

Outline of Exploring a Framework for Moral Education

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Transition to the Age of Maturity

- a Humanity is in an age of rapid change - reevaluation and innovation is the rule
- b This accelerated change poses challenges - creators of revolutions find it difficult to instill in succeeding generations a sense of purpose, vision, dedication, values; while efforts of those resisting change are futile.
- c Search for moral codes and structures must be conducted with an understanding of the great forces operating within society - Baha'u'llah provides insights into the direction of history.
- d Like all organic beings, humanity goes through stages, and we are currently in the stage of adolescence - a period of transition in which the attitudes, thought, habits of childhood are inadequate for the requirement of maturity.
- e The two parallel forces operating in society are
 - i destructive (evident by violence and terrorism, breakdown of family/community life, suspicion and fear, thirst for vanities and misdirected pleasure) which tear down barriers to progress
 - ii integrative (steadily evolving, from family, tribe, city-state, nation) towards a world civilization which will repudiate excessive centralization on one hand and uniformity of the other; its watchword is unity in diversity
- f A new process of moral education must train succeeding generations - within the context of humanity's maturity and with vision of its requirements.

Twofold Purpose

- a Individuals must be imbued with a strong sense of purpose - to transform their own selves (dedication to one's vast potentialities) and to contribute to the transformation of society (dedication to promote the welfare of the human race).
- b These aspects are inseparable - we cannot segregate the human heart from the environment outside.
- c A profound awareness of the reciprocal relationship between personal growth and organic change in social structures is essential to moral education - to focus only on one's development is to lose objectivity, standards, and become prone to guilt, self-righteousness, self-satisfaction (forms of ego); while to focus only on societal

transformation is to lose respect and compassion for others and become prone to acts of cruelty and oppression.

- d A new process of moral education must transcend this dichotomy, and thus must be shaped by appropriate forces - built on convictions that influence internal moral orientation and an accurate appreciation of the relationship between individuals and the world
- e **Attraction to Beauty** (force that shapes sense of purpose)
 - i Gives proper direction to purpose; becomes a standard to judge - Manifests as love for majesty of nature, impulse to create and behold art, response to a beautiful idea or elegant scientific theory, seeing perfection of good character in others, search for order in the universe, and a desire for order in social relations. [Also, beauty of the Creative Word and its Revealer]
- f **Thirst for knowledge** (oriented by a vision of beauty) (also force that shapes purpose)
 - i Inherent quality that impels every human to search for understanding in the universe, physical and spiritual, and of one's own self - one approaches life as an investigator of reality
- g **Nobility of man** (accurate basis for investigation of truth)
 - i Human nature has two aspects - material is shaped by struggle for survival and leads to injustice, cruelty, egotism; spiritual is characterized by love, mercy, kindness, justice. The conviction of the inherent nobility of man leads one to self-knowledge and enhances one's powers to contribute to the twofold purpose.
- h **Oneness** (also enhances one's knowledge of self and universe)
 - i Conviction of the oneness of mankind enables each to feel part of one organic whole - injury to part is injury to whole, accomplishments of one are built on sacrifices of others, one's own fulfillment lies in the welfare of others.
- i **Transcendence and well-being** (fruit of investigation of reality) (directs purpose)
 - i Indispensable for moral integrity is a vision of human existence that extends beyond day to day life - enables individuals to distinguish between superficial and lasting results and directs moral purpose towards that which is permanent. Achieved through aligning oneself with that which is greater.
- j **Service** (the way purpose expresses itself)
 - i Perfection of one's own character naturally finds expression in efforts to serve others, and one's desire to serve others enhances the refinement of one's character - motivation to

carry forward an ever-advancing civilization rises from within
- the two-fold purpose becomes one process.

Essential Relationships

- a Development of moral structures of a new age implies profound change in the conception of essential relationships - just as a human being has spiritual and material side, so does social order.
- b **Man and nature** (humility, serenity, interconnectedness, rather than pride, greed, exploitation)
 - i Humanity cannot sustain a predatory relationship with nature, driven by greed, exploitation, and political conflict - as consciousness of the interconnectedness of the universe grows, insights into the principle of unity gained, appreciation of the beauty and necessity of diversity developed, people will choose means and methods for progress that are in harmony and balance with nature.
- c **Individuals and groups** (rejection of dominance and service to others)
 - i Most societies are pervaded by relations of dominance - especially injustice against women. Attention to the spiritual characteristics of social order includes universal acceptance of the fact that personal fulfillment comes from serving others and developing the potential of every member.
- d **Family** (unity, integrity of bonds, rights of each member)
 - i The fundamental institution of human civilization, the first environment of the child.
- e **The individual and social institutions** (understanding and cooperation)
 - i Throughout history, the desire of individuals for freedom and liberty and the demand of institutions for submission, used as instruments for selfish ends of a minority and mechanisms for control of a population, has caused tension.
 - ii New conceptions and understandings are required
 - 1 Individuals need to acknowledge that true freedom depends on self-discipline, and institutions should be lovingly supported and nurtured.
 - 2 Institutions are humble channels through which talents, abilities, and collective energies of the people can be expressed in service.
 - iii Conceptions of law needs to be re-examined - just as there are laws of science that describe principles that govern physical reality, there are unavoidable spiritual laws by which humanity is governed, and happiness is found through obedience to them; they guide liberation as oppose to limit freedom.

Moral Capabilities

- a Moral education is to analyze virtues, in related groups organized around moral capabilities, and devise patterns of action that foster qualities, attitudes, skills, abilities, and knowledge
- b Moral capability is developed capacity, resulting from interaction of related qualities, skills, attitudes, knowledge, to act purposefully in a well-defined field of endeavor - focus on what people are capable of doing as oppose to sermonizing
 - i Building unity is one moral capability - requires constant effort to combat prejudice, identify commonalities, and help people put aside minor disagreements.
 - ii Others needed to reshape and sustain relationships mentioned previously include: development of united family; transcending/rectifying relations of dominance; interacting harmoniously with nature; dealing with others with rectitude.
- c **Initiative** (application of will in a manner creative and disciplined)
 - i Allows one to actively seek opportunities for development, with wisdom (acquired through adopting a humble posture of learning), freeing one from fear of failure and protecting from self-indulgence and fruitless experimentation - one must learn to identify elements that can bring potentialities into reality, analyze forces at work, understand crisis and victory.
- d **Work** (universal essential aspect of existence, linked to dignity, source of happiness)
 - i Work must be built around desire to manifest excellence, will to serve society, and love of beauty - awakening of these longings are an essential task of moral education.
 - ii Work is not a personal manner, rather each person must be able to express talents and initiative within a framework of cooperation - the notion of competition distorts the human spirit and is undermining human society; basis for excellence is attraction to perfection, not the desire to out-compete others.
- e **Consultation** (search for truth; group decision-making based on a more complete view of reality)
 - i Moral thought is developed through decision making, which is a social process, and thus effective participation in group-decision-making is an essential moral capability.
 - ii Consultation, a process that extends and is connected to many parallel activities, requires adopting a posture of learning, recognition of the values underlying any set of choices, respectfully receiving opinions, and consciousness that reality is complex and each person has a unique perspective - Consultation denies use of power as the

determinant of decisions and rejects the negotiations and compromise of the democratic process.

- iii Truth leads to unity, and thus when conflict arise, consultation is not complete.

Spiritual Qualities

- a The Baha'i Faith is intimately concerned with the individual's inner state and spiritual development - the understanding of which cannot be appreciated without examining Baha'u'llahs' teachings on the nature of God.
 - i Belief in an Unknowable Essence gives rises to emotions and attitudes indispensable for moral education - creates a will and aspiration to act on moral principles and creates a context for morality.
 - ii At the foundation of all moral capabilities lie spiritual qualities that interact with each other and modify each other.
- b **Motivation for moral development: love, knowledge, faith, and obedience**
 - i There is an all-pervading love that emanates from God and expresses itself in increasing degrees throughout creation - in the human kingdom, the mind has the capacity to recognize and the heart has the capacity to reflect.
 - ii As consciousness increases, this love's embrace widens from family to neighbors to nation to race to, hopefully, all of humanity, at which point one becomes capable of contributing to a condition of unity and harmony not able to be created by other means.
 - iii Heart and mind are interconnected - love grows with knowledge, and understanding is enhanced by love. Opening one's heart to love is linked to thirst for knowledge of the universe, and as insights are gained, the love that is reflected becomes less dependent on transitory emotions and more rooted in the realities of human existence.
 - iv The interaction between love and knowledge engender faith - which is necessary to develop one's potentialities and contribute to an ever-advancing civilization (faith in one's potential, faith in a new society)
 - v Love is the motivating force behind obedience, because failure to make effort towards obedience, and thus losing love, is its own punishment; and the love that results from striving to obey is both the reward and incentive.
- c **Rectitude of conduct: trustworthiness, truthfulness, and justice**
 - i Truthfulness is the foundation of all human virtues - embodies the capacity to discern, value, and uphold truth - without this, clarity of thought is unattainable and capacity to

acquire knowledge impaired. Thus, it is the basis of the scientific method as well.

- ii Truthfulness interacts closely with justice, the standard by which individual and collective action is measured - justice is a prerequisite for unity societally, and through it, one perceives reality and acquires true knowledge.

d **Purity of motive: sanctity, sincerity, and radiance**

- i Purity has multiple levels - physical cleanliness, freeing oneself from the decadent influences of present-day society, honesty and sincerity when dealing with others, and diligence and faithfulness in managing one's own affairs.
- ii This is not asceticism; purity makes one more able to appreciate life's joys, and leads to radiance of spirit - manifested by those who live in harmony with their true purpose. Thus, joy and radiance are measures and indicators of successful moral education and moral development.

e **Attitude toward transformation: courage, trust, confidence, and humility**

- i The magnitude of the challenge of personal transformation could result in hopelessness or guilt, which interfere with development, and instead, a central task of moral education is to develop courage, faith, and confidence to strive with joy towards high potentialities - it must be moderated with humility, so that, on the one hand, complacency and arrogance, and on the other hand, passivity or inaction, are protected against.