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Moral Principles and Moral Principals?

An Introduction

A SCENARIO

The scenario that follows is the dominant example in this book. I will discuss some of its features in this introductory chapter and will return to it a number of times in the book, altering it as though it were about different levels of education: elementary, middle, or high school.

Imagine that you are the principal of a school in a large district. Your school, like your district, has a diverse population. It does not have the extreme poverty that characterizes a few of the schools in your district, yet your community is not wealthy. Students for the most part come from middle- and working-class families who own modest homes. The percentage of children on free and reduced lunch is lower than the district average.

Your school is successful in a district where many schools are not. You have worked hard to make your school into a learning community. Your teachers work well together. Parents and community members are included in some of the deliberations and feel they are valued partners in the school.

Under your leadership, your teachers have developed a curriculum and instructional strategies that you and they believe to be first-rate. While basic skills are not neglected, the program is designed to teach advanced cognitive

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skills and to develop creativity. Teachers cooperate in its implementation and meet frequently to discuss problems.

Your teachers did a great deal of background research on this curriculum, and they believe that the curriculum and their instructional strategies are supported by a significant body of educational research. Its merits have been confirmed through their own experience, and they have modified the program where needed. Parents understand the program, were regularly consulted while it was being developed, and support it.

Your state has a series of tests that the students in your school must take. Results are reported in the local papers, and there is much pressure on schools to do well. This has not been a problem for you. Your students do well. Moreover, while the program your teachers developed under your leadership was not designed to be aligned with these tests, it seems more than adequate to prepare your students to succeed on them. While some parents have complained about the amount of time their children spend taking tests, many teachers and parents have felt that the fact that their children score well on these tests is a validation of their efforts. They are happy to be accountable.

Moreover, the data from the tests have been helpful in the continuing assessment of and reflection on the program. Among other things, test results have helped make it clear that while your students perform well on average, it is not the case that all students do well. It has been of particular concern to you that those students who are on free and reduced lunch are overrepresented in the group of students who are performing poorly.

Other schools in your district have not done well, even on average. Your district is one of the more poorly performing ones in your state. That its central office, superintendent, and board of education have had a history of conflict and turnover has not helped it focus on the problem of educating its large number of poor and minority students.

After much soul-searching and a fair amount of squabbling, your district has produced a plan to deal with this matter. Among the provisions of the plan are three that will directly impact your school. First, the district has insisted that the curriculum in each of its schools be tightly aligned with state tests. This will require considerable revision of your current curriculum. Second, the district has mandated that review of released or sample test items be incorporated into instruction on a regular basis in all subjects for which there are tests. Finally, the district has required that whenever a test is to be given, during the two weeks prior to testing, significant instructional time is to be devoted to test preparation and taking practice tests.

The district justified these requirements by claiming that it believed that the state's tests were good tests aligned with state standards; hence, educational practices that focused on them served to focus the attention of the district's schools on teaching what they should be teaching and, if this amounted to "teaching to the test," to do so was nothing more than to emphasize essential content.

The teachers and parents at your school were most unhappy. They did not wish to alter their current curriculum and instructional practices, and since their students were doing quite well, they saw no reason why they should. They did not agree that they were merely being asked to teach sound subject matter in ways that had proven successful. They claimed that they were being

required to focus on rote memorization of facts rather than on higher cognitive skills and creativity, and they quickly (if not very originally) dubbed the pedagogy they were expected to employ "drill and kill." Meetings were called, and contentious letters were written. (We will read portions of these letters in Chapter 5.) There was criticism not only of the wisdom of the board's new policies but also of how they were achieved. A number of people argued that the board members were playing politics by attempting to divert attention from some of their own failings. They were more concerned with sound bites than sound education.

Eventually, demands were made of you. You were asked to return to the board of education and secure an exemption for your school from these requirements. Failing this, you were asked to lead an effort to work around these board mandates and, it was privately suggested by a few, to subvert them. Several interesting suggestions were made about the nature of "creative program characterizations" that might be made to the central office on various reports that had to be filed. A little imaginative reporting might secure the required autonomy needed by your school, and no one was likely to look too closely at the program of a successful school.

You were not pleased with these suggestions. You worked for the board of education. So did the teachers. While you understood the concerns of the parents and teachers about the changes, you also thought that they had overreacted and that the board's strategy might benefit instruction in the district. Indeed, you wondered if it might not benefit some of your students. After all, not all of your students succeeded, and you were concerned that too many poor students were left behind. The teachers and parents of your school, you worried, were a bit too satisfied with their program and had not adequately come to terms with the fact that it did not work for everyone. You were also reluctant to misrepresent your school's program to the board, even for a good and just cause. No one had used the unpleasant term lie when they suggested how you were to represent your school to the board, but it felt like lying to you.

PROLOGUE

In this chapter I will use the preceding scenario to introduce some issues about the ethics of leadership. I will also explain my vision of what ethics is about. Ethics concerns the fundamental question, How shall we live well together?

Ethics has often been understood to involve two basic questions: What is good? and What is right? The question on how to live well together focuses discussion of these two questions on the nature of good communities. "What is good?" concerns the fundamental aims of communities. "What is right?" concerns the principles and shared understandings that enable social cooperation. Good communities have worthy aims and a fair basis of cooperation. I will encourage you to view ethical leadership as the art of creating good school communities.

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ETHICS AND LEADERSHIP

A number of ethical issues are embedded in the scenario with which this chapter began. I would suppose that most readers will have recognized the suggestion that you “creatively” characterize your program to the board of education as an ethical issue. May you lie for a good cause? Can you be deceptive even if you don’t actually assert something that is false?

Other candidates for ethical issues emerge from the suggestion that, while on average the students in your school are doing well, some are not. These students are disproportionately poor. Are there issues about equality here? There are several. One is equality of educational opportunity. What does it mean? What does it require? If some students are not doing as well as others, does it inevitably follow that they have been treated unequally? How would we decide this? What should we do about it?

A related issue is the ethics of resource distribution. You are worried that some of the less affluent students in your school are not doing well. Suppose you propose that to help these students catch up, you will provide them with additional resources. Is that ethical when this decision lessens the resources available to others? How would we decide this? What constitutes a just distribution of educational resources?

A third issue of equality concerns the nature of a community in which all are equal even though they are also different in many respects. What kind of community is this? How do its members relate to one another? How do we respect diversity and still promote a democratic culture? What is a fair basis of cooperation in a community in which there is much difference?

The scenario also raises a number of questions of legitimate authority. The parents and teachers in your school have raised questions about the board of education’s decision by challenging the *merits* of the decision. They think it to be unwise. But they have also raised issues about the *legitimacy* of the board’s decision. They have hinted that the decision was intended to serve the needs of the members of the board rather than of the children in its schools. If this is true, does it make the decision illegitimate? Need illegitimate decisions be obeyed?

They might have pressed the matter further. Why is the board allowed to decide these matters? The parents of your school’s children might argue that they should have the final say about how their children are educated. After all, these students are their children. They do not belong to the board of education.

Your teachers, in turn, might argue that they should be entitled to the most authoritative say about how the children under their care are educated. After all, they are the professionals, the ones with relevant experience, and the ones who work directly with the students and who best know what they need.

Both your parents and teachers might argue that the educational program at your school was achieved by a process of democratic deliberation

and consultation involving parents and teachers, and it was the product of a consensus among these key actors. Why is a distant board of lay people who don't know the local situation, who don't know much about education, who may be using the board of education to further political careers, and whose interests are not significantly affected by how well these children perform permitted to override the considered judgment of those who know what is best for these children and of those who care most for them? Who elected them?

Of course the answer to the final question in most places is that the citizens of the school district did. Why do these citizens, who may not have children in your school and may know little about it, get to select those who decide what goes on in your school?

In these few sentences, we have begun to articulate a tension between two conceptions of democracy. One conception sees democracy as a process of local deliberation that seeks a reasoned consensus about what is good and fair for the community to do. When school leaders are asked to be democratic leaders, this is often the kind of democracy people have in mind. But another conception sees democracy as concerned with elections and representation. Sovereignty does not rest with the local community. It rests with an elected legislature. How do these conceptions fit together? Do they fit together?

Several different principles of legitimation are appealed to in these comments: decisions should be made by those who are elected by the citizenry to do so, decisions should be made by those most directly affected, decisions should be made by those most competent to make them, and decisions should be made via the deliberations of the local community. There is something to be said for all of these views. How are they to be balanced? When they conflict, which is to be preferred?

A closely related issue is the ethics of decision making. Ethical decisions must be legitimate decisions. Hence, to know when a decision is ethical, we must have a view of who is entitled to make it, that is, who has legitimate authority. But ethical decisions have other features: they aim at worthy ends, they treat people fairly and respect their rights, they respect evidence and argument, and they are transparent and open to debate.

Worthy ends? How do we know if our ends are worthy? Consider how this question arises from our scenario. Some of your parents and teachers have dubbed the board's mandates with the pejorative label "drill and kill." What does that mean, and why might one think that it is objectionable?

Very likely the phrase is meant to imply that *drill* is tedious and *kills* the interest in learning. Is this right? Perhaps, but something more is at stake. Educators often object to drills because they believe that the kind of learning that is of most worth aims at understanding and creativity and involves reflection, argument, and the appraisal of evidence. The teachers and parents of your school seem to believe this. Drills do not seem to involve reflection or aim at understanding or reasoned conclusions. This suggests

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that underlying the view that education should involve understanding and the assessment of evidence may be an ideal of character concerning what we want our students to become. We want them to be able to decide for themselves on the basis of adequate evidence. We want them to become autonomous, self-governing people.

There may also be an ideal of citizenship and democratic community involved. We wish for our society to be a certain form of political community, a democracy. Arguably, a democracy requires citizens who are able to engage one another in dialogue and to discover and support policies that are reasonable and sustain the common good.

If concerns such as these motivate the objections of parents and teachers to drill and kill, then they have raised some serious objections to board policy. While these objections may be mistaken, they appeal to values that are profound and deeply held. Their objections are not just about the nature of effective pedagogy or what is required to raise test scores. If these objections have merit, then the board is mandating a kind of education that rubs up against some of the deepest moral and ethical convictions of liberal democratic societies. Perhaps they have a mistaken view about how to educate children so that they (and we) can live well together in a democratic society. If these objections are wrong, then it is important to understand why.

ETHICS AND MORALITY: WHAT ARE THEY? WHAT IS ETHICS ABOUT?

Let's consider the types of issues that we have raised. There are issues of personal conduct: Is it ever right to lie? There are issues concerning the aims of education: Should our schools aim at producing autonomous individuals? Should they aim at producing good citizens? And what do these aims mean and require? There are issues of rights: Do students have a right not to be indoctrinated? Do they have a right to equal opportunity? There are issues of legitimate authority: What is the basis of the school board's authority? What is the basis of your authority? Who is entitled to a say about educational matters? To whom may we be made accountable for our actions? There are issues that concern community norms: What does it mean to be a democratic community? What does it mean to be an intellectual or an educational community?

Why are such issues ethical issues? Historically, ethics has been viewed as an inquiry into the nature of good living. It addresses the broad question, How shall we live? or, as I prefer, How shall we live well together?

Earlier I suggested that this broad question can be divided into two further questions, those concerned with what is *good* and those concerned with what is *right*. Each of these questions poses others.

Questions concerned with what is good are: What ends are worth pursuing? What activities are worth doing? What kinds of lives are worth

living? What is the nature of human flourishing? What kinds of people must we become if we are to live well? How can we educate so as to produce people of this sort? What kinds of communities and societies do we need if people are to be able to lead good lives? and How can we create people who are able to sustain and function in these communities? These questions start with a concern for the nature of those goods and activities that are intrinsically worthwhile or worthwhile for their own sake. Every view of education presupposes answers to such questions.

Questions about what is right involve many issues about personal conduct: May I lie? May I steal? and May I kill? But there are other questions: What is the nature of legitimate authority? When must I obey the commands of another, and when must others obey me? What rights do I have? What duties and responsibilities do I have? How are social resources justly distributed? and How are decisions fairly made? Such "ought" questions concern the rules and principles that govern the interaction of members of the community and that assign to them various rights and responsibilities. They establish a fair basis for social cooperation.

To understand what makes a community (including a school community) a good one, we must answer both of these broad questions. That is, we must know something about the fundamental goods at which the community aims and the moral principles that govern interaction in the community. Communities are associations in which individuals cooperate to realize shared aims. Good communities pursue worthy aims, and, if they are to function well, they must have a shared conception of the rules and principles that govern the cooperation of their members in the pursuit of these aims.

Thus, to answer questions about the ends at which a community aims and the principles that govern the interactions of its members is not just to address the question, How shall we live? Instead, it is to address the question, How shall we live well together? Ethics, ultimately, is about the shape of human communities in which people can flourish and about the basis for social cooperation in such communities.

ETHICS AND PLURALISM

One concern about this view of ethics is that it is potentially oppressive. Perhaps when we have discovered answers to questions about the good communities, we will have developed a view that assumes there is one kind of life that is good for all and that all must cooperate to achieve it. This is the path that leads to total community, oppression, and the inquisition. It is not a path we should take.

While human communities do exist to further cooperation in pursuit of shared ends, it does not follow that all ends must be shared. While human communities must have agreements about how decisions are to be made, it does not follow that communities may make all decisions on behalf of their members. Good communities may be united in the pursuit

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of some aims and quite diverse in other respects. The task for educators is often to discover how to pursue shared aims while encouraging appropriate diversity. How shall we approach this task?

Here is one way to think about the issues of unity and diversity: Our society is liberal and democratic. Liberal societies emphasize individual rights and freedom. Democratic societies emphasize collective decision-making and the pursuit of common goods. Liberal democratic societies are often characterized by the tension between democratic decision making and individual freedom.

The freedoms that liberal societies grant their members impose restraints on the scope of democratic decision making, permit members of the society to choose their own ends, and enable their free participation in democratic decision making. There is a familiar list of such freedoms, including freedom of speech, press, and association; freedom of religion; and a right to privacy and property. To say that people have such rights is to say (among other things) that legislatures may not pass laws that restrict them. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution begins, "Congress shall make no law . . ."

Thus, liberal societies have an answer to the claim that ethical inquiry leads to oppressive communities dominated by an imposed conception of the good. It is that people have rights—rights that impose limits on what the community may decide and that require the community to treat them freely and equally. Part of our inquiry must concern the nature of these rights and how they constrain and shape educational communities.

Now we must address a second concern. Sometimes individual rights are viewed as though they were anticomunal in their character. Liberal societies are often described as being individualistic, and this characterization is often meant as an accusation.

This accusation seems to me to be wrong. These rights do restrain the scope of democratic decision making, but they shape community as much as they restrain it. These rights tell us what we believe to be a fair basis for social cooperation. They tell us that the political community we want must be one in which the basis of cooperation is not, for example, a shared religion or some other shared orthodoxy. It is one in which people are free and equal. It is one in which people may freely participate in collective decision making. The political community of liberal democracy is thus limited, but the aim is not to produce a society in which people act solely as individuals in the pursuit of their own ends; its aim is to produce a political community in which people may flourish in diverse ways while cooperating fairly in pursuing common goods.

One conclusion of this view is that in liberal democratic societies, the government may not require orthodoxy of belief or of faith as the basis of political community; nor, since they are agents of government, may public schools. It follows that the aims of the schools of liberal democratic societies must not assume such orthodoxies.

Yet there must be some goods at which the schools of a liberal democratic society can aim without oppressing some of their members. If there were not, we could not (or should not) have common schools. What are these goods? The answer to this question awaits in the next chapter. Here let me note only that the aims of public schools must be big-tented, that is, they must be of such a nature as to guide the education of children from diverse cultures and faiths while allowing all to be equal citizens. The aims of common schools must be inclusive aims.

I will also argue that the aims of public education should not be merely instrumental. One way to try to make public schools big-tented is to disavow any interest in considering the nature of good lives. We merely provide basic skills and essential knowledge, believing that such skills and knowledge can be useful to all, regardless of the kind of lives they seek to lead. We aim at universal instrumentalities.

This, I believe, is not a good response. Of course, we must provide basic skills and knowledge. But we must also help our students become good citizens and have worthy conceptions of how they will live their lives and what they will live them for. To do otherwise, I will argue, is corrosive of educational community and the solidarity on which democratic societies depend. The idea, then, is not to lapse into instrumentalism but to promote a big-tented vision of a good education that is inclusive of diverse cultures, faiths, and aspirations.

Thus, the claim that people have rights that are sometimes against the authority of the community does not reject the idea that ethics concerns answering the question of how we shall live well together in favor of an individualistic society. Rather, it insists that we answer the question in a certain way. It insists that in our public institutions, the goods at which we aim are goods that can be the goods of all.

It also insists that goods that cannot be the aims of all be those of communities that are free associations. Such communities (e.g., places of worship) are important to the health of free societies, but they do not act with the endorsement and authority of the state. This is part of what we mean by pluralism in liberal democratic societies. We limit the scope of the political community so that a diversity of communities can flourish. That liberal democratic societies do not view all goods as public goods does not reject the idea that goods are sought in a community. It tells us something about the kinds of communities we want. It says that part of human flourishing is freedom.

ETHICS AND MORALITY

I have said that ethics addresses two central questions: What is good? and What is right? Sometimes the notion of morality is understood to be concerned with the second question. Morality, in this view, is the part of ethics

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that deals with questions of right and wrong, with rights and duties, but does not concern itself with what is good.

There is a tendency for modern discussions of ethics to emphasize morality and pay less attention to questions about what is good. Why? One reason might be that there is no way to decide what is good. What is good, many believe, is a matter of personal taste. Even if it is possible to know what is good, the decision about what is good is one to be made by individuals, not by the society. Individuals have a right to choose those goods that they will attempt to realize in their lives. Inquiry into what is good is therefore impossible and potentially oppressive. Perhaps ethics *should* be reduced to morality.

The consequence of a focus on morality is to emphasize the question of the nature of a fair basis of social cooperation and to claim that people are entitled to pursue a freely chosen conception of the good with those whom they choose to associate with. If we wish to be a free society, there is much to commend such a view.

However, the reduction of ethics to morality is a mistake, and a particularly problematic mistake for educators and school leaders. I would respond to the two problems with inquiry into the nature of the good as follows. First, it is possible to inquire into the nature of the good. (I will engage in such an inquiry in the next chapter.) It does not follow that the good must be the same for everyone. Indeed, I believe that one feature of good lives is that they are lived "from the inside." Nothing will be experienced as good if it is experienced as something imposed.

Moreover, what one experiences as good is affected by nature and culture. We are different in some ways from the outset. Our cultures further shape our wants and needs. When individual differences and enculturation have done their work, we will experience our good in different things. Every school leader should understand and respect this.

How, then, can we think productively about the good? There are two complementary approaches. One that I have just suggested is that we can look for those goods that are big-tented. Philosopher Martha Nussbaum (1990) coined a useful phrase for such goods: They should be *thick, but vague*. An example of such goods (which I shall discuss more fully in the next chapter) is that people tend to enjoy activities that develop their capacities and engage the capacities they have developed. More simply, people enjoy becoming good at something and doing what they have become good at.

This view of what makes something good has substance to it. It provides guidance about how to live well, and it provides guidance to educators about the goals of education. It says that we should help students discover worthwhile activities that they can master. At the same time, it is a view of the good that is big-tented because it is vague. It can be realized through a wide range of activities and expressed through various cultures. It does not oppress or exclude.

A second approach is to note that liberal democratic societies can themselves be viewed as good because they permit and encourage human flourishing in a variety of forms and because they are just. They enable a diversity of good lives and permit us to enjoy and learn from those who are different from us. Others become our resources. We become their resources. Moreover, being a member of such a society is a good in its own right. Being part of such a just society is itself part of living well. Our view of the aims of education may then be informed by the characteristics required of individuals if they are to be flourishing members of liberal democratic societies. We can, then, think about the good and do so in a way that informs our view of education.

ETHICS AND LEADERSHIP

This is a book about the *ethics* of leadership, not just its morality. When ethics collapses into morality, the tendency is to disconnect morality from the nature of good communities and their goals and ideals. Moral rules and principles become the generic rules and principles of any and all communities: Don't steal, don't lie, respect people's rights, and so forth. These are the morality of schools and school leaders because they are the morality of all institutions and associations.

I want to provide a view of ethics that is internal to the role of the educational leader. This means that I need to talk about the goals of education and how moral rules and principles contribute to the realization of these goals. I want schools in which children flourish and learn to flourish. The ethic of school leaders needs to be an ethic for educational institutions that teach children how to flourish in liberal democratic societies.

I have said that one very general way to characterize the role of leaders is that they must create healthy, functional, and good educational communities. To explain this I must talk about how ethics furthers healthy educational communities. I cannot do this with a generic conception of morality. It requires a view of educational communities that are informed by a conception of human flourishing and by how moral principles shape the interactions of the members of educational communities to realize their vision.

When we ask if it is okay to lie to benefit one's students, if students have a right to free speech, and what it means to treat people equally, we are seeking the basis of social cooperation in educational institutions. We should not be satisfied with generic answers to these questions. We should want to understand why truth-telling is important to good education. We should want to understand how the expression and consideration of dissenting views serves educational goals. We should want to understand how equal educational opportunity shapes people to be good citizens in democratic societies. Generic answers will not serve.

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At worst, relying on a kind of generic morality to understand the ethics of leadership can contribute to an attitude toward morality that sees it as a kind of necessary evil or an inconvenience rather than as the basis for fair cooperation in educational institutions.

When we are thinking in this way, what we are really doing is viewing decision making in a certain way. We are saying to ourselves that first we decide what actions are most likely to efficiently serve chosen ends. Once we have chosen a course of action, we then ask ourselves if acting in this way violates any moral rules. The liability of thinking in this way is that we do not ask whether actions we have chosen are consistent with the norms that are appropriate to a community with worthy educational aims. Moreover, we are tempted to cut corners when morality seems inconvenient to the pursuit of worthy ends.

Consider due process. School leaders sometimes chafe at the necessity to follow various rules of due process when they evaluate teachers. They may experience these rules largely as constraints on their authority and judgment. I have heard more than one school leader complain, "I know this teacher is incompetent. Now I have to spend months or years proving it to the satisfaction of lawyers and courts. Time and treasure are wasted, and children are harmed." When we think something like this, compliance becomes legalistic and separated from the educational purposes of due process. And we are tempted to a kind of arrogance—one that says that so long as our hearts are pure and our intentions noble, we should not have to follow rules that prevent us from making those decisions we know to be good ones. We are tempted to cut corners so as to produce good outcomes.

But we can also think of the requirements of due process as serving values that are central and internal to good educational communities—fairness to those evaluated and rationality in decision making. A sense that one will be treated fairly is community building. It helps people bond with the institution, its purposes, and its work. Moreover, being fair models fairness to our students. It is part of an education for citizenship.

Also, the rules of due process can be viewed as a kind of institutionalized rationality—a specification of how to collect evidence, make reliable judgments based on it, and produce good decisions. In evaluation and other personnel matters, good decisions produce good teachers. Moreover, they also model a key educational good—the rule of reason in human affairs. Fairness and rationality are not just constraints on efficient action toward desired ends. They are part of establishing educative communities.

Or consider accountability. You might say that your responsibility is to raise those test scores, and that you will do so by the most efficient means that do not violate some moral principle. You will not lie or cheat, but you will employ the most efficient pedagogical means to improve scores. If drill and kill will do it, then drill and kill it is. That, after all, is what it means to be accountable: to adopt the most efficient means to achieve publicly agreed upon benchmarks of achievement.

In contrast, you might employ the test scores you achieve as one piece of evidence about how your students are doing in realizing an educational

program that you and your school view as having merit because it (ultimately) serves a praiseworthy conception of human flourishing, and you might embark on an inquiry as to how you can improve test scores in educationally productive ways. You can view test scores as a measure of whether you are providing a good education but not as specifying its meaning. Once you say this, you will need to develop a conception of a good education to provide a context for understanding the meaning of test scores.

To take the latter stance toward being accountable in a responsible way is to engage in an ethical inquiry that extends beyond mere morality. It must be informed by a vision of human flourishing. This is what the discussion of the board of education's policy described in our scenario has begun. It is what complaints about drill and kill are ultimately about. Your school needs to explore what lies behind these clichés. While your teachers ultimately need to comply with the board of education's legitimate requirements, they need to do so in a way that serves a praiseworthy and articulate vision of a good education.

In this book, morality is viewed as only part of ethics. This is a book about the ethics of leadership, not about mere morality. Morality must inform us about how to create good educative communities.

LYING FOR GOOD ENDS

I am hopeful that your instinctive reaction to the suggestion that you mislead the school board so as to preserve the program of your school is to reject it out of hand. The appropriate ethical response to this suggestion is to do the best you can to make the case for your school's program and, if you do not succeed, to explain to the people in your school that it is now their obligation to respond as productively as possible to board policy. If this is your instinctive response, you may not feel the need of a justification for it.

Discussing it will be productive nonetheless. As a school leader, you will have many opportunities to engage in deceptive behavior—if not to the board of education, then to teachers, parents, or students. One of the most persistent temptations of leaders is to lie for what they perceive to be a good cause. A discussion of lying may help to put deception in perspective. Even if you are altogether saintly about truth-telling, the discussion of lying that follows will be used to introduce some concepts that will be useful in considering ethical issues in other contexts.

With this in mind, consider some ways to address the issue. (The following discussion owes much to Bok [1999].)

THREE HISTORICAL APPROACHES

One approach to lying emphasizes the concept of equal respect for persons and appeals to an ideal like the golden rule. Is lying wrong? We decide this by noting that we do not want to be lied to. We would not, to paraphrase

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Immanuel Kant (1956), be willing to make lying into a universal rule of human conduct. Moreover, when people lie to us, they treat us as instruments to their ends rather than as persons who are ends in their own right and deserving of respect. On this view, good ends do not justify unethical means. Someone who took this stance might claim, "Lying is simply wrong. Lying to the school board would not be justified even if it might produce good ends." The duty to respect persons means that people have a right not to be lied to, and we have a duty not to lie to them.

Another historical theory focuses its attention on the consequences of our actions. A classical formulation called utilitarianism (e.g., see Bentham & Mill, 1961; Smart & Williams, 1973) says that the best actions are those that produce the greatest good for the greatest number. This theory invites us to consider the range of consequences of an action, determine the desirability of these consequences, and make a judgment as to which set of likely outcomes is most desirable. Here one would object to lying because it generally has bad consequences. Note, however, that this seems to open the door a bit wider to lying when lying produces more good than harm. Indeed, utilitarianism might be construed to require lying under such circumstances.

A third approach, communitarianism (see MacIntyre, 1981), reminds us that we are members of a community. This community has purposes and traditions, as well as members. We owe a debt of loyalty to these purposes, traditions, and members. Lying, from this perspective, is wrong because it erodes trust, undermines the solidarity on which effective communities rely if they are to accomplish their purposes, and is inconsistent with the purposes of educational communities.

In this book, my approach is closest to communitarianism. However, I will not enter into a debate between these and other theories. Resolving such philosophical debates has only modest value so far as practical, ethical decision making is concerned. Moreover, I do not believe that there is such a thing as one right moral theory. Moral theories typically attempt to systematize and explain our moral experience and put it on a firm, rational basis. They may also illuminate it by showing us more clearly what is involved in our decisions. However, moral theories that claim there is one central moral good, such as respect, utility, or community, may also distort moral experience.

Hence, in this book, I will not often appeal to the kinds of systematic theories that philosophers have developed to discuss practical ethical problems. I will, however, sometimes call attention to ethical ideals that capture what these theories take to be central to ethical decision making. In what I have just stated, we can see three ideals at work: respect for persons, benefit maximization, and community. The first invites us to view others as ends in themselves and entitled to equal respect, the second to maximize good outcomes, and the third to create and sustain healthy communities. Bringing these ideals to bear on issues is quite central to ethical decision-making. We can illustrate these ideals by seeing how they apply to lying.

LYING AND EQUAL RESPECT

Consider some questions suggested by the ideal of equal respect. You might quite reasonably view being lied to as a sign that you are not respected. Those who lie to you treat you as a means to their ends. Reverse your role with someone on the board of education. Would you be willing to be lied to under these circumstances? As a school board member, you would have a public responsibility for the welfare of all the children in the schools of your district. You would be trying to make judgments about effective policies that are in the best interest of all. You would need accurate information about the success of these policies. You would find it hard to succeed in your position were the principals in your district regularly to undermine your authority when they disagreed with your judgments. If you put yourself in the position of a board member, it is unlikely that you would be impressed with the argument that lying served good ends.

LYING AND BENEFIT MAXIMIZATION

Suppose that we apply the ideal of benefit maximization to the issue of lying to the school board. We are asked to consider whether lying might not be a good thing because it protects what all (in your school) agree is a good program from board policies that most (in your school) consider unwise. What are the consequences? Suppose that it is true that the children in your school will be better off if you mislead the board; does that decide the matter? There may be other consequences. For example, you must consider the effects of your behavior not only on the children in your school, but on the children in other schools. Perhaps your disregard for board policy will contribute to a climate in which other principals (perhaps less enlightened and more self-serving than yourself) will feel entitled to ignore board policy when they feel it is useful. You may weaken the board's authority with the result that the children in other schools are harmed because the board is unable to secure compliance with even sound policy.

Also consider that the board of education is an elected body; its authority is democratic authority, the authority of the people. Democratic authority does not exist if citizens decide that they will obey it only when they believe it is correct. When those who are employed to do the will of an elected body decide that they are free to substitute their judgment for that of the legislature should they deem it to be wrong, they erode the authority of the elected representatives of the people. Moreover, if the board cannot count on its principals to carry out its policies, it may need to generate more elaborate enforcement mechanisms. The district's organization may become more hierarchical, more rule-governed, and less collegial.

LYING AND COMMUNITY

Finally, consider the implications of your deception for your own school. Your willingness to lie to the board may ultimately erode the climate of trust in your school and its sense of community. While your authority in your school formally consists of the fact that you have been appointed to the role of principal, and that role carries with it certain powers, your ability to exercise this authority successfully depends on the fact that those who work under you trust your integrity and judgment. You should not be surprised if your willingness to lie to the board, even on the behalf of people in your school, is taken by those who work under you as a sign that you may also be willing to lie to them when you think it convenient.

Lies by public employees commonly have effects of this sort. When school leaders are not trusted by other members of the school community, the community changes. It becomes harder to achieve decisions by open discussion. People look out for their own interests rather than those of the school and its children. Your moral authority is eroded, and you will need to rely more on the formal authority that comes with your position and your ability to reward people for compliance. Behavior in the school becomes more rule-governed and bureaucratic and less purpose-driven and consensual. Solidarity is broken, and community eroded.

Your school community is an educational community. Truth-telling is essential to education. It is essential to the assessment of evidence. Not every fact can be directly checked by everyone to whom it is presented. Productive argument cannot proceed unless we trust the integrity of those with whom we argue. Teachers cannot teach unless their students believe that they are truthful. Truth-telling is essential to the educational process. Learning cannot occur where there is not confidence in the integrity of those who teach.

School leaders are not just administrators charged with the efficient operation of their schools. They are, in a sense, elders. An *elder* is someone whose authority rests on the fact that he or she exemplifies the virtues essential to the community. We expect clergy not only to be good preachers, but to be spiritual people. Similarly, we should expect that school leaders will exhibit those characteristics that are central to the educational process. These include respect for evidence and argument, and, perhaps above all, integrity and truth-telling. The school leader is the chief tone-setter and role model for the school. School leaders need to exemplify the virtues required by educational institutions.

Respect for persons and benefit maximization are bound up with the emphasis on truth-telling as essential to educational communities. Students are not respected if they are lied to not only because we would not wish to be lied to were we in their place, but because they cannot learn apart from an environment in which truth-telling is taken for granted. In a

school where truth is not taken for granted and trust does not prevail, children are less likely to mature into the people we hope they will become—people who are able to reason and discuss. Lying has bad consequences because ultimately it is miseducative.

TRUST AND COMMUNITY

Lying erodes trust. Why is trust so important? (See Baier [1995].) Trust is important because it is a condition of community, and a sense of community is essential to good education. To see why trust is important, we need to consider why communities are important.

Communities exist to enable cooperation aimed at the achievement of certain shared goods. Political communities, for example, aim at justice and the common good. Religious communities may aim at such goods as faith, instruction of the young, worship, or righteousness. Intellectual communities aim at research, the pursuit of truth, and educating new members.

In addition to the goods that communities exist to pursue, they often produce other goods that are important to their members. A sense of belonging is one such good. Friendship is another.

One feature of community that is especially important to consider is that in communities, cooperation is more central than competition. This must be said carefully, so that it is not a mere platitude. Competition is a part of life and will be as long as resources are scarce. Moreover, in many contexts, competition is a virtue since it often elicits productivity and efficiency. Indeed, when competition is structured by shared understandings about its purposes and rules, it is a form of cooperation.

What makes communities different from other associations is not that competition is absent but that it is secondary. Consider orchestras or football teams. Members of orchestras compete for chairs and solos, and members of football teams for playing time. However, it is also important to note that orchestras and football teams must succeed or fail as a whole. Orchestras perform well or not as a unit; football teams can only win or lose as a team. Also, the excellence of each community member contributes to the excellence of the whole. If I am a violinist in an orchestra, my goal is that the orchestra should play well. This goal is enhanced if the oboist plays well. The oboist's success does not diminish my success if I identify this with the orchestra's playing well—it contributes to it.

This is also often true of intellectual and educational communities. If the goal is to advance knowledge through teaching or inquiry, the success of each contributes to the success of all. It is, for example, to my advantage as a scholar to have other able scholars in my department. I can learn from them, and they from me. In good academic departments, able scholars make one another better. The same thing is true in good classrooms and

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schools. When students learn with and from one another, the success of each can contribute to the success of all. When teachers are members of learning communities, what one teacher learns is a resource for others, and one teacher's success contributes to the advancement of goals shared by all.

Solidarity is essential to the functioning of healthy communities because solidarity is the basis of cooperation. Solidarity involves a commitment to the community's goals and to the members of the community. If members of the orchestra neither care about playing well nor value one another as members, they are unlikely to work or play well together.

Trust is essential, because when trust disappears, solidarity is difficult to maintain. Here, trust means something specific. When we trust other members of a community, it is not just that we believe they have such virtues as honesty or integrity. What we have confidence in is that they, like ourselves, are motivated by the goals of the community and by loyalty to its members. We trust them because we believe that they share our concerns. They want what we want. They, like ourselves, will subordinate personal goals to shared collective ones when they conflict.

The preceding suggests another reason why educators need to strive for clarity about the purposes a good education serves. Trust relies on the integrity of members of a community. But it also relies on the belief that members of a community are committed to its purposes. If they are to be so committed, they must understand what these purposes are.

Lying undermines community because it dissolves trust and, hence, solidarity. Lying signifies a failure of personal integrity. But it also signals the loss of commitment to the purposes of the community. When people lie, we can no longer be confident that they want what we want. Lying signifies that they are motivated by their own private and personal desires; hence, not by the goals of the community.

These considerations do not, I believe, show that it is never wrong to lie. There are, no doubt, cases of an extreme sort where lying is justified. I would not argue, for example, that in a just war we must not deceive our enemies or that we may not deceive people who propose to commit murder about the location of their victims. There may also be cases of a simpler sort (white lies) where lying is a simple kindness.

However, I think my arguments do strongly suggest that lying is unlikely to be a morally acceptable response in most of those cases where leaders are likely to be tempted to lie. Often when we believe that we are lying to achieve worthy goals, we will discover that we have failed to consider all of the relevant consequences, that we would have a different view were our roles exchanged with those to whom we are lying, and that we are squandering trust and eroding community. Honesty is the best policy almost all of the time. Leadership requires, before all else, integrity and a manifest commitment to the community's purposes. Lying abandons both.

CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Ethics concerns the question, How shall we live well together? When we emphasize this as the central question, we are led to interpret the questions, What is good? and What is right? as questions about the nature of good communities. Good communities have worthy aims and a fair basis of cooperation. The role of the educational leader is to create good educational communities.

In what follows, I will trace this concern for good communities through six chapters. A brief description of each may help you to see how each contributes to understanding good educational communities.

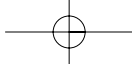
In Chapter 2, I discuss the goals of education. I argue for four broad goals: students should become economically competent, become good citizens and moral people, be capable of an examined life, and discover ideas, activities, and relationships that enrich their lives. I suggest that these goals are big-tented and can serve as the goals of public schools.

Chapter 3 discusses two essential freedoms: intellectual and religious liberty. Here I am interested in discussing their role in creating good educational communities. I argue that the goals of education described in this chapter require that we create intellectual communities in our schools where free and open debate is cherished and protected. I also claim that we must give provisional authority to certain ideas because they are essential tools of thought. Finally, emphasizing the current debate about creationism and intelligent design, I discuss freedom of conscience and religious liberty and show why religious ideas cannot be given provisional authority in public schools.

In Chapter 4, I discuss equality of opportunity, resource allocation, and multicultural community. I argue that we are more likely to achieve equality of opportunity if our schools are able to achieve a sense of themselves as communities in which "we are all in this together," where the success of each is seen as contributing to the betterment of all, and where the weakest and most vulnerable are cared for.

In Chapter 5, I discuss the connections between the concepts of democracy, community, and accountability. I pay special attention to the conflict between different norms of legitimate authority and how these generate role conflicts for leaders with respect to accountability. I argue that accountability is not merely a matter of raising test scores. Leaders are accountable to professional standards and ideas and to members of the local community as well.

Chapter 6 discusses the ethics of decision making. I argue that there is an important distinction to be drawn between data- and evidence-driven decision making, and I argue for the latter. I also argue that a core idea for good educational organizations is that they need to institutionalize evidence-driven decision making in a way that makes it an ongoing collective



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responsibility. This chapter also connects the idea of due process to the idea of evidence-based decision making.

In Chapter 7, I turn explicitly to the ethics of accountability. There I argue that accountability has the potential to do good and to do harm. One of the things that makes a difference between doing good and doing harm is the existence of schools that are collectively reflective about the meaning of a good education and about how to provide it. Schools that are able to be collectively reflective about these things will be able not only to succeed, but to employ accountability measures to improve. Schools that are not collectively reflective are likely to succumb to the potential evils of accountability: gaming, goal erosion, and motivational displacement.

