Sport, Moral Development, and the Role of the Teacher: Implications for Research and Moral Education

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Sport, when seen as a valued human practice, is a form of moral education. In particular, the virtues, which help characterize and sustain sport as a practice, are central to what it is to be morally educated. This paper underpins this general position further by pointing out the inadequacies of some empirically based models in their approach to a study of moral development, especially when observed from the perspective of virtue theory and in particular, the Aristotelian concepts of phronesis and habituation. The latter approach, it is argued, provides criteria that is more complete as a basis for the formulation of a new model of what constitutes the nature of the moral so that it can be examined in a less limited way. It also provides a more satisfactory foundation for the teaching of moral education in schools. The last section is concerned with the role of the teacher of sport in this endeavor.

In a previous paper (Arnold, 1999), I argued that sport, when seen as a valued human practice, is in itself a form of moral education and that, in particular, the virtues, which help characterize and sustain sport as a practice, are central to the morally educated person. I want now to strengthen this general position still further by pointing out the inadequacies of a purely “justice” or “moral reasoning” approach to moral development in sport, which, under the influence of Kohlberg (1981), some other empirical researchers have somewhat uncritically adopted. Apart from drawing attention to the narrowness of Kohlberg’s model, the conceptual limitations of two other models will also be outlined. I shall then argue that by using an Aristotelian perspective (with reference to the concepts of phronesis and habituation) a better understanding of morality (and morality in sport) is provided. This perspective, it is suggested, might then be used as a basis for the development

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of a new research model for the testing and evaluation of moral development in sport. In the last section, I shall adumbrate the role of the teacher in attempting to realize this perspective.

The Limitations of a Purely Justice Approach to Moral Development in Sport

One of the most influential figures in moral development research is that of Lawrence Kohlberg. His essentially empirically based program of studies into the growth of moral reasoning was, and perhaps still is, in its various modified forms, the dominant paradigm of research into questions of moral education. The six-stage theory of moral development that Kohlberg produced (1981) was taken almost as a template and as a method of doing research in this area, whether it was related to a school subject such as English or to such activities as sports, games, and play. Although for a while Kohlberg’s findings were regarded by some as definitive, others were not only doubtful but critical. This criticism, with the recent revival of virtue ethics, is more focussed and articulate today than it was when Kohlberg’s influence was at its height. Let us look, then, at Kohlberg’s work as a form of empiricism, which held sway for a while but can now be found wanting.

Kohlberg, following Piaget (1965), considered that moral reasoning was the central issue in moral development. He also, partially under the influence of Kant, thought that “moral judgment” could be satisfactorily rendered in terms of one principle, that of justice. He meant by that “a rule of choosing that we want all people to adopt in all situations” (Kohlberg, 1981, p.39).

Kohlberg’s research can be seen as an attempt to clarify moral stages mainly on cognitive considerations (in contrast to psychoanalytic and social learning theories). The emphasis is on the acquisition of mental capacities and levels of understanding with the assumption that emotional development would move at a comparable pace. It was believed that the child who is able to think about moral questions in a certain way will have corresponding feelings and that these will help guide and motivate behavior in accordance with decisions made (see Crittenden, 1993, p. 62). Overall, Kohlberg’s theory offers a scientific account of the development of moral reasoning that claims to be true for all times and places. There have been numerous criticisms of Kohlberg’s six stages account of moral reasoning as a basis for moral education, but here I shall be concerned only with two of these.

First, Kohlberg’s account assumes wrongly, I think, that the single principle of justice encompasses all aspects of what it is to be moral. Although justice is a key aspect of moral life, it is by no means all of it. On this point, Peters (1981, p. 115) comments that Kohlberg’s account of moral development is one sided “in that it has been erected on the features of a limited interpretation of morality.”

Secondly, because of its one-sidedness, Kohlberg’s theory results in a neglect of the affective and motivational dimensions of moral life. Such qualities as sympathy, compassion, and concern for others simply do not feature in his cognitive biased account of moral development. Instead, it is restricted to the way the child (or person) is able to respond to certain hypothetical dilemmas in relation to justice. Gilligan’s (1982) objection to Kohlberg’s account of moral development not only focuses on the way women have been excluded from the construction of the theory but in its striking omissions. Whereas, for Gilligan, a justice orientation is marked by such features as impartiality, autonomy, obligation, and a contractual
approach to human relationships, a “care orientation,” in contrast, is one that is characterized by particularity, an interdependent sense of self, a view of responsibility as responsiveness, and a nurturant web approach to relationships.²

It becomes apparent that Kohlberg’s theory of moral development, especially when viewing it from the perspective of virtue ethics, is lacking in at least two major respects. Carr (1996, p. 354) in crystallizing what has been said, identifies these as first, underestimating “the moral provenance and significance of moral affectively grounded qualities of care and concern for others” and second, as neglecting “the moral significance of the acquisition of certain behavioral dispositions or qualities of character.” In the absence of these, it is difficult to see how any theory of moral development can be formulated, least of all used, as a basis of empirical research into moral development, whether in relation to sport or any other aspect of the curriculum. It is simply not sufficiently complete to identify and reflect the various aspects and complexities of moral life

A Critique of Two Other Empirically Based Research Models

Those researchers who followed Kohlberg, and were conscious of the criticisms made of him, were left with two main choices: either to reject the cognitivist paradigm and look elsewhere for an adequate account of morality or to attempt some modifications to it. Haan (1985, 1991), a child psychologist and a former associate and collaborator of Kohlberg, chose the latter course. She thought that Kohlberg was too committed to the Kantian tradition of individual autonomy and set out to develop her own form of moral psychology, which I believe contains as many defects as the model developed by Kohlberg.

At the heart of Haan’s model of morality are four concepts: moral balance, moral dialogue, moral truth, and moral levels. Moral balance connotes a form of explicit or tacit interpersonal negotiated agreement whereby each person plays a part in discerning right from wrong. Fairness becomes what the parties decide is in their mutual interest. It will be noted here that fairness is not, as it is with Kohlberg, derived from the principle of justice but rather as having an equal right to establish rules and standards in communal life even if it is morally questionable, even “wrong.” Morality for Haan is no more than a form of social construction. For her, it would seem to be theoretically possible for a delinquent group to successfully negotiate forms of belief and conduct that were socially offensive to the larger community of which they are a part. Moral truth turns out to be no more than those balances that are achieved under conditions of fairness. For Haan, the concept of moral truth is not to be equated with anything morally substantive but merely with those pragmatic procedures reached fairly through a moral dialogue that emphasizes the part negotiation, verbal or otherwise, must play in the achieving of moral balance. Haan (1978) testifies to her own unsatisfactory theoretical position about what counts as morality when she acknowledges that her own constructivist position “identifies people’s consensus about social realities as truth” (p. 289). It will be appreciated that because a group of people agree on a certain course of action does not necessarily make it a moral one. Other tests, not least those to do with universality, benevolence, and compassion, would also need to be invoked. In short, the establishment of social norms (which is what moral balance seems to be) are not to be equated with a system of normative ethics as the term is understood in
moral philosophy. The first refers to conduct as it is; the second, with conduct as it ought to be. The first is a descriptive finding; the second is a prescriptive one. In Haan's model, there is a real danger that the former is taken to be the latter, especially perhaps among her less discriminate followers, with the result that moral levels of development presented are not in any substantive sense moral at all but are rather different ways of structuring (procedurally) what is somewhat misleadingly called "moral balance."

All in all and for the reasons given, it will be seen that Haan's model for researching into moral development is no less deficient than the one formulated by Kohlberg. Both, in their different ways, detract from the very notion of what it is to be moral. Each of them lacks an adequate account of what morality involves.

Shields and Bredemeier (1995), in their "integrated" model of moral development, attempt to accommodate some of the criticisms of both Kohlberg and Haan (as well as others) by recognizing that moral development might be better conceptualized as a three-track process of moral reasoning, development of such affective capacities as empathy and sympathy, and the development of interpersonal moral skills. They also recognize, somewhat reassuringly, that what they call causal factors in moral behavior are "multiple and varied and they interact in complex ways" (1995, p. 32).

In adopting then elaborating on Rest's (1979, 1984) Four Component Model of Moral Action which, Rest claims, helps characterize every moral action, Shields and Bredemeier make use of a framework that is comprised of four processes: (a) an interpretation of the situation, (b) the forming of a judgment about what should be done, (c) the selection of a value from a possible range of competing values to guide action, and (d) the implementation or carrying out of the action that embodies and instantiates the value chosen.

Shields and Bredemeier (1995) claim, I think correctly, that Rest's model is useful for at least three reasons. First, it renders the complexity of moral behavior more manageable by organizing moral constructs and research into meaningful components. Second, rather than dividing cognition and affect, it enables the investigator to consider cognitive-affective interactions within and among component processes. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the model is built on a descriptive analysis of the necessary processes that make up moral action. They make the further point that the model is theory independent with the result that it can incorporate insights from different research traditions. Shields and Bredemeier (1995, p. 85) assume, along with Rest, that moral action is "infused with and partially motivated by such feelings as empathy, sympathy, pride and guilt."

Shields and Bredemeier's 12 Component Model of Moral Action is much more satisfactory than the models of Kohlberg and Haan because it is less reductionist in what it proposes to count as being involved in morality. To some extent, it also makes provision for the role of the virtues in moral action as well as for the place of character. Shields and Bredemeier observe (1995, pp. 192-193), for example, that "we define character as the possession of those personal qualities or virtues that facilitate the consistent display of moral action."

Overall, the model of Shields and Bredemeier can be regarded as more complete than the other two models previously considered. It is, however, far from perfect. As they themselves recognize (p.169), the model has at least three limitations. First, it is ahistorical and, although taking account of the present, it disregards the forces of tradition that have helped shape the present. Second, the model
has difficulty in coping with responses that have been “overlearned” because the model is based on the assumption that each moral act has to be newly constructed. Third, the model is excessively individualistic and tends to play down or disregard the role of the group or community in the establishment of what is moral. Perhaps, however, the greatest limitation of all, since the model serves as a basis for a particular account of character, is the association of the term character with the four virtues of compassion, fairness, sportspersonship, and integrity. Questions concerning this arise: Why these virtues in particular? Why omit some others such as courage, loyalty, cooperativeness, dependability, or self-control? The virtue of sportspersonship, in particular, as it is outlined (Shields & Bredemeier, 1995, p. 194) is left especially inchoate so that its use as an investigatory concept is questionable.

Apart from the model’s limitation in associating only four virtues with the idea of a moral character and with the meaning of one of the virtues being left exceedingly vague, two other questions about the conceptual basis of the model need to be resolved: Are the virtues seen only in terms of them being instrumental, i.e. as facilitating “consistent moral action,” or are they seen in addition as instantiating moral action, i.e. is being virtuous being moral? Is the question of a good character, upon which the model of Shields and Bredemeier is premised, satisfactorily resolved by reference only to the principle of fairness? Clarity is required about both of these matters.

In summary, having looked at three well-known models that have been used in relation to research into moral development in sport and found each of them to be to a greater or lesser degree unsatisfactory, I want now to unfold two Aristotelian concepts that I believe will help further the quest for a more satisfactory model.

**Phronesis and the Rationality of Sporting Practices**

It can be said that virtue ethics is preferable to the ethics of duty in that it looks to human flourishing or well-being (eudaemonia) as an ultimate value rather than to justice. In particular, it looks to certain qualities of character and conduct that are conducive to both individual and community welfare. Such virtues as wisdom, courage, honesty, benevolence, tolerance, and compassion as well as justice are seen as forms of human excellence that are worth pursuing in themselves as well as being useful in the realization of other desirable goods such as medicine or sport. Just as virtues have to be nurtured and cultivated in upbringing, so too do such vices as callousness, ignorance, fearfulness, spite, bigotry, cruelty, and injustice have to be discouraged.

Instead of just moral reasoning being presented as a basis for moral development, there is instead a far broader account of moral development available, which is considerably more balanced and concerned with the acquisition of a variety of human excellences. A virtue approach to moral development, then, is one that is concerned with a prolonged and systematic attempt to bring about excellences in people so that they will be reliably and characteristically motivated to act appropriately in particular circumstances.

People with good moral character come to possess a wide range of virtues and are willingly disposed to act upon them both in their own long term interests as well as in the interests of others. How they will be applied precisely will vary
from one practice to another and from one situation to another. Clearly, being moral lies not only in the ability to reason about moral issues in real life (rather than hypothetical ones) and make moral judgments in relation to them but to feel about them and act upon them in a way that someone with practical wisdom would. Aristotle’s view of how this is best accomplished is the subject of the next two sections, which are to do with phronesis and habituation.

Briefly speaking, phronesis is the term Aristotle uses to refer to the wise application of knowledge to everyday living. It is that faculty (power, ability, capacity) in humans which, according to Angeles (1981, p. 212), enables them to discover the correct (proper, right) action in a given situation and makes human desires conform to reason. It entails a knowledge of the goods (ends, goals) of rational human conduct and a knowledge of the means and their appropriate application in achieving those desirable rational goods. Aristotle defines phronesis as “a truth-attaining intellectual quality concerned with doing and with things that are good for human beings” (Zagzebski, 1996, pp. 229-230). Schuchman (1980, p. 33), in keeping with this, suggests that it is “the capacity to think well for the sake of living well.”

It should be noted that the very concept of moral virtue refers to a person with phronesis. According to Zagzebski (1996, p. 220), a virtue like phronesis is theoretically necessary to make sense of both morally right action and a justified belief in virtue theory.

Phronesis, in general, can be thought of as a form of practical thinking concerned with what to do, especially with regard to the living of life. It therefore embodies a moral dimension and is concerned with such virtues as courage, temperance, justice, truthfulness, and friendliness. A practically wise person is necessarily virtuous, and a virtuous person is necessarily practically wise.

Phronesis is important to individuals in at least three different ways: in planning the ends and means of their lives, in conducting themselves with understanding and insight with regard to particular social practices, and in relating what is chosen and done to the good of the community as a whole. In what follows, I shall be concerned mainly with the second of these in the form of sport as a social practice.

Elsewhere, Arnold (1992, 1997, 1999), in arguing that sport is a valued human practice, has, following MacIntyre (1985, p. 187), taken the term to mean “any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which the goals internal to that activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goals involved, are systematically extended.”

I argue that if sport is to be understood in this way, as I believe it should be in the context of education, with its emphasis on the achievement of internal goals rather than external ones, it follows that the virtue of phronesis is important to the manner in which it is both taught and conducted if its integrity is to be preserved. To engage in sport successfully, it is both necessary to understand it as a distinctive practice and to exercise phronesis in relation to it so that its highest values and standards can be upheld and preserved.

What then does phronesis in sport entail? First, it involves understanding that each instance of sport has its own moral as well as technical demands. Each
activity has its own particular telos, which invites a relevant form of phronesis. Second, this in turn involves grasping that there is a reciprocal relationship between a given sport and the phronesic responses that are appropriate to it. Unless participants are properly initiated into a sport as a practice, it is very difficult for them to understand and perceive actions required and those appropriate. Put somewhat differently, it can be said that there is a necessary connection between the goals intrinsic to a particular sport (e.g. soccer) and the rules and the virtues that help characterize it as one. At a socio-technical level, an instance of this is given by MacIntyre (1998, p. 115) in a discussion of practical rationality:

A hockey player in the closing seconds of a crucial game has an opportunity to pass to another member of his or her team better placed to score a needed goal. Necessarily, we may say, if he or she has perceived and judged the situation accurately, he or she must immediately pass. What is the force of this “necessarily” and this “must”? It exhibits the connection between the good of that person qua hockey player and member of that particular team and the action of passing, a connection such that were such a player not to pass, he or she must either have falsely denied that passing was for their good qua hockey player or have been guilty of inconsistency or have acted as one not caring for his or her good qua hockey player member of that particular team. That is to say, we recognize the necessity and the immediacy of rational action by someone inhabiting a structured role in a context where the goods of some systematic form of practice are unambiguously ordered. And in so doing, we apply to one part of our social life a conception which Aristotle applies to rational social life as such.

Similarly, in the moral sphere, phronesis in sport entails that participants be not only informed about the rules and their application but have an understanding and appreciation of the ethical principles upon which those rules are based. It will be seen, for example, that fairness is a form of justice and is, in part, dependent on the principle of equality whereby the players of a particular sport come together in the full knowledge that (a) the rules apply to themselves as well as to others and (b) that rules benefit all participants if the sport concerned is to proceed in such a way that one person or team will not gain an unfair advantage over another. The point here is that a person who has phronesis will act out of a desire to be fair and not merely out of a sense of duty.

More than this, however, the person who exercises phronesis in a sport will perceive that some acts, although permitted by the rules, actually contravene the spirit of the practice in terms of its best traditions and conventions. It is at such moments that the participant with phronesis, perhaps at some disadvantage to himself, may act generously, amiably, or compassionately. Such human qualities, it will be seen, although not required by the rules, reveal a grasp of what it is to be a member of a practice. They provide an ethos by which the practice can in part be characterized. The point here, as MacIntyre (1999, p. 93) recognizes, is that “knowing how to act virtuously always involves more than rule-following” and it will be seen that this applies even to a heavily rule-governed practice such as sport.

In general, the person who has phronesis in relation to sport is not only able to exercise wise judgment in relation to its rules, conventions, and traditions, but is able to perform with knowledge and understanding those actions, both technical
and interpersonal, that are in keeping with its spirit. In addition, he or she will have
the capacity to perceive that the goods that are intrinsic to sport relate to those
other goals that help shape and govern his or her life as a whole.

In recent years, the concept of phronesis has been adopted by a number of
researchers in education, partially because they see it is central to the notion of
moral development, especially as this relates to virtue theory (e.g. Dunne, 1993),
and partially because it is seen as having importance for improving the practice of
teaching (e.g. Tom, 1984). Noel (1991) claims that “different interpretations of
phronesis can give rise to different conceptions of teaching and of education” (p.
274). He maintains that there is (a) a rationality interpretation, which is concerned
with deliberation and deliberative strategies; (b) a situational perception and in-
sight interpretation, which is concerned with what in particular would it be ap-
propriate to do; and (c) a moral character interpretation, which is concerned with the
good life or living well.

I draw attention the these studies not only because they may be of interest to
potential researchers in sport but to suggest that Noel’s analysis of phronesis as
having three different interpretations is misleading. As he himself observes in
Aristotle’s works, they are “interconnected” (p. 275). They are, in fact, not different
interpretations at all but rather different aspects of the same concept. They
each, together with some other elements of phronesis, come into play when it is
appropriate for them to do so. In so far as these general comments relate to sport,
clearly it makes sense only in so far as it refers to each sport as a distinctive form
of practice with its own rules and ways of proceeding.

It will be appreciated that in the context of education, the concept of phronesis
is concerned not only with the development of a person’s character but with the
learning and teaching of specific subjects, whether they are called sport, history,
mathematics, or English. Clearly, phronesis is not only concerned with the well-
being of a person’s life in general but also with the pursuit of those specific prac-
tices that help make this possible.

These brief comments reveal that phronesis is a useful if somewhat complex
concept. Phronesis is rich in possibilities as a basis for further research projects. If
its different aspects are to be made coherent, however, the division of its parts into
separate entities must be avoided because, if taken on their own, they lack compreh-
ensiveness of meaning.

Learning by Habituation

The concept of habituation is sometimes referred to as if it were a form of
drilling whereby character traits are acquired through the practice of correspond-
ing actions. Aristotle himself occasionally gives this impression when in discuss-
ing moral education, he says “Excellences we get by first exercising them. . . . Men
become builders by building and lyre-players by playing the lyre; so too, we be-
come just by doing just acts, temperate doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave
acts,” (as cited in Barnes, 1984, p. 56)

Habituation is seen by some narrowly and confined to an early period of
development, separate from and antecedent to the development of the rational and
reflective capacities; others see it as having a wider and more comprehensive mean-
ing. Sherman (1989), for example, argues that a broader grasp of Aristotle’s texts
suggest that his concept of habituation is not a mechanistic theory but one that
takes account of the perceptual, affective, and the deliberative aspects of the developing person. "Habituation," she writes, "requires no rote memory of rules, but the exercise of judgement and reason as a part of the practice" (p. 153).

Broaddie (1991) also takes this more enlightened view of habituation. She recognizes that habituation is not a "mindless process" (p. 109) of repetition, as it is sometimes depicted, but one that gradually attunes the pupil (or agent) to make an appropriate response to a given set of circumstances. It thus requires perception, deliberation, and a disposition to act effectively for the right reasons. Especially, perhaps in the context of education, habituation should be seen as that process by which the person (or pupil) learns that form of "practical wisdom" (or phronesis) that is concerned with

... the ability to deliberate well about what promotes good living in general (as distinct from some restricted area of life) and about what is good or bad for a human being as such. (Broaddie, 1991, p. 192)

Aristotle's concept of critical habituation makes clear that it combines the growth of character with that of practical reasoning. It leads him to make the claim in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that one cannot be good without practical wisdom, nor wise without virtue. Aristotle recognizes that if the process of habituation is to be effective, it must be taught in such a way that it takes account of maturational and environmental factors. Both family and teachers should be involved in the provision of help and guidance.

Habituation, then, or learning to be good, is acquired by upbringing and is sustained by practice. It is in part characterized by the desire to know and the capacity to grasp what needs or ought to be done in relation to a particular situation or subject matter. It invokes and tries to give appropriate answers and actions to questions such as these: How am I to control what is happening here? How is what I see different from similar circumstances I have encountered previously? How do I proceed given things as they are? How, if at all, is my choice related to the living of the good life?

Aristotle views pleasure as an intrinsic part of moral learning. He recognizes, as many learning theories do today, that when learning is associated with pleasure, there is greater chance of its being repeated than if it is accompanied by pain. A part of the habituation process, therefore, is concerned with rewarding virtuous activity with praise and castigating vicious activity with reproof. This is particularly important in the early years in order to help establish virtuous conduct. Sherman (1989, p. 189) underlines this point when she says "To become aware of the circumstances necessary for the specific virtues, and to begin to form the right sorts of emotional responses and decisions for action is itself a part of having virtue."

Once the virtues, with the aid of instruction, have become more firmly founded as qualities of character, pleasure, Aristotle maintains, not only becomes an intrinsic part of virtuous action but even aids in the discriminatory performance of an activity.

For the pleasure proper to an activity increases that activity. For those who perform their activities with pleasure judge better and discern with greater precision each thing, e.g. those finding pleasure in geometry become geometers, and understand the subject-matter better,
and similarly also, lovers of music, lovers of building and so on, make progress \textit{(epididyoasis)} in their appropriate function when they enjoy it. (as cited in Barnes, 1984, p. 56)

The point is eventually reached whereby the virtuous person acts knowingly, feelingly, and perceptively in a particular situation and takes pleasure in the doing of it because it is in itself the right thing to do.

I suggest, then, that habituation, at least in its more sophisticated form, is not a process of crude conditioning but a stage-by-stage form of progress. It leads, in the moral developmental sphere, from the young person being aided in his learning by the use of pleasurable rewards for the performance of virtuous actions to one whereby the mature agent is guided by the informed choices he or she makes and is motivated by the desire to act because it is in itself the good and intrinsically pleasurable thing to do. The virtuous person, to put it another way, acts virtuously not out of duty or because it would make the greatest number happy but because he takes joy in doing so.

Clearly, the concept of habituation is not to be misconstrued as thoughtless habit formation, somewhat like a process of conditioning. Rather it should be understood as a gradual and sustained learning process in and through which the virtues are encouraged and developed, especially in relation to those practices that together help constitute the good life.

One problem for the teacher or researcher in this transition toward maturity is being able to differentiate in pupils those behaviors that are motivated by the attainment of genuine virtues (i.e. those that arise from the demands of the activity itself) from those that are counterfeit (i.e. those that appear to be genuine but are not). Only when a pupil is motivated by the attainment of genuine or intrinsically necessary goods and values in relation to a practice such as sport can the educative process happen.

In attempting to summarize the key features of habituation in relation to sport pedagogy, especially with regard to a young person’s moral development, I suggest the following are important: (a) that it takes account of a pupil’s maturational stages; (b) that it emphasizes reflective practice; (c) that it puts a premium on particular contexts and circumstances; (d) that it attempts to cultivate the virtues rather than rely solely upon an appeal to abstract principles; (e) that it actively seeks out and establishes the relationship between the thinking, feeling, and doing in the making of a response; (f) that it recognizes the importance of pleasure as a form of motivation; and (g) that the role of teacher as model and educator (as well as parent) is held as important. Any new model arising from virtue theory will take into account each of these points.

Enough has been said to suggest that if a model can be designed along the lines outlined for research purposes, it will offer a considerable advance in terms of what is involved in moral learning and development than the three models previously discussed. In the case of the last of these (i.e. Shields and Bredemeier, 1995), it will open up in a more fruitful way the place of the virtues in relation to sport as a valued human practice; it will also overcome their own criticisms of their model, which were in part concerned with its lack of historical perspective and sense of community. I will now elaborate on the last of the seven points listed above.
The Role of the Teacher

It has been suggested that the concepts of phronesis and habituation are at the heart of an Aristotelian virtue approach to the development of a moral character in sport. It is the job of the teacher as educator (rather than as trainer, coach, or instructor) to relate one to the other in such a way that over a period of time, the pupil will come to understand what is involved in the practice of sport and derive fulfillment and satisfaction from so doing.

The teacher as educator is concerned with the initiation of the young in a morally defensible way into a culture’s worthwhile pursuits so that they are able to be practiced and appreciated for what they are. What, then, can a teacher of sport reasonably be expected to do in order, among other things, to bring about the development of character in a morally acceptable way? In answering this question, there are, seemingly, at least four important aspects that should be addressed.

The Teacher as an Initiator Into and a Guardian of the Practice View of Sport

Any pupil being initiated into a particular sport will be expected to learn the rules that govern and characterize that activity, but it is the responsibility of the teacher to explain that at heart, they are not only to do with fairness but having a respect for all of the participants, whether on the same side or in opposition. Views that may be expressed or enacted concerned with cheating, dangerous play, or unacceptable behavior should not be condoned but condemned because they offend the rules of the activity and its spirit. Conversely, acts of consideration or sportspersonship, although not required by the rules, should be recognized and commended as in keeping with sport as a valued practice. Attention should be paid to the rules of sport and the ethical principles upon which they are based as well as to its skills, techniques, tactics, and strategies. Emphasized also should be its moral ethos and the ideals and virtues in which it is rooted. The place of fable and story should not be overlooked here. All these matters help to exemplify the idea of sport as a form of practical rationality and relate to what was said earlier about phronesis.

The teacher will act as guardian, guide, and mentor in these respects. By caring about sport as a practice and making informed judgments in relation to it, the teacher will pave the way to an understanding of sport and the manner in which it should be conducted. Then, its finest conventions and traditions will be preserved and enacted.

The Teacher as an Enlightened Leader of Discussion

It is inevitable that situations arise in sport that both require and provide opportunities for comment and discussion. These might emerge from the playing of a game and can be quickly settled by a reference to the rules. There may be other more general matters, however, that require considerable knowledge and understanding if they are to be considered in a rational and sensitive way. Issues such as winning at all costs, the use of professional fouls, and the taking of performance-enhancing drugs as well as social concerns such as race, gender, and the
use of sport for political and commercial purposes come to mind. These topics may seem a long way removed from the practice view of sport, yet modern sport, especially at representative level, is bound up with them. It is, therefore, necessary for the teacher to have at least an acquaintance with the place of sport in society and confront the problems that this can pose for sport as a form of education within the school. Teachers should confront these both formally, in the form of structured lessons in which points of view are expressed, as well as informally in their day to day observations with pupils.

Meakin (1981, p. 246) also advocates that discussion should be a part of the teaching process: "The aim would be to sensitize the developing child to the moral presuppositions of competitive sport and bring home to him that he has some degree of choice whether to abide (by them) or not." The teacher, he suggests, should not only ask children whether they ought or want to behave in certain ways but, by an appeal to moral reasoning, should condemn bad practices and recommend good ones. Thus, in a rational way, the development of ethical ideals and modes of conduct such as modesty in victory and dignity in defeat can be nurtured. This, if handled intelligently, could be of assistance in the prevention of antisocial and morally wrong practices, perhaps even in the encouragement and living out of what is demanded by the practice view of sport. It will be seen, however, that discussion on its own is not likely to be sufficient. It could, if not related to sportsfield practice, result in an intellectual acceptance of what is appropriate behavior, without it necessarily occurring. As was intimated earlier, being moral is a matter of motivation and doing as much as reason.

Although teachers in their formal position of authority are expected to be rational and objective in the presentation of arguments, this does not necessarily mean that they must remain silent about which particular view they personally hold. On the contrary, it seems to me important and desirable that they reveal their viewpoint and integrity if they are to be respected. As Warnock (1977, p. 143) puts it, "If the teacher as a moral agent is to affect the moral development of others, he must show that he has views, principles, attitudes—even passions, himself."

The Teacher as Exemplar
of the Values Embodied in Sport

Moral education in sport is concerned with the processes of judging, caring, and acting in relation to a concern for the interests and welfare of others as well as ourselves. Much of this aspect of sport education can be directly taught, but a lot depends on the teachers and the ideals and values they embody and project. In matters of moral development, this is particularly important, for no matter what teachers may formally do as a result of the position they occupy, it will count for little unless, by example, they live out the values they publicly extol. There is good reason for the idea that moral education is as much caught as taught. The sports teachers' thoughts, feelings, and dispositions become, for better or worse, a model of what is normal or even acceptable. As previously intimated, rationality and knowledge about what is required in moral matters does not always lead to appropriate feelings or right actions. In moral matters, they stand a better chance of doing so if they are seen to come shingly together in the case of influential others. In this respect, the teacher and the parent are crucial figures. On this point Carr (1991, p. 258) comments:
A good teacher is not just the technically efficient deliverer of certain curricular goods. He or she is the kind of person who is looked up to by virtue of possessing certain admirable qualities of character upon which it is appropriate to model our lives.

It is important that teachers of sport be the kind of people who care about the worth of their subject and teach it in a way that fairness, consideration, courage, honesty, and compassion are in evidence. If morality is to be conveyed indirectly as well as directly, it is best done in an unobtrusive way by those who are authentically moral and possess the qualities that are occasionally extolled and which are a necessary part of the practice called sport.

It is unlikely that social and moral values in sport can be effectively taught unless teachers show a commitment to such values themselves. This is a tall order, yet it is not an impossible one to fulfill. The power of example and commitment make it all the more necessary, in the words of Warnock (1977, p. 135-6), “for teachers to know what they are at, what characteristics they are displaying, since their virtues and vices will form a part of the whole picture of possible moral behaviour that a child will, gradually, build up.” In being conscious of their role, however, it is as well for them to remember Ryle’s (1975, p. 57) comment that “…in matters of morality as distinct from techniques, good examples had better not be set with edifying purpose.” If teachers are too intent or heavy handed in the presentation of themselves as a model, or are seen not to be genuine, they are likely to be scorned, ridiculed, or perhaps even worse, disregarded. In the last resort, the sport teachers’ work is measured not so much by their pupils’ dispassionate judgments but by the attitudes and conduct of the pupils as they engage in the fervor and challenge of competition.

The Teacher as a Provider of Individual Pastoral Care

No matter how clear the message regarding what conduct is appropriate to the practice view of sport, there will be those who know what is right but do what is wrong. There will be an inconsistency between what they know and understand and how they conduct themselves. There may be many reasons for this disparity between thought and action. It may be a failure of perception, know-how, or of caring. Whatever the explanation, it becomes the responsibility of the teacher to provide some individual counseling. This will emphasize to pupils that conduct in sport, as in other walks of life, is not a matter of indifference but of concern, because it affects others as well as themselves. This is so whether it relates to a deliberate transgression of the rules governing procedures or whether it relates to the intentional injury of another. The practice view of sport is dependent on mutual cooperation and respect in the interests of what is fair. To undermine sport by flouting its rules and conventions is to corrupt and spoil it as a worthwhile pursuit. If after counseling, miscreant behavior continues, then the issue arises as to whether the individual should be permitted to continue as a participant.

Concluding Comments

Overall, it can be said that moral development in education, as in life, is concerned with our interpersonal relations. It involves a consideration for others as well as for ourselves, and it attempts to distinguish right from wrong, good from
bad. It is often associated with values and principles that need to be taken into account before choosing or carrying out a particular action. Hence, such principles as universality, impartiality, and benevolence are frequently cited as underpinning the character of moral discourse. In a virtue-based approach to moral development, however, it is not so much to principles that one looks as providing guidance for conduct but rather to those “inner traits, dispositions and motives” that help mark out the virtuous individual (Baron, Pettit, & Slote, 1997, p. 177). In particular it emphasizes those highly regarded qualities of character, such as honesty, tolerance, and compassion that flow from those individuals who, without relying on set principles and rules, are sensitive and intelligent enough to perceive what is appropriate as one set of circumstances gives way to another. Because character education is concerned with the cultivation and deployment of certain forms of human excellence, rather than with the performance of acts based on duty or a calculation of consequences, it is sometimes referred to as being agent focused.

In summary, good character development aims to bring about the education of individual persons who are able to think, feel, and act in ways that are not only of long term benefit to themselves but to the practices in which they engage and to the larger community of which they are an integral part. It is when we think about the kind of character we want for our children, says Lickona (1992, p. 51), that “it’s clear that we want them to be able to judge what is right, care deeply about what is right, and then do what they believe to be right—even in the face of pressure from without and temptation from within.” Any view of moral development that settles for less is an impoverished one.

References


**Notes**

1While it is true that Kohlberg, in his later writings, came to acknowledge that justice was not the whole of morality, he unfortunately did so without making any corresponding change to the way in which his stages of moral development were constructed, and it is these that have been taken as the basis of research into sport and other aspects of the curriculum.

2For a more extensive criticism of Kohlberg’s theory, see Crittenden (1993).

3The 12 Component Model of Moral Action can be found in summarized form in Shields and Bredemeier (1995) on page 92. In brief, however, it comprises a grid of processes, which are concerned with interpretation, judgment, choice, and implementation.

4See Barnes (1984).
For further comments about the difference between genuine virtues and counterfeit ones, see MacIntyre’s article “How to seem virtuous without actually being so” in Halstead and McLaughlin (1999).

It is important to understand that MacIntyre associates genuine virtues with the Aristotelian point of view whereby they are constituent elements in the achievement of a particular kind of human ethos.