

# Religion and Morality: What Place in the Curriculum of American Higher Education?

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## **Religion and Morality: What Place in the Curriculum of Higher Education?**

### **I. Introduction**

The title of this essay poses a question: "What is the place of religion and morality in a curriculum of higher education?" The question, of course, assumes there is a place for these matters and the challenge is to find it. Perhaps the more searching question should be, "Is there a place for religion and morality in the modern American University?" This question, however, begs its own predecessor – "What are the aims and purposes of the modern University?" or better yet, "What are the aims of any university?" If the point may be pressed further, "What is a university?"

Now these are all good questions, because how these questions are answered will ultimately define the institution's curriculum. The latter questions, however, are more properly subjects for an essay on history and philosophy, rather than on curriculum. Since this essay is intended to make a contribution to thinking about curriculum rather than history and philosophy, it is essential to identify those assumptions which are counted as received wisdom and which are not.<sup>1</sup> Besides, an essay on the place of religion and morality in the curriculum which assumes that neither religion or morality are relevant would be a very short essay indeed.

Bearing the foregoing in mind, this essay will take as accepted wisdom, an assumption that was legislated into the fabric of post-revolutionary American society. This assumption was embodied in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 and affirmed that "[r]eligion, morality and knowledge being essential to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged."<sup>2</sup> The essay, therefore, does not consider arguments against inclusion of religion and morality; not because they are unimportant, but because they are outside the scope of the essay's purpose.

Moreover, the adoption, development and integration of this idea into the American university, and its eventual dissolution and replacement by different and contrary assumptions has been explored at a general and philosophical level in a previous essay.<sup>3</sup> That essay concluded with the view that what is needed "is to reevaluate the place and scope of religion, morality, and knowledge

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<sup>1</sup> Recent literature has focused more clearly on inclusion of religion in a university setting. See Charles M. Stanton, "Religion in American Higher Education" in *The Review of Higher Education*, 18 (Fall 1994) pp. 111-121; Kimon Sargeant, "The Religious Values of Today's Parents and Students" in *Planning For Higher Education*, 22 (Summer 1994) pp. 40-41.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Stat. 50, 52-53 (1789). The Ordinance was originally adopted on May 20, 1785 as An Ordinance for ascertaining the mode of disposing lands in the Western Territory, in 4 *Journals of the American Congress From 1774-1788*, (Washington, D.C., 1823) 520-22.

<sup>3</sup> See Kerry L. Morgan, "The Northwest Ordinance and the Ideal of American Higher Education" 1994. This essay examined two conflicting ideas that have or now animate in a very general way, institution-wide academic plans. The first idea is that the purpose of American education is to promote good government and the happiness of mankind by the means of teaching religion, morality, and knowledge. The second idea or assumption which has taken its place is that an uncritical skepticism (rather than religion), subjective personal experience (rather than morality), and socially constructed words (rather than knowledge), is better suited to realize the modern mission of a university.

in the aims and curriculum of today's American university."

This essay takes up that challenge, at least in part, considering religion and morality alone. Organizationally the essay will first examine some specific reasons why religion and morality are now generally excluded from the curriculum and more generally, from "academic plans." The modern preoccupation with objectivity will be considered as it has been translated into an instructional method of silence where religion and morality come into play. The secular view of mankind as one devoid of any spiritual dimension which intersects with man's reason, will also be considered since "critical thinking" has dominated the goal of many current academic plans.

This section is followed by an examination of assorted historical or *external* influences to the university which affect the degree of integration of morality and religion into academic plans. These influences will be discussed as viewed through the lens of various individuals who have examined inclusion of religion and morality into academic plans. These approaches emphasize: 1) the centrality of truth to the curriculum and its relationship to its first cousins religion and morality; 2) academic development of the whole person through inclusion of religion and morality in the curriculum, and not simply academic development of the intellect alone; 3) religion and morality as a component of truth and as important ideas to think about as a function of the university's emphasis on thinking; 4) religion as a dimension of the non-rational; 5) religion as art; 6) the limits and therefore inapplicability of the scientific method in relation to religion and morality; 7) morality as psychology; and 8) morality as values. Each of these eight approaches are discussed as intellectual vehicles whereby religion and morality have made their way into the curriculum, sometimes directly in their own right and sometimes indirectly by adoption into other disciplines.

The subsequent section moves from external influences to *internal and organizational* influences which often affect consideration of religion and morality as aspects of an academic plan. The significance of faculty influence is very strong, particularly in relation to the instructional processes which are or are not employed. Organizational influences warrant consideration of factors such as inclusion of religion and morality at the course or program level, the interdisciplinary aspect of these disciplines, and a strategic emphasis on stimulating classroom conversation about religion and morality, rather than an emphasis on religious or moral conversion of students by faculty.

Finally, the last section briefly considers how an academic major, school or department at a university might begin to integrate religion and morality into its academic plan. The section will highlight some appropriate objectives which may be considered by administrators, faculty and students interested in bringing religion and morality to bear in a more systematic way in any given program and classroom.

Central to this essay is the view that inclusion of religion and morality as viable topics of legitimate academic inquiry and discourse will lead to a more exciting and rich curriculum – one geared to the whole person. The student who is taught to discuss such matters in a thoughtful and reasoned way, will be a more cultivated person than those who never had such an opportunity. The student who is encouraged to form and express a viewpoint with respect to the religious or moral dimensions of a given topic or course, will develop that habit of mind and speech which will set them above others whose depth and breadth of academic concentration provide no such encouragement. The student who does these things, because the academic plan readily facilitates and encourages them, will be a person who has learned to be comfortable, though not complacent, with

the subject as with any other.

In short, the student who does these things can get on in life and be all the while, a person with whom others will desire to converse, associate and perhaps employ. Needless to say, such a student is capable of seeing the world in a fuller and more real way than those intellectually nourished on less heterogeneous fare. And if this result is obtained for the student, then what effect could be expected on the faculty and the university itself?

## **II. Why are Morality and Religion Generally Absent from an Academic Plan?**

### **A. Curricular Silence as Neutrality**

In his 1965 lecture on "Higher Education," William R. Niblett, observed with much insight that:

We rarely exercise our students' capacity to feel themselves into human situations or attempt to train their moral discernment. But by such very avoidance, we subtly orientate. We may fancy that we can opt out of all this, telling ourselves that any education of assumptions and values is not the business of university teachers. But if we do opt out, acting during business hours as academics only, never showing our conscience of a world of value, the effect in practice usually will be that we identify ourselves – nothing said – with current secular presuppositions and value judgments. We may even pride ourselves on our individuality in the same way as some readers of intellectual weeklies congratulate themselves on all being non-conformists together. But the effect really is that we teach orthodox secular prejudices.<sup>4</sup>

Professor Niblett's observation is powerful. The practical effect of remaining silent or avoiding moral questions in the classroom, he says, must of necessity identify one with current presuppositions and value judgments. Niblett thus argues there is no middle ground on the question of morals in the classroom – silence itself weighing in on the side of the modern, the popular, and the contemporary view. The professor's view, stated with dependable British clarity, chides the popular belief that strict neutrality is possible, or that silence is its best guarantor.

### **B. Mankind as Only an Intellect or as a Real Person?**

"Now it may be," by force of sheer modernity continues Professor Niblett, "that a rather impersonal and predominantly secular kind of education is all that we can properly expect an institution of higher education to give most of its students."<sup>5</sup> By and large, "institutions of higher education today are not much concerned to give their students more than an intellectual education; they are not much concerned to produce qualities that are intellectually on the fringe – compassion,

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<sup>4</sup> William R. Niblett, Christian Education in a Free Society (London: Oxford University Press, 1960) 85-86. Professor Niblett made these remarks while he was the Dean of the University of London Institute of Education and Director of the Centre for the Study of Educational Policies.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* at 87-88.

for example, imaginative understanding of other races, sensitivity to other people ...."<sup>6</sup> But Niblett believes that such an insular approach does not bode well for even the secular man. "Is not," he asks

such a limited concept of higher education itself limiting to human development? It is one of the fundamental laws of biology that an environment must be suited to a species. Should it not be, the species will either die or go elsewhere. But what *are* the real potentialities of our species? It is here that Christians and humanists must part company. If fundamental parts of the nature of man do remain unnourished by education inside our universities and technical colleges we are certainly impoverishing the future.<sup>7</sup>

In other words, the goal of education is decisively tied to one's view or assumptions about mankind. If man is simply an intellectual and physical creature, then what need of the spiritual, or what Niblett calls recognition of the "personal," in an academic plan? But if mankind is more than an intellect, then the "religious viewpoint, with its emphasis on creatureliness and its recognition of the personal" is desirable.<sup>8</sup> Challenging the dominance of the dispassionate and objective observer approach, he pointedly asks: "Is the context of higher education to be limited to those kinds of knowledge and skills which will be contributed only by an observer who has learned to be detached and unmoved?"<sup>9</sup> From Niblett's point of view the curriculum should conform to consideration of human beings as persons, not just *disembodied* intellects. For if the latter is actually the case, then neither religion nor morality have any relevance to the curriculum, except perhaps as philosophical constructs, which is a polite way to say that they have no relevance.

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<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 85.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.* at 87-88. Moreover, with respect to this view of man, Niblett sees no common ground between the humanist and Christian view. He reasons that:

Christianity, however, will only count for much henceforward in higher education if there are some christian teachers who can ... modify pre-suppositions as well as teaching knowledge. They will not do this by allowing their Christianity to get in the way of a proper teaching of their subject, but by a showing that their understanding of the scope of education is wider than a concern with analysis alone.

*Id.* at 89.

If Christianity is properly to enter into higher education our concern must be first that the possibility of a religious view is made clear and witnessed to, and secondly, that the consequences of such a view are brought more fully into consciousness. It will not be enough to have a Department of Theology ....

*Id.* at 90.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 86.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* at 88. Niblett adds that:

though we may well admire these developments in higher education, it is well to remember still that the teaching of sheer knowledge is only one of the functions of education. For always quietly included somewhere within it must be an education of where to look – that is of attitudes, pre-conceptions and pre-suppositions. This is so even with the teaching of what seem to be hard facts, unbiased observations and nothing else.

*Id.* at 83-84.

### **III. What Historical Influences Promote Inclusion or Exclusion of Morality and Religion from the Academic Plan?**

#### **A. James B. Angell and the Search for Truth for the Whole Person**

James Burrill Angell (1829-1916) was President of the University of Michigan from 1871 to 1909. As President, he was a champion of academic instruction in religion, morality and science. Angell also studied and embraced "moral philosophy" at Brown University under then President Francis Wayland (1796-1865) so he was familiar with that curricular movement and development.<sup>10</sup> Of particular interest to the present inquiry, however, is that Angell emphasized the old classical education as well as the new reforms because even the new reforms did not exclude the search for truth as it related to the whole person. Angell observed that

[i]n my college days we were incited to make the largest possible acquisition of what had been learned and thought by great scholars and to attain the culture which such achievement brought us. In these days the ultimate end which the student is exhorted to seek over and above and beyond those acquisitions is the power and the passion for discovering new truth.<sup>11</sup>

The President recognized no neutrality where religion and other disciplines met on the academic playing field. He found that "[i]t is impossible that [a student's] ... mental processes in respect to all the other subjects of thought should be modified without affecting their thought and reasoning concerning religion."<sup>12</sup> He did not isolate religion from the whole of the academic environment. With reference to religion in general and Christianity in particular, Angell complained that an education devoid thereof, would fail in one of its most essential purposes – to impart to the student an understanding of the *spiritual aspects* of human conduct. Angell asserted that

[i]t must be confessed that with all the zeal of our age for literary and scientific attainments, the average college graduate is far too unfamiliar with that greatest literary treasure of the race, the sacred Scriptures, with the history of the development of religious thought, with the inner life of the Christian church, in short with the power of religion in shaping the career of the race. If you aspire to know the forces that control mankind, especially those that exalt and purify the human heart, you cannot afford to neglect the study of those spiritual forces which have always yielded the greatest power over men.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> With respect to religion, President Angell "made Christianity in the university a major cause. He spoke about it, conducted surveys on it, wrote articles and edited a book on Christianity, facilitated the growth of campus ministries, and continued through the first decade of the twentieth century to preach Christ to Michigan." George M. Marsden, The Soul of the American University (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 167. For a few of Wayland's many writings, see the attached bibliography.

<sup>11</sup> James B. Angell, The Old and the New Ideal of Scholars: A Baccalaureate Address Delivered June 18, 1905 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1905) 3.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.* at 7.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.* at 9.

And if this academic charge to avoid neglect of the spiritual dimensions of humanity fell on uncertain ears, he put the point bluntly, concluding that

whatever else the true scholar neglects, his plain duty and his high privileges are found striving to find out the ways of God in dealing with men, the exact scope of the truth which he has sought to make known to us and to our obligations to our fellowmen.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, as far as President Angell was concerned, higher education in general and the University of Michigan in particular, should strive for true scholarship. True scholarship was not conceived only in terms of the usual and desirable landscape of free inquiry and research, critical thinking and the pursuit of knowledge. These pursuits are important and indispensable, but these do not lie at the heart of the enterprise. Whatever else the true scholar neglects, he or she must not neglect to find the ways of God in dealing with men, the truth which he has sought to make known to us, and our obligations to our fellowmen. According to Angell, this charge is central to the academic plan of the university concerned with true scholarship and it appears to apply across the disciplines without limitation.<sup>15</sup>

## **B. Robert M Hutchins**

Robert Maynard Hutchins (1899-1977) was President of the University of Chicago during its critical stages of growth and development. Hutchins advanced two major themes with respect to higher education, religion and morals. The first was very similar to Angell, and concentrated on the university as a place which pursues truth and is interested in the academic development of the whole person. This emphasis incorporated in a general way, an insistence on inclusion of religion and morality. The second is more urgent and flows from his emphasis on the development of critical thinking skills as an indispensable element of higher education. He weaves religion and morality into the curriculum by emphasizing that the university should be thinking about important things, religion and morality among them.

### *1. The Academic Development of the Whole Person*

The academic focus on truth was still strong in the earlier part of this century at many institutions of higher learning. Hutchins built the University of Chicago on this palladium asserting that "[t]he university exists only to find and to communicate the truth. If it cannot do that, it is no longer a university."<sup>16</sup> Hutchins was critical of the growing trend to pursue facts at the expense of truth. He characterized this trend as one which directly impacted the curriculum, asserting that "because we have not been pursuing the truth but have been piling up helpful facts, we have had to multiply courses and departments."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Id.* at 9.

<sup>15</sup> See Deuteronomy 6:5, Leviticus 19:18, and Matthew 22:37-40. Angell actually has restated, perhaps translated, the great commandments to love God and one's neighbor, into the context of the university by emphasizing the particular dimension associated with them as pertaining to the love of God with the "mind."

<sup>16</sup> Robert M. Hutchins, No Friendly Voice (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1936) 5.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.* at 67.

President Hutchins generally drew his source of truth from Greek philosophers and Saint Thomas Aquinas. Overall he emphasized "development of the intellectual, moral, and spiritual powers of persons through a rigorous intellectual education in the humanities or liberal arts."<sup>18</sup> Hutchins recognized that a university had the obligation to provide an atmosphere in which this whole person could develop. Not just the intellectual was emphasized, but the moral and spiritual aspects of student development were acknowledged and encouraged. If the university failed to answer these demands as part and parcel of its search for truth, it was not fit to be called by the name "university."

To Hutchins the inclusion or consideration of morals in the curriculum was not merely "academic," it had a practical and urgent dimension as well. In an address to the graduating class of 1935 at the University of Chicago, President Hutchins remarked: "I am not worried about your economic future. I am worried about your morals. My experience and observation lead me to warn you that the greatest, the most insidious, the most paralyzing danger you will face is the danger of corruption."<sup>19</sup>

Clearly Hutchins concern was not to teach morals through compulsion or indoctrination of his students. He maintained a vigorous defense of critical and free inquiry declaring:

[i]t must be remembered that the purpose of education is not to fill the minds of students with facts; it is not to reform them, or amuse them, or make them expert technicians in any field. It is to teach them to think, if that is possible, and to think always for themselves.<sup>20</sup>

But thinking and an emphasis on the intellect, were not disconnected from morals, the pursuit of truth, or what Hutchins called Thomas Jefferson's intellectual love of God. "We have been able to devote" said Hutchins "much time, effort, and money to the physical and moral welfare of students." But at the price of forgetting that "a university should be devoted to the intellectual love of God."<sup>21</sup> The scholarly dimension of this devotion was to recognize that "[f]aith is intellectual assent" and that the "approach to God upon which young men today may come to him is not sociological or aesthetic; it is intellectual."<sup>22</sup> (He did not think much of Dewey's sociological approach or of Gill's yet to be pronounced "religion as art" theme discussed *infra*.)

## 2. *Thinking About Important Things – like Religion and Morals*

Consideration of Hutchins' views on religion, morality and the curriculum must of necessity examine his definitions of these topics, as well as their place within the university. Hutchins does this by emphasizing that the university is created to encourage thinking and that it should be thinking

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<sup>18</sup> John L. Elias, Moral Education: Secular and Religious (Malabar, Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1989) 35.

<sup>19</sup> Hutchins *supra* note 16 at 1.

<sup>20</sup> Hutchins *supra* note 16 at 8.

<sup>21</sup> Hutchins *supra* note 16 at 67.

<sup>22</sup> Hutchins *supra* note 16 at 139.



about important things, religion and morality among them.

Hutchins defined religion in terms of God: "[b]y religion I mean belief in and obedience to God. This may not require adherence to a church or creed; but it demands religious faith."<sup>23</sup> Hutchins added, however, that "the kind of religion I am talking about is one that is sustained by both reason and faith."<sup>24</sup> He also defined morals in terms of good habit – "habits which are good for the organism in question"<sup>25</sup> – a similar approach to Niblett's law of biology "that an environment must be suited to a species."

But how do all these views and definitions intersect in the university according to Hutchins? First Hutchins recognized that the university cannot do everything. Every institution is different. Students are of varying degrees of maturity, practice different habits of morality and profess different religious beliefs. The student's matriculation is limited in time. Thus, Hutchins says that "[w]e are concerned here, then, with what certain institutions can do in a certain period of time with certain people of a certain age."<sup>26</sup> With such inevitable limitations on scholastic education in mind, Hutchins declared that it is beyond the university's power to educate morally or religiously because "[m]oral and religious education consists in training the feelings and the daily habits; and these are, in the main, beyond the sphere and inaccessible to the control of public education."<sup>27</sup> The impact of this view of the curriculum is straightforward. Hutchins positively rejected a course in how to be good, or act in a moral way. He rejected compulsory religious exercises or mandatory profession of belief or doctrine. He rejected public "secular" institutions being controlled by a denomination or church.

But yet with such caveats and clear boundary markers over which the university must not pass, Hutchins nevertheless staked out an affirmative place for religion and morals by reasoning: "[if] we insist that colleges and universities should be devoted to thinking, and if we insist that they should, if possible, think about important things, we may perhaps find the way in which higher education may make its unique contribution to morals and religion."<sup>28</sup> To put it more forcefully:

If a college or university is going to think and to think about important things, then it must think about religion. It is perhaps not necessary that all the faculty should be religious; it is necessary that most of them, at least, should take religion seriously.

The same is true of morals. If a college or university is to think and think about important things, then it must think about morals, for we have admitted throughout that morals are most important. It may not be necessary that all faculty should be good; it

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<sup>23</sup> Robert M. Hutchins, Morals, Religion and Higher Education (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1950) 2.

<sup>24</sup> *Id.* at 3.

<sup>25</sup> *Id.* at 1-2.

<sup>26</sup> *Id.* at 5.

<sup>27</sup> *Id.* at 6. Hutchins notes that both Cardinal Newman and John Stuart Mill "insisted over and over again that the purpose of a university was intellectual and not moral." *Id.*

<sup>28</sup> *Id.* at 24.

is necessary that most of them, at least, take goodness seriously.<sup>29</sup>

What other institution, asks Hutchins, is better equipped to supply the adult student with the intellectual foundations of morals and religion, or consider the intellectual foundations of good habits by taking them "seriously"? "The curriculum," therefore says Hutchins, "should include the knowledge and understanding of the principles of morality. It should include both natural and sacred theology; for how can a man call himself educated who does not grasp the leading ideas that since the dawn of history have animated mankind?"<sup>30</sup>

Returning to where he began with an emphasis on truth, Hutchins identified an internal organizational influence that must be present for religion and morals to be taken seriously. He states that "if the object of higher education is truth, then, in order to take morality and religion seriously, the institution must believe that there is some truth and some discoverable truth about morality and religion."<sup>31</sup>

Finally, on this and other related points the educational community must have a common aim. Hutchins emphasized that though it is not necessary that everyone agree, it is requisite that they communicate. Thus, with respect to teaching methods that produce the desired learning outcomes, Hutchins advocated the importance of classroom discussion of religious and moral ideas "because of the great contributions that this method makes to the moral and intellectual habits we desire; and I emphasize reading and discussion by all the students and faculty because in this way the formation of a community can be advanced."<sup>32</sup>

### **C. Robert Bellah and Religion as a Non-Rational Subject**

Angell and Hutchins included religion and morality in the curriculum because they were important, reasonable, related to the pursuit of truth, and had a necessary purpose that the average person could discuss in a reasoned way. More contemporary approaches tend to redefine religion and morality to place it outside of the area of reason and discourse, yet invent a way to nevertheless include them in the curriculum. For instance, professor Robert Bellah is entirely sympathetic with the "whole person" conception of education – one that according to Angell generally and Hutchins specifically, is concerned with the "development of the intellectual, moral, and spiritual powers of persons." But Bellah does not see the integration of morals and religion into the curriculum as a

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<sup>29</sup> *Id.* at 24-25.

If higher education is to take morality and religion seriously, it must repudiate these dogmas; [that there is no moral law and there are no moral principles] for the truths of morality and religion never have been and never can be discovered by experiment or by any allegedly "scientific" means. Morality and religion cannot be taken seriously unless the possibility of attaining truth by philosophical inquiry and by revelation is admitted. It is necessary to believe that philosophy is more than words and that it is possible to be rational and religious at the same time.

*Id.* at 27.

<sup>30</sup> *Id.* at 26.

<sup>31</sup> *Id.*

<sup>32</sup> *Id.* at 32-33.

function of reason. He elects to bring them in as a function of the non-rational dimension of being a human being. Thus, morality in general and religion in particular, are not legitimated as an extension of the proposition that "faith is intellectual assent," but rather on the basis that they are non-rational. Bellah inquires:

What on earth is happening if within the very heart of the secular university, a new understanding of human beings including their religious dimension emerges, an understanding that takes seriously the pre-conceptual non-rational aspect. What do we do when that emerges in the very midst of our rational enlightenment enterprise? Some may be tempted to start reaching for their guns, so to speak, and start talking about the separation of church and state.... But I would suggest that here is at least one small point where the profound schism in our culture, the schism between the disemboweled intellect, and our whole humanity, might possibly begin to be overcome, where the initiatory elements of education might begin to be regained.<sup>33</sup>

Bellah's view, when reduced to its most basic philosophical component, is a rather scandalous defense of religion and morality's legitimacy in the academy. They can never achieve full intellectual peer status on par with the other disciplines, and are consigned to sit on the intellectual sidelines, satisfied that the other disciplines even permitted them into the academic arena to watch the process of discourse. Philosophically, Bellah's approach can be characterized as half-baked existentialism. His view is existential because the knower brings meaning to the subject. It is half-baked, because Bellah had to create a special class of knowing of which only the disciplines of religion and morality are admitted (or pushed), and which, as it turns out, is a way of knowing grounded in the irrational (which is no way of knowing at all). Of course, Bellah avoided the term irrational, but it is so fairly implied from the context that the skilled academic gamester can easily pick it up. It is hard to see how this brand-X philosophy could produce any coherent personal enlightenment, be shaped into curricular context, or bridge the schism between the intellectual and "our whole humanity."

#### **D. Theodore A. Gill and Religion as Art**

While Bellah jumps to the non-rational, Theodore A Gill takes just a little hop in the same direction. Gill takes a similar tact as Bellah, but with more creativity and flair. Gill argues that religion is not capable of proof, a slightly different tactic than stating it is non-rational. Religion, according to Gill is part of the ascetic – a form of art. As such religion is created by man and is therefore subjective, mythical and evolving. Consider his use of the artistic paradigm as he argues quite ably that

[r]eligion begins with a vision, it shows us a picture, it develops a style. Religious vision, like artistic vision, isn't something to prove. No proposed department of religious studies need bother with anything remotely like apologetic.... You can't prove a picture, you can't prove a musical composition, you can't prove any artistic statement. You get

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<sup>33</sup> Robert Bellah, "The New Religious Consciousness and the Secular University," in David N. Freedman & A. Theodore Kachel, Eds., Religion and the Academic Scene (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: The Council on The Study of Religion, 1975) 18-19.

it out there the best way you can, looking its best, not hoked up, pure.<sup>34</sup>

For Gill religion is personally and socially constructed, much like an artist reflects who he or she is in their work. As with Bellah, religion is not really a full participant in the university, but it can be slipped in through the art department from a program or curricular standpoint. The analogy is more than superficial as Gill concludes that

[t]his is how religion as an art, theologians as artists, present themselves now as a powerfully commanding option for the colleges and universities approaching the study of art.... Sprinkle your religion courses through the catalogue if you will, but locate its office (and its budget) in the arts division.<sup>35</sup>

Unfortunately, Gill not only does religion and morality a disservice by stripping them of their reasoned dimension, but he also strips them of their transcendent dimension. God was central to Angell, Hutchins (and Buber as discussed *infra*). For Bellah and Gill, the curricular implication of their assumptions would not permit such a view to enter the academic arena.

### **E. Richard M. Hare and the Limits of Scientific Application**

Differing in his approach to religion from Bellah, Gill and others, however, is Richard M. Hare, another Briton. With respect to the Christian religion in general and morality in particular, Hare notes that

[i]t is a part of Christian belief to believe in the possibility of explaining things by means of scientific laws. But scientific belief is not the whole of Christian belief. There are whole fields of human conduct outside the laboratory where scientific belief does not give us answers to the questions we are (or ought to be) asking. It does not give us these answers, not because it is wrong, but because it does not apply in those fields. I will mention only one of those fields, that of morality. We cannot decide by experimental methods or by observation what we ought to do.<sup>36</sup>

Hare recognizes that science is limited in its means of proof and that its means are not coequal with the limits of reason. This view necessitates the admission that morality for instance, cannot be judged by science one way or the other. But he goes further than this and states that morality as a discipline can be judged by its own parameters though he is unclear on their exact dimensions. He notes accordingly that academic "subjects are different" and that when "we come to moral and other evaluative questions we have to ask afresh whether, here too, there is a subject called ... 'morals', which of conceptual necessity, imposes certain disciplines that the teacher can know just as he knows Latin or mathematics."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Theodore A. Gill, "Religion in Higher Education: A Lecture with continuous Questions and Answers," in David N. Freedman & A. Theodore Kachel, Eds., Religion and the Academic Scene (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: The Council on The Study of Religion, 1975) 45-46.

<sup>35</sup> *Id.* at 48-49.

<sup>36</sup> Richard M. Hare, Essays on Religion and Education (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1992) 14-15.

<sup>37</sup> *Id.* at 135.

In brief, Hare asserts the intellectual need for instruction in morality as an equal member of the academic team. He asserts that "intellectual autonomy requires moral virtues – honesty, courage, patience, and thoroughness, and I would certainly add clarity and rigor, which, though not themselves moral virtues, are such that the failure to strive for them is a sign of moral defect."<sup>38</sup> Thus, Hare does not make the jump to non-reason or mutate morality or religion into art in order to find its way into the university. He simply says that it need not bow the knee to science, nor assume a chameleon-like nature for admission. As long as religion and morality reach to the intellect in their own right as disciplines, their academic and curricular place should be assured.

Hare's view is an interesting one. It takes religion and morality seriously on their own terms and does not try to force them into another discipline to obtain legitimacy. Moreover, he recognizes that they, like any other discipline should be free to develop their own set of parameters of inclusion and exclusion – rules that define whether this or that idea fits within the boundaries which the discipline imposes on itself.

#### **F. John Dewey and Morality as Psychology**

Bellah and Gill are contemporary examples illustrating the antithesis of Angell and later Hutchins' approach to developing and implementing their respective views on the place of religion and morality in the university and the curriculum. Others are harder to gauge as they move more carefully in the cross current of intellectual discourse. For instance John Dewey (1859-1952) constructed his own theory of moral education through a combination of naturalistic philosophy and empirical science. Dewey's view of curriculum formation (and therefore of development of an academic plan), followed these basic philosophical and empirical assumptions about the purpose and content of education. His influences are acclaimed and "experienced" by many students today. In his theory or theories of education

Dewey was true to his basic principles for organizing a curriculum. The unity of the curriculum is found, according to him, not in the classical works, metaphysical principles, or religious truth but in the solution of concrete life problems through the use of the methods of science.<sup>39</sup>

Dewey's moral emphasis was grounded in his theoretical emphasis on experience and was authenticated by the methods of science. This emphasis lead him to the emerging discipline of psychology, rather than religion or morality. "I believe," said Dewey in prototype creedal terms, that education "must begin with a psychological insight into the child's capacities, interests, and habits. It must be controlled at every point by reference to these same considerations."<sup>40</sup> Thus,

Dewey did not completely reject moral principle, laws, and rules but considered them of little value unless they were stated in psychological and social terms as well as translated "into the actual conditions and working habits which make up the doing of

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<sup>38</sup> *Id.* at 136.

<sup>39</sup> Elias *supra* note 18 at 44.

<sup>40</sup> John Dewey, My Pedagogic Creed (New York: E. L. Kellogg & Co., 1897) 6.

the individual."<sup>41</sup>

Dewey recognized that morals were part of the reasoned or at least the experienced life – certainly in terms of the "science" of psychology. He did not justify the recognition of morals by the university through the ruse of non-reason as did Bellah. But if he started (as Gill later would) to rush over to the art department to set up shop, he certainly got distracted by psychology along the way. With this emphasis on psychology, combined with his prominence and dominant contributions to the development of schools of education, including higher education, it should come as no surprise therefore that his legacy would be broad and deep. Thus, it is not uncommon to find that a certain brand or aspect of morality has slipped into today's curriculum through the psychological paradigm, rather than through a religious or moral one. This legacy is seen in a curricular emphasis on the psychology of this or that discipline and the creation of Psychological courses in schools and institutions.

### G. Robert T. Sandin and Morality as Values

Robert T. Sandin has also recognized that other wider trends in American education such as the push toward productive employment of graduates, specialization, and resistance to interdisciplinary approaches by faculty, may prove adverse to integration of something as broad as values into the curriculum.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, he is optimistic that an academic emphasis on morals is entirely reasonable and appropriate from a curricular point of view. He suggests a systematic program of education in values that would be designed to enable students to achieve outcomes which "clarify a model for moral thinking and ... develop proficiency in moral decision making."<sup>43</sup>

Essential to this undertaking is the goal of developing "skill in assessing the morally significant consequences of alternative choices in individual action and in public policy." Moreover, appreciation of "the great religious traditions" and integration of "a religious understanding of life with the methodologies and findings of responsible scholarship" go hand in hand with such a program design.<sup>44</sup> Sandin, however, recognizes that the hard part comes in actually achieving effectiveness through curricular design. "It is easier" says Sandin, "to reach agreement concerning the appropriateness of such aims in a program of values-related education than it is to design curricular programs and academic policies that will be effective in achieving them."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Elias *supra* note 18 at 44 *quoting* John Dewey, Democracy in Education (Ed. and Introduction by Reginald Archambault, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1964) 138.

<sup>42</sup> Robert T. Sandin, The Rehabilitation of Virtue: Foundations of Moral Education (NY: Praeger Publishers, 1992) 14-15. Robert T. Sandin is Professor of Philosophy and Director of Special Programs and former Provost at Mercer University.

<sup>43</sup> *Id.* at 13.

<sup>44</sup> *Id.* at 13.

<sup>45</sup> *Id.* at 13.

#### **IV. What Internal and Organizational Influences Affect Morality and Religion in an Academic Plan?**

In light of the various and diverse approaches to integration of religion and morality into the curriculum previously examined, there remain organizational and internal influences that will naturally affect the process of instruction and design.<sup>46</sup>

##### **A. Internal Influences of Faculty**

Professor David N. Freedman has considered the teaching of religion in much the same light as morality in terms of its place in the university and the effect of the educational environment. He has lamented that the unnatural and restrictive conditions and influences which are often imposed on the teaching of religion, either result in it not being taught at all, or in it being taught in a truncated and witless fashion. He states:

The fear that the teaching of religion would contaminate the academic process of open inquiry and freedom of speech has led to the virtual abandonment of the subject in many institutions of higher and lower learning, as well as any method of teaching it, or in circumscribing the nature of instruction by straight-jacketing in guidelines requiring neutrality, impartiality and objectivity. If the same restrictions were applied to other disciplines they would be similarly handicapped.<sup>47</sup>

Professor Freedman recognized that teaching from a "neutral" or "objective" point of view imposes serious impediments to the subject academically. Where other disciplines would view such restrictions as truly "straight-jacketing" academic freedom or freedom of inquiry, such impositions on the subject of religion seem mysteriously the norm.

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<sup>46</sup> The political dimensions and the politically correct movement are not discussed herein and are left to another essay. It should be noted, however, that a recent Report on the State of Humanities in Higher Education declared that "[t]his report is ... [about] the effort to discover the truth. Long the goal of our colleges and universities, this aim is enshrined in mottos: *veritas* at Harvard, *lux et veritas* at Yale and Indiana Universities." Yet, "this aim is frequently derided today. An increasingly influential view is that there is no truth to tell: What we think of as truth is merely a cultural construct, serving to empower some and oppress others." The report concludes that the rejection of objective truth has left a void so that the "aim of education, as many on our campuses now see it, is no longer truth, but political transformation – of students and society." National Endowment for the Humanities, Telling the Truth: A Report on the State of the Humanities in Higher Education (1992) 6-7.

Peter W. Musgrave is typical of this view. He states that

Moral codes are social constructions, born in the redefinition of meanings by individuals, and justified by members of societies according to or within the ideologies of groups with power, though this does not mean that an existing group may not be taken over by, or take over, a new morality, as was the case with Christianity in the Roman Empire.

Peter W. Musgrave, the Moral Curriculum: A Sociological Analysis (London: Meuthen & Company, Ltd., 1978) 128.

<sup>47</sup> David N. Freedman & A Theodore Kachel, Eds., Religion and the Academic Scene (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: The Council on The Study of Religion, 1975) vii. Professor Freedman was the Director of the Program on Studies in Religion and the Office of Ethics and Religion at the University of Michigan. His remarks prefaced a Campus Conference in the fall of 1972 on "Religion and the Academic Scene."

Fear of teaching religion may be one internal influence. Faculty affinity with current secular presuppositions and value judgments may be another. It is certainly true that faculty bear a proportionate degree of responsibility for exclusion of morality and religion from their courses or academic plans. Indeed, it has been related that

we faculty members have ourselves largely structured the situation in this way and have indicated that this is the type of role we wish to play with the students. In our pristine concern for "objectivity" we have declared our devotion to Truth in the area of "the facts", while detaching ourselves from "values" and "ethics", which would demand that we consider larger issues, those of life and death, of the meaning and direction of the entire enterprise.<sup>48</sup>

Moreover, as a matter of faculty involvement and course content, Martin Buber's educational method with respect to moral education, first proposed that students and teachers read the

spiritual documents of Jewish tradition. These readings enabled learners to assimilate works of the human spirit that deal with ethics and values. Buber's second method was to lead students to recognize the limits of science, move to the boundaries of reason, and ask questions that were accessible only through prayer.<sup>49</sup>

Buber truly recognized the significance and reality of man in relationship to God, or what he called the "I-Thou" relationship. He was not one to intellectualize religion and morality in terms of content or faculty involvement at the level of instructional process.

Thus, for Buber, "the main method of moral education lay in the example of the teacher." "Moral character," wrote Buber, is "formed not by moral geniuses but by persons who are wholly alive and able to communicate with fellow human beings. To be effective, moral educators need the humility to recognize that they are only one element in the lives of their students."<sup>50</sup> It may also be added that humility as a faculty virtue is a necessary predicate for any successful instruction.

Professor Bruce Wilshire has lamented many of the same shortcomings as Buber, noting that faculty in particular should recall that

education is a moral enterprise and that the contemporary research university lacks moral direction. Amidst all our stunning discoveries we have forgotten, I think, what it means to be a human being in the world – also of course what it means to be good. We tend to treat our students abstractly, as if we were divided into bodies and minds.<sup>51</sup>

It is desirable according to Wilshire to integrate the professor with the lives of students to help develop the whole person, not just the intellect as if it were detached from oneself. This same

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<sup>48</sup> Niblett *supra* note 4 at 86.

<sup>49</sup> Elias *supra* note 18 at 52.

<sup>50</sup> Elias *supra* note 18 at 52.

<sup>51</sup> Bruce Wilshire, The Moral Collapse of the University: Professionalism, Purity and Alienation (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990) xxiii-xxiv.



approach to the whole person is similar to both Niblett, Angell and Hutchins as previously discussed and seems to be a rather common thread in the tapestry.

## **B. Organizational Influences**

In addition to internal influences, certain organizational factors must be considered. Any academic department will face challenges when considering exactly how to integrate *any* new material or approaches into its present program, given typical departmental structures and limitations. Edward L. Long, Jr., presents two options when considering integration of new materials. One suggests a full integration approach in which every course has a component geared to the new material or subject matter. The other approach notes that it may be necessary to present the material or approach in its own class where it can be explored systematically in relation to the program emphasis.<sup>52</sup>

Englishman and professor Peter W. Musgrave has likewise noted that a moral curriculum is also influenced in many ways by organizational factors. The "content of the moral curriculum, its pedagogy and pacing, the academic subjects to be involved in the school organization needed, are all very clearly related to the total structure within which any school is set, though lags may occur[] so that a school is teaching a moral curriculum attuned to the past rather than the present."<sup>53</sup>

Professor John L. Elias adds yet another insight to factors which must be considered if integration of a moral or religious curricular component into a current program is to be achieved. He has observed that "[m]oral education is an interdisciplinary field of study. To approach this field through one discipline only is both limited and dangerous. Educators must give attention to theories and research which come from a number of disciplines and which contribute to our understanding of the complex process of moral education."<sup>54</sup> Thus, when considering how to actually integrate a concern for morality or religion into a specific curriculum, the implementation must consider questions of scope, as well as organization and depth.

Student receptivity and instructional approach are also crucial factors. We may add and learn from the instructional process suggested by Richard M. Hare who, when considering how to best involve religion into the curriculum observed that instead of trying to teach the student "what he ought to believe, I sought instead to learn from him what he really did believe."<sup>55</sup> Or as A. Theodore Kachel put it, "[c]onversations, not conversion."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Edward L. Long, Jr, Higher Education as a Moral Enterprise (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1992) 96-97.

<sup>53</sup> Musgrave *supra* note 46 at 128.

<sup>54</sup> Elias *supra* note 18 at ix.

<sup>55</sup> Hare *supra* note 26 at 12.

<sup>56</sup> A. Theodore Kachel, "Revisiting the Unknown God of the Modern University," in David N. Freedman & A. Theodore Kachel, Eds., Religion and the Academic Scene (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: The Council on The Study of Religion, 1975) 62.

## **V. Morality and Religion in an Academic Plan for a Major, Department or School**

This section briefly considers how an academic major, department or school might begin to integrate religion and morality into its academic plan at the program and course level. The section will highlight some appropriate ideas which may be considered by faculty and students interested in bringing religion and morality to bear in a more systematic way in the program and classroom.

### **A. Program Considerations**

The first consideration which must be addressed is whether the effect of exclusion of religion and morality in the program has the actual effect of teaching "orthodox secular prejudices" as Niblett claims. If this is so, then morals are going to be inculcated regardless, and the only question is how will all the different moral and religious views on the subject be handled on a course by course basis. And the obvious answer is that the courses should handle these views in the same way it handles any other points of view in the classroom – how is it relevant, what does it mean, and how does it stand in relation to the whole?

Second, the program must evaluate the students for whom it is providing an education. Are they disembodied intellects or whole real persons? For Niblett warns that if "fundamental parts of the nature of man do remain unnourished by education inside our universities and technical colleges [then] we are certainly impoverishing the future." Angell and Hutchins took the same approach. If students have a spiritual, religious or moral dimension, and the evidence suggests they share these dimensions with the rest of the human race, then education must take those dimensions into account.

Third, once the issue of whether or not to expressly include religious or moral presuppositions at the program level is made (as contrasted with a spurious devotion to neutrality or objectivity in this area), then the widest possible latitude in instruction should be encouraged at the course level.

In other words, the *program* should consider whether it will 1) affirm in a general way that religious and moral assumptions and principles should be taught by substantive discourse and discussion rather than silence (the former being far more suited to a university's overall purpose), 2) that religion and morality are in fact valuable components of a school of education because they are relevant to its mission, 3) that the mission of the university and the school, as Hutchins affirms, is to encourage thinking and that this should include thinking about important things such as religion and morals where relevant, and 4) that inclusion of these disciplines will enhance student learning and increase satisfaction because students are thereby regarded in a holistic fashion as real persons, not just as talking heads. If it does affirm these points, then each course (and obviously each individual professor) should be accorded the widest possible latitude to determine the actual relevance of religion and morality and the most appropriate instructional method to be employed.

### **B. Other Considerations**

Finally, whether the emphasis on morality and religion is at a program or course level, a few caveats are in order. Adopt an approach which will elicit from students their particular interest in the area of religion and morality. Conversation, not conversion is an apt rule. Communication, not necessarily concurrence is another. Select a variety of materials that bear on the subject. Angell, Hutchins and Buber referred to portions of Revelation where appropriate. Academic freedom is broad enough to include these and other writings. Emphasize the significance of the whole person

in the educational process. Consideration of interdisciplinary perspectives and content as they bear upon the particular subject under discussion is also a useful tool to promote both understanding of how religion and morality fit into the wider picture.

Respect for these and other basic rules will go along way to promote integration of religion and morality into the academic plan and achieve essential objectives for today's university, faculty and student. It will also produce a student who is better trained to get on in life and is skilled at seeing the world in a fuller and more authentic way than those not so trained or skilled.

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