



# THE CONSCIENCE CELEBRATION

A STORY ABOUT  
MORAL FLOURISHING

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## **The Conscience Celebration**

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## **The Conscience Celebration Study Guide**

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## ABOUT THE CONSCIENCE CELEBRATION

Our first offering for our second decade of psychoeducation is entitled **The Conscience Celebration**. This is a serialized book with a new episode appearing approximately every two months. Neither morally didactic (i.e. it is not a book of virtues); nor a "How To" book about moral reasoning with Kohlbergian dilemmas; nor a workbook on values clarification. This book is intended to be informative to children about what they and their peers are experiencing, in common and diverse experiences, as their consciences develop. It is a secular, psychoeducational book about conscience development and functioning. As such, it provides tools to discuss moral development the way educational videos assist teacher, parent and child with discussion of sexual development and sexuality. **The Conscience Celebration** is also a rendering, in a family book format, of research findings and interpretations drawn from *The Conscience Study* that began over 15 years ago in the early 1980's. The ongoing **Indiana University Conscience Project** is dedicated to research and education of conscience formation and functioning across the lifespan. *The Conscience Study* (see references below) examined the awareness children and adolescents, between the ages of 5 to 17 years. The study, which drew subjects from religious and community schools, was organized around the **Stilwell Conscience Interview**. In the course of our research, we acquired many drawings from children asked to "use your imagination and draw a picture of your conscience." Some of these drawings are reproduced in **The Conscience Celebration**. In addition, the reader will find embedded in the story the same questions that were asked of our research subjects. We hope the insights drawn from actual interviews with 132 volunteers make our story informative. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the characters in the **Conscience Celebration** are entirely fictitious. Finally, we cannot ignore the near certainty that any recognizably "good for you" book will be shunned by kids, unless it is required reading. In this case, grown-ups make the requirements in different settings including families, schools, clinics and religious schools where a secular and scientific view of moral development is seen as an important basis for discussion.

The Authors.

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We hope that in our final version, we have done at least some justice to the emendatory and reparative work indicated by the able first readers whose names appear below. If we have failed here or there in this task, it is not because our first readers lacked insight into the ideal potential of this work. They shared in the aspiration of what we set out to accomplish, gave our work their careful consideration and were concerned to guide it practically, ethically and aesthetically. Undoubtedly, they were sometimes too generous in ascribing conscious intent to authors who only fortuitously struck a responsive chord more deeply within their wonderment. Nor were they lacking in clarity as they described our work's actual faults. However, we may not have fully appreciated or decisively remedied the flaws these first readers identified. We hope that the current reader, discerning a persistent fault, will give their predecessors the benefit of the doubt: they were not remiss in their critical, peer-review duties. We also hope that the current reader, while holding us entirely accountable, will accept on faith that we made efforts to respond to the excellent suggestions we received. We did not succumb to what the Ancient Greeks called *akrasia* and knowingly, deliberately allow mistakes to stand.

## **First Readers** (in alphabetical order):

Jill Abram, M.D., Fellow in Child Psychiatry, IU

Ms. Barbara Brown, Special Education, Larue Carter Hospital

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Phil Coons, M.D., Professor of Psychiatry, I.U.

Wm. DeMyer, M.D., Professor of Pediatric Neurology, I.U.

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Deborah Chernin Galvin, M.S., Wife, mother, performing artist, Physical Therapist

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Charles Shelton S.J., PhD. Associate Professor of Psychology, Regis University, Author, Morality of the Heart

Deborah Vahary, R.N., Methodist Behavioral Care Center

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Kelda Walsh, M.D., Assistant Professor of Child Psychiatry, I.U.

Marcia Plant Jackson, R.N., M.P.H.

Marylou Zirkelbach, R.N.

# THE CONSCIENCE CELEBRATION: COMMENTARIES

**Selected Comments** from the First Readers of The Conscience Celebration, addressed to Ms Susan Cakars who provided editorial advice, reprinted with permission:

"At this point in our history when society appears to be disintegrating, this book should prove to be a help to a wide variety of professions in their efforts to promote empathic connections between children and their world. I think the book would be most effective as a basis for group discussion. The story is interesting with the right amount of tension to make the reader want to know what will happen next. The teaching or instructive sections may need the guidance of an adult facilitator to keep the youngsters involved....

"... I liked the examples of conscience development and think they will appeal to the middle school group.

"...[T]he dilemma[s] which the main characters found themselves in were interesting and the way their stories were dispersed will keep the reader involved with what will happen next. The examples (Aaron and Cynthia) will be primarily identified by middle-class children. The examples involving animals will have a universal appeal....

"... I liked the example of Jamie and Cynthia's discovery about the causes of the changes she saw in her friend. I believe this will encourage young readers to look beyond concrete reactions to behavior and to be interested in motivations or causes for changes observed, the search for which is the beginning of the empathic connection.

"...I liked the reassurance that everyone is different in their emotional response. This is important so that children won't feel abnormal if they don't react like others. The acceptance was also illustrated clearly in the contrasting responses of Aaron And Cynthia.

"...The description of Jamie and Jessica is beautiful and realistic.



"In summary, I think this is a timely story that will prove to be useful to a wide variety of caregivers whose purpose is to facilitate healthy growth in children. Children will find it absorbing but may need guidance through this didactic sections...."

**Linn LaClave, PhD.**

Chief Psychologist Riley Child Psychiatry Clinic

Clinical Associate Professor of Psychology, I.U. School of Medicine.

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" I recently finished 'The Conscience Celebration' by Matthew Galvin and Barbara Stilwell. I really found it to be an excellent piece of writing.

" I thought it was able to combine a learning modality that was understandable and self-revealing in terms of the adolescent experience. Further, it was very relevant to the life of the typical child/adolescent, expressing the dynamics, issues, and dilemmas that are so much a part of developmental processes.

" I would think the book quite useful for young people as both a source for self-help reading as well as for instructional purposes..."

**Charles M. Shelton, S.J., PhD.**

Associate Professor of Psychology

Regis University.

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" I am writing regarding Matthew Galvin and Barbara Stilwell's manuscript, The Conscience Celebration. I teach courses at IUPUI in Religious Studies and sometimes lead discussions on morality and ethics in the World Religions.

"Galvin and Stilwell have done a remarkable job with this book on the elusive topic of the development of childhood conscience.

" In it, they create a group dynamic with vivid personalities, and conjure up neighborhood scenes, sketching the 'bridge kids,' parents doctors and youths with questioning minds, involved in discoveries about right and wrong. In this subtle way they dramatize the issues and suggest emergent conclusions. The trick of this is really quite neat --they describe the textures of everyday life for kids, capturing them so well that the ideas unfold naturally in a thick (rather than thin or superficial) rich weave of actions and feelings, concepts and theories. Thus information, knowledge and even wisdom are imparted in a pleasant story form.

"The book is like a journey exploring the terrain of complex experiences in the interior life of children. It is a useful work, rich with insights, valuable for those seeking to understand the inner language and its connections with children's behavior.

" The discussions in the book feature illustrative examples drawn from literature, history, religions and current events as well as typical childhood goings-on.

" It is a well-thought out exposition of lucid reasoning about good and bad conduct and the formation of a moral sense. It serves an important purpose in our time-- to illuminate the issues with the findings of our best researchers in the field. I highly recommend it for publication...."

**William J. Jackson, PhD.**

Associate Professor Religious Studies.

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"Please excuse the delay in sending this response to a draft of **The Conscience Celebration** by Drs. Galvin and Stilwell. I've read it a few times and have been impressed with the story line and the means by which conscience development has been presented for assimilation and understanding of children, their parents and perhaps by teachers and school

counselors. The reader who is familiar with the authors, both of whom have a very easy and familiar manner with youngsters, can almost hear them chatting with the children under their care. The book, it seems to me, would best be targeted to older children and pre-teens ages 10 to 14. The story line is engaging and is a neat way to convey information to a variety of interested readers.

" At a time when schools are being increasingly required to socialize their students and even to provide a reasonable model for the development of morals, this book should be very much in demand if teacher and/or counselor guides could be available to them to make the most of the material that may be unfamiliar to them. This might be specially true for special education professionals (e.g. teachers, teacher aides, guidance counselors, tutors). This book might also be [useful] for the residential or institutional placement sector which is constantly seeking the means to socialize the youngsters residing with them.

" The manuscript intermittently becomes didactic and convoluted, with the concepts difficult and probably requiring great effort for younger readers to grasp. Therefore, some attention to those sections would be critical for general acceptance. It would also be of some benefit if portions of it could be serialized in some of the newsletters and magazines subscribed by older children and young teens as one way to get a wider [audience] sensitized to the issues.

**Theodore A. Petti, M.D., M.P.H.**

Arthur B. Richter Professor of Child Psychiatry.

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"I am a psychotherapist who specializes in the treatment of families recovering from emotional, physical, sexual abuse and addictions. In helping people who have experienced violence little has been written about the stories of feeling like a bad person and not knowing how to sort feeling from actions that were done to them. I am impressed with Drs. Galvin's and Stilwell's manuscript, the Conscience Celebration . The multiple conversations that the adults and children have with each other and within

themselves informs the reader that the development and formation of conscience is an ongoing process. Each child seems to explore their own dilemma making the process both personal, family, and community minded.

" At this time in our culture it seems imperative that adults and children have information about moral development. Often in the families I work with both parents feel they are not good enough parents and their children struggle with hopelessness and or trying to make up for the shame in their parents. The *Conscience Celebration* introduces new conversation that brings moral issues into multiple perspectives. It does not tell the child what to do but gives a frame work about exploring the context of moral development. One of the main strengths of this book for my clinical practice is being able to share with families multiple conversations of conscience development in process rather than thinking that the endpoint is to be " a good person".

" I would encourage you to look for authors such as Drs. Galvin and Stilwell who have had the opportunity of researching the field of moral development and the art of story telling. I would like books and videos that help children and adults move through conflict while building their integrity in a manner that does not shame but does inform. The *Conscience Celebration* reaches that goal.

**Ingrid Sato, M.S.**

# INTRODUCTION (TO TEACHERS, PARENTS AND OTHER GROWN-UPS)

"What is your conscience, and how does it work?" These are the first two questions of the *Conscience Interview*, the imaginative and sensitive device which guides twelve year old Cynthia and her middle school friends on their quest to understand their moral selves. The *Conscience Celebration* is the story of young people exploring both the uniquely personal and the shared experiences of conscience development in the context of their daily lives as students, friends, siblings, daughters and sons.

The Stilwell Conscience Interview (SCI) was developed by Dr. Barbara Stilwell several years ago as a tool to explore the development of conscience in children. Through the use of the SCI and related work, the authors identified discrete domains of conscience functioning and associated developmental stages. The first domain, *Conceptualization of Conscience*, encompasses five age-related stages: *External Conscience* (age 6 and under), *Brain or Heart Conscience* (ages 7-11), *Heart/Mind or Personified Conscience* (ages 12-13), *Confused Conscience* (ages 14-15), and *Integrated Conscience* (ages 16-17). The four other domains also undergo dynamic change with time and life experience. These domains include *Moral Attachment*, *Moral-Emotional Responsiveness*, *Moral Valuation*, and *Moral Volition*. Each domain is intimately associated with bedrock values and virtues, and resonates with the rich tradition of moral philosophy.

As interesting and useful as this information may be to parents, physicians, and educators, the group most intimately affected by these findings - children and young adults - would likely have little interest in learning about such scientific research, presented as such. Drs. Galvin and Stilwell know that and so, instead, they have crafted a very good story, with interesting plots and compelling characters. Young readers may recognize themselves in Cynthia who thinks she probably worries too much about being good but can't seem to get along with her younger sister; or Aaron, who thinks maybe he doesn't worry *enough* and seeks some external reassurance that he will not grow up to be a really bad guy; or Jamie, who regrets the resentment she felt toward her dying sister and continues to grieve for her. The students bring these and other concerns to the *Conscience Club* where they investigate the conscience domains, and identify their own stages of

development. Together, they explore the moral crises and inner lives of the most interesting people they know - themselves.

Much has been written in the past several years about the so-called decline in personal and public virtue, and the need to explicitly teach morals and values to our children. Nearly two decades ago, Kohlberg and Gilligan described theories of moral reasoning. But until much more recently, little was known about how a child's conscience actually develops, or why, or about the roles of emotional responsiveness or reparation. This is a book that will help young people, and the adults who care about them, explore the realm of conscience, and begin to understand the whys and oughts of (their own) human behavior.

Knowledge and information bestow power, and children whose moral inquiry is enlightened and supported will develop the power to choose morally and wisely.

Margaret Gaffney, M.D.  
January, 1998

**THE CONSCIENCE CELEBRATION**  
**A STORY ABOUT MORAL FLOURISHING**

# Chapter One

Cynthia was doing lots of thinking lately. Walking by herself seemed to stir up all kinds of thoughts. At the moment she was walking by herself from school to the Fairchild's home. She was Mr. and Mrs. Fairchild's favorite sitter and they had a babysitting job for her that night. The thoughts stirred up in Cynthia's mind were the kind of thoughts a person can really get lost in, but before Cynthia did, they were interrupted by the whirling, clacking, rolling sound that only a skateboard on concrete sidewalk can make.

"Hi, Cynthia!" Aaron called to her from halfway down the block. No sooner had he greeted her than he turned his full attention to a fancy and daring maneuver, which launched him and his skateboard separately off the curb onto the street. He successfully landed on the skateboard, regained control of it and veered once again in Cynthia's direction. What a show-off, thought Cynthia. Then she thought, with a little admiration, how does he do that? It looks neat. But, all she said was "Hi, Aaron." By this time, he had changed direction by 180 degrees and drawn parallel to her. "Where are you going?" he asked. Cynthia said, " To sit for someone."

"Oh, who you sitting for?" Aaron asked. She almost said the Fairchild's but had long ago decided that it was better not to let people know that she would be all alone babysitting toddlers in a big house at night. Cynthia had learned some rules about safety from the babysitting course she took in Girl Scouts to earn a badge. It was also the kind of precaution her mother often reminded her to take. Not that she mistrusted Aaron. He was in her class at school. He seemed pretty nice even if he had a lot of the show-off and a bit of the thrill-seeker kind of kid inside him. Cynthia also didn't like the fact that he spent so much time hanging with the Bridge Kids. Her mother called them a public nuisance. "Well they aren't a gang or anything like that", Aaron had once said in his defense. "We just like to skateboard together."

"Still, thought Cynthia, it's better to be careful." Cynthia took pride that she was considered an old pro at babysitting. She didn't want to spoil her reputation. "I don't think you'd know them," she finally said to Aaron. Then she lied. "They live outside this township." Almost immediately, Cynthia felt badly that she had lied to Aaron even if she believed her lie was--what was



that phrase she had heard in the Conscience Club? "Oh yes, I remember," she thought. "It's for a greater good."

"Out of the township?" Aaron repeated inquisitively. Cynthia nodded.

"Good thing," he said, spinning the roller on his skateboard with his foot. "Didja hear about that lady babysitter near the college?"

Cynthia had heard about her. It was scary. A man car-jacked the woman right there at the daycare center parking lot just as she was leaving to go home. A day had passed and both the woman and her car were still missing. Scary or not, Cynthia was determined to respond to Aaron with practiced indifference. "So? That wasn't babysitting. That was daycare."

Aaron scoffed, "Yeah like that's a big difference."

"Anyway, I can't talk anymore now. I won't be on time for my sitting job," Cynthia said.

"Oh, O.K.," said Aaron who could not quite account for the awkwardness that he experienced just then. "Seems like I did something wrong again", he thought to himself. But all he really said, "Oh, I just wanted to say Hi anyway. See you in class Monday?" Just then, before Cynthia could respond, Aaron lost his balance and started to fall off the skateboard. At the same time a car was coming down the street much too fast and too close to Aaron. Cynthia's heart skipped a beat. Her hands went out towards Aaron but he was out of reach. She yelled, "Look out!"

Fortunately, the car swerved out of the way in time and Aaron recovered his balance without actually falling. He was safe. He stopped, looked at the car as it sped on its way and shouted, "Learn to drive, idiot." Aaron turned to Cynthia, smiled and said, "That was close." Cynthia wasn't smiling. "Too close. Aaron, be more careful--please." Aaron looked away. "I guess I looked pretty dumb, huh?"

"You could have been badly hurt."

Aaron shrugged. "Yeah, I guess so. Crazy driver."

"Promise to be more careful," Cynthia, said.

Aaron smiled again, fully recovered now. "Yeah sure, Mom. Well, See you later, Cynthia." With that Aaron was off again on his skateboard. Cynthia called after him,

"See you, Aaron." Shaking her head doubtfully, Cynthia hurried on her way to the Fairchild's.



The thoughts which Cynthia had been thinking and which Aaron's near-accident had thoroughly disrupted followed three different lines, or maybe threads that were becoming interwoven. To Cynthia, they seemed all tangled up in a ball. Her first thread of thought had to do with her twelfth birthday tomorrow. She was especially excited about a trip she and a few of her favorite friends would take to the Air and Space Museum as part of her birthday

celebration. Cynthia was fascinated by the sciences, especially space science. She had been to Space Camp and really enjoyed that experience. This would be a shorter outing but she would be able to tell her friends a lot about the

exhibits there because of what she had learned in Space Camp. The only trouble was that her parents had strictly limited the number of guests Cynthia could invite. Her mother was coming and maybe her sister Rachel. Rachel hadn't decided, but Mom had made it clear that Rachel's choice whether to go or stay home made no difference to the number of out of family guests Cynthia could invite. She decided not to invite Jamie, who had been her best friend last year. Jamie was still a friend but not as close as the others Cynthia invited. Jamie had seemed to change from a fun friend to a not so fun friend. She was sometimes moody and crabby. She didn't laugh at the stuff that made Cynthia's other friends laugh. Anyway, Jamie had heard that she was not invited, and Cynthia was worried about Jamie's reaction.

Her second thread of thought had to do with her family, mostly how she and ten-year-old Rachel didn't seem to get along very well. In fact, they fought everyday. Mom was in the habit of saying, "I wish you girls could go just one day-**JUST ONE**- without bickering and quarreling". Last spring when she was chosen by the science teacher to be part of the group that went to the Space Center (which in turn led to her going to Space Camp over the summer), Cynthia heard Rachel complain bitterly, "Why did you get to be the older one? You always get to do everything first." Not so long ago Cynthia would have been secretly pleased that Rachel was unhappy. After all, Rachel always snickered when Cynthia was told to clean up her room. She used to suspect Rachel of deliberately hiding her homework or distracting her so she would mess up on a project. She would never forget her Outer Space diorama with an extra planet on the background drawing. That was from the splotch that was made when Rachel said, "Your project looks stupid," and grabbed for the luminescent magic marker right out of Cynthia's hand. Cynthia decided to call the splotch **Planet X**. That turned out to be a stroke of genius that led to some neat discussions in class, but still....

It was true Rachel knew how to push Cynthia's buttons. Rachel was hardly ever yelled at by Mom and Dad and never by teachers. She cleaned her room, did her homework, took out the trash, and played **QUIETLY** with her friends. She knew that noise was something that really bothered her parents. And with that knowledge she developed a secret talent. She could get Cynthia into an argument and provoke her all the way to **RAGE** with just a few softly stated but very mean statements. Then Rachel would mutter "*Lift-off*" just under her breath so Cynthia alone would hear it. She could

make it so Cynthia got all the blame, too. Cynthia didn't know when to shut up, but Rachel did ...just when she heard Mom coming down the hall. But it was even worse when it was Dad coming down the hall. Talk about NOISE. Cynthia had heard the lecture about her being the older sister who should be setting good examples. He would say things like, "Stop an argument before it starts. Remember, she doesn't understand as much as you." Then, there was always that one that had something to do with the Bible, "Turn the other cheek."

The absolute worst was when Mom and Dad scrapped the idea of a family vacation to Yosemite because they didn't think they could stand being in the car that long with two bickering girls. Cynthia had to admit long car rides could be deadly. No matter how many car games, cassette tapes and art materials were brought along; she and Rachel would find something to fight about. Then Mom would say, "I grew up in a family of four girls, but it was never like this!" Dad said, "O.K. O.K. We're not going to Yosemite this year. I don't know what's with you girls."

"Were your sisters like our daughters?", Mom asked Dad a little bit accusingly. She liked to confirm her suspicions about the side of the family that might have bad habits or what she called "difficult personal traits". Cynthia noticed Mom usually thought the bad habits and difficult personal traits came from Dad's side of the family. Dad replied a little bit defensively. "I don't know. I was always outside building things. I don't know what they did except talk all the time. Anyway my sisters have nothing to do with what we're talking about right now." Cynthia silently agreed with Dad. She didn't think she and her sister were anything like her aunts.

"You're no help.", Mom said icily to Dad. The room became VERY QUIET. Cynthia guessed Mom was disappointed that they would not be going to Yosemite. Cynthia hated the long periods of VERY QUIET when her parents were angry with one another. She also noticed a pattern that arguments starting with her and Rachel spread to Mom and Dad even if they changed form.

It turned out that Space Camp was better than Yosemite anyway because of the science and technology she learned. But when Cynthia came home from Space Camp she seemed much quieter. Cynthia's brand of QUIET was new and different. It was not the, **I WANT PEACE AND QUIET** brand in such

demand by her parents everyday. Nor was it the **VERY QUIET** brand of angry silence that threatened to explode (and sometimes did explode in hurtful words) between her parents before it resolved. Cynthia's silence was more like solitude, being into self so she could think things through. She spent more time in her room alone. Mom and Dad wondered what was going on. They called her camp counselor, but as far as he knew she had had a great time at Space Camp. She had been polite and behaved, seemed to enjoy the activities, and hardly ever got into any after-hours mischief.

Rachel couldn't stand this new QUIET. When Cynthia was reading, she would throw Barbie dolls at her. When Cynthia closed her door, Rachel would tack silly notes on it or slip notes under it. Rachel seemed to want a good fight, some NOISE, some disapproving glares from their Mom directed at Cynthia. A lecture from Dad would have been nice. Rachel began making loud noises herself, especially when Cynthia was talking to their parents. "What on earth is the matter with you, Rachel?"

, Mom and Dad both asked.

Cynthia never told Rachel what was going on. There was a change inside her -- maybe beginning with that letter she had received at camp from Rachel. The letter contained the news that Rachel's pet rabbit had died. Cynthia remembered how she had said mean things about that rabbit to Rachel in the past. Sometimes she had even told Rachel how she had better not let that rabbit out of her

sight --or else. Rachel's letter made her sad to think that Rachel's favorite pet had died. So there was this change in Cynthia. She barely understood it



herself but she had an idea from the *Conscience Club*. That's what the kids called it, anyway. It was sort of an after-school class but with lots of discussion.

In fact, the Conscience Club was the third thread of thought that Cynthia had been following on her way to the Fairchild's to baby-sit. The Conscience Club hadn't started out as a club. It started at the second PTA meeting at Cynthia's school. The president of the PTA had invited Dr. Esse to speak of a research project she wanted to do. She wanted to study the development of conscience in children and adolescents. First, she had gone to the school board. The members of the school board didn't know whether or not an interview about morality would be too controversial for them to approve. They told Dr. Esse to talk to the president of the PTA, Mrs. Hanover. Mrs. Hanover was Cynthia's Mom's best friend. After her talk with Dr. Esse, Mrs. Hanover called Cynthia's Mom. Mrs. Hanover was very excited. "It's about time we did something about moral education in our schools." Cynthia's Mom also became very excited. Cynthia knew from experience that when her Mom became excited about school, it meant she and Rachel would be talked into volunteering (or even volunteered without being talked into it first) to do something to help the school. Mom liked to be right in the thick of things, all right. Maybe because she had been a teacher once. Eventually, Cynthia and several other students from middle school had been recruited to participate. First of all their parents had to agree to let them be subjects. Then Dr. Esse, or one of her co-investigators, explained the study to each kid. Some parents' didn't agree. Most did. Cynthia didn't know of any kids in her class that refused. Most were at least a little curious. Aaron thought it was dumb but his parents wanted him to participate. The Conscience Project spread to high school and then to grade school. There was no escape for Rachel. She was volunteered to participate as well. In fact some day soon, Rachel would be headed over to Dr. Esse's house for the Conscience Interview. The interviews were taped so they could be typed out word for word later. Cynthia remembered hers ran over two hours. The interviewer had to come back a second time to finish. Well, Cynthia had had a lot to say.

All this started over a year ago. Since then Dr. Esse and the others in her group had studied the responses to the conscience interviews and now they had some results to share with people. Cynthia's teacher in social studies, Mr. Moore, invited Dr. Esse back to discuss the findings from her study. Cynthia was annoyed when Aaron blurted out - without even raising his hand,

"What's so interesting about conscience anyway; why would anyone study that?" Dr. Esse didn't seem the least annoyed. She smiled and said, "Aaron, in our study of conscience we wanted to know three things. First of all, would every child describe a conscience? Second of all, would they always describe it in pretty much the same way or would there be important differences among children? Third, would they describe it differently as they grew up?"

Dr. Esse described how the kids' answers to the questions could be grouped into **stages**. She said there's a theory that human beings grow up in these stages, pretty much one at a time and in a certain order since a kid has to be on a lower stage before she can get to the next higher one. Aaron said, "Do you mean like the stages in the life cycle of insects?" He remembered from science how some insects went through different changes from larva to pupa to adult forms. "In humans, stages are not quite as obvious as that, but you have the idea," she answered. "Like, the ability to think in certain ways comes in stages. There's a way kids think before they go to preschool. Then the way they think becomes different by the time they're in grade school. It's not just what they're taught in school, either. It's what they're ready to learn."

Then Dr. Esse told a story.

"Once there was a famous psychologist in Switzerland named Piaget. He loved to watch children to see how they learned. He learned a lot from his own three children. Other times he went to schools or watched kids play marbles on the street, just to see how they made rules for their games."

Aaron remembered a skateboarding game he played with the Bridge Kids. They made it up and had to agree on the rules. Sometimes the rules were changed as the game went on. Aaron wondered what Mr. Piaget would think of their game. He imagined him sitting on the bridge watching and taking notes while Aaron and the other kids skateboarded in tight circles around a street sign.

Dr. Esse continued her story. "Piaget thought kids were smart, not according to what they knew on tests, but according to how they learned by experimenting."

Aaron listened closely. He liked experiments. He noticed that Cynthia was listening closely as well. Cynthia was smart, he knew. Sort of a goody-goody but she knew lots of neat scientific stuff.

"For example, a preschooler can be shown a very tall, thin glass beside a very short, fat glass. If the same amount of water were poured into each glass, this little kid would probably be fooled into thinking the tall, thin glass held more water. But a grade schooler wouldn't be fooled."

Cynthia understood that this was because the very young child was not ready to think in a certain way--had not reached the necessary stage. While babysitting Cathy when she was not quite two, Cynthia had used a trick a friend told her about. Cathy had asked for a cookie. Cathy's Mom had said she could have only one. Cynthia said "O.K." and reached into the cookie jar. Before she could take her hand out, Cathy said, "Two! Two cookies!!" Instead of giving Cathy two cookies, Cynthia had broken one cookie in half. Cathy, she remembered, accepted the two halves greedily, crowing triumphantly. "Two! Two cookies!!" Mrs. Fairchild had been watching. She told Cynthia, "Believe me, that won't last long."

Keith exclaimed, "Neat! I can use this on Izzy."

"Who's Izzy and what are you planning, Keith?" asked Mr. Moore.

"Izzy. Izzy. My sister Elizabeth, she's three. All she will ever drink is 'purpo'. That's what Izzy calls grape drinks. Anything she drinks has to be purple. Izzy only likes purple pop, not red pop, not orange pop, and definitely not brown pop. Once we had to put purple food coloring in her milk to get her to drink it. It looked disgusting. So she takes all the grape drink. She says I can have only a little --not as much as she gets. Well, now I can trick Izzy. I can put her grape drink in a bud vase and mine in a cup. She'll think she has more. That will get her!"

No wonder the kids' think Keith is such a geek, thought Cynthia. Spending his time trying to get even with a three-year-old. Aaron, she noticed was rolling his eyes as Keith talked.



Cynthia thought it especially interesting that Dr. Esse believed a person's conscience also develops in stages. Mr. Moore said he questioned the whole idea of stages, like one step after another. He said he liked to play devil's advocate and always urged his students to think critically and ask lots of questions. Dr. Esse agreed. She said, "I'm glad Mr. Moore plays devil's advocate." Aaron had heard his stepfather explain once that a devil's advocate was someone who tried to make the best argument they could for a point of view or a belief that he or she did not necessarily share. Even so, when Mr. Moore said he would be a devil's advocate, Aaron imagined him with horns on his head, wearing a red suit and carrying a pitchfork. The picture in his mind made Aaron smile.

"The idea of stages are part of a theory of human development and any theory deserves to be challenged. Still, the results of our study fit nicely with the idea of stages."

Now, Cynthia knew something about how scientific studies are done. She knows the results of a study support a theory; sometimes they don't. Instead, they change the theory. So she didn't have any problem with there being a theory behind a study.

Dr. Esse said there were **stages in the development of conscience** in children and adolescents. She wrote them on the board. The first was the **external** (outside) stage when a person's conscience is mostly outside her and rules come from her parents and other grown-ups. "This stage usually happens when children are quite young," Dr Esse explained. "Maybe you know one 5 or 6 year-old who really wants to be a good person but depends on grown-ups to figure out what is right and wrong. I see some nods. So, you do know someone like that?"

Jamie raised her hand. "My sister can't always tell right from wrong without our help. She's only five."

Dr. Esse nodded. "I believe it," she said. "Suppose a little kid broke a cookie jar while trying to get a cookie. He might just make something up like--like--"

Aaron chimed in. "Like the cookie jar just jumped off the shelf. I still use that one."

Everyone laughed. Dr. Esse said, "Right. Also, younger kids follow rules too exactly. They tattle. The Golden Rule to them might be more like - He did it to me so I can do it to him."

"Next comes the **brain or heart** stage when a person's conscience has started to come inside. So have at least some rules for being good," Dr. Esse said.

"How old do you have to be for that one?" Aaron wanted to know. Cynthia couldn't decide if he was being smart-alecky again.

Dr Esse said, "Why about the ages of you and your classmates, Aaron."

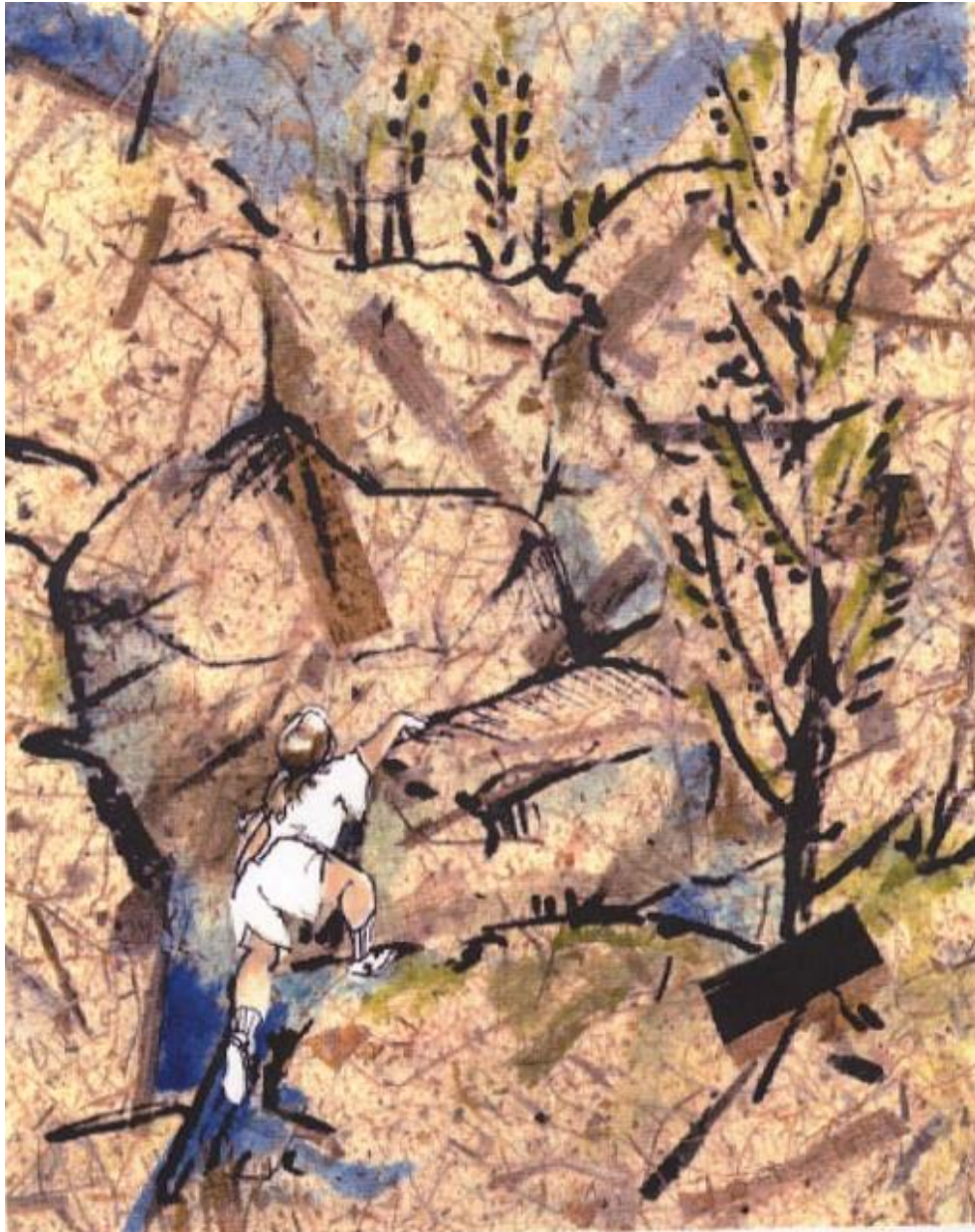
Somebody deep in the group said, "Well it couldn't be in Keith's brain. His brain's much too small!" Everyone laughed except Dr. Esse and Mr. Moore. Mr. Moore stood up and walked around the class. He didn't say anything but kind of glared at everyone and no one in particular. Cynthia liked Mr. Moore a lot. She didn't want him to think badly of her. There was something else, too. Cynthia felt ashamed for joining in the laughter at Keith's expense. She didn't like to be made fun of, so she shouldn't join in making fun of someone else. The class quieted down.

Dr. Esse continued. "Well actually some children, usually the younger ones, think their consciences are in their stomachs. The point is they begin to locate it inside themselves, not outside. This happens sometime between 7 and 11 years old. Most of you are 11 or 12. It's about twelve years or older when a person's conscience is almost like a person inside that talks to her. That's called the **personified** (heart / mind) stage. Still later, there are more stages to go through."

Jamie had been deep in thought. She said, "Well maybe Dr Esse is right and there are these stages, Mr. Moore; but they aren't arranged in steps -- maybe they go back and forth too. Like switchbacks up a mountain or down a canyon. I went to The Grand Canyon once and we walked down Bright Angel Trail. It had switchbacks. And Bryce Canyon is full of switchbacks." Cynthia knew Jamie really loved trips to The Southwest. She always talked about it. It made Cynthia wish her family had gone to Yosemite after all.

Mr. Moore said, "Jamie, I like your image of switchbacks. I can see a person might accidentally slip down to a lower loop of the trail every once in awhile...like chutes and ladders."

Cynthia looked at Aaron who returned her glance by crossing his eyes. Cynthia imagined a picture of him slipping and sliding all the way to the bottom of Grand Canyon.



There was another interesting thing. Besides different stages of conscience, there were also different parts of conscience. Dr. Esse called these the **five domains of conscience**.

Jamie told Cynthia later that the word "domain" made her think of fairytale places where kings and princesses and ogres lived in castles and each of them ruled a separate realm. "Who dares to step on my land? This is my domain and no others!" Jamie could almost hear an ogre say, "Fi, Fie. Fo. Fum."

Dr Esse said that what she meant by a domain was a special area of human concern. Not really a place but hard to describe without using words that make people think of places. Some of the questions the kids had answered had to do with each domain. Dr. Esse named the domains **concept of conscience, moral attachment, moral emotions, moral value making (and keeping) and moral choosing**.

One thing led to another. Mr. Moore was very interested in meeting again. He had a way of getting the kids to share his excitement. "There's so much more to talk about," he said. "It's been a whole year since you did the interviews," he added. "I wonder how you've changed?" Some of the kids wanted to do the conscience interview again, but this time altogether as a group. A few wanted to hear different ideas of where conscience comes from and how it grows and changes. Some just wanted to understand why there was so much stealing, fighting, hurtful gossiping and even drugs and gang involvement in their school, mostly in high school but even some in middle school. Why just last week the middle school was visited by police with dogs especially trained to sniff out drugs. The kids couldn't leave their classrooms while the dogs were taken down the hallways, sniffing the lockers. And, in the high school they used a metal detector to find weapons.

Mr. Moore agreed to sponsor meetings of interested students as a kind of club, as long as each kid had permission from home. Dr. Esse agreed to come back once a week to help with discussions. That was the real start of the Conscience Club. Cynthia's best reason to join the club was so that she could understand the changes she suspected she was going through. "Nothing preachy," Aaron had said. "I get more than enough of that in Sunday school and Scouts." Mr. Moore and Dr. Esse said they weren't going to teach particular morals or values. The kids might want to talk about their own, as

long as they did so with respect for each other's differences. The club meetings would always begin the same way. "Did anyone have to make a hard decision about right and wrong, good and bad this week?" They would also go through the conscience interview questions again, as a group. There would be other rules. Cynthia listed them to herself. "We can't blame anyone. We can't talk about what kids had done wrong outside the club. We have to talk about our own stuff, although it could be made up stuff," Aaron said. "Yeah, but what are you going to tell our parents when they ask what we're talking about in the club?" Dr. Esse said. "I think it would be good for me and Mr. Moore to meet sometimes with your parents without you to talk about conscience development in kids. I don't think it would be right or good to tell them what each of you says in the Conscience Club. Especially about moral choices you decide to talk about. But we also believe we have to say something to them if you ever say you are going to do something we think might be pretty harmful to anyone including yourselves." Dr. Esse said she would talk more about the parents' meetings with Mrs. Hanover. Sometimes, if it seemed helpful, Dr. Esse would teach the kids what she had learned about moral development. She thought that knowing how human consciences develop is every bit as important as knowing how human bodies develop.

This week they had started with three question sets from the conscience interview:

**Have you heard of the word conscience? What is it?  
How does it work?**

**Describe your own conscience and  
how it works.**

**Use your imagination and draw a picture of your  
conscience.**

Just now, Cynthia was trying hard to remember how she had answered the first question a year ago. Of course she had heard the word **conscience** even then. Her memory was vague but she thought of it as maybe her brain or heart. She could not remember her drawing. Then Cynthia wondered how she would draw her conscience this year. Before, she had just thought it was

something that did its work inside her, some place in her brain or heart helping her to know about good and bad. And it seemed to work more quickly and automatically back then. Now, she didn't know. Her conscience was more complicated. She knew that. It was changing. Dr. Esse described how people have conscience growing pains as they change stages. Maybe that's why it began to bother her that she wasn't very nice to her sister, Rachel. It made her feel bad about herself. It also bothered her that Rachel wasn't nice to her, but she thought mostly about her end of the relationship. Those things Dad said were true. What had Dr. Esse said? "A person's conscience starts outside with parents but gradually comes inside one's self."

Cynthia thought her conscience was starting to say some of the same things as her Dad and Mom. That's pretty scary as it crossed her mind. Well, she was older and smarter, and when she didn't lose her head, she could be kind and "turn the other cheek." Cynthia thought, maybe, that's also why I'm trying to be nicer to Rachel. I'm trying to treat her the way I would like to be treated. She began to think even stranger thoughts. What if she didn't have a sister! What if something happened to Rachel like what happened to Jamie's older sister? Jamie's older sister had gotten leukemia. Cynthia decided to make very sure Rachel knew she was welcome on the trip this weekend. Cynthia thought about her conscience drawing again. Maybe a picture of something to show how conscience takes in information and processes it, and gives feedback.... Hmm.

Cynthia must have succeeded in getting lost in her thoughts this time without interruption. To her surprise, she found herself on the Fairchild's doorstep.

# The Conscience Celebration

## *Chapter One: Conscience Concepts*

### Guide for further study and discussion

After the first chapter is read, group discussion may be facilitated further with the following remarks and questions.

1. We have just heard/read/read together the first chapter of this book called **The Conscience Celebration**. The authors mean for this book to help us think about and talk about something called 'conscience.' That's what we will do today and for the next \_\_\_\_\_ meetings. We may have different-even very different- ideas about it but whatever else we might say about conscience, it's something personal. What do we mean by 'personal'?

An interactive discussion of 'personal' might include examples of things personal other than conscience, as well as distinctions to be drawn between individual and general, private and public, innermost secrets and outward demonstrations of thoughts, emotions and behavior.

2. Our **thoughts** before we speak them, our **feelings** before we show them, our **values**- the stuff that's important to us, that we hold dear- before we make them known, our **choices** before we act on them are all examples of things personal. We can choose to share them -and we can choose not to. Sometimes we might choose to share certain things with certain people but not with others. It might depend on whether the persons we talk to promise not to take **what we have to say** and spread it around in places we don't want it to go where it might be heard by other persons we don't want to know. If we are to talk and listen together about personal things, to speak our thoughts, show our feelings, share our values and describe the choices we've made or have yet to make, maybe we should or ought to have some rules (do's and don'ts) first. What were the rules (do's and don'ts) that Dr. Esse and Mr. Moore made for the Conscience Club? Are these rules that would be good to use in our own group? Why or why not?

After interactive discussion of pros and cons, establish group rules; perhaps make them visible on the bulletin or chalkboard.

3. In discussing 'do's and don'ts' for our own group, we've already used our consciences. But we would like to better describe this thing we are using. Turn to page 11, again. Look at the first set of questions that ask what we know in general about conscience:

What is conscience?  
How does it work?

In our group, you may want to try out an answer, but may want to change it later after you have thought about it some more. That's a good approach. Would anyone like to try out an answer to the general question right now?

4. For your homework assignment, we would like for you to answer the personal questions that come next:

Describe your conscience.  
And  
Draw a picture of your conscience.

It's very important to remember there is no right or wrong description, no correct or incorrect picture—except for how well it describes or pictures your personal conscience. We believe you should always think of yourself as the expert on you when it comes to your personal conscience.

6. Are there some things in the story that suggest Cynthia's or Aaron's consciences are already at work? Put another way, can you tell how Cynthia or Aaron might already be thinking about or reacting to good/bad or right/wrong stuff?



## Chapter Two

Aaron had been on his way to The Village when he encountered Cynthia and had his near- accident. The Village was a part of the city where both he and Cynthia lived and went to school. It really had been a separate village once before the city surrounded it. People liked it for its shops and restaurants and especially for its canal where the ducks waded. People of all ages loved the canal. Older men would bring their fishing gear and sit all day. While young people in love strolled along, bicyclists, joggers, and walkers in training would scurry along like they really had to get somewhere. Moms and Dads with young children would come with bread to feed the ducks. There were even specially made duck crossing traffic signs to warn motorists to make way for ducklings. The canal had been built in the days before railroads became popular. It was meant to connect up waterways for transporting goods on flatboats that were towed by mules and horses that walked along the tow paths next to the canal. Aaron imagined what it would be like to pull those flatboats. " What if instead of mules, a bunch of kids on rollerblades got on each side of the canal and towed the flatboats?" he asked himself. " That would be child labor of a fine kind!" Aaron wondered what the minimum wage should be for that

Several streets crossed the canal. Some streets were very busy, but some were quieter and less traveled. It was one of the bridges over the canal on one of the quieter streets that gave a bunch of kids their nickname. Shopkeepers and homeowners called them the Bridge Kids. They didn't really want them around. They said they loitered and scared off customers. Aaron admitted to himself that the Bridge Kids might not look as harmless as he thought they were. Some smoked cigarettes. Every once in awhile a couple of them said they had some drugs to sell. He always said no or walked away from them. But for the most part Aaron believed the Bridge Kids were there for one reason--skateboarding. " They're not a gang. They're not drug addicts or criminals," Aaron insisted to anyone who put the Bridge Kids down. He didn't know what he'd do if the Village made a rule that there would be no more skateboarding on the bridges.

"I really, really hate rules," Aaron thought to himself as he flipped his skateboard up onto the sidewalk. Deciding to walk awhile, Aaron picked up his skateboard and tucked it under his arm. " Oh, this is the street where

those new puppies live," he was reminded by an old fashioned lamppost that he marked his way by, " I hope they're outside playing." Aaron really liked animals--better than people, he told himself and anyone else who would listen. "People have too many rules that spoil everyone's fun." But, even if he didn't like them, Aaron did follow his Mom and Stepfather's rules most of the time. They didn't spank him anymore. They said he had grown too big. So they took things away like privileges: TV, telephone, choosing the carryout restaurant for Friday's dinner, or staying over at a friend's. He especially didn't like losing skateboard privileges or getting grounded when he came home too late or had a bad in- term report from school. Sometimes he couldn't understand what they were fussing about; he didn't see what was wrong with what he was doing. He certainly didn't feel all that bad about what he was doing. That really bothered his Mom who said " Doesn't it bother you that you've caused me to be late for work by your inconsiderate dawdling?" Or " I wish you showed more remorse for bending your Dad's five iron." That was the golf club he had borrowed from stepdad' s bag for the street hockey he and his friends played on rollerblades. They were pretty much able to fix the seven and eight irons, afterwards.

It wasn't all punishment though. Both his Mom and his stepdad praised him when he did something good, even if he didn't see how it was good. They gave him rewards too. In Conscience Club, Dr. Esse had said that sometimes a guy's conscience depends on parents' rewards and punishments to help him mark his way, to learn the rules. Conscience Club. He thought it should be called the Conscience Conspiracy, because he suspected the grown-ups were in league with one another to get kids to do what grown-ups thought was the right thing. And some of the stuff they did there was pretty silly, like having to draw a picture of their consciences. But there were some questions the kids were asked that made him think. Mr. Moore wrote them on the board:

**What is the very first thing you can remember doing that was called "good"? Go back as far as you can. Tell the whole story of the event.**

" That was when I learned to ride my bike.... My Dad said he would hold on to the seat...but he let go...and I rode myself," Aaron recalled.

**What is the very first thing you can remember doing that was called "bad"? Go back as far as you can. Tell everything you can about it.**

" That had to be stepdad's five iron," Aaron muttered to himself. It happened a long time ago. And now everyone could laugh about it.

**Other than yourself, who is most proud when you have done something good? Has this been true all your life? How does this person or these persons show they care about your goodness?**

**Other than yourself, who is most ashamed when you have done something bad? Has this been true all your life? How does this person or these persons show they care when you haven't been good?**

What these questions made Aaron think was "Hey, sometimes anyway, I follow the rules just because my parents want me to, not 'cause they punish me if I don't. I guess it's because I know they care and want what's best for me."

Aaron was almost at the house with the puppies. Their owner had put up an electronic fence so the puppies wouldn't leave the yard. The puppies, now about five months old, were still in training. Little flags marked the boundaries of the yard. If the puppies came too close to the flags they received a mild shock from their collar. Aaron knew most puppies learned to stay in their yards after one or two shocks. But there had been a problem with these two puppies. The problem really was a little kid, around 8, in the neighborhood who liked to coax the puppies to the boundary with cookies just to see them shock themselves. Aaron had caught the boy laughing at his cruel trick on the puppies and chased him away. Aaron had shouted after the boy "How would you like it?" He picked up a stone to throw, he was so angry at that kid. He didn't throw the stone though, maybe because he stopped and thought about it too long to get a good shot at him. Well there was no sign of that boy or the puppies this evening. "The puppies must be inside," Aaron thought. He wondered if he should tell the owner what had been going on. He actually paused a moment. Just then he saw Rick come around the corner on his skateboard and wave. " Come on, Aaron, race you to the bridge." Aaron was off in a flash.

Cynthia had made sure the Fairchild children were bathed and in their pajamas before they could do any more playing. Now two-year-old Cathy was settling down with her dolls, her head in Cynthia's lap. Just a few minutes ago, Cathy had had a short tantrum in the bathtub. This had to do with Cynthia using less shampoo than is necessary to make the mounds of suds and bubbles that Cathy expects of shampoos. Cynthia got splashed and had a puddle of water to clean up. At first Cynthia was vexed. Then she reminded herself, "Cathy is in 'those terrible twos' when her favorite word is NO!" It had taken several babysitting sessions at the Fairchild's before Cathy was able to see her parents leave without crying and carrying on. Now she looked forward to Cynthia spending the evening with only a brief whimper when her parents said 'goodnight'. Cynthia was especially pleased to hear the Fairchild's go on and on about how much the kids liked her and how she could get them to do things their parents couldn't. Cynthia had said "Cathy if you finish up with your shampoo, we'll have time for playing with your dolls. Who did you say is your favorite doll?" Cathy stopped crying to consider Cynthia's question. After that the bath went smoothly, Cynthia saw to it that Cathy's hair was detangled, combed, blow dried and combed again. The proper pajamas were selected (but there were several different pajamas that were first tried and then discarded on the floor before the final selection was made). Cynthia coaxed Cathy to pick up and fold her clothes by suggesting they do it together. "That's very good, Cathy," Cynthia said. "Now bring your dollies and let's see what Michael is doing." After his bath Michael had proudly told Cynthia "I don't need any help getting dressed or brushing my hair." Michael was three and one half. When Cynthia and Cathy found Michael he was in his pajamas all right but they were inside out and backwards and sort of twisted at one sleeve so he couldn't get his arm through. Cathy laughed and said "Michael's silly." Michael was mad and blamed his sister, "You made me--" he said as he advanced towards his sister, hitting his fist in his hand. Cynthia said, "Now, Michael, Cathy didn't do anything. You just got tangled up, that's all. It happens to people all the time." That seemed to calm Michael down and they were all able to go to the living room to play. Cathy had her dolls. She was sleepily muttering to one: "Bad Dolly, you will get spanked," and to the other "Good Dolly, you didn't spill." Michael played with his Lego's and watched TV Cynthia took out a magic marker and a piece of paper. She began to draw. Michael noticed this and sidled over to her.

"What you doing, Cynthia?"

" I'm doing a drawing."

"What you drawing?" he asked.

"My conscience."

" 'Consin?" Michael was surprised. " My Grandma lives in Wish 'Consin."

"No, no, Michael, you're thinking of Wisconsin. I think your grandma lives in Wisconsin. It's a state. I'm drawing my conscience."

"What's that?" Michael asked.

"It's the part of me that helps me figure out what's good and bad." Cynthia said.

" Oh," said Michael, "I am a good boy."

" I know that, Michael," Cynthia replied while selecting another color.

" Some boys are naughty and that's a shame. I know three shames."

"Three shames?" Cynthia was interested in what Michael knew about shame.

"Yes. My Daddy told me." Michael continued, " Last Halloween, we made pumpkins into Jack O' Lanterns. Then we set them outside on the windowsill. Some very naughty boys came by very late--past their bedtime. They smashed our pumpkins. My Daddy and I didn't know until Mommy showed us the next morning. My Daddy said it was a shame."

"O.K. so that was the first shame?" Cynthia asked.

"Uh-huh," Michael said. " The second shame was when the cookie store at the mall closed up. Me and my Mommy liked those cookies."

"So what was the third shame?" Cynthia was looking at Michael with a big smile.

" I forgot the last shame."

"Have you ever been ashamed of yourself for something and your face got all hot and red and you couldn't look anybody in the eye?"

"No. Once my Mommy gave me sweat pants that were too loose on me. At preschool they fell down and everybody saw my underwear."

"That's embarrassing, I know," Cynthia was sympathetic. "Was that the third shame?"

"No. That was embarrassing. There's another shame." Michael said. "But it went out of my head." Michael came closer, snuggling a little. "That's a good drawing, Cynthia. I want to help draw. Please."

"Thanks, Michael, I have to do this by myself. Why don't you play with your Lego's for awhile?"

Whenever Cynthia tried to do homework or a project while she was babysitting, she felt funny. She thought she should be playing with the kids instead. It wasn't that Mrs. Fairchild insisted that she play with the kids. Mrs. Fairchild had said it was O.K. to bring homework over to do. Cynthia just didn't like the look of disappointment on Michael's face when she said she needed to study. Once he told her "You don't like me. You won't play with me." He even told his mother. Cynthia was about to defend herself by saying she had had to study for a science test. Mrs. Fairchild just said, "Don't worry, Cynthia, Michael's just trying to make you feel guilty. He pulls that on me all the time. He just refuses to understand the world doesn't revolve around him."

Tonight Cynthia decided to ignore Michael's plea for company while he played. Cathy was sound asleep now. Cynthia pulled up the quilt around

Cathy's shoulders, thinking she'd drawing before she carried Cathy upstairs to her bedroom. Cynthia lost track of time while she worked on the drawing. She looked up and had a moment's worry when she realized Michael was no longer in the room playing Lego's. She gently lifted Cathy's head from her lap and scooted out from under her. Then she started towards Michael's room. Only he wasn't there! Now, Cynthia's moment of worry had turned into something longer and stronger. Still she refused to become frantic or

panicky. She went out into the hallway and headed towards the staircase. Just then Michael was coming up the stairs. He said, "Cynthi, come see my drawing." Cynthia sighed a sigh of relief. She said " Michael, where have you been? I've been looking for you." Michael took her hand and repeated, " I made a drawing for Mommy and Daddy. Come look." Cynthia was confused. Michael did not take her into his room as she had expected. Instead they went into Mr. and Mrs. Fairchild's room. She turned on the light. He led her to the closet, a big walk-in closet full of nooks and crannies, coats and dresses and lots of boxes He pulled aside his mother's skirts with a grand gesture, just as if he were unveiling a great work of art. There in glorious, luminescent magic marke color was Michael's drawing---on the closet wall! It wasn't a small drawing make some changes in her conscience either. And it wasn't in light colors. "I drew my 'consin," Michael said proudly.



Aaron and Rick were in a hurry now. They had stayed out way too late skateboarding with the Bridge Kids. It was getting dark. Some parents were going to be pretty angry--at least Aaron's were. Rick's parents are cool, Aaron thought. "They don't make a big deal about him being out late." He was a little envious.

At the last bridge they had to cross, Aaron and Rick stopped dead in their tracks. There was yellow tape stretched from one tree to the next along the canal. They made out the words **Do Not Cross -Police Line** repeated over and over on the tape. The road over the bridge was barricaded. The boys could see the reflection of two police cruiser's flashing lights reflected on the water. A siren from behind them was getting louder and louder. Aaron saw some men in a boat on the canal shining powerful flashlights on the water.

"What's going on?" Aaron called to one of the men.

" You kids get outta here. Right now. You hear me?" he replied.

"Cool," exclaimed Rick. " They're gonna drag the canal!"

" What?" Aaron asked as he tugged on Rick's t-shirt to get him moving. A police officer on the bank was looking their way and waving them on. She didn't look like she had much patience left.

"You kids head on home now--last warning." The police officer said.

Rick moved away reluctantly. He was excited. "They're looking for her body," he whispered as they passed by the officer.

" Your parents know you're out?" the officer came towards Aaron.

Just then she was distracted by one of the men calling to her from the boat. "Go on, get out here," she said over her shoulder and walked to the bridge railing to see what the man in the boat needed.

" Whose body?" Aaron asked Rick, but he knew before he finished the question. All of a sudden he had a queasy feeling in his stomach.

"The babysitter."



By the time Cynthia had scolded Michael for drawing on the wall of his parents' bedroom, comforted him when he started to cry, reassured him that it was a good drawing, (just in the wrong place) and tucked him into bed, she had very little time left to try to clean the scribbles off the wall. Still she tried. The scribbles wouldn't come off. Cynthia tried some more. They still wouldn't come off. Now it was Cynthia's turn to cry. She thought about calling her mother to find out what would take the markers off the wall, but she changed her mind. She really felt badly that she hadn't watched Michael more closely. She thought that she was irresponsible. And she didn't want her Mom to know. She worried that the Fairchild's would be upset and angry. Then she thought, "I could just pretend I don't know the drawing is there. After all, Michael could have done it any time." That way when the Fairchild's discovered the drawing, Cynthia would be gone. She wouldn't have to face them. Anyway why should she take the blame, it was Michael's fault after all. " Well, I'll try once more with this cleaner." It didn't work any better than before. Still she scrubbed and scrubbed. Then suddenly there was someone's hand on her shoulder. Cynthia almost jumped out of her skin! She turned around and started to say " It wasn't me- it was Michael-" Then she realized it was only Cathy who had awakened and come to find her.

" Cynthia 's crying," Cathy said sleepily. " Are you sad, Cynthia?"

Cynthia said, " No, Cathy, I'm not sad-- I don't know. I'm frustrated. I'm vexed." *Vexed* was her mother's all-purpose word when she was annoyed, frustrated or irritated with someone or something else.

"Oh," Cathy said. " Cynthia's vexed. O.K." Cathy yawned, " I want to be tucked in my own bed, now." They went hand in hand to Cathy's bedroom. Cynthia hurried through the tucking-in procedure and became a little more vexed when Cathy insisted on a glass of water and her favorite doll she'd left on the couch. Cathy told her doll,

" Michael's bad and Cynthia's vexed." Then Cathy fell asleep again. Cynthia's thoughts were racing, " The Fairchild's will be home any minute now! What am I going to do about Michael's drawing? What should I tell them?"

She couldn't think about it any longer. So she turned on the TV A live news report was on. The reporter was standing near a parking area near the river.

People used it to as a put-in point when they went canoeing on the river. The reporter said...

" Mike and Debby, it was only an hour ago that Ms. Haworth was finally found and released from the trunk of her car, where she had been bound and gagged after she was carjacked. Authorities had been combing the riverside and searching the canal for signs of her this evening when they came--"

She hadn't realized until just now how anxious and tense the carjacking had made her. Not because she knew the woman, because she didn't. And not just because she was afraid it could happen to her--which it could, she realized, but also because it happened at all and because it happened in her hometown. Cynthia whispered to herself, " Thank God."

" With a complete description of the suspect, police have intensified their search--" the reporter continued.

The news that the woman was safe didn't prevent Cynthia from nearly jumping out of her skin when the On Watch device of the security system signaled a door to the house had been opened. Hearing Mrs. Fairchild call out " Cynthia, we're home" was an immense relief. In awhile Cynthia's heart had even stopped thumping against her chest.

# The Conscience Celebration

## *Chapter Two: Moral Attachments*

Guide for further study and discussion

After the second chapter is read, group discussion may be facilitated further with the following remarks and questions.

1. The title of this chapter is "Moral Attachments"

People often speak of being attached to places, other people and even things. Attachment is also an idea in psychology that has been extensively researched. Both human beings and non-human primates experience attachment. This occurs between a parent and an infant. If you have been to the zoo and seen baby monkeys clinging to their mothers, you have a notion of what attachment is: the infant clings for security and the parent provides safety and protection. Attachment theory says that the infant's clinging and the parent's safekeeping are both associated with biological changes. When we speak of later attachment, we are moving up the pathway of personal and interpersonal development. We become ready for relationships by using our first attachment experiences as models but then going on beyond them. What do you suppose moral attachment might be?

2. Think about the characters in the story. To whom is Aaron most attached?

How can you tell?

Who-besides Aaron- might care about whether Aaron is good or bad?

3. Are there examples in the story of attachments besides ones between a birth parent and a child?

4. Whose good opinion does Cynthia most want to keep?

What makes you say so?

5. Do you think Cynthia is capable of providing care or protection in an attachment relationship? Why or why not?

6. Do you think Aaron is capable of providing care or protection in an attachment relationship? Why or why not?

7. Try for yourself the questions that Mr. Moore wrote on the board. What do you think an early memory has to do with moral attachment?

## Chapter Three

Not everyone was on time for the Conscience Club meeting that Tuesday after school. Mr. Moore and Dr. Esse waited a while for the latecomers, including Aaron. While they waited, Jamie was telling about her summer vacation. She had gone to Arizona and seen the Grand Canyon, the Painted Desert and the Petrified Forest. She had earned a Junior Ranger's Badge at each national park. Her family loved national parks and Jamie always worked for a badge on every visit. To earn a badge she had to identify different things-- trees, flowers, rocks or animals in the park itself. Usually she had to write down some ways she could protect the environment. Also she had to visit the nature center or park museum to see some of the exhibits. At the Petrified Forest museum there was this exhibit Jamie wanted to tell Dr. Esse and Mr. Moore about. Jamie said, "In the Petrified Forest there are signs that tell people not to take anything from the park. I mean the signs are everywhere. But I guess some people don't obey them."

"How do you know that?" asked Mr. Moore.

"Well," replied Jamie, "because in the museum there is this exhibit called 'Conscience Rocks'."

"Conscience Rocks?" asked Dr. Esse. "What could those be?"

"They're rocks that people stole from the Petrified Forest --you know for souvenirs. They took them to their homes in different states and countries and kept them. One lady from Japan wrote that her husband had stolen a piece of petrified wood and kept it in his car for years and years. He became sick and died. She decided to return the rock to the park. She wrote that she felt guilty and she believed that the stolen rock brought bad luck to her family. She said she was sorry her husband had taken it."

"It sounds to me like you're already thinking about moral emotions and how people respond to them, Jamie," Dr. Esse said smiling. "But can we spend a little time on the conscience drawings some of the club members have done since last week? To get things started, let me show you one of the drawings I've collected from kids your age over the years."

Dr. Esse explained as she showed a slide on the projector, "It's a picture of a tape recorder with three sets of lips on it, the first smiling and telling the girl who did the drawing she did something good, the second neutral and telling her what to do, the third frowning and telling her she did something bad. The girl who drew this commented on her drawing, 'Kind of like a tape recorder...recording what you're saying and doing. It comes back, processes what you've said, decides what's the output...really like a machine because it changes. You could rewind it if you wanted to. When you're sleeping, it stops, unless you're having a dream. The process takes in information, analyzes it, and decides whether it's good or bad. You can't turn it down, but you can push it to the back of your mind and try to think of other things.'" Dr. Esse said she had more slides to show but she really wanted to see the club members' drawings first.

Jamie brought out her drawing. On one side, it was a nature drawing with mountain and forests and wild animals. On the other side, it was a picture of pollution in the sky and waters.

Keith showed a drawing of a square divided into four color-coded sections. He explained that one square represented evil, one good, another sad, and the last happy.

"Keith, how does this conscience work?" asked Dr. Esse.

Keith said, "If I'm wrong ...pain! 'That's wrong'. If I do something wrong, people would be mad. If I do something good, I'd feel proud of myself. I think 'Is that the right answer or not?' Maybe my teacher or my Tae Kwon Do instructor says 'yes' or 'no'. Sometimes my own mind says it's right or wrong."

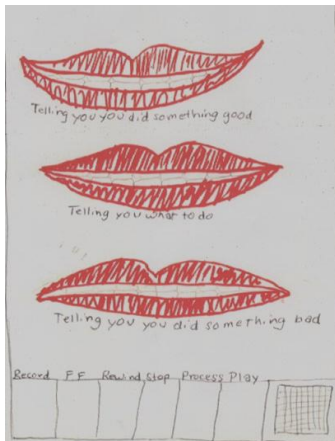
"Even more moral emotions," said Mr. Moore.

"Did you finish your drawing, Cynthia?" he asked. Cynthia had been more quiet than usual at the club meeting. She was debating with herself whether to bring up the other drawing, the one on the Fairchild's closet wall, during the club meeting today. She was relieved when she was asked for her own conscience drawing. Cynthia's drawing was done with changeable colored markers. I showed a girl's head. She had big green eyes. Her mouth could be a smile or a frown, depending on the changeable marker you used on it. In

the middle of her forehead was a perfectly round blue face with a mouth shaped like an 'o'. On either side of the blue face there were words. On one side it read 'Be helpful', on the other, 'Be nice.'

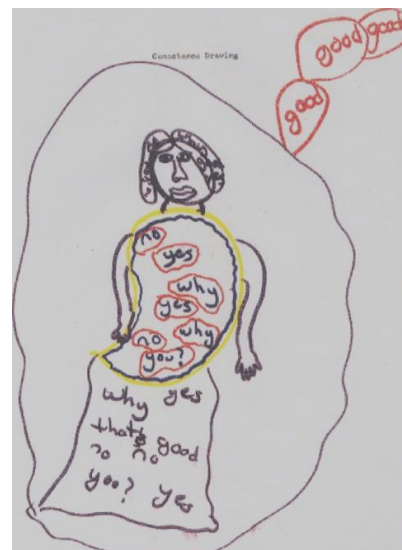
Cynthia received lots of praise for her drawing. Even Aaron, who had finally made it, told her he really liked it. She thought she would have felt even better if she hadn't been thinking so much about the Fairchild's bedroom closet. Cynthia asked to see Aaron's drawing. At first Aaron didn't want to show it but after Mr. Moore and Dr. Esse encouraged him. He pulled a wad of paper from his jeans and unfolded it like pirates' map of buried treasure. Everyone gathered around as Aaron explained. "I got the idea from the canals and bridges in the Village. See here's the river and here are the canals. The river can be very fast and overflow its banks. Especially if there's a storm or when the ice melts in spring. When it floods that's like a bad thing in my conscience. In the canal the water can be controlled and go where you want it. That's mostly good. Here are some dams I added. The bridges let the people cross the canals to work the dams and check to make sure the river doesn't break the levy between it and the canal. If it does that would be like another bad thing and the people would have to cross over to repair it. That's like making it up when you've botched up something important to someone else." Aaron's picture also received praise. Mr. Moore said he thought Aaron's drawings showed how lively, colorful, flowing things sometimes can spill and cause damage but can also be directed if necessary.

## Some Other Images of Conscience from the Conscience Study.



### TAPE RECORDER CONSCIENCE

"Which can be shoved  
to the back of the mind  
but can't be turned off...."

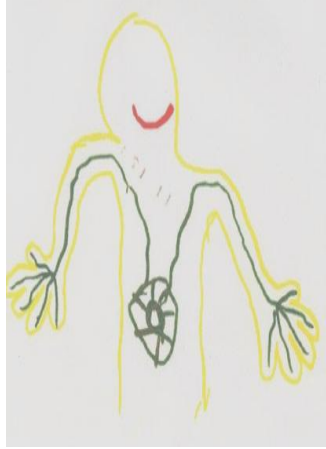


### CONNECTED CONSCIENCE

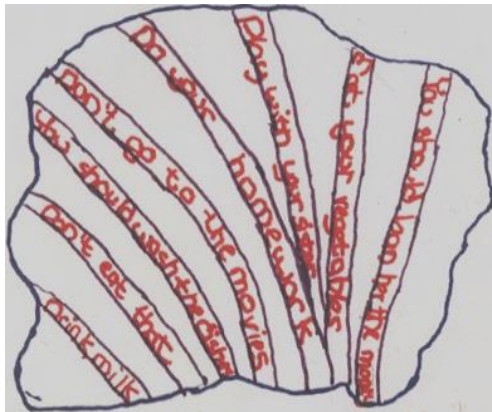


### MORAL EMOTIONAL BAROMETER





GUT FEELING CONSCIENCE

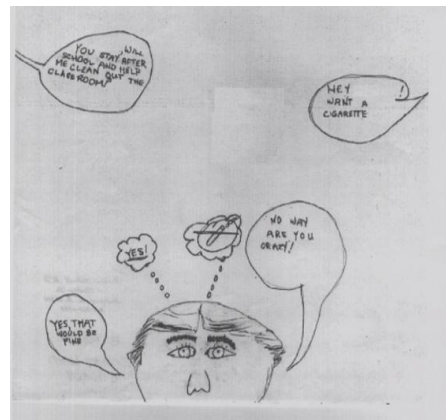


VALUATIONAL CONSCIENCE

With DO'S AND DON'TS  
in the very convolutions of the brain

### A VOLITIONAL CONSCIENCE

Conscious of choices to be made



Then Dr. Esse said she wanted to show some more slides. Cynthia recognized the first slide almost right away. It was the conscience drawing she had done a year ago! Actually she had drawn two pictures. In the first picture, she had drawn a picture of herself calling a friend "ugly" because she's mad at her. The friend is crying and saying, "No, I'm not." In the second drawing, the girls are friends again but another child has called Cynthia's friend "ugly." In the second drawing Cynthia is defending her friend. Cynthia tried to remember which friend she had in mind when she made that drawing. As hard as she tried, she couldn't decide who it was supposed to be. Aaron's old drawing was also in the slides. He had drawn something like a brain. Aaron said "Hey my drawing changed a lot in a year!" Cynthia thought so too. Then she remembered who the friend was in her drawing. It was Jamie.

"In the Conscience Study, what did you want to know about moral emotions?" Mr. Moore wanted to know.

Dr Esse paused a moment." First let me ask, do any of you know about Charles Darwin?"

Keith said, "He discovered evolution."

Someone else said "Yeah, survival of the fittest stuff."

"Yes, but he did some other things too. He lived in the 1800's. His father wanted him to be a clergyman but he was more interested in natural science. A person like that was called a naturalist. Darwin got out of school and didn't know what to do with himself. Then one of his old professors came along and asked him if he would like to take a trip around the world. Now, who could say no to that? The trouble was he had a girl friend. He told her he'd be gone a couple of years, but it ended up being five years. He took a five-year voyage on Her Majesty's Ship Beagle as the ship's naturalist.

"The Beagle," Aaron thought. "What a great name for a ship. Beagles are my favorite dogs."

"Darwin probably was chosen because he was a keen observer. He really had a good eye. He looked at everything...and made notes...and made big collections of things. If there had been baseball cards in his day he would have had the biggest collection around. During his voyage on the Beagle, he

visited South America, the Galapagos and other Pacific Islands. He collected fossils and studied plants, animals and geology."

"Did he take any fossils or rocks he wasn't supposed to?" Jamie looked worried. She was thinking about the National Parks she loved to visit.

"I don't know... Back then I'm not sure anyone minded too much and he was a scientist allowed to collect things for studies. He didn't just look at rocks and fossils and birds and animals. He was a people watcher, too. A really good one. And since he didn't know languages, he watched faces. Everywhere he went, everyone expressed emotions the same way. They could be scared, happy, sad, mad, embarrassed, or ashamed. Anyway he observed people of different countries and cultures and he also observed the many children he had with his wife Emma Wedgwood. He published a book in 1872 just ten years before he died called **The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals**. Darwin wrote about his idea that emotions are pretty much alike across cultures and even among primates. He thought that animals like dogs could show shame or shyness but he thought only humans could express shame by blushing."

Aaron listened closely. He remembered how one of the puppies in the yard with the electronic fence seemed to be very bold but the other one seemed to shy away from anyone unfamiliar. He knew puppies could look very ashamed when they were scolded for being naughty.

Dr. Esse continued, "Have you ever been suddenly embarrassed and blushed? Then you know you can't control the blushing or the feeling of your ears and neck growing hotter and hotter. Because blushing is the result of activity in the Autonomic Nervous System, it cannot be controlled voluntarily. If you have a pale complexion, you know how other kids can have great fun at your expense commenting on how red your face becomes."

Keith felt himself start going red just then. He had begun to feel uncomfortable. Dr. Esse's talk about blushing made him think about getting called "pinky" last year. It started with those awful red gym shorts he had to buy. Keith hated gym to start with because he wasn't very skilled at sports and the other kids sometimes laughed at his clumsiness. But then there were those shorts. How was his Mom supposed to know they would bleed in the wash? They did and left all his underwear an unmistakably

bright pink color. Keith was trying to stay as unnoticed in the locker room as possible. He tried to change quickly. He almost thought no one had seen that he was safe. But then, Eddie, who liked to bully people, came by, roughly pulled down Keith's shorts below Keith's knees exposing the pink underwear to everyone's view. Eddie started shouting to everyone to come see the boy in girl's underwear. Keith had wanted to die. It had been enough to get him to take self-defense classes at the Y. Funny thing; Keith had become very interested in martial arts of all sorts. He especially liked to collect Ninja weapons.

"Darwin thought that a shame response happened most often when a person is being blamed or maybe just thinks she is being criticized but it also could happen when receiving praise. As a boy, Darwin liked to be admired for how bold he was at climbing trees. He also liked to tell tall stories that made him seem grander. Yet he felt deeply ashamed and even held himself in contempt when he recognized he was being vain. Later on he would blame himself for the pleasure he took in the success of his books."

"He had a harsh conscience, didn't he?" asked Mr. Moore.

"Why? What made his conscience so hard on him?" Jamie wanted to know.

"Some think that Darwin's hard conscience came from losing his mother when he was 8 and then being raised by his elder sisters and father without much encouragement from them to grieve his loss. Any way he had a harsh conscience that never left him," Mr. Moore said. "Darwin was very opposed to slavery. One time when he was having dinner with his grown-up son, his son made an insensitive remark about slavery. Darwin became very angry. He pretty much told his son to get out and go back to his own home. But then he visited his son in the early morning and told him he couldn't sleep because he felt so badly about his anger. Anyway, in some people the shame response can be so intense it interferes with clear thinking. They become momentarily confused."

Mr. Moore asked, "If Darwin was beginning to write about the evolution of emotions at the end of the last century, then how come we didn't start studying them then?"

"In psychology people were paying attention to other things and ignored emotions. Some people didn't think emotions could be studied scientifically at all because they're too messy. Then years later, some other keen eyed scientists also studied people's faces and agreed with Darwin's idea that emotions and their expression are the same all over the world."



"When you were younger did you ever play 'Guess Who'?"

Jamie had played it many times with her sister Jessica when Jessica was too sick to get out of bed. Jamie raised her hand.

"How do you play it, Jamie?" Mr. Moore asked.

"It's a game where both you and your opponent pick have the same set of cards with faces on them. You each pick one without showing it to one another. Then you look at all the other faces on the cards and you try to guess which one your opponent picked. You get to ask one yes or no question each turn. Like 'Is it a man?' or 'Does he wear glasses?' The one who guesses right first wins."

"That's 'Guess who?' all right. Now suppose we try 'Guess Who?' with a little twist. Jamie, suppose I give you some pictures of faces and you pick one. Don't show me or anyone else which one. Now Aaron you take an identical set of cards. Now you pick one but you also keep it hidden. In this game you have to ask at least one yes or no question about emotions."

"You mean like 'Is the person sad?' Jamie asked to be sure she understood.

"Exactly, now Jamie you start."

"Well," Jamie asked Aaron, looking over her cards. "Is the person sad?"

Aaron looked at the card he had picked and, after a short while, said "No, I don't think sad. Now it's my turn. Is your person a man?"

"Yes," Jamie answered. Aaron put away all the cards of people weren't men. He still had seven cards to choose from. It was Jamie's turn.

"Is this person angry?" Jamie asked. She eliminated all but three cards.

"Yes," Aaron answered after he studied the face. "My turn. Is your person embarrassed?"

"Not really," Jamie said. "Is your person a woman?"

"Yes." Aaron said, "That was fast."

Some other kids tried the game too. Then they started to make faces at one another saying "Guess which emotion this one is?" Cynthia gave a great impression of being absolutely horrified, scared to death. Aaron acted as if he were completely broken hearted after his girlfriend broke up with him. Then in his best stage whisper he said "good riddance I'm free!" Then he said loudly, "Free! At last, I'm free!" he shouted with mock joy.

"These performances deserve Oscars. But let's settle down now." Mr. Moore said laughing, "I guess we can pretty much understand each other when we talk about emotions."

"Let's see some drawings of how the faces of human babies show different emotions." Dr. Esse showed another slide." Maybe you've seen a poster like this slide that shows the human face expressing different emotions. Emotions seem to have evolved with their own biology, as well. But it's important to realize that we each react differently in our emotions to experiences. Something could make one person angry and another person sad and make still another person excited."

"Well, we know that all people, no matter what their cultures, have very similar emotions. What brings those emotions out for each individual is going

to be somewhat different, but the look on his or her face and their experience of what is happening inside is pretty much the same. There may be only ten kinds of emotion. But each kind has countless shades and hues and these can be mixed with other emotions, too. So we have joy and interest --you might have to think about that one awhile, but it might help to think about being excited, that's a kind of interest, isn't it? And being excited is pretty emotional, really. Then there's surprise. Surprise clears the brain of thoughts and other feelings. It gets you ready for something new. Of course we know some negative emotions, too: like distress, anger, disgust, contempt, fear, shame and guilt."

"You can see a lot of disgusted looks in the cafeteria at lunchtime," said Keith, looking down his nose to show contempt.

"Yeah and around Keith when he passes gas," someone snickered. Keith reddened. Others laughed. Mr. Moore glared again. He looked angry just then. Then Cynthia thought Mr. Moore looked a little ashamed that his class was being crude in front of his guest. Whatever he was feeling he didn't say and he didn't show it for more than a moment or two.

"People learn how to hide or disguise their emotions, sometimes even from themselves. Have you ever heard an argument between two people when one says 'You look angry,' and the other one denies it?" asked Dr. Esse.

Cynthia immediately thought of her parents. Those arguments ended with everyone getting angry but only admitting it later.

"So which are the moral emotions?" Mr. Moore asked. "I would guess fear of punishment, shame and guilt would be. Are there others?"

"Any of the emotions could become aroused by things we think of as good or bad, right or wrong. Think how often we **enjoy** praise for having done something good."

Cynthia said, "Jamie's picture makes me think how disgusted I get when someone pollutes the environment." Jamie looked up at Cynthia. She was both surprised and pleased that her drawing had moved Cynthia.

"I got really mad with some kids hurting puppies, I was furious." Aaron said, "Was that a moral emotion?"

"Probably," said Dr. Esse, "What do you think?" Aaron just shrugged, sat down but looked puzzled.

"Besides all the emotions you've mentioned, I want to say one more thing. Each person wants to feel good and think of himself or herself as a good person. It's a combination of feeling and thinking. It's like a set point on a thermostat in your home. If the temperature goes too high or too low from the set point, on goes the heating or cooling system. At least some moral emotions can make us so uncomfortable that we have to respond. Sometimes we respond in our own defense. Sometimes, when we know we've done something wrong or bad, we try different ways to repair the damage or heal the hurt."

"What questions did you ask the kids to find out about moral emotions? And what did you find out?" asked Mr. Moore.

"Well, the questions we asked to find out about moral emotions began with:

**When you've done something good, what happens on the inside of you? How does it show on the outside?**

After that we asked the same thing when something wrong is done:

**When you've done something morally bad, what happens inside and outside? How does your body express these feelings?"**

Cynthia was about to burst; she wanted to say something so badly. She waited for Dr. Esse to finish her sentence, and then said, "I really have strong feelings in my body when I've done something wrong. I feel my face get hot. My hands are sweaty. My heart beats fast."

Keith said, "My stomach starts to ache. I start feeling sick."

"Do you, Keith? Really?" Cynthia seemed to see Keith for the first time.

"Yeah," Keith said. "I'm glad I'm not the only one."

"Yeah me too-- and later on, I feel guilty inside," added Cynthia.



"So what happens outside when you've done something wrong, Cynthia?" asked Dr. Esse.

"People notice I spend more time in my room," Cynthia said, "And I don't have as much energy to do things with friends. That can go on and on."

"That sounds like some of the things we heard from lots of the kids in the study," said Dr. Esse.

"It doesn't sound like me," declared Aaron, "I don't have those feelings at all--well not very often, anyway. And mostly when I know I've done something wrong, I just want to say I'm sorry and do what I have to do to put it right. Then I want to think about something else. You know, talk to friends about sports and stuff. Does that mean I really don't have a conscience?" Aaron was trying to be nonchalant as he asked the question, but Cynthia thought he seemed worried about the answer he might hear. In fact Aaron had once overheard some words his mother said to his stepfather once when she was very angry about something Aaron had done. She had said, "He doesn't seem to feel guilty when he's done something wrong. He just doesn't show a lot of remorse."

Dr. Esse said, "You know, I think all people experience emotions, but some experience certain ones more deeply than others. Other people get more quickly moved to action. Also, some people are just better at describing their emotions than others. And when it came to physical sensations like a galloping heart beat, or a churning stomach, or a throbbing headache inside when a person had done something wrong, some of the kids we studied didn't have a lot to say. I think some people don't have such strong sensations. The important thing to remember is that having physical sensations or having a lot of emotions and knowing how to describe them aren't absolutely necessary to become a good person. Still, moral emotions and what we do with them are awfully important in conscience.... But, Aaron, didn't you start to tell a story about a kid tormenting some puppies?"

"Yeah," I was so mad I couldn't see straight. I was shaking so hard, I couldn't aim--" Aaron stopped and looked sort of ashamed of himself. He shifted from foot to foot, and looked away from everyone. He finally continued, "I was so mad I picked up a rock to throw at that little kid."

"O.K. we can talk about what you were going to do later, if you like. Right now, I would like for you to remember how your body felt when you were experiencing your moral outrage," Dr. Esse said.

The kids were surprised. Most of them had been told that throwing rocks was wrong. They thought Aaron would surely be scolded and they would all be reminded about the rules. Jamie liked the words "moral outrage." She was glad Dr. Esse was talking about that instead of scolding Aaron. In fact she thought that maybe that little kid had it coming for being cruel to an animal. Aaron found a few words to describe the way he felt at the time, "tensed up" he said. He kept saying how unfair it was for the kid to coax the puppies into the invisible fence where they would be shocked.

"So you see Aaron, you have moral emotions. The ones you experience most strongly are different than Keith's or Cynthia's. Also the triggers for your moral emotions - what gets them started or sets them off- might be different than theirs," Dr. Esse explained.

"Well, I guess it's True Confessions time. I was going to really let that kid have it," said Aaron.

"Did you throw the rock at him, Aaron?" asked Jamie. "I wouldn't blame you if you did." She was still indignant about the puppies.

"No, I waited too long and lost my aim," explained Aaron. "Anyway I would have been in big trouble if I had hurt the kid. I'm not supposed to throw rocks."

"That sounds like a rule to me," said Mr. Moore. "I think we could use that as an example when we talk about the do's and don'ts that come from our moral values."

"O.K.," said Aaron. "Hey, this is kind of neat talking about what we did wrong without getting punished for it but- well sometimes I feel better to tell what I did and take my punishment. Then it's over."

Mr. Moore nodded, "There's another story about Darwin when he was a boy. Mostly he was a very humane person but once he was cruel to a puppy. He said he beat the puppy. The memory bothered him a lot - so much that he

remembered the exact spot where it happened and, to his shame, would be reminded of his misdeed every time he passed that spot."

Aaron wondered if Dr. Esse was thinking the same thing he was thinking. He asked "Why was Darwin cruel to the puppy?"

Mr. Moore said "I don't know but when he was older he thought maybe it was because he enjoyed having power over the puppy."

Cynthia wished she were more like Aaron and not spend so much time worrying about being good. She knew what he meant about feeling better when she confessed. She did that in church. She decided that it was now or never for telling about her recent experience at the Fairchild's. She worked up her courage and then spoke up. She told how Michael had drawn on the closet wall and how she couldn't bring herself to tell the Fairchild's what had happened when they came home. She was able to forget all about it over the weekend, during her birthday trip. She hesitated when she realized that Jamie was listening as she mentioned her trip. Cynthia wished she'd left that part out. But Jamie didn't seem upset, so Cynthia continued her story. She said she started thinking about it off and on, Sunday after church. At first she wondered if the Fairchild's had discovered Michael's drawing. Then she wondered and sort of hoped that they thought it was an old drawing he'd done before she babysat. Then she wondered if Michael told them it was his Conscience Drawing. At that Dr. Esse laughed and said, "I wish I could see that drawing and ask Michael to tell about it." Cynthia really wanted some advice as to what to do--should she tell the Fairchild's? Aaron just shook his head. "You didn't do anything, Cynthia!"

Cynthia was grateful to Aaron for saying that. Still she wasn't sure. All this conscience business was so...so...then Cynthia laughed and said, "Little Cathy really meant it when she told her doll 'Cynthi's vexed'. Look at me. I'm still vexed!"

Then Jamie said, "I know what Cynthia means. She thinks she was responsible."

Cynthia was about to ask Dr. Esse what she thought when Mr. Moore said they had to stop because parents needed to pick up the kids from The

Conscience Club on time. As he wrote something on the board he said "Let's think about this question between now and next time." The question read:

**When you have gone against your conscience and you do something wrong or bad, what do you do to make things right?**

As they filed out of the room, Dr. Esse said, "Cynthia, I will be very interested to hear what you decide to do."

Jamie came up to Cynthia after the meeting. "Is your Mom or Dad going to pick you up, Cynthia?"

"No, it's still light out so I can walk home," Cynthia answered. "How about you?"

"I'm walking home, too," Jamie said. "Want to walk together?"

"O.K." Cynthia said.

They walked together in silence for awhile. Cynthia wasn't sure how to start a conversation with Jamie. It was odd because they had been best friends last year. But Jamie had changed and became less and less friendly. Cynthia wasn't sure why. Maybe Jamie wasn't sure either. There had been some pretty big changes in Jamie's life when her older sister, Jessica, became very ill. They found out she had leukemia. Jessica was sick a lot, often very weak and suffering lots of pain. Jamie tried her best to help out either in Jessica's care or keeping up the house. Jamie's mother often praised her for being thoughtful and considerate. Jamie's parents often had to travel the long distance to the children's hospital so that Jessica could have the treatments she needed. Sometimes Jamie went with them. Sometimes she stayed at home. But whether she went or not, it seemed to her that all the attention was being paid to Jessica. She told herself it was wrong to feel this way but she missed the attention she had once had as the youngest member of her family. She started having unkind and even hateful thoughts about Jessica. Only she was ashamed of the thoughts and kept them to herself. Then in October of last year, Jessica's condition became very serious. She had to go into the hospital for more treatments. They didn't work. Jessica's condition became worse and worse. Everyone in the family including Jamie traveled to the city and gathered together in the hospital.

Jamie hoped to get a chance to talk to Jessica, but Jessica wasn't able to respond to anyone. Then she died. Everyone in the family grieved. Jamie didn't even realize how close she and her sister had been until after Jessica had died. It hurt a lot. Jamie and her parents did their best to comfort one another. They prayed and remembered Jessica together, and in some ways they became even closer as a family. It helped to tell each other out loud all the things they wished they had had a chance to tell Jessica before she died. The trouble was that Jamie also remembered her unkind and hateful thoughts about Jessica. Perhaps, she thought about them too much. And, because she was ashamed to tell anyone about them, she didn't find out until later that it's natural for kid sisters and brothers of very ill children to have some unkind thoughts about them. And, sometimes a person doesn't get a chance to say how much they love or care or how sorry they are for the wrongs they have done to someone else before she dies.

Cynthia found what she wanted to say to Jamie, "I'm sorry your sister died."

Jamie said, "Thanks." Then she added, "We still think about her a lot."

Cynthia thought she saw some tears welling up in Jamie's eyes. She looked away from her friend and said, "I wish we could be better friends."

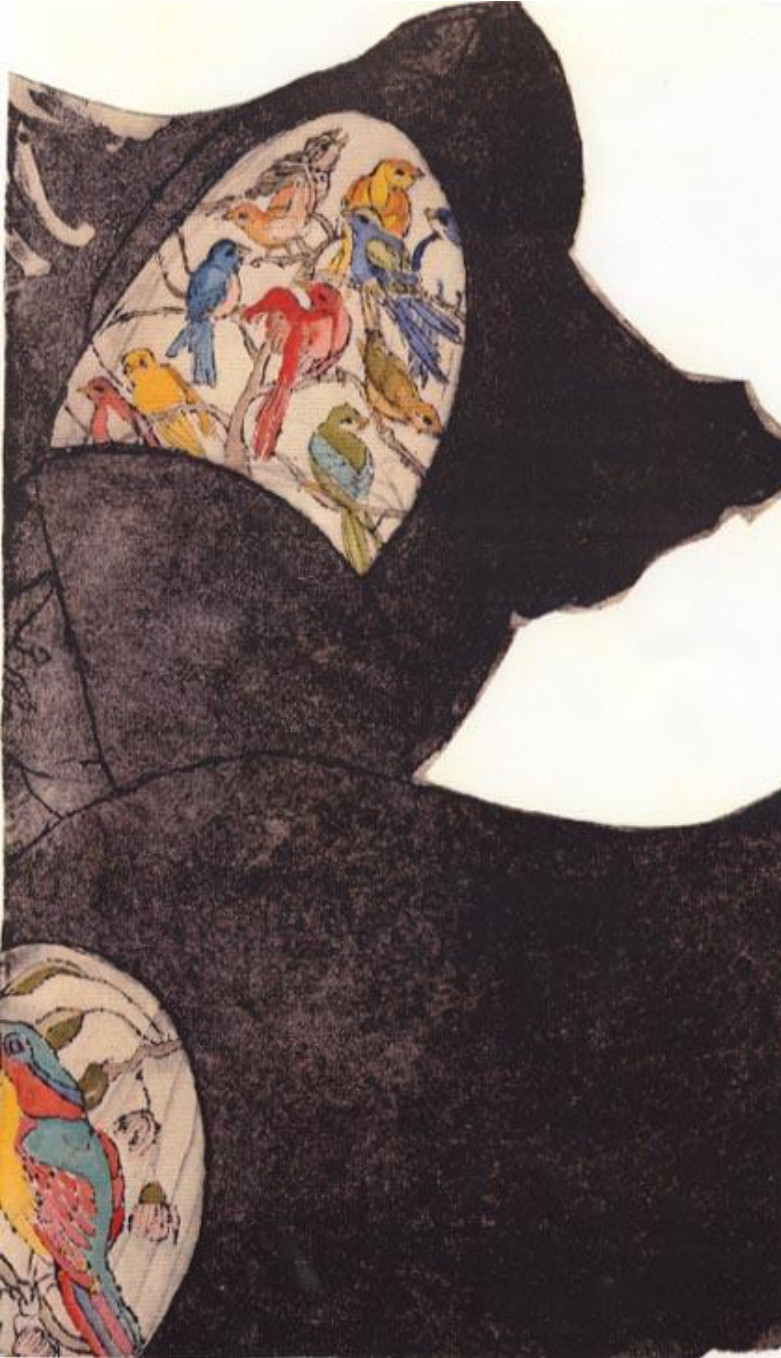
Jamie looked puzzled, "What do you mean?"

Cynthia said, "I don't know. Last year, you weren't much fun to be around. You didn't want to do stuff and you were pretty crabby. I guess I started staying away from you."

Jamie laughed a little nervously, "I don't blame you. Sometimes I didn't want to be around me either."

Cynthia said, "I've never had someone in my family get very sick and die."

"It never happened to me before," Jamie said. "It was pretty hard on everyone. Mom was always awake at night and always tired. Everyone tried to be nice. I know I did. But sometimes Jessica was mean to me so I felt like being mean to her. Sometimes I didn't care if she was dying and I told her so. Then my Mom would say, 'Jamie that's enough ugly behavior'. Of course, she never punished Jessica 'cause she was dying."



"I thought you and Jessica were pretty good friends, I mean for being sisters."

"Yeah, I guess so. We did fun things together before she got so sick. Especially on vacation. Once we went to a pueblo in New Mexico and visited a family that made pottery. They let Jessica and me make our own clay animals. Jessica made a bear. She was really proud of it. She said she'd kill me if I even looked at it. I forgot all about it. Then after Jessica was so sick, one day she just gave it to me as a present. So now I have something that helps me remember her."

"That's good," said Cynthia. She wanted to say more but decided to be quiet instead.

Jamie, too, was quiet for a moment as they walked. "Cynth, would you like to come over and see the pottery Jessica and I made?"

Cynthia said, "Sure, but I need to call home and tell Mom where I'm going to be."

# The Conscience Celebration

## *Chapter Three: Moral Emotions*

### Guide for further study and discussion

AFTER THE THIRD CHAPTER IS READ, GROUP DISCUSSION MAY BE FACILITATED FURTHER WITH THE FOLLOWING REMARKS AND QUESTIONS.

1. This is a good time to engage the group in showing and telling about their conscience drawings.
  - Representations of concept, moral attachments, moral emotions, valuations and moral choosing (autonomy or volition) may be highlighted.
  - Recognize that different domains are apt to be emphasized or appear to have more importance or value in each person's drawing or description. For example, one boy drew brain convolutions upon which were inscribed various rules: a valuational conscience. A girl gave a detailed account of feedback from conscience components, emphasizing retrieval of moral memories and reflection: a conceptual conscience. Another girl identified feelings and relations with others: a connected conscience.
  - Efforts should be made to appreciate the contours of each person's conscience rather than the stage of any particular person's moral development. Use the different characters in the Conscience Club—most of whom are stage II or III-- to discuss differences in conscience contours.
  
2. Invite discussion about the differences between and connections among thoughts, emotions, values and choices.
  - Discrete Emotions Theory involves the idea that there are a small number of discrete emotions that can be experienced in different hues and shades, in various combinations and strengths.
  - These emotions have a timetable for appearing in development.
  - Each emotional experience involves neurological pathways, a distinctive subjective experience and a particular facial expression. We can learn different ways of expressing them or to disguise them so well that even we, who are experiencing them, no longer recognize them.

- According to this theory, the biology of an emotional experience is apt to be very similar among people but the biography of emotional experiences is apt to be very different (what, for example, has made me angry or happy in my life may be very different from what has made you happy or angry in yours).
- Sometimes we describe our emotions in a way that reflects how we value them: we might talk about **good or bad** feelings for example. Mental health professionals are more prone to use words like **appropriate or inappropriate, healthy or unhealthy, adaptive or maladaptive**, but they are still making value judgments about emotional experiences. When is shame or guilt a good-a healthy-thing? When are they bad-unhealthy? Could something be healthy and bad at the same time? Like what? Could something be unhealthy and good at the same time? Like what?

Invite discussion about what group members believe constitutes well-being in a person's emotional life, in her thinking life, in her valuational life, and in her volitional life. Write on the board or flip chart the values that comprise the group members' notions of well being in these domains. Save this material for further discussion and reference in the session(s) on moral valuation. For now, wonder aloud about how Aaron's conscience contours might support one bedrock value over others while Cynthia's conscience contours might be more favorable for evincing quite different bedrock values.

3. What does Dr. Esse say about which emotions can become moral emotions? Can anger be moral? What about pride? Joy?
4. What are some ways that moral emotions might be controlled? Expressed? Concealed?
5. What do group members think are right ways and wrong ways for a person to control, express or conceal his/her moral emotions?
6. Moral emotions are a response to right and wrong doing, to good and bad experiences, but we also respond to the emotions themselves-we handle, manage or "deal with" them. What are some examples of how we might deal with our moral emotions?
7. Moral emotions may be induced by others, sometimes to punish the perceived transgressor with an uncomfortable feeling, sometimes, more kindly, to help someone grow morally. Elicit **examples**. The absence of



very strong moral feelings can be alarming to grown-ups. Are there ways for a person's conscience to be strong, even though the moral emotional responses are relatively weak?

8. Moral emotions, having biology, are apt to be influenced by experiences that change biology. How might acute stress affect a person's moral emotional life? What about abuse endured at different times in life? Other forms of hardship? What about conditions like depression or anxiety?

## Chapter Four

While Cynthia and Jamie were walking and talking, Aaron was running and calling out, "Hey Dr. Esse wait a minute. I have to talk to you." Dr. Esse was just then taking her bicycle out of the bike rack and putting the chain and lock away. When she saw Aaron running, she took off her helmet and waited for him to catch up. "What's that he's carrying?" she wondered. Then she realized it was a skateboard. "Hello, Aaron," she said. "You know I really enjoy you in Conscience Club. I especially liked your conscience drawing."

"Conscience Club's O.K., I guess." Aaron seemed to want to think more about what he wanted to ask. He said, "Can I go along with you a ways?"

"Well, I'm on my bicycle this afternoon, but I suppose I could walk it."

"Oh you don't have to walk it. I can keep up with you on my skateboard, unless you go too fast."

So they went along together- Dr. Esse on bicycle and Aaron beside her on his skateboard, talking as they went. Aaron asked, "Do you think everyone has a conscience? What about war criminals? People that kill other people just because they're different? You know, people who commit hate crimes? What about drug pushers and serial killers?"

"So many questions all at once," Dr. Esse laughed. "As it is, I can think of only one thing at a time and right now I'm thinking about the traffic and following traffic safety rules." She didn't add that she also was worried by Aaron darting in and out of the road on his skateboard. Somehow Aaron understood the hint and also began to pay closer attention to the traffic. "Since you don't live far from here, why don't you stop at my house? We can sit on the patio and have some water."

"Sure," Aaron welcomed the chance to ask more questions. It wasn't long before they arrived at Dr. Esse's home. She brought out some ice water and asked,

"Would you like a cookie, Aaron?"

"Yeah, thanks." Then he frowned and said "No thanks, my Mom doesn't want me to eat snacks before supper."

"I could wrap it up and you could take it with you for dessert," Dr. Esse suggested.

"Cool. Mom won't mind that," Aaron promised himself he would remember this solution next time he was offered treats between meals.

"You know I think I know where some of your questions come from. At our last parents meeting, your Stepdad asked if Mr. Moore and I believe everyone has a conscience. He also brought up the Holocaust."

"In my family, every year on Yom HaShoah, we remember all the Jews who were killed in the Holocaust. What about the people who did that or knew about it?" Aaron asked.

"You and your family are not the only ones who have asked this question. You know, the study of moral development was really advanced by a psychologist named Kohlberg. He picked up where Piaget left off. And one of the reasons he had for studying moral development was because of the Holocaust. He wanted to know 'How could people let the Holocaust happen?' I don't know if he ever found an answer that satisfied him, but he did find out an incredible lot about how people grow in moral reasoning through their lives.

"I don't have 'a once and for all' type answer to your question, Aaron. I think that hatred of a people can grow up right alongside conscience, and distort and disfigure it so that a great evil, like killing off a people because they are different, is allowed to happen."

"You mean, a person can listen to his conscience and still be evil?"



"It's a good question for all of us. It's the kind of question that awakens the little moral philosopher inside each of us. So we start thinking about the nature of good and evil in ways that moral philosophers have thought about these things for ages. But it's also a question that cannot be answered in the study of moral development alone. So I will tell you how the little moral philosopher inside me tries to answer your question. My moral philosopher tells me that a person who follows the Golden Rule only for some human

beings whom she decides deserve it and not for others has a badly shaped conscience. That can lead to allowing evil to happen, sometimes great evil."

"Well, what about serial killers?" Aaron wanted to know.

"Well Aaron how many serial killers have you run into?"

"None yet," Aaron replied.

"Me either," she said. "Not that I know of, anyway. That means I haven't done any research on those persons."

"So how do you know I won't grow up to be a serial killer or someone like that?"

"Or maybe you mean how do **you** know you won't? Well, I promise to think about your question before our next club meeting."

"One more thing?"

"One more," Dr. Esse was smiling.

"What should I do about that kid who teases the puppies? It's not right for him to hurt them." Aaron had thought he could get some of the Bridge kids together and kind of wait until the boy showed up at the puppies' home. It could be a regular ambush. Wouldn't that kid be surprised? But then he wondered what Dr. Esse would think of his solution using the Bridge Kids. He decided not to mention them. Out loud he said, "And it's not right for me to hurt him."

"I'd start by asking, 'Who knows the most about preventing cruelty to animals?'"

Aaron left Dr. Esse's home with her last question on his mind. He still had time that afternoon to get some skateboarding in with the Bridge Kids and he hurried off to meet them. Even so he went out of his way to pass by the house where the puppies lived just to make sure they were O.K. They were both outside play fighting and growling at one another. Aaron went into the yard and patted the puppies. He started to leave, then stopped, turned around, kicked his skateboard off the walkway and went up the steps to the

front door. After one last moment of hesitation, he rang the doorbell. It seemed like the longest time before someone came to the door and began undoing the dead bolt and latch. Finally, a woman who seemed very old to Aaron opened the door and, through very thick glasses, looked him up and down. What can I do for you young man? If it's another fund drive from school, I'm already up to my ears in wrapping paper. Now, wait a minute. I know you. You're the boy who does the fancy tricks on that -that-board thing. What do you call it?"

"A skateboard," Aaron answered, smiling. "How did you know that I skateboard?"

"I'm ashamed to admit I enjoy spying on people. I watch you from my window when you come by to see my puppies. You show off for them on -that- that surf board thing and they love it. I also know you're not always careful about traffic."

"I am too!" Aaron exclaimed. "Some people just think they own the road. Oh. Did you see me on the street or something?"

"Yes I did. I was in a car with my son. He was driving me to the hospital. I had had one of my spells that morning. I just couldn't see for a few minutes and it was over. Not bad spell at all, if you want my opinion. But my son was very worried. He insisted he pick me up and take me to the doctor. So I went for the ride. Besides, the doctor is kind of cute. You were showing off for someone else besides puppies I think," she said with a smile and a wink. Aaron felt his ears get hot. "I recognized you then as the boy who stops to play with my puppies. But my son passed too close to you as he drove by. I was scared out of my wits that my son had hit you. Were you all right?"

But before Aaron could begin to answer her she went on. "I said 'Stop this car, a boy's hurt. You've hit him.' He said that no, he hadn't hit anyone at all. He wouldn't stop because he said he was too worried about me. He wouldn't stop but I could tell I was getting to him because he slowed way down and hunched his shoulders. That's how I know I'm making myself understood to my son when he's driving. Anyway, I kept at him until he turned that car right around and went back to help you up at least. I guess you weren't too bad off though 'cause we couldn't find you. Anyhow you didn't answer my question "Were you hurt? Because you know my son is

usually a very safe driver and he wouldn't hurt a flea but he was really worried about me-

Aaron broke in. "I wasn't hurt at all. I didn't even fall down."

By this time of course the puppies were nuzzling and nipping Aaron, then jumping all over him. The woman continued, "You really like animals, I can tell. Not like that other boy that comes by sometimes just to cause trouble."

"That's what I came to tell you," Aaron interrupted. "There's a kid hurting your puppies. He gives them treats to get them to shock themselves on your fence."

"Oh those electronic fences! I don't know why I let my son talk me into one in the first place. They seem really cruel to me. I thought the shocks were inhumane. But the veterinarian said the fences really work to keep pups safe at home. I felt the shock it wasn't too terribly bad."

"Can I feel it?" Aaron wanted to know.

"Well I guess so if you want to." She slipped a collar off one of the puppies and let Aaron hold it. She said, "When you get to within 5 feet of the boundary to my yard it will give you a warning beep beep beep. Then if you cross the boundary it gives you a shock."

Aaron tried it. "Yeah, I guess it's not too bad. How long does it take for them to learn?"

"I was told that after the first shock, they learn pretty fast. But one puppy doesn't seem to catch on as fast as the other. Also it doesn't work if they are confused by mixed signals and inconsistent trainers. Kind of like raising children, if you want my opinion."

"So that kid could be messing up the puppies while they are learning how to stay safe in your yard."

"I know he does. I don't know why he thinks it is fun to do what he's doing. I've caught him at it and gave him a good scolding. My son says that if I see him around my home anymore he'd call the sheriff. But I feel sorry for the boy. You have to be hurting yourself somehow to be so inhumane."

Aaron and the woman chatted a while longer and she asked him his name. Then she asked him if he would be interested in helping her complete the puppies' training by taking them out for walks by the boundaries, then calling them back when the beeping sounds came on, and praising and petting them if they came to him. If they didn't come right away he was to pull sharply on their leashes but not scold them.

"Now that's the humane way to teach them do's and don'ts, if you want my opinion."

Aaron nodded and waved good-bye. Mounting his skateboard again, he suddenly had the answer to Dr. Esse's question. "The Humane Society," Aaron smiled. "I could call them."

Cynthia had begun another babysitting job at the Fairchild's. The Fairchild's were taking part in a progressive dinner party with their friends. That meant they would have appetizers at one friend's home then go to another couple's home for salads then to still another friend's place for the main dish. Finally they would return to their own home with all their friends for desserts. Everyone at the party belonged to a storytelling club. At each stop someone had to tell a story to everyone else. Cynthia was to babysit Michael and Cathy until it was the Fairchild's turn to entertain at their home. Then if Michael and Cathy were asleep Cynthia could stay and listen to the last story of the evening.

From the hallway where she was standing, Cynthia could see into two rooms. She could see into the kitchen where Mrs. Fairchild was busy at work and she could also see into the dining room which had been decorated for the dinner party and was full of fine china and wine glasses and plates full of fancy desserts. Cathy was sitting under the dining room table. Michael was quietly looking at a picture book in the corner.

"You've come early, Cynthia," Mrs. Fairchild remarked as she was preparing Michael's and Cathy's supper. Cynthia had come early on purpose. She wanted to talk to Mrs. Fairchild about the drawing Michael had made in the bedroom closet. She thought that if she came early Mrs. Fairchild wouldn't be in her usual last minute rush and there would be time to talk. The trouble



was Cynthia was having difficulty working up her courage to tell Mrs. Fairchild what had happened. Finally she started.

"Mrs. Fairchild, I need to tell you something."

"Sure, Honey, what do you need to tell me?"

"It's about my last time babysitting, something hap-" Just then there was a crash from the dining room. Cynthia turned to look and saw Cathy dangling from the table, a big chair overturned and just out of the reach of her feet. Cathy was clutching the lace table cloth with one hand and trying very hard with her other hand to put the lid on a jar of sugar cubes that had spilled out all over the table.

"Help!" Cathy cried.

"Oh no!" Cathy's mother cried.

"Oh!" exclaimed Cynthia, "Cathy. Be careful." Cynthia reached Cathy just before she fell all the way down. Cathy had such a tight grip on the table cloth she had pulled everything to the very edge of the table. There would have been a terrible mess if Cynthia had been even one moment later.

"Cathy. How could you- I told you not to come in here. Now look what you've done. You've been very bad. Very naughty," Mrs. Fairchild scolded. Cathy had ducked under the dining room table. "You come out from under there this instant," Mrs. Fairchild was really mad. Cathy slowly crawled out from under the table on the side farthest away from her mother. Cynthia thought Cathy looked like a puppy dog cowering in shame.

"Cathy, you had better leave this room right now, before you get swatted on your fanny." Cathy left in a hurry followed by her brother who kept the book in front of his face. Mrs. Fairchild said "Michael, did you have anything to do with this?" Michael shook his head but wouldn't look his mother in the face.

He said, "I didn't do anything."

"Hmm," said his mother as she and Cynthia put things back in order on the table, "I know you like sugar cubes as much as Cathy. I think you put her up to it."

"Uh- uh, I didn't," Michael protested.

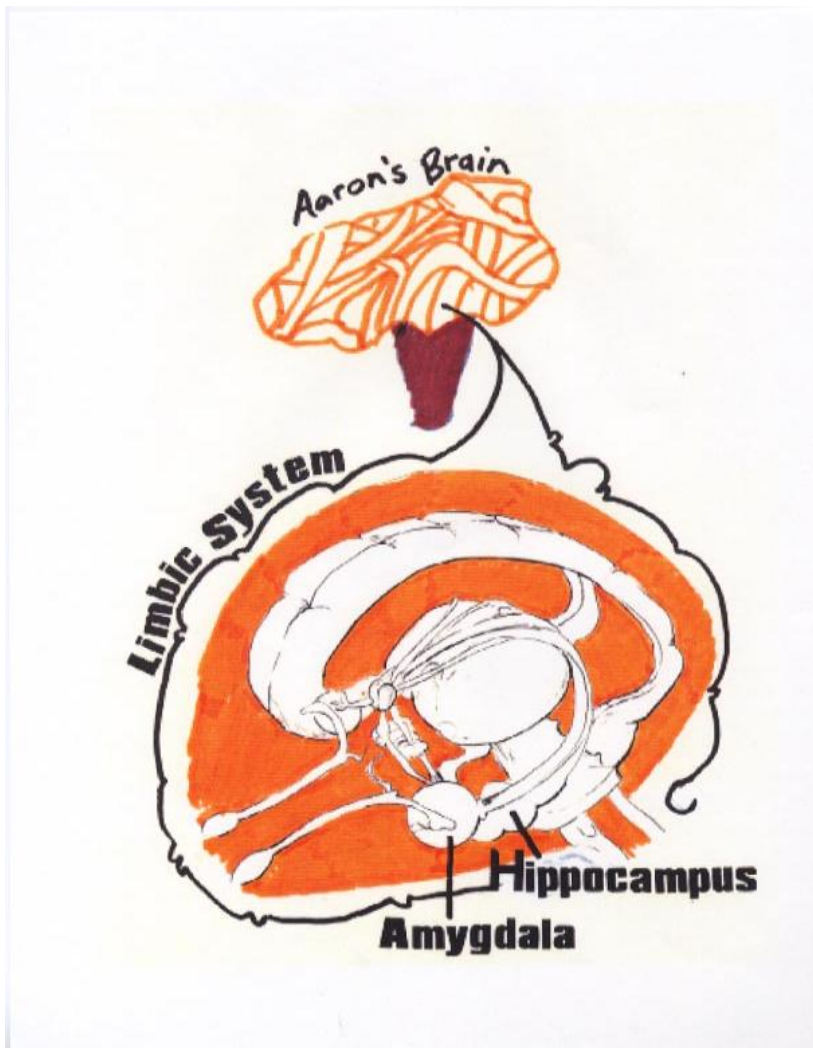
"Michael...go on. You don't belong in here either. You and Cathy are just lucky Cynthia was here to save the day. Thanks Cynthia."

Cynthia decided that she would wait awhile longer before telling Mrs. Fairchild about the drawing. She thought to herself. "Maybe I don't need to say anything at all."



Aaron had arrived at their favorite bridge and didn't see the usual kids skateboarding. In fact nobody was skateboarding. There were three older guys hanging out nearby by the comic card shop. They were sharing a cigarette. Aaron recognized one of them as a guy who used to skateboard with the Bridge Kids until he tried to sell drugs. Aaron and everyone else said "no" and the guy totally lost interest in their group. Aaron was just about to cross back over the canal and head home, when he saw another kid on his bicycle ride up to the older guys and stop. Aaron was really surprised when he recognized

Keith from the Conscience Club. Like the woman with the puppies, Aaron enjoyed spying on people. Unlike her, he was completely without shame about spying. There just wasn't anything like "Don't be a snoop" on his list of rules. He almost certainly thought to himself, "I'd better go or I'll catch it from Mom for being late." He also very possibly thought, "Curiosity killed the cat," but if he did he didn't keep that thought very long. The guys and Keith were leaving and Aaron decided to follow them.



"I'm glad Dr. Esse brought her slides back today because I wanted to ask her something," Mr. Moore explained to the class. "Dr. Esse, could you go back to the slide of Aaron's conscience drawing a year ago?"

"The one of the brain?" Dr. Esse wanted to know.

"Yes, that one," Mr. Moore stopped her as she flicked the slides on the

screen in reverse order. "What do we know about what happens in the brain to make conscience work?"

"We certainly don't know as much as we would like. But we may have even better ideas now that we have identified the different domains of conscience," Dr. Esse answered.

Mr. Moore said, "You mean concept of conscience, moral attachment, value making and moral choosing--"

"And don't forget moral emotions. Yes, each of these domains depends on different but connected brain structures. Aaron, let's use your picture of the brain. And may we also use your encounter with the little boy who tormented the puppies as an example?"

Aaron didn't look very happy about being used as an example but he said, "O.K. Go ahead." After his visit with Dr. Esse last week he felt she could be trusted.

"The first thing that happened was Aaron used his visual pathways. Before Aaron quite recognized that the puppies were not responding to the little boy playfully at all, he was probably surprised. It's as if something said to Aaron 'Look alert! Pay attention! Hey, wait a minute something's wrong here. 'How did he do that so quickly? Aaron's brain could pick up on emotional cues from the little boy and from the puppies too, probably, I'd say, knowing how much Aaron likes animals. Then other parts of Aaron's brain were activated and allowed him to compare what he was seeing with other experiences that were sort of like it. So first he made sense of what he saw. 'Hey, these puppies are being mistreated.' At the same time Aaron determined how important what he saw was to him. Remember values? If you think about it, deciding that something is important enough to pay attention to is already giving it a kind of value. Aaron was already evaluating the experience he was having. Aaron had a picture of a little boy teasing the puppies and he put it in a frame of some of his values. He had some strong emotions going on while he looked at that picture in that frame. Aaron felt badly for the puppies. Part of Aaron's brain was very active just then. I mean the part that has to do with emotional experiences. It's called the **limbic system**. And a part of the limbic system is called the **amygdala**. Some people think the amygdala helps us recognize and appreciate what someone else is experiencing in his emotions. That's called **empathy**. So Aaron's amygdala was active while he was recognizing and registering the puppies' distress signals. He was also experiencing an emotion in reaction to the puppies' distress."

"Yeah I was really mad," Aaron said.

"And ready to act, too. Another part of Aaron's central nervous system was activated by the stress he was under seeing those puppies being hurt. He had a strong urge to act in some way. When Aaron was suddenly stressed like that, stress hormones were released in his brain and his sympathetic nervous system. He had what's called a **fight or flight response**. His body prepared either to stay and fight or to runaway- to take flight."

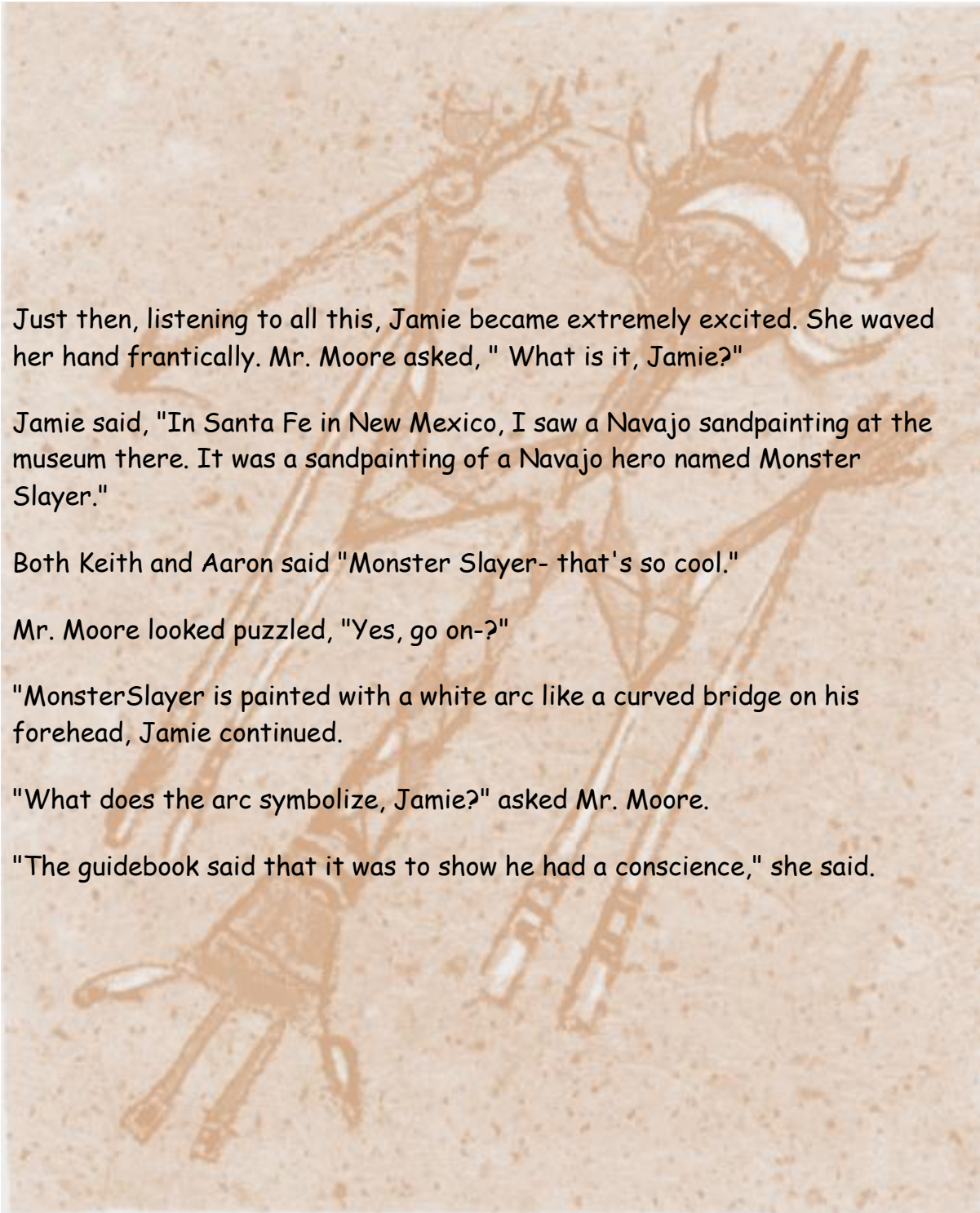
"I was ready to fight that kid."

"But you didn't, Aaron. You didn't want to hurt him," said Jamie. Cynthia nodded.

"Nah, maybe Aaron was afraid he'd get in trouble. Aaron just knew he'd get in trouble if he threw that rock at the kid," said Keith.

"Maybe both things are true," suggested Mr. Moore.

"It's hard to know all the things going on at one time in a person's mind," agreed Dr. Esse." Aaron could have had a sharp rise in his fear of punishment from some grown-up who might find out, or maybe the start of a shame response as he pictured himself throwing a rock at a kid smaller than him, or maybe a twinge of guilt as he pictured the little boy in pain Aaron had caused. By the way, you know guilt is really having empathy for someone you've harmed or wronged. Anyway it's a safe bet that Aaron was having more than one emotion as he pictured himself taking action. He stopped himself and thought. Another part of Aaron's brain called the **hippocampus** tapped into the long-term memories of what happened when he or someone else threw rocks at people. He made a choice not to throw the rock. Aaron's brain used its special chemicals to send messages between nerves that make up his **behavior inhibition system**. Inhibition is like forbidding something to go on. The behavioral inhibition system is also called the STOP system. Another part of Aaron's brain just behind his forehead is called the frontal lobe--"



Just then, listening to all this, Jamie became extremely excited. She waved her hand frantically. Mr. Moore asked, "What is it, Jamie?"

Jamie said, "In Santa Fe in New Mexico, I saw a Navajo sandpainting at the museum there. It was a sandpainting of a Navajo hero named Monster Slayer."

Both Keith and Aaron said "Monster Slayer- that's so cool."

Mr. Moore looked puzzled, "Yes, go on-?"

"MonsterSlayer is painted with a white arc like a curved bridge on his forehead, Jamie continued.

"What does the arc symbolize, Jamie?" asked Mr. Moore.

"The guidebook said that it was to show he had a conscience," she said.

Dr. Esse laughed, "So maybe the Navajo sandpainters know about the importance of the frontal lobe in conscience. It may be so.

"Through its connections with the limbic system, the frontal lobe takes part in the behavioral inhibition system. Our frontal lobes are important to us in making critical judgments and in controlling our urges. Aaron's frontal lobe was active in helping him control his urge to throw the rock at the boy. What do you think happened to the fear of punishment, the shame or the guilt emotions Aaron might have had after his behavioral inhibition system kicked in and forbade him to act on his urge to throw that rock?"

Cynthia answered, "Well he didn't do anything, so he didn't have anything to be afraid of -"

"-or ashamed of or guilty about," Mr. Moore added.

"Right," said Dr. Esse, "and what a relief not to feel fear or shame or guilt. Relief from distressing emotions is a pretty powerful way for conscience to work on preventing bad behavior. In fact Aaron's brain used other special chemicals to send messages between nerve cells that make up his **behavioral reward system**. It's also called the GO system. His brain rewarded his good judgement not to throw the rock."

"All of that was going on inside my conscience?" Aaron was astonished. "So how come I didn't notice it? Is being good just automatic, liked I'm computer- programmed or something? What if the computer goes haywire?"

"You're not like any computer I know about. Although you do program yourself in some ways—like when you learn habits of thinking and feeling and doing. Those habits depend a lot on choices you make."

Keith said, "My Dad says everything about us is because of genes. Genes tell the brain how to grow and what kind of persons we will be."

"Genes make an important contribution, it's true. They do tell the brain how to grow. And genes have a lot to do with our personality, especially a part of personality called **temperament**. Temperament has to do with how we respond to new things, how easily we make changes in our everyday lives, how much we stop and think before we act, how much we are willing to act-- stuff like that. Babies are sometimes called Easy or Difficult or Slow to Warm-

Up, according to their temperament. You babysitters probably already know about different temperaments."

"My sister Rachel's a Really Difficult Child!" exclaimed Cynthia.

"My kid brother is too!" said Keith.

Mr. Moore laughed, "I think everyone sees their kid brothers and sisters as Difficult Children, whether they are or not."

"One thing like temperament that might be inherited is how much inner tension or moral emotion a person feels physically when he or she has done something wrong and also how much he or she can make that feeling go away by doing something to make things right, or at least better, again," Dr. Esse said. "Some people have lots of that inner tension or very strong physical experiences of fear or shame or guilt or even pride in doing good things. For one person it might be a gut churning sensation. For another person it might be her heart pounding or her palms sweating. For someone else it might be a terrific tension headache. Other people don't have so much emotion expressed in their bodies or maybe just don't know their own feelings. But I don't want you to think that our consciences are just the result of genes that determine how we might experience certain kinds of emotions in our bodies. No, other experiences we have and learn from include thoughts and values and the important experience of making a choice. Together with emotions they also affect how our brains grow and what kind of persons we become."

Mr. Moore pondered awhile then said, "So, we use values to make judgments and control how other parts of the brain tell us how to act. Really, what we think and feel, the values that become our own, and the choices we make are reshaping our brains all the time--"

--in ways we can't easily detect. I think so, yes." Dr. Esse added.

"O.K. Dr. Esse, our brains are really essential for our consciences to work. I buy that. Now back to Aaron's question--what if something in our brains necessary for conscience to work isn't there or goes haywire?"



"In my practice as a child and adolescent psychiatrist, I have worked with children and adolescents who violate the rights of other people or really important rules for their age."

"You mean juvenile delinquents?" again Aaron wondered what Dr. Esse would think of the Bridge Kids.

"Well in my profession we talk about kids who have a conduct disorder. 'Juvenile Delinquent' is a legal term. Anyway, what I've found are that all the kids we've interviewed - whether they had conduct disorder or other conditions or were more like the kids in the Conscience Club - had something I would call conscience. But some kids have genuine weaknesses in some or possibly all of the different domains of conscience. Some researchers agree with Keith's Dad that a person can inherit genes that give him or her a tendency to act in ways that violate the rights of others or really important rules for their age. They may be kind of thrill seekers who aren't affected when doing 'what they want when they want' causes harm to others. Maybe what they inherit is an imbalance in their behavioral inhibition and reward systems."

"It's also possible that those same systems are affected by the stresses that children go through if they are being abused or neglected. One thing researchers are studying now is how abuse and neglect affects a child's conscience. Remember the questions you were asked in the interview:

**Do you feel like a good person most of the time?**

**Do you think you were born 'good' or 'bad'?**

Some of the abused and neglected kids I see in my practice often don't feel like they are good even if they are behaving themselves. They may not think anyone really cares about their goodness or badness. They may not have the kinds of do's and don'ts inside that other kids have that help them respect the rights of others."

"What about Oliver?" Jamie asked abruptly.

"Oliver?" Dr. Esse was puzzled.

"Oliver. Oliver Twist in Dickens' book," Jamie said.

"What-?" Dr. Esse was still puzzled.

Mr. Moore explained, "The kids are reading Oliver Twist right now and learning what it was like for children in Dickens' time."

Jamie said, "There are lots of people who are cruel to Oliver. First off, he's an orphan. Then he's in an awful place where he's made to work and isn't even fed enough. He gets abused so much he runs away. Then he meets up with the Artful Dodger and gets in a gang. But he's really a good boy after all, not like that bad Bill Sikes who kills Nancy in the book."

"So Jamie, let's see, Oliver, the Artful Dodger and Bill Sikes all probably had some bad times growing up, maybe they all had been abused. They all broke the rules and the law but they were each different. Oliver was trying to escape abuse and then just trying to survive. The Dodger, I remember, was a thrill seeker and kind of fun to be around even if he broke the law by picking pockets. He didn't enjoy hurting people. Bill Sikes was a hardened criminal who certainly didn't mind hurting someone else who got between him and whatever he wanted; maybe he enjoyed hurting others too."

"I see Jamie's point," Mr. Moore concluded, "When children are maltreated, how can anyone know which one will turn out the way Oliver did and which one will turn out the way Bill Sikes did?"

"Well, I definitely think Jamie thinks deeply about what she reads. Huckleberry Finn, by Mark Twain is another example. Huck Finn hated rules - didn't want to become civilized, he kept telling himself.



He'd lost his mother and been badly treated by his Pap who beat Huck during his drunks. Pap later kidnapped Huck and tried to take his money. He told Huck whatever a boy had belonged to his father because the boy belonged to his father. Then he tried to kill Huck but Huck escaped down the Mississippi River. He was joined by Jim, a runaway slave, who wanted to be free once and for all. Huck liked Jim but he also grew up in a time and place where it was against the law to help runaway slaves. In fact, lots of white people thought it was wrong not to return slaves to their lawful masters. He and Jim took this raft trip down the river. Jim wanted to get to Cairo where he could buy passage on a riverboat to the free states, find work and earn the money to free his family. But Huck wasn't sure what to do--- should he help Jim or not. Jim trusted Huck and Huck began to understand that Jim was as important a human being as anyone else. But what about that law? The raft ride down the Mississippi was a moral dilemma for Huck. When it came down to it, when Jim was caught, Huck was determined to help him get free. So, where did Huck find the caring and the courage to help another person when he had known nothing but abuse from his own father? Especially when so many folks Huck lived with and who seemed to be expert on right and wrong believed it was O.K. for some people to make slaves out of other people. Why was moral sense stronger in someone who had himself been treated so badly? It's an important question for people who try to understand the effects of abuse and neglect on a child's conscience but nobody has a complete answer yet. Anyway, enough questions without answers. Right now, I think I' m ready for an answer to the question Aaron asked me after our last club meeting. Do you remember the question, Aaron?"

"Huh?" Aaron had to think a few seconds. "Oh yeah, how do you know I won't grow up to be a serial killer?"

Most of the other kids laughed- it seemed ridiculous to imagine Aaron could be a serial killer, but maybe some were a little nervous about Aaron's question. They had all seen stuff on TV about serial killers. It was scary stuff they sometimes talked about on the playground and at slumber parties.

"I let Aaron know that I really don't think I've met any serial killers. Do you remember how I changed your question?" Dr. Esse continued.

"Yeah, you said I was really asking myself how I know I won't be a serial killer."

"Right. So now after all this discussion, Aaron, how do you think you can answer your own question?"

"Well, I guess I sort of wondered because my parents sometimes say I don't act guilty when I've done something wrong. Like I'm not sorry enough or something. But listening to you talk, I think I must have a conscience after all--even if it's not a ... a..."

Dr. Esse helped out, "--even if it's not an especially emotional one?"

"Yeah, that's what I mean. I still know it's not right to hurt people. So I guess I wouldn't make a very good serial killer."

"Well good. I'm glad that's settled," Mr. Moore laughed. So did everyone else.

"O.K., O.K. so I'm not going to be a serial killer. I'm still mad at that jerky kid who hurt the puppies," Aaron declared.

Mr. Moore said, "That reminds me that we were going to talk about different ways to make bad feelings like guilt go away. I suppose in Aaron's case it's not guilt so much-- more like moral outrage."

"Hey that's right. Aaron, what *did you* decide to do about that mean little boy and the puppies?" Jamie wanted to know.

"He hasn't come back when I've been around, anyway. But I got to thinking. There's lots of cruelty to animals when people who care about animals aren't around. So I called the Humane Society to find out what people can do about it. The woman there was Mrs. Katie Carrothers. She said people at the shelter nicknamed her Kitty Carrothers because she has a special place in her heart for homeless cats. She said that sometimes cruelty to animals is because of ignorance and insensitivity. She said sometimes education helps. So they have some programs to teach people how animals like to be treated. She said maybe I could be a volunteer in one of the elementary school programs where I can help take animals in to show the little kids. Also Mrs. Carrothers said to be sure to mention that they need help taking care of the

animals at the shelter after school and on weekends. If you are interested in volunteering I can give you her number." Aaron finished.

"That's really neat, Aaron," Jamie said. Jamie was quiet a moment. "It's sorta like what I want to do. I would like to do some volunteer work too."

"I bet at the State Park," Mr. Moore said.

"No, well maybe sometime. I do like nature. But right now I'd like to help out in the children's hospital. You know be a child life helper or something. And Cynthia said she'd like to do that with me."

Cynthia nodded.

"Cynthia," Dr. Esse was reminded that Cynthia was also working on a moral dilemma. "Have you decided what you want to do about the Fairchild's?"

"In my church we have the Sacrament of Reconciliation. My Mom and Dad still call it Confession. First you think about the Ten Commandments and how you might not have kept them. Then you tell the priest how you've sinned and he gives you ideas on how to find forgiveness or make things better and what prayers will help. After I went to confession, I decided to tell Mrs. Fairchild what happened. But I didn't have the chance while I was babysitting last weekend. Well I sorta had a chance but I didn't take it. I think confession outside of church is harder than inside church."

Aaron said, "I know what you mean, Cynthi. At temple, we have a special day set aside called Yom Kippur. It's The Day of Atonement that comes after our Jewish New Year. On that day, we ask God for forgiveness. I think it's easier to admit to God I've done something wrong than to tell my parents."

"Dr. Esse, are there some other ways that people deal with moral emotions outside of religious rituals?" Mr. Moore asked. "After all, not all families are religious."

Dr. Esse answered, "Yes, I agree. Not just religious people find they have to deal with their moral emotions. The preteen kids in our study also told us that they tried to talk the matter over with somebody besides the person who had been hurt or offended. Some said they sought advice from respected adults. Kids also find healing in solitude, listening to music,

reading, talking to friends about non-moral issues or being friendlier to the person who's been hurt."

"I'm amazed at all the different ways everyone has thought of to repair and heal themselves," said Mr. Moore. "I suppose kids have different ways of rewarding and punishing themselves too?"

"And they also tell us that some rewards and punishments from grown-ups work better than others. It depends on the person," Dr. Esse added.

"You know I think everyone is already sneaking into the next domain of conscience with this talk about The Ten Commandments and religious rules. Isn't that part of **value making and keeping**, Dr. Esse?" asked Mr. Moore.

Dr. Esse nodded and said, "Maybe we can talk about that next time. Let's see. I'll write the question set for that domain on the board."

**Now, I want you to make a list of the main principles**

(Rules) (do's and don'ts) in your conscience. Beside the rule write the name of the person(s) who have helped the most in putting that rule in your conscience.

**Sometimes there are good reasons for obeying rules;**

**sometimes there are good reasons for not obeying rules.**

**Let's look at the rules you have listed, your best reasons**

**for following them, and also your best reasons for not following them.**

# The Conscience Celebration

## *Chapter Four: Moral Emotions continued*

### Guide for further study and discussion

Chapter Four concludes our considerations of Moral Emotional Responsiveness and introduces Moral Valuation.

AFTER THE FOURTH CHAPTER IS READ, GROUP DISCUSSION MAY BE FACILITATED FURTHER WITH THE FOLLOWING REMARKS AND QUESTIONS.

1. Emotions and values are so closely linked together- just as emotions and thoughts are - that we sometimes confuse them. There are some emotions, for example, that so many people agree are bad or negative so much of the time, they come to be referred to as bad feelings. At other times, however, what makes the feeling bad may be how strong it is or how out of place it is in most people's experience. In either case a value judgement is being made about the feeling. Sometimes we simply say that we feel good or bad without any reference to the discrete emotions involved at all. While we could stipulate that such use of words violates the distinction between emotion and value, no one (including ourselves) would really pay much attention and everyone (including ourselves) would continue to refer to feeling good and feeling bad. On the other hand, there have been efforts to disguise or remove value language in how we describe our human nature. One way that this has been tried is to reduce inner states to one of two kinds: thoughts (cognitions) and feelings (affects), assigning values, if they are mentioned at all, to one or the other category. We suppose that's better than eliminating inner states altogether (which has also been attempted in some psychological schools and philosophies) but better still, we believe, is recognizing that values are simply and essentially irreducible to thoughts and feelings-- even if they are not often (maybe not ever) found without them. Anticipating the final chapter, we also want to make clear that volition is likewise irreducible.
2. What might people mean when they say:
  - "my conscience hurts "
  - "I have a bad conscience."
3. Notice that Aaron asks Dr. Esse whether a person can listen to his or her conscience and still be evil. What do members of the group think about the same question? One way of exploring this further is to wonder aloud whether a person can have a conscience but doesn't include (or only partially includes) someone or some group in its workings. Some participants, like Aaron, may expand the boundaries (the ambit) of conscience to include non-humans. Later in the chapter is the example of Huckleberry Finn's struggle to escape the ambit of the conscience of slavery and help Jim to freedom.

## Chapter Five



"It's not like he meant to kill someone," said one of the kids visiting the lockers by the room where the Conscience Club was beginning to gather.

Someone else disagreed. "That doesn't matter," she said. "He should be expelled for bringing it to school."



"As if!" A third kid passing by exclaimed. "He's just a geography geek anyway--so what's the big deal?"

"Hey don't you know he's supposed to be the school champion? He's going to compete in the township tournament."

"Not if he's expelled," the response was as the voices receded down the hall.

Inside the classroom, Cynthia and Jamie were standing behind the door, straining to overhear this snatch of conversation. "Who are they talking about? Who's in trouble now?" They both wondered.

Dr. Esse and Mr. Moore had not yet entered the classroom. They too were out in the hall, empty now except for them. Mr. Moore peeked into the classroom to assure himself that he was out of earshot of any of the students. He didn't notice Cynthia and Jamie who had not returned to their seats and now gave each other a quick conspiratorial look, as they remained concealed behind the door to eavesdrop on Dr. Esse and Mr. Moore.

"I don't know what to do," began Mr. Moore. "The consequence for carrying a weapon to school is supposed to be immediate expulsion. Probably people would be less upset if the High School gym hadn't been deliberately set on fire last week. That's the third arson attempt in a year. The principal of the middle school wants to take a hard line."

"Aren't you on the student probation committee or something like that?" asked Dr. Esse.

"Yes and I may have some influence there but, you know I'm not sure which is the right way to use it. Keith's my best student and was going to represent the school in the geography tournament."

"Keith!" gasped Cynthia and Jamie. Jamie whispered, "I can't believe it. Aaron I could understand but Keith bringing a gun to school?"

"What's this?" Mr. Moore demanded as his face appeared from the other side of the door from the girls. Cynthia thought his face was frightfully close and terribly angry looking. "Have you two been eavesdropping? I'm ashamed of you both."

Cynthia, just how or why, she raised her eyes to meet Mr. Moore's gaze and said firmly, " I admit we were eavesdropping, Mr. Moore. And we shouldn't but we care about this. Keith's one of the Conscience Club. We want to know what's going on."

"What's going on is that Keith brought a martial arts weapon- not a gun- to school and that's against the rules. If he isn't expelled, he'll be suspended," Mr. Moore explained.

"Keith wouldn't hurt anyone," Cynthia said. "Why should he be expelled or even suspended. Shouldn't he be given a warning first?"

"That will be decided by the principal," Mr. Moore answered. "Rules are rules you know."

"Which, by the way, is today's topic for discussion." Dr. Esse interrupted. "Has anyone seen one of those billboards around town, the ones that say 'Thou Shall Not Kill?' There were some nods as the kids settled down to listen. "Maybe like me you wondered who put that billboard there--a religious group, the city government, a private citizens' group? I remembered reciting that commandment along with the nine others in Sunday-school class. At the time it was mostly an exercise in speed and memory. Well what do you think was the reason someone put up the signs?"

Jamie said, "It's about people including children having guns. That's what my Mom said."

"Really?" Cynthia said. "I thought it was against abortion."

"Uh- uh," said another "It's about police brutality."

"I remember when it was about war," said Mr. Moore quietly. Cynthia remembered her father saying that Mr. Moore had served in Vietnam. Her father did too. Sometimes, but not very often he would talk about it. He seemed to read more than he talked about it. "Still trying to understand it," he'd say if Mom asked why he was reading about Vietnam. Cynthia had never heard Mr. Moore talk about his personal experiences during the war. He liked to talk about the culture and geography of Vietnam, though. "Maybe it's about ethnic cleansing, now," Mr. Moore added.

"It could be about animal rights," Aaron said as he joined the group, as usual, a little late.

"Since I was driving on the interstate during rush hour at the time I saw it, I thought how it might be reminding myself and other drivers to be alert to traffic flow and the rules of the road to avoid accidentally killing one another," Dr. Esse mused. Aaron thought about the day he would be able to drive--only three more years. He hoped the speed limits would be much higher by then. "Anyway, each of us has thought of a way the Commandment--the rule- *Thou Shall Not Kill* might be meant to apply. And we might not all agree when the rule is meant to apply and when it isn't. But suppose I ask you what are your best reasons for following this commandment or rule, what would you say then?"

Cynthia was first to speak. "You shouldn't kill because it says so in the Bible."

Someone else said, "You shouldn't kill because you would go to prison or get the death penalty and then you wouldn't have control of your life."

Jamie said, "That's true but what if you were pretty sure they wouldn't catch you?"

Aaron said, "You shouldn't kill because everyone has a right to life--"

Jamie added, " - and we need to live with each other and protect each other."

"So, different reasons can be given for following- or not following- this rule. In fact you may have several different reasons at one time. In our study, you told us about reasons that had to do with authorities you wanted to obey, that had to do with how you were obliged or responsible to yourselves and that had to do with how you were obliged or responsible to others. **Authorities, self** and **others**: they form a triangle of relationships with each person through his or her conscience. The other thing we learned from you is that there are different reasons given for following rules at different ages. That didn't surprise us because Lawrence Kohlberg had already studied the stages of moral reasoning in children. We found that children under age seven with external consciences thought that rules belonged to

grown-ups, or if they were religious, to God. They thought that what belonged to them were the consequences for obeying or not obeying the rules. As children grow up, they begin to use their thinking power to construct rules. They still just memorize some but they make other rules based on their own experiences or what they see happens to other kids around them. So one child told us her list of do's and don'ts included 'Don't write in library books'. We asked her why she had that 'don't'. She said, 'The lady in the library said not to.' Another child told us 'I did that once and had to stay in from recess and erase it.' Still another child told us a story how a boy in her class scribbled all over a big important book and got in big trouble."

Listening to Dr. Esse talk about kids scribbling in books reminded Cynthia that she had some unfinished business at the Fairchild's where there was scribbling on the closet wall. Then she thought to herself. "What are my best reasons for telling Mrs. Fairchild about Michael's drawing in the closet, especially now after so much time has gone by? I can think of good reasons for not telling, but I do feel bad not telling. Hey, Cynthia, get a life! There are more important things to worry about... all the stuff we've been talking about today, Keith- I wonder if conscience can get in the way of doing the right thing?" Cynthia put her head in her hands and shook it. "What a headache you can give yourself thinking about right and wrong."

Dr. Esse was still talking as Cynthia's thoughts wandered. "Of course now the child at the Brain or Heart stage has not only rules owned by parents but also rules owned by herself. She made them because of her experiences. And she usually doesn't make exceptions. There's never a reason to lie or be nice or not mind your parents, unless it's fun. Also we think that at this stage kids believe grown-ups are meant to protect and teach children, so kids should do what grown-ups say."

"Then along about 11 or 12 comes a change in conscience, remember how it becomes more like a person inside? Well, at the same time that the conscience goes deeper inside and becomes more like a person, 'a rule is a rule is a rule' is no longer the rule."

"What do you mean? That's confusing me," said Aaron.

"Well, an older child understands that 'clean your room', 'help with the dishes', and 'feed the cat' are really specific examples of a rule about the rights and responsibilities between himself or herself and his or her parents. What's the rule?"

Aaron said, "I really don't know."

"It might be that parents have the right to see that kids grow up to be responsible by giving us chores," said Jamie. "They want us to be organized and responsible--and helpful."

"How do you know that, Jamie?" asked Dr. Esse.

"They keep telling me so," said Jamie.

"Sometimes Jamie might not follow her Mom's instructions to feed the cat. Or she might do it only after grumbling a lot--or she might insist that it's someone else's turn, believing that it is also an important rule to share chores. But she would also understand that her parents have the right to teach her something about responsibility while she is entitled to express her thoughts and feelings about the rules within the relationship between her and her mother. Jamie could also look behind the rule to find the values of her parents. 'It's good to be organized' or 'it's good to be responsible' are values. Sometimes there is a conflict between different values, between two rights and not between a right and a wrong at all."

"We had another example just a few minutes ago. Cynthia and Jamie know the rules about eavesdropping and, more importantly, the consequences for eavesdropping include being scolded by someone whose opinion of them really matters. So it's wrong to eavesdrop, but if they do by chance overhear something about a friend not intended for their ears, is it better to pretend they didn't hear it or to speak up because they're concerned-- even though that means they admit to eavesdropping? They care about another member of the Conscience Club and that conflict in values changed the rules."

"Hmm. Would you like another example, Dr. Esse?" asked Mr. Moore.

She said, "Yes, certainly."

"I was thinking of how I had just told the kids 'Rules are rules.' Then I remembered when I was only 16 and it seemed right to question the rules. I knew that in a few years, I might be called to serve in a war I didn't think was right. I thought most of the grown-ups in my life were like my parents and believed a person should serve whether he agreed with the war or not. After all they had been through World War II when people didn't question so much whether they should serve or support the war. During the Vietnam War, there were lots of 18 year-olds who were against serving. They were going to Canada or going to prison instead of the armed forces. Some had very strong convictions that war is always wrong or that the Vietnam War was an especially unjust war. There were some grown-ups who didn't think the war was right either. Still my mother had always taught me to obey the laws of my country. I think she valued loyalty. But she wanted to make an exception when it was her own son who might have to go to war. So then she had to think about all the other women in her community who had sons who were being drafted. It made her question the rules she lived by. I was really surprised when I turned 18 and my mother offered to pay my way to Canada. She had decided that that was the right thing to do."

"Seems like both she and you were taking a hard look at the rules," Dr. Esse nodded. "Rules exist in relationships and there are rules for relationships. Huck Finn learned something in his relationship with Jim that changed the rule about returning runaway slaves. You learned something from others and your mother learned something about her relationship with you that changed the rules, or at least which rule comes first. But you decided to serve anyway, didn't you?"

"Yes, I did. I didn't call it a value triangle at the time but that was what it was. There were authorities including the law of the land, my mother and that Commandment, *Thou Shall Not Kill*, all at odds with one another it seemed to me. There were values about myself, of course: to survive, but also not to be seen as a coward, to test myself and to respect myself by facing my fears. I think I also saw the war as an adventure. I just wanted to know firsthand what was going on. There were also values about others. I asked myself what about all the other guys my age that couldn't escape the draft? If they served, shouldn't I? What about the Vietnamese? Shouldn't they decide what government they would have without us interfering? But what about helping stop the war so that other guys younger than me wouldn't have to go- and did that mean going or protesting?"

"So how did you decide what to do?" Aaron wanted to know. So did everyone else.

"Well in a way I was lucky. By the time I was 18, there were so many people against the war, because they were persuaded by others who had strong convictions that the war was wrong, or because they had been there or were parents or friends of parents with children who still might have to go. Anyway, the government was under lots of pressure to negotiate a peace settlement. So it looked like the war would eventually end. In the meantime there were still a lot of troops over there that needed support as they waited their turn to come home. I decided I would go and be a medic there. My mission would be to provide medical support to troops who were being sent home. That made sense to me. I could feel O.K. about my decision and balancing all those obligations in my value triangle."

THOU SHALT NOT



THOU SHALT NOT



his balancing act. He was questioning authority and deciding how much to rely on authorities outside himself. He also had to choose which among his values would guide his decision whether to go to war or not. He had a conflict in values between what was right and what was more right as well as between what was right and wrong. Not easy choices."

Everyone was silent for a little while, maybe wondering about moral issues they would have to face later in their lives. Cynthia was the first to break the silence, "How do you know you aren't just being selfish when you're doing a good thing for yourself?"

"Tell us more about the question you're asking, Cynthia," Mr. Moore responded. "It sounds like an important one."

"Well, you didn't want to die in a war but you also didn't want people to think you were a coward and you wanted your Mom to think you were a good person--I don't know what was selfish and what was good for you, even if it was against the law to refuse to go. I guess I don't get these self values."

"Each human being is an individual as well as belonging to a community. Sometimes an individual understands better than the community what is for the good. As individuals change their minds about what's for the good, then the rules in the community also change, sometimes very gradually, sometimes faster if there is a very exceptional individual who steps forward to lead others in making the changes", Mr. Moore explained.

"Like Martin Luther King?" asked Jamie.

"Yes, like King or Gandhi or Florence Nightingale or Susan B. Anthony or Elizabeth Cady Stanton or Bela Abzug-" Mr. Moore began.

"Or Christa McAuliffe," Cynthia said. Mr. Moore smiled. Like Cynthia, he was inspired by the courage of the first civilian astronaut who had been a teacher like himself- even taught social studies like himself. His class had been watching the launch of the space shuttle Challenger, following its pathway across the sky when it exploded. He would never forget that. Sometimes, he thought, in the face of terrible and remarkable events experienced together, like the Challenger, people of all sorts come together

and share their feelings but also take out their values to look at them good and hard. Then he thought of a time when people were anything but united.

"Other persons may see changes are coming and even agree with them, but work to keep the community together-- like Lincoln tried to do with this country before and during the Civil War."

"Wait Mr. Moore, you're talking about people who had reached the highest moral stage and even went on beyond conscience. Let's go back a few steps," Dr. Esse cautioned.

Aaron laughed, "'On Beyond Conscience?' That sounds like a Dr. Seuss book!" "Hmm, it does, doesn't it?" Dr. Esse mused. "Maybe we will get back to that subject later."

"Well, I'm curious about what you mean," Mr. Moore said.

"Later on we can talk about *On Beyond Conscience*. Right now I want to go back a little. Very young children told us about their first Self-Values like 'Having fun is...just being a kid...it's what you're supposed to do.' They recognized a basic right to enjoy themselves in a safe environment. At stage two, a child makes rules with an idea of what is most fair to herself. Cynthia, that child might be called selfish when she tries to get around rules that others make--she makes exceptions to make things better for herself. But learning to make exceptions to rules for her will also allow her to make exceptions for others later on. Next, in the Brain/Heart conscience stage Self Values have to do with succeeding, doing the best she can and earning a good reputation."

"You should hang out with the good crowd so you have a good rep. If you hang out with the type of people that do drugs and stuff, they're gonna think you do it even if you don't because you hang around those people," one boy in the back said.

"That's true," Cynthia said. "But kids sometimes spread all kinds of lies and gossip about other kids."

"Some kids want a bad rep," added Jamie. "They think it's cool, but then they aren't really doing the stuff they want people to think." Cynthia and

Jamie both looked at Aaron. He just glared right back at them. Dr. Esse and Mr. Moore pretended not to notice.

Aaron changed the subject. "What about friends? Are their Friend Values?"

"You bet. And Sister and Brother Values too. As we grow up we move from playing alone, to being interested in somebody else's stuff, to being interested in somebody else, to wanting to share and cooperate with friends - and maybe even sisters too- in order to have fun and company. We become less self centered."

Cynthia said, "I know one thing. It can be really frustrating trying to play a game with a three year old."

She told about a time when Michael insisted on playing a game of chess with her. He said his Dad taught him how. "Show me how to move the pieces, Michael," she had said. Very seriously he showed her how he thought the knight moved. It was way too strange with a double loop in the air, something like Aaron skateboarding off the curb. Cynthia knew it wasn't right. Then Michael showed her again. The second time was very different from the first time. The knight had to do a little somersault before it landed. She laughed and said he changed the move. He said he didn't change it and he knew it was right because Dad said so. Then Cathy toddled over and took Michael's Queen away to chew on. That ended the game right there when Cynthia had to keep Michael from hitting his sister. "We'd better put this game up for now, Mike," she said, making up a new rule "If we can't play nicely with one another, we won't play at all."

"Little children Michael's age experience rules about playing as coming from grown-ups. When they say 'That's the right way' they are serious and they say that's the way it's always been, but then the right way changes willy-nilly however they want it to change. There were other games, different from chess, going on too, between Michael and Cathy-- like, who would have Cynthia's attention. Michael's still learning to share with Cathy. After all she's the newcomer. He has yet to grow out of the stage when he says ' I hit my sister because she hit me first.'"

"Let's go ahead a few years. One older child said that his rule was to be friendly. We asked him what his best reason for being friendly was. He said

because people want to be liked and respected. He said if a person doesn't have friends that respect him, he's a-nobody...a-wannabe...a-dork. Someone else told us he stopped a friend from getting into trouble. Why? Because he knew his friend would be grounded and then couldn't play anymore. He said he liked going to his friend's house a lot."

"Isn't that still sort of selfish?" Cynthia asked.

"I think it is, but it's also a step beyond being interested in just himself."

"As kids grow up, they find that a friend is no longer just someone to have. Friends are people with whom we share memories. We have a history together. We come to expect to enjoy a friendship with certain persons in certain ways. To keep our friendships going we become more aware of our friends' needs and wishes and feelings and even values. We expect our friends to do the same."

Cynthia and Jamie glanced at each other at the same time and smiled shyly as if to say 'She's talking about us, isn't she?'

Dr. Esse continued, "One child told us, ' Once I wanted to give a friend a present. I couldn't think of what to give her 'cause my Mom wouldn't let me buy anything. So I sort of looked around. I couldn't decide 'cause I was choosing from all the things that I didn't really want. So my conscience helped me there 'cause I picked this one little thingy that I got at McDonald's. It made me feel pretty good since I found something good to give her-"

"McDonald's? Yuck. I used to like their stuff for kids. My sister Rachel still does,'" Cynthia interrupted. "She always wants to go to McDonald's just to get the toys."

Jamie asked, "So what did the kid think of her present?"

"Well, that child told us her friend was pretty surprised because her friend didn't go to McDonald's and hadn't seen that toy."

"So the child you interviewed had gone on beyond just wanting to have a friend, any friend at all, to thinking about what might please her special friend?" asked Mr. Moore.

"I think so. Oh there are all kinds of changes going on. Remember we talked about empathy? At the Brain/Heart conscience stage, empathy kicks in and makes the reasons for following rules take a new shape. One child told how she was unhappy that her friend was tested but didn't make it into a gifted program at school. She wanted to be with her friend, but there was something else she couldn't quite put in words, maybe that she was aware of her friend's disappointment."

"Does anyone remember the Golden Rule?" Dr. Esse asked.

"Yeah, 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.'," Aaron was the first to answer.

"Right, Aaron," Dr. Esse continued. "Only kids at different conscience stages understand it differently. At the Brain/Heart stage, it's mostly about taking turns and something like 'If you're nice to me, I'll be nice to you' or 'If you share with me, I'll share with you'. Then gradually it begins to have a different meaning. Like one child who told us her best reasons for being nice to people- she said: 'I'm nice to people whenever they are nice to me.'

"That's not really different than the other kids we've talked about," Aaron said doubtfully.

"Yes, it doesn't sound different so far, does it, Aaron? But she added something else. She said, 'Sometimes I'm nice when they're mean to me.'"

"O.K. that's different," Aaron agreed.

"Or, take another child's answer to the question 'What do you do when your little sister bugs you?' She said 'I just ignore her when she gets on my nerves.' Now that's different, at least a little, from trying to keep everything even-steven, tit-for-tat, don't you think?" Dr Esse asked.

"My Dad says 'If you're always trying to get even, you never get ahead!'" the boy in back said.

"And maybe there's still more than that. Anyway, I think that child's answer shows she's ready for the next stage in Friend and Other Value- making and Value-keeping."

Mr. Moore said "O.K. O.K. I'm going to be devil's advocate again. Maybe all that's happening is that the selfishness Cynthia saw in the kids' answers have become more complicated. As kids grow up, first they figure out in order to get what they want they have to wait their turn and share, then they figure out it's in their self interest to sometimes be nice even when other kids are mean because there will be a reward from some grown-up along the way. Then maybe they earn their own praise and approval by being nice."

"Yeah, my Mom says people usually act in their own self-interest," Aaron said.

"It's like sucking up to people." Aaron glared at Cynthia just then. She glared back at him. Dr. Esse and Mr. Moore pretended not to notice.

"Self is a powerful force in all of us, it's true. But it's not the only force there is, or else it includes being able to sacrifice self for others. Being able to sacrifice self for others, to put others' needs before needs of ourselves is also part of being human. Part of the way humans flourish is called **altruism**. And it shapes conscience in ways that selfishness- or simple self interest - just don't. Listen to what some kids who were the same age as you are now, at Stage Three, said about this."

"One person told us that her don'ts included not quarreling. She said her best reason for not quarreling was because she didn't want to hurt other persons' feelings. Someone else said he used to call his brother names but didn't anymore because he knew it was mean. There is empathy at work in those answers. And there's altruism at work changing The Golden Rule too: a person treats others well, hoping but not demanding, that he or she will also find kindness and help from others. And sometimes no return is expected at all. Just as Mr. Moore said when he was the devil's advocate, there is a satisfaction in doing a good deed because it builds up a moral reputation inside: seeing oneself as being a kind and helpful individual. That requires a certain amount of moral privacy. Sometimes, if you tell the good deed to others it's even spoiled a little or maybe you become embarrassed if others find out."

"You mean ashamed of being good - because it's not cool? Cause a lot of times people look at me weird because they're not used to other kids in school doing anything good...sometimes they just glare at me," Cynthia said.

To his credit, Aaron made only one sucking sound. To her credit, Cynthia appeared not to notice. Actually, she smiled a little to herself. She thought that she could tell now when Aaron was mostly kidding her.

Dr. Esse said, "Let me see if I can summarize what we've talked about today. We started with Do's and Don'ts, rules, all ones you or kids like you told us were your rules, and we separated them into Authority rules, Self rules and Other rules, then we looked at how each rule comes with reasons for following it and often enough reasons for not following it. We also saw how the Golden Rule itself changes in how we understand it as we grow up. Then we followed our reasoning about rules like a pathway to our values about *Authority, Self and Others*, that includes our friends and brothers and sisters. And Mr. Moore gave us a personal example of how his own values pointed him in different directions during the Vietnam War. I think we know that sometimes there are choices to be made between Right and Wrong. Though Mr. Moore thought the war in Vietnam was wrong, he also had to decide if it was right for him to go there to help troops come home as safely as possible. One writer, a newspaper editor named Rushworth Kidder, described how there can be different values in conflict within the same person. Sometimes we must choose between right and right not just *right and wrong*. Mr. Kidder says that the Right vs. Right choices is usually about one of four super rules called principles: truth vs. loyalty, the individual vs. the community, what's good for today vs. what's good for the future and justice vs. mercy. Now whenever you see that little 'v' and little 's' together it means 'versus',

Aaron interrupted, "like a contest, or a race between one skate boarder and another."

"Right, one against the other, and 'v-s' is a signal that there are different directions to take, different ways to make a choice, but the choice doesn't always have to be all one way and not the other. Sometimes there is a middle path that can be taken. Mr. Moore took the middle path in his decision-making about Vietnam."

"Making choices can be really hard," Jamie said. "I have trouble choosing what to wear and what breakfast cereal to eat. I don't know what I'm going to do when I have to make choices about Right vs. Right like Mr. Moore."

"I think it's better to begin practicing when you're young," Dr. Esse said. "The practice of choosing right over wrong and choosing among values, finding a middle way when there is a question of Right vs. Right, is called becoming virtuous. Virtue is putting values into practice. It doesn't come without making choices and living with the consequences. It doesn't come without exercising will power."



"We talked before how values and choices are as important to understanding the human mind as are thoughts and feelings. Thoughts and feelings and values and choices are all connected. They all need the brain to happen and they all change the brain, too. How we practice choosing according to our



values set up and strengthens connections among the nerve cells in our brains making brain pathways that determine some of our behavior. Now I can write the last set of questions from our study.

*Does your conscience change as you grow? How?*

*Is there any way you would like to change how you think about good and bad?*

*Is there any way your feelings get in the way?*

*Is there anything you would like to change about your own behavior?*

*Are there changes going on in you now?*

Before Dr. Esse could set her magic marker down, there was a loud knock on the door. Mr. Moore opened it and was immediately faced with several parents as well as the principal of the school. Mrs. Hanover, the president of the PTA was there. So was Keith's father. "Mr. Moore," said the principal, we don't want to disturb your club meeting but Mrs. Hanover is here representing the PTA. She came at my request. There have been lots of parents worried about the safety of their children in our school. In fact the office telephones are ringing off their hooks--"

Mrs. Hanover interrupted, "Yes Mr. Moore, I'm also hearing from a lot of concerned and some angry parents. They want some disciplinary action taken now--"

Keith's father spoke up. "It's a tempest in a teapot. Sure Keith shouldn't have had the knife. He knows that. He would never hurt anybody with it."

"I don't know about that," another parent said angrily, "It's pretty vicious looking and it's a stolen weapon after all. The sheriff thinks so, anyway. It matches the description of a weapon that was stolen from an exhibit at the martial arts school in the Village."

"Well, Keith didn't steal it. Keith doesn't steal," his father insisted.

"Then where did he get the weapon, I want to know?" asked another parent.

"I don't know where he got the weapon," said Keith's father miserably. "I can't get him to tell."

"Well then, he stole it--"

"No way!"

"If you don't make an example of this kid, things are going to get worse and worse until we have deliberate fire-setting and shootings in middle school as often as we do at the high school."

Mr. Moore stepped in. "Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Let's not have this conversation in the hall. That's not right--there are kids inside who can hear us clearly."

"I can."

Everyone turned to look. It was Aaron. He looked scared. Dr. Esse was behind him, her hand on his shoulder.

"Aaron?" asked Aaron's mother as she stepped forward. "Aaron what do you know about this?"

"Keith didn't steal the weapon," Aaron said.

"How do you know that, Aaron?" Mrs. Hanover asked.

Aaron looked at his feet, then at Dr. Esse. "I promised I wouldn't tell. I promised." She patted him on the shoulder once but said nothing.

Aaron continued, "Keith bought the weapon from a guy in the Village, near the magic card shop."

"What? What were you doing there? You know that that part of the Village is strictly off limits to you, young man," Aaron's Mom looked ready to spit nails."

Mrs. Hanover asked, "Aaron, do you know why Keith wanted the weapon?"

"He's into martial arts," Aaron shrugged. "Lots of guys collect martial arts weapons."

"So why did he take it to school? You kids know better than that," another parent said.

"He bought it on the way home from school. He must've stuck it in his book-bag and forgot to take it out," Keith's father said.

"Hmm. Maybe," said the principal. "I think I need to talk more with Keith."

"And I need to talk more with Aaron," Aaron's mother took him by the hand. "If you are done with him, I'd like to get started."

"See you later, Mr. Moore," Aaron said. "See you, Dr. Esse."

"See you later, Aaron," said Dr. Esse. "I'm glad you spoke up to help Keith."

"Something tells me you know a lot more about this than you've told me, Dr. Esse." The principal suggested.

"I had to keep my promise of confidentiality, even if that wasn't best for Aaron or Keith. That was the agreement when we started the Conscience Club. Anyway, Aaron came through with flying colors, I thought," explained Dr. Esse.

So did Jamie and Cynthia, eavesdropping at the door again. They were both really proud of Aaron.

Holding Michael's hand in hers, Cynthia knocked on the master bedroom door.



She heard Mrs. Fairchild answer, "Yes, what is it?" Then the door opened as Mrs. Fairchild tried with one hand to secure her earring. "Oh, it's you Cynthia, what can I do for you honey?"

"I don't want to make you late for your evening out with Mr. Fairchild, but I need to talk to you, Mrs. Fairchild," Cynthia began. "A while back when I was babysitting Michael and Cathy something happened that you should know."

"Yes?" asked Mrs. Fairchild, looking suddenly alarmed. Parents are never entirely trusting of babysitters, Cynthia figured. "Now, Mrs.

Fairchild probably thinks I abused her kids--I'd better get this over with," she thought to herself, feeling more and more queasy. "It's that I should have told you right away.... Anyway, while I was busy with an assignment, I lost track of Michael. And he drew in your closet---here I'll show you." Taking a reluctant Michael in tow and followed close behind by Mrs. Fairchild, Cynthia led the way to the closet. She drew back the skirts on hangers and started to say, "Here--".

To Cynthia's surprise, Michael's picture was gone. In fact, the closet was painted in a whole new shade of blue. "Then you knew about Michael's drawing?"

"Michael's drawing? What are you talking about, Cynthia? I don't understand." For just a moment, Cynthia wondered if she couldn't just say "never mind." After all, no harm done if Mrs. Fairchild hadn't even noticed Michael's conscience drawing on the closet wall. Then she told Mrs. Fairchild what had happened.

"Really? Michael drew a picture of his conscience?" Mrs. Fairchild said. Cynthia thought she looked much more relaxed than a moment ago. "The painter's finally came. I don't know how many times I waited at home for them to show up. I'll never use them again! When they finally called to say they could do the painting, I couldn't even be here to empty the closet. I had to ask a friend of mind to help take the clothes out. So, I never saw the drawing at all....."

Michael finally remembered his picture and pointed to the wall where it had been, "My Wish Consin," he said. "It' gone. That's a shame."

"Michael, you know better than to draw on walls. Don't ever let me catch you doing it, or you'll never see a magic marker again." Michael's lower lip started to quiver a bit. Then Mrs. Fairchild said, "Ooh, it's O.K., honey, no harm done. Cynthia, why don't you take Michael downstairs and get him a cookie and some milk. I really have to hurry."

"O.K." Cynthia said.

"Cynthia?" Mrs. Fairchild poked her head out the door. "It was good you told me. I'm glad you did."

"It's not the drawing so much," Cynthia realized as she said it. "I was supposed to be watching Michael, and I wasn't. Something even worse could have happened," Cynthia said, noticing that her voice cracked just a little. "I'm sorry."

"Well I see your point, Cynthia. But I can't believe Michael was gone very long before you noticed him missing and got up to look. And no harm was

done. So don't worry about it anymore, O.K.? You're the best babysitter I've ever had."

Those were the exact words that Cynthia wanted to hear just then. She felt so relieved and deeply grateful for the kind reassurance from Mrs. Fairchild. She guessed she did worry too much. After all, no harm was done.

Even so, it was maybe a good thing that the phone didn't ring in the Fairchild's home that night. If Cynthia had answered it, she surely would have seen the bill for the paint job on the kitchen desk right beside the phone. The painter had written "Master Bedroom Closet -- Mrs. Fairchild wants two coats, dark blue, to cover magic marker scribbles. \$220.00 paid in full."

"You're walking too fast," Rachel complained to Cynthia. They were on their way to Dr. Esse's. "Why is Dr. Esse having a party anyway? Is it her birthday? I'll bet she's ancient."

"No, it's nobody's birthday," Cynthia said. "And hurry now or we'll be late."

"Well?" persisted Rachel.

"Well, what?" said Cynthia a little exasperated that Rachel had stopped to feed the ducks near the canal.

"Well, if it's not somebody's birthday is she going away or something?"

"No, I don't think she's going away. Have you heard of the word 'conscience'?"

"Have I heard the word 'conscience'? Hello...all I hear anymore is conscience this and conscience that--Dr Esse had me do that conscience interview, remember?"

"Oh yeah, she did, didn't she? Well, I asked Dr. Esse if we could have a party to celebrate the end of the Conscience Club. She said we could do that but maybe it would be even better to celebrate conscience, especially how it changes us and then let's us change it."

"Conscience? Who wants to celebrate that old thing?" Rachel was not sure about this party at all. "Besides her house makes me dizzy."

"You are really weird, Rachel. Why does her house make you dizzy?"

"It's the different levels. It makes you step up then step down. That's what does it!"

"Well, we're having the party outside her house in a little park by the canal. So you won't have to feel dizzy, O.K.? Dr. Esse said she's even found a story teller for the party."

Cynthia felt her pocket again for the little toy she'd stopped at McDonald's to get for Rachel. For a moment she wondered if she should kind of bribe Rachel to go along to the conscience celebration without complaining. Then she decided that she wouldn't do that. "No strings attached," she told herself. "Rachel, I have something I want to give you."

Rachel was immediately suspicious. Was Cynthia about to hit her? Had Cynthia discovered her missing hair bands in Rachel's drawer? What about that old pop-up book about Space that Cynthia said was a Christmas present when she was little- could she have found that hidden in the bottom of Rachel's treasure chest? She backed away. "What?"

"It's the new toy from McDonald's you wanted. Here," Cynthia pulled out the toy from her pocket and handed it over to Rachel.

Cynthia said, "I know you voted to go to McDonald's last Saturday when Mom took us out to lunch. But we wanted Chinese instead. So you might not have a chance to get this toy. It's for a limited time only."

"Thanks, Cynthia," Rachel said, accepting the toy. They watched the ducks for awhile. "Cynthi?" Rachel broke the silence.

"Yes?"

"Is all this conscience stuff O.K.? I mean is it O.K. with the Church that Dr. Esse is studying it?"

"Dr. Esse isn't Catholic. So I don't think she's worried about that one bit," Cynthia answered but then became thoughtful. "I really wondered that myself. You know because conscience is very close to the soul and all. So I asked Father Charlie."

"Oh, Father Charlie would know the answer, all right." Rachel said a little gravely. "He's very smart you know."

"Father Charlie told me that what Dr. Esse is doing is science, studying human nature. He said that God's grace builds on nature. He said that he thought God means for us to understand as much about nature, even human nature, as we possibly can. If we do, we'll appreciate God's Mysteries even more."

Just then coming around the corner, they saw Aaron. He waved and came closer.

"Aaron, hi," Cynthia was surprised to see him. "Aren't you still grounded?"

"Yeah", Aaron said. "But I have permission to go to the party."

"We're going there too," said Rachel. Cynthia nodded and smiled at Aaron.

"I'm also allowed out to help train those puppies I told you about."

"Where's your skateboard, Aaron?" asked Rachel, a little mischievously.

"I don't think I'll get to use my skateboard again before I'm twenty-one," Aaron said sadly.

Rachel showed Aaron her new toy, "Look what Cynthia brought me from McDonald's."

Aaron looked at the toy and shrugged. "Hey Rachel, do your parents ever take you and Cynthia to one of those restaurants where kids over 12 get to eat kids under 12 for free?" He snapped his teeth menacingly at Rachel. Cynthia laughed. Rachel stuck her tongue out at Aaron.

They were at Dr. Esse's before they knew it. Mr. Moore was there and so was Jamie. Cynthia was really surprised to see Keith. He was still suspended.



"At least he hadn't been expelled, thank goodness," Cynthia thought. Keith was showing Mr. Moore some forms he had learned in Tae Kwon Do. It was hard to do because Izzy was with him and he had to keep an eye on her so she wouldn't wander too close to the canal. He repeated their Mom's warning about the undertow in some places in the canal, though the surface was very still. Izzy misunderstood her brother and kept warning everyone to look out for a terrible undertoad that might hop out of the canal at any moment."

Mr. Moore said "Keith, I think Izzie would make a great storyteller for today's party."

Izzie's story would have been a short one. She tugged on Keith's sleeve and whispered, "Purpo?"

Dr. Esse said, "It just so happens sparkling purpo is the drink of the day." Izzie accepted her drink with a simple 'thanks' grunted into her cup.

Before the storyteller arrived, Aaron had a chance to talk to Keith. Aaron wanted Keith to know Aaron wasn't a snitch. To Aaron's surprise, Keith thanked him. "I could've been in worse trouble if it hadn't been for you," he said. "You were a friend." Aaron decided that Keith wasn't bad for a geography geek--maybe he wasn't a geek after all. In fact he decided he wouldn't use the word 'geek' to describe anyone again.

Meanwhile Mr. Moore had a chance to talk to Dr. Esse. "You told us the questions that you wanted to answer when you started to study conscience. But why those questions? After all your study doesn't tell a person what values to make or keep--"

Rachel overheard the two grown-ups talking. She reminded herself not to interrupt but thought almost out loud, "How do you know from asking a bunch of kids that conscience is a good thing? Or even how do you know from asking kids about their consciences that conscience is a good thing?" said Dr. Esse as if she had read Rachel's mind.

Mr. Moore nodded.

Dr. Esse continued, "Knowing about how conscience grows and changes isn't necessarily a good thing. It depends who knows it and what they do with that

knowledge. And I can't tell just by learning how conscience grows and changes that conscience itself is a good thing. I believe it is when it is properly nourished. That's where I have to go on beyond studying conscience, to listening to my own and making and keeping my own values. And even then some of those values depend upon beliefs that aren't my conscience but give my conscience meaning and value. We study how conscience allows us to give moral meanings to life, to make and keep values and choose according to them. I believe there is also meaning and value in our being able to do just that. I think that it's very important - valuable- to understand how we grow morally to appreciate and respect that process in each other even if we don't make and keep the same values. That's a value I have that leads me to do research. I'm also a doctor who has healing values. So I try to be on the side of healing when there's interference with growth. And, like you, I'm also a grown-up who likes to see children flourish. I hope much, much, more than we ourselves have."

"I think every parent has that same hope. It's the same for a teacher who really examines why he or she teaches," said Mr. Moore. "I hope that others share your value that learning about our nature is a good thing. But don't you think there are at least some values people will find we all have in common?"

Dr. Esse nodded vigorously, "Yes, yes I do--the Conscience Study researchers refer to those as the bedrock values. Some philosophers refer to them as intrinsic values. Remember Aaron's conscience drawing with the bridge over the canal? The question you just asked is a question about whether we use at least some of the same bridges set in the same foundations to cross the gap between facts about our nature on one side and values we hold on the other. Well, just think about it. If you decided to value the different parts of our nature that we've been talking about --the different domains of conscience."

"Well, wait, don't tell me what the bedrock values are...."Mr. Moore mused,

"'Bed rock values' makes me think of Jamie's Conscience Rocks. Hmm...I think of **being connected** for the domain of moral attachment. I think of **having freedom and being responsible for oneself** for the domain of moral volition. I'll have to think more about the other domains. O.K. But back to the question why there is a conscience and is it really any good?"

"I think that's really on beyond conscience- on beyond the study of how conscience grows and works. It's religion for some and philosophy for others. Some say it's life's creative force. I don't pretend to understand it," Dr. Esse laughed.

Rachel listened closely, but only for awhile. She didn't understand it all, but she figured Dr. Esse and Mr. Moore would be around to explain it when she was older. She figured if the two of them had anything to say about it there would still be a Conscience Club by the time she went to middle school. She thought, " Even if there isn't a conscience club, there'll still be Mom and Dad and Father Charlie and ---"

She hadn't finished her thought when Cynthia came by and took her hand saying, " Come on, Rachel, the storyteller is here!"

"Mom and Dad and Father Charlie ... yes and Cynthia, too." Rachel finished her thought before she ran off with her sister.

# The Conscience Celebration

## Chapter Four and Five: Moral Values

### Guide for further study and discussion

1. In this section of our work on conscience, we begin to discuss **moral valuation**.  
There are three forms of valuation (or value processing) in general, to keep in mind:
  - Value keeping
  - Value seeking
  - Value making
2. While all forms of valuation are identifiable throughout the lifespan, different forms may be especially prominent at different stages of moral development.
  - Invite participants to choose the form of valuation which best matches the stage of Conscience Formation called External Conscience, when values are evinced by the adults around one in the form of do's and don'ts reinforced by rewards and punishments.
  - Value seeking is apt to emerge during the developmental period when competing claims (e.g. from family of origin and peer group, from media and the mall) are being made on the child's valuational allegiance. This can be most readily discerned at the Confused Stage but also at the Personified Stage or even earlier.
  - Ownership of values (when *I* attribute the source of moral mandates to *myself* rather than someone else) developmentally precedes Value making, which is apt to require an Integrated Conscience.
  - Periodically we re-evaluate our values—weigh and order them. Ask the first time parent of a newborn baby about how his or her values changed after first seeing his or her baby.
3. Values can also be characterized according to kind of status;
  - **Intrinsic value** stands by itself  
Very straightforwardly, we wish to promote and foster the growth and development of the domains of conscience because we believe each of them has intrinsic value. Looked at one way, the intrinsic values are what push development from within the domains. Think of them as needs, comparable to other human needs like needs for food and shelter (possibly emerging only after these basic survival needs are met), but distinct from other human needs in being *moralizing* needs (possibly, once they emerge, even governing how the basic survival needs are met). **Call for discussion of what values might best be matched with each domain of conscience. See if the list your group generates resembles the list of bedrock and connected values attached.**

Looked at another way an intrinsic value pulls a person along as an end which shapes (and is shaped by) the practical means (the virtuous striving) used to attain it. In this sense virtues are values in practice, they are habits of behavior designed to achieve a special goal—a life composed according to moral principles. It follows that we can appreciate- and approve- a push along the personal developmental trajectory of conscience, even when it seems to be just beginning and relatively feeble. We can approve the value keeping, value seeking and value making impetus in a person even if we reject the values he or she espouses because, just now, they appear stunted in growth or malformed in development.

- **Instrumental values** derive value from intrinsic values. They assume value because they are means to ends, which confer value upon them.
- **Originative values** are values newly introduced into the world. They are the end result of creative value making. Does a person in him or herself possess intrinsic value? Instrumental value? Both? Neither? What about original value?
- **Contributory values:** so often we engage in projects that would not succeed save for the cooperative efforts of a few, sometimes many people.

4. Values are derived from, regard and respect the value triangle:

- **Authority**
- **Self**
- **Peers**

In chapter 5, we learn about Mr. Moore's value triangle. Describe it.

In the preceding chapter, we recalled how Huck Finn found himself in a value triangle, although one of the values involved seems to us now as a dysvalue.

Describe the triangle. What are the value triangles that Aaron and Cynthia or other characters in the story are in?

(Hint: some grown-up characters are in moral conflict, too)

5. Invite discussion how to resolve Right vs. Right dilemmas. Highlight Kidder's resolution principles from **How Good People Make Tough Choices**. What do group participants think about Aaron's resolution to his dilemma? Cynthia's? What about Mrs. Fairchild---think about how she handled Michael's masterpiece in the closet---did she have a moral dilemma or not?

6. **The Conscience Celebration** is based on interviews with persons who were middle-school age in the early-eighties. Since the story itself was written and electronically published, there have been terrible events that have occurred at our schools in which students have been shot and killed or wounded.

How might the tragedy of Columbine make a difference in the way today's persons of conscience (for example, peers, parents, teachers and school authorities) react, in their thoughts, emotions, values and deeds, to someone like Keith, the boy who brought the knife to school?