

Stephen Pickard
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(Eds.)



THE IMPACT of EDUCATION

on Character Formation, Ethics,
and the Communication of Values
in Late Modern Pluralistic Societies



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Preface to the Series

Five hundred years ago, Protestant reformer Martin Luther argued that “three estates” (*drei Stände*) lie at the foundation of a just and orderly society – marital families, religious communities, and political authorities. Parents in the home; pastors in the church; magistrates in the state—these, said Luther, are the three authorities whom God appointed to represent divine justice and mercy in the world, to protect peace and liberty in earthly life. Household, church, and state—these are the three institutional pillars on which to build social systems of education and schooling, charity and social welfare, economy and architecture, art and publication. Family, faith, and freedom—these are the three things that people will die for.

In the half millennium since Luther, historians have uncovered various classical and Christian antecedents to these early Protestant views. And numerous later theorists have propounded all manner of variations and applications of this three-estates theory, many increasingly abstracted from Luther’s overtly Christian worldview. Early modern covenant theologians, both Christian and Jewish, described the marital, confessional, and political covenants that God calls human beings to form, each directed to interrelated personal and public ends. Social-contract theorists differentiated the three contracts that humans enter as they move from the state of nature to an organized society protective of their natural rights—the marital contract of husband and wife; the government contract of rulers and citizens; and, for some, the religious contracts of preachers and parishioners. Early anthropologists posited three stages of development of civilization—from family-based tribes and clans, to priest-run theocracies, to fully organized states that embraced all three institutions. Sociologists distinguished three main forms of authority in an organized community—“traditional” authority that begins in the home, “charismatic” authority that is exemplified by the church, and “legal” authority that is rooted in the state. Legal historians outlined three stages of development of legal norms—from the habits and rules of the family, to the customs and canons of religion, to the statutes and codes of the state.

Already a century ago, however, scholars in different fields began to flatten out this hierarchical theory of social institutions and to emphasize the foundational role of other social institutions alongside the family, church, and state in shaping private and public life and character. Sociologists like Max Weber and Talcott Parsons emphasized the shaping powers of “technical rationality” exemplified especially in new industry, scientific education, and market economies. Legal scholars like Otto von Gierke and F. W. Maitland emphasized the critical roles of nonstate legal associations (*Genossenschaften*) in maintaining a just social, political, and legal order historically and today. Catholic subsidiarity theories of Popes Leo XIII and Pius XI emphasized the essential task of mediating social units between the individual and the state to cater the full range of needs, interests, rights, and duties of individuals. Protestant theories of sphere sovereignty, inspired by Abraham Kuiper, argued that not only churches, states, and families but also the social spheres of art, labor, education, economics, agriculture, recreation, and more should enjoy a level of independence from others, especially an overreaching church or state. Various theories of social or structural pluralism, civil society, voluntary associations, the independent sector, multiculturalism, multinormativity, and other such labels have now come to the fore in the ensuing decades—both liberal and conservative, religious and secular, and featuring all manner of methods and logics.

Pluralism of all sorts is now a commonplace of late modern societies. At minimum, this means a multitude of free and equal individuals and a multitude of groups and institutions, each with very different political, moral, religious, and professional interests and orientations. It includes the sundry associations, interest groups, parties, lobbies, and social movements that often rapidly flourish and fade around a common cause, especially when aided by modern technology and various social media. Some see in this texture of plurality an enormous potential for colorful and creative development and a robust expression of human and cultural freedom. Others see a chaotic individualism and radical relativism, which endangers normative education, moral character formation, and effective cultivation of enduring values or virtues.

Pluralism viewed as vague plurality, however, focuses on only one aspect of late modern societies—the equality of individuals, and their almost unlimited freedom to participate peaceably at any time as a respected voice in the moral reasoning and civil interactions of a society. But this view does not adequately recognize that, beneath the shifting cacophony of social forms and norms that constitute modernity, pluralistic societies have heavy normative codes that shape their individual and collective values and morals, preferences and prejudices.

The sources of much of this normative coding and moral education in late modern pluralistic societies are the deep and powerful social systems that are the pillars of every advanced culture. The most powerful and pervasive of these are the social systems of law, religion, politics, science/academy, market, media, fam-

ily, education, medicine, and national defense. The actual empirical forms of each of these powerful social systems can and do vary greatly, even in the relatively homogeneous societies of the late modern West. But these deeper social systems in one form or another are structurally essential and often normatively decisive in individual and communal lives.

Every advanced society has a comprehensive legal system of justice and order, religious systems of ritual and doctrine, a family system of procreation and love, an economic system of trade and value, a media system of communication and dissemination of news and information, and an educational system of preservation, application, and creation of knowledge and scientific advance. Many advanced societies also have massive systems of science, technology, health care, and national defense with vast influence over and through all of these other social systems. These pervasive social systems lie at the foundation of modern advanced societies, and they anchor the vast pluralities of associations and social interactions that might happen to exist at any given time.

Each of these social systems has internal value systems, institutionalized rationalities, and normative expectations that together help to shape each individual's morality and character. Each of these social spheres, moreover, has its own professionals and experts who shape and implement its internal structures and processes. The normative network created by these social spheres is often harder to grasp today, since late modern pluralistic societies usually do not bring these different value systems to light under the dominance of just one organization, institution, and power. And this normative network has also become more shifting and fragile, especially since traditional social systems like religion and the family have eroded in their durability and power, and other social systems like science, the market, health care, defense, and the media have become more powerful.

The aim of this multiyear project on "Character Formation and Moral Education in Late Modern Pluralistic Societies" is to identify the realities and potentials of these core social systems to provide moral orientation and character formation in our day. What can and should these social spheres, separately and together, do in shaping the moral character of late modern individuals who, by nature, culture, and constitutional norms, are free and equal in dignity and rights? What are and should be the core educational functions and moral responsibilities of each of these social spheres? How can we better understand and better influence the complex interactions among individualism, the normative binding powers of these social systems, and the creativity of civil groups and institutions? How can we map and measure the different hierarchies of values that govern each of these social systems, and that are also interwoven and interconnected in various ways in shaping late modern understandings of the common good? How do we negotiate the boundaries and conflicts between and among these social systems when one encroaches on the other, or imposes its values and rationalities on individuals at the cost of the other social spheres or of the common good? What and where are

the intrinsic strengths of each social sphere that should be made more overt in character formation, public education, and the shaping of minds and mentalities?

These are some of the guiding questions at work in this project and in this volume. Our project aims to provide a systematic account of the role of these powerful normative codes operating in the social spheres of law, religion, the family, the market, the media, science and technology, the academy, health care, and defense in the late modern liberal West. Our focus is on selected examples and case studies drawn from Western Europe, North America, South Africa, and Australia, which together provide just enough diversity to test out broader theories of character formation and moral education. Our scholars are drawn from across the academy, with representative voices from the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences as well as the professions of theology, law, business, medicine, and more. While most of our scholars come from the Protestant and Catholic worlds, our endeavor is to offer comparative insights that will help scholars from any profession or confession. While our laboratory is principally Western liberal societies, the modern forces of globalization will soon make these issues of moral character formation a concern for every culture and region of the world—given the power of global social media, entertainment, and sports; the pervasiveness of global finance, business, trade, and law; and the perennial global worries over food, health care, environmental degradation, and natural disasters.

This volume is focused on the impact of *education* on character formation, ethics, and the communication of values in late modern pluralistic societies. It builds on four volumes already in print on the respective impacts of the market, religion, law, and academic research, and these will soon have a companion volume on the impact of the family. Forthcoming volumes will study the respective impacts of the media, the military/defense system, politics, and health-care systems. A final integrative monograph will distill the main findings of these volumes and outline some constructive responses for late modern pluralistic societies.

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Introduction

Stephen Pickard

This book investigates the impact of education on the formation of character and the communication of values in late modern pluralistic societies. Scholars from four continents and many different academic fields are involved. While the basic framework for the contributions is informed by Christian traditions, the disciplines cover a significant range, including theology, education, psychology, literature, anthropology, law, and business. This makes for a rich variety of thematic concentrations and perspectives.

While the perspectives and content of the chapters are diverse, a number of themes continually reemerge. First, the authors, perhaps unsurprisingly but none the less importantly, all give voice to the significance of education in its many forms and contexts as a major contributor to the formation of character and the communication of values in late modern pluralistic societies. The educational foundations and trajectories of any given country are pervasive and have a significant reach into the fabric and shape of the society and its values, making education a barometer of the well-being of a people and their culture(s). Thus, a volume on the impact of education is an important addition to this series.

Second, the contributions to this volume point to the contested nature of the role and purpose of education in the formation of character and shaping of values in different contexts. What continually emerges in the essays in this volume is a recognition of the influence of other interests and concerns on policies, programs, and delivery of education. Whether it is the nexus between education and politics, economics and work, or national identity and history, in all these areas and more, the formation of character and values through education is never simple, always inherently fragile, and ever in need of vigilance. In short, it is not a given that education as such can fulfill its purpose as a communicator of values and moral vision for the common good.

Third, the essays in this volume highlight the remarkable potential of informed educational philosophy and policies to foster an environment conducive to forming character and contributing to cultures that value respect, care, and creativity. In this respect, the final three chapters of this volume are of particular

note, as they address issues concerning vocation and discernment, the importance of literature, and the call for a radical rethinking of moral education and practice from the perspective of Indigenous and planetary concerns.

The book is divided into three parts covering (a) general issues concerning education with respect to society, values, and character; (b) issues for education and character formation arising from different national contexts; and (c) emergent themes relevant to the contribution of education to forming character and values.

Part One, on *Society, Values, and Character*, begins with a chapter by Anne Stewart, (“What Has Solomon to Do with Google? Old Testament Wisdom Literature and the Mediation of Truth in Modern Pluralistic Societies”). Stewart examines the book of Proverbs as a wisdom system for truth discernment. She argues that such a historical perspective on competing truth claims might have something important to teach our contemporary society, caught as it is in a “contest of information” and “infodemic” related to the spread of misinformation. What is required above all else is discernment among competing voices and truths. This is a timeless human dynamic, albeit made even more challenging by modern media and technology. In short, does Google have the last word, or is there yet an ancient wisdom to fill the void?

Stewart points out that the book of Proverbs says more about character and the gaining of wisdom than any other literature of the Bible. It is an instruction manual for wise living and, as such, a book about education. This includes the young and the old, the neophyte and the sage. Proverbs conveys a sense of urgency, for it has to do with attaining “skills to navigate the world.” Nor is the book of Proverbs naïve about the complexities of discernment in the moral world; the book’s “aim is to foster wise character in its students, equipping them for living amid the grey hues of moral discernment.” In this sense, the book invites “contextual ethical reflection” amid the puzzles and contradictions of life. Stewart is thus clear about the relevance of the book for “the formation of wise character in a context of competing perspectives, truth claims, and moral worldviews.” It is apparent from a close reading of Proverbs that we have to do with the “education of desire.”

Stewart’s discussion of the competing voices of “woman Wisdom” and “strange woman” pierces our contemporary experience of the strange and alluring algorithms of Google and Facebook, with their inbuilt monetizing of desire, ambiguous treatment of information, and tendency to generate division and new tribal networks. A careful reading of Proverbs draws attention to the fact that a contest of truth is at the same time a test of character for a society.

Robert Hefner (“Character Socialization and Diversity in Modern Democracies Today”) presses two questions that require precisely the kind of wise discernment that Stewart seeks. He asks: What kind of character education is appropriate for the societies and polities in which we moderns live? And what conditions in society either facilitate or impede the realization of this form of character educa-

tion and, with it, its ability to influence understandings of the public good? Hefner argues that “efforts to build sustainable consensus on both character education and citizenship” have been hampered by both a radical ethical-religious plurality and what he refers to as “the rise of new forms of social mediation and mobilization,” which undermine consensus and generate ethical and social differences for commercial and political purposes. Hefner draws upon the discussions of Charles Taylor and John Rawls on the subject of “overlapping consensus,” which is critical “for civic coexistence and the public good.” Hefner argues that, notwithstanding serious negative social and ethical consequences for minorities, key features of Christianity have contributed “to the inculcation of genuinely civil habits of the heart, as well as providing theological and ontological grounds for the affirmation of human dignity.” The distortions that arise, in Hefner’s view, are due to “political entrepreneurs” in civil society who harness popular Christian identities to override the dignity-affirming message of the Christian gospel. Political instrumentalization trumps theological depth. Hefner also highlights the way the Janus-faced capacity for religious socialization can generate exclusive rather than inclusive public ends (as in, for example, France and India). He points out the importance of commitment to the modern values of democratic civility and offers us cogent and urgent reasons to protect our civic and religious education.

Joachim Funke’s chapter (“Character Formation from a Psychological Point of View: Search for Values, Search for *Sinn*”) examines psychological studies of character formation and values. The emphasis is on the dynamics of development over the course of a human lifespan. This approach, which has been the standard paradigm since the mid-twentieth century, asks about the origins and development of moral values and how they might change. Funke introduces the reader to two different approaches in psychology to the question of character: a narrow one, which associates character with moral attitudes that develop over time like other “faculties,” such as cognition, emotion, and language (Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg); and a broader one, which connects character formation to personality development that involves both stable personal traits and variable states across situations. The latter approach offers greater possibilities for change over time, and education seems to provide the optimum conditions for such change.

Whether or not wisdom might be the result of successful character formation is a moot point. Perhaps character and moral values can be measured. This is an area in which psychologists invest considerable expertise. But what to do with this information, and what insight does it yield for character formation? Another tack involves experimental research in moral dilemmas, though Funke is wary of drawing too much by way of conclusions from such experiments for understanding character formation. In short, it seems that character formation is a complex process that is not particularly accessible by psychological measurement. It seems that the human search for values and *Sinn* (making sense of things) is what makes us human and not robots.

If, as Funke's psychological assessment suggests, character formation and moral disposition are fundamentally matters of individual development in society, then it begs a question: Where, and with whom, does responsibility lie for fostering civic skills and virtues? This question is taken up by Charles Glenn ("Civic Norms and Distinctive Convictions: Finding the Right Balance"). Specifically, Glenn examines the contribution to character formation by nongovernmental schools undergirded by distinctive religious convictions. This matter is clearly controversial, as opponents argue that these kinds of schools constitute a threat to public education's mission "to develop citizens possessing the appropriate dispositions to sustain a well-functioning society." Shared convictions and loyalties that inculcate civic virtues conducive to social and political peace apparently require the banishment of distinctive religious beliefs and convictions of families and communities from the educational process. Underlying this view is what Glenn identifies as the "myth of the common school," associated with the idea of nation forming and social unity via popular schooling. Glenn offers an insightful commentary on the history of this issue, citing Michel Foucault's view that the "state has taken over from the medieval church the role and the techniques of the 'cure of souls,' with pretensions extending well beyond its traditional duties of the maintenance of domestic tranquility and the administration of justice."

Glenn's essay highlights many important issues regarding the role of education for citizenship, the role of governments in such processes, and the dangers of politicizing children's education in ways that thwart the needs of children for a culturally coherent life. He raises fundamental questions about how civic virtue might be developed, and by whom. In the challenging, often fragmenting and highly polarized times in which we live, Glenn sees a critical role for the "vitality of faith-based institutions, including schools, where trust is based upon shared commitments [and] is a precious resource to society at large."

Part Two, *National Contexts*, explores the impact of education on character and moral education in Germany, Australia, South Korea, and the United States. Heike Springhart ("Stabilizing Continuity and Transforming Spirituality: Germany's Democratization after 1945 as an Example of the Impact of Education on Character Formation, the Communication of Values, and the Breakdown of Totalitarianism") is concerned with the potential of religion to contribute to a truly democratic way of life. She examines aspects of Germany's democratization after 1945 in so far as they highlight the role of education in shaping the character and values of a nation in a time of significant transition. In doing so, Springhart identifies various themes—for example, reeducation as a pedagogic program; reeducation as part of the process of comprehensive democratization; and the importance of harnessing "clear areas" (relatively healthy spheres) of society as locations for reeducation.

With respect to this last theme, studies appear to have overlooked the significance of religion and the churches as places of resistance and, hence, "clear

areas.” Springhart focuses on how religion and the churches played a vital role in the reeducation process, which was strongly influenced by therapeutic models of recovery from social and cultural psychosis. There is a place here for an educational therapeutic designed to shape and strengthen character at both the individual and the national level. Important in this respect is Talcott Parsons’s concept of “controlled institutional change,” which included a form of religion to help shape a free, democratic society and act as a critical counterpart to the impact of National Socialism. The premise was simple: democracy was primarily a way of life, and healthy social institutions provided a vital component in the process of reeducation and character formation. Springhart shows the extensive international cooperation and shared learning entailed in the reeducation process; draws attention to the significance of and continuing impact of Protestant Academies in postwar Germany as sources of moral and spiritual support; highlights the role of women in the educative and political process in a new German society; and recalls the significance of church-based welfare organizations. Importantly, Springhart underscores the importance of religion in tempering the alienating aspects of change and keeping alive in society questions of meaning and purpose. Overall, we are left with the two complementary ecclesial and theological impulses in the process of education for a democratic way of life: stabilizing continuity and transforming spirituality.

Jo-Anne Reid (“School Education in Australia: Building Character and Reforming the Nation”) focuses on the role of school education as a means for reforming national character. The background is the continuing tension between a systemic racism that emerged from Anglo-Saxon colonization in the late eighteenth century and the fact that Australia is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse societies in the world. Reid argues that “the challenge of shaping a population that will continue to uphold the values of a pluralist society is largely entrusted to the education system, through its national ‘civics and citizenship’ curriculum.” Given the diversity of cultures, races, languages, and values “*schooling* may well be the *only* shared social institution that young people participate in prior to exercising their rights as citizens.”

This is a tall order for any education system. It is made even more problematic because Australian education still reflects a set of Christian values contaminated by desires for wealth and status, founded on the “convenient lie of Australia as *terra nullius*,” which has been responsible for the emergence of a variety of discriminatory and undemocratic social outcomes. As a consequence, a major task for Australian education is to engage with a “decolonializing curriculum for educating the next generation of young Australians.” How well or otherwise this task is undertaken will determine the kind of society—its character and values—that coming generations will inherit and live by. Reid highlights the differences between education within the framework of an essentially British school system and the broader European notions of character building as a social and cultural sub-

ject. As Reid makes clear, such a process needs to begin in the earliest years of a child's education.

John Witte Jr. ("Restoring the Value(s) of Religion in American Public Education") draws attention to the easily overlooked fact that the school's influence on character formation is more overt and visible than the more subtle but powerful influences of other major societal systems, such as markets, laws, politics, the media, and so on. His focus is on "the prominent role of modern American state-run public schools in educating modern citizens and the deprecated role of religion in the delivery of this public education." Witte comments on the role of the courts in this latter development and the resultant impoverishment of "the values education and character formation of American students in primary and secondary public schools, and sometimes in public universities, too." The consequences of this diminished place of religion in education have been profound with regard to students' appreciating their own religious beliefs and practices in relation to those of others and promoting the false idea that religion is essentially a matter of private disposition. This loss is particularly serious given the massive industry that education and schooling are in the United States, and it constitutes "a major battleground for constitutional struggles over religious freedom." Witte tracks some of the legal disputes in which religion was pushed further to the margins of public education, and he highlights more recent attempts in the courts to challenge this marginalization on the basis of free speech, freedom of religion, and equal access. Prominent in these battles are critics who argue for the inherent usefulness of religious values in helping to shape the character and outlook of young people preparing to take their place in an open and democratic society.

Witte notes the global resurgence and power of religion, for good and ill. Public-school education ought not ignore this. Witte provides a powerful critique and assessment of public education in the context of current American society and politics.

Chung-Hyun Baik ("An Analysis of the Impacts of the Korean Education System on the Character, Ethics, and Values of Koreans and Its Implications for Late Modern Pluralistic Societies") offers an Asian perspective as a South Korean theologian. Baik comments on the challenges facing a country that places high value on student performance and achievement (particularly in reading, science, and mathematics) yet also registers a high level of student anxiety and unhappiness in the educational process. What are the origins of this tension? What are its implications for the role of education in character development? And, importantly, what correctives are required?

Baik traces the origins of this tension in the history of the Korean education system, noting the early purpose of education in the training of children from ruling aristocratic families to become government officials; later reforms that opened education beyond those from the ruling classes; the further impact of Japanese annexation of Korea, with the result that the Korean education system be-

came subjugated to Japanese imperialism; and post-World War II reforms that nonetheless remained highly politicized, with a focus on anticommunism and an emphasis on education for industrial and economic development.

One consequence of the educational-political link is that the Korean education system is “grounded in meritocracy” based on abilities rather than money or social status. The top priority is for students to serve the purposes of governmental rule, whose achievement is regarded as a sign of not only individual success but also filial duty to one’s parents and family. The roots of anxiety are thus sown out of a particular cultural history that prizes both responsible leadership in society and a family centrism and egoistic familism. This culture of success and competition is somewhat at odds with some of the central tenets of Confucianism that encourage loving relations between people and overcoming oneself and governing others well. What this means is that education for the purpose of character development and values has a diminished role in the culture. With increasing cultural and social pluralism, change is taking place. Education for education’s sake, as well as its role in shaping character and values for individuals and society, represent a challenge to more entrenched political and historical agendas.

Ashley Berner (“Public Education and Moral Formation in the United States: A View from the Early Twenty-First Century”) examines the development of the uniform model for American public education and makes a strong case for an alternative plurality model. Her work has resonances with the offerings of Glenn and Witte in this volume. Berner makes an important and often ignored point that “schools are inherently meaning-making institutions; every component of a school’s structure and content is educative for students. Even the omissions—what is unacceptable to discuss—are instructive.” Given this reality, the pervasiveness and influence of the uniform model of state control of public education in the United States has proven to be far more problematic than might have been either intended or imagined. Berner traces the emergence of the uniform model as an anxiety-driven response to threats to Protestant hegemony from increased pluralism and diversity. Such uniformity did not imply moral neutrality but rather “reinforced Protestant hegemony,” although this hegemony lost considerable force from the mid-twentieth century as courts (as outlined by John Witte in this volume) increasingly moved the country to a more secular model and marginalized the distinctly religious framework of public education. While the past quarter of a century has been marked by increasing diversity and plurality in public education, for the most part the system is captive to the common-school or uniform model.

However, as Berner makes clear, the intent of the uniform model in its secular guise is to inculcate “moral and civic cohesion” across a diverse population. This kind of “civic republicanism” begs the question of which intellectual resources and institutional practices could be broadly acceptable within a heterogeneous society. She notes the lengths to which educators will go to foreclose discussion

of fundamental questions concerning values, meaning, and the religious significance of hotly debated ethical issues. The default is to a kind of majority viewpoint associated with what Berner terms a “moral therapeutic deism” and “expressive individualism.” What has happened to questions of character formation and moral vision for individuals and a culture? Can a pluralist model of public education gain sufficient traction in the system? Not surprisingly, moral formation remains both contested and controversial.

Part Three, *Emerging Themes*, sets out on a different tack to focus on some areas of emerging and contemporary concern. David Cunningham (“Vocational Exploration as Character Formation: A New Direction for Higher Education”) shows how questions that broadly concern vocation are beginning to play a more important role for emerging generations of students in North America and elsewhere. “Students seem to be spending more time thinking about their personal strengths and weaknesses, pondering what will make for a meaningful or purposeful life, and sometimes even using the language of *vocation* or *calling* in their efforts to describe where their lives might be headed.” While this vocational turn is only in its infancy, Cunningham (and he is certainly not alone in this) judges this development to be a portent of a preoccupation that will have much wider and more significant implications for the way educative processes contribute to a broader approach to moral formation and civic and social engagements for the common good.

How, then, does reflection on vocation (with its attendant concerns for meaning and purpose) connect with the matter of character formation? Cunningham’s chapter offers an insightful examination of the contexts and features of ethics and character formation in higher education in North America. Given the two tracks in higher education in that context—(a) public secular universities that usually steer clear of religious or quasi-religious matters and (b) private institutions that often have a religious foundation—it is not surprising that the latter institutions are most associated with a certain ethical freedom to pursue matters relevant to moral education, character formation, and vocation. This ancient term (“vocation”) was reinterpreted by Luther during the Reformation beyond a narrow medieval clericalism to embrace a broad range of human occupations that includes one’s work but also domains that are deeply formative of a way of life and a sense of purpose. This richer concept of vocation is being taken up in places of higher education to enable students to explore matters of calling and discernment so that they might live purposefully. In other words, it’s not just about their prospective work, but involves moral education and character formation. Cunningham shows how this approach has consequences for personal and community commitments; the cultivation and integration of virtues into career, family, civic life, and leisure; and dealing with experiences of limit and finitude in a world of myriad choices. All of this is grist for the mill of moral development and contribution to the greater good

of society. This turn to vocation as a kind of educational experiment has great potential for export into other national contexts.

Irene Pieper (“Character Formation and *Literarische Bildung*: Aims and Potentials in Literature Education”) examines the potential of literature as a source and mediator of the educational process and its contribution to character formation and moral development. Pieper’s discussion is grounded in the notion of *subjectivation*—a relational process in a sociological environment. This process is operative in the teacher-learner context, where readers encounter texts and learning takes place through co-construction. Pieper finds that the potential of literature to stimulate personal development requires an “environment allowing for co-construction, particularly via communication,” which may be provided by family but certainly by formal education at school. In such an environment, literature is inevitably part of a more dynamic process of learning and personal development through the way literature is perceived, discussed, and enjoyed. The reason literature can play such a formative role in moral development is that a great deal “of the literary canon and contemporary literature alike shows a critical stance toward how we live, how societies are shaped or justice questioned, and how the environment is degraded.” As literature operates in this manner, the learner’s own world is framed, critiqued, and provoked, making possible a personal breakthrough to an expanded understanding of the self in the world and society.

Pieper traces the way this process occurred for young people in the German education system, as the reader moves from moral insight into a broader emancipatory function of literature and a stronger focus on contemporary concerns for identity, both personal and social. Other voices stressed the priority of the aesthetic potential of literature over instrumentalist concerns. The emphasis on personal and moral development, cultural continuity, and identity formation through encounter with literature is the critical matter. Pieper alerts us to the danger that concern for learning outcomes and literacy competency can become decoupled from inquiry into “what particular literary texts have to teach about our various worlds and how they stimulate our imagination.” The chapter offers a rich and intricate account of the importance and challenges of literature as a critical aspect in a student’s self-understanding of their place and purpose in the world.

Darcia Narvaez (“Resetting Baselines for an Earth-Centered Moral Education”) sets out an urgent and radical agenda for moral education against the backdrop of the present existential threat of global destruction. In light of the emergence of a worldwide “Taker” culture, whose origins can be traced to the growth of human civilizations out of nomadic foraging societies over the past ten thousand years, Narvaez poses the question: “What should moral educators do in the face of such a destructive culture, one that is destroying not only humanity’s habitat but also the integrity of every ecosystem and that of the planet?” Narvaez responds: “We must examine human baselines, better understand human development, and re-adopt ancestral approaches to living a good life.” The alternative to a Taker cul-