

In practice you can watch your adolescents graduating from one grouping to another, all the time widening the circle, all the time embracing new and more and more strange phenomena that society throws up. Parents are very much needed in the management of their own adolescent children who are exploring one social circle after another, because of their ability to see better than their children can when this progression from the limited social circle towards the unlimited social circle is too rapid, perhaps because of dangerous social elements in the immediate neighbourhood, or because of the defiance that belongs to puberty and to a rapid development in the sexual capacity. They are needed especially because of the instinct tensions and patterns that reappear and which were first laid down at the toddler age.

'Towards independence' describes the strivings of the toddler child and of the child at puberty. In the latency period children are usually contented with whatever dependence that they are lucky to be able to experience. Latency is the period of school playing a role as a substitute for home. This is not always true, but there is no place for a further development of this special theme here.

Adults must be expected to be continuing the process of growing and of growing up, since they do but seldom reach to full maturity. But once they have found a niche in society through work, and have perhaps married or have settled in some pattern that is a compromise between copying the parents and defiantly establishing a personal identity, once these developments have taken place, adult life can be said to have started, and the individuals one by one climb out of the area covered by this brief statement of growth in terms of dependence towards independence.

from: DW Winnicott,
The Maturational Processes and The
 Facilitating Environment (Hogarth 1965)

MORALS AND EDUCATION¹

(1963)

The title of my lecture gives me scope to develop the theme not so much of society that changes as of human nature that does not change. Human nature does not change. This is an idea that could be challenged. Nevertheless, I shall assume its truth, and build on this foundation. It is true that human nature evolved, just as human bodies and beings evolved, in the course of hundreds of thousands of years. But there is very little evidence that human nature has altered in the short span of recorded history; and comparable with this is the fact that what is true about human nature in London today is also true in Tokyo, in Accra, in Amsterdam and Timbuktoo. It is true for whites and blacks, for giants and pygmies, for the children of the Harwell or Cape Canaveral scientist and for the children of the Australian aboriginal.

Applied to the subject that is under discussion (moral education today) this means that there is an area for study that may be called the capacity of the human child to be morally educated. What I am referring to in this lecture is limited to this area, the human child's development of a capacity for having a moral sense, for experiencing a sense of guilt and for the setting up of an ideal. Analogous would be an attempt to get behind such an idea as 'belief in God' to the idea of 'belief', or (as I would prefer to say) 'belief in'. To a child who develops 'belief in' can be handed the god of the household or of the society that happens to be his. But to a child with no 'belief in', god is at best a pedagogue's gimmick, and at worst a piece of evidence for the child that the parent-figures are lacking in confidence in the processes of human nature and are frightened of the unknown.

Professor Niblett in the opening lecture of this series referred to the headmaster Keate who said to a child: 'You will believe in the Holy Ghost by 5 o'clock this afternoon or I will beat you till you do,' and in this way Professor Niblett led on to the idea of the futility of teaching values or religion by force. I am trying to

¹ Lecture given in a series at University of London Institute of Education, 1962, and first published (under the title 'The Young Child at Home and at School') in *Moral Education in a Changing Society*, ed. W. R. Niblett. (London: Faber, 1963.)

open up this important theme and to examine the alternatives. My main point is that there does exist a good alternative, and that this good alternative is not to be found in a more and more subtle teaching of religion. The good alternative has to do with the provision of those conditions for the infant and child that enable such things as trust and 'belief in', and ideas of right and wrong, to develop out of the working of the individual child's inner processes. This could be called the evolution of a personal superego.

Religions have made much of original sin, but have not all come round to the idea of original goodness, that which by being gathered together in the idea of God is at the same time separated off from the individuals who collectively create and re-create this God concept. The saying that man made God in his own image is usually treated as an amusing example of the perverse, but the truth in this saying could be made more evident by a restatement, such as: man continues to create and re-create God as a place to put that which is good in himself, and which he might spoil if he kept it in himself along with all the hate and destructiveness which is also to be found there.

Religion (or is it theology?) has stolen the good from the developing individual child, and has then set up an artificial scheme for injecting this that has been stolen back into the child, and has called it 'moral education'. Actually moral education does not work unless the infant or child has developed in himself or herself by natural developmental process the stuff that, when it is placed up in the sky, is given the name God. The moral educator depends for success on there being that development in the individual child that enables the child to accept this God of the moral educator as a projection of the goodness that is part of the child and of his actual experience of life.

We are reduced in practice, therefore, whatever our theological system, to a dependence in the case of each new child on the way the child is being or has been enabled to make the grade developmentally. Has the child been able to pass, so to speak, his or her entrance examination in moral sense; or to acquire this thing that I am calling *belief in*? I cling to this ugly, incomplete phrase, *belief in*. In order to complete that which has been started up, someone must let the child know what we in this family and in this bit of society at the present time happen to believe in. But this completing process is of secondary importance, because if 'belief in' has not been reached then the teaching of morals or religion is mere Keatean pedagogy, and is generally accepted as objectionable or ludicrous.

I feel dissatisfied with the idea that is often expressed by otherwise well-informed persons that Freud's mechanistic approach to psychology or his reliance on the theory of the evolution of men from animals interferes with the contribution psycho-analysis might make to religious thought. It might even turn out that religion could learn something from psycho-analysis, something that would save religious practice from losing its place in the civilization processes, and in the process of civilization. Theology, by denying to the developing individual the creating of whatever is bound up in the concept of God and of goodness and of moral values, depletes the individual of an important aspect of creativeness.

Surely Mrs Knight in the controversy of some years ago was not devaluing God by comparing God with Father Christmas; she was saying or trying to say that you can put some parts of a child into the witch of the fairy story, some of the child's belief and generosity can be handed out to Father Christmas, and all sorts of feelings and ideas of goodness that belong to the child and his or her inner and outer experiences can be put out there and labelled 'God'. In the same way, nastiness in the child can be called 'the devil and all his works'. The labelling socializes the otherwise personal phenomenon. Practising psycho-analysis for thirty years has made me feel that it is the ideas bound up with the organization of moral education that deplete the individual of individual creativeness.

There are reasons why the ideas of the moral educationalist die hard. An obvious one is that there do exist wicked people. In my language; this means that there are persons in all societies and in all ages who in their emotional development did not reach to a stage of believing in, nor did they reach a stage of innate morality involving the total personality. But moral education that is designed for these ill persons is unsuitable for the vast majority of persons who, in fact, are not ill in this respect. I shall refer to wicked people again later.

So far I have spoken as an amateur theologian, but I have been asked to speak as a professional child psychiatrist. To contribute usefully I must now be able to give a brief story of the emotional development of the human infant and child. You know of course that this is an extremely complex subject and a story that cannot be briefly told. There are many ways of approaching the subject of emotional growth and I shall attempt to use various methods.

The basis of child-development is the physical existence of the infant along with his or her inherited tendencies. These inherited

tendencies include the maturational drives to forward development. Let us say, an infant tends to use three words at one year and tends to walk by fourteen months or so, and tends to reach the same shape and height as one of the parents, and tends to be clever or stupid or moody or to have allergies. In more hidden ways there starts in the infant and continues in the child a tendency towards integration of the personality, the word integration tending to have a more and more complex meaning as time goes on and as the child gets older. Also the infant tends to live in his or her body and to build the self on a basis of bodily functioning to which belong imaginative elaborations that quickly become extremely complex and constitute the psychic reality specific to that infant. The infant becomes established as a unit, feels an I AM feeling, and bravely faces the world with which he or she is already becoming able to form relationships, affectionate relationships and (by contrast) a pattern of object-relationships based on the instinctual life. And so on. All this, and much much more, is true and always has been true of human infants. Here is human nature unfolding itself. BUT, and this but is a big one, maturational processes depend for their becoming actual in the child, and actual at the appropriate moments, on a good enough environmental provision.

This is the old argument of nature and nurture. I suggest that this problem is not incapable of statement. The parents do not have to make their baby as the artist has to make his picture or the potter his pot. The baby grows in his or her own way if the environment is good enough. Someone has referred to the good enough provision as 'the average expectable environment'. The fact is that throughout the centuries mothers, and parents, and parent-substitutes, have in fact usually provided exactly those conditions that the infant and small child do in fact need at the beginning, at the stage of their greatest dependence, and this continues even a little later when, as children, the infants are becoming somewhat separate from the environment and relatively independent. After this things tend to be not so good, but at the same time this fact matters less and less.

It will be noted that I am referring to an age at which verbal teaching does not apply. Neither Freud nor psycho-analysis was needed to tell mothers and parents how to provide these conditions. These conditions start with a high degree of adaptation on the part of the mother to the infant's needs, and gradually become a series of failures of adaptation; these failures are again a kind of adaptation because they are related to the growing need of the child for meeting reality and for achieving separation

and for the establishment of a personal identity. (Joy Adamson describes all this beautifully in terms of her upbringing of Elsa the lioness, and of the cubs who are now Forever Free.)

It seems that although most religions have tended to recognize the importance of family life it fell to psycho-analysis to point out to the mothers of babies and to the parents of the very young the value—no, the essential nature—of their tendency to provide for each infant that which each infant absolutely needs by way of nurture.

The mother (I do not exclude the father) adapts so well that it can only be said that she is closely identified with her baby, so that she knows what is needed at any one moment, and also in a general way. The infant, of course, is at this first and earliest stage in a state of mergence, not yet having separated out mother and 'not-me' objects from the 'me', so that what is adaptive or 'good' in the environment is building up in the infant's storehouse of experience as a self quality, indistinguishable at first (by the infant) from the infant's own healthy functioning.

At this early stage the infant does not register what is good or adaptive, but reacts to, and therefore knows about and registers each failure of reliability. Reacting to unreliability in the infant-care process constitutes a trauma, each reaction being an interruption of the infant's 'going-on-being' and a rupture of the infant's self.

To sum up this first stage of my simplified scheme for describing the developing human being: the infant and small child is usually cared for in a reliable way, and this being cared for well enough builds up in the infant to a belief in reliability; on to this a perception of the mother or father or grandmother or nurse can be added. To a child who has started life in this way the idea of goodness and of a reliable and personal parent or God can follow naturally.

The child who is not having good enough experiences in the early stages cannot be given the idea of a personal God as a substitute for infant-care. The vitally important subtle communicating of the infant-mother kind antedates the stage at which verbal communication can be added. This is a first principle of moral education, that *moral education is no substitute for love*. At the beginning love can only be expressed effectually in terms of infant- and child-care, which means for us the provision of a facilitating or good-enough environment, and which means for the infant a chance to evolve in a personal way according to the steady gradation of the maturational process.

How can I go on to develop this theme, taking into account the

rapidly increasing complexity of the individual child's inner reality and the expanding storehouse of the child's internal and external experiences remembered, or for economy forgotten?

At this point I must try to say something about the origin in the infant or small child of those elements which the words good and bad can describe and be apposite. It is not necessary of course that words should be offered at this stage, and indeed approval and disapproval can be conveyed to the deaf, and to infants at a stage long before verbal communication has begun. There do develop in the infant certain opposed feelings, apart altogether from the approval and disapproval which is conveyed to the child by the parent, and it is these that must be noted and perhaps tracked down to their source.

In the developing storehouse of personal memories and of the phenomena that constitute the inner psychic reality of the individual child there appear elements which are at first simply opposed. They may be called supportive and disruptive elements, or friendly and hostile elements, or benign and persecutory elements; these arise partly out of the infant's satisfactions and frustrations in the living experience, which includes excitements, and partly this build-up of positive and negative elements depends on the infant's capacity to avoid the pain of ambivalence by not joining up the objects that feel to be either good or bad.¹

I cannot avoid using the words good and bad here even though to do so defeats my own object, which is to describe phenomena prior to the use of words. The fact is that these important things that are going on in the developing infant and small child demand description in terms of good and bad.

All this is closely intertwined with the perception of maternal approval and disapproval, but here as everywhere the internal and personal factor is more important than the external or environmental factor, a precept which is at the very heart of my communication. If I am wrong in this respect then my thesis is faulty. If my thesis is faulty, then infants and small children do depend on having right and wrong injected into them. This means that parents must approve and disapprove instead of loving, and in fact they must be moral educators instead of parents. How they would hate this!

The child does need to meet with approval and disapproval, but parents on the whole find themselves waiting, refraining from showing approval and disapproval until they have found in their infant the elements of a sense of values and of good and bad and

¹ This primitive state of affairs becomes employed as a defence against the pain of ambivalence and is then called 'splitting' the object.

of right and wrong, that is, in the particular area of child-care which is significant at the moment.

It is now necessary to take a glimpse at the inner psychic reality of the infant and child. This becomes a rapidly growing personal world that is localized by the child both inside and outside the self, the self that is but newly established as a unit with a 'skin'. What is inside is part of the self though not inherently so, and it can be projected. What is outside is not part of the self, but again not inherently so, and it can be introjected. In health, a constant interchange goes on as the child lives and collects experiences, so that the external world is enriched by the inner potential, and the inner is enriched by what belongs outside. The basis for these mental mechanisms is clearly the functioning of incorporation and elimination in bodily experience. Ultimately it may be perceived by the child, who is by then becoming a mature individual, that there does exist that which is truly environmental, and this (the environmental) includes the inherited tendencies as well as the environmental provision and the world past and future, and the universe as yet unknown.

It is evident that as the child grows in this way the content of his personal self is not only he. The self becomes increasingly shaped by the environmental provision. The baby who adopts an object as almost part of the self could not have adopted it unless it had been lying round for adoption. In the same way all the introjects are not only exports reimported, they are also truly foreign goods. The infant cannot know this until considerable maturation has taken place, and the mind has become able to deal intellectually and intelligently with phenomena that have no meaning in terms of emotional acceptance. In terms of emotional acceptance the self, at its core, is always personal, isolated and unaffected by experience.

This way of looking at emotional development is important for my argument, for as the infant grows in this way the stage becomes set for those engaged in infant- and child-care to leave lying round not only objects (such as golliwogs or teddy bears or dolls or toy engines) but also moral codes. These moral codes are given in subtle ways by expressions of acceptance or by threats of the withdrawal of love. In fact, the phrase 'sphincter morality' has been used to describe the way that ideas of right and wrong can be conveyed to infants and small children in terms of the way in which incontinence turns into socialized self-control. Control over excretions is only one rather obvious instance in a host of comparable phenomena. However, in terms of sphincter morality, it is easy to see that parents who expect the small child

to comply with the regulations before reaching the stage in which self-control has meaning are depriving the child of the sense of achievement and of faith in human nature that comes from a natural progress towards sphincter control. This sort of mistaken attitude to 'training' ignores the child's maturational processes, and ignores the child's wanting to be like the other persons and animals who are in the child's world.

No doubt there are and always will be those who by nature and nurture prefer to implant morals, just as there are also those who by nature and nurture prefer to wait, and perhaps to wait a long time, for natural developments. Nevertheless such matters can be discussed.

In these matters the answer is always that there is *more to be gained from love than from education*. Love here means the totality of infant- and child-care, that which facilitates maturational processes. It includes hate. Education means sanctions and the implantation of parental or social values *apart from* the child's inner growth or maturation. Education in terms of the teaching of arithmetic has to wait for that degree of personal integration in the infant that makes the concept of *one* meaningful, and also the idea contained in the first pronoun singular. The child who knows the I AM feeling, and who can carry it, knows about one, and then immediately wants to be taught addition, subtraction and multiplication. In the same way moral education follows naturally on the arrival of morality in the child by the natural developmental processes that good care facilitates.

Sense of Values

Soon the question arises: what about a sense of values generally? What is the parents' duty here? This more general issue follows on the management of the more specific issues of infant behaviour. Again there are those who fear to wait, and who implant, just as there are those who wait, and keep ready for presentation the ideas and expectations that the child can use on his arrival at each new developmental stage of integration and capacity for objective consideration.

In regard to religion, and the idea of a god, there are clearly the extremes of those who do not know that the child has a capacity to create a god so that they implant the idea as soon as possible, and there are those who wait and see the results of their efforts to meet the needs of their developing infant. These latter, as I have already said, will introduce the family gods to the child when the child has reached to the stage for their acceptance. In

the latter case, there is the minimum of set pattern; in the first case the set pattern is what is wanted, and the child can only accept or reject this essentially foreign thing, the implanted god concept.

Advocates could be found for not leaving any cultural phenomena lying round for the child to catch hold of and to adopt. I even knew a father who refused to allow his daughter to meet any fairy story, or any idea such as that of a witch or a fairy, or of a prince, because he wanted his child to have only a personal personality; the poor child was being asked to start again with the building up of the ideas and the artistic achievements of the centuries. This scheme did not work.

In the same way it is no answer to the problem of moral values to expect a child to have his or her own, and for the parents to have nothing to offer that comes from the local social system. And there is a special reason why a moral code should be available, namely, that the infant's and the small child's innate moral code has a quality so fierce, so crude, and so crippling. Your adult moral code is necessary because it humanizes what for the child is subhuman. The infant suffers talion fears. The child bites in an excited experience of relating to a good object, and the object is felt to be a biting object. The child enjoys an excretory orgy and the world fills with water that drowns and with filth that buries. These crude fears become humanized chiefly through each child's experiences in relation to the parents, who disapprove and are angry but who do not bite and drown and burn the child in retaliation related exactly to the child's impulse or fantasy.

By experience of life and living the child in health becomes ready to believe in something that can be handed over in terms of a personal god. But the personal god idea has no value to a child who has not had the experience of human beings, persons humanizing the terrifying superego formations that relate directly to the infantile impulse and to the fantasy that goes with body functioning and with crude excitements involving instinct.¹

This principle affecting the handing on of moral values applies likewise to the handing on of the whole torch of culture and civilization. Give a child Mozart and Haydn and Scarlatti from the beginning and you may get precocious good taste, something that can be shown off at parties. But the child probably has to start with noises blown through toilet paper over a comb, and then to graduate to drumming on a saucepan and blowing into

¹ Erikson has written on this theme in terms of the concept of virtue (Erikson, 1961).

an old bugle; the distance from screaming and from vulgar noises to *Voi che Sapete* is vast, and an appreciation of the sublime should be a personal achievement, not an implant. Yet no child can write or perform his or her own Mozart. You must help him to find this and other treasures. In the area of living this implies that you provide your child with an example, not better than you really are, not dishonest, but tolerably decent.

The fiercest morality is that of early infancy, and this persists as a streak in human nature that can be discerned throughout an individual's life. Immorality for the infant is *to comply at the expense of the personal way of life*. For instance, a child of any age may feel that to eat is wrong, even to the extent of dying for the principle. Compliance brings immediate rewards and adults only too easily mistake compliance for growth. The maturational processes can be by-passed by a series of identifications, so that what shows clinically is a false, acting self, a copy of someone perhaps; and what could be called a true or essential self becomes hidden, and becomes deprived of living experience. This leads many people who seem to be doing well eventually to end their lives which have become false and unreal; unreal success is morality at its lowest ebb as compared with which a sexual misdemeanour hardly counts.

One stage in the child's development has especial importance, and I must refer to it, although it is only a new and much more complex example of the environmental provision facilitating maturational processes.

At this stage to which I refer now there is a gradual build-up in the child of a capacity to feel a sense of responsibility, that which at base is a sense of guilt. The environmental essential here is the continued presence of the mother or mother-figure over the time in which the infant and child is accommodating the destructiveness that is part of his make-up. This destructiveness becomes more and more a feature in the experience of object relationships, and the phase of development to which I am referring lasts from about six months to two years, after which the child may have made a satisfactory integration of the idea of destroying the object and the fact of loving the same object. The mother is needed over this time and she is needed because of her survival value. She is an environment-mother and at the same time an object-mother, the object of excited loving. In this latter role she is repeatedly destroyed or damaged. The child gradually comes to integrate these two aspects of the mother and to be able to love and to be affectionate with the surviving mother at the same time. This phase involves the child in a special kind of anxiety

which is called a sense of guilt, guilt related to the idea of destruction where love is also operating. It is this anxiety that drives the child towards constructive or actively loving behaviour in his limited world, reviving the object, making the loved object better again, rebuilding the damaged thing. If the mother-figure is not able to see the child through over this phase then the child fails to find or loses the capacity to feel guilt, but instead feels crudely anxious and this anxiety is merely wasteful. (I have described this elsewhere and more thoroughly than I can do it here, and of course the chief work leading to this part of our understanding of the child's development comes from Melanie Klein, and is to be found in her writings under the heading 'The Depressive Position'.)

Provision of Opportunity

Here is an essential stage in child-development, and it has nothing to do with moral education except that if this stage is successfully negotiated then the child's own and personal solution to the problem of destruction of what is loved turns into the child's urge to work or to acquire skills. It is here that the provision of opportunity, and this includes the teaching of skills, meets the child's need. But the need is the essential factor, and the need arises out of the child's establishment within the self of a capacity to stand feeling guilt in regard to destructive impulses and ideas, to stand feeling generally responsible for destructive ideas, because of having become confident in regard to reparative impulses and opportunities for contributing in. This reappears in a big way at the period of adolescence, and it is well known that the provision of opportunity for service for young people is of more value than moral education in the sense of teaching morals.

Earlier I indicated that I would return to the idea of wickedness and the wicked. For the psychiatrist the wicked are ill. Wickedness belongs to the clinical picture produced by the anti-social tendency. It ranges from bed-wetting to stealing and telling lies and includes aggressive behaviour, destructive acts and compulsive cruelty, and perversions. For an understanding of the oetiology of the antisocial tendency there exists a vast literature, and only a short statement can be allowed here. Briefly the antisocial tendency represents the hopefulness in a deprived child who is otherwise hopeless, hapless and harmless; a manifestation of the antisocial tendency in a child means that there has developed in the child some hopefulness, hope that a way may be

found across a gap. This gap is a break in the continuity of environmental provision, experienced at a stage of relative dependence. In every case there has been experienced a break in the continuity of the environmental provision, and one that resulted in a hold-up of maturational processes and a painful confusional clinical state in the child.

Often the child psychiatrist is able, in a case seen before the development of secondary gain, to help the child back over the gap, so that instead of stealing there appears a return of an old good relationship with mother or a mother-figure or parent. The wickedness goes if the gap is bridged. This is an over-simplification but it must suffice. Compulsive wickedness is about the last thing to be cured or even stopped by moral education. The child knows in his bones that it is *hope* that is locked up in the wicked behaviour, and that *despair* is linked with compliance and false socialization. For the antisocial or wicked person the moral educator is on the wrong side.

The understanding that psycho-analysis can offer has importance although its application-value is limited. Modern thinking, largely based on psycho-analysis, makes it possible to see what is important in infant- and child-care, and relieves the parents of the burden that they feel when they think they have to make their children good. It evaluates the maturational processes in individual growth, and relates these to the facilitating environment. It examines the development of moral sense in the individual, and demonstrates the way in which a capacity for feeling a sense of personal responsibility belongs to health.

What the psycho-analyst leaves unsolved has to do with the moral education of individuals in so far as they have not matured in essential respects, and in so far as they have no capacity for moral evaluation or for feeling responsibility. The psycho-analyst simply says that these people are ill, and in some cases he is able to give treatment that is effective. But there remains the moral educator's effort to deal with these individuals, whether they are ill or not. Here the psycho-analyst can only ask that the educator shall not spill over his methods designed for these ill persons so that they affect the well persons. The vast majority of people are not ill, though indeed they may show all manner of symptoms. Strong or repressive measures, or indoctrination even, may suit society's need in the management of the antisocial individual, but these measures are the worst possible thing for healthy persons, for those who can grow from within, given the facilitating environment especially in the early stages of growth. It is these latter, the healthy, who grow into the adults who

constitute society, and who collectively establish and maintain the moral code for the next decades, till their children take over from them.

As Professor Niblett said again in the first lecture of the series, we cannot meet out adolescents with the words: over to you. We have to provide them in infancy and childhood and adolescence, in home and in school, with the facilitating environment in which each individual may grow his or her own moral capacity, develop a superego that evolved naturally from crude superego elements of infancy, and find his or her own way of using or not using the moral code and general cultural endowment of our age.

By the time the child is growing up towards an adult state the accent is no longer on the moral code that we hand on; the accent has passed over to that more positive thing, the storehouse of man's cultural achievement. And, instead of moral education we introduce to the child the opportunity for being creative that the practice of the arts and the practice of living offers to all those who do not copy and comply but who genuinely grow to a way of personal self-expression.