as the historic significance of each person's motivations and past and present choices was becoming defining in the new context of transparency in a shrinking world.

Bulgaria was chosen as the cross-cultural setting because the USA and Eastern Europe share the same westernized materialistic and individualistic lifestyle, coloured by a generally recognized Christian framework. In terms of the three main sectors in every society (Malaska, 1993), economic order, socio-political order and spiritual order, both types of societies represent an imbalance. In both, the spiritual order is overshadowed by, in the case of the USA and western societies, the preponderance of the economic order and, in the case of East European societies, by the preponderance of the socio-political order. Both types of societies manifest the signs of moral and spiritual decline; both exhibit a rather frayed fabric of social life (Colby & Damon, 1994). Therefore, it appeared important to understand how these socio-historical forms of organization relate to the nature of optimal consciousness. In addition, the two societies also represent some important variations within the western scene. In contrast to the fundamentally individualistic cultural tradition and collective discourse of the USA, as described by Bellah *et al.* (1985) and Wuthnow (1991), East European societies come out of more collective cultural, social and religious traditions. Hence, a cross-cultural study had the potential to reveal generic and context-specific aspects of optimal moral consciousness.

Data analysis followed the pattern of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Open and axial thematic coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) of the interview data yielded empirical patterns and themes, which were then connected to patterns and themes identified in the analysis of secondary life histories and case studies of social activists. In addition, developmental data analysis was applied, along with generic, differentiation and conditions type conceptual analysis (Soltis, 1978). The results were then correlated with the analysis of a wide range of theoretical literatures, seeking the intersection of psychology, history, politics and morality.

### **The nature and ontogenesis of critical moral consciousness**

The capacity to engage life fully and responsibly and to problematize every aspect of the natural, cultural and historic human reality is a whole-person phenomenon, a way of being, which includes, but cannot be reduced to, moral identity, moral reasoning, moral affect or any other particular moral dimension. It also includes what critical theory and praxis call historical agency and empowerment; what Maslow calls mental health and authenticity; what Fowler calls the development of faith and the quest for meaning; what ancient wisdom traditions and transpersonal psychology describe as an orientation to growth, unitive understanding, interconnected ways of being and transcendence.

This wholesome way of being is the result of a qualitatively different level of integration of human cognitive, volitional, and affective capacities, manifested in a deepening lifelong integration of moral motivation, agency and critical discernment. Critical consciousness is in essence optimal consciousness, characterized by the integration of the intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual aspects of a human being. Levels and degrees of critical consciousness are the result of the lifelong synergistic interaction of moral motivation and structural cognitive development, leading to a progressively more harmonious working of mind and heart and an empowered unity of rational understanding, intuitive knowing and inner vision. This paper describes how this engaged and empowered way of being in the world emerges and can be fostered by educational environments.

### **Moral motivation at the heart of critical consciousness**

Empirical analysis shows that at the heart of the inclination to engage life fully and responsibly is a moral yearning inherent to human nature and progressively amplified from early childhood by authentically moral environments. These empirical findings converge with the philosophical understanding of the modern ethic of authenticity (Taylor, 1991). Since the late 18th century, people have become increasingly aware of an inner calling to become more fully who they uniquely are, to seek their idea of God or the Good from within. The ideal of authenticity, the most compelling moral force of modernity, accounting for both its greatest accomplishments and its most devastating failures, is rooted in the notion of the Romantic period that 'human beings are endowed with a moral sense, an intuitive feeling for what is right and wrong' (Taylor, 1991, p. 26).

Although rediscovered and given new significance by the modern age, this idea of the inherent tendency of every human being to gravitate toward the good, the true and the beautiful permeates world religious traditions and is often found in variations on the mystical theme of 'God speaks to every heart'. It is at the centre of the Platonic understanding that a world of perfect forms, of ideal concepts of 'the true', 'the good' and 'the beautiful' is primary, timeless and independent of ourselves, while the physical world and our mental realities reflect in varying degrees these ideal forms (Plato, 1937). Recently, Oxford mathematician Robert Penrose (1994) reached the

Table 1. Development of human spiritual powers in relation to primary human concerns

Primary human concerns	Main human powers		
	Knowledge	Love	Will
Self	Self-experience	Self-preoccupation	Self-control
	Self-discovery	Self-acceptance	Self-confidence
	Self-knowledge	Self-development	Self-responsibility
Relationships	Sameness of people	Acceptance of others	Competition
	Uniqueness of people	Empathy with others	Cooperation & equality
	Oneness of people	Unity	Service
Time	Present (here & now)	Primary union	Desire
	Mortality	Separation	Decision
	Immortality	Secondary union	Action

same conclusion that ‘mathematical concepts and truths inhabit an actual world of their own’ (p. 50) and cannot be reduced to computation. He recognizes that the human quality of understanding, along with the capacity for aesthetic and moral judgements, are matters that require awareness and cannot be analysed through the linear computational approach of current science. He writes: ‘Might it be the case that our awareness is somehow able to make contact with such absolutes, and it is *this* that gives consciousness its essential strength? Perhaps there might be some clue, here, as to what our consciousness actually “is” and what it is “for”’ (p. 401).

Drawing from the Christian tradition, and echoing the understanding of human nature of Teilhard de Chardin (1964), Helminiak (1996, 1998) operationalizes the ambiguous concept of spirituality by recognizing the true and the good as built into the structure of the universe and reflected in a built-in homing beacon in human beings that orients them toward the true and the good. In a similar way, this paper treats spirit as different from matter, where (i) ‘matter and spirit are interactive, dialectical poles of a unified cosmos’; (ii) ‘Spirit is fundamental to matter; matter is an emanation or appearance of spirit. ... Spirit is generative or creative...’; (iii) ‘Spirit is abstract and transcends time and place...’; (4) ‘Spirit is an emanation from God, and God is all Goodness’, understood in both Eastern and Western terms as harmony, balance, alignment. Therefore, ‘spiritual becomes a normative or prescriptive modifier’ (Diessner, 2000, unpublished manuscript, p. 11).

Drawing from the integrative comparative religious understanding of the Baha’i spiritual tradition, Danesh (1994) conceptualizes the authentic striving toward truth, beauty and goodness as an expression of the human spiritual potential to develop and manifest in varying degrees the qualities of absolute reality. The human spiritual potential to know truth, to love beauty and to exercise one’s will in the direction of the good either develops ever more fully in the lifespan in relation to major human concerns with self, relationships and time or is thwarted in varying degrees by unsupportive environments and results in dysfunctional developments in adulthood. Table 1 reflects Danesh’s (1994) conceptualization of the lifespan development of

human spiritual powers in relation to primary human concerns. In this model, the development of each human power in relation to each of the primary human concerns goes through three stages, corresponding to childhood, adolescence and mature adulthood. Numerous combinations of uneven development in these nine domains are possible, where people manifest relatively less developed spiritual powers and fixations on earlier stages around important concerns.

This understanding sheds new light on the compelling analysis of the Frankfurt School of Critical theorists of the contextual forces that trap modern consciousness in the Western world, stunt its capacity for historical understanding and prevent it from developing toward its critical potential. Marcuse (1989a,b) shows how economic conditions in an advanced industrial society are responsible for the social frameworks in which reality is organized, fostering direct socialization of individuals into currently pervasive cultural institutions, such as mass media, schools, sports and peer groups, unmediated by the ego-building tensions, and producing massive social conformity. He describes the need for consciousness to break 'through the material and ideological veil of the affluent society' (Marcuse, 1989a, p. 281), where affluent society is seen as 'growing on the condition of accelerating waste, planned obsolescence, and destruction, while the substratum of the population continues to live in poverty and misery' (p. 280). Marcuse (1989c) points out that the Western scientific method, narrowly understood, has illegitimized the spiritual dimension of life and has 'destroyed the idea that the universe was ordered in relation to a goal, to a teleological structure' (p. 120), substituting for it the almost 'metaphysical' universal applicability of technology in the place of ontology. Freire (1973) describes this tendency as the pervasive substituting of technocratic problem-solving for actual problematizing. This analysis captures the deeply paralysing contexts we are negotiating as we enter the 21st century and from which we need to emancipate ourselves and our children. Liberation, Marcuse writes, 'is *predicated upon the opening and the activation of a depth dimension of human existence*' (1989c, p. 281; emphasis added).

In the same vein, Fromm (1955) provides a riveting analysis of the extent to which conformist Western consumer culture shapes consciousness, fosters alienation, dependency and the superficial development of reason, while actually cultivating what Maslow (1999) calls 'deficiency motivation' in the place of a 'growth motivation'. In the context of such social critiques, Danesh's model allows us to appreciate more fully the precarious nature of the balance of optimal moral consciousness. As Prilleltensky (2004) points out, 'The pursuit of knowledge, without a parallel pursuit of love, may render technological advances and academic brilliance, but not necessarily moral concern. Likewise, vigorous pursuit of agency and relentless exercise of will, may render great pragmatism, but without knowledge and love, the solution may be worse than the problem'.

When the human spiritual striving to know truth, to love beauty and to exercise choice in the direction of goodness is amplified by early environments, it becomes the motivating force behind the progressive constructions and reconstructions of the true, the good and the beautiful. This essentially spiritual orientation becomes dominant in

a person's life and activates more fully the developing capacities to know, to love and to exercise free will (Mustakova-Possardt, 1996, 2003). It leads to a higher level of integration of cognitive, volitional and affective capacities and to a greater consistency between what a person knows, what they love and the real-life choices they make. It fosters greater engagement with life and, hence, spurs structural cognitive development, resulting in an expansive and progressively more empowered consciousness throughout the lifespan.

This understanding of moral motivation as the progressive amplification of spiritual potential, amplified or thwarted in varying degrees by different environments, includes, but is fundamentally broader than, the constructive developmental Piagetian and Kohlbergian view of morality, which emphasizes cognition as the source of moral motivation (Gibbs, 1995). The Piagetian view of the developmental progression of moral reasoning from heteronomous, external, physicalistic or pragmatic considerations to increasingly internal and autonomous considerations and the role of social interactions in these evolving personal constructions of rights and justice captures the complexity of the development of moral judgement beyond the simple social internalization of motives. It points powerfully to the nature of moral development as a process of integration (Blasi, 1995). However, evolving morality is still seen as centred primarily around the exercise of the human faculty to know. Love and will appear to be by-products of knowing.

This cognitive developmental tradition has made important contributions to understanding the way young children form concepts of morality that constitute a distinct developmental sequence from concepts of social conventions (Turiel, 1983). It has helped us appreciate the extent to which children 'systematically discriminate among different social issues' and among different social authorities (Wainryb & Turiel, 1993, p. 210). It has made it clear that education for moral development, like any good education, requires 'informed analysis, intellectual scrutiny, self-correction, criticism and reflection' (Wainryb & Turiel, 1993, p. 215).

In an effort to counterbalance the emphasis on cognition in moral development, Hoffman (1983, 1989, 1991) seeks to understand motivational processes by studying the role of empathy in motivating an orientation to justice. In his study of the development of levels of empathy as a synthesis of affect and cognition and of the role of parenting practices of optimal moral induction in the formation of 'hot cognitions' and in the development of moral self-attribution in the young individual, he combines the Piagetian emphasis on progressive internal constructions with the idea of socialization in the tradition of Comte, Freud, Durkheim and Levi-Strauss. This author has drawn extensively on Hoffman's approach, which seeks to balance the role of affect and cognition, and is consistent with the findings of neurobiology regarding the importance of feelings in decision-making (Damasio, 1999). Gibbs (1991) takes even further the argument about the complementarity of justice and empathy as 'equally primary and mutually irreducible sources of moral motivation' (p. 97).

Despite the helpfulness of these arguments, however, this paper adopts a broader and more independent treatment of the capacity of love. Such a treatment is actually

implied, but not fully developed, in Gibbs's (2003) examination of near-death experiences as expressions of deep human interconnectedness, which point to significant implications for the theory and practice of moral development.

This author understands the human faculty of love as 'an active force of attraction to beauty, unity, and growth' (Danesh, 1994, p. 67). This spiritual force of attraction varies greatly in the degrees of its manifestation. It can be amplified to produce inspiration and to generate creative activity and even to awaken the full awareness of interdependence, as in near-death and other religious experiences, or it can be overlaid. In addition, the quality of love is closely related to the nature of the object of love, as can be seen when we examine humanity's continuing love affair with war (Danesh, 1994). People exhibiting critical consciousness stand out as creative agents in their communities, forces of attraction that seem to draw out the best in others. The quality of their love is notably more all-embracing and is manifested in a deep compassion for the human condition.

Therefore, the approach this researcher has taken gives independent legitimacy to the power of love as an innate spiritual force of attraction, including, but larger than, empathy. The kind of optimal parenting practices that Hoffman describes would create what Fowler (1981) calls an 'ethos of goodness', which Fowler considers at the core of spiritual development. Such practices will, no doubt, amplify the power of love, and will direct it toward the cultivation of a love for the idea of justice, which Bembow (1994) describes in her study of activists as a 'generative motivational source' (p.164), their tendency, even as children, to gravitate toward what they perceive as true and good. As adults they recollect this attraction to core moral values or instincts having been with them from a very early age. In many cases this moral impulse led them to decisions that put them in conflict even with their early family environments, with which they otherwise largely identified. While these children appear to have been affiliated to their families' 'ethos of goodness', they also show a consistent tendency to transcend that ethos in defining moments, at an age at which it is not reasonable to assume post-conventional principled reasoning (see Gandhi, 1927; Bembow, 1994). Their life stories, however, reveal that the 'ethos of goodness' of their early environments had amplified and cultivated in them the power of love and had transformed it into an independent passion for justice.

The discussion about the spiritual roots of moral motivation would not be complete without defining the third human faculty, will. This researcher understands it as 'our freedom to choose between good and evil, between action and inaction, and to determine the direction and quality of our lives' (Danesh, 1994, pp. 70–71) and, hence, as a much broader phenomenon than agency. Contemporary thought reveals a significant tension between, on the one hand, the tendency in psychology to reject the primacy of the role of will and to place much greater importance on forces beyond the reach of volition, such as childhood experiences or drives, and, on the other hand, the philosophical tendency to absolutize free will. A spiritual approach to moral motivation recognizes the role of free will, as well as its contextual qualifications subject to socio-historical factors and personal life history.

Overall, the human spirit can be understood as 'a conscious intentionality,

dynamic, open-ended, and self-transcending' (Helminiak, 1998, p.13). In contrast, the psyche is the realm of memory, images and emotions, of habitual behaviour and personality, a phenomenon we share with animals. Yet the human psyche is unique in that it is 'enspirited', since the human spirit 'subsumes psyche and organism into the train of its dynamic unfolding' (Helminiak, 1996, p. 141). Spirit is 'determined by self-awareness and experiences of spontaneous questions, marvel, wonder, and dynamism open to all there is to be known and loved' (Helminiak, 1998, p. 11). Hence, spirit is the ultimate organizing principle in human experience, and spiritually oriented environments are environments that recognize this ultimate organizing principle and engage it deliberately along different dimensions of human capacity, such as knowledge, love and the exercise of will.

In human life, spirit does not exist apart from the body and the psyche, but manifests itself through both, providing the context and meaning of the images of the psyche and the sensations of the body. Hence, engaging the human spirit in life happens through emphasizing certain central aspects of existence. This author's research has established, across a range of cultural and historical contexts, that authentic, spiritually oriented environments amplify the human spiritual potential by engaging it in ongoing reflection and reconstructions along four central themes or dimensions of existence: (i) identity; (ii) relationships with external moral authority and the emerging sense of internal moral authority, responsibility and agency; (iii) empathic concerns with others, with justice and caring; (iv) concerns with the meaning of life. These four themes are conceptualized as motivational dimensions, represented in Table 2. Each and all of these motivational dimensions are seen as expressing the operation of all three human spiritual faculties: knowledge, love and will.

Every person negotiates to some degree their energy for life and core yearning toward truth, beauty and goodness along the above four motivational dimensions, and each of these dimensions involve, but are not limited to, the evolution of moral reasoning. The ongoing negotiation of this core yearning may happen unconsciously, sporadically and with many distractions, in the course of which the core yearning may become progressively overlaid by fear and the overall motivation of the person may become predominantly instrumental and expedient (i.e. avoiding discomfort). Or these dimensions may be much more consciously and purposefully negotiated in the context of morally/spiritually oriented formative environments, in which case the person's overall motivation becomes predominantly or exclusively guided by moral concerns. In that sense, each dimension represents a continuum between moral and expediency motivation (see Table 2). When morally coloured, these dimensions can be statically described as follows:

1. Moral identity, anchored in universal moral values and moral character, predominates over, and mediates, the sense of identity derived from various social configurations, such as class, race, gender, ethnic or other group membership. Identity, rooted in moral models and concepts, however simply understood,

Table 2. Template of the continuum between moral and expediency motivation

Dimension	Expediency motivation	Moral motivation
1. Identity	Identity predominantly rooted in social conventions (social identity) & lack of moral imperative	Identity predominantly rooted in moral values (moral identity) & moral imperative
2. Authority, responsibility & agency	Limited personal authority & responsibility; lack of agency (fear, helplessness, scepticism in the face of external authority)	Personal moral authority & critical discernment of external authority; expanding sense of moral responsibility; moral agency
3. Relationships	Lack of empathy, alienation, impermeability, lack of concerns with justice & not hurting	Empathy, relatedness, permeability, concerns with justice & not hurting
4. Meaning of life	Self-referential frames of reference & limited goals	Larger frames of reference as vantage point for critical discernment & self-reflection; life purpose greater than self

is the source of a moral imperative, i.e. an inner need to do the morally right thing. Moral imperative is stronger than self-interest and strengthens and expands in the course of life, leading to the progressive integration of self and morality.

2. External moral authority in significant others is first intuitively and then increasingly rationally scrutinized, as the individual constructs their understanding of authentic moral authority. With the growing critical discernment of, and receptiveness to, authentic moral authority, it is progressively internalized as personal moral responsibility. This process is accompanied by the emerging sense of internal moral authority and the tendency to reconstruct continuously internalized personal moral responsibility. A sense of moral agency develops, which prevails over the tendency to experience oneself as the victim of circumstances.
3. Experiencing oneself in relationships, rather than just in contact with others, fosters empathic concerns with others, with good and bad, with being loyal and not hurting. With role taking opportunities, these concerns gradually expand beyond interpersonal relationships into larger social concerns with justice and equity.
4. The tendency to ask and value questions regarding the meaning of life and the lifelong search for authentic meaning is amplified by explicitly or implicitly spiritual environments, with faith in the wisdom of life and acceptance of the responsibility it imposes. The search for truth provides a larger frame of reference from which to reflect on self and experience and spurs intense self-reflection and critical examination of reality, expanding toward principled, philosophical, historical and global vision.

Table 2 presents the motivational template this author has developed of the continuum between moral and expediency motivation. Moral motivation, understood this way, involves what Bishop Desmond Tutu refers to as ‘the opportunity to fulfil one’s ‘human and spiritual potential’ (Colby & Damon, 1992, p. xii).

This proposal is consonant with other efforts to conceptualize a more integrated understanding of moral development, which focus on the study of the formation of moral identity (Blasi, 1995; Hart *et al.*, 1998). In attempting to answer the question ‘how morality comes to be an integral part of the structure of our personality’, Blasi (1995, p. 229) studies the processes through which moral understanding is progressively integrated into one’s motivational system and in some people becomes central to their sense of identity. Similarly, Hart *et al.* (1998) define moral identity as ‘a self-consistent commitment to lines of action benefiting others’ (p. 513) and propose a model of moral identity development, which they see as irreducible to personality traits linked to prosocial behaviour.

The central distinction between these bodies of work and the proposed model is in the effort of this research to grasp the very quality and dialectic of mature moral consciousness, founded on the bedrock of a solid and integrated sense of moral identity and a moral understanding of the interdependent nature of life. This moral consciousness also possesses a critical historical capacity to differentiate authentic moral authority from other dominant forms of authority and to engage its socio-historic reality through the harmonious and full development and interconnected operation of high levels of knowledge, love and will.

### **From a moral yearning to critical moral consciousness**

As already pointed out, central to the transformation of the inherent moral yearning toward truth, beauty and goodness into critical moral consciousness are authentically moral environments, which recognize spirit as the ultimate organizing principle of life and human development and engage it deliberately. While there have been critically conscious people in every age and chapter of human history, modernity has both unleashed that capacity for authenticity in the vast majority of people, through the democratization of education and public life, and has also trapped it in a new brand of misunderstandings, which Taylor (1991) describes as ‘soft relativism’.

Relativism is an offshoot of a kind of individualism, which has lost the heroic dimension of life and its broader vision, having focused primarily on individual comfort and instrumental purpose. It assumes that

Everyone has the right to develop their own form of life, grounded on their own sense of what is really important or of value. People are called upon to be true to themselves and to seek their own self-fulfillment. What this consists of, each must, in the last instance, determine for him- or herself. No one else can or should try to dictate its content . . . . This individualism involves a centering on the self and a concomitant shutting out, or even unawareness, of the greater issues or concerns that transcend the self, be they religious, political, historical. (p. 14)

While it is important to recognize that ‘each of us has an original way of being human’ (Taylor, 1991, p. 28) and to honour the fact that ‘morality has ... a voice within’ (p. 26), soft relativism is a profound mistake because life is fundamentally dialogical and we cannot define an identity without relating it to larger horizons of significance. The slide of the contemporary culture of authenticity toward soft relativism that Taylor describes adopts a subjectivist assumption about value, namely that

Things have significance not of themselves but because people deem them to have it—as though people could determine what is significant, either by decision, or perhaps unwittingly and unwillingly by just feeling that way. ... Things take on importance against a background of intelligibility. ... Authenticity can’t be defended in ways that collapse horizons of significance. ... Unless some options are more significant than others, the very idea of self-choice falls into triviality and hence incoherence. ... To shut out demands emanating beyond the self is precisely to suppress the conditions of significance, and hence to court trivialization. (Taylor, 1991, pp. 36–40)

In contrast to this general cultural swing, environments that foster critical moral consciousness are characterized by an explicit orientation to values greater than the self, as captured in the four moral motivational dimensions discussed above. They both foster the authentic quest of individuals and challenge them to keep aligning themselves to horizons of greater significance through the combined exercise of knowledge, love and will. As a result, individuals who exhibit critical moral consciousness are uniquely authentic individuals.

The development of critical moral consciousness unfolds through three large periods in the lifespan: pre-critical consciousness, transitional critical consciousness and mature critical moral consciousness. Pre-critical consciousness begins in early childhood and is ideally completed by adolescence, when the foundation for moral motivation is formed and the structural conditions for transitional critical consciousness are achieved. The task of this period is to recognize and amplify the spiritual yearnings of the child toward truth, beauty and goodness by exposing them to moral discourse as an organizer of experience and cultivating in them a general moral orientation to life, stimulating moral interest and a preoccupation with questions regarding authentic moral authority and moral responsibility, as well as by exposing them to a range of lived examples of uprightness, moral earnestness and idealism and cultivating a sense of relatedness. Such environments foster the inherent truthfulness, permeability to and fascination with authenticity characteristic of the naive consciousness (Wade, 1996) of the impressionable young child. The presence of explicit moral values in a child’s environment, of moral induction practices coupled with optimal empathic arousal, which allow moral self-attribution to occur (Hoffman, 1991) and significant and authoritative moral voices to be internalized are all important conditions. With the advent of adolescence and the negotiation of egocentric and then early conformist consciousness (Wade, 1996), the first signs of personal moral authority of the young person are found in ‘structured self-identification through the member role and intra-group relationships’ (Wade, 1996, p. 119).

Daloz *et al.* (1996) identified some important characteristics of early environments, which successfully fostered the above process: (a) a home with open doors which provides glimpses into the larger socio-political world; (b) a public parent; (c) exposure to and learning to discern justice and injustice; (d) the gradual expanding of the meaning of 'home' to include increasingly more encompassing spheres of trust and agency, and so on (pp. 28–37). While families are of central importance here, it is clear that schools can have a significant influence in ensuring that the young person's growing sense of self becomes grounded in a sense of their own noble spiritual nature and of the importance of their choices. Therefore, the central educationally relevant tension of this period is the need to facilitate the dominance of a moral sense of identity over other, more limited forms of psychosocial identity and of moral imperative and normative concerns over self-interest and pragmatic concerns (see Table 2).

As the developing cognitive structures of the young mind are engaged in this type of challenging dialogue with life, the young person is likely to reach the cognitive threshold for transitional critical consciousness without cognitive developmental arrests. This structural threshold constitutes at least an early formal operational ability for a consistent analysis of causality (see Commons & Rodriguez, 1990), conventional social system and conscience orientation toward duty and responsibility to a larger human group than one's immediate circle (Kohlberg, 1984), early pattern self-knowledge and its accompanying ability for some self-reflection (see Weinstein & Alschuler, 1985) and an institutional internal organization of the self, able to differentiate personal goals and to articulate a coherent philosophy (Kegan, 1982; Lahey *et al.*, 1988). At that point, with the advent of formal operational thought, the young person enters the period of transitional critical consciousness.

Having developed the foundation of moral motivation, a moral sense of identity and moral imperative, the young person becomes engaged in expanding circles of the social world and deepens the negotiating of the second and the third dimensions of moral motivation, moral agency and engagement in increasingly conscious relatedness on every level. The youth negotiates the consecutive themes of expanding moral and social responsibility and socio-political consciousness (see Table 3). Here, the theme of service to a larger human family (see Table 1) is a wonderful context for the idealistic young person to channel their energies and experience social-cognitive challenge and growth. This period also increasingly manifests the fourth dimension of moral motivation, a defining concern with the meaning of life and with finding larger frames of reference than the self. It is marked by a growing critical discernment and the growing ability to problematize various aspects of human reality. However, it still manifests a significant tension between mind and heart, between various emotions and the moral sense of identity (Blasi, 1995) and a limited capacity for critical reflection and internal contradictions, linked to the absence of systemic reasoning. The central educationally relevant tensions of this period derive from the need to facilitate the dominance of a moral sense of responsibility and agency over fear, helplessness and scepticism; empathy, relatedness and permeability to meaningful social relationships over self-protective compartmentalization, closedness and preju-

Table 3. Successive ascendance of content themes in the evolution of CC

Ascendance of tasks (themes)			
			Historical and global vision
			Philosophical expansion
		Principled vision	
		Sociopolitical consciousness	
		Expanded moral and social responsibility	
	Moral responsibility		
	Moral authority		
Moral interest			
Pre-CC	Transitional CC	CC	Lifespan development

dice; larger frames of reference, critical discernment, self-reflection and a larger life purpose over compartmentalizing contradiction, negative criticism and short-term, pragmatic and self-referential goals (see Table 2).

With the advent of systematic reasoning (see Commons & Rodriguez, 1990) and the movement beyond the institutional self (Kegan, 1982; Lahey *et al.*, 1988), the individual opens up to a more thorough and consistent examination of both self and world from principled moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1984), developing mature critical consciousness. It is important to recognize that this emerging mature moral consciousness is a much more comprehensive phenomenon than the epistemological self/other constructions which Kegan describes as the movement toward the interindividual self. Not only does this level achieve the full structural capacity to deconstruct and problematize both its own ideology and socio-historic reality, but it is highly agentic, moved by the deepening synergy of knowledge, love and will. This deepening synergy between moral motivation and critical systemic thought elaborates

the psychosocial themes of principled vision, philosophical expansion and historical and global vision.

This ontogenesis of critical moral consciousness can be represented as a cluster of chronologically ascending psychosocial themes or tasks (see Table 3). Through the negotiation of these themes, there emerges a progressively more wholesome relationship between knowing and being, mind and heart, centred round a caring, increasingly interconnected, justice and equity-oriented view of life. With the structural developmental movement toward greater differentiation and complexity, people engage increasingly in a critical dialogue with themselves and their socio-cultural world, have empathy toward fellow human beings in the larger social world and integrate their social experience. This constitutes a developmental movement towards greater openness to and engagement with the world.

### **The role of education**

The construct of optimal moral consciousness, understood as a consciousness that brings systemic thought and an engaged dialogical relationship to reality from a place of unity of mind and heart, of integration of high levels of knowledge, love and will, provides a normative framework for rethinking education. It allows us to examine the strengths and limitations of current educational models in the historical context of an emerging global society and to explore possibilities for a new level of educational integration which can meet the challenges of our world.

This proposal for the re-envisioning of education addresses the issue on a paradigmatic level. Comprehensive suggestions for strategies of implementation across the curriculum would have to be the focus of a separate discussion, since a premature rush for piecemeal problem-solving may end up obscuring the main point of this proposal, namely that it is our philosophy of education and concept of a human being and of optimal development that have to be rethought in order for substantive educational change beyond specific palliative measures to take place.

The main question which the last part of this paper begins to address is: What kind of overall educational shift would constitute an adequate collective response to the developmental readiness of people in the 21st century to be educated toward critical moral consciousness? How can diverse cultures and historical contexts incorporate into their public education across the curriculum a consistent understanding of the dimensions of optimal human consciousness?

If empowered, resilient moral consciousness is a function of the extent to which the individual's spiritual capacities to know, to love and to exercise free will are fully awakened and harmoniously developed and such consciousness cannot be reduced to any single dimension, be it moral reasoning, character or values, critical discernment, caring, social responsibility or agency, the question is to what extent does education, as we know it, cultivate harmoniously knowledge, love and will? To what extent does it not only develop the rational capacity but also cultivate sincerity and earnestness, moral passion and self-reflection, the power of the heart to be attracted to beauty, truth and goodness and the willingness to act accordingly while continuing to rethink

one's understanding of beauty, truth and goodness? A serious consideration of this question reveals that dominant educational paradigms do not explicitly recognize as an educational goal the cultivation of the spiritual powers of the heart in harmony with the cultivation of minds, but define a much narrower rationalistic focus, the heritage of the materialism of the Enlightenment. To the extent that good education happens, it is the result of often unappreciated individual educators going far above and beyond their defined goals and objectives and setting out to cultivate hearts through love and personal example. With industrialization, the main purpose of education has evolved into something much different from developing human potential. The focus is on the developing of skills relevant to national economic and social goals.

With this reality in mind, the last section of this paper proposes five comprehensive goals for education, consistent with the theoretical and empirical understanding of optimal moral consciousness discussed above. Some of these, such as character education, can already be discerned in recent educational trends. However, we have yet to recognize the interdependence of these five comprehensive goals and the need to implement them as a whole across the curriculum, rather than as separate subject areas, thus reorienting the whole focus of education.

### **Cultivating heart**

Critical consciousness is a precarious balance between mind and heart, where each serves as a corrective to the other, as a result of which the faculties of love, knowledge and will function in relative unity. The heart has a deep capacity to discern, be attracted to and be moved by beauty, truth and goodness. This capacity is referred to in ancient Pali as the love-knowledge of the heart, or *cita*, translated as 'heart-mind' or the seat of ultimate understanding. But that capacity is feeble until strengthened by the relentless critical examination of an ever stronger rational mind. The mind, on the other hand, can easily become locked in circular self-referential reasoning without the corrective of a heart aware of, attracted to and moved by its spiritual source.

Since the Enlightenment, humanity has sought to separate the attachments of the heart from all pursuits after truth, training the mind to be more rigorous. Freed from the superstitions of the past, we now have to reclaim the heart's deeper knowing and capacity for love and will, because the mind in isolation from the greater spiritual yearnings of the heart has proven not much more reliable a tool than the heart divorced from the scrutiny of a disciplined mind.

The study of lives (Mustakova-Possardt, 1996, 2003) has shown that significant vicissitudes of character, motivation and intellect point ultimately to people's exercise of free will. These different choices are, in essence, differences in the strength of the heart to be sincere and to follow its best understanding. This strength of the heart is fostered by the cultivation of love for truth, beauty and goodness. This love is the missing link that brings together moral reasoning and critical discernment with moral values, character, responsibility and compassion into a qualitatively different consciousness, empowered, resilient and authentically moral.

Empowered moral consciousness is not guided by fear and its by-products,

prejudice, rationalizations, scepticism and hostility. It understands and transcends its fears, because the spiritual yearning for truth, beauty and goodness has been amplified to such an extent that the love-knowledge and attraction of the heart and the understanding of the mind have entered into synergy. Through this dialectic of heart and mind, critically conscious people continuously face, understand and redefine fear as an inescapable part of the human condition, while they are moved by expanding circles of love. Their powers to know and to act are fully released. They are what Freire (1973) calls 'subjects of history'.

This finding converges with the conclusion of the study by Daloz *et al.* (1996) of 100 lives of 'sustained commitment to the common good in the face of global complexity' (p. 244) that 'committed lives have a heart—not mere sentimentality, but rather the strength and grace of a seeing heart that, joined with an open and informed mind, can apprehend reality in a manner that seeks not to deny but rather to engage central challenges of the twenty-first century' (p. 131).

Recently, there have been at least two other proposals which speak to the need to reorient education towards the cultivation of hearts. One is Vokey's (1997) dissertation entitled *Reasons of the heart: education for critical dialogue in a pluralistic world*. Another is Lewis' (2000) article *Spiritual education as the cultivation of qualities of heart and mind*.

Vokey's work constitutes an impressive effort to establish a non-foundational justification for a wide reflective equilibrium beyond intellectual bias in psychology. Vokey (1997) points out that this intellectual bias, 'firmly rooted in Hellenic dualism' and 'a persistent feature of mainstream Western culture' (p. 159), leaves out several important questions. The first question is 'what is perception', and 'how do we come to see things as they are, the varieties of ways in which we may fail, the varieties of causes of failure, and the kind of discipline that can overcome these obstacles'. The second question is 'how does habit educate the passions'. The third question is 'how can we know which actions to perform in order to educate the passions' (pp. 159–161). Drawing on Buddhist psychology, Vokey describes our capacity for 'unconditioned awareness or wakefulness' as our basic nature (p. 196) and a potential foundation for holistic psychology.

Lewis's (2000) discussion of the possibilities for synthesis between psychological and spiritual understanding builds further on these ideas, drawing on significant work in cognitive psychology (Sternberg and Wagner, 1986; Donaldson, 1992; Sternberg, 1992; Bohm, 1994; Claxton, 1994, 1997; Sternberg and Davidson, 1995). Lewis' (2000) main premise is the need for a holistic spiritual approach to the human being, which cultivates qualities of both mind and heart and is supported by excellent examples of what that can begin to look like in education.

The rethinking of education along an explicit orientation to cultivating hearts as well as minds across the curriculum need not remain an abstraction. The four dimensions of moral motivation allow operationalizing such re-envisioning of education in terms of its influence during the formative periods of critical moral consciousness, pre-critical consciousness and transitional critical consciousness.

The four dimensions of moral motivation can serve as overarching interdisciplinary

objectives. The first dimension, the formation of a moral sense of identity and moral imperative, needs to be particularly emphasized in elementary and middle school, the period of pre-critical consciousness. The other three dimensions need to become progressively more central in middle and high school, as well as in continuing education, i.e. in the period of transitional critical consciousness. Below are some initial suggestions on how public education can foster moral motivation in concord with developing more sophisticated structures of reasoning.

*Cultivating a moral and spiritual sense of identity*

Nothing seems to have been a more powerful influence in the lives of critically conscious people than their realization of their own essentially spiritual nature, which they struggled to express throughout their lives. Hence, education has to *see* children as inherently noble spiritual beings and to cultivate in all children a sense of their inner nobility. It has to help both parents and teachers overcome the pervasive current materialistic assumptions about human nature as basically instinctual and selfish and begin to appreciate, recognize and foster the inherent spiritual strivings of children toward truth, beauty and goodness, which have been recently compellingly described in Hart's (2003) study of children's spirituality. Education has to re-examine its ontological assumptions about the nature of reality, the nature of life and the nature of a human being. As Daloz *et al.* (1996) conclude, we need to examine the images and symbols which 'elicit and instill the strength and grace that characterize the quality of citizenship needed in the twenty-first century' (p. 131); because 'the quality of a society is dependent upon the strength of its imagination of the world and the meaning of citizenship within it' (p. 133).

This opening up of education has to begin with the recognition of the spiritual nature of life and of human spiritual potential. As Lewis (2000) points out, spirituality should be seen as a characteristic of all phenomena, since the psychological fact of spiritual experience is not limited to any particular domain. People have the capacity to experience feelings of awe and wonder, gratitude, transcendence, unity and wholeness, love and serenity across content areas and it is this human sensibility that needs to be fostered and enriched through education across the curriculum. In this sense, 'the moral, aesthetic, religious or just simply educational all include, not exclude or oppose the spiritual' (Lewis, 2000, p. 4). Lewis proposes a spiritual education across the curriculum as a fundamental orientation to coming to know ourselves and to understanding our relations with all things.

Children are naturally spiritual, but they do not know it, and they also have other inclinations as the ego develops. They need us to articulate for them their basic spiritual strivings, so that they can learn to identify them consciously and develop a moral and spiritual sense of identity. Their inherent moral sense needs to be continuously drawn forth through discussion and living examples of virtues, such as patience, trustworthiness, kindness, justice, mercy, generosity, courtesy, respect, purity, love and so on (Popov *et al.*, 1995). Discovering these capacities and learning to develop these potentialities in themselves is tremendously empowering to children.

So is observing and reading about these capacities in others in compilations such as Taafaki's (1986) collections of folk stories and world spiritual teachings. Spiritual self-understanding naturally leads to a striving to develop spiritual qualities of character.

When people recognize their own spiritual nature, they are freed from the inner oppression of having to identify primarily with transient and questionable social configurations and to struggle to build a sense of identity in fear, anxiety and social competition. Their socialization becomes mediated by universal ideals of love, mercy, kindness, service, generosity and justice (Noguchi *et al.*, 1992). In adolescence these ideals provide a buffer of critical discernment, high personal standards and resilience.

Along with fostering a child's sense of spiritual identity, educators need to foster the progressive recognition of the oneness of the human family and the affective capacity of children to embrace the human race (Rutstein, 1999). A range of United Nations Children's Fund publications (see Kindersley & Kindersley, 1995), as well as US initiatives (Southern Poverty Law Centre Teaching Tolerance Project), offer rich and creative materials on the oneness of the human family that could become more fully incorporated into school curricula.

#### *Cultivating a sense of authentic personal authority, responsibility, and agency*

The development of discernment of, and respect for, authentic moral authority in others and the gradual evolving of personal moral authority and responsibility are dependent upon the presence of examples of authentic moral authority in one's life. Yet, with the disintegration of the fabric of family and community life in relatively alienated western societies and with the global reality of Social Breakdown Syndrome (Lambo, 2000), most of the people in the current author's research (Mustakova-Possardt, 1996, 2003) proved to have had few such figures in their immediate environments.

The lack of models of authentic moral authority has become particularly prominent in educational environments, where there is a growing recognition of 'the disparity between intellect and character' (Coles, 1995). The educational debate has become a battleground between liberals and conservatives, between self-righteous and moralistic pseudo-religious authorities and alienated and ideological secular intellectual authorities. However, a spiritual approach can integrate the best of traditional character-building values with the best democratic ideals of the progressive movement.

Education cannot fulfil its purpose of 'educare' (in Latin, to draw out the human potential) if the living examples of the most transformative figures in human history, humanity's spiritual and moral leaders, are not integral to the content it teaches. While such content needs to be central to the study of literature, religion and history, the focus on outstanding examples of the human spirit from all cultures and historic periods can enrich the current approach in all the sciences and social sciences. Engaging young people in an ongoing dialogue with authentic exemplars of the human spirit is a powerful way to help them recognize and develop their own moral authority, responsibility and agency.

*Cultivating relatedness on all levels*

Developing an understanding of what it means to be in a relationship with the world is the focal point of any authentic spiritual education. As Noguchi *et al.* (1992) point out, in our age of transition relationships have become corrupted and even rendered meaningless.

The development of the moral structures of a new age implies a profound change in the conception of essential relationships: between man and nature, among individuals and groups, within the family, and between the individual and social institutions. ... Fundamental to the re-conceptualization of these relationships is awareness of the spiritual aspects of social structures and relationships. (p. 8)

Relatedness needs to be taught along every dimension of living. Below are some examples.

*Relationship with nature.* Environmentally sustainable education is practically non-existent in the public school system and is still viewed as peripheral to the central concerns of society. Yet, the emerging field of ecopsychology has shown that children's growing alienation from the natural world and primary attraction to technological artifacts, as well as adults' greedy and exploitative attitudes, have become the source of much psychological disorder. Education needs to cultivate, on all educational levels, an understanding of the interdependence of all forms of life on this planet and a new sense of 'the responsibility to conserve and use rationally the earth's resources' (Noguchi *et al.*, 1992, p. 9). Such education needs to examine 'the very goals and structures according to which society has been organized. Endless acquisition of material goods impelled by individual and collective greed can only aggravate the destruction of the environment' (Noguchi *et al.*, 1992, p. 9).

*Relationships between individuals and groups.* As Noguchi *et al.* (1992) point out, 'just as establishing a healthy relationship between humanity and the environment requires a cultivation of attitudes of humility rather than pride, serenity rather than greed and interconnectedness rather than exploitation, the relationships among individuals and groups can also be set on a more mature footing through attention to the spiritual characteristics of the social order. At present, most societies are pervaded by relations of dominance' (p. 10). Alternative and very specific proposals have begun to emerge as to what processes are involved in the cultivation of authentic relationships, based on grace rather than force, on both the individual and collective levels (Hatcher, 1998; Penn, 2003).

Service has to become a central and genuinely meaningful component of education, rather than a formal and peripheral requirement, so that it can open up for young people realistic opportunities to find 'where the heart's deep gladness meets the world's deep hunger' (Daloz *et al.*, 1996, pp. 196–197). For service to become a truly meaningful component, education needs to overcome the current fractured view of

the structure of humanity (Rutstein, 1999) and to cultivate true understanding of the oneness of the human race. As young people internalize the idea of the Earth being one country, they find themselves inspired by a new sense of initiative and ownership.

*Relationships between the individual and social institutions.* Education can help bridge the gap between individualistic distrust of social institutions as curtailing individual freedom and excessively collectivist tendencies. Since there are socio-cultural examples of the limitations of both, education needs to take a dialectical historical view and help individuals become more aware of their particular socio-cultural conditioning and of the possibility of a balanced middle ground. Here again, the concepts of human freedom and of human nature, as well as of the nature and purpose of institutions, need to be profoundly re-examined.

*Cultivating a conversation on the meaning of life*

Education for critical moral consciousness has to teach a greater, self-transcending purpose in life, which helps the growth, transformation and well-being of the individual and society (Noguchi *et al.*, 1992). Authentic spiritualized education does that by fostering the independent and interdependent investigation of truth and reality. What does that mean?

Education needs to cultivate faith in the ultimate meaningfulness of life and in our capacity to respond to life fully and completely, with both hearts and minds. In order not to confuse that with teaching religious beliefs, it is important to remember the distinction Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1998) draws between the two: 'Faith ... [is] that human quality that has been expressed in, has been elicited, nurtured, and shaped by, the religious traditions of the world ... Faith ... precedes and transcends the tradition, and in turn sustains it.' (pp. 5–6).

Education cannot teach religious beliefs, except as comparative religion, which needs to be part of the basic curriculum. But education can foster faith. In a nurturing and strengthening educational environment in which young people learn that humanity has forever been sustained by its capacity for faith in life and are exposed to rich examples of that from the history of world religions, young people can do their own independent and interdependent investigation of truth and find beliefs and traditions that can sustain them in their life journey. As Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1998) points out, 'Faith is a quality of human living. At its best it has taken the form of serenity and courage and loyalty and service: quiet confidence and joy which enable one to feel at home in the universe, and to find meaning in the world and in one's own life, a meaning that is profound and ultimate, and is stable no matter what may happen to oneself at the level of immediate events' (p. 12). As studies of lives show, people who have faith have a remarkable capacity to rise to the challenges of living with dignity, resilience and an ever expanding sense of responsibility.

In addition to comparative religion, education needs to incorporate the significant

new content area of global ethic discourse (Swindler, 1999). This area has the potential to support, in significant and unexplored ways, the cultivation of faith across the curriculum.

The spiritual re-envisioning of education currently faces a great challenge: to transcend the collective paralysis of relativistic, Stage 4/5 thinking (Lahey *et al.*, 1988; Taylor, 1991; Prilleltensky, 1997) and to integrate the best understanding gained through post-modern thought into an explicitly moral vision of human potential and a commitment to that vision. Without a collective evolution beyond relativism, into commitment in relativity, even our greatest achievements and most honest efforts are tinged with bitterness, if not cynicism, and we are left estranged from our own powers. Until education focuses on the cultivation of character and the development of a moral sense of identity and moral imperative, until it begins to purposefully emphasize models of authentic moral authority and to foster moral responsibility and agency, until it makes central the cultivation of expanding levels of empathy, progressively embracing the human race and until it is willing to entertain an explicit spiritual conversation about truth and meaning in life, it cannot really fulfil its responsibility to human potential. The study of critical consciousness offers many possibilities for an in-depth interdisciplinary re-envisioning of holistic education across the curriculum.

## Note

1. The original Midlife Development in the United States (MIDUS) survey was based on a demographically representative sample of 6000 Americans in midlife (aged 35–60), selected by the MacArthur Foundation Research Program on Successful Midlife Development (MIDMAC). Colby and Damon's study of social responsibility was an in-depth follow-up study of a sub-sample of about 100, roughly half men and half women, residing in or around five urban areas throughout the country, namely Atlanta, Chicago, Boston, San Francisco and Phoenix. The Boston area interviews were carried out by this researcher and provided the sub-sample to explore optimal consciousness.

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