

Contemporary Canadian and Quebec Theatre as an Instructional Medium  
for Moral Pedagogy

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Contemporary Canadian and Quebec Theatre As An Instructional Medium For Moral Pedagogy**

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Dramatic art is a potent instructional medium for developing and refining moral consciousness and for enhancing sensitive discrimination and reflection of those interrelated levels of moral choice, moral judgment and moral conduct. As a theatrical genre, most Canadian and Quebec theatre is valuable for exposing students to the cultural plurality of moral agency, and for generating discussion of viable and desirable forms of moral coexistence within a secular society.

By relying on three separate fields of study, those of moral education, theatre in education, and contemporary Canadian and Quebec theatre, this study illustrates a philosophical approach to moral pedagogy that relies on dramatic art to engage critical reflection upon moral choice and moral conduct. In light of the scarcity of existing theoretical paradigms, this study examines the process by which dramatized plays can provide a vicarious experiential basis for assessing valid and acceptable moral orientations.

A discussion is presented of the aesthetic principles of dramatic art that can stimulate intuitive reception, provoke emotional identification, and engage imaginative impersonation with the moral conflicts and dilemmas examined by a dramatized play. In addition, the study examines how a refined moral

consciousness can be cultivated through multiple aesthetic encounters, through which the logic of the moral imagination can be engaged for envisaging a more caring, humane, and equitable social coexistence.

The study also demonstrates how contemporary Canadian and Quebec theatre, by exploring the circumstantial factors, the multiple contextual elements, and the emotional and spiritual effects of morally divisive situations, can enhance awareness of a relational orientation for moral judgment. Textual analyses of a select corpus of Canadian and Quebec plays define and discuss the moral issues and situations that can be assessed through this medium. The choice of plays provides examples of the quality of dramatic treatment offered with regard to morally problematic situations.

In conclusion, instructional suggestions for implementing this creative, holistic approach to moral pedagogy are provided. These stem from experientially based philosophies of education, from Noddings' (1988, 1992) recommendations for creating non-judgmental, supportive and caring learning environments, and from Davis's (1988) pedagogical model for preparing a more informed student audience to attend the performances of plays. Suggestions are presented for future research.



## Résumé

### Un Examen du Rôle Éducatif du Théâtre Contemporain Québécois et Canadien, dans le Domaine de la Pédagogie Morale

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L'art dramatique est un outil éducatif appréciable dans le développement et l'affinement de la conscience morale. Il se révèle important également, comme outil pour l'amélioration de la subtilité dans la discrimination et dans la réflexion sur le croisement entre le choix moral, le jugement et le comportement moraux. Le théâtre canadien et québécois en tant que genre dramatique permet à la fois, d'ouvrir aux étudiant-e-s la dimension pluri-culturelle de la moralité, et aussi de faciliter les échanges au sujet des formes acceptables et concevables de la coexistence morale dans une société laïque.

À l'appui de trois domaines distincts d'études, ceux, de l'éducation morale, du théâtre dans l'enseignement et de l'art dramatique québécois et canadien, ce travail démontre une approche philosophique à la pédagogie morale qui considère que l'art dramatique a un rôle important à jouer pour faciliter une réflexion critique sur les questions de choix et de comportements moraux. Peu de paradigmes théoriques existent à ce niveau de questionnement, c'est alors, que cette étude regard le processus par lequel des oeuvres dramatiques servent de modèles expérientiels vicariants pour l'évaluation de la légitimité et de l'acceptabilité

d'orientations morales

L'étude examine les principes de l'esthétique de la dramaturgie qui stimulent une réception intuitive face à, et qui provoquent une identification émotive et une personification imaginative par rapport aux conflits et aux dilemmes à caractère moral qui sont abordés dans une pièce de théâtre. Nous examinons également, comment éduquer une conscience morale par le moyen de multiples rencontres d'ordre esthétique, pour que la logique de l'imaginaire morale puisse agir comme moteur d'une co-existence à caractère plus humaine, plus compatissante et plus équitable

L'étude démontre par ailleurs, comment d'un côté, le théâtre québécois et canadien traite non seulement les facteurs environnants et les divers éléments contextuels, mais qu'il relève aussi, les conséquences émotives et spirituelles qui sont engendrées par les divisions d'ordre moral, ce qui contribue de l'autre côté à la prise de conscience de la place de l'orientation relationnelle dans le domaine du jugement moral. L'exégèse des pièces de théâtre, choisies parmi les corpus des oeuvres québécoises et canadiennes, encadre la discussion des questions et des situations morales susceptibles d'être analysées par le moyen de l'art dramatique. Le choix des pièces fournit des exemples saillants de la qualité du traitement dramatique au niveau de la problématique des questions morales.

En guise de conclusion, nous proposons des suggestions concrètes pour la mise en oeuvre de cette approche holistique dans le domaine de la pédagogie morale. Celles-ci s'inspirent des courants de pensée philosophiques existentielles

ainsi que pragmatiques dans le domaine de l'éducation. Nous nous inspirons aussi de Nodding (1988, 1992), qui suggère la création de milieux éducatifs attentifs et stimulants, et libres de jugements de valeurs, ainsi que de Davis (1988), qui propose un modèle pédagogique qui forme des étudiant-e-s pour devenir des spectateurs-trices averti-e-s face aux représentations théâtrales. Nous présentons aussi, des recommandations de sujets subséquentes de recherches

## **Dedications**

This thesis is dedicated to those members of my immediate family, my close friends and my colleagues, who have encouraged me to persevere with the fulfilment of my life goals and objectives in spite of the obstacles that I have had to face. To all of you, thank you for your unrelenting support and inspiration.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

### 1.1. Background to the Problem.

According to Lickona (1991), "When much of society came to think of morality as being in flux, relative to the individual, situationally variable, and essentially private, public schools retreated from their once central role as moral educators." (p. 8) In culturally pluralistic societies such as Canada or Quebec, the debate regarding the institutionalization of moral pedagogy in a non-partisan, non-sectarian and non-denominational manner often focusses on the pedagogical viability and validity of this curriculum subject. The organic multicultural matrix of a secular society, such as that of Canada, reflects a social fabric distinguished by divergent and disparate moral perspectives, because of which there prevails a severe disapproval of any form of moral inculcation and moral indoctrination (Jarrett, 1991; Lickona, 1991, Natale & Wilson, 1991; Wilson, 1990). As Paul (1988) argues in his article concerning the teaching of ethics without indoctrination:

Indeed, since one of our most fundamental responsibilities as educators is to educate rather than to indoctrinate our students, to help them cultivate skills, insights, knowledge, and traits of mind and character that transcend narrow party and religious affiliations and help them to think beyond biased representations of the world, we must put special safeguards into moral education that prevent indoctrination. (p. 11)

Contemporary attitudes towards any form of moral instruction are often characterized by a cynical contempt for the need to educate about fundamental



humanistic and/or spiritual moral values and principles. May (1983) observes that:

We live in a sceptical age. Anyone who therefore claims certainty for himself, whether concerning his religion or his politics or his moral and aesthetic values, is immediately viewed with suspicion...It seems it does not do to be positive in these matters any more. We should be sure only about our scepticism (p. 64).

In the wake of a post-modern fascination with critical theory and critical pedagogy, advocating the persistent need to deconstruct oppressive and disempowering power structures and cultural institutions, deference is being paid to certain seminal philosophical questions regarding moral coexistence within a secular society.

Similarly, a prevailing consciousness amongst most academics seems to regard critical pedagogy as that long-awaited panacea that will enable human beings to live in a more just, equitable, and humane society. Writing on the need to re-conceptualize traditional paradigms of educational theory as distinct forms of social theory, Giroux (1985) argues that critical pedagogy becomes:

...a political discourse that emerges from and characterizes an expression of struggle over what forms of authority, orders of representation, forms of moral regulation, and versions of the past and future should be legitimated, and debated within specific pedagogical sites. (p. 258)

In light of the 'ethos of free play' that reflects most forms of deconstructive thinking,

Edmundson (1988) suggests that the ethical ideal of critical thought and deliberation should aim to unbind and radically revise all consciously and unconsciously sustained forms of moral authority and moral truth (pp. 632-633). By doing so, deconstructionist thinkers such as Derrida affirm that "...a form of liberated reason, one not inhabited and directed by the ghosts of figures of patriarchal authority will be enough to direct life ethically after this projected unbinding has taken place." (p. 634)

Disengaged from conventional humanistic and metaphysical moral values and principles, most deconstructionist scholars assume that in a social and epistemological climate of 'free play,' human beings will each be able to redefine and recreate themselves as moral persons. Revisions of current curricular objectives to develop and to refine critical minds for political reform and for multicultural and intercultural acceptance, neglect to address the value of scholarly deliberations of viable moral imperatives for interpersonal conduct within a secular society. Consequently, adherents of critical pedagogy argue that since all moral values and principles are relative, and there can be no rational criteria and standards by which a society collectively assesses and evaluates interpersonal, communal and social interactions, moral instruction need not be addressed by the revised curricula. Appealing to moral relativism as a necessary precondition for social renewal, proponents of critical pedagogy often assume that by educating about the individualistic and subjective nature of moral choice and moral conduct, dated moral ideals and puritanical moral dogmas will be spontaneously abandoned

for a more reformed vision of moral coexistence.

A central weakness with this kind of reasoning is the unwillingness to realize that regardless of how competent one is in exposing socially-constructed power structures, individuals often need a solid value base from which to guide and monitor their social coexistence. Moral development usually does not occur within a vacuum, and each distinct moral perspective tends to evolve and to solidify in relation to alternative, competing and conflicting views of appropriate and desirable forms of moral judgment and conduct. If moral relativists assume that all moral values and principles are equally valid and indisputable, does that necessarily imply that all forms of moral judgment and moral behaviour are equally viable and desirable within the context of a culturally pluralistic society? Moreover, if there are no standards and criteria by which competing moral perspectives and conflicting moral judgments can be critically assessed, does it necessarily follow that within a secular society, moral agents should not be held accountable and responsible for their moral choices?

Similarly, the process by which moral reform can be achieved within the demands of specific social and cultural contexts is often not addressed by proponents of social theory and critical pedagogy. Critical awareness and deliberation does not necessarily imply the capacity for moral sensitivity and moral empathy, two essential cognitive and affective capabilities for envisaging and eventually restructuring a more caring, responsive, just and equitable social order (Gilligan, 1982, 1988; Maguire, 1991; Noddings, 1984). As Jarrett (1991) observes

on the merits of moral pedagogy, "...the question is whether morality must be seen as necessarily tyrannical, narrowly partisan, and therefore kept as much out of the picture as possible. Or can the image of morality be refurbished?" (p. 42)

Moral relativism provides an intellectual release from any serious deliberation about acceptable forms of moral conduct between individual persons, and about guiding moral principles for reforming social coexistence; but can such a perspective ensure the eventual creation of an egalitarian and equitable society? Once one disregards moral discourse, and therefore moral pedagogy, as important complements to critical thought with which socially constructed power structures can be revised, is the establishment of a supportive and egalitarian society anything more than an illusion of post-modern critical thinking?

In answer to revisionist demands for a more neutral approach to moral pedagogy, schools have either chosen to abandon any form of moral instruction or have opted to integrate a series of pedagogical models that focus on developing formal processes of individual moral reflection and judgment (Lickona, 1991; Sankar, 1992; Wilson, 1991) According to Moran (1987), when moral education is assigned to schools

the schoolteacher is warned against trying to teach morality [Students] are thought to have an inbuilt impetus toward thinking in a moral way. Thus, the schoolteacher's job is to devise techniques and exercises to unblock this natural development. (p. 147)

Relying on the increasing reality of a culturally pluralistic social order,

schools have attempted to accommodate the need for moral education by acknowledging the diversity of moral perspectives. The character of moral education has been transformed to endorse an individualistic process of moral preference with little regard for cultivating analytical and critical assessments of possible standards for moral consistency. Wilson (1990) observes that

If one tries to persuade...educators that there is a set of attributes, demanded by reason, that anyone seriously concerned with 'morality' ought to have and ought to encourage pupils to have, one rapidly comes to appreciate the strength and nature of resistance to any such idea (p 15)

A popular and prevailing pedagogical approach for moral education is that of values clarification, deriving from the most seminal principles of existentialist philosophy and humanistic psychology that stress the value of personal autonomy and individual self-fulfilment (Elias, 1989, Spiecker, 1988). According to this theoretical paradigm, moral pedagogy should focus on enabling students to discover and to define a value framework through which they gradually develop an individual moral identity. An important criticism often levelled against this pedagogical approach is that of a blatant disregard of any rational deliberation of logical criteria and standards by which moral values and principles can be critically and substantially assessed (Jarrett, 1991, Lickona, 1991, Spiecker, 1988)

However, the prevailing appeal of this pedagogical model only serves to reinforce an implicit relativistic attitude endemic to most courses in moral education, as educators avoid explaining a possible foundational content for

principled behaviours. According to Day (1983):

A variegated culture is commended because it displays a wide range of life-styles and preferences. But when so much is clearly a matter of taste, it is not surprising if the idea gains ground that beliefs, values and commitments are similarly a matter of taste. All is culturally conditioned.

(p. 79)

In order to avoid charges of indoctrinating ethnocentric and sectarian moral rules and ideals, schools often aim to facilitate the process of individual moral choice, at the expense of a more substantial view of moral reasoning, judgment and responsibility.

Concurrently, a growing social consensus continues to argue that there is a need to educate students regarding moral empathy, sensitive discrimination, and responsible moral judgment (French, 1990; Jackson, Boostrom, Hansen, 1991; Lickona, 1991). Indeed, a culturally pluralistic society would require an informed and critical citizenry that can work for its preservation. Consequently, schools need to reconsider their pedagogical responsibilities for developing specific moral dispositions and for educating about guiding moral principles for establishing a more just, caring, and humane social coexistence. As French asserts (1990), moral pedagogy "...preparera ainsi des agents moraux qui ne souffrent pas de cécité morale, sont moralement sensible et compatissants et font un effort pour saisir les différentes facettes de chaque situation morale bien concrète." (p. 167) Similarly, Sankar (1992) observes that, "Educators should become more sensitive

to the possibility of consensus on the desirability of both becoming aware of shared values and working on increasing and deepening them " (p 169)

Similarly, in light of the prevailing moral confusion and 'malaise' (Taylor, 1991) of most secular societies, there is a growing need for discriminating moral assessment and evaluation of those depersonalizing and objectifying moral views that often degrade human life at the expense of a more equitable and more just communal existence. Such toxic, self-serving values, often characterize the moral subjectivism of modern and post-modern 'cultures of narcissism' (1991, p 11), that are endemic to most secular societies. In arguing for a re-conceptualization of moral individualism to include the possibility of a 'moral ideal,' Taylor observes that "(t)he individualism of anomie and breakdown of course has no social ethic attached to it; but individualism as a moral principle or ideal must offer some view on how the individual should live with others." (p 45) Assuming that each generation of students can become agents for social change and renewal, and that, as proponents of critical pedagogy would strongly assert, schooling should provide students with the necessary skills and abilities to reconstruct a more just society, must they not be exposed to the moral indifference generated by a prevailingly confused moral consciousness?

Moreover, moral confusion often results when cultural plurality is assumed to be synonymous with moral relativism. Cultural plurality is indeed the norm of our Western secular societies, yet does that necessarily imply moral relativism? For Day (1983), the common 'pluralist myth' of prizing all forms of diversity seems

to neglect the possibility that not every value position and belief has equal moral validity and worth (p. 81). The justification of rational and logical disagreement of competing moral perspectives is for Day a significant principle of moral pluralism. Consequently, he argues that:

...the preservation of disagreement takes the debate out of the realm of pure picture preferences or matters of taste. The fact that people can *disagree at all* implies criteria to which all may make reference.

This is the very opposite of the crude relativism popularly supposed to be entailed by pluralism. Relativism is not a necessary correlate of pluralism. (Day, 1983, p. 84)

Extreme moral relativism invites moral apathy, leaving few possibilities for any conscious attempts at envisaging the potential for growth and development in responsible and responsive actions between individual persons and their respective communities. (Maguire, 1978, 1991; Moran, 1987).

In light of the above, how does moral relativism aim to reconcile the mutual interdependence of self and other, a necessary condition for moral development, when actions are executed with little regard for their possible consequences? If superfluous whims condition and guide moral interactions between human beings, can a relativistic philosophical framework provide the necessary justification and support for a more culturally validating and accepting social coexistence? Instead of regarding the fear of possible moral indoctrination as pedagogically problematic, as tends to be the common perception of a 'post-modern' moral consciousness,



moral pedagogy may very well provide the forum and the stimulation to discover those moral principles and moral orientations that can help to produce a more humane and just citizenry. According to Hirst (1974), "Diversity can be taken to imply a certain relativity in particular moral judgments, but that of itself would be compatible, not only with the possibility of an objective basis for morality, but even with a universally accepted objective code." (p 42)

In fact, only through dialogue and discussion is one able to appreciate the basic assumptions underlying different moral perspectives that have attempted to ensure just, humane, and caring social organizations (Johnson, 1993, Noddings, 1988, 1991; Paul, 1988). Moreover, through dialogue moral perspectives can be critically evaluated and rationally assessed, encouraging the re-evaluation of dated norms and moral ideals in order to recreate moral consciousness and practice. As Day (1983) observes:

...acceptance of common values, whether they have to do with procedure, culture, rationality or morality, does not exclude the possibility of wanting change nor does it suggest that all who work within the consensus wholeheartedly support every part of it. That is partly what is meant by connecting consensus with pluralism (p 86)

In a culturally diverse society, there is an important need for morally sensitive individuals who can confidently engage the process of moral evaluation, in order to reconsider certain basic assumptions of moral coexistence. As Johnson (1993) affirms, "What is needed is a strategy that fosters ongoing criticism, self-reflection,

and dialogue with competing views." (p. 231)

Moral pedagogy is a significant subject area concerned with generating discussion and debate of viable and desirable forms of moral coexistence between individual persons and their respective communities within a culturally pluralistic society. The current study will suggest an alternative interdisciplinary approach to moral pedagogy, relying on dramatic art as a potent medium for extending moral consciousness and for engaging critical reflection and sensitive discussion of valid forms of moral judgment and moral conduct within a secular society.

## 1.2. Defining the Fields of Study and Research.

Proposing an interdisciplinary model for a specific pedagogical area often necessitates a clear delineation of those hybrid theoretical assumptions that are relevant to its formulation. The current study draws on three seemingly disparate, yet inter-related areas of pedagogy: moral education, theatre in education, and contemporary Canadian and Quebec theatre. Integrating these three fields of study and research has involved a re-conceptualization and redefinition of prevailing perspectives and common misconceptions regarding these areas of pedagogy. To formulate the proposed methodology, the author has borrowed several conceptual propositions from each field of study, that will be defined below.

Instead of moral education, 'moral pedagogy' will refer to that pedagogical area that aims to cultivate moral consciousness and moral reasoning, as well as to refine moral empathy and sensitivity in students. Moral pedagogy will be used to suggest a multi-levelled process that involves generating moral empathy and

responsive care, stimulating and engaging individual moral reflection, and cultivating relational values and principles. Unlike certain paradigms of moral education that advocate moral indoctrination as a terminal pedagogical objective, for this study 'moral pedagogy' signifies a more holistic, recreative, facilitating and interactive approach to the study of ethics and of morality.

In addition, the philosophical paradigm of relational ethics (Gilligan, 1988, Maguire, 1978, 1991; Noddings 1984; 1992), that advocates a contextual approach to moral inquiry, will provide the theoretical foundation for assessing the dynamic nature of moral agency and the situational elements of moral action. Moreover, for this study, Maguire's (1991) definition of 'moral,' as "all judgments of interpersonal conduct that befit and do not befit persons as persons" (p 8), will provide a conceptual definition for assessing those life-promoting and relationally responsible forms of moral judgment and moral conduct. Finally, Noddings' (1988; 1992) and Gilligan's (1988) contentions for creating supportive, non-judgemental, and responsive learning environments, will provide the educational context within which to situate a more creative approach to the study of ethics and of morality. It will be argued that such supportive learning environments can allow for multiple instructional activities that promote personal moral self-reflections and enable group discussions of viable and acceptable forms of moral coexistence within a pluralistic society.

As an alternative to the more participatory, and quite common, paradigm of developmental drama, that encourages creative self-expression through such

diverse dramatic forms as spontaneous, non-scripted improvisations and role-plays, 'theatre in education' will refer to that pedagogical area that relies on dramatic art as an effective instructional medium. Borrowing from Shank (1969), 'dramatic art' will refer to the distinguishing production and performance conventions by which a dramatic text is presented to a group of spectators, and through which an audience can be imaginatively engaged in an aesthetic encounter with the fictional 'world' of a play. Moreover, aesthetic encounters between audience and stage (Beckerman, 1990; Brook, 1993; Wilshire, 1982) will be defined in relation to the aesthetic principles of affective response and imaginative reception by which an audience often relates to professionally staged plays.

Thus, the potency with which a dramatized play can significantly disturb and challenge most preconceptions of those intricate levels of moral agency, will be illustrated. In this respect, it will be suggested that such a vicarious experiential context can broaden perception of the complex processes of moral choice and moral behaviour, enabling a more perceptive assessment of situationally determined moral conduct

Similarly, it should be clarified initially that theatre in education will not pertain to that form of dramatic expression that involves student ventures in play-production and performance (Hornbrook, 1991; Jackson, 1993; Warren, 1991). In addition, theatre in education will not refer to that form of educational theatre that relies on professionally staged productions of plays within schools, that have been

tailored to address social issues and themes that concern adolescents and school-age children (Jackson, 1992). A separate research study would be required to do justice to this form of dramatic expression. For this study, theatre in education will pertain to a pedagogical approach that emphasizes the instructional potential of live theatre, and that promotes the consistent exposure of secondary and college students to theatrical events as a valuable learning experience.

Finally, contemporary Canadian and Quebec theatre will refer to that artistic form through which fictional and concrete existential conflicts and dilemmas of moral significance are presented for audience engagement, contemplation and deliberation. Although there are multiple genres and styles of Canadian and Quebec plays that have been produced in the time period concerning this study, (i.e. 1968 to the present), references will only be made to those plays that can be classified under the standard categories of 'realistic' theatre. Thus, throughout this research project, a number of references are made to a collection of Canadian and Quebec plays that present well-defined characters and intricate plots that expose and examine several distinct forms of moral agency. By presenting moral dilemmas and interpersonal conflicts between fictional characters, plays such as these can stimulate further discussion and reflection of those intricate levels of moral choice and moral conduct.

In addition, for this study, a collection of plays, written by indigenous playwrights, both men and women, of diverse cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds, will provide a material source for the kinds of moral and social issues

being explored in this theatre. This study will also incorporate a discussion of the moral implications that can be culled from these dramatic texts, for they often reveal the plurality of moral values as culturally determined systems of thought that can influence moral conduct and behaviour.

Although seemingly unrelated, this project will illustrate how these three fields of study can contribute to the formulation of an alternative philosophical approach to moral pedagogy. Because of the prevailing neglect of existing paradigms of moral education to develop relational values and principles and to engage the moral imagination (Johnson, 1993), this study will illustrate a methodology for cultivating a more perceptive, discriminating and critical approach to the study of moral agency. In addition, it will be argued that a moral pedagogy that relies on the interactive nature of dramatic art to enhance moral empathy and to broaden moral consciousness can foster subsequent deliberations of dramatized forms of moral judgment and moral conduct within a supportive and responsive learning environment. An outline of this theoretical approach will present a more holistic process for analyzing and discussing those intricate levels of moral choice and moral conduct, aiming to engage both personal moral self-reflections and critical deliberations of valid forms of moral coexistence within a culturally pluralistic society.

### Literature Review

#### 1.3. Some Prevailing Philosophical Paradigms for Moral Pedagogy.

A survey of the dominant theoretical frameworks for moral education often

reveals a prevailing dichotomy between those that support the systematic development of formal operations of moral judgment and deliberation, and those that advocate cultivating moral character and appropriate forms of moral conduct (Ellrod, 1986, p. 8). As is the case with Lawrence Kohlberg's (1984) moral taxonomy, often the paradigmatic presuppositions of these distinct, yet related, models for moral education are unable to reconcile distinct categories and classifications of moral development, with logical standards and criteria by which one can learn to assess moral behaviour.

The focus of a particular model may be on the empirical stages of moral development, with little consideration of those cognitive and affective processes that influence moral choice. Other paradigms often stress the value of logical thought and rational deliberation for defining standard normative values and principles, without recognizing and acknowledging the spiritual and emotional dimensions of moral conduct. Still other models underscore the pedagogical merits of developing specific character virtues and moral excellences for refined forms of moral conduct.

An exhaustive treatment of the historical development of Western models of moral education is beyond the scope of this chapter. The four philosophical paradigms that have been selected for this study were chosen because of their impact in educational theory for stimulating a re-assessment of the pedagogical objectives for moral education. The following is a review of the central theoretical assumptions concerning the stages of moral development and the process of

cultivating moral judgment as defined by four prevalent paradigms for moral education: the traditional model of character formation, the values-clarification model, the cognitive-developmental model, and the cognitive analytical model (Ellrod, 1986, p. 10)<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the discussion will critically assess several commonly perceived deficiencies in each approach to moral education.

Although it is not the intent of this discussion to provide an exhaustive comparative analysis among these four paradigms and a relational model for moral pedagogy, throughout this review references will be made to some of the central differences between these distinct theoretical perspectives for moral pedagogy. A detailed discussion of the seminal principles of a relational approach to moral pedagogy is presented in Chapter III. By doing so, the theoretical context will be set for illustrating an alternative approach to moral pedagogy that relies on dramatic art to enhance moral consciousness, so that students can engage in subsequent discussions of viable forms of moral coexistence within a secular society.

Historically, institutionalized education operated on the classical assumptions that pedagogy should develop intellectual skills and impart subject

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A substantial body of scholarly essays and treatises exists that critically examines and assesses the pedagogical merits of each philosophical paradigm discussed in the above literature review. For a more detailed chronicle of the historical evolution of this pedagogical field of study, the reader may consult: J. L. Elias (1989). Moral Education: Secular and Religious. Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co.; J. L. Garrett (1991). The Teaching of Values: Caring and Appreciation. New York: Routledge.; Frederick E. & G. McLean (Eds.). (1986). Act and Agent: Philosophical Foundations for Moral Education and Character Development. Lanham: University Press of America.



matter, while attempting to inculcate the cultural ethos of a distinct social order (Elias, 1989, p. 19) As a microcosmic extension of socially sanctioned and culturally defined networks of foundational moral principles and beliefs, the school was regarded as a vital agent for social enculturation and moral indoctrination. For Durkheim, "The morally educated person is one who has learned to live in a way that reflects a sense and a practice of duty to a set of social ideals and norms." (Chazan, 1985, p. 21)

Grounded in the classical views of Aristotelian ethics, and in the moral codes of the Judeo-Christian ethical tradition, often regarded as two of the most significant moral philosophies that have influenced Western thought, (Ellrod, 1986, pp. 30-31), the traditional model for moral education was concerned with transmitting vital moral truths and principles for individual and social coexistence. Wynne (1986) asserts in assessing the pedagogical values of 'the great tradition' of character formation, "The tradition was concerned with good habits of conduct as contrasted with moral concepts and moral rationales " (p. 6)

According to the paradigmatic assumptions of this approach for character development and for cultivating the capacity for principled moral judgments, moral excellences or 'virtues' are the governing principles of human conduct. It is assumed that knowledge of these virtues implicates the moral agent in their habitual exercise, which in turn results in the formation of a consistent moral character. Moral pedagogy involves daily supervision of interpersonal interactions between teachers and students, with systematic reinforcements of appropriate

moral conduct and the use of punishment to ensure consistent moral behaviour. In addition, discussion and debate of fictional moral conflicts and dilemmas that were derived from literature and morality tales, focussed on indoctrinating valid moral ideals and moral rules for interpersonal and social conduct (Wynne, 1986, pp. 6-8).

A significant instructional objective of this paradigm is the cultivation of exemplary moral behaviours, reflecting a solid moral foundation. As Ellrod (1986) indicates, this paradigm assumes that:

If the basic and overriding concern of a human being is to be a good human being--to be excellent as a human person--then this accounts for the fact that moral obligation is seen as overriding any other kind of reason that may be suggested for or against an action, as modern ethicists have noted. (p. 31)

In short, to resolve a moral conflict one may rely on those proper rules of moral conduct that constitute one's moral character, and exercise pure will-power in applying these to any given situation. Revealed moral truths and rationally defined moral ideals are the subject content that have to be transmitted to ensure a morally just and responsible citizenry.

A noteworthy feature that distinguishes this theoretical paradigm from the other models to be discussed is the emphasis it places on the range of moral principles and moral ideals that can guide human actions. Paradoxically, this distinction can be regarded as its major weakness. Not only do proponents of this

theory assume that there are irrefutable and indisputable moral rules for valid and legitimate forms of moral conduct that can be known and easily transmitted, but it is often presumed that contemporary Western society recognizes these to be substantially valid and of perennial value (Ellrod, 1986, p. 33). In addition, the eurocentric and ethnocentric bias of these moral perspectives, exemplified by a rigidly dogmatic theoretical grounding in classical patriarchal moral philosophies and religious traditions, does not tolerate alternative perspectives of moral knowing and moral judgment (Paul, 1988, p. 11).

Assumptions of a common human nature that can be guided by revealed moral truths and fundamental moral principles neglect to address the particular contexts of morally problematic situations, and imply a pedagogical process of moral indoctrination at the expense of developing critical thought and sensitive deliberation. The traditional model for moral pedagogy fails to recognize that conventional moral rules and conservative moral ideals can be fallible and need constant diligent revision. For some ethicists and moral educators, this approach to moral pedagogy can result in a form of 'pseudo-moralizing,' which neglects to cultivate a discriminating moral consciousness of those intricate levels of moral agency. Paul (1988) indicates that:

Students have an undeniable right to develop their own moral perspectives...but they should also be able to analyze the perspective they do use, compare it accurately with other perspectives, and scrutinize the facts they conceptualize and judge in the moral domain

with the same care required in any other domain of knowledge. (p. 13)

This approach for inculcating specific moral rules and principles disavows students' potential for developing into responsible and conscientious analytical thinkers, capable of critically assessing alternative and competing perspectives of legitimate and desirable forms of moral conduct. Consequently, this model offers no methodology by which students can be engaged in critical discussion and debate of viable and desirable forms of moral coexistence within a culturally pluralistic society.

Moreover, proponents of this model often assume that these moral virtues and moral ideals are universally valid and consistently applicable in most situations. Thus, regardless of the circumstances of each case, moral agents are obligated to respond to most conflict situations according to principled moral behaviours that have been learned. In addition, imparting moral dogma and moral ideals that pertain to the dominant culture within a pluralistic society, can be regarded as a form of moral propaganda that neglects to educate students about the potential commonalities between distinct, culturally determined moral frameworks and philosophies. Consequently, this approach to moral education neglects to engage students in critical analyses of competing moral perspectives, and in subsequent discussions of existing assumptions regarding legitimate forms of moral behaviour within a culturally pluralistic society. Thus, this model fails to develop a moral orientation, that is characterized by moral empathy, sensitive and holistic inquiry, and perceptive discrimination, by which competing moral

perspectives can be critically examined and assessed.

Conversely, proponents of a relational approach to moral pedagogy are not concerned with indoctrinating fundamental and universal moral norms and moral ideals. This approach focusses on involving students in comprehensive analyses and critical reflections of the intricate levels of moral agency, emphasizing the need to identify the circumstantial elements and contextual frames of reference by which a moral dilemma is resolved, before assessing a moral choice. Furthermore, this model stresses the significance of re-assessing the prevailing need of relational values and principles to guide moral judgment and moral conduct between individual persons and their respective communities. Thus, adherents of this approach emphasize the importance of developing a caring, compassionate, and responsive disposition for discriminating against conflicting moral views and perspectives, which can eventually result in a more respectful and responsible commitment for guiding conflicting parties to maintain relational contacts.

Furthermore, proponents of a relational approach stress the recreative potential of the moral imagination, underscoring the importance of provoking students to revise existing views on valid and desirable forms of moral judgment and conduct according to the demands of a relational ethic. In short, this approach to moral pedagogy is concerned with providing instructional opportunities for enabling students to redefine themselves as responsible and responsive persons within a secular society. It would appear that in a culturally pluralistic society, the process of formulating viable forms of moral coexistence can only be

engaged through honest and sincere dialogue, that can permit a rigorous and discriminating assessment of multiple moral perspectives.

According to Jarrett (1991), beginning in the early 1960s, an increasing awareness of the secular and culturally pluralistic nature of the Western social fabric caused a re-assessment and a re-evaluation of some of the most seminal assumptions of conservative and conventional forms of moral education (pp. 42-44). In response to this growing consciousness of moral pluralism in North American society, alternative theoretical paradigms were developed that were concerned with cultivating and refining multiple cognitive processes for engaging moral reflection and deliberation (Ellrod, 1986, pp. 11-12).

Beginning with Rath's (1966) model for values-clarification, later to be revised and expanded by Kirschenbaum (1977), this philosophical approach to moral education was widely acclaimed for its ability to engage moral self-reflection and personal assessments of competing moral perspectives (Fielding, Hersh, Miller, 1980, pp. 74-75). Relying on some of the central principles of humanistic psychology, existential philosophy and pragmatic thought, the values-clarification model attempted to ensure personal confidence in individual value choices (Ellrod, 1986, pp. 15-16).

Objecting to all forms of moral indoctrination about which there is no unanimous consensus, and opposed to all sorts of concessions to cultural norms and social prescriptions, proponents of this approach emphasize an individualistic and subjective process for defining a personalized moral identity. Since proponents

of this model are concerned with developing a more intuitive, affective and reflective approach to the discovery of moral autonomy, they often argue that values are personal and subjective, and that educators should abstain from value-judgments.

For Kirschenbaum (1977), "Values clarification can be defined as an approach that utilizes questions and activities designed to teach the valuing process and that helps people skilfully to apply the valuing processes to value-rich areas in their lives." (p. 12) Concerned with cultivating those valuing skills for classifying and ranking personal values within a distinct value framework, this approach to values education aims to equip students with strategies for evaluating their personal choices of appropriate moral values and principles (Elias, 1989, pp. 170-171).

Developing the valuing process involves consistent practice with certain valuing skills that constitute those inter-related phases of moral choice and moral action. Thus, several distinct sub-processes of this valuing method have been identified by its proponents, suggesting that a moral value is appropriated after it has been carefully chosen from a consideration of possible consequences, and from alternative and competing value perspectives. Moreover, a moral value should be publicly affirmed and repeatedly acted upon in some pattern of life for it to be integrated in a personal moral framework (Chazan, 1985, pp. 56-57). In addition, it is assumed that personal moral development evolves as a direct result of authentic value choices that coincide with the process of self-actualization. The

search for a sense of personal identity should therefore involve a sincere and honest attempt to identify one's value commitments and to act on these consistently. As Fielding, Hersh, and Miller (1980) assert, "This approach argues that as individuals engage in values clarification, they can gain a sense of personal direction and fulfilment." (p 75)

Furthermore, it is assumed by proponents of this theory that the individual discovery and appropriation of personal values should occur ideally within a non-threatening and non-judgmental learning environment that promotes self-reflection and open discussions. As Kirshenbaum (1977) avers, "In discussing value-rich areas...the teacher accepts all answers and does not try to impose his or her own views on the students." (p. 12) Teachers ought to remain value-neutral. Value neutrality is perceived to be a reliable and dependable disposition to guard against subjective moral biases, and against the arbitrary imposition of values.

Emphasizing that values are personal and subjective has functioned to redirect interest and attention to those multiple affective and cognitive valuing processes by which individual persons can freely appropriate individually chosen moral values and moral perspectives. In this respect, this philosophical approach to moral education has provided a way of recognizing and affirming differences and distinctions of diverse forms of moral thought and moral conduct within an increasingly pluralistic society.

A significant weakness with this paradigm is that it incorrectly equates moral subjectivity with moral subjectivism. Thus, proponents of this theoretical approach



have been criticized for assuming that most forms of moral judgment and moral conduct are equally acceptable and desirable, and that the criteria of valid moral behaviour rest on personal whims and spontaneous inclinations. According to this model, personal moral choice prevails in significance over the pedagogical value of critical reflection and rational deliberation of moral priorities within a social context.

Operating on the assumptions that at present there does not exist a singular conclusive, definitive, and agreed upon body of moral values or principles, and that competing moral perspectives cannot be critically evaluated and rationally judged, this paradigm promotes atomistic moral relativism as a viable orientation for moral judgment and moral conduct. As Ellrod (1986) affirms, "From a philosophical point of view the most fundamental problem in the values clarification theory is its lack of standards for value-judgment independent of the individual's pre-existing values." (p. 18). Similarly, the focus on the valuing process seems to imply that there could be no rational, objective evaluation of conflicting value claims. For Lickona (1991):

Values clarification discussions made no distinction between what you might want to do and what you ought to do. There was no requirement to evaluate one's values against a standard, no suggestion that some values might be better or worse than others. (p. 11)

Thus, the methods proposed for values clarification seem to lack a systematic approach for distinguishing moral preference from that which ought to be valued

and acted upon responsibly within a given situation.

Moreover, this model ignores the possibility that students can be challenged to discuss and to critically assess those moral principles that can provide some guidance for more just, equitable, and caring forms of social coexistence. By emphasizing the valuing process over valuational content, often regarded as a simplistic view of the intricate dimensions of moral agency, the values-clarification model is unable to account for subsequent changes in moral perspective that can result from resolving unprecedented moral dilemmas. From an educational perspective, merely clarifying pre-existing values leaves little opportunity for engaging the moral imagination, and thus seems to deflate the pedagogical value of moral growth and transformation. As Maguire (1991) asserts, "Moral thinking at its best perceives goods that have not yet existed and brings them into being in the creative act." (p. 79)

Finally, even though North American society presently reflects a pluralism of value perspectives, it does not necessarily follow that these perspectives cannot be compared and critically evaluated. As Day (1983) asserts:

In short, the preservation of disagreement takes the debate out of the realm of pure picture preferences or matters of taste. The fact that people can disagree at all implies criteria to which all may make reference. This is the very opposite of the crude relativism popularly supposed to be entailed by pluralism. Relativism is not a necessary correlate of pluralism. (p. 84)

As was suggested in the introduction, a pluralist society may become susceptible

to a repressive tolerance of all forms of moral expression, regardless of the logical repercussions entailed by such careless moral relativism. Thus, for Royce (1982), "If moral education is to consist in encouraging virtues in people then what is required is the justifiable selection of these and not suggestions that people should tolerate each other no matter what their differences." (p. 180) The possibility of rediscovering rational standards and logical criteria to critically evaluate and assess moral perspectives may need to be addressed when reconsidering the manner in which individual persons will choose to define themselves morally within a secular society (Day, 1983, pp. 83-86).

Although a relational approach to moral pedagogy emphasizes the value of individual moral choice for resolving interpersonal conflict situations, it stresses the importance of responsive dialogue and of diligent deliberation regarding responsible resolutions to moral dilemmas. Even though a relational model does not aim to inculcate a series of predetermined moral rules and ideals, unlike the values-clarification paradigm, it does maintain the need for interpersonal and social accountability of distinct forms of moral judgment and conduct between individuals and their communities. Underscoring the need for cultivating and refining a moral orientation characterized by empathy, care, compassion and sensitive discrimination, a relational model stresses the significance of distinguishing between acceptable forms of interpersonal conduct based on life-affirming and life-promoting moral values and principles.

A relational paradigm additionally emphasizes the importance of generating

discussion and dialogue of viable and desirable forms of moral conduct between individual persons, based on detailed analyses of compelling moral situations. Providing multiple instructional opportunities for engaging the moral imagination is an important pedagogical objective of this paradigm, which, unlike the values-clarification model, emphasizes the prevailing need of revising existing moral perspectives for redefining a more caring, understanding and responsible moral coexistence. Consequently, a relational model is not solely concerned with enabling individual assessments of personal moral frameworks, but with encouraging students to rediscover their potential for redefining a more relationally accountable and interpersonally validating social life and communal existence.

The cognitive-developmental paradigm for moral education emphasizes the valuing process over moral content. The basic theoretical assumptions of this philosophical paradigm were initially illustrated in Jean Piaget's *The Moral Judgment of the Child* (1937), and were later elaborated upon by the empirical investigations and research findings of Kohlberg. For Piaget, moral development among children progressed from a 'heteronomous morality', characterized by a respect for authority figures and a duty to preserve fairness and justice in interpersonal relationships, to an 'autonomous morality', reflecting a respect for mutually decided values and principles for social relating (Elias, 1989, p. 79).

Thus, "Movement from one stage to the other takes place when children break out of egocentric thinking and begin to see the viewpoints of others." (1989, p. 79) Moreover, Piaget (1948) argued that moral education must not occur in

"...an atmosphere of authority and intellectual and moral constraints." (p. 412). Educators should espouse an interactive pedagogy that acknowledged and respected children's "lived experience" and encouraged a "...freedom of investigation, outside of which any acquisition of human values is an illusion." (Piaget, 1976, 125-126).

Building on Piaget's research in the fields of cognitive development and moral development in children, and initially relying on empirical investigations with young boys between the ages of ten and sixteen, Kohlberg formulated his own theory describing the progressive and sequential nature of moral judgment. As Hersh, Paolitto, and Reimer (1983) assert, "The exercise of moral judgment is a cognitive process that allows us to reflect on our values and order them in a logical hierarchy." (p. 47). Often perceived to be developmentally rigid, Kohlberg's theory of moral development assumes that moral reasoning and deliberation progresses along a continuum whose final stage involves freely choosing moral principles that have universal application (Ellrod, 1986, pp. 20-21).

In addition, this model maintains that most individuals progress through the stages of preconventional, conventional, and post-conventional moral reasoning, although this process may be arrested temporarily or permanently at one stage. As Elias (1989) indicates, "In their development people move from fear of punishment to respect for laws and social enforcement to an internalized conscience which is based upon more complex reasoning and perceptions of the world and the need for justice." (p. 81). As structured wholes, these levels of

moral thinking implicate each individual moral agent in a continuous process of rational deliberation, reflecting a distinct moral perspective for guiding one's actions and interactions with others.

According to Kohlberg (1981), educators should consistently attempt to stimulate moral reasoning towards higher stages, where it is understood that one's thinking is more just and more autonomous (pp. 49-96). To create conditions that foster moral development, the teacher has two principal functions in the process: "First, to create conflict, the kind of conflict that facilitates growth in students' patterns of thinking. And second, to stimulate students' ability to take the perspective of others beyond their own." (Hersh, Paolitto, Reimer, 1983, p. 145). It is recommended that presenting case studies depicting conflicts of interest that engage a more advanced level of moral reasoning, challenges students to move towards higher stages of moral thinking. Socratic questioning, group dialogues and debates, and the creation and maintenance of a supportive and trusting learning environment, are essential pedagogical principles for stimulating students to take risks with their moral reasoning skills and abilities (Hersh, Paolitto, Reimer, pp. 178-189).

For Kohlberg, students and teachers should therefore engage in co-operative and collaborative discussions of those complex levels of moral agency situated either within fictional conflicts and dilemmas, contemporary moral issues or lived experiences. Because of his belief in liberal and democratic education, in his later work Kohlberg was interested in the creation of learning communities,

or 'just communities,' in which students and teachers equally participated in the democratic government of their schools (Ellrod, 1989, p. 84).

Although this paradigm for the development of advanced forms of moral reasoning emphasizes the independent, rational abilities of the moral agent to solve moral dilemmas, it seems to have a limited conception of the multiple complexities of actual, existential dilemmas. Sterile and objective reports of conflicts of interest usually characterize this model's hypothetical case studies, which, unlike a dramatized moral conflict or dilemma, fail to vividly portray the painful and debilitating results of specific forms of moral judgment and moral conduct. According to Hersh, Paolitto, and Reimer (1983), "The problem with such fictional dilemmas is their failure to engage people in the richness and ambiguity that real-life situations can offer." (p. 150) This theoretical perspective is unable to account for those subconscious, intuitive, and affective factors that often provoke moral actions. As illustrated in this study, a dramatized play can serve to sensitize a perceiving audience to the rich ambiguities and intricate inconsistencies of moral conduct.

In addition, according to Ellrod (1986), the paradigm neglects to offer a balanced perspective on those individual motivations and environmental factors which often precipitate moral actions (p. 25). Notions of will power, character virtues and habit, as well as of intuitive awareness and perception, often operate in the resolution of moral conflicts, yet Kohlberg's theory does not seem to acknowledge such internal motivational stimuli. By integrating dramatic art as a

potent instructional medium for generating moral reflection, this study illustrates an alternative activity to the conventional case study, which lends itself to a more holistic appreciation of moral choice and moral conduct within situational contexts.

Considering that the stages of moral development are presented as an invariant sequence along which all persons progress, and that more advanced stages of moral reasoning result in more refined, consistent, and principled moral behaviour, several critiques of this model challenge the very assumption of a normative progression in moral development. Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (1984, 1988, 1992) question the hierarchical development of moral thinking, arguing for a re-conceptualization of moral development that acknowledges a feminine approach to moral judgment and reasoning. Both feminist ethicists question the validity of Kohlberg's theoretical conclusions that are primarily based on qualitative investigative research with a culturally homogeneous group of male students. Similarly, both moral philosophers argue that a more personal, responsive and dialogical perspective on moral judgment can enable a more holistic understanding and appreciation of the intricate levels of moral development. (This relational perspective will be examined more fully in Chapter III.)

This theory for developing moral judgment neglects to suggest standards for evaluating conflicting moral claims within given situations. Moreover, it is not made clear how judgments regarding the rightness and wrongness of actions can be articulated if and when one achieves a specific stage of moral decision-making. As Ellrod (1986) asserts:



As Ellrod (1986) asserts:

...it can be argued that without assuming some basic valuations, or some rule of procedure other than those included in the forms of reasoning described, many conflicts cannot be resolved at all; for without comparative evaluation of the content of individuals' conflicting claims, there is no way to assign them priority once universalization has placed them on an equal basis. (p. 24)

For example, someone operating from a post-conventional level of principled moral reasoning may choose to respond to a specific conflict situation according to the conventional moral norms of one's cultural group. Thus, one may be in favour of affirmative action programs that promote the desegregation of school age children, and yet, under the threat of social ostracism, one chooses to demonstrate with other members of one's community against racial integration in schools. Kohlberg's model neglects to address the significance of such discrepancies and contradictions between moral development and actual moral conduct, and fails to suggest how a moral agent can assess conflicting moral claims, given the particular circumstances of specific moral conflicts.

If moral pedagogy is concerned with cultivating the capacity for critical analysis and sensitive discrimination for evaluating competing and conflicting moral claims and perspectives, Kohlberg's model does not seem to describe the process by which such evaluations can be made. Similarly, unlike a relational approach to moral pedagogy, Kohlberg's paradigm neglects to address the potential for

generating dialogue regarding viable and desirable forms of moral coexistence. Regardless of one's current stage of moral development, the question still remains of how human beings will choose to define themselves as moral persons within a culturally pluralistic society. Moreover, Kohlberg's model neglects to address the value of developing moral empathy, compassion and responsive care for assessing different forms of moral judgment and moral conduct.

Furthermore, the onus placed on disengaged abstract moral reasoning of relatively detailed case studies, disregards the significance of those emotional and spiritual factors that often provoke moral behaviour between individual persons. In addition, such emotionally sterile case studies fail to engage affective and intuitive responses to morally problematic situations, thus depriving students of assessing the emotional content of moral judgment. Finally, proponents of Kohlberg's model assume that moral conduct is perpetually consistent with one's stage of moral development, and therefore neglect to enlighten about the potential inconsistencies between the demands of concrete moral dilemmas, and the actual processes of moral choice.

Closely related to Kohlberg's theory of moral development and moral reasoning is the paradigm commonly identified as the cognitive-analytic approach to moral education. A major proponent of this theory is the British philosopher John Wilson (1990) who, in addition to emphasizing the function of independent reason in assessing conflicts of interest in typical social situations, refers to a list of moral 'virtues' that can be developed and refined to guide the valuing process.

(pp. 130-132). As Chazan (1985) indicates, Wilson "(a)rgues against the notion of morality as an expression of taste or a question of feeling and defends the conception of morality as part of the sphere of rational discourse " (p. 35) For Wilson, moral reasoning develops as a direct result of training the natural and inherent capacities for logical deliberation and moral empathy, so as to ensure the eventual application of universal moral values and principles.

Thus, Wilson's approach to moral education proposes a methodology for developing a series of 'moral components' dictated by pure reason (Wilson, 1990, p. 15), that can enable individuals to resolve personal conflicts and moral dilemmas without the influence of external sources of moral authority. According to Wilson, the three basic rules of procedure for moral deliberation and action are "That we should stick to the laws of logic. That we should use language correctly. That we should attend to the facts." (1990, p. 123). This paradigm for cultivating and refining moral reasoning skills reinforces the process of rational justification of moral actions and interactions, that can be critically evaluated and assessed within a pedagogical context.

For Wilson, stimulating moral thinking involves a complex process that involves analyzing and explaining the moral components that constitute a morally educated person. As Wilson (1991) avers

Our aim is essentially to initiate pupils into a particular methodology, to get them to appreciate and master the principles, procedures, concepts and so on which proper moral thought and action require, so that they

can make up their own minds about what moral beliefs and behaviour to adopt. (p. 18).

His prescriptive system for developing skills in moral reasoning entails developing in students a consciousness, a concern and a genuine respect for other persons as a fundamental logical principle to guide critical evaluations of moral conduct. Similarly, developing a sense of empathy and discriminating sensitivity in relation to the rights, interests and needs of other persons becomes a significant pedagogical objective of Wilson's methodology.

Mastery of relevant knowledge in the area of moral philosophy, such as the understanding of general concepts and meanings, as well as knowledge of prevailing moralities of dominant cultural institutions, such as those of law, government, medicine, and the different professions, comprise a significant procedural principle for this approach to moral education. In addition, enabling insights into the intricate processes of moral agency by relying on historical accounts, the arts, literature, music and the study of civics, suggests an alternative methodology for developing moral consciousness and refining moral reasoning. Finally, discussion and debate of prevailing moral issues, fictional dilemmas and personal conflicts involves the concrete application of the previous components for deliberating upon the most effective resolutions to moral, problematic situations (Wilson, 1990, pp. 132-152)

Such a systematic and multi-disciplinary approach to the study of morality aims to engage the student in the rational justification of personal moral values and

principles, maintaining that philosophical deliberation can provide the means for consistency in moral conduct. Moreover, it is assumed that the development of these reasoning skills for moral inquiry will result in principled moral behaviour that aims to reconcile one's needs with those of others in a more just and equitable manner. As Wilson (1991) affirms, the morally educated person is not only:

...someone who can function in a particular society or with reference to his own particular psychological and idiosyncratic feelings. Such a person has to measure himself, and his society, against certain trans-cultural and trans-personal norms and standards. (p. 88)

For Wilson, morally educated persons are those who have mastered the craft of formulating logical rules and principles that aim to sustain moral communities according to more just dispositions and commitments.

To this end, in addition to the teacher's role in developing these moral 'virtues' in students, Wilson suggests that the establishment of a decentralized learning community, similar to that of Kohlberg's just community, will extend the process of moral deliberation for the creation of practical operational rules and principles for social coexistence (Wilson, 1990, pp 176-186). In this respect, Wilson is concerned with developing a learning process for regulating thought, feeling and action according to the dictates of discursive logic and rational deliberation, by which it is assumed that consistency in moral behaviour is guaranteed.

As a philosophical paradigm for moral education that aims to develop and

to cultivate moral reasoning, the cognitive-analytic model stresses the importance of cultivating sound formal habits of logical argumentation for not only assessing moral conduct, but for enhancing consistent principled behaviours. The focus placed on the rational justification of moral actions to the neglect of affective and intuitive motivations for conflict resolutions, once again disregards an important dimension of moral judgment and conduct. As Elias (1989) indicates:

Wilson is also interested in emotions, the will, and feelings of obligation and commitment. While these are important attributes for a morally educated person, it is clear for Wilson it is by rational or reasonable standards that these dimensions of human nature are ultimately to be judged. (p. 58)

In addition, it is not clear what standards for evaluating conflicting value claims within concrete, moral situations can be suggested by such an approach to moral reasoning. The process of critically assessing the moral validity of competing and conflicting moral perspectives and value claims has not been sufficiently elaborated upon in Wilson's description of his theory.

Moreover, it is assumed by Wilson that his list of moral 'virtues' can ensure that individual persons will choose to act consistently according to certain fundamental and universal moral principles. The degree to which a direct causal link can be established solely between moral conduct and the assimilation of specified codes of eternal moral truths, moral rules and principles is still debatable amongst most ethicists and moral educators. Finally, Wilson neglects to describe

the process of developing these moral 'virtues', as he appears to be far more concerned with identifying the formal criteria by which moral principles and rules can be justified transculturally and universally (Ellrod, 1986, p. 28)

As with Kohlberg's model, the cognitive-analytic paradigm neglects to acknowledge the value of cultivating and refining a moral orientation based on mutual care and responsive accountability for moral judgment and moral conduct. Similarly, unlike a relational paradigm for moral education, Wilson's model neglects to acknowledge the significance of empathic engrossment and sensitive dialogue for assessing the multiple inconsistencies and ambiguities that often inhere to concrete moral choices. The emphasis placed on the rational assessment and logical adjudication of moral behaviour, neglects to consider the value of emotional and intuitive knowledge for responding to the demands of morally problematic situations. Moreover, Wilson's model ignores considering those subliminal factors that often provoke moral action, and therefore, provides few suggestions for assessing moral conduct motivated by such instinctual elements

In light of the above discussion, one can suggest that moral education should not solely be concerned with developing moral reasoning or refining individual valuing skills, nor with the moral indoctrination of a culturally predetermined code of moral rules and ideals. Rather, moral education should attempt to address the need for cultivating moral empathy, sensitive discrimination and appreciation of the intricate dimensions of moral choice and moral conduct. By doing so, a foundational orientation can be developed for subsequent

assessments, deliberations and justifications of appropriate and desirable forms of moral judgment and moral behaviour.

Relying on a more relational approach to the study of ethics, moral pedagogy can therefore attempt to reconcile a commonly perceived dichotomy between moral content and the need for rational deliberation within the moral sphere. A more holistic approach to moral pedagogy can educate about the value of developing a moral orientation grounded in moral empathy, compassion, and responsive care, for enhancing subsequent reflection of distinct forms of moral judgment and moral conduct.

In addition, by developing and refining sensitive discrimination of moral choice and moral conduct, critical reflection can involve philosophical speculation of those standards and criteria by which human beings shall choose to define themselves morally within a secular society. A relational approach to moral pedagogy addresses not only the inherent plurality of moral judgment and action, but assumes that moral consciousness is in constant need of renewal and recreation. This model provides an alternative paradigm for engaging inquiry of different forms of moral choice and moral action between individual persons and their respective communities. It is the intent of this study to illustrate how the use of dramatic art can serve a relational paradigm for enhancing moral consciousness, stimulating the moral imagination, and generating subsequent deliberations of viable and desirable forms of moral coexistence. (A more detailed discussion of this alternative philosophical approach to moral pedagogy will be



presented in Chapter III.)

#### 1. 4. Dramatic Art and Moral Pedagogy.

Historically, theoretical principles and paradigms describing Western forms of dramatic art and theatre performance illustrate the qualifying distinctions of diverse aesthetic encounters between distinct groups of audiences and their respective theatres. Through their seminal writings on the theatre as an art form, many theatre practitioners and theorists since the time of Plato and Aristotle, have defined those formal aesthetic properties of dramatic art, while describing the process by which a play's performance can engage an audience psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually. Some of these notable figures in Western theatre theory and criticism, such as George Bernard Shaw and Bertolt Brecht, have also attempted to illustrate the political, moral and social benefits of dramatic art for their respective audiences. Since an exhaustive survey of the major theoretical paradigms in theatre aesthetics is beyond the scope of this discussion, the author has chosen to limit this review to certain theorists who have significantly influenced the study of dramatic art, while often addressing the instructional potential of the theatre medium.

Although known for his famous attack on tragedy, the arts and literature in *The Republic*, Plato rejected histrionic performances that dulled the senses for " a reflexive model of dramatic performance that comments on itself during the course of its enactment." (Gruber, 1987, p. 208) According to Gruber, Plato advocated an aesthetic that enables spectators, whether they were attending a staged

performance of a play or a dramatized enactment of a poem, to identify and appreciate the material components of the presentation itself (1987, p. 209). However, Plato also decried the contagious effects of poets on spectators and condemned poetic mimesis as "...an ordinary thing having intercourse with what is ordinary, producing ordinary offspring." (p. 201), while sporadically acknowledging the instructional value of dramatic art in his other writings.

For example, in *The Symposium*, Plato argues that the Idea of Beauty is the ultimate goal of education, which often appears in a flash of intuition (Courtney, 1989, p. 34). Since both acting and poetry can reveal divine truth through inspiration, Plato confirms in *The Ion* that aesthetic encounters with such mimetic forms provide the proper foundations for a solid education that would produce intellectually discriminating and useful citizens for his ideal state (1989, p. 34). However, as a philosophic idealist, Plato was more concerned with developing discursive logic for defining abstract, ideal and eternal Forms, or Truths, rather than with emphasizing the instructional value of contemplating false manifestations or imitations of the material world, that he believed were characteristic of most artistic forms. Therefore, Plato did not preoccupy himself with formulating an elaborate theory of theatre aesthetics that accounted for the theatre's potential to cultivate and refine moral insight and deliberation.

Aristotle's *Poetics*, although short and incomplete, presents a relatively coherent theory of the art of drama, and illustrates some of the most significant aesthetic principles and formal properties of classical Greek theatre. In this study

of dramatic art, Aristotle elaborated on his theory of mimesis, analyzed the plot, characters, and thought of the classic Greek tragedies and comedies, and established the three basic unities of effective drama. For Aristotle, dramatic art was practical and useful to education because plays could afford the greatest of intellectual and emotional pleasures by depicting probable resolutions to specific conflict situations, given the individual and social factors operating within these (Courtney, 1987, p. 35). Thus, aesthetic engagement with a dramatized play is often maintained by securing interest in not what has happened, " but what may happen - what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity." (Fergusson, 1961, p. 68). Moreover, it is in *The Poetics* that Aristotle advances his theory of catharsis, whereby tragedy purges emotions for more profound insights into the human condition

Endlessly discussed and debated by theatre scholars and historians to this very day (Eldridge, 1994; Packer, 1989; Paskow, 1983), the concept of catharsis clearly indicates Aristotle's interest with those potent emotional and psychological effects of staged plays. For Aristotle, these had the potential for stimulating reflection and enhancing consciousness of valid and desirable forms of human conduct. In addition, Aristotle argued that the progression of actions and interactions between dramatic characters often focussed attention and thought to the moral implications of interpersonal conduct and of social behaviour that were being examined by a specific play. Thus, the theatre event not only had the power to delight but to instruct. Unfortunately, like Plato his predecessor, Aristotle did not

propose a systematic theory for incorporating dramatic art for moral pedagogy within an educational context, which would have proved beneficial for this study.

During the Middle Ages, the Christian Church capitalized on the theatre's potential for instructing the masses about the seminal tenets of their faith, and produced plays that relied on biblical stories and the lives of the saints to reinforce knowledge of a specific religious ideology (Courtney, 1987, p. 36). These dramatic works were called *miracle*, *mystery*, and *nativity* plays. Later, *morality* plays were developed. In these morality plays, each character represented a virtue to admire or a vice to avoid, such as Charity and Envy (Ayers, 1984; King, 1994). The Christian Church recognized the instructional potential of the theatre to indoctrinate the masses, and for political reasons it relied on this medium to reinforce stringent and irrefutable moral ideals and principles that would ensure spiritual salvation. Consequently, this religious institution trusted in the interactive nature of theatrical communication to ensure ideological control over its followers. This methodology for moral inculcation has little to offer for this study's approach to moral pedagogy, since it is not the intent of this research project to illustrate how the theatre can be used as a vehicle to impose and to dictate revealed moral orthodoxies and truths.

The rise of 'realist' performance conventions in Western theatre, which rejected the classical orthodoxies' immutable and irrefutable standards of excellence in the writing and performance of plays (Esslin, 1986, p. 60), resulted in the development of important 'social dramas', or plays that aimed to stimulate and to engage the social and moral conscience of theatre audiences. Ibsen,

Chekov and Shaw regarded the theatre as a potent medium for provoking audiences to re-evaluate and to reassess many of their preconceptions of prevailing social mores and ideological verities. Since he strongly regarded the theatre as a provocative vehicle for moral instruction (Crawford, 1981, p. 22), Shaw's unconventional and witty comedies aimed to stimulate groups of spectators to seriously reconsider viable and acceptable forms of moral conduct between individuals.

According to Crawford, for Shaw, a work of literary art should aim to " ..effect moral instruction by making the audience reexamine its morals..."(1981, p. 24). Thus, for Shaw, an engaging play causes "that pain in the self esteem," "the spectator to face unpleasant facts," and "the public to reconsider its morals." (p. 21). The theatre's ability to enhance consciousness and generate further reflection and discussion of prevailing moral and social issues would find further support in the views of such notable American playwrights as Lillian Hellman, Arthur Miller, and Tennessee Williams.

Although a 'realist' aesthetic has prevailed in Western theatre in the modern era, significant challenges to this theatre's dominant theatrical conventions have been advanced by such playwrights and theatre practitioners as Artaud, Beckett, Boal, Brecht, and Genet. It is beyond the capacity of this discussion to explore the scope of the contributions each of these theatre artists have made in their work and in their writings for provoking their audiences to re-evaluate, and at times abandon, their dependency on standard theatrical conventions. Of the five, both

Boal and Brecht have been concerned with using the theatre to raise political awareness and to stimulate critical reflection of prevailing social injustices.

In discussing Brecht's use of the 'alienation effect' in his *epic* theatre, Woodruff (1988) asserts that "Brecht intended his plays to provoke and not to obstruct critical thought...In Brecht's ideal theatre the audience would be free to think that situations like those presented on stage are not inevitable-that they can and should be prevented." (p. 240) Recently, Boal (1979), in rejecting what he considers to be the 'numbing' effects of empathic identification perpetuated by Aristotelian forms of dramatic art, argues for a theatre of the oppressed that invites audiences to participate in the dramatization of conflict situations that examine prevailing forms of political and social oppression. Boal's theatre involves audiences in dialectical discussions for suggesting possible courses of action to recreate more just and politically equitable social coexistences between individual persons (p. 122)

Finally, in suggesting that theatre can function as a potent catalyst for political reform and moral reformation, the once dissident Czech playwright Havel (1990) argues that an important objective of dramatic art should be

...to propel the audience in the most drastic possible way, into the depths of a question he should not, and cannot, avoid asking; to stick his nose into his own misery, into my misery, into our common misery, by way of reminding him that the time has come to do something about it. (p. 199)

As can be gleaned from the above perspectives on dramatic art, at certain periods in its historical development, a number of theatre theorists recognized the theatre's potential to function as an instructional medium, while addressing some dimension of political, social or moral coexistence. However, the individual theorists and distinct perspectives cited do not attempt to provide a detailed and systematic theory that clearly illustrates the potential of dramatic art for moral instruction within a pedagogical context. In this respect, there appear to be few theoretical paradigms in theatre history and research to draw from to substantiate an alternative philosophical approach to moral pedagogy that relies on dramatic art to stimulate moral reflection and deliberation.

Previous scholarly research and the prevailing academic literature in the area of moral pedagogy reflect a scarcity of theoretical paradigms that invoke dramatic art as a valuable stimulus for moral reflection and judgment. Traditionally, diverse forms of Western literature, such as the novel, the short story, and the poem, have been successfully integrated in the study of ethics and of morality (Casement, 1987; Jarret, 1991, Parr, 1982; Tirrell, 1990). According to Tirrell (1990), fictional narratives can significantly develop and refine perceptions of the multiple levels of moral judgment, moral action and interaction because of their ability to expose and to explore those situational factors that often influence moral conduct:

To understand people, whether others or oneself, one must put their actions into the appropriate contexts and produce hypotheses about their reasons

for acting. That is, one must give an account. A story is a special kind of account, for it recognizes and essentially uses the fact that the agent is a particular person living at a time within a particular society. (p. 117)

Similarly, Casement (1987) asserts that through personal encounters with literary characters, "We observe the decisions and actions of others, and the results thereof, and work inductively toward an understanding of what counts as successful living." (p. 108)

In support of these observations, the current resurgence in interest in the moral implications of literary texts, as evidenced by the most recent scholarly writings of such literary theorists as Booth (1988), Grant (1992), Murdoch (1993), Nussbaum (1986, 1990), and Schwarz (1990), lends further credence to the ability of literary narratives to stimulate reflection and provoke deliberation of valid forms of moral judgment and moral conduct. For Nussbaum (1990):

Schematic philosophers' examples almost always lack the particularity, the emotive appeal, the absorbing plottedness, the variety and indeterminacy of good fiction; they lack, too, good fiction's way of making the reader a participant and a friend, and we have argued that it is precisely in virtue of these structural characteristics that fiction can play the role it does in our reflective lives. (p. 46)

Arguing for the potency with which fictional narratives invade the reader's consciousness for the duration of a personal encounter with a text, Booth (1988) asserts that, "Our best narrative friends introduce us to the practice of subtle,



sensitive moral inference, the kind that most moral choices in daily life require of us." (p. 287) In this respect, literary texts are understood to offer valuable insights into the complex processes of moral judgment and moral conduct. Unfortunately, it seems that dramatic art continues to endure scholarly disinterest as a valuable catalyst for moral reflection.

In addition, the value of literary narratives for deepening and extending moral consciousness, while stimulating further reflection of the moral sphere, continues to receive substantial pedagogical support from such educational thinkers as Coles (1989), Feder (1981), Novitz (1993), and Tirrell (1990). Defending the pedagogical value of most literature for stimulating moral consciousness and engaging moral deliberation, Feder (1981) affirms that, "Literature provides a forum for moral dialogue in an atmosphere where all ideas and all interpretations of life, society, and reality are open to consideration" (p. 26). Similarly, Brown and Tappan (1991) assert that the multiple, complex and interdependent cognitive, affective and conative levels of moral thought and moral action are effectively illustrated through fictional descriptions of moral conflicts and their resolutions (pp. 177-178). In this respect, stories can function as potent instructional catalysts for critically assessing the complicated process of moral choice within given situational contexts.

The power of literary art to engage the reader imaginatively, intuitively, and intellectually, thereby challenging most preconceptions and presuppositions of sound moral reasoning and action, has led Coles (1989) to conclude that often

literary narratives " ...lend themselves as signposts, or continuing presences in our lives; their plots offer a psychological or moral journey, with impasses and breakthroughs, with decisions made and destinations achieved " (p. 68) In comparison to this scholarly support of literary art, dramatic art has received minimal academic corroboration for its potential to enhance moral consciousness and to stimulate moral reflection within an educational context.

As mentioned above, there is a noticeable lack of scholarly treatises on the pedagogical merits of dramatic art for extending moral consciousness and for refining discriminative moral judgment. Even when play texts have received some consideration for moral pedagogy (Casement, 1987; Feder, 1981; Nussbaum, 1986), analysis of the moral implications of dramatic texts has prevailed over any conscious attempt to highlight the pedagogical merits of the theatrical event for provoking moral reflection. Similarly, other forms of dramatic activity, such as creative dramatics and improvisation, role-playing, and a distinct form of theatre in education, continue to receive substantial support for their capacity to actively engage students in participatory resolutions of fictional moral dilemmas (Duke, 1978; Heiden, 1991; Jackson, 1993; Shaftel & Shaftel, 1967; Wolfe, 1978)

For Heiden (1991), creative dramatics can function as an effective pedagogical technique for discussing moral issues in relation to Kohlberg's theory of moral development. As Heiden indicates, "The nonscripted nature of creative dramatics, lends itself ideally for struggling with moral dilemmas. Creative dramatics also creates a forum where ideas are exchanged and where questioning

and growth can occur." (1991, p. 66)

According to Duke (1978) and Hawley (1974), as a form of dramatic activity within a pedagogical context, role-playing can lend itself to a more experiential process of values clarification and the development of skills for moral reasoning. Duke (1978) indicates that, "When it is properly used, role playing permits the kind of discovery learning which occurs when individuals in a group face up to the ways they tend to solve their problems of interpersonal relations, while becoming conscious of personal value systems " (pp 64-65). Arguing for the pedagogical merits of the more participatory model of theatre in education, Jackson (1993) observes that this form of dramatic activity can engage students to critically assess and deliberate upon specific social and moral issues that may concern them. Thus, for Jackson, theatre in education is most powerful when " it initiates or extends a questioning process in its audience and when it makes us look afresh at the world, its institutions and conventions and at our own place in that world " (1993, p. 35). Although this model for theatre in education requires active audience participation, and thus allows for a qualitatively different aesthetic experience to generate moral reflection, it does not provide the theoretical principles for the approach to moral pedagogy proposed in the current study.

The use of different forms of dramatic activity to generate moral reflection and deliberation, finds further support in the moral education programs established in the province of Quebec. According to the curriculum guides prepared by the Quebec Ministry of Education (1986, 1989, 1991), role-playing, improvisations, and

short dramatic skits, are valuable methods and activities with which to engage individual moral reflection, and to stimulate group discussions and debates of prevalent moral issues. Conversely, these guides include no substantial discussion of the pedagogical merits of attending the performance of a play for enhancing moral consciousness and for stimulating moral thought and reflection. Neglecting to address the value of integrating dramatic art as a potent pedagogical tool for stimulating critical evaluations of the moral sphere only serves to reinforce the standard perspective of using participatory dramatic activities for enabling moral reflection.

Moreover, the literature review undertaken for this research project has yielded a limited number of scholarly sources that deal specifically with some ethical dimension of dramatic art. Worthen's (1984) treatise on the ethics of performance presents a comprehensive analysis of the historical development, from the Renaissance theatre to Brecht's theatre and the theatre of the Absurd, of the perception of the actor's role as a potential channel for moral inculcation or as a catalyst for moral deliberation.

Similarly, Pelias (1991) explores the ethical limitations of the performer's dialogic embodiment of dramatic characters, concluding that actors should reconsider their enactments of dramatic characters for the purpose of critical consideration, rather than for audience identification and assimilation. Thus, for Pelias, three overlapping ethical principles should guide performance practice, ". . . (1) to adopt an attitude of a witness, (2) to engage in a process of open

dialogue with others, and (3) to place their voices within a community of voices." (1991, p. 150) Rayner (1993) defines the spectators' roles as consisting of distinctly individualized moral perceptions, whereby each subjectivity of a collective body of spectators appreciates the moral implications of a given performance from a specific moral and ideological framework. For Rayner, the audience enters into an 'ethical' relation with the performers in that this encounter "...has to do with being aware, along with the performer, of the joint venture toward meaning, not recovering it." (1993, p. 21)

In his seminal article on the potency of dramatic art to engage analytical and critical reflection of personal moral values and social norms, States (1985) examines the character ethos of dramatic characters. Thus, States asserts that:

A dramatic character is, first and foremost, an intensified simplification of human nature: he is a Personality with a Character-someone who appears and behaves in a certain way and who carries within him a certain *ethos*, or disposition with respect to moral conduct and choice. (1985, p. 91)

Finally, in reviewing the process by which dramatists have traditionally attempted to reconcile their moral visions with prevailing deficiencies in the political and institutional realms, Peacock (1983) avers that.

What we face is a world of incessant adjustment amidst fluctuating, multifold feelings and tentative ideals...In such a world [drama] cannot be didactic or authoritarian towards many parties but its only

partially suppressed idealism keeps its moral desires alive." (p. xxxii).

As may be gleaned from the above, there is insufficient scholarship and research regarding the role of the theatre as a potent catalyst for moral awareness, reflection, and critical deliberation, especially within an educational context.

Specifically in terms of Canadian and Quebec theatre, scholarly research by Beauchamp (1985, 1993), Doolittle (1979), Farhead (1985), and Foon (1985) examine the historical development of educational theatre for young audiences on a national scale. The pedagogical merits of plays written to address the specific needs of adolescents and school-age children, and performed by either professional theatre companies or by a collective of teachers and students within a school context, is not part of the scope of the current study. To do justice to the pedagogical strengths of a specific form of theatre education that relies on plays written for young audiences to raise awareness of prevailing social issues, would require a separate research study. Even though the focus of this study will be on a specific corpus of recent Canadian and Quebec plays, some references will be made to certain dramatic texts written for young audiences, because of their effective treatment of prevalent moral issues.

Few writers have attempted to elucidate the merits of contemporary Canadian and Quebec theatre for generating moral reflection within the context of moral pedagogy. Although plays have been historically employed to educate about certain moral values and principles, as argued effectively in Coggin's (1956)

comprehensive treatise on the major theoretical developments in drama in education, it is not the intent of the current project to extol the virtues of Canadian and Quebec plays as powerful moral homilies for moral development.

In addition, the intent of this study is not to propose a theoretical approach for moral pedagogy that aims to inculcate specific moral absolutes, moral rules and ideals. Rather, one of the objectives of the current study is to illustrate the manner in which dramatic art can provide an aesthetic context for engaging philosophical deliberation of valid and desirable forms of moral conduct within supportive learning environments. The aim of this alternative approach is not to employ the theatre medium to indoctrinate, but to sensitize and to stimulate critical reflection of the manner in which individual persons will operate as moral agents within a secular society.

#### 1. 5. Aesthetics of Dramatic Art.

Given that there appears to be little academic research on the role of dramatic art in moral pedagogy, the research conducted for this study aims to integrate those seminal principles of theatre aesthetics within a theoretical approach for cultivating moral reflection. Beginning with Aristotle's treatise on classical forms of dramatic representation, in the history of Western theatre several notable theatre practitioners and theoreticians have attempted to articulate their thoughts on those distinguishing formal properties of dramatic art. Depending on the theoretical assumptions embedded in the divergent historical and cultural conventions of theatrical performance, various perspectives have been advanced

regarding the process of codifying, conveying and receiving a dramatic text through the medium of the theatre.

Conventional representational forms of dramatic expression, still prevalent in modern realistic plays, rely on a specific ideological code of aesthetic principles, whereas post-modern forms of *Absurdist*, *epic*, ritualistic, collective and performance pieces have aimed to redefine dominant paradigms of theatre aesthetics. By reviewing the major developments in the study of theatre aesthetics, one could therefore focus on Aristotle's concept of dramatic *mimesis* and *catharsis* (Fergusson, 1961), on the symbolic and archetypal characterizations in the Medieval theatre, or on the modern theatre's representational principles for theatrical realism.

In addition one could focus on Stanislavsky's theory of performance conventions that rely on a process of 'affective memory' to convince a perceiving audience of a character's emotional state, thus securing affective engrossment with each character's predicament (Wiles, 1980, p 19). Similarly, one could refer to Brecht's presentational principles of distancing his audiences from emotional identification with dramatic characters and their situations, so as to produce subsequent critical thought and reflection of existing social and political conditions (Hamilton, 1982, p 47).

Furthermore, aesthetic engagement, contemplation, and pleasure could be illustrated by relying on theatre semiotics, on those multiple and variegated systems of signification that often inhere in a theatrical performance (Aston &



Savona, 1991; Eco, 1977; Elam, 1980). References to Artaud's (1958) and Grotowski's (1968) contentions of the ritualistic potential of aesthetic encounters between audiences and a staged performance, would provide an added dimension to the discussion. Moreover, Boal's (1979) *theatre of the oppressed*, that aims to describe the distinguishing features of aesthetic involvement and engagement with collective and collaborative theatre productions, and Schechner's (1985) study of the anthropological and cross-cultural power of theatre to amuse, delight and instruct, would further extend conventional notions of dramatic art. Finally, one could refer to the post-modern approach to theatre aesthetics that underscores the process of deconstructing performance pieces and conventional dramatic texts according to a rigorous criticism of performance discourse and textually embedded social and political ideologies (Birch, 1991).

As is evident from the above, a discussion of performance and production, theatre aesthetics could involve a variety of perspectives. It is beyond the capacity of this chapter to explore in detail the scope of the contributions these distinct theatre artists have made in their writings about the quality of aesthetic engagement and aesthetic pleasure to be derived from a theatrical event. For the purpose of this study, a synthesis is presented of the most prevalent theoretical assumptions regarding the aesthetic appeal of dramatic art from the perspective of an humanistic poetics (Schwarz, 1991).

A conventional and standard assumption regarding the audience's encounter with a dramatized play maintains that there exists an interplay of

reception and participation with the created images on the stage. Thus, it has often been argued by a number of theatre practitioners and theoreticians that an audience does not simply passively absorb the multiple images, actions and interactions enacted on the stage, but intuitively, emotionally and cognitively reconstructs those significant elements that form the fictional world of a performed play (Beckerman, 1970, 1990; Brook, 1987; Shank, 1969). In light of this basic assumption, this study will attempt to examine and to illustrate those seminal principles of aesthetic engagement that have been elaborated upon by a number of reputable theatre artists and theoreticians, from Aristotle to Peter Brook, that emphasize those different dimensions of this active *dialogue* (the author's italics) between audience and stage.

As an art form, theatre, unlike other media forms of dramatic expression, such as television and film, can provide a different aesthetic experience to engage moral awareness. Although a case can be made for the incorporation of these popular forms of communication media in moral pedagogy, and even though extensive research exists to substantiate the effectiveness of these media forms as information channels for examining prevailing social and moral issues (Henry, 1983; Lin, 1973; McGuire, 1974; Masterman, 1980), this study focusses on dramatic art. Limiting the focus of this project to the pedagogical value of dramatic art only serves its purpose to effectively argue against a prevailing neglect of this art form as a potent medium to stimulate moral consciousness.

Similarly, arguments can be advanced for the integration of fictional case

studies in moral pedagogy, as was discussed above in the Kohlbergian model for moral education (Hersh, Paolitto, Reimer, 1983). Additionally, an argument can be advanced for the inclusion of dramatic narratives under the rubric of literature, and thus maintain the potency of this art form to stimulate moral reflection and deliberation. As a response to these observations, the research conducted for this study examines the qualifying distinctions between aesthetic encounters with literary narratives and dramatic art. In addition, mention is made of dramatic art's potency to engage affective and intuitive modes of individual awareness, which seems to be lacking with emotionally static case studies that focus on the cognitive analysis of potential resolutions to conflict situations. With a performed play, moral conflicts and resolutions are presented concretely and vividly, thus evoking a more visceral reaction from an audience. Such emotional and intuitive responses to dramatized moral crises can function as catalysts for a more holistic awareness of the multiple, and prevailing, ambiguities and incongruities with distinct forms of moral agency (Esslin, 1976; 1987).

Moreover, there seems to be a prevailing academic and pedagogical susceptibility to regard dramatic art as synonymous with the textual analysis and discussion of play texts. As Davis (1988) affirms against the common misconception of dramatic art as a distinct form of literature:

The experience of drama must be from the stage, not just from the page. The reason for this assertion is that plays, like all other texts, are written in codes: that is, their meaning is not intrinsic, available to anyone

who happens to look or listen...To center [students'] experience of drama on the page is to invite miscoding, frustration, and boredom; most plays simply were not coded for reading. But to center the experience on the stage is to open drama to students-and students to drama-perhaps for the first time. (pp. 1-3)

Although one may argue that individual encounters with dramatic texts involve distinct aesthetic experiences, for this study arguments will be advanced to illustrate some of the most significant aesthetic distinctions between literary and dramatic art.

Similarly, for Bailin (1993a, 1993b, 1993c, 1993d), Davis (1988), and Hornbrook (1991), the current pedagogical focus on developmental drama for enabling and cultivating individual dramatic expression should be re-conceptualized to include the viewing of plays as a significant aesthetic experience. As an example of one such dramatic curriculum, the drama program instituted at the elementary and secondary levels of schooling in the province of Quebec stresses the pedagogical merits of developmental drama for enhancing the process of creative self-expression and for refining improvisational and role-playing skills for group learning. According to the curriculum guides published by the Ministry of Education (1984, 1986), the primary objective of the drama curriculum can be summarized in the following statement: "The Drama program should enable the pupil to use dramatic language as a means to express, communicate, and create, individually or in a group " (1986, p. 9) Consequently, this pedagogical objective

consists primarily on using dramatic activities for enhancing the creative and recreative processes of dramatic expression and of dramatic communication, and not on developing those cognitive and affective skills for aesthetically assessing plays in performance.

Unlike literary art, a play in performance presents a concrete, visible narrative that has both a spatial and temporal dimension, and which gives an audience the impression that the actions presented are happening instantaneously (Esslin, 1987; Wilshire, 1982). In this regard, Langer (1953) affirms that one is often given the impression of the gradual progression of time and of action within a given structural setting, through which images of some 'virtual reality' are presented for the spectator's contemplation. For Brook (1993), "Life in the theatre is more readable and intense because it is more concentrated. The act of reducing space and compressing time creates a concentrate" (p. 11). Interacting with the fictional 'world' of the drama simultaneously on an intuitive, affective and intellectual level, there is a sense that one lives the conflicts and dilemmas presented in what Esslin (1976) refers to as an 'eternal present' (p. 18).

The effectiveness with which a theatrical event involves an audience emotionally and intellectually in staged dramatic conflicts and dilemmas, can provide a significant experiential context for a more comprehensive and contextual analysis of moral conduct. For Wilshire (1983), by enabling emotional identification and imaginative impersonation with dramatized conflicts and dilemmas, theatre invites an audience to speculate " ..what more there is to be known, and to set out

before us an array of possible ways of being." (p. 5) Thus, as opposed to the linear development of action of most literary art forms, like the novel and the short story, which give the reader the impression that events have happened in the past, with dramatic art, spectators are confronted with morally problematic situations that unfold before their very eyes.

Assuming that dramatic characters often exhibit distinct cultural, social, and even political orientations, and that they tend to act and interact according to diverse ideological and moral perspectives, most plays can be used to engage critical reflection and discussion of the intricate levels of moral agency. As Wilson (1985) indicates:

...most significant works of drama lend themselves readily to the consideration of wider social and philosophical issues....and the intelligent audience spends much of its time following the work at this meta-level rather than on the concrete level (p. 11)

Moreover, the theatre experience can sensitize individuals to an awareness of the cultural and social influences of moral values. As Esslin (1987) asserts, theatre often "...exercises its most powerful and lasting moral impact by reflecting the attitudes of the more advanced groups among the population, exposing them to public outrage and discussion and thus gradually penetrating the consciousness of society." (p. 172) Thus, as an art form, theatre can not only reassert the moral code of a given society, but most importantly, it can function as a potent catalyst for generating further reflection on potential forms of moral reform within a given

social order.

For this study, theatre in education, as opposed to the more physically participatory models of drama in education (Bolton, 1986, Heathcote, 1980; Jackson, 1993; Warren, 1984, 1991; Way, 1939), defines a form of aesthetic involvement resulting from encountering a dramatized play within a pedagogical context. In addition, a discussion is presented of those cognitive, affective, and spiritual stimuli that can be stimulated through an aesthetic experience with a performed play (Beckerman, 1990, 1970; Cohen, 1991; Courtney, 1982, 1989, 1995; Langer, 1953, O'Toole, 1992; Ubersfeld, 1982), and that can affect the re-assessment of personal and communal moral values. As Brook (1987) asserts:

A play in performance is a series of impressions: little dabs, one after another, fragments of information or feeling in a sequence which stirs the audience's perceptions. A good play sends many such messages, often several at a time, often crowding, jostling, overlapping one another. The intelligence, the feelings, the memory, the imagination are all stirred  
(p. 46)

Because of theatre's potency as an art form (Bentley, 1965, Esslin, 1976, 1987; Styan, 1975, Wilshire, 1982) to examine the multiple levels of moral agency within concrete existential terms, this study argues that dramatic art can function as a medium for moral pedagogy. References are made to those variegated levels of aesthetic engagement (Bennett, 1990; Brook, 1987, 1983, Cohen, 1991, Marinis, 1987; Shank, 1969; Wilson, 1985), through which moral insight can be

effectuated by participating vicariously in the fictional drama depicted on the stage.

For Wilshire (1983):

Within the frame of the theatre, where there can be no enactment without typification and generalization, the particular human, either actor or member of the audience, stands open to a revealing restructuring of his humanity, a restructuring to which he allows free experimental play for the moment. (p. 105)

Moreover, engagement on a subliminal level is discussed in relation to Jungian analytic psychology (Jung, 1961, 1962, 1963/1983; Hillman, 1975; Pascal, 1992), with the intent of exploring those psychic transmutations and archetypal forces that often motivate moral choice and moral conduct.

Alluding to dramatic characters as embodied psyches in the process of growth and evolution (Salter, 1995), argues for investigation and acknowledgement of those subconscious motivational needs that often find expression in moral behaviours. In order to educate about moral consciousness and moral judgment in a comprehensive manner, moral pedagogy should aim to engage the issue of spiritual progression and regression as a catalyst for interpersonal conduct that has moral significance (Pearson, 1991, Zukav, 1989). As discussed above, present theoretical paradigms for moral education, most notably Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental model (Kohlberg, 1964, Hersh, Paolitto, Reimer, 1983) and Wilson's cognitive-analytic model (Natale, Wilson, 1991; Wilson, 1990), because of their insistence on rational deliberation of moral behaviour, neglect to address the



presence of these prototypical causal motivators that are often at the heart of moral conduct. Similarly, Rath's (1966) and Kirschenbaum's (1977) model for values clarification, with its insistence on an individualistic and subjectivistic process of value assessment, neglects to address the presence of these subconscious factors in different forms of moral conduct.

Relying on a relational approach to moral inquiry espoused by such ethicists as Gilligan (1982, 1988), Johnson (1993), Maguire (1991, 1978), Noddings (1984, 1988, 1991), and Shogan (1988), that proposes a more contextual approach to analyzing moral agency, this study proposes an alternative philosophical approach for moral pedagogy that recognizes and acknowledges the presence of the psyche in moral conduct. It is suggested that since an aesthetic encounter with a play in performance often communicates to an audience on both an affective and a kinaesthetic level (Courtney, 1982; Wilshire, 1982), dramatic art can be regarded as a powerful source of insight into the complex levels of moral meaning-making and moral decision-making. Similarly, because a relational approach to ethics stresses the importance of developing and refining the individual's capacity for discriminating sensitivity, moral empathy and responsive care (Maguire, 1991, Noddings, 1984, 1992), dramatic art can provide a means for cultivating such an orientation among students.

#### 1. 6. Canadian and Quebec Theatre and The Moral Sphere

One of the most important objectives for selecting Canadian and Quebec theatre for this research project is to redirect academic and scholarly interest to its

ability to engage discussion and critical reflection concerning the intricate levels of moral agency. Recent scholarship and research in Canadian and Quebec theatre generally yield few critical assessments of the moral issues, situations or themes examined within most contemporary Canadian and Quebec plays. Prevailing studies on the regional character of this indigenous art form, on the cultural, political and ideological discourses that inhere to specific dramatic texts and performance pieces, and on the social issues that preoccupy Canadian and Quebec dramatists through their works (Grant, 1995; Hodgkinson, 1991; Wallace, 1985) have little to offer by way of studying the moral implications that can be culled from Canadian and Quebec plays. Although other theatre genres could have been chosen for this study, such as the compelling tragedies of classical Greek theatre, the morality plays of Medieval Europe, or the 'problem' plays of Henrik Ibsen or George Bernard Shaw, this discussion aims to elucidate how Canadian and Quebec theatre can stimulate moral deliberation.

The author does not to deny the pedagogical value of other more contemporary approaches for critically analyzing Canadian and Quebec plays. On the contrary, the intent of the study is to illustrate that there is an alternative perspective for analyzing and discussing this indigenous art form, which has not only been overlooked in previous studies of Canadian and Quebec theatre research and criticism, but which can be incorporated within an educational context. Thus, it will be assumed from the outset that, like most forms of Western theatre, Canadian and Quebec theatre often explores and examines specific moral

issues, themes, and situations that can invite further philosophical reflection of valid and viable forms of moral judgment and moral conduct.

As potent and evocative commentaries of those cultural units of meaning that circumscribe human behaviour and that reflect the pervasive values and principles of a multicultural society, most Canadian and Quebec plays can function as significant catalysts for moral reflection. The human dilemmas and conflicts often depicted and explored on the Canadian and Quebec stage, specifically in the realist genre, illustrate the complex dimensions of existential reality (Harvey, 1992; Wallace, 1985; Wilson, 1995) that have been placed on a pedestal to be exhibited, looked at, examined and contemplated.<sup>2</sup> As Wallace (1985) affirms regarding most Canadian and Quebec playwrights:

No matter what subject or style a playwright chooses to utilize, he automatically involves himself in the process of interpreting life for his audience. Our best playwrights are those who recognize this fact and consciously seek to find in everyday language and events the distinctive qualities that make life special (p 77)

By dealing with certain current social issues (Grant, 1995; Much, 1992; Parameswaran, 1995; Wallace, 1990, 1992), Canadian and Quebec dramatists

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<sup>2</sup>For an insightful essay on the current dramaturgical trends in Canadian and Quebec performance theatre, the reader should consult Sarah B. Hood's (1995), "Theatre of Images: New Dramaturgies." Similarly, Ann Jansen's (1995) essay on the current status of Canadian radio drama, "Change the Story: Narrative Strategies in Two Radio Plays." is highly recommended. Both essays can be found in Per Brask (Ed.). (1995). Contemporary Issues in Canadian Drama (pp. 50-67 and pp. 86-102). Winnipeg: Blizard Publishing.

often employ the medium of the theatre to expose those abusive, oppressive, and disempowering cultural and social institutions that perpetuate dogmatic and dehumanizing attitudes for interpersonal and social conduct. Through such critically incisive evaluations of prevailing moral perspectives, Canadian and Quebec playwrights aim to convert consciousness, to reform relationships, and to refine moral perceptions of the inherent value and worth of individual persons.

For example, in a recent article on the current issues explored in native drama, Grant (1995) concludes that:

Through the medium of drama, Natives themselves are beginning to present a veritable smorgasbord of ideas; different concepts of time, different mythologies, a different kind of spirituality, different attitudes towards sexuality, different concepts of relationships between people where the non-interference ethic is paramount, a different attitude toward land and perhaps the most difficult for Western readers to comprehend, a gender-neutral, non-hierarchical world view. (p. 114)

Political marginalization and oppression of Canada's indigenous peoples, as critically scrutinized in plays written by Griffiths (1989), Highway (1988; 1989), Pollock (1987), Ryga (1987), and Taylor (1990), becomes a significant moral issue addressed in these plays. Similarly, the systemic and institutionalized alienation of racial and ethnic communities within a multicultural society, as explored in the plays of such playwrights as Fennario (1987), Foon (1982), Fortin (1994), Micone (1995), and Sears (1990), raise important ethical considerations regarding

acceptable forms of moral coexistence between different cultural groups within Canadian and Quebec societies. These plays raise significant criticisms of a prevailing eurocentric and ethnocentric tribal bias that delegitimizes the humanity and integrity of distinct cultural groups within a pluralistic society. Consequently, these plays often refocus attention on the need for individual persons to re-examine and to reassess prevailing moral ideologies that discriminate between human beings according to misleading and erroneous generalizations.

Canadian and Quebec women playwrights rely on the medium of the theatre to expose the multiple levels of political and social disempowerment endured by women within a prevailing patriarchal social order. For Hodgkinson (1991), "In the feminist playwright's vision, poverty, fear, old age, and stereotyped sex roles represent the many faces of oppression which have kept women from becoming active participants in society." (p. 14) In discussing what she identifies as the 'culture of abuse' explored in a select group of plays written by some notable Canadian and Quebec women playwrights, Wilson (1995) argues that the exposure of prevailing social ideologies that influence women's sense of victimization, serves as an important reminder to women that they need not continue defining themselves as victims within a patriarchal society. (p. 169)

A significant objective of most Canadian and Quebec women playwrights is thus effectively articulated by Hodgkinson (1991) who asserts that these playwrights must rewrite:

...their scripts by uncovering and interpreting the voices and experiences

of women...Drama becomes a stimulating medium to carry out this endeavour, as it journey from the personal to the public arena. In this public arena, women's presence must be recognized and consolidated. (p. 15)

The Canadian and Quebec stage becomes a medium that can not only engage the moral implications of those ideologies that oppress and dehumanize, but it can function as an important channel which contextualizes the intricate process through which women can choose to define themselves as moral agents within a secular society Hollingsworth (1979; 1983), Lambert (1987), Lill (1985), Marchessault (1983, 1992), Pollock (1981; 1984), and Thompson (1992) effectively explore the pain, anguish and frustration contingent on diverse forms of political oppression and disempowerment, thereby engaging critical reflection and deliberation of the process by which human persons of both genders will choose to morally coexist.

Canadian and Quebec theatre also addresses gay and lesbian issues, as effected in the plays of such playwrights as Bouchard (1990), Hollingsworth (1979; 1983), Rintoul (1992), Thomas (1992), and Tremblay (1992; 1991) For gay and lesbian Canadian and Quebec playwrights, the theatre functions as an important medium for exposing and assessing a prevailing heterosexist ideology that condemns particular forms of sexual expression that do not agree with the sexual mores of the dominant culture As Wallace (1992) avers

Fear and loathing of homosexuality is so rampant in contemporary Canadian society that it even transcends gender: the out gay person, whether male or female, invariably shares the same experience of injustice

and ostracization that homophobia breeds. (p. 15)

In this respect, plays that deal with the fear, anger, and pain resulting from social ostracism and political marginalization because of sexual preference can serve to engage critical reflection of a reformed morality that validates and accepts human persons in their distinctiveness. Moreover, by celebrating the multiple dimensions of a 'queer culture,' (Wallace, 1995, p. 146), these plays can foreground the necessity for moral revision that challenges those within this culture, and those without, to re-evaluate the principles and values by which they will choose to interact and to relate to one another as moral persons.

In addition, Canadian and Quebec theatre has also examined family issues (French, 1972, 1987, Ledoux & Young, 1989; Gault, 1989; Lill, 1989, Massing, 1991; Ravel, 1992; Tremblay, 1987, 1988; Walker, 1992), as well as the oppressive and disempowering effects of tribal mentalities (Chaurette, 1992, Foon, 1982; Garneau, 1990, Mighton, 1987, 1992, Moher, 1988; Reaney, 1975), and of valued political, cultural, and social institutions (Freeman, 1987, Herbert, 1987, Kerr, 1992, Lambert, 1987). Through these penetrating commentaries of social reality, most Canadian and Quebec playwrights often explore and present multiple levels of moral judgment and action within specific social and cultural contexts. As Brook (1992) affirms of most theatre, and which applies equally to this indigenous art form, "...it is the mirror that Shakespeare talks about, the mirror that shows the forms and pressures of our time. This mirror is not indulgent. It is a clear, pitiless, accurate mirror which shows life as it is." (p. 76) Thus, most plays written by

Canadian and Quebec playwrights often explore the moral sphere of the human condition, for they often unfold the pluralistic nature of moral values as culturally determined metaphorical systems of thought that direct human behaviour.

The fictional situations presented on the Canadian and Quebec stages invite individual audience members to engage philosophically the seminal issues of what it means to be a moral person within a secular society. The emphasis is thus on permitting the individual spectator to participate vicariously in the imaginative and affective "re-play" (Courtney, 1982) of familiar and, often alien, emotions and behaviours, achieved through a complex process of emotional identification and imaginative impersonation with dramatized characters (Wilshire, 1982; Wilson, 1965). The potency of such imaginative 're-enactments' of dramatic conflict and resolution lies in its ability to invite subsequent analyses of a play's commentary on distinct forms of moral conduct. Moreover, through such critical reflections, an attempt can be made to identify those multiple behavioral deficiencies, and sometimes strengths, characteristic of interpersonal encounters that are conditioned by diverse moral orientations.

In light of the above, it is argued throughout this study that contemporary Canadian and Quebec plays can make a significant contribution to moral pedagogy by providing an 'experiential' context for the critical reflection of personal and culturally-defined moral values and principles. This study suggests that in exploring various forms of moral agency within diverse cultural contexts, Canadian and Quebec theatre can function as a potent pedagogical medium to engage reflection



on the viability of relational principles for resolving moral crises and dilemmas. As commentaries of oppressive cultural ideologies, these plays can raise moral awareness of prevailing social injustices, thereby providing a means for generating discussion on the creation of a more just, humane, and validating social coexistence.

Although this study discusses the educational merits of dramatic art for moral pedagogy, selected play texts written in the past thirty years for the Canadian and Quebec stages are analyzed for their potential to generate discussion and reflection of multiple forms of moral conduct. There are two reasons why the corpus of play texts is limited to those written during a specific time period within the continuous development of this indigenous art form. Firstly, the late 1960s saw the resurgence of Canadian and Quebec theatre as a potent artistic medium for treating complex social, cultural, and political issues, and thus began its critical appraisal on national and international levels (Benson & Conolly, 1987; Moore, 1973; Weiss, 1986). Secondly, during these past thirty years of growth, a number of Canadian and Quebec plays have focussed on contemporary social and moral issues, that can be relied upon to provoke moral reflection.

Textual analyses of these play texts illustrate ethical issues that can stimulate critical thought of prevailing questions regarding the manner in which persons will define themselves morally within a secular society. Balancing a contextual analysis of those social, political, and cultural factors that often affect moral behaviour, with a complementary examination of those organic subliminal

forces that motivate human conduct, these textual analyses aim to present a more holistic assessment of particular forms of moral agency. Moreover, at the end of this section of the study, instructional suggestions are included for discussing the moral implications that have been culled from these plays.

#### 1. 7. Outline of the Study.

An alternative interdisciplinary approach to moral pedagogy that aims to engage analytical and critical reflection of multiple forms of moral agency can challenge prevailing pedagogical paradigms for the study of morality. In light of the current philosophical paradigms of moral education, this model discusses how dramatic art can provide a vicarious experiential context from which the diverse levels of moral choice and moral conduct can be critically assessed. Consequently, this study argues that the potency with which dramatic art can engage intellectual, affective, and intuitive modes of awareness, and can stimulate the moral imagination (Johnson, 1993; Maguire, 1978, 1991), allows for a more holistic study of moral agency

The current study proposes a methodology that describes a more integrative, interactive, and experiential process for stimulating discussion of viable orientations for defining moral conduct within a culturally pluralistic and secular society. As a particular form of dramatic expression, theatre can be used within the context of moral pedagogy so as to engage critical reflection of how human beings will choose to define themselves as contributing moral agents to the pluralistic moral matrix of modern North American society. Thus, this approach

aims to illustrate the learning potential that is enabled by dramatic art for subsequent moral self-reflection, and for further group discussions of viable forms of moral coexistence.

In addition, the current approach examines the role of Canadian and Quebec theatre as artistic media that can enhance consciousness of the contextual factors, metaphorical schemata, social and cultural ideologies and perspectives, that often influence moral agency. This study aims to illustrate specifically how contemporary Canadian and Quebec plays, in dealing with multiple forms of moral judgment, action and interaction, as well as with current moral issues, can be used as instructional media for stimulating moral reflection and deliberation. Assuming that most Canadian and Quebec theatre aims to reveal the cultural plurality of value judgments within diverse social, historical, and regional contexts, this study illustrates the emotional and cognitive value to be derived by incorporating in moral pedagogy the aesthetic experience of dramatized plays from this indigenous art form.

This study is divided into three sections. In the first section, Chapter I discusses some of the current parochial views regarding the pedagogical value of courses in moral education within secular societies. The lack of an adequate paradigm for moral pedagogy that provides a more holistic development of moral empathy, awareness, and critical reflection, is presented. Moreover, this first chapter reviews the three pedagogical areas that constitute the interdisciplinary nature of this study's research. Previous and current scholarship within each field

of study is assessed, with the intent of revealing the general scarcity of academic research dealing specifically with the potency of dramatic art to stimulate and enhance moral awareness and reflection.

The following section consists of two separate chapters. Chapter II discusses some of the central principles of this study's proposal for an alternative philosophical approach to moral pedagogy. The issues of aesthetic involvement, of psychological, emotional, and intuitive stimulation during an encounter with a dramatized play, are addressed. In addition, this chapter focusses on the manner in which moral insight is enhanced through a process of empathic identification and imaginative impersonation with embodied psyches undergoing emotional and spiritual dissonance and transformation within a play's fictional world. Through dramatized situational conflicts and dilemmas, spectators are permitted to examine and to reflect upon those individual factors, situational circumstances and metaphorical frameworks which tend to distinguish distinct forms of moral thought and action. This chapter aims to elucidate how multiple encounters with specific moral conflicts endured by dramatic characters, enables a more profound awareness of the variegated levels of moral choice, moral judgment and moral action.

Chapter III in this section outlines the seminal philosophical principles of a relational ethics and illustrates how dramatic art lends itself to a more contextual approach to the study of moral choice and moral conduct. An argument is made for the inclusion of dramatic art as a potent medium through which moral

consciousness can be broadened and deepened. Specifically, this chapter illustrates how Canadian and Quebec theatre, when re-conceptualized as a potential catalyst for broadening moral perception, can serve a more integrative approach to the study of morality.

Furthermore, this alternative approach to the study of morality argues that as an art form, Canadian and Quebec theatre can generate critical discussion of diverse moral perspectives, with the intent of engaging serious reflection of how students will choose to define themselves morally within pluralistic societies such as Canada and Quebec. This chapter therefore demonstrates that as a learning medium, Canadian and Quebec theatre can not only stimulate the process of moral self-reflection, but it can provide students with the knowledge to critically assess the validity of viable and desirable forms of moral coexistence within a culturally diverse and secular society.

In the third section of this study, Chapter IV presents a discussion of certain instructional guidelines for implementing such an approach to moral pedagogy. These guidelines focus on the manner in which plays can be chosen for discussion, with a consistent argument for the provision of monthly and/or bi-weekly excursions to the theatre where students can participate in a theatrical event. Practical suggestions are offered for educators who are unable to ensure consistent monthly visits to the theatre, illustrating the value of integrating other forms of dramatic activity when studying a specific dramatic text

Recommendations are made concerning the creation of supportive, co-

operative, caring, and non-judgmental learning environments within which such a methodology for stimulating personal moral reflection can bear fruition. Specific references are made regarding the quality of interpersonal interactions between teacher and students, as well as among students themselves, that can result in the establishment of more trusting, accepting and validating learning environments. Relying on Dewey's (1938) and Roger's (1969) contentions for educational practice suggestions are made for the value of creating responsive and interactive learning environments (Lickona, 1991; Noddings, 1988, 1991), within which critical reflection and deliberation can ensue of those moral issues, themes or situations often explored by specific plays. Moreover, the role of the teacher and of the student, as distinct, yet mutually supportive and interdependent creators of moral knowledge is elucidated in light of the recommendations of a relational approach to moral inquiry.

Finally, it is suggested that the experiential basis of a theatrical event can provide a significant learning situation to which other forms of dramatic activity can be employed to further explore received moral insights from a dramatized play. Curriculum should not only be comprised of multiple opportunities to vicariously experience fictional moral dilemmas and conflicts, but should encourage students to participate in non-threatening and non-judgmental discussions and debates of a philosophical nature. In short, moral pedagogy should enable students to critically reflect upon not only their personal moral perspectives, but should aim to engage them in deliberating upon a more just, humane and responsible vision of

moral coexistence (Johnson, 1993).

The following chapter, Chapter V, begins with a discussion of a specified corpus of play texts in light of the moral implications that can be culled from these. Instructional suggestions for studying and discussing these plays within a classroom context are provided at the end of this chapter.

Chapter VI concludes this study with a summary of the major strengths for implementing this alternative approach to moral pedagogy, stressing the prevailing need to educate individual persons towards moral empathy, discriminating sensitivity and critical reflection of current moral issues. Suggestions will be made for further research.

## Section II: An Alternative Approach to Moral Pedagogy.

### Chapter II: Aesthetic Principles of Dramatic Art.

#### Introduction

The literature review presented in the preceding chapter illustrates that there exists insufficient scholarly interest concerning the potential function of dramatic art as a powerful catalyst for stimulating moral reflection. This chapter examines how dramatic art can enhance one's consciousness of the intricate processes often involved with distinct forms of moral agency. The discussion illustrates certain significant aesthetic principles of dramatic art with the intent of elucidating how this art form lends itself for deepening moral consciousness while engaging moral reflection. Aesthetic encounters with dramatized plays can provide a vicarious experiential basis for critically assessing valid and desirable moral perspectives for guiding interpersonal behaviour. Utilizing dramatic art as an instructional medium for a more contextual approach to the study of morality can result in further dialogue, discussion, and debate of viable forms of moral conduct within a secular society.

#### 2. 1. Grounding the Discussion in an Humanistic Poetics

Recognizing that a substantial analysis of Western perspectives on theatre aesthetics would require a separate study of its own, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to present a detailed discussion of the diverse theoretical paradigms that have described the quality of aesthetic engagement, contemplation, and pleasure



that can result by attending the performance of a play. Thus, the following discussion does not aim to provide a historical survey of those distinct theoretical perspectives of dramatic art that have evolved during the major historical and cultural developments of this art form within the Western hemisphere.

This chapter begins with brief descriptions of two prevailing theoretical paradigms for the study and analysis of theatre aesthetics, those of structural semiotics and of textual and performance discourse deconstruction. References to these dominant schools of thought provide a theoretical context for emphasizing a *humanistic poetics* for the study of theatre aesthetics. A humanistic poetics upholds the metaphorical function of dramatic art, and thus argues that theatre is an important artistic medium for addressing and examining various dimensions of the human condition, including the intricate levels of moral agency. Throughout this chapter, and in light of a humanistic poetics, the discussion illustrates those formal aesthetic properties relevant to most genres of dramatic art. Similarly, references are made to the manner in which a dramatized play can engage an audience psychologically, emotionally and spiritually

Relying on the analytical methods of structuralism and semiology for the study of theatre aesthetics, which derive in large measure from the work of the Prague Linguistic Circle in the late thirties (Aston & Savona, 1991, Bennett, 1990, Elam, 1980), resulted in the formulation of a paradigm for describing the aesthetic properties of dramatic art. This approach to the study of theatre aesthetics aims to identify and to assess those intricate signifying levels of performance that

convey meaning to a perceiving audience. Most theatre semioticians distinguish between the sign systems operating in a dramatic text and those operating in a theatrical performance (Aston & Savona, 1991, p. 3; Bennett, 1990, p. 72). For the purposes of this discussion, theatre semiotics will refer to those signifying structural elements of a dramatized play.

In this respect, a play in performance is perceived to be a compositely encoded image generated by various systems of signification. As Aston and Savona (1991) indicate, "In the theatre everyone and everything placed within the theatrical frame has an artificial or pre-determined meaning. The process of signification is directed and controlled." (p. 99) As such, each spectator is actively implicated in a decoding process through which he or she assigns personal meaning and relevance to an aesthetic encounter with the fictional 'world' of the play. As Eco (1977) avers, "The very moment the audience accepts the convention of the *mise-en-scene*, every element of the world that has been framed (put upon the platform) becomes significant." (p. 112)

According to most theatre semioticians, to create a visible image with the power to move in space and in time (Esslin, 1987, p. 36), theatre artists often manipulate diverse elements of performance, and the sign systems inherent in these. For Elam (1980), theatrical performance "...is made up...of multiple messages in which several channels, or several modes of using a channel in communication, are used simultaneously in an aesthetic or perceptual synthesis." (p. 38) In assessing the signifying elements of a dramatized play, various

performance properties function to signify different dimensions of a play's, or performance's, symbolic 'world.' According to most theories of theatre semiotics, and as succinctly summarized by Bennett (1990), most theatrical performances consist of two interdependent and complementary groups of signs: " .those that are part of the actor and his craft, and those external to the actor's performance. These external signs derive from the set, props, lighting, sound, and music." (p. 149).

Relying on Kowzan's typology of sign systems (Bassnett-McGuire, 1980, p. 48; Elam, 1980, p. 20; Esslin, 1987, p. 52), as well as on Pierce's tripartite taxonomy of signifying units (Elam 1980, p. 21; Esslin, 1987, p. 44), most theatre semioticians suggest that different levels of meaning can be decoded at any given point in a play's performance. Engaging a play-in-performance often involves an active decoding, assimilation, and interpretation of the multiple meaning-signifiers that constitute the 'performance text' (Marinis, 1987, p. 100). Thus, as a spectator, one does not passively absorb the complex layers of information transmitted from the stage, but actively pursues the connoting and denoting sign systems to derive some personal meaning of a dramatized play. As Esslin (1987) avers

Every detail of what is exhibited during the course of a dramatic performance becomes a sign, a 'signifier,' one of the multifarious ingredients from which, in the mind of each individual spectator, the basic information about what is happening in the drama is perceived and established.

And out of these basic facts, the higher levels of its 'meaning' must

ultimately emerge. (p. 39)

The presence of stage props and scenic structures, of kinaesthetically active dramatic characters or performers, who are in full costume and who engage in successive interactions with other dramatic characters, individually and collectively transmit multiple messages to a perceiving audience. It is no wonder then that Barthes (1979) referred to the theatre as a "polyphonic system of information," by which a fictional 'world' is recreated for perception and assessment (p. 29). In this respect, continuous intuitive reception and cognitive interpretation of various signs and codes of signification direct and influence aesthetic focus and contemplation. For Ubersfeld (1982), "Theatrical pleasure, properly speaking, is the pleasure of the sign; it is the most semiotic of all pleasures..." (p. 129)

Interpreting the signifying systems of performance conventions usually implies that a perceiving spectator assesses a dramatized play in light of those theatrical codes of signification with which he or she may be familiar (Elam, 1980, p. 52). In addition, a spectator often relies on those social and cultural systems of signs by which he or she has come to interpret and understand empirical reality. These conceptual systems of signification, that are culturally and socially defined and perpetuated, often enable a consistent decoding of conveyed messages regarding situational enactments, and in certain cases, character predicaments (Bennett, 1990, p. 99, Elam, 1980, p. 52). Moreover, interpretation of the performance as a work of art often relies on knowledge of those generic, stylistic, and structural codes which confirm the spectator's expectations and anticipations

during a reception of the performance (Elam, 1980, p. 52). Thus, according to most theatre semioticians, awareness of the signifying functions of various production codes and performance conventions can enable a more compelling reception of a dramatized play or performance piece.

Although a semiotics of theatrical performance and production provides an alternative perspective for the study of theatre aesthetics, a more detailed discussion of the signifying elements and properties of theatrical performance is not part of the scope of this study. For the purposes of this discussion, elucidation of the quality of aesthetic pleasure derived from a theatrical event will not focus primarily on the ability to decipher those systems of signification and communication of dramatic art that are ruled by different conventions and laws (Eco, 1977, p. 108)

In fact, an important criticism of this perspective has often emphasized the inability of most theatre semioticians to provide a concrete and detailed description, based on empirical research with theatre audiences, of the interpretative processes by which spectators perceive and decode the variegated systems of theatrical signification (Beckerman, 1979, p. 158, Bennett, 1990, p. 72). Similarly, solely accentuating the structural signifiers of a theatrical performance, and stressing the arbitrary nature of the signifying process, can redirect interest away from the thematic concerns that preoccupy a given playwright, as examined in a play. Consequently, this perspective to the study of theatre aesthetics is not part of the discussion below.

Similarly, a common post-modern approach to theatre aesthetics often aims to assess critically, and often to subvert, those prevailing cultural and institutional performance and production ideologies, principles, and values of dramatic art. As Kaye (1994) asserts, "The postmodern in art is subversive and transgressive, that it occurs as a critical and sceptical stepping beyond bounds, a disruption that purposefully upsets the terms by which the 'work of art' would constitute itself " (p 20) *Deconstructing* (italics mine) a work of dramatic art often involves a more critical evaluation of those contextual elements, those ideologies of performance and reception, that have influenced the staging of a specific play or performance piece. For Birch (1991):

To consider a drama text as 'the play' and to assume that it is a single entity rather than a multiplicity of potential performances is to ignore 'the context of circumstance;' it is to reduce any critical practice to pointlessness. Drama *praxis* is about understanding the many ways of making meaning, and recognizing the ideologies involved and calling for change in those ideologies that are oppressive (p 33)

According to this theoretical perspective, aesthetic experiences with staged plays or performance pieces should involve a critically objective analysis of those 'textual' processes of interpretation and codification that have been selected to convey some dramatic meaning to a perceptive audience As Birch (1991) contends:

There is no correct interpretation of a text in order to determine its

reality, but a set of interpretive options which are never fixed but which change according to the different ways people have of making sense, and therefore of making realities. (p. 53)

From a postmodern deconstructionist perspective, aesthetic receptions and assessments of theatrical performances operate on two distinct, yet interdependent levels of critical analysis and evaluation. Aesthetic response can involve a re-examination and re-evaluation of those ideological principles of production by which a group of theatre artists have chosen to present their interpretation of a dramatic text or performance piece. In addition, aesthetic assessment can comprise a dialectical process of inquiry and deliberation, through which culturally and socially constructed conceptual frames of reference, as well as historically paradigmatic assumptions of established processes of signification, can be seriously questioned and re-evaluated (Bennett, 1990, pp. 106-107).

A deconstructionist perspective on assessing aesthetic concentration and contemplation often embraces a rigorous analysis of those 'textual' constructs by which dramatic and performance texts are staged for a perceiving audience. As Smith (1989) observes:

...deconstructionists are keen on sifting out key words that reveal the logocentrism of a text under scrutiny, words a writer may have used unself-consciously or merely considered insignificant. They further draw attention to the actual figurative character of language that was formerly considered literal. (p. 172)

Scrutiny of such 'logocentric' tendencies implies critical reflections of those ideological implications that often constitute an implicit 'sub-text' of discursive meanings that either reflect or subvert dominant and conventional cultural systems of signification. In short, one can examine a particular performance text or performance piece in relation to those cultural and social ideologies that are either perpetuated through the work, or seriously criticised and challenged by it.

Deconstruction of a performance text can therefore focus on those cultural stereotypes, or eurocentric and ethnocentric biases by which gender, sexual orientation, and/or racial and ethnic membership are presented and explored through a play. According to Birch (1991):

There are varieties of language in the modern stage which stand counter to the dominant culture-not because they are necessarily minority languages or because they belong to specific sub-cultures, but because they threaten the determined standards (p. 90)

Images of marginalized social groups (such as women, visible racial and ethnic minorities, homosexual men and lesbian women, and physically and mentally challenged individual persons), are often seriously scrutinized for their conceptually rigid assumptions of these disenfranchised and disempowered groups. For example, Dolan (1992) avers that, "Traditional theatrical forms tend to work structurally to keep the sexual gifts of gay and lesbian subjects invisible " (p. 268)

Often, theatre artists belonging to one or more of these politically oppressed and socially stigmatized 'cultural' groups within Western society, have sought to



rediscover their collective identity through their works. As Forte (1992) avers, "The feminist performer aims to communicate her experience of the female body, of her pain and what meanings it carries, within a specific cultural context." (p. 252) Similarly, Hodgkinson (1991) asserts that "(t)he stage, as a metaphor of the world, becomes the setting in which women project their vision, enabling women to move out of the silent margins into a vocal celebration of life." (p. 15) Thus, performance texts and performance pieces that appear to expose and to question conventional parochial views of politically disempowered members of society, have proliferated with a renewed perception of the theatre as a potent medium for social commentary.

For example, the performance piece *This is For You Anna*, (1985), created by a collective of Canadian women theatre artists known as 'The Anna Project,' aims to confront its audiences with a collage of stereotypical patriarchal images of women and women's experiences. In doing so, this performance piece aims to illustrate the process by which a patriarchal ideology has created a *Weltanschauung* that serves to perpetuate violence against women. An aesthetic assessment of this performance piece can very well focus on the language and production methods by which this work involves a critical assessment of conventional patriarchal values and principles, in relation to women's prevailing demands for legal and political empowerment.

Engagement in dramatic discourse for its ideological connotations and implications appears to provide a means by which an audience can be sensitized

to issues of control and oppression that continue to be perpetuated by cultural institutions. A deconstructionist approach to the aesthetic reception of a performance text or performance piece, can provoke a spectator to reflect upon the potency of language to limit human awareness of socially and culturally condoned forms of oppression. For Birch (1991), performance texts ". are not simply neutral, ideologically uninvolved instances of different registers, but are institutionally determined, with certain registers more dominant than others." (p 77)

As a deconstructionist thinker, Birch even suggests that if one takes a critical perspective towards dramatic language, one's consciousness of the oppressive nature of discourse as a socially and culturally constructed medium may very well be enhanced (1991, p. 101). Aesthetic engagement with a performance text, involving more cerebral assessments of the underlying constricting ideologies that inhere to a particular work, can result in a renewed awareness of the need to revise and redefine prevailing conceptions for social and political organization.

Aside from focussing on the ideological implications of dramatic discourse revealed through performance, deconstructionist thinkers often refer to the aesthetic pleasure and gratification that can be derived by assessing those subversive elements of performance that seriously challenge traditional liberal 'humanistic' norms and principles for theatre practice (Birringer, 1991, p 31) Conventional theoretical concepts of dramaturgy and performance, based on those

seminal aesthetic properties of dramatic 'naturalism' or 'realism,' are often rejected in a perpetual rediscovery of alternative formal structures for the imagistic expression of dramatic meaning. In general, a postmodern theatre aesthetics often denies the metaphoricity of dramatic art in relation to some anterior reality, and thus the representational function of a theatrical event.

Similarly, the values of characterization, conflict resolution, and thematic unity are often rejected for a more intricate presentation of disparate actions between performance artists. As Kaye (1994) observes:

...the postmodern would entail a giving over of the modernist concern for singularity, depth and the stability of meaning to a freeplay of signifiers, to exhibitions of fragmentation and multiplicity, where meaning is shifting and undesirable (p. 17)

Thus, aesthetic pleasure and gratification often results from the novelty of alternative presentational modes that radically challenge received concepts and conventions of dramatic art (Bennett, 1990, p 103)

Postmodern critical theory, a foundational paradigm for alternative models of theatrical production and reception, is the theoretical context that often informs current views on theatrical performance. If one assumes, as most deconstructionist thinkers, that the standard liberal humanist definition of some constant 'empirical reality' is contingent upon socially and culturally constructed ideologies of meaning, then there can be no objective referents to empirical reality and few reliable truths about human existence. As a consequence, culturally and socially ingrained

conceptual frames of reference and theoretical assumptions, which are often implicitly conveyed through a dramatic work, need to be reconsidered as relative and illusory, in that they are mere constructs by which human beings order and interpret their experiences. As Birch (1991) indicates, with theatrical performances, "It is probably more appropriate not to talk about realities at all, but to talk about differing fictions being considered more suitable and appropriate/acceptable in different contexts, frames and conventions." (p. 36)

If, according to deconstructionist thinkers, what is commonly understood as 'reality,' is an illusion, then theatre practice should aim to confront an audience with this insight by continuously emphasizing the fictionality of performance as another social construct (Birringer, 1991, p. 3). As a cerebral exercise concerned with the critical analysis of performance, an aesthetic encounter with a dramatized play or performance piece would involve confronting an audience with the transitory qualities of socially defined epistemologies. According to most deconstructionist thinkers, aesthetic engagement would not involve vicarious 'emotional numbing', related to well-defined and detailed character conflicts and dilemmas, that is so characteristic of most 'bourgeois illusionistic theatre' (Boal, 1979, p. 56, Suvin, 1984, p.36),

Moreover, assuming that the multiple historical, political and cultural contexts of dramatic works cannot be entirely reconstructed through textual and/or performance analysis, deconstructive criticism often maintains a relativistic approach to the culturally and socially-defined interpretative processes by which

meaning is assigned to specific dramatic texts. Thus, it is highly unlikely that a work of art, such as a play text or a dramatized play, has meaning that can be revealed through rational and objective criticism. As Smith (1989) avers, according to most deconstructionist thinkers, "...interpretive criticism, in so far as it attempts to explain the meaning of a work of art, is meaningless, for all interpretative statements stem from misreadings and thus are false." (p. 171)

Assuming also that critical theorists are correct in denying the metaphoricity of most dramatic texts, emphasis is placed on deciphering a work's structural systems of signification, as well as the ideological underpinnings of interpretive 'texts.' In this respect, there is little regard for the moral and philosophical texture of a dramatic work that can engage both a cognitive and affective response. For Birringer (1991),

Postmodern critical theory, in spite of its insistent chatter about transgression and desire...has largely failed to account for its disinterest in the human condition and in the different physical and geographical realities of the distressed map of contemporary culture it draws. (p. 26)

In view of the general neglect to acknowledge the value of theatre as a philosophizing medium, through which multiple dimensions of existential reality and of the human condition are exposed for public scrutiny and reflection, this approach to theatre aesthetics will not be elaborated any further in this discussion. Since most postmodern critical theorists tend to neglect to address or to recognize

the value of ethical criticism for dramatic art, an alternative theoretical grounding of theatre aesthetics for this study is presented below.

A variant of the dominant and prevailing conceptual frameworks for literary and dramatic analysis, Schwarz's (1991) theory of a humanistic poetics acknowledges the metaphorical function of most works of fiction, including most plays (p. 3). Assuming that a playwright, like most artists of fictional works, has created a fictional world, "... an ontology separate and distinct from the real one.." (p. 11), a humanistic poetics affirms that a dramatized play can metaphorically and symbolically disclose some aspect of empirical reality for scrutiny and contemplation. As Schwarz affirms, humanistic criticism:

...addresses the relationship between the imagined worlds of texts and the real or anterior world for which the imagined world is a metaphor, and the relationship between the imagined world and the [artist] for whom the text is an expression-indeed, also a metaphor (1991, p. 11)

Consequently, the metaphoricity of most plays relies on a playwright's imaginative abstractions from a shared anterior reality, so as to expose and to examine some aspect of those intricate psychological, cultural, social, political, spiritual and moral dimensions of the human condition. Aesthetic encounters between audiences and fictional works, and in this case, between an audience and a dramatized play, can often enable a more refined awareness of those subtle and complicated motivations for interpersonal actions, interactions, and reactions. As Schwarz (1991) avers:

The focus of humanistic criticism is how people live in all their personal and cultural diversity; this encompasses the various hypotheses (philosophical, psychological, linguistic, socio-economic, and historical) for explaining how and why people behave, including their propensity for supernatural explanations - most notably but not exclusively theological ones.

(pp. 142-143)

In this respect, the current study will assume that a play, like most works of fiction, often originates from some philosophical and ethical frame of reference, from which an individual playwright has created his or her work. For Schwarz, a humanistic poetics is also concerned with understanding "...the texture of the moral and emotional experience..." a fictional work presents (1991, p. 8). Thus, a dramatized play becomes a potent medium by which prevalent and conventional views and perspectives of moral judgment and conduct may be tested, affirmed, or seriously questioned.

Moreover, the central assumptions of this theoretical paradigm recognize that a fictional work's formal elements are inextricably linked with its revealing commentary on empirical reality. Form and content reinforce one another in a continuous tension that creates the work and which can involve an audience in a focussed assessment of the work's structural and thematic conventions and innovations (Schwarz, 1991, p. 11). For the purposes of the following discussion on theatre aesthetics, it is assumed that the fictional 'ontologies' of most forms of dramatic art often examine and explore some dimension of the human condition,

most notably those complicated layers of the moral sphere and of moral agency

## 2. 2. Aesthetic Encounters and Dramatic Art.

Within the enclosed boundaries of the theatre's 'empty space,' (Brook, 1993, 1981), Nietzsche postulates that chthonian Dionysus playfully lurks in the shadows to captivate an audience's senses, to tantalize their perceptions, and to challenge their complacent views and conceptions of the human condition (Nietzsche, 1954, p. 953). The Apollonian eye of symmetry and order fashions the universe of discourse within which dramatic signs and signals, performance conventions and styles, will fuse together to create the fictional 'world' of the play. A symbiotic union of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, or of the two creative sources of psychic energy, often results in a formal recreation of a playwright's vision. In Aristotelian terminology, this refers to that discriminating 'thought' or perception of the human condition that is thematically foundational to the work. For Aristotle, this is the defining element of drama that "...controls every effect that has to be produced.' (Butcher, 1961, p. 93). In support of Aristotle's observation, Styan (1965) affirms that:

The true unity of action is the unity possible to the imagination, and this is probably what Aristotle meant when he suggested that a play must represent a complete whole in which the incidents are so closely connected that the transposal or withdrawal of any one of them would dislocate it.  
(p. 91)

According to Roberts (1971), the playwright's thought for the work is:



...the drive of the artist to express a felt significance, a governing concept of the play...It is the artist's point of view; it is his way of looking at the world. It dictates his use of all the other elements, of all of his materials as he structures them into a whole. (p. 52)

In fact, when a play is written, it is often with the intent of having an audience contemplate it and indulge in its peculiar vision of existential reality, as it is being performed on stage. Quebecois playwright Michel Tremblay (1978) reveals that:

My conception of a good play is one with a message...A good play for me has at least two levels. One level is what you see and hear; the other level is what you understand from the author's meaning. This latter is the most important for me. For me a good play is not a play that tells a story. Rather, it is the meaning that the playwright is trying to convey through his characters that is all important. (p. 280)

Similarly, English-Canadian playwright George F. Walker (1982) perceives his role as a dramatist as being that of a 'social critic,' and thus asserts, "To write anything is to be a critic of the times. But I don't start off with any answers...I guess I do want to change the world. But I won't teach anyone how to do it. I am teaching myself We will change it together " (p 221) Finally, playwright Judith Thompson (1994) is concerned with presenting to her audiences "simple moments of truth" which expose recognizable fears, anxieties and nightmares of the human psyche under the disguise of civilized behaviour (p. 186).

Part of the attraction and allure of the theatre experience is thus the

pleasure it can afford by impressing a distinct vision of those dynamic and elemental motivational factors, interplaying with specific environmental conditions to instigate interpersonal responses to conflict situations. As Aristotle suggests, "...it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen - what is possible according to the law of probability and necessity." (Butcher, 1961, p. 68) Similarly, Brook (1981) indicates that, "In everyday life, 'if' is a fiction, in the theatre 'if' is an experiment. In everyday life, 'if' is an evasion, in the theatre 'if' is the truth. A play is play." (pp. 140-141) An audience attending the performance of a play is often engaged to experience and to reflect upon the 'ifs' of human existence, those fundamental concerns and questions that inform a playwright's view of those multiple causes of interpersonal strife, individual pain and anguish.

According to Webster's dictionary (1961), etymologically, the word 'theatre' is derived from the Greek word 'theatron,' which means 'a place to see ' (p. 2369) 'Drama' is derived from the Greek word 'dran' which signifies 'to do' or 'to act ' (p. 685) According to Wilshire (1982), "*Theatron*, the word for theatre, is related to *theoria*, spectacle, but this can also mean speculation and theory. Thus, it is suggested that theatre, at its origins, was its own mode of speculating and theorizing about human nature and action." (p. 33) In this respect, theatre, in its multiple historical manifestations and productions, has often attempted to expose and to scrutinize those variegated dimensions of human pleasure, pain and suffering familiar to many of its audiences. Indeed, without the presence of

percipient spectators, theatre, as an art form, would lose its *raison d'être*, and therefore its generative vitality. The need for perceiving human subjects to contemplate and to delight in the creation of an image of 'virtual reality' (Langer, 1953, p. 325) complements the artistry and skills of a group of performing artists.

As an essential component of the theatrical event, the presence of the audience has caused a re-evaluation of the traditional and conventional perceptions of the primacy of the dramatic text, as a work of literature, above the actual performance of the play. It is generally agreed upon by most theatre historians and theoreticians that when discussing the aesthetic value of this art form, a clear distinction should be made between the play as 'text' (or 'play text') and the presentation of this 'text' as a dramatized performance (or 'performance text'), to be viewed by an audience (Beckerman, 1990; Bennett, 1990; Ubersfeld, 1982).

According to Aston and Savona (1991), "To examine a play for its literary qualities alone ignores its fundamental function as a blueprint for production, a theatrical event which is to be realised in two planes (time and space), not one." (p. 3) For Davis (1988), there is a need for reassessing the study of theatre as being synonymous with the literary analysis of play texts, arguing that the experiential value of dramatic art rests on its potency to engage an audience simultaneously on a number of levels of awareness and cognition (pp. 7-9). The aesthetic values of dramatic art can therefore be assessed primarily in light of the personal and communal encounters an audience enjoys with the production of a

play.

This is not to deny that the reading of a play text cannot in and of itself afford an aesthetic experience of a different kind and breadth. As one assimilates the dialogic exchanges between characters, and imaginatively situates these within the framing of the playwright's stage directions, one is emotionally and imaginatively engaged in the fictional character dilemmas explored by a play (Aston & Savona, 1991, p. 131). As a solitary endeavour, an imaginative engagement of the play text permits one to perceive, contemplate, and reflect upon those multiple dimensions of empirical reality that are being treated in the play. Engrossed in the progression of action and the clear delineations of characters and/or character types, the reading of the text can serve as a catalyst for vicariously experiencing feelings and thoughts, recognizable and foreign, through which the reader's perceptions of the human condition can be broadened and deepened.

For the purposes of this discussion, however, audience participation will be examined in relation to the encounter that takes place between the performed text and a group of spectators. In short, through performance, the dramatic text is given flesh, motion, and space, three formal elements that function to create a concrete image of 'virtual' reality for further contemplation. As Hornbrook (1991) avers, "The playwright's script remains words on the page until it is realized as a living text by actors." (p. 52) For Hornby (1986), "The dramatic illusion is a form of primary process thinking. It is pleasure giving, as primary process thought is

in general, because it presents us with a unified, coherent vision. We enjoy it because it is comprehensible." (p. 111) Similarly, Birch (1991) contends that, "Drama is about a present, rather than a past, determination of person, time and place because it occurs as performance (at any level) in the here and now." (p. 120) Confronting the presentation of the play's fictional 'world,' and attentively contemplating the dramatized situations enacted on the stage, lends itself to a different kind of aesthetic assessment and gratification which, it can be argued, distinguishes the theatrical event from other art forms.

For example, according to Esslin (1976), there exist some seminal differences between dramatic art and diverse forms of discursive literature (such as the short story, the novel, and the poem). First, the multilinear presentations of virtual action on the stage as opposed to the linear descriptions of actions and interactions in the discursive literary forms of the short story or the novel. In addition, the presence of a sub-text in dramatic art that conveys further insights into the motivational needs of dramatic characters, often intimated through their actions, as opposed to the degrees of descriptive abstractions by which a writer creates a gradual impression of a character's physical, psychological, emotional and social condition. Finally, the concrete, eternal present of a play's physical reality on the stage, as opposed to the perpetual past of most narrative forms (Esslin, 1976, pp. 16-19).

As Courtney (1990) indicates, "Theatre performance is an external representation of the dramatic metaphor, and like any other art form, it brings

about a self-contained and self-sustaining world." (p. 131)<sup>3</sup> Aesthetic focus thus centres on the pleasures to be derived by imaginatively receiving the illusion of 'lived realities,' allowing one's consciousness to be 'colonized' (Booth, 1988, p. 139) by the fictional 'world' of the play for the duration of the performance

A concrete image that is given the power to move in space and time characterizes the 'aesthetic field' of most theatrical events (Berleant, 1991, 1970), in which a spectator emotionally and intellectually participates. For Berleant (1991), the seminal features of aesthetic involvement with an art form such as that of the theatre implies a kind of, "(a)esthetic engagement [that] joins perceiver and object into a perceptual unity. It establishes a coherence that displays at least three related characteristics: continuity, perceptual integration, and participation " (p. 46) The dynamic character of attending the performance of a play can thus activate the play's potential for aesthetic insight into the intricate dimensions of the human condition and the complex layers of moral agency.

### 2.3 Dramatic Action, Metaxis, and Aesthetic Engagement in the Theatre

In most theatre performances, the audience is either initially confronted with an empty stage devoid of all living, breathing, feeling, and intuiting human presence, or often, as in the avant-garde theatre, with simply the physical

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<sup>3</sup>According to Shank (1969), "The methods of each art (i.e. dramatic art and literary art) are distinguished in part by the fact that one is intended to culminate in an audible and visible presence for the perception of a group while the other is intended to be read and experienced imaginatively by the individual." The Art of Dramatic Art. (California: Dickenson Publishing Company., p. 23.

presence of a performance's characters. In either case, the stage often lacks energy, action, and purpose. An initial interest may very well be effectuated by the appearance of this empty space. However, the space has to be filled with action, as generated through intrigue, conflict, suspense, complications, reactions and/or resolutions, as in most forms of representational theatre. Or, as with certain forms of *avant-garde* and performance theatre, the space functions as a structural element to elicit constant anticipation of some identifiable course of action.

With the appearance of dialogue, gesture, and/or movement, the action of a play has been set in motion, and the audience's interest has been secured. According to Beckerman (1990):

The audience is alerted to an unsettled present. Information given to the audience and knowledge available to it serve as pointers toward a relatively defined future. We are continually directed to that future, and it is in this respect that...drama is the art of the virtual future (p. 138)

As a play evolves to its inevitable conclusion, audience attention and curiosity are maintained with each successive framing of individual and collective actions that seem to carry it forward. As Elam (1980) indicates, "The dynamics of the drama derives from the suspension-and thus the projection into the future-of the purpose-success/purpose-failure of the sequence, so that every distinct act is replete with the possible global result " (p. 124). The process of framing actions compresses time and intensifies the expression of energies which gives the impression that these events are spontaneously being created before the audience's eyes. For

Brook (1993), "Life in the theatre is more readable and intense because it is more concentrated. The act of reducing space and compressing time creates a concentrate." (p. 11)

Aesthetic engagement intensifies with each successive reception and assimilation of stylistically concentrated actions, enabling a spectator to construct the fabula, or basic story-line, that is based on the plotting of dramatized events (Elam, 1980, p. 119). Thus, part of the pleasure of dramatic art often derives from imaginatively processing multiple impressions of diverse actions and interactions between dramatic characters, into some unified narrative whole, inviting speculation of the guiding principles of these dramatized events.

As actions multiply, extend and connect in such a concentrated manner, the audience is given the impression of life being lived within a palpable and visible extension of empirical reality, with all its complex dimensions. Part of the aesthetic appeal of attending the performance of a play is therefore in witnessing the enactment of virtual human actions, interactions and reactions, as these each progress to some contrived fulfilment. Consequently, as situations evolve and progress, aesthetic engagement is secured on a metaphorical level, which involves continuous schematic shifts to process projected allusions to empirical reality. As Brook (1987) asserts

An empty space makes it possible to summon up for the spectator a very complex world containing all the elements of the real world, in which relationships of all kinds-social, political, metaphysical, individual-co-exist



and interweave. But it is a world created and recreated touch by touch, word by word, gesture by gesture, relationship by relationship, theme by theme, character interaction by character interaction, as the play gradually unfolds. (p. 190)<sup>4</sup>

Aesthetic attention and engrossment is often maintained because the peculiar 'world' of the play is a formal construct that invites contemplation of its distinct logic and rationale for purposive, and sometimes non-purposive, conduct and behaviour. As Ubersfeld (1982) avers, a dramatic event often signifies:

. a gap-being-filled. It would not be going too far to say that the act of filling the gap is the very source of theatrical pleasure. Memory and utopia, desire and remembrance, everything that summons up an absence is fertile ground for theatrical pleasure. (p. 129)

Aesthetic assessment of a performed play usually begins with the audience accepting the simulated actions as if collectively constituting a distinct fictional 'world,' and therefore, agreeing to focus on the gradual development of enacted events and situations.

An assessment of aesthetic encounters with dramatized plays entails a recognition of the interplay between the symbolic world of the play and the spectator's individual reality (i.e. his or her cultural and social contexts). A living, breathing, thinking and feeling human subject interacts with a dramatized play and

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<sup>4</sup>For an insightful summary of Peter Brook's notion of the 'two worlds' of the theatre, please see Paul B. Cohen's (1991) article entitled, "Peter Brook and the 'Two Worlds' of Theatre" in New Theatre Journal, 37, 147-159.

often brings to each performance a plurality of referential frameworks through which meaning is assimilated (Bennett, 1990, p. 2). As Beckerman (1970) indicates, "The play projects doubly, to each member of the audience as an individual, sparking his or her private memories, and to the audience as a whole, in that distinctive configuration that it has assumed for a particular occasion" (p. 133). Each spectator often approaches a production of a staged play with a series of expectations and anticipations seeking to be satisfied through the performance.

The dynamic nature of the theatrical event is therefore partly due to the interplay of two contextual frames of reference that enable each perceiving agent's imaginative involvement and individual aesthetic assessment of a dramatized play. As O'Toole (1992) affirms:

The percipient's reality - what we know to be real, and what we bring to the drama in terms of our cultural background, experience, and attitude - is termed the real context, while the make-believe world of the drama which we have agreed to believe in together is termed the fictional context. (p. 13)

The process of imaginatively, or vicariously, participating in a performed play implies a series of attitudes, preconceptions, biases, experiences, and aesthetic skills that are brought to each specific production

Most theatre scholars refuse to conceive of the individual spectator as a *tabula rasa* who sits passively and absorbs the multiple images that are projected from the stage. Instead, they often extol the audience's evocative and responsive

(and sometimes physical) collaboration with a play's enactment (Esslin, 1987; Bennett, 1990). In this respect, it has often been assumed that there are two different, yet related 'worlds,' that comprise an aesthetic reception and engagement of a dramatized play. Thus, for Brook (1987):

Theatre only exists at the precise moment when these two worlds - that of the actors and that of the audience - meet: a society in miniature, a micro-cosm brought together every evening within a space. Theatre's role is to give this microcosm a burning and fleeting taste of another world, in which our present world is integrated and transformed. (p. 236)

As each of these 'worlds' rests on distinct frames of reference, a spectator often operates in both of these contextual frameworks, through which a *gestalt* of a play's primary rhythms, energies and drives coalesce to recreate imaginatively a palpable image of dramatic actions and interactions. According to Beckerman (1970), "Initially, the give-and-take occurs between the physical activity of presentation and the sensitized organs of perception in an audience. Gradually, the sensory response expands into the imaginative." (p. 145)

These two signifying systems operate in constant tension with each other to help enhance the multiple levels of meaning to be derived from a dramatized play. As Courtney (1990) avers:

The fictional world is an alternative to the actual world. The two operate together as a cognitive gestalt, so to speak: they share common properties such as the concrete reality of the actual, and many of their operations are

remarkably similar. The difference lies in our attitude towards them: we see the one as real and the other as 'not really real.' (pp. 18-19)

This constant interplay of these contextual frameworks of meaning stimulate aesthetic interest and maintain perceptual and imaginative engagement in the work. O'Toole (1992) refers to this interactive process as 'metaxis.' (p. 30) In short, metaxis describes that aesthetic process which enables a percipient spectator to keep personal attitudes, perceptions, and feelings in continuous tension with those expressed in the fictional 'world' created on the stage.

Indeed, it is through this interactive process that dramatized character actions and interactions are imaginatively apprehended and later contemplated upon by each spectator (Ubersfeld, 1982, p. 131). Consequently, this consistent imaginative transaction with a play's fictional events and their performing agents, enables a spectator to intuitively grasp those complementary conscious and subconscious dimensions to character actions and interactions. By absorbing and assimilating multiple impressions of relational encounters and conflict situations, a spectator aims to provide some meaningful synthesis of the disparate levels of meaning that are being constantly communicated through character actions and interactions (Brook, 1987, p. 125)

Each spectator's personal frames of reference often affect the quality of the aesthetic experience one can have with a play in performance. In addition to multiple conceptual constructs and cultural expectations, a spectator's frame of reference is often coloured by those lived experiences of personal and social

reality that operate during the aesthetic reception of a specific performance (Bennett, 1990, pp. 1-2). The process of deciphering the various levels of meaning of a dramatized play often relies on those philosophical, ethical, cultural and political perspectives, through which spectators interpret the social and interpersonal dimensions of dramatized events. As Esslin (1987) indicates:

To the many socially and culturally pre-determined conventions, assumptions, religious and moral beliefs, generic and technical pre-conceptions, we must add the personal store of assumptions and ideas, memories and expectations each individual brings to a performance.

(p. 149)

In short, one brings to the performance of a play certain theoretical constructs of existential meaning and purpose, a knowledge of historical events and awareness of topical social issues, and a familiarity with cultural institutions and prevailing social ideologies, which function to regulate social life. Similarly, an awareness of those deeply revered metaphors and symbols that refer to some metaphysical level of existence often provide a conceptual context for assessing themes and insights conveyed through a play's performance (Elam, 1980, p. 52; Harris, 1991, p. 40).

In addition, most spectators rely on those semantic and syntactic elements of language by which information is communicated, on a sensitivity to those poetic and discursive uses of language that aesthetically engage the emotions and the imagination, as well as on an awareness of gestural and vocal idiosyncracies

which convey a sub-text of motivations (Beckerman, 1990, pp. 80-81). From a structuralist perspective, the process of understanding a dramatized play involves an active decoding of those signifying elements and signification structures by which the moving image on the stage evokes thoughts and feelings from a perceiving audience. Finally, a spectator brings to a performance of a play a substantial resource of feelings and intuitions concerning human actions and interactions, by which he or she is able to identify and empathize with each character's situational predicament (Wilshire, 1982, p. 22).

Thus, aesthetic engagement and contemplation of a dramatized play usually involves a profound emotional, psychological, and intellectual penetration of the fictional 'world' that is being created on the stage. Through one's perceptions and contemplations of this fictional 'world,' one permits the formal properties of physical space and setting, of music and sound, and of costume, gesture, movement and dialogue, to imaginatively coalesce into various images of 'lived' experiences. By imaginatively participating in these dramatized situations and events, a perceiving spectator can be profoundly and deeply moved towards some profound insights of the human quest for existential meaning and purpose (Esslin, 1987, p. 155, Wilson, 1985, p. 11).

In light of the above, an individual percipient subject who attends the performance of a play relies on a series of conceptual and experiential frames of reference which serve to maintain aesthetic absorption with a specific performance. This aesthetic experience also involves a second frame of reference and that is

the fictional drama depicted on the stage. According to Beckerman (1990), then, the created illusion of actions and interactions:

...is gradually built up by the players. Earlier scenes serve as an imaginative background against which later scenes unfold. Suspense develops through an interaction between the foregrounded action and a sharply defined background of events that contradict or endanger the future of the foregrounded action. (p. 80)

Thus, as dramatic characters appear and interact with one another, as actions and interactions develop and proceed towards some sense of completion, aesthetic attention centres on perceiving those sensuous images of virtual action depicted on the stage.

In fact, the fictional 'world' of the play demands concentrated attention from a percipient spectator, who receives multiple forms of information from the stage with which to decipher the meanings of staged actions, and with which to intuit their purpose in relation to the general plot-scheme of a specific play. As Shank (1969) indicates, a dramatized play "...must be designed to interest the percipient, to focus his attention upon the work, to occupy his mind and empty it of extraneous matters so it can be impregnated with the import which has been objectified in the work." (p. 54) The spectator's personal and cultural contexts therefore operate in the creation of some meaning derived from the performance. As Cassirer (1979) asserts of most art forms such as dramatic art:

Even the spectator of the work of art is not restricted to a mere passive

role. In order to contemplate and to enjoy the work of art he has to create it in his measure. We cannot understand or feel a great work without, to a certain degree, repeating and reconstructing the creative process by which it has come into being. (p. 212)

Aesthetic reception and contemplation of a dramatized play therefore requires and exacts a focussed interpretation of the formal and contextual offerings it makes to an audience.

The presentations of such virtual actions and interactions often tend to maintain audience interest as these evolve and develop towards some future fulfilment, and often resolution. The illusion of 'lived realities' advancing towards some future sense of completion and often, transformation, seems to be one of the strengths of dramatic art to sustain and to expand initial interest in the situational predicaments of fictional lives. For Shank (1969), "It is because these acts are causally related that we are interested in what will happen even though the primary focus is on the present, that point in time when the causally related past and future are joined." (p. 44)

Thus, aesthetic focus and engrossment with a play in performance often results because of a keen and perpetual desire to experience some sense of closure of the multiple dramatic situations encountered by watching a play. By citing Gestalt psychology, Beckerman (1970) asserts that appreciating the completion of some dramatized activity implies that, "(c)losure is imaginative,...it embraces emotive and cognitive response so that it not only releases a rush of



feeling but also provokes a flash of awareness. Often, in the process of closure, we enjoy a heightened insight into human experience." (pp. 153-154)

Consequently, part of the aesthetic appeal of watching a performance lies in the ability of dramatic form to stimulate and to tease an audience's anticipations of the future fulfilment of character needs that move the play's plot forward. According to Beckerman (1990), there is a tendency in most theatre to cast the progression of the narrative into a sequence of duets, through which the play's action moves forward towards some resolution. It is by assimilating these multiple and variegated 'duets' that an audience participates intuitively, affectively, and cognitively in the growth and development of situational tensions. As Beckerman (1990) indicates:

Projecting action in performance demands sufficient clarity of agents and concentration of their energies in order to produce an impact on an audience....[the duet] offers an effective means for channeling the performers' energies so that the onlooker, the audience, can not only follow the events but feel the effect of the events. (p. 166)

Vicariously implicated in the gradual progression of diverse sequences of character interactions, aesthetic pleasure is often derived from anticipating the impact and force of some eventual fulfilment of a conflict-resolution. As Langer (1953) asserts, "This constant illusion of an imminent future, this vivid appearance of a growing situation before anything startling has occurred, is 'form in suspense.'" (p. 310)

A play in performance often reflects a conventional aesthetic property of

most dramatic art, which is that of the interdependent spatial and temporal dimensions of a play's progressive sense of 'virtual' reality. For Esslin (1976) "...a combination of spatial and temporal elements allows an infinite number of structural permutations between spatial unity in rhythmic diversity on the one hand and unity of pace and tone in a wide variety of visual changes on the other." (p. 50) Embodied virtual actions presented on the stage often serve as projections of movement in space and of the passage of time

Patterns of actions and interactions often give the impression that emotional intensifications and interpersonal tensions between characters and character types, generate events and conflict situations that carry the play to some final conclusion. As O'Toole (1992) indicates, "A fictional context is created, consisting of a situation and characters-the selected and focussed pattern of fictional or fictionalised human beings, their location and their relationships which are subject matter of the dramatic narrative." (p. 51) Thus, through dialogue, gesture, and movement, actions evolve into complex situations that function to convey temporal progression and spatial transitions.

Moreover, kinaesthetic and sensuous elements of dramatic art, as 'actualized' through the actor's craft, often aim to sensitize an audience to the illusion of a concrete and immediate reality. For Shank (1969), "the movement of the actor unifies time and space in the work of dramatic art by expressing time in space." (p. 50) It is this feature of a virtual reality confronting one's senses and one's imagination that makes of dramatic form a highly dynamic feature of the

theatrical event. According to Brook (1987), "A play in performance is a series of impressions; little dabs, one after another, fragments of information or feeling in a sequence which stirs the audience's perceptions...The intelligence, the feelings, the memory, the imagination are all stirred. (p. 46) It is no wonder then that Brook (1981) chooses to qualify the audience's aesthetic involvement with a dramatized play by borrowing from the French 'j'assiste a une pièce' (p. 127). Thus, spectators make sense of the multiple impressions communicated through a performance through a series of receptive affective and cognitive processes, that 'assist' their individual and collective understanding and appreciation of a performed play.

In fact, it seems that the formal constitution of a play in performance, although demanding continuous focus and contemplation, is often only complete in retrospect. As O'Toole (1992) asserts, "The dramatist takes a focussed event and characters and moves forward through its consequences, backward through its causes, or backwards and forwards to show the causal network." (p. 32) Similarly, Shank (1969) observes that, "Because the work of dramatic art extends over a period of time its form is never complete while the work is being experienced; it is complete only in retrospect, when the work of art no longer exists." (p. 44) Thus, the demand for various forms of intuitive, affective, and cognitive processing of a performance text, which are characteristic of most aesthetic encounters with dramatized plays, often produces a kind of aesthetic pleasure related to an active attempt to make meaning of the thoughts and

feelings communicated from the stage.

According to Courtney (1990), the 'manifest' content (or the subject matter of the dramatized fiction) and the 'latent' content of the dramatic metaphor (or the themes and issues explored through the play) constitute the meaning-giving substance of a dramatized play (p. 74). Aesthetic pleasure is thus derived from actively assessing how dramatic form, or the medium of the theatre, is used to broaden perceptions of some aspect of the human condition.

As a work of art, a play in performance results because of the multiple and complementary contributions of different theatre artists collaborating to present the play on the stage. For Chaudhuri (1984), "...plays are addressed to spectators *through* performers. Or, to put it differently, the reception of a play involves a "relay"-like process: the play is "received" first by performers and then by spectators." (p. 283) A group of spectators who attend a play are often exposed to a finished product that has evolved through the collaborative work of these individual artists. These artists often aim to communicate their own perceptions and interpretations of a playwright's overall vision for the play. As Shank (1969) asserts:

Using whatever materials serve their purposes - words, the actor's body and voice, sound, light, scenic and costume materials, paint, and makeup - dramatic artists create an audible and visible illusion of human action and

its setting which embodies the artists' collaborative conception (pp. 62-63).<sup>5</sup>

Thus, part of the aesthetic pleasure of contemplating the performance of a play derives from actively assimilating and assessing those presentational choices by which a group of theatre artists have attempted to convey an impression of the playwright's vision for the work. Interacting with a dramatized play may very well secure aesthetic attention and focus because of an additional interest in identifying and evaluating those materials, techniques, and presentational skills by which artistic effects are achieved (Ubersfeld, 1982; Beckerman, 1990).

#### 2. 4 Aesthetic Pleasure and the Formal Elements of Performance.

The multiple images of virtual action and interaction presented on a stage often cohere to create an illusion of a spatial and temporal material reality populated by fictional characters. Aesthetic interest is often maintained by the active discriminative perception of those artistic properties with which the 'world' of the play comes to life on the stage (Beckerman, 1990; Esslin, 1987). Part of the aesthetic appeal of interacting with the symbolic world of the play lies in the

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Known for his rather unconventional and revolutionary approaches to directing and staging the works of various Western dramatists, most notably the plays of William Shakespeare, Brook (1981), in his book, The Shifting Point, makes the following observations regarding his initial interaction with the dramatist's text: "There's a formless hunch that is my relationship with the play. It's my conviction that this play must be done today, without that conviction I can't do it...I have no structure for doing a play, because I work from that amorphous non-formed feeling, and from that I start preparing...The formless hunch begins to take form by meeting that mass of material and emerging as the dominant factor from which some notions fall away." (pp. 3-4). It is during the rehearsal process, in collaboration with other artists, that Brook perceives the performance to take shape and to arrive at some form.

pleasure to be derived from apprehending and assessing those formal elements which embody and present a play's conflict situations and character dilemmas (Ubersfeld, 1982, p. 130).

Thus, dramatic form usually evolves on the stage through the complementary functioning of dialogue, setting, costumes, props, lighting, and most importantly, the actors' skills in conveying their roles (Esslin, 1987; Shank, 1969). In order for a play to achieve its desired effects, these formal elements must effectively interrelate to convey the impression of some palpable 'reality,' within which situations arise and seek some future fulfilment and resolution. Assessing the production quality of a play's performance can therefore involve a perceptive appraisal of the skill and artistry which convey the illusion of virtual conflict situations and events.

As an essential element of dramatic art, dialogue often serves to enhance aesthetic pleasure because of its functional dexterity in conveying distinct messages to perceptive spectators. According to Elam (1980), dialogue "in its own right, is the chief form of interaction in the drama.. the action dynamic of the play is carried, above all, by the inter-subjective force of discourse" (p. 157). Dialogue often functions as an active force in situating the action of the play within specific social, historical, cultural, and political contexts, which individually and collectively convey the distinctive features of a play's fictional 'world'. As Beckerman (1990) indicates, "With the actor-to-actor exchange as the basis for the character-to-character portrayal, a self-enclosed world is created. It makes the

exchange between the two autonomous from the world of the audience." (p. 130)

In addition, dialogue, complemented by gesture, movement, and facial expression, often serves to indicate the personal, cultural, and social idiosyncracies of dramatic characters. For example, Highway (1988), a native Canadian playwright, in his play *The Rez Sisters*, integrates dialogue written in the Ojibway dialect with distinct forms of vernacular English, to present a more accurate portrayal of Canada's indigenous peoples. Similarly, Lambert's (1987) play, *Jennie's Story*, relies on the rustic drawls of a distinct prairie dialect to effectively situate her characters within a rural and agrarian agricultural community.

Dialogue also serves to convey those narrative elements which contextualize character motivations and courses of action, and reveal those biographical and historical details that often serve to provoke conflicting situations between a play's characters. Moreover, dialogue often functions as a catalyst for progressive interactions between characters, by which actions evolve towards some inevitable climactic fulfilment on the stage, and by which the plot is carried forward towards some final conclusion. As Beckerman (1970) asserts, "Stage speech is theatrical activity and, like any activity, is constantly interacting with action." (p. 234) In this respect, dialogue often functions to designate the diverse physical settings of dramatic actions, and can serve to suggest a transition of time and of locale.

Finally, dialogue appears to be an important means by which character needs, desires, and motivations are revealed, expressed, and often suggested. It

is often through the implications of overt statements in staged interpersonal encounters that additional information about character motivations, what has been referred to as the 'sub-text' of dramatic art, is conveyed to an audience. As O'Toole (1992) avers:

There is a deception underlying all dramas: the action is never what it seems; it is never merely representative of its surface meaning. It can even be suggested that the essential tension of drama consists of the disjunction between the surface text and the subtext (s). (p. 75)

Moreover, dramatic dialogue has rhythm, force, texture, and style, which can stimulate emotional, intuitive and physical responses from a group of spectators. It is no wonder that Brook (1987) refers to this formal element of dramatic art as the "...basic element of a play ." (p. 15)

As a mediator of the dramatic text, the actor in performance gives shape and form to the textual intricacies of the stylistic dialogue by which the playwright's views of human relationships are conveyed to an audience. Interacting with a dramatized play often results in a discriminating perception and sensitive appreciation of the deliberate artificial nature and construction of dramatic speech, which can often be a source of aesthetic pleasure (Ubersfeld, 1982, p. 130). As Bentley (1965) indicates:

Dialogue is bound by the exigencies of the drama alone. Hence a character in a play does not talk merely to show what he is like. He is limited in his utterances to what bears on the play as a whole, keeps it moving, advances



it just as much as it needs to be advanced, and the proper rate of speed.

(pp. 79-80)

Thus, often a play's dialogue, as a symbolic and stylized abstraction of conventional speech patterns, illustrates the power of the spoken word to evoke affective and intuitive responses to dramatized events and situations.

In the theatre, aesthetic pleasure can often be derived by the manner in which lighting is used to delineate space, to foreground action, and to indicate the progression of time (Esslin, 1987, p. 76). Often the use of lighting helps to convey the general mood of a particular scene, aiming to suggest a character's internal state of psychic disequilibrium or of emotional elan at the resolution of some conflict. Similarly, aesthetic attention often focusses on the constructed physical settings and their props, which in and of themselves help to enhance and to embellish the general feeling and aura of a particular scene (Aston & Savona, 1991, pp. 115-116).

Moreover, the colour and design of costumes often provide sensual delight in the presentation of characters, and can even suggest those historical idiosyncracies, and those social and cultural characteristics that define a particular character (Esslin, 1987, p. 61; Shank, 1969, p. 82). The manner in which costume lends itself to constrain bodily movements, as well as the ways in which individual costumes are handled by characters to convey information about their state of being, may serve additionally to enhance one's aesthetic assessment of dramatic characters.

Perceiving the play as a collaborative endeavour undertaken to express a playwright's perceptions of those intricate emotional and psychological levels of interpersonal and social relating, can enable some form of aesthetic gratification and pleasure. In discussing the 'metaphorical level' of aesthetic engagement that is made possible through the theatre medium, Esslin (1987) observes that the dramatic metaphor "...elevates individual facts into a general and generalisable perceptions about the nature of the world, life, the human condition and may produce profound insights." (p. 164) By utilizing the formal properties of dramatic art, an attempt is made to convey a playwright's perspective on a specific issue or concern, or perhaps even his or her philosophy of human existence, for an audience's reception and future reflection.

Dramatic art often succeeds if those recreative processes by which a production's structural properties are organized effectively to express a playwright's vision of the human quest for meaning, identity, and purpose. By engaging the viscera, a staged play often aims to enlighten through the affect, for it is through feelings that the artists' conception of the work are expressed. As Courtney (1995) asserts:

The knowledge gained in a performance is experienced; it is specifically not discursive but tacit. It is personal rather than explicit, corporeal rather than cerebral, active rather than contemplative, and transformative rather than speculative. (p. 51)

As a consequence, when theatre artists create for the stage, it is often with

the intent of sharing an intuitive and affective sense of a playwright's vision of some weakness, paradox, or strength within the human condition. This "...wordless conception embodied in everything the audience is intended to see, hear, or imagine-in what the characters feel, think, say, and do as well as the audible and visible setting [of the play]" (Shank, 1969, p. 173), signifies a dramatist's 'emotive view.' of living life, with all its faults, strengths, and limitations. It is no wonder then that often a powerful and impressive production of a particular play can leave an audience with numerous residual feelings long after the performance has been completed.

## 2. 5. The Social Dimension of Dramatic Art.

Because attending the performance of a play is a social act, success in conveying the emotional content of a particular play are often affirmed and reinforced by the collective response of a theatre audience. If the creation of an audible and visible image of virtual reality is the result of the creative work of a group of theatre artists, reception and appreciation of its aesthetic elements is often enhanced by the collaborative reactions of the audience members. As Ubersfeld (1982) asserts:

Theatrical pleasure is not a solitary pleasure, but is reflected on and reverberates through others;...The spectator emits barely perceptible signs of pleasure as well as loud laughter and secret tears-their contagiousness is necessary for everyone's pleasure. (p. 128)

Unlike other art forms whose aesthetic contemplation and assessment is

generally undertaken on a solitary basis (for example, reading a novel or a poem; engaging a piece of sculpture or a painting; listening to a recording of a symphony), attending the performance of a play usually involves an individual and a communal aesthetic experience. For Hyde (1994), there is "...an added dimension of pleasure in sharing selected events with others. ." (p. 32), and as a performing art, theatre has the marked distinction of maintaining a "feeling of communion" between audience and actors, and between audience members. According to Esslin (1976), one of the characteristic effects of attending a live performance of a play is what he refers to as the 'three-cornered feedback effect' (pp. 26-27) that qualifies the spectators' collective responses to a play.

In short, there is an interaction between stage and audience, and between audience members, which often creates a collective consciousness through which a performance is appreciated and understood. The three features of these social exchanges have been succinctly identified by Bennett (1990) as consisting of "a) audience-stage interaction in the field of fiction, b) audience-actor interaction; c) interaction in the audience." (p. 162) Due to this interplay of emotional reception and response to the fictional situations and predicaments presented on the stage, an audience can sense whether or not it has appreciated the profundity of a play's commentary on interpersonal relating, that is mediated through the actors' performances. In addition, any positive and/or negative reactions communicated by the audience to the actors often serves as meaningful signs to spontaneously adapt the performance to the respective needs of a particular audience, or often

to stimulate a reassessment of the production for future presentations (Marinis, 1987, p. 109).

In any event, the collective experience of a play in performance seems to result in an intuitive perception amongst the audience of a shared humanity with all members of the theatrical event (i.e. artists and percipient spectators), as well as an implicit recognition of the strengths and weaknesses of the human condition being depicted on the stage. As Bennett (1990) affirms, "The audience, through homogeneity of reaction, receives confirmation of their decoding on an individual and private basis and is encouraged to suppress counter-readings in favour of the reception generally shared." (p. 164)

This collective experience of a dramatized play often enables an audience to transcend the concrete image of virtual reality towards more profound levels of awareness and of appreciation of numerous insights into the human condition. According to Brook (1987):

In the theatre, these moments that break open the normal limits of awareness are life-giving and their special value comes from the fact that they are shared ..the experience in the theatre is truly wider because the individual is momentarily lifted into a communion with others. Such moments are climaxes, so there is a process that leads up to them. In this process, everything has its place: the themes, the techniques and the talents. What counts for me is the increase of perception, however short it may be. (p 232)

Consequently, the theatre experience has often been likened to a secular ritual event by which a community of spectators, individually and as a group, encounters and affirms its identity in all its multiple expressions, through the stage.<sup>6</sup>

An aesthetic experience of a dramatized play may enlighten a group of spectators about the complex processes by which humanity aims to structure and to assign meaning to social existence. In addition, from the perspective of social-consciousness-raising, the performance of a play can be perceived to be a 'gift' (Beckerman, 1990, p. 2) by which a group of artists aims to generate further reflections on the prevailing deficiencies and weaknesses that plague social life.

As Esslin (1976) avers:

...when a fine play in a fine performance coincides with a receptive audience in the theatre, this can produce a concentration of thought and emotion which leads to an enhanced degree of lucidity, of emotional intensity that amounts to a higher level of insight and can make such an experience...a

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Traditionally, it has been assumed by a number of theatre historians that as an art form, Western theatre evolved out of the Dionysian rituals performed in classical Greece. Although a number of theatre scholars presently disregard this assumption for a more secular perspective that acknowledges the human propensity for playful mimesis as the origins of dramatic art, one cannot strip this art form of its potential for ritual insight. It is not the intent of this discussion to engage this debate, but to draw attention to the fact that there persists a tendency amongst some theatre practitioners and theoreticians of drawing parallels between ritual events and the aesthetic experience of attending the performance of a play. For an interesting discussion of the similarities between theatre and ritual, please see Turner (1982), From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play (New York: Performing Arts Journal) and Schechner & Schuman (1990), Ritual, Play, and Performance: Readings in the Social Sciences/Theatre. (New York: Seabury Press).

memorable high-point in an individual's life. (p. 26)

Thus, an encounter with the fictional 'world' of a play can provide an opportunity to broaden one's perceptions and one's conceptions of those psychological, emotional, and spiritual elements that comprise the multifarious fabric of human existence.

The preceding discussion has identified some of the most significant aesthetic properties that constitute dramatic art. The following section will elucidate the process of aesthetic engagement with dramatic characters and dramatic conflicts, focussing on the manner in which dramatized plays can engage reflection on the complex dimensions of distinct forms of moral agency.

#### 2. 6. Fictional Lives and the Pleasure of Aesthetic Confrontation.

Attending the performance of a play often engages an audience's interest and curiosity because of the opportunities it can afford to a group of spectators to vicariously explore other lives within a fictional context. Moreover, by targeting the affect and the imagination, the performance of a play often appeals to a prevailing human need for imaginative 'playful' participation in variegated presentations of fictional lives and their respective predicaments. An aesthetic encounter with a dramatized play appears to satisfy a perpetual wish to transcend those multiple limitations of one's lived experience, while being aware of the self-contained distinctness of the fictional 'world' of a dramatized play. As Wilshire (1982) indicates:

An aesthetic funnelling and restricting-an aesthetic distance-regulates

the intercourse of 'world' and world. It is just because of this protection that the audience can uncover itself at its most vulnerable levels: its archaic mimetic fusions with others, and its odder and deeper sympathies, about which it has never learned to speak in words. (p. 23)

Similarly, Lewis (1985) asserts that, when an audience responds to these fictional characters as if they were real:

...the 'as if' must be understood to have an essential qualifying value: it registers the fact that, in responding, we at the same time know that this is not actual life, so that our response is, in various ways, different from what it would be in dealing in actual life with such situations as are represented. (p. 276)

Being aesthetically engaged with a dramatized play usually introduces a perceiving spectator to fictional characters who populate the 'world' of the drama, and whose actions, interactions, and reactions generate the plot of the play (Esslin, 1987, p. 114). Dramatic characters are often regarded to be the life-blood of dramatic art. As Wilshire (1982) indicates, "For us, characters enacted onstage are not verbal but physiognomic metaphors; we see and feel them to be like ourselves." (p. 94) Similarly, Langer (1953) asserts, "A character stands before us as a coherent whole. It is with characters as with their situations: both become visible on the stage, transparent and complete, as their analogues in the world are not." (p. 310) Conceived in the vibrant and fertile imagination of the individual playwright, and embodied through the narrative structures of the dramatic text,



dramatic characters often require the presence of human actors to re-enact their fictional predicaments before an audience. Part of the aesthetic appeal for attending the performance of a play lies in the pleasurable encounters to be had with these fictional characters (Bailin, 1993, p. 64; Swanger, 1993, p. 43; Wilson, 1985, p. 17)

As dramatic artists, stage actors often become the mediators through whom the characters' situational dilemmas come to life on the stage. According to Brook (1993), "We must remember that theatre is made by people and executed by people through their only available instruments, human beings. So the form is in its very nature a mixture where pure and impure elements can meet." (p. 156) Thus, the living, thinking, feeling and intuiting actor is usually responsible for infusing a role with movements, mannerisms, gestures, feelings, and speech, that seem to collectively impress and convey a particular interpretation of a character's needs, goals and objectives. As Brook (1987) asserts:

A role is a meeting, a meeting between an actor as a mass of potentialities- and a catalyst. Because a role is a form of catalyst, from outside, it makes a demand, and draws into form the unformed potentiality of the actor. That is why the meeting between an actor and a role always produces a different result. (p. 221)

For these fictional characters to impress their individual idiosyncracies and their respective peculiarities on a perceptive audience, the skill and artistry of the actors must effectively capture and maintain the spectators' aesthetic interest in each

character's predicaments.

Furthermore, a significant aspect of aesthetically contemplating a play lies in the pleasure and delight that can be derived from assessing the manner and technique by which an actor presents his or her role. As Ubersfeld (1982) observes, aesthetic pleasure in the theatre is:

...based on the desire to see the world imitated through the limited resources of human craftsmanship...The pleasure of the audience oscillates between these two attitudes: a fascination with magic recreation and the observation of a practice of imitation. (p. 130)

When a performance of a play leaves an indelible impression of a powerfully expressed emotive and perceptive view of the human condition, it is often to the actors' credit that the playwrights' vision has been effectively communicated to an audience. Moreover, the greater the role's demands on the actor's capabilities to assume the persona of the character, the more aesthetic pleasure is to be derived by actively discriminating the methods and skills employed to bring the character to life (Esslin, 1987, p. 59)

Often, the presence of a reputable actor in a particular performance may enhance the aesthetic reception of the production because of a sustained curiosity and interest in his or her distinct approach to conveying the part. As Aston and Savona (1991) aver, "A performer who has achieved fame and public recognition necessarily brings the sign of celebrity into play." (p. 102) Whether or not the character of Iago is performed by Dustin Hoffman in a Broadway production or by

some obscure amateur actor at a community playhouse, a basic fascination with the actor's dexterity, agility, and potency in the role often remains a prevailing source of aesthetic interest for most perceiving spectators (Wilson, 1985, p. 70).

Beckerman (1970) observes that:

Throughout a dramatic presentation, character grows by accretion. The initial image of personality, which is a fusion of actor and role, is amplified and modified by successive actions. Predictable patterns of behaviour begin to emerge and condition our expectations. The impression of character results from the accumulation of responses to action. (pp. 210-211)

Thus, consistency and accuracy in the presentation of a dramatic character are influential in securing aesthetic interest in a play's fictional characters and their respective situations.

A notable distinction has often been made between three specific, yet interrelated dimensions of dramatic characters that serve to maintain aesthetic interest in the fictional lives enacted on the stage. According to States (1985), dramatic character can usually be examined in terms of its three complementary parts, those of personality, character, and identity (pp. 88-89). Depending on the genre and style of a dramatic presentation, these distinct elements of dramatic character are either emphasized, and sometimes ignored.<sup>7</sup> A character's

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<sup>7</sup>The author of the current study is aware that in certain genres of dramatic art, such as the Theatre of the Absurd, 'imagistic' theatre, and the current forms of performance theatre, dramatic characters are often embodied abstractions, symbols

*personality* consists of those peculiar psychological, social, and cultural traits which distinguish him or her from the remaining collective of dramatic characters who populate the 'world' of the play (States, p. 90). Distinctive patterns of behavioral conduct, dialects and modes of speech, physical movements and facial gestures, style of clothing and make-up, and the repertoire of attitudinal and emotional expressions used to deal with situational conflicts, often coincide to convey the impression of a unique *personality* to an audience.

Thus, one can suggest that the tragically endearing transvestite Claude Lemieux, or 'Hosanna,' in Tremblay's (1992) play by the same name, reflects various distinguishing personality traits. From the forced effeminate gentilities consistently contradicted by the coarse *joual* that he speaks, to his style of dress that serves to remind the illusory trappings of a transvestite's existence, these qualities function to differentiate this dramatic character from the other personae in the play. In this respect, when a spectator confronts a dramatic character initially in a performance, it is such personal idiosyncracies which can secure aesthetic attention for the duration of the play

As these dramatic characters begin to interact, conflicting situations arise which usually progress towards some climax and eventual resolution. The process

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intimating some transcendent reality, or even ideal forms, abstractions and their subversive counterparts. In these 'ideal' forms, it would be difficult to apply States' character taxonomy effectively, nor is it the intent of this discussion to elaborate dramatic character in terms of various dramatic presentations. For this paper, the anatomy of dramatic character will be disclosed in terms of contemporary 'realist' theatre, to be able to elaborate on these character dimensions.

by which a dramatic character seeks to resolve a personal dilemma or to regain a sense of psychic stability, indicates those qualifying *character* attributes that often designate possible courses of action to be taken. As States (1985) observes, "Thus Character is the deeper (if later) part of [a dramatic character], his value sphere as defined within or against that of society, while Personality is his distinctive way of being himself." (p. 90) Character therefore constitutes those ingrained social values, political and cultural ideologies, which comprise that whole system of internal self-government with which a dramatic character reacts to the situational predicaments that confront him or her. As Wilshire (1982) indicates:

To be sure, theatre is usually dramatic, i.e. desiring, acting persons or characters-encounter obstacles to their desires and actions. It is these obstacles that test and expose the characters' mettle, expose the 'roles' they are playing, and who they are. (p. 97)

For example, in Tremblay's (1987) play, *Forever Yours, Marie-Lou*, an embittered patriarch of a traditional family is depicted as being both physically and psychologically abusive towards his spouse and his two children. Born and bred in a working-class environment that supports and perpetuates patriarchal values, one can argue that Leopold often resorts to sexually assaulting his wife Marie-Louise, because of an ingrained cultural ideology that severely denigrates the status of women in the eyes of most men. The morality of his choice of action thus assumes a different perspective when examined and assessed in relation to its social and cultural contexts

Through the interplay of *personality* and *character*, dramatic characters generate and maintain curiosity and intrigue in the fictional 'world' of the play. Impressions resulting from perceived emotional climaxes, sensitive self-reflections, powerful psychological transformations or resilient spiritual stagnation, are usually the kinds of responses with which dramatic characters endear themselves to an audience. As Ubersfeld (1982) avers:

...the pleasure of seeing human relations in their most conflictive and passionate forms, while one is feeling quite protected oneself (protected but concerned) and knows full well that no real blood will be shed-this is the pleasure...at the centre of all theatre. (p. 136)

In addition, the potency of dramatic characters to engage the spectator intuitively, imaginatively, and emotionally often lies in their evocative semblance as 'living beings.' States (1985) asserts that:

A dramatic character is, first and foremost, an intensified simplification of human nature: he is a Personality with a Character-someone who appears and behaves in a certain way and who carries within him a certain *ethos*, or disposition with respect to moral conduct and choice (p. 91)

As complex entities, dramatic characters often remind an audience of those distinct psychological, emotional, and spiritual states of being with which daily life is lived and often, endured (Wilson, 1985, p. 27) In short, an important focus of aesthetic interest during the performance of a play rests in witnessing dramatic characters evolve and/or stagnate in their perceptions of a valid personal identity, of the value

of interpersonal relationships, and of the significance of adversity in lived experiences.

If aesthetic pleasure often lies in the suspense generated from the dramatic characters who appear to be in the process of becoming, both formally and thematically, then part of the appeal of most dramatic characters often rests on the fulfilment of some expressed need or objective (Beckerman, 1990, 1970). Conflict usually evolves in a play because of opposing needs and desires that are seeking to be actualized and fulfilled. For Beckerman (1970), "The project is the concrete focal point of a character's energy, and it is the project that the performer enacts...That energy, or impelling force, can be conscious or unconscious, rational or irrational, defined or vague." (p. 71) Thus, as actions and reactions are frustrated and delayed, tensions grow and develop successively until the inevitable resolutions have been reached in a performance.

It is often because of what O'Toole (1992) refers to as "character tasks and goals," or similarly, what Beckerman (1990) refers to as "character projects," that one can perceive and appreciate the distinct *identity* of each dramatic character. According to States (1985), "Identity may be defined as the attachment of the [characters'] energies, voluntarily or involuntarily, actively or passively, consciously or unconsciously, to an enterprise." (p. 97) Fulfilment of these felt needs often provides a catalyst for dramatic action, through which character *identities* either transform or solidify and stagnate.

In light of the above, engagement in the plot of a play usually requires a

focused assessment and contemplation of character actions, interactions, and reactions in anticipation of the future fulfilment of implicit and/or expressed goals or 'projects.' Although solitary exchanges, in the forms of soliloquies, asides, and narrations, have been used in dramatic art to convey some insight into a character's psychological and emotional state of being, most plays rely on "binary exchanges" and "character contrasts" (Beckerman, 1990), to convey the emotional content of implicit or expressed needs and desires. These dynamic exchanges between characters often serve to sharpen one's concentration on those impassioned convictions, those reasoned hypotheses and conclusions, and often those irrational perceptions by which dramatic characters struggle to realize their goals and to deal with frustrated attempts at their fulfilment (Beckerman, p. 80). Each exchange builds on the preceding ones to create the illusion that these fictional lives have encountered obstacles which they have sought to overcome.

In short, these intermittent interactions are imaginatively reconstructed by the perceiving spectator into some causally linked whole that solidifies the processes by which character needs have been fulfilled and/or frustrated. As Beckerman (1970) indicates, "Imaginatively, we follow a path that runs parallel, not to the events themselves, but to the shifts of tension either between characters or between ourselves and the performers. This process may be called empathic parallelism." (p. 149) Consequently, part of the pleasure of watching a live play unfold before one's eyes lies in deciphering character motives and anticipating the fulfilment of their individual needs. Through this process, the individual spectator



is often able to intuit various insights into the complex levels of empirical reality, that constitute part of the intent of the theatrical performance. As Courtney (1982) asserts on the value of dramatic activity, and which applies equally to the fictional drama enacted on the stage:

Drama is the metaphoric representation of concepts and persons in conflict in which each participant is required either to imaginatively project himself into an identity other than his own through enactment, or to empathize with others doing so. This action is structured, occurs in real time and space, and typically demands intellectual, physical and emotional engagement and yields fresh insights into the human condition. (p. 94)

## 2.7 The Pleasure of Empathizing with Fictional Lives.

Dramatic art gratifies aesthetically the cognitive need for stimulation (Brook, 1993, p. 113; Courtney, 1995, p. 26; McGuire, 1974, pp. 179-180), as well as the affective need for imaginative playful activity (Courtney, 1995, p. 127; McGuire, 1974, pp. 183-184; O'Toole, 1992, p. 26; Shank, 1969, p. 117). To attend a play, regardless of how many different productions of the same play one has experienced, can provide a means for satisfying a perpetual need for intellectual and emotional stimulation. It is as though a staged performance can gratify what McGuire (1974) refers to as that "...exploratory drive that makes the individual characteristically curious, seeking after novelty, rather capricious, playful...[who] needs food for thought to escape from the aversive state of boredom." (p. 180) As Esslin (1987) asserts, the need to pass the time pleasurably through the

vicarious 'play' afforded by a theatre experience "...is the bedrock on which must rest all the higher gratifications that drama can bring, the basic objective that induces human beings to expose themselves to a dramatic performance." (p. 131)

In addition, the need for emotional arousal, expression, and response, or aesthetic catharsis, can be satisfied by identifying with dramatic characters so as to vicariously experience a multitude of feelings that can be personally gratifying and enlightening (Esslin, 1987, p. 184). As Brook (1993) avers, "The theatre, through the energy of sound, word, colour and movement, touches an emotional button that in turn sends tremors through the intellect." (p. 102) Experiencing emotions and situations that are often non-existent in their daily realities, spectators are allowed a cathartic release, enabling them to rethink and to re-evaluate multiple forms of emotional expression and response. As Hyde (1994) indicates, when as members of an audience "...we deliberately expose ourselves to the realities of ugly situations so that we can feel a part of them" (p. 33), there is a conscious attempt made to gratify a need to share in the suffering of others.

The pleasure to be derived by imaginatively engaging the vengeful rage of Walker's (1987) archetypal character, Zastrozzi, or the determined passion of Pollock's (1981) disillusioned heroine, Lizzie Borden, or even the pain and anguish of enforced sterilization endured by Lambert's (1987) tragic protagonist, Jennie, rests on permitting an audience to intuitively appreciate complex feelings that may or may not be familiar.

An important way in which dramatic art can help an audience to re-examine many of its cherished biases and preconceptions of social existence is by gratifying an affective need for identification (McGuire, 1974, p. 189). According to Hyde (1994), as a public art, theatre can gratify the need for regulated vicarious encounters with fictional lives and conflict situations (p. 34), often permitting an audience to witness, within a controlled situation, exalted, grotesque, disturbing and awe-inspiring forms of interpersonal behaviours (pp. 34-36). Thus, aesthetic interest and attention with a performed play is often secured through dramatic art's ability to maintain empathic identifications with fictional characters and their respective predicaments.

The 'imaginal self,' that is being transported into each character's situation allows for a form of visceral stimulation that can lead to a more profound awareness of human pain, anguish, suffering or spiritual elation. As Wilshire (1982) asserts:

The actor stands in for the character. But the character is a type of humanity with whom the audience members can identify, either directly as a stand-in for his own person, or indirectly as a stand-in for others whom the audience member recognizes, and with whom he can be empathetically involved. (p. 22)

Similarly, Hornby (1986) observes that, "(t)his identification is not displacement. It is instead an expansion of the ego boundary that defines our concept of oneself. We both remain who we are and become the hero on the stage." (p. 112)

Moreover, Courtney (1995) suggests that what distinguishes aesthetic engagement in the theatre is that tacit 'as if' thinking that can allow for some distinct forms of cognitive and affective transformations. For Courtney (1995):

In any world of 'as if,' there are two types of transformation. First, people think 'as if' they are different from their everyday selves. Second, 'as if' acts transform what we know. Transformation of the persona gives us a new perspective on an event. We learn more about it and this changes our knowledge of it. (p. 14)

A significant aspect of aesthetic gratification to be derived from attending a dramatized play therefore lies in those multiple insights into the human condition that the fictional lives of these characters can convey.

As percipient spectators of a dramatized play, an audience often identifies with those emotional elements it intuitively recognizes in the characters' attempts to realize their respective needs. Part of the aesthetic appeal of watching these fictional conflicts and dilemmas unfold on the stage results from the parallel patterns of feeling that can be evoked within the audience (Ubersfeld, 1982, p 134; Wilson, 1985, p. 17). Through a process of empathic identification and vicarious impersonation, what Courtney (1982) refers to as "re-play," (p. 6), spectators actively engage the obstacles experienced by these fictional beings

To watch a play allows for an ideal opportunity to live other lives; to experience familiar and alien emotions, and to contemplate unexpected resolutions. As Brook (1987) observes, the paradox of the theatre experience is

that:

...because you are in safety, you can go into danger. It is very strange, but all theatre is based on that. Because there is a greater security, you can take greater risks; and because here it is not you, and therefore everything is hidden, you can let yourself appear. (p. 231)

Similarly, according to Hyde's (1994) detailed classification of those variegated needs and desires often gratified through the pursuit and enjoyment of the public arts, which is partly based on Maslow's taxonomy of human needs (Aronoff, 1967; Goble, 1970), to attend the performance of a play can satisfy the need for amusement, for distraction and for diversion from the daily problems of lived existence (p. 29).

Dramatized conflicts and situational dilemmas become an important means for sensitive empathy that can often lead a spectator to enlightened perceptions of those multiple faults, weaknesses, and strengths of being human. As Shank (1969) indicates, "The arousing of emotions in the percipient may help to keep him focused upon the work and thereby enable him to grasp the knowledge which is revealed, but such emotional excitation is a means, not an end." (p. 177) In discussing the effects of aesthetic catharsis to produce insights into the human condition, Paskow (1982) asserts that:

...aesthetic catharsis is neither simply edification nor a 'clarification' of external events; nor is it a harmless pleasure produced by physiological change. It is an emotional response appropriate at once to a sequence

of dramatic events and to the spectator's most significant individual and human possibilities...Finally, the peculiar cathartic pleasure that Aristotle alludes to but does not explain may be viewed as the spectator's reaction to his own global transformation. (p. 64)

Similarly, Hyde (1994) maintains that the kinds of emotional purgation, spiritual dissonance and disturbance afforded by dramatic art, can enhance a renewed consciousness and a sensitive discrimination of those prevailing needs for moral and social reform (pp. 27-28). Finally, Brook (1981) indicates that through aesthetic catharsis:

...emotion is continually illuminated by intuitive intelligence so that the spectator, though wooed, assaulted, alienated and forced to reassess, ends by experiencing something equally indivisible. Catharsis can never have been simply an emotional purge: it must have been an appeal to the whole man. (p. 126)

In addition, character reactions and responses often reflect those cultural ideologies and social values that seem to inform a particular character's behaviours. As Esslin (1987) avers, "All drama is a purveyor of ideological and political messages, whether it openly questions the values of its society, or,...tacitly accepts and serves to reinforce them." (p. 158) Thus, an audience can be challenged on the level of cultural identity by being made conscious of those systems of thought and of those cultural institutions that can, and do, affect social interactions. According to Hornby (1986), "Plays often provide the means for

examining the ideologies by which we live." (p. 64) As a potent catalyst for critical thought and deliberation, a play can expose those oppressive and often dehumanizing elements of a particular social order, with which an audience may or may not be acquainted. In this respect, through the exploration of such discrepancies, an audience's need for critical self-examination can be answered by a dramatized play.

As illustrated above, dramatic art can also enable a group of spectators to re-evaluate many of their perceptions and perspectives of the intricate dynamics of interpersonal relating and social intercourse. In short, by engaging the audience to imaginatively play, dramatic art often enlightens, raises awareness, and enhances consciousness of prevailing social issues and concerns. Consequently, the appeal to utilitarian motives (McGuire, 1974, p. 182) can be just as powerful a motivation for attending the performance of a play. As a communication medium, McGuire (1974) would suggest that theatre:

By acquainting the person with issues, whether in the passing political scene or the perennial human condition...can facilitate the person's developing an attitude or point of view, which ideological development itself can be a gratifying, self-enhancing activity besides furnishing the basis of subsequent action in word or deed that might constitute a further rewarding self-expression. (p. 185)

Hyde (1994) asserts that a play, as a public art form, can satisfy the need for intellectual stimulation by dealing with prevailing social, cultural, and political

issues, as well as with recent and past historical events, that can engage an audience to reassess their knowledge and awareness of these specific issues and events (p. 33). Furthermore, a play can gratify the need for assessing multiple forms of interpersonal behaviour, thus challenging an audience to re-evaluate many of its assumptions of appropriate forms of interpersonal and social conduct (Hyde, 1994, p. 23).

Often by examining prevalent social issues, and the resulting injustices from these, dramatic art can provide a controlled release for the expression of emotions resulting from perceptions of human pain, anguish, and misery. For Brook (1981), through a dramatized play, a playwright often "...challenges the audience truly when he is the spike in the side of an audience that is determined to challenge itself." (p. 134) By doing so, a play can provoke spectators' emotions in order to stimulate the intellect and the imagination. Tacit awareness of dramatic characters' motivational needs often serves to broaden and to deepen perceptions of tragic events, which leads Eldridge (1989) to conclude that the value of enacted tragedy lies in its ability to "...clarify or illuminate what is pitiable and fearful to human life. It makes clear to us how the human life we share with tragedy's protagonists, with whom we identify, is typically liable to include significant, undeserved, and anticipatable suffering." (p. 288)

Thus, part of the value of tragic resolutions played-out on the stage lies in their potency to stimulate an audience to seriously reflect upon possible remedies for the prevailing ills, deficiencies, and inequalities that plague social existence



As Hyde (1994) indicates, plays "...that arouse in us powerful emotions, and then fail to purge them, often force us to continue to think about the issues raised, and to discuss them with others. This could lead to demands for social change." (p. 62) Furthermore, Brook (1987) indicates that, "(i)f a play does not make us lose our balance, the evening is unbalanced. If a play confirms anything that we already believe, it is useless to us Unless of course it confirms the real belief that theatre can help us to see better." (p. 54)

The opportunity to critically consider social reality is often enabled through multiple enactments of political, social and historical injustices, which allows for an increased awareness of the prevailing need for social reform. As Beckerman (1970) asserts, often a playwright relies on the social, cultural, political and moral ideologies and principles of a particular community to explore the different dimensions of a specific issue or theme (p. 139). Consequently:

The background can represent communal values with which the dramatist is in accord and which he confirms sympathetically through the working of his action. In contrast, the background can represent values which the action is calculated to attack, directly or indirectly.

(Beckerman, 1970, p. 140)

Depictions of fictional characters engaged in conflicts originating from the prevalence of discrimination, oppression, violence, and widespread moral corruption, often aim to expose a group of spectators to those complex systems of values and beliefs that condition human actions and interactions. Moreover,

dramatic exposition of these social issues on the stage often attempts to expose those cultural and political institutions, and those ethical systems of thought, that seem to help perpetuate the oppressively dehumanizing effects of prevailing social injustices.

A performance of Foon's (1982) play *Skin*, for example, examines the prevalence of ethnic and cultural prejudices and systemic forms of discrimination in Canadian society. With a balanced dose of humorous and tragic situations, Foon challenges many false securities of a highly publicised vision of a multi-cultural Canada. He succeeds in this commentary on Canadian society by exposing the blatantly discriminating attitudes and practices of Canadian educational and law enforcement agencies, as experienced by three culturally distinct adolescent youths. Through his play, Foon aims to challenge his audience to critically reflect upon prevailing misconceptions and presuppositions of a supposedly culturally accepting society that values all of its citizens regardless of their ethnic and cultural origins.

In a more tragic vein, Ryga's (1971) play *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* paints a shocking portrait of the Native Indian's plight as a consistently oppressed and violated pawn in the white man's world. A series of vignettes recounting the protagonist's, Rita Joe's, earliest memories of her life on an Indian reserve with her family are alternately juxtaposed with the numerous dehumanizing encounters with the Canadian justice system. Rita Joe's life in the city traces the gradual process of objectification she undergoes in a world dominated by a racist and patriarchal

system of beliefs, disturbingly reflected in the various patronizing comments inflicted upon her by the symbol of white male authority, the Canadian magistrate. As an example, in one of Rita Joe's numerous trial scenes, the magistrate in charge of the proceedings remarks: "Don't blame the Police, Rita Joe! The obstacles to your life are here, in your thoughts...possibly in your culture." (1971, p. 68)

At the end of the play, Rita Joe is raped and murdered by three unidentified white men. Once again a community of spectators attending this play can be enabled to re-evaluate the tolerance of violent oppression of indigenous peoples in Canadian society. In addition, an audience engaged in the dilemmas of this play can be challenged to assess their personal implications in the persistent forms of racial bias and discrimination of a distinct group in society. One fundamental question this play can pose to a professed society of civilized human persons is: Are all Canadians equally responsible for the raping and destruction of native peoples by a prevailing conspiracy of tolerance and silence? Although this question may be political, it also aims to engage some reflection from a moral perspective, inviting speculation on the perceived value of human persons, for a more just and equitable social coexistence.

By scrutinizing unjust social ideologies and cultural practices, a play can provoke further reflection regarding the prevailing need for moral justice and for viable and desirable forms of moral conduct between individual persons. For Esslin (1987), the moral impact of most theatre lies "...in its ability to expose dominant

views, attitudes and values of a society...to public outrage and discussion and thus gradually penetrating the consciousness of society." (p. 172) For Novitz (1993), as a work of fiction, a play can foster moral reasoning because it can help "...sharpen our sensitivity to moral issues and increase our awareness of the sorts of quandaries and difficulties encountered by people who would otherwise be the victims of ill-considered judgments." (p. 592)

Refusing to be moralistic, most plays raise important ethical considerations that need to be addressed. It is often left to an audience to deliberate the moral implications of certain conflict resolutions, thus provoking some profound philosophical inquiry into acceptable and valid forms of moral coexistence. Through an aesthetic process of emotional identification and imaginative impersonation, speculation can thus be stimulated for the manner in which human persons shall choose to define themselves as moral persons. As Courtney (1995) indicates, "By interacting with dramatic characters, the power of a cognitive change that can ensue results from its human context. It is ontological, it is a form of knowing how to Be." (p. 26)

As an art form, the theatre often provides an audience with a unique experience that informs while it entertains. The performance of a play is often an invitation to engage in a highly stylized enactment of virtual actions and emotions that have the ability to challenge an audience to re-evaluate its most valued perceptions of itself. The fictional 'world' of the play not only stimulates and mesmerizes, but often aims to revitalize forgotten ideals and principles for human

relating and social coexistence. It is the intent of most plays to leave an audience sufficiently in doubt about those conceptual and metaphorical systems of interpretation by which human persons often define their relationships with their world and with others. In short, engaging a dramatized play can function as a valuable learning experience through which perceiving spectators are enticed to seriously reflect upon the necessity for reconsidering and re-evaluating cherished values and beliefs. As Wilshire (1982) avers:

Together with the actors we alienate ourselves as characters so that we can return to ourselves as persons...The actor lends his body and soul to use by the community: its exploration of actual and possible types of person and interpersonal existence. (pp. 99-100)

A play involves play. As a medium for examining the human condition from both a philosophical and a moral perspective, most theatre can challenge an audience to imaginatively visualize different possibilities for human relating and communal living. As a pedagogical tool, dramatic art can serve to broaden perceptions and perspectives of social and existential reality, allowing for subsequent discussion and debate for the creation of a more just and a more humane coexistence.

## 2. 8. Assessing the Moral Sphere Through Dramatic Art.

The fictional world of a play often functions as a visual and audible metaphor of some 'lived' reality, exposing certain dimensions of the human condition. As Wilshire (1982) indicates, "Through the proxy of theatre's drama we

discover actual and possible 'dramas' of everyday life in which we are tested and confirmed, both individually and collectively." (p. 40) An aesthetic encounter that transpires between an audience and a dramatized play can often enable a more refined awareness of those subtle and complex motivations for interpersonal actions and reactions to conflict situations. As Bruner (1986) affirms in relation to fictional narratives, which equally applies to most plays, dramatized situations:

...define the range of canonical characters, the settings in which they operate the actions that are permissible and comprehensible. And thereby they provide, so to speak, a map of possible roles and of possible worlds in which action, thought, and self-definition are permissible (or desirable) (p. 66)

Through dramatized situational conflicts, most plays explore some dimension of moral judgment and moral action, often aiming to present a more detailed enactment of those contextual factors and circumstances that serve to create morally problematic situations. In this regard, as a work of fiction, a dramatized play can function as an important medium through which prevailing and conventional moral values and principles are tested, seriously challenged, affirmed, and often discredited. Consequently, dramatic art can prove to be a valuable instructional medium for developing a more relational approach to the study of morality, which refocusses attention to those intricate processes of moral choice and moral conduct.

As a self-sustaining and enclosed 'world' populated by fictional characters

operating from distinct cultural, ideological, and moral biases, the visible and palpable actions and interactions presented on the stage often offer a concrete perspective on those intricate levels of moral agency. Encountering a staged performance of a play usually entails a focussed absorption with a fictional 'world' that functions according to its own rules and contingencies. As Harris (1991) indicates, "The carefully crafted action on stage recalls, by way of denotation not reproduction, a recognisable narrative which then serves as a partial metaphor for the nature of reality in which the audience live." (p. 40)

The drama created on the stage, often consisting of heightened episodes of suffering, pain, anguish, joy and elation, invites multiple interpretations of dramatized actions and interactions, thus stimulating visceral and intellectual responses to the intricate conflicts and dilemmas endured by dramatic characters. Brook (1993) asserts that, "What holds our attention is the interplay between one person and another; the social context, always present in life, is not shown but is established by the characters" (p. 34) Thus, intuitively responding and intellectually assisting in an imaginative 'recreation' of dramatized conflicts, often involves a conscious suspension of disbelief to 'playfully' engage the fictional world of the play.

The intricate process of imaginal identification and impersonation, or recreative "re-play," (Courtney, 1982, p. 3), resulting from an aesthetic experience with a staged play, often accounts for maintaining interest and curiosity in dramatized conflict situations. Courtney (1982) observes that:

"Re-play is re-cognition," as Marshall McLuhan says...The knowledge we obtain through such action becomes highly significant to us. We have experienced it, been through it, relived it. Thus, we feel it; it has emotional significance for us and will be remembered. In such a way, dramatic learning is highly effective, mingling cognition and feeling into a whole experience that deeply touches the self. (p. 6)

Aesthetically, this fictional world engages a spectator on a dynamic continuum of perception and interpretation that can enable a more intuitive and affective awareness of those multiple subliminal factors that motivate moral conduct. According to Swanger (1993), works of fiction, such as dramatic narratives, have the power to generate "empathetic knowledge," (p. 46) in perceiving subjects. In this respect, dramatic characters, caught in situational conundrums, can often provide a spectator with primary process learning, characterized by a quality of knowledge that "...enables the learner to enter the subject, and have it enter him or her. It is the cognitive and emotional internalization of knowledge." (Swanger, 1993, p. 46)

Similarly, Courtney (1982) asserts that dramatic art elicits.

...'as if' thinking which is based on the ability to 'put oneself in someone else's place,' which is essentially a dramatic act. It can lead us to see both sides of a question, and the tensions between them. It can lead us to envisage a whole variety of possibilities within a situation. (p. 54)

As sensuous, and erotic, symbols of recognizable and identifiable forms of human



angst, anger, misery, determination, and pleasure, dramatic characters can evoke spontaneous emotional reactions that often provide insights into those complex levels of moral agency.

As metaphorical intimations of embodied human suffering and pain, dramatized conflicts and dilemmas can stimulate a perceiving spectator to transcend towards a more sensitive consciousness of those elemental yearnings and needs seeking expression through moral conduct. Courtney (1995) suggests that:

It is the feeling power of the dramatic metaphor that creates consciousness and self-consciousness. Thereafter, our conscious self oscillates between here and there, and now and then, as a sign. We become a metaphor of ourself-we feel ourself to be 'a costumed player.' This occurs in play... and in the theatre. (p. 23)

Vicariously participating in these fictional lives involves an important emotional and psychological process through which a group of spectators can embrace these embodied others as symbolic representatives of prevailing flaws and strengths within the human condition.

Since aesthetic encounters with these dramatic characters often generate empathic identification with their individual dilemmas, these fictional lives become an important resource for transforming perceptions of what it means to be moral. In short, dramatic characters often function as metaphors of existential *Being*, serving as potent reminders of what ails the human condition and what possible

means exist for recreating social and moral coexistence. As Wilshire (1982) contends, "The actor lends his body and soul to use by the community: for its exploration of actual and possible types of persona and interpersonal existence." (p. 100)

Representing a playwright's conscious and subconscious fears, anxieties, and idealistic yearnings, dramatic characters often offer themselves as mimetic symbols of a shared humanity, iconically alluding to the social, cultural, political, and ethical dimensions of empirical reality. This has led Brook (1993) to assert that, "Theatre can reflect every aspect of human existence, so every living form is valid, every form can have a potential place in dramatic expression." (p. 115) Similarly, Wilshire (1982) indicates that:

The actor stands in for each of us. He models a response to a difficult situation which, in one form or another, might befall any of us. Standing in for us in public, he authorizes our anxiety in such a situation, as well as our determination not to collapse in the face of the difficulty (p. 22)

Perhaps the most impressive aesthetic quality of dramatic art is its ability to allude concretely to prevalent social mores, values, beliefs and ethical perspectives, often in a realistic or surreal manner

In this regard, part of the aesthetic interest and appeal of most dramatized plays stems from a tacit and implicit realization that these fictional lives bear certain close affinities to actual lived experiences within an anterior reality. Schwarz (1991) contends that the aesthetic value of fictional characters, whether

encountered in a novel or in a play, lies in their ability to convey multiple insights into human psychology, moral judgment, and interpersonal behaviour because:

...character is the most metaphoric ingredient of fiction: we think of it as representing larger patterns of behaviour because we need to. Moreover, we do not think of depictions of humans as other; we see them as metaphors of ourselves. (p. 75)

Similarly, Shank (1969) asserts that, "In creating action, including what characters feel, dramatic artists use their understanding (not their feeling) of what such a virtual person might feel under certain circumstances and what he might do as a result " (p. 122) Attending the performance of a play can thus be regarded as an important means to broaden, cultivate, and refine conventional perceptions of human behaviour, as symbolized by these characters' distinct forms of moral agency.

In short, these fictional characters often assume a distinctly unifying existence of their own, situated within particular historical, cultural, and social contexts. Moreover, dramatic characters often embody diverse psychological, emotional, and ideological attributes that condition their behaviours and illicit their responses to conflict situations endured within their self-contained 'worlds'. When responding to these characters, one may suggest that "...we think of the personality of characters - their public personae and quality of their psyche -their anxieties, frustrations, and obsessions...their moral strength and reputation." (Schwarz, 1991, p. 74) Aesthetic interactions with these fictional characters often

implicates an audience in a more detailed assessment of those contextual factors, metaphorical schemata and systems of thought by which these characters function, and according to which they choose to interact morally with others.

According to O'Toole (1992):

One of the most fruitful fields for the creation of dramatic tension, and arguably the basis for the majority of dramatic subject matter, has always been the dissonance between these sets of characteristics, which impose constraints, often conflicting and contradictory, upon the characters. (p 19)

Character 'narratives', embellished by distinguishing biographical details, extend the unifying power of a play to seriously engage an audience in multiple reflections of prevailing and alternative forms of moral agency (Esslin, 1987, p. 114). In this regard, the power of transcendence often afforded by dramatic art enables an audience to experience a more profound awareness of those limitations and deficiencies in structuring its own perceptions of appropriate forms of moral conduct.

By imaginatively identifying with the diverse characters encountered on the stage, an audience is often able to decipher those values that constitute a character's ideological, ethical and often philosophical, point of view (Aston & Savona, 1991, p. 47; O'Toole, 1992, p. 18). Discussing the ability of fictional works to maintain interest and curiosity in these fictional characters, Schwarz (1991) asserts that "...Although modes of characterization differ, the psychology

and morality of characters must be understood as if they were real people; for understanding others like ourselves helps us to understand ourselves." (p. 5)

Dramatic characters may be regarded as potent symbols of shared ideologies, and of ethical perspectives with which an audience can identify and/or empathize.

For example, in Bouchard's (1990) play *Lilies, or The Revival of a Romantic Drama*, stringent dogmatic prescriptions of the Roman Catholic faith against all 'unnatural' forms of sexual expression, most notably that of homosexuality, are thematically symbolized through the character of Jean Bilodeau. The sanctimonious zeal with which Bilodeau persecutes the two male lovers only serves to support the dominant prejudices against homosexuality supported by a conservative patriarchal society. In this respect, a moral perspective concerning a specific form of human sexual relating is seriously challenged and critiqued through the dramatic treatment of homosexual love in this play. Consequently, an audience attending the performance of this play may be engaged intellectually to reflect upon their personal views and their culture's biases concerning the prevailing forms of discrimination and prejudice against a specific social group because of sexual preference.

Character portraits of dramatized frustrations, aspirations, and fears confined within distinct environmental contexts, can serve to sensitize an audience to the precarious, and often oppressive and dehumanizing, ideological constructs and systems of thought that often influence interpersonal relating. As Haines (1989) indicates, the role of a fictional work, including a play, is:

...to raise consciousness about the epistemological choices we have made in our system of beliefs (and prejudices). We discover not only what we don't know, as we are informed by what the artist communicates through intelligent selection, arrangement, and creation of narrative, but also what we do know: filling in the indeterminacies of the text reveals our point of departure. (p. 40)

Part of the value of dramatic art lies in its ability to extend consciousness of those knowledge schemata by which human persons choose to assign moral meaning to interpersonal relating and social conduct.

Aesthetically engaging a caustically realistic portrayal of situational conflicts and dilemmas that result from opposing ideological, ethical, political and/or religious views, or interacting with a poetically surreal abstraction of archetypal longings, often lends itself to serious reflection of those moral and nonmoral values exposed in a dramatized play. As Brook (1987) asserts, "Every person carries with him a hierarchy of values according to which he approves or condemns. The theatre offers the possibility of seeing whether these values have been imposed from the outside or whether they are truly part of one's own convictions " (p. 235). Thus, often an audience becomes sensitive to its own limitations of perception, awareness, and understanding of the intricate layers of moral agency. This kind of awareness can lead to further reflections of what it means to be normatively human.

A dramatized play often affords an experiential context for critically reflecting

upon and assessing the multiple dimensions of moral agency with which an audience may or may not be familiar (Esslin, 1987, p. 172). A play often provides concrete, audible and visible portraits of fictional persons struggling to resolve some moral conflict, or to fulfil some need that implicates him or her in some form of moral conduct. In this respect, most plays can serve to broaden and deepen an audience's awareness of those complex levels of moral judgment, moral choice and conduct, given the distinct circumstances of morally problematic situations. As Nussbaum (1990) avers, a play, like most forms of fiction, is:

...deep, and conducive to our inquiry about how to live, because it does not simply record that this or that event happened; it searches for patterns of possibility-of choice, and circumstance, and the interaction between choice and circumstance-that turn up in human lives with such persistence that they must be regarded as our possibilities. (p. 171)

Consequently, the value of vicariously engaging the conflicting predicaments faced by a play's dramatic characters rests on the potency of dramatic art to reveal those personal, emotional, and psychological repercussions often resulting because of distinct forms of moral agency. Aesthetic involvement with character dilemmas can enable a holistic, refined, and sensitive perception of the complex levels of moral judgment and moral conduct, by allowing an audience to empathize with a moral agent struggling to decide how to resolve a moral problem. This it achieves without providing moral prescriptions for appropriate interpersonal and social behaviours, but by inviting an audience to accept the situational context as

a given, stimulating them to empathize with the emotional costs endured by these fictional characters. As Swanger (1993) observes, the value of a fictional work for moral reflection, and therefore of most theatre, lies "...not because of certain prescribed "moral" content, but precisely because [it] is a created and shared vision of our humanness, and therefore engenders empathy, the elimination of otherness." (p. 44)

As a dramatized narrative, a play can be regarded as a potent medium for stimulating critical reflection of standard moral norms, principles, and values, that often influence human actions and interactions. The metaphorical nature of a play's fictional 'world' often can invade and 'colonize' the individual and collective consciousness of an audience, therefore functioning "...to introduce [an audience] to the practice of subtle, sensitive moral inference, the kind that most choices in daily life require of [them]." (Booth, 1988, p 287) Similarly, Novitz (1993) contends that an important feature of most fictional works, including plays, is the ability to "...explore, tease, and test our moral standards and attitudes." (p. 590) Part of the pleasure of vicariously experiencing dramatized situational conflicts derives not only because plays often affirm standard assumptions of valid forms of moral conduct, but most importantly, because they often undermine, question and criticize prevalent views of appropriate forms of moral agency.

Aesthetic encounters with a play can engage an audience to seriously question many of its preconceptions regarding the way in which individual persons ought to conceive of their moral and social coexistence. As Beckerman (1990)



indicates:

The poles of action place the given values of an audience in opposition to subversion or challenge. Where the challenged values are deeply cherished and the dialectic opposition has genuine appeal, the imaginative risk we experience is more than game. (p. 84)

Empathic receptions and imaginative confrontations with a dramatized play can be viewed as an invitation for reconsidering possible reforms of prevailing social and political structures, so that the concerns of all members of society are acknowledged and validated (Esslin, 1987, p. 167). When a play has a compelling message to convey concerning the oppressive and limiting nature of cultural and social institutions, it often aims to transform and to liberate consciousness. In doing so, a play can stimulate subsequent critical reflections of how social and moral coexistence can be revised according to more just and equitable principles.

A personal appraisal of a dramatized play is further enhanced by an audience's communal responses to the work, as reflected in an intuitive recognition of a cultural identity shared by most members in the audience. It has often been argued by drama theorists and theatre historians that the collective experience that can be afforded by the performance of a play is a potent means by which a community affirms its identity (Brook, 1987, Esslin, 1987, 1976). The fictional 'world' of a play often presents those moral principles by which individual persons within a specific historical and social, and cultural context, interact and relate to one another. In this respect, a collective experience of a dramatized play often

enables a community of spectators to review many familiar codes of conduct, as well as those prevailing rules and principles for social coexistence.

As a consequence, a dramatized play can provide an audience with a significant opportunity to critically assess its moral 'identity,' challenging prevailing perceptions of what it means to be morally human. As Esslin (1976) indicates, part of the aim of the theatre experience "...is an enhanced level of consciousness, a memorable insight into the nature of existence, a renewal and strength in the individual to face the world." (p. 28) Dramatic art can function as an important medium by which perceptions of valid and viable forms of moral thought and action can be broadened and extended. Thus, it can serve as an important catalyst for further discussion and dialogue of viable forms of moral reform, which can involve substantial revisions of existing moral frameworks and moral principles within particular social and cultural contexts.

### Conclusion.

The above discussion has described certain aesthetic principles of dramatic art with the intent of elucidating the process by which this art form can stimulate moral deliberation and reflection. References have been made to those distinguishing formal properties of dramatic art, as well as to those complementary levels of intellectual, emotional, and psychological engagement enabled by attending the performance of a play. In addition, this discussion has elaborated on the manner in which a dramatized play can sensitize and broaden an audience's

perceptions of those intricate levels of moral choice and moral action. In doing so, dramatic art can serve as a potent catalyst for further reflection and deliberation of valid and viable forms of moral coexistence between individual persons, communities, and groups.

### Chapter III: Dramatic Art and a Relational Approach to the Study of Morality.

#### Introduction.

The intent of this chapter is to illustrate how dramatic art can serve as a valuable instructional medium for educating about an inductive, relational approach to the study of ethics and of morality. As indicated in Chapter I, particular value is to be found in the application of a relational ethics approach to moral pedagogy. The current chapter therefore begins with a review of those seminal foundational philosophical principles of a relational paradigm for provoking critical reflection of particular forms of moral agency. The discussion further demonstrates how dramatic art can be used to enhance a more contextual and situational approach to the study of those intricate levels of moral agency, that are reflective of interpersonal relating and social conduct.

In addition, this chapter illustrates how Canadian and Quebec theatre, as a specific dramatic genre, can be used to generate discussion and debate of the manner in which individual persons can choose to define themselves as moral persons within a secular society. Finally, in light of a Jungian typology, the following discussion explores those elemental sources of human motivation that often affect interpersonal behaviours, and that need to be addressed for a more substantial assessment of moral agency.

### 3. 1. Some Seminal Philosophical Principles of a Relational Ethics.

A relational approach to moral pedagogy embraces many of the conceptual assumptions of humanistic and feminist moral discourses<sup>8</sup> (Gilligan, 1982, 1988; Noddings, 1984, 1988, 1992; Maguire, 1976, 1984, 1990), and encourages the critical analysis of ethical codes and systems of thought in terms of their cultural and historical contexts (Johnson, 1993). This philosophical approach to moral inquiry recommends developing specific moral orientations and relational dispositions, which constitute a valuing context against which moral actions and interactions can be critically assessed. In this respect, a relational ethics sets the stage for a revised perspective on the prevailing dichotomies in moral education between teaching moral content, modelling moral behaviour, and cultivating the capacity for rational deliberation of conflicting moral claims.

This theoretical paradigm acknowledges the value of developing students' capacities for discriminating perception and moral empathy as fundamental to moral behaviour, and aims to cultivate students' abilities for critically assessing

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<sup>8</sup>The author of this study acknowledges that as a specific category of moral discourse, feminist ethics comprises a multiplicity of perspectives, which is beyond the scope of the above discussion to ascertain in detail. For the purposes of this study, feminist ethics refers collectively to the theoretical perspectives propagated by such women ethicists as Carol Gilligan(1982; 1988), Nel Noddings (1984; 1988; 1992) and Deborah Shogan(1988; 1993). Alternative perspectives of feminist ethics, supported by critical analyses of an 'ethics of care' espoused by both Gilligan and Noddings, can be found in C. Card's (Ed.). (1991). Feminist Ethics, (Kansas: University Press of Kansas). Of special interest are the articles written by A. M. Jaggar (1991), Feminist Ethics: Projects, Problems, Prospects (pp. 78-104); and by S. L. Hoagland (1991), Some Thoughts about "Caring," (pp. 246-263).

distinct forms of moral conduct within concrete existential situations. Moreover, such an approach for provoking moral reflection often implicates the moral agent in a conscious process of critical evaluation, by which conflicting value claims and moral perspectives can be assessed for future applications. As will be demonstrated, a relational paradigm for generating moral reflection, judgment, and praxis can provide the necessary stimulation for a more profound awareness of those intricate levels of moral thought and moral behaviour

According to a relational paradigm for enhancing moral awareness and for engaging moral judgment, morality is concerned with human actions and with assessing such actions in relation to specific social, cultural and historical contexts. As Maguire (1990) indicates, "Moral meaning speaks to us from the existential order where moral values exist in their actual reality, and where persons and things meet and relate. It is in the experience of real life that all moral intelligence commences." (p. 42) Similarly, Noddings (1988) observes that, "(a) relational ethics remains tightly tied to experience because all its deliberations focus on the human beings involved in the situation under consideration and their relations to each other." (p. 218)

It is also assumed that moral values are culturally determined, and that moral actions are often situation-specific, thus involving an active existential subject who struggles to resolve conflicting situations in light of competing value systems. In addition, this philosophical approach to moral inquiry recognizes those intuitive, affective, and cognitive dimensions to moral reflection and praxis, thus

acknowledging the psychological, emotional and spiritual factors that often motivate moral conduct between individual persons and their communities (Noddings, 1984, p. 196)

Moreover, moral actions and interactions are evaluated according to their life-affirming and life-promoting consequences within existential reality. According to Sankar (1992):

If ethics constitutes the body of norms for achieving excellence in performing the art of living, its most general principles must follow from the nature of life in general and of human existence in particular. In most general terms, the nature of all life is to preserve and affirm its own existence. (p 160)

A relational ethics underscores the significance of assessing moral action in terms of certain basic assumptions and dispositions regarding the value of human existence. For Maguire (1991), a relational ethics "...exists as an effort to see what does and does not befit persons in all their activities and to affirm the meaning of moral value." (p. 10) A pedagogical paradigm for moral education that is based on a relational ethics would be concerned with enhancing growth in moral consciousness as a strong corollary for cultivating moral conduct that aims to preserve and to validate human existence

Promoting moral sensitivity for those life-enhancing values is therefore highlighted and further elaborated by engaging a critical evaluation of multiple forms of moral judgment and conduct in relation to specific conflict situations.

Cultivating the will to act with a consistent intent for personal and social conservation, may result in a renewed vision of moral character, one that reflects a more perceptive and informed moral agent committed to acting for a more just and compassionate social coexistence. A relational ethics can therefore enlighten future generations of moral agents about the perpetual need for careful moral deliberation, judgment and action so that human persons and their respective environments are confirmed and validated (Shogan, 1988, p. 89),

A relational ethics bases many of its philosophical assumptions concerning the growth of moral consciousness and the cultivation of cognitive and affective skills for moral deliberation on Dewey's theory of ethics (Maguire, 1991, p. 115; Noddings, 1988, p. 221). According to Mann (1986), Dewey's pluralistic perspective on moral inquiry, moral judgment, and moral conduct maintained that moral values and principles are not fixed codes of behaviour (p. 62). Dewey recognized that moral principles evolve within specific cultural and social contexts, and as socially constructed systems of thought, these were individually assimilated and communally perpetuated.

In this respect, moral principles should not be regarded as rigid, indisputable abstract moral rules that are equally applicable in all moral cases. As Dewey (1960) avers, "The object of moral principles is to supply standpoints and methods which will enable the individual to make for himself an analysis of the elements of good and evil in the particular situation in which he finds himself" (p. 141). Consequently, Dewey emphasized the process of moral inquiry, engaging



deliberation of the practical viability and validity of moral values and principles, given the circumstances of concrete situations. Dewey (1960) indicates that:

Any actual experience of reflection upon conduct will show that every foreseen result at once stirs our present affections, our likes and dislikes, our desires and aversions...It is this direct sense of value, not the consciousness of general rules or ultimate goals, which finally determines the worth of the act to the agent. (p. 135)

Dewey therefore maintains that there is always the possibility of revising and modifying existing moral standards and principles to meet the demands of more refined perceptions of the moral worth of individual persons and of their environments (1960, p. 133)

Dewey perceived the moral self as essentially dynamic, capable of continued moral growth as it attempts to deal with the novel demands of unprecedented moral dilemmas. As Dewey affirmed, "We prefer spontaneously, we choose deliberately and knowingly. Now every such choice sustains a double relation to the self. It reveals the existing self and it forms the future self." (p. 149) Assuming that moral consciousness is in a constant state of transition, Dewey emphasized the need for examining and reflecting upon actual, concrete existential situations to discover those values and principles by which moral actions can be guided and critically assessed. Indeed, Dewey "...insisted that ethics is a matter of inquiry whose conclusions are often tentative and experimental." (Mann, 1986, p. 64) The crucible of moral choice and moral action was the dynamic life

of the community or group, in relation to which the moral self was continuously being actualized.

Moreover, Dewey argues that even though moral reasoning and moral judgment evolve in response to novel and unprecedented moral crises and dilemmas, sensitive responses must guide their future resolution. As Dewey (1960) affirms:

To put ourselves in the place of others, to see things from the standpoint of their purposes and values, to humble, contrariwise, our own pretensions and claims till they reach the level they would assume in the eye of an impartial, sympathetic observer, is the surest way to attain objectivity of moral knowledge. (p. 130)

Thus, Dewey argues that the development of moral empathy and the refinement of sensitive discrimination are crucial for deepening moral consciousness, which would enable a more analytical process for judging and evaluating multiple forms of moral conduct. For Dewey, "...the emotion of sympathy is morally invaluable But it functions properly when used as a principle of reflection and insight, rather than of direct action." (Dewey, 1960, p. 107) Sensitive deliberation and judgment of moral actions and interactions becomes an important precondition for critically assessing those norms and standards that can promote a more balanced and just social coexistence. Human experience, with its multiple forms of moral judgment and moral conduct, provides the empirical data in relation to which moral reflection can be stimulated to assess how human beings will choose to define themselves

as moral agents. Therefore, Dewey (1960) argues that, "(t)he essence of reflective morals is that it is conscious of the existence of a persistent self and of the part it plays in what is externally done." (p. 15)

Moral reform, based on more advanced and refined visions of moral coexistence that promote more just, equitable and humane principles, can only be realized if existing moral perspectives are seriously challenged and tested for their practical viability within an existing social order. For Dewey, then, the perpetual reality of moral smugness was the bane of human civilization, and was largely responsible for the persistent atrocities and inhumanities committed in the name of dated ideals. In short, Dewey argued that a morally aware and critically reflective person continues to search for life-affirming values which can enhance the development of a morally responsible and responsive social order. As Dewey observes:

Not perfection as a final goal, but the ever-enduring process of perfecting, maturing, refining is the aim in living...The bad man is the man who, no matter how good he has been, is beginning to deteriorate, to grow less good. The good man is the man who, no matter how morally unworthy he has been, is moving to become better. Such a conception makes one severe in judging himself and humane in judging others. (Quoted in Durant, 1961, pp. 524-525)

Concurrent with these philosophical assumptions of moral growth and evolution, a relational ethics aims to redirect consistent reflection of legitimate and

forms of moral coexistence within a secular society. A relational ethics affirms the prevailing need for moral empathy as constituting a necessary orientation for discriminating valid forms of moral conduct between individuals and their respective communities. Indeed, an awareness of the complex levels of moral agency within social, historical, and cultural contexts is a significant precondition for evaluating such diverse expressions of moral choice.

According to ethicist Maguire (1976, 1984, 1991), the foundational moral experience of the value of persons and of their environments should precede most forms of moral inquiry and moral judgment. As Maguire (1991) asserts, "Moral experience cannot be explained nor can we understand our own experience if we do not accept the foundational role of our perception of the value of persons and their environment " (p. 11) For Maguire, this kind of discriminating moral perception guides the development of moral language and moral judgment. Moreover, it is this fundamental consciousness of an enduring human quest for moral worth, validation and confirmation that can enable a more substantial and critical appraisal of what befits human beings in a normative sense. Maguire contends that, "This experience is the distinctively human and humanizing reality in our lives and the gateway to personhood." (1991, p. 9)

Thus, moral consciousness should reflect those principles of respect, responsibility, and compassion when considering what normatively befits persons as persons. In this respect, moral reflection should be concerned with critically assessing those actions that ought to befit human persons because of their

inherent value and worth. Maguire (1991) contends that:

Because persons are so valuable, we owe them fidelity and truth and justice. A moral ought is basically a specified expression of the respect that we have for the value of personhood...Persons have a certain primacy of worth, and to know and respect this worth is to be civilized, moral, and human. (pp. 15-16)

For Maguire, the foundational moral experience is an affective, faith, process enabling the refinement of specific moral values and principles that resonate in a profound conviction of the inherent integrity and worth of individual persons (1991, pp. 20-24). Awareness of the innate value of human beings begins in the affect which stimulates and enhances perception of a fundamental unity between self and other. For Maguire, "The foundational moral experience is an affective response to value.. The value of persons cannot be taught, subjected to proof, reasoned to, or computerized. It can only be affectively appreciated." (p. 19) Thus, moral consciousness and understanding evolves because of empathic acknowledgments of a mutual quest with other persons for moral value and moral affirmation.

Moreover, such an enlightened recognition of a shared purpose in moral growth stems from a cultivated faith perception of mutual worth, that requires a disposition of care, empathy and compassion for each moral agent. Maguire asserts that such a concern for the welfare and preservation of personal life cannot be proven empirically. Rather, the foundational moral experience embraces a

profound belief in the inherent value of human life and other ecological life forms. Maguire therefore argues that, "We cannot scientifically prove that persons are sacred in their worth. The foundational moral experience of the value of persons opens us to that belief. Thus, morality is born, and survives, and we build legal systems and nations upon it." (Maguire, 1991, p. 23)

According to Maguire, the roots of ethical discourse and inquiry lie in this fundamental belief that human life has value, which has other personal and communal forms of expression. Awareness of this foundational perspective implies a guiding moral orientation by which moral actions and interactions can be critically assessed. This quality of moral consciousness develops in a continuous process characterized by mutual experiences of empathy, compassion, and care within specific social contexts (1991, p. 23). Consequently, any attempts to develop moral consciousness of a shared moral worth and value involves a consistent cultivation of the capacity to empathize, to be compassionate, and to care for the welfare of the self and of the other. As Maguire indicates, "The capacity for love, the ability to appreciate and respond to the value of personal life in all its forms, is the foundation of moral consciousness" (p. 25)

Learning to relate to others morally thus implicates the moral agent in a continuous judgment and re-evaluation of conflicting, competing, and opposing moral perspectives in their capacity to preserve and to promote the continued welfare of individual persons. For Maguire (1991):

This foundational experience includes an awareness of the value of others

(all others) and of the connection between one's own value and that of others; it is short-circuited if one of these elements is lacking. We cannot just value self or just value others and be integral. We must see their link. (pp. 24-25)

A relational ethics promotes a crucial awareness of the perpetual search for moral certitude by stimulating critical analysis of the multiple forms of moral experience within existential reality. According to Maguire a relational ethics "...seeks to bring sensitivity and method to the discernment of moral values." (1991, p 34) This philosophical approach for cultivating sensitive moral inquiry involves the practice of discriminating perception, creativity and the moral imagination so as to assess instances of moral conduct within the empirical order in which human persons interact and relate to one another. Moral awareness and moral judgment are understood to evolve out of specific situational and circumstantial contexts that reflect the complex interpretative and valuing processes that influence moral actions and interactions.

Thus, a relational ethics promotes the systematic thinking of moral values within concrete conflict situations, and argues for "...rational understanding [as] it collects data, weighs, assesses, analyzes, and studies relationships of empirical facts" (Maguire, 1991, p 35) For Maguire, this approach to moral inquiry "... offers a complete and holistic method that tries to integrate various personal, social, and cultural processes of reflective evaluation." (1991, p. 36)

In this regard, the centre of moral inquiry and deliberation is the discerning

subject who consistently endures tension and conflict as he or she relates morally to a world of significant others. Moral conduct needs to be assessed primarily from an inductive expository process that aims to identify those specific circumstances of each individual case. Maguire (1976) asserts that, "...you cannot make a moral judgment if you do not know the circumstances that specify an action and give it its moral meaning." (p. 118) Ethicist Fletcher (1967) concurs that perceptive inquiry and deliberation of moral choice and moral conduct are " .empirical, fact-minded, data conscious inquiring. It is antimoralistic as well as antilegalistic, for it is sensitive to variety and complexity." (p. 29) For most relational ethicists, moral principles function as guides for moral judgment and moral conduct. Irrefutable moral ideals and rigid orthodoxies for appropriate moral behaviours need to be continuously reassessed as valid moral directives in light of the situational contexts of concrete moral conflicts and dilemmas

If moral wisdom evolves within empirical reality, then it is through sensitive perception and discernment of moral actions and interactions that one can carefully distinguish those values and principles that can ensure accountability and responsibility for moral choice. Maguire (1991) indicates that, "Since moral insight is an ongoing process, ethical achievement found in principles must be affirmed continuously and, when necessary, corrected as greater moral meaning is discovered." (p. 115) In a perpetual cultivation of moral responsibility, individual persons should attempt to make distinctions between false generalizations and true, individuated discernments of morally problematic situations. According to



Maguire, this is the mark of moral maturity.

As a consequence, moral deliberation aims to assess those complex personal and cultural processes of reflective evaluation, by which moral values and principles are defined, and often revised. As Maguire (1991) avers, moral deliberation:

...can be seen as a dialogue conducted by the moral agent between the moral meaning found in principles and that found in the unique circumstances of the case. Principles are thus tied to the empirical order by reason of their origin and their application. (p. 111)

It is therefore Maguire's contention that a relational approach to moral inquiry should aim to enhance sensitivity in the discernment of moral choice and moral action, in order to encourage a rational and critical evaluation of moral commitments.

For Maguire, moral judgment is "...about what befits or does not befit the personal situation as it really is. If our judgment of the facts is skewed, the brilliance of subsequent discussion and analysis will be misdirected. The creative ethical mind is always well informed " (1991, p. 50) Thus, moral knowing and moral praxis are dynamic, and potentially recreative, precisely because they evolve out of relational contexts of human coexistence. Moral knowledge aims to ensure that conflicting value claims and competing moral perspectives are evaluated according to the standards of a morally sensitive and critical consciousness.

A relational approach to ethical inquiry aims to preserve a more holistic

analysis of moral agency, in light of the cultivated dispositions of a discriminating and empathic moral consciousness. Moreover, through such an informed moral consciousness, the cultural plurality of moral perspectives can be appreciated, eliciting perhaps a better understanding of the conceptual and metaphorical commonalities between distinct moral frameworks. A questioning moral consciousness often relies on the moral imagination to critically assess the infallibility of moral rules and moral standards, that may be obstructing the humanizing potential of a reformed moral vision for social coexistence. Maguire (1991) indicates that:

The central moral faculty of creative imagination is regularly blocked in every intellectual discipline and in every culture by the difficulty of penetrating unchallenged, long-tenured orthodoxies. Sensitivity to what other groups think or have thought on matters that concern us can be effective solvents of false absolutes. Rather than simply being immersed only in the particular ethical issues that emerge in our society, ethics should press us to look at different kinds of moral presuppositions that emerge in other social systems. (p. 125)

A relational approach to moral inquiry can challenge prevailing dogmatic, and often oppressive views of purportedly infallible moral behaviour. Therefore, a relational ethics can remind humanity about the potential fallibility of moral reasoning and moral judgment according to revered moral laws, rules and orthodoxies. Moral rules and principles:

...will bear the assets and the debits of social, and historical reality...It is intellectually chastening and healthy for a critical ethics to see that some principles that were long ensconced and apparently of the highest pedigree have come to be seen as wrong and immoral.

(Maguire, 1991, p. 115)

In support of Maguire's central assumptions for enhancing moral inquiry and judgment, Sankar (1992) asserts that moral meaning is discovered, appropriated, and tested within existential reality (p. 42). Culturally determined and socially perpetuated interpretative systems of thought define the processes by which moral reflection, judgment, and praxis will be executed. In addition, moral values are identified, defined, and often revised within the creative interplay of imagination, intuition, and insight. As Sankar indicates, "The moral vision, imagination, and thinking must be integrated into our reasoning about moral values." (1992, pp. 174-175)

It is therefore through the workings of the moral imagination that moral values are generated, tested, and recreated in order to preserve personal life and the welfare of the community of others. For Sankar, "A moral choice is ultimately a solitary decision/action that cannot be made/performed humanely outside the context of a moral community." (1992, p. 213) In short, moral decisions evolve within relational contexts and it is the perceived value of personal and communal life that should provide the litmus test for evaluating different value options and competing moral perspectives.

Moreover, Sankar distinguishes between moral principles that reflect life-affirming values and those ego enhancing values that reflect a moral vision of social and personal alienation and anomie. Relying on Fromm's (1975) notion of a 'marketing personality' that promotes an egocentric view of moral choice and moral conduct, Sankar indicates that a relativistic approach to ethics denies the possibility of a mutually valuing and respectful social coexistence. Because of the allure of the marketing personality, human persons have evolved into a community of desensitized egos who often fail to see the essential commonalities that are shared by one another (Sankar, 1992, pp 91-92). Thus, for Sankar

A disintegrated personality is a creature with no social sentiment, one who feels no links with the world around him, is unconscious of all values, and even gradually loses the instinct of self-preservation, and is no longer aware of the value of his personal life (p 94)

Furthermore, Sankar argues that a basic understanding of the enduring worth of all persons and their environments can enlighten the self about the prevailing need for responsible moral actions that preserve and promote the welfare of individual and communal life (p 250). A relational ethics can therefore enable human persons to rediscover a mutual need for empathic understanding and for interpersonal validation, so as to secure a more respectful and responsible moral coexistence. In support of this observation, Wilson (1993) asserts that "Sympathy - our sense of another's feelings and of their appropriateness given the circumstances - is the basis of our judgment. More bluntly, to sympathize is to

judge." (p. 32) Moral judgment of specific conflict situations should stem from empathic identification, sensitive discernment of the pain and suffering endured as a moral agent struggles to resolve a specific moral dilemma.

The practical application of a relational ethics is given further support in the writings of such feminist ethicists as Noddings (1984, 1988, 1992) and Gilligan (1982, 1988), who situate moral knowing, moral judgment, and moral development within the context of caring and trusting relationships. For Noddings (1988; 1992), the basic elements of a caring relationship are the one-caring and the cared-for. The one-caring commits herself to the other precisely because she prizes and values the other, and is willing to assist the cared-for to overcome any obstacles he or she may be experiencing. In the complex interplay of the emotional, intuitive, and cognitive dynamics of caring, there is a shift in motivational energy which permits the problem to be initially apprehended intuitively and affectively by the one-caring. Noddings (1984) indicates that:

The one-caring is sufficiently engrossed in the other to listen to him and to take pleasure or pain in what he recounts. Whatever she does for the cared-for is embedded in a relationship that reveals itself as engrossment and in an attitude that warms and comforts the cared-for. (p. 19)

As a consequence of such primary reception and empathic identification, one aims to see the moral problem in terms of the other's perception of it. Noddings (1984) avers that:

Caring involves stepping out of one's own personal frame of reference

into the other's. When we care, we consider the other's point of view, his objective needs, and what he expects of us. Our attention, our mental engrossment is on the cared-for, not on ourselves. (p. 24)

A responsive and responsible approach for judging morally implicates the moral agent in a diligent attempt at preserving and promoting the welfare, worth, and integrity of the other. Receiving and identifying with the pain, anguish and distress endured by a moral agent, can sensitize the one-caring towards a profound consciousness of a common humanity shared with this cared-for.

Thus, the development of moral empathy and compassionate, non-judgmental understanding evolves in relation to the other, with whom the moral agent discovers and refines his or her capacity to care. Spiecker (1988), by comparing this form of moral empathy with other-affirming, altruistic emotions, concurs that, "An altruistic emotion and the corresponding wish to watch over or promote the other's well-being, or to lighten his suffering, can be justified by referring to the weal and woe of the other, to his situation or condition which 'strikes' us." (p. 49)

For Noddings (1984), "This caring for self, for the ethical self, can emerge only from caring for others " (p. 14) In support of Nodding's contention, feminist ethicist Hasten (1987) concurs that, "The ground of our being as humans is found in relationships, and our moral achievements consist in the maintenance and enhancement of caring relations." (p. 35) Developing one's capacity for empathy and for care could therefore result in a further perfection of one's awareness of the

value of persons and their environment, a necessary precondition for sensitive and discerning moral reflection, deliberation, and evaluation. As Lickona (1991) avers, "One of our tasks as moral educators is developing a generalized empathy, the kind that sees beneath differences and responds to our common humanity." (p 59)

The cared-for contributes to the relation by responding to the caring actions of the one-caring. An ethics of caring enables an awareness in the cared-for that his concerns and dilemmas are being respected and understood in all their complexities. An attitude of sincere acceptance and trust qualifies the relationship between both parties (Noddings, 1984, p. 65) Thus, the one-caring is perceived to be genuinely committed to helping resolve the problem for the emotional, spiritual, and psychological well-being of the cared for. As Noddings observes, "The responsive cared-for, in the fullness of the caring relation, feels the recognition of freedom and grows under its expansive support." (1984, p 72)

Characterized by mutual trust and respect, the caring relation initiates both parties in a more profound appreciation of the prevailing human need for moral confirmation. In short, allowing for the cared-for to reflect upon competing and opposing value claims within a supportive, non-judgmental relationship can enable him to rediscover a sense of moral integrity and worth. Noddings (1984) argues that, "I must see the cared-for as he is and as he might be-as he envisions his best self-in order to confirm him. The attitude that is perceived by the cared-for as caring is generated by efforts of the one-caring at inclusion and confirmation." (p.

An attitude of care and respect for the other allows one to understand and appreciate fully the complications of a moral dilemma within its existential context. Such an approach heightens the need to be morally sensitive and informed when examining a moral conflict from another's perspective. For Noddings, "The one-caring does not seek security in abstractions cast either as principles or entities. She remains responsible here and now for this cared-for and this situation and for the foreseeable futures projected by herself and the cared-for." (1984, p. 43) There is a demand for a careful analysis of the situational circumstances that structure the dilemma, as well as a critical assessment of those conceptual and metaphorical systems of thought by which the one cared-for interprets and assigns meaning to the situation. Feminist ethicist Sherwin (1987) affirms that:

The behaviour evaluated is behaviour of persons in social contexts, not abstract, freefloating actions that are available to any agent.

Character and circumstances of persons should be relevant in making moral judgments - a recognition that most modern moral theories seem to have abandoned. (p. 28)

Being psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually involved in the moral situation enables one to comprehend the perceptual weaknesses and parochial interpretations preventing moral action, so that alternative courses of action to resolve the problem may be imaginatively 'rehearsed'. Thus, emotional and intuitive identification with a moral dilemma precedes an intellectual analysis of its



conceptual elements. As Noddings (1984) asserts, "As we convert what we have received from the other into a problem, something to be solved, we move away from the other...The other's reality becomes data, stuff to be analyzed, studied, and interpreted." (p. 36) Moreover, a relational ethics seems to engage the cared-for in personal reflections of assumed moral principles and conventional moral rules that may or may not be causing the obstacles for some future resolution of a problematic situation.

A relational ethics, or an ethics of caring, recognizes others as struggling moral agents who need to resolve a moral crisis and thus, require guidance for a more detailed understanding of their respective situations. By identifying with a human being in conflict and transition, the one-caring aims to guide the cared-for towards a solution that preserves the integrity and personal worth of an evolving moral self (Noddings, 1984, p. 64). Through sincere and nonjudgmental dialogue between the two parties, an attempt is made to resolve some conflict through a careful consideration of viable and desirable solutions to a specific crisis. For Noddings, such dialogue enables "...interpersonal reasoning - the capacity to communicate, share decision making, arrive at compromises, and support each other in solving everyday problems " (1984, p. 53)

Similarly, feminist ethicist Mullett (1987) describes this kind of dialogue as being:

...collaborative communication about interpretations of situations in which each tries to explicate the meaning of the situation for herself

and none has a monopoly on correct interpretation, but in which each strives to incorporate aspects of the other's interpretation so as to coincide sufficiently, if minimally, in making sense and reinforcing certain norms (p. 33)

It is important to realize that the resolution of the moral conflict should aim to preserve the capacity to care and to empathize, thereby enhancing the personal life of the other. Thus, Noddings argues for the development of an ethical ideal for caring that seeks to recreate previous experiences of caring, and that functions as a guiding orientation in dealing with moral dilemmas (Noddings, 1988, p. 222, 1992, pp 16-17)

Indeed, Noddings maintains that by accepting to function as the one caring, one sets one's self up as a model for the cared-for. "As one caring, what I seek is completion in the other - the sense of being cared for and, I hope, the renewed commitment of the cared-for to turn about and act as one-caring in the circles and chains with which he is defined." (Noddings, 1984, p. 19; 1992, p. 22) It is by being cared for that one realizes the relational value of valuing and respecting individual persons, in that one benefits emotionally and spiritually from a sincere response to the obstacles one is facing.

Recognizing a shared worth with the other enables one to realize how precious human life is and how it must be preserved through consistent interpersonal validation and affirmation. A relational ethics allows for the examination of moral problems within their actual social and historical contexts,

within which the cared-for has to operate (Noddings, 1984, p. 24) It therefore recognizes that consequences for human actions should be evaluated seriously, and that alternative solutions to moral dilemmas should be engaged reflectively. Respect and responsibility would appear to be the guiding principles for resolving morally problematic situations (Noddings, 1988, p. 223). Lickona (1991) concurs that, "[respect and responsibility are] values that constitute the core of a universal, public morality. They have objective, demonstrable worth in that they promote the good of the individual and the good of the whole community " (p. 43)

Thus, such a relational approach to moral inquiry does not promote an emotivist view of moral judgment, choice and action. Rather, it begins with the fundamental notion of choosing to care because one recognizes an affinity with the pained and anguished other, and then aims to rationally examine and test possible, viable and desirable solutions to specific moral problems. For Noddings (1984) "...we might say that kindness should be tempered with justice. This means that the well-being and feelings of the other are steadily regarded as we try to work out just arrangements and persuade each other of their problems " (p. 64)

In her empirical studies of the ways in which men and women differ in moral deliberation and moral judgment, Gilligan (1982, 1988) lends further support to a relational ethics by reiterating the importance of empathy, compassion, and mutual respect in the resolution of moral conflicts. In support of Gilligan, ethicist Sherwin (1987) concurs that, "What is needed is a moral theory that recognizes genuine sympathy and co-operation as valuable and encourages their development where

appropriate." (pp. 27-28) Rejecting traditional taxonomies of moral development that are expressive of male voices, such as that of Kohlberg, and challenging fixed notions of moral deliberation that espouse rule-bound logic and discursive argumentation for moral judgment, Gilligan argues for a more responsive, interactive, and dialogic approach to moral inquiry. As Straus (1990) observes, "[Gilligan] argues that we need to supplement men's voices talking about laws, hierarchies, and rules with women's voices talking about attachment, caring, and networking." (p. 288)

Like Noddings, Gilligan recognizes the value of context in moral inquiry, and stresses the need for a genuinely empathic and compassionate disposition for moral judgment that acknowledges the relational nature of moral awareness and moral conduct. Gilligan (1982) contends that, "Care becomes the self-chosen principle of a judgment that remains psychological in its concern with relationship and response but becomes universal in its condemnation of exploitation and hurt." (p. 74) Furthermore, Gilligan argues for a contextualized approach to moral inquiry and moral judgment that seeks to understand and to appreciate the active human subject, within distinct historical, cultural, and social circumstances, who has to choose to act to resolve particular moral dilemmas (1982, p. 16)

Concern for the pain and anguish endured by a moral agent as he or she deals with moral conflicts should motivate most attempts to assist in the resolution of these dilemmas. One must therefore make a genuine effort to perceive the sources of conflict and pain from the perspective of the moral agent who is

personally implicated in each moral dilemma. For Gilligan (1988), "The activities of care - being there, listening, the willingness to help, and the ability to understand - take on a moral dimension, reflecting the injunction to pay attention and not to turn away from need." (p 16)

After such initial empathic identification, one can assist a moral agent to explore possible courses of action for resolution that will function to preserve the integrity and inherent worth of the human subjects involved in a problematic situation. According to Gilligan, after careful reflection and deliberation one chooses to act without seriously diminishing the innate value of individual persons and without hindering the possibility of rediscovering that self and other, because of a shared humanity, are relationally linked (1988, p. 16) For Gilligan, respect, mutual validation and interpersonal responsibility should be guiding orientations for the resolution of moral conflicts. As Gilligan (1982) asserts, "Responsibility for care then includes both self and other, and the injunction not to hurt, freed from conventional constraints, sustains the ideal of care while focussing the reality of choice." (p 95)

When moral actions are judged, they are judged in terms of their consequences in severing relational ties, which, according to a relational ethics, perpetuates alienation and apathy, and can result in physical, psychological and spiritual oppression (Gilligan, 1982, p. 149) One has to attempt to appreciate this when judging a situation and the factors that led to its creation In short, when one critically assesses a moral situation, one should be motivated to preserve the

relationship between conflicting parties and to work towards a renewed vision for their moral coexistence. As Gilligan (1982) indicates, "The truths of relationship return in the rediscovery of connection, in the realization that self and other are interdependent and that life, however valuable in itself, can only be sustained by care in relationships." (p. 149) Furthermore, Noddings (1992) concurs that, "Working out what is just in a particular situation implies attention to building and maintaining relations of trust. Indeed a relation of trust seems to be a precondition for any exercise of justice that is recognized by all participants as justice." (p. 64) Thus, a relational ethics aims to enhance a more committed belief for a recreated vision of social existence, based on mutual compassion, empathy and care for others.

Similarly, for Shogan (1988, 1993), a relational ethics fosters the growth of benevolent and just desires, characteristic traits of a caring person. For Shogan (1988), "A caring person is motivated by the welfare and fair treatment of those in a moral situation" (p. 18) A caring person is someone who is concerned with adjudicating moral dilemmas by understanding a conflict situation in all its complexity, thereby guiding the cared-for through a diligent process of contemplating possible consequences to proposed resolutions of specific dilemmas. Intuitive reception of and empathic identification with a person in conflict provide the internal motivation for imagining plausible and viable solutions to a moral dilemma. As Shogan (1988) observes:

Subjective imagination is closely associated with the ability to see a

situation according to a particular description, but to see a situation in a particular way it is also necessary for someone to be able to imagine subjectively what it would be like in that situation. (p. 69)

Furthermore, a caring person is committed to helping a moral agent arrive at a solution that maintains the personal integrity and worth of both conflicting parties, which is the ultimate concern for preserving the relationship. For Shogan (1988), a caring response to the pain and frustration of a moral agent, "...is morally significant to a recipient of a response...An emotion experienced as a result of a desire for others' welfare or fair treatment is significant to those in a moral situation because it is an indication of another's care for them qua people " (pp. 41-42)

This ethical model for resolving interpersonal conflicts can be further applied to resolving communal dilemmas. For Shogan, a caring person is committed to extending, promoting, and preserving the fair treatment of individual persons by those societal structures and institutions that have traditionally and consistently violated their fundamental human rights (p 21) A caring person is thus someone who is able to extend his or her concerns to more global assessments of persistent human rights violations, and to work against the preservation of institutional oppression and systemic discrimination, social marginalization and disempowerment. "Since a caring person cares that others are helped but cannot help everyone, he or she has a commitment to changing both social structures and people so that others can be helped." (Shogan, 1988, p. 20) Sensitivity to those multiple flaws and deficiencies of social coexistence would seem to provide the

necessary stimulation for moral revisions that acknowledge the prevailing need for reforming human relationships according to the principles of care, empathy and mutual respect

A paradigm that stresses the relational aspect of moral inquiry and moral judgment provides a more concrete, analytical and critical approach for stimulating moral deliberation. As has been illustrated above, the primary value of a relational ethics is that it attempts to substantiate the need for a moral orientation characterized by empathy, care, respect and compassionate acceptance. In addition, a guiding principle for resolving moral conflicts and dilemmas seems to be the constant perception of the fundamental value of individual persons and of their respective environments. Moral judgments of specific, concrete existential situations therefore involve an assessment of the circumstantial evidence of a situation, and of those personal and cultural processes of reflective evaluation by which the situation is interpreted and understood. In relation to such a detailed and sensitive appraisal of the situation, it is understood that moral knowledge evolves and deepens

Moreover, it is suggested that through such intuitive receptions and empathic identifications with an individual moral subject, a more discriminating and sensitive perception of moral choice and moral judgment can be cultivated. Indeed, the greatest challenge that a relational ethics presents is the preservation of human relationships, through which persons define their moral identities. In short, a relational approach to moral inquiry underscores a fundamental need for



a recreated vision of moral coexistence which consistently validates and affirms human persons within relationships. Thus, a refined and responsive moral consciousness provides the necessary stimulation for the moral imagination to contemplate possible methods for reinventing a more humane society, that cherishes such basic principles as care, empathy, responsibility, and social concern.

A perception of the fundamental value of human persons and of their environment implies a certain sensitivity to those interpretative and metaphorical cognitive structures by which moral situations are understood and evaluated. In fact, one may argue that a relational ethics can help sensitize individuals towards the metaphorical structures of distinct moral perspectives and moral principles. According to Johnson (1993), the reflective processes of the moral imagination can enable a more analytical and critical inquiry into prevailing moral perspectives and standard moral ideals. This allows for a more substantial assessment of the complex manner in which human persons evaluate moral situations and choose to act towards a particular resolution (Johnson, 1993, p. 241)

The moral imagination becomes a critical faculty for revisioning the process by which moral agents will choose to define themselves as moral persons within the pressing demands of competing moral perspectives and unprecedented moral dilemmas. Assuming that human life has inherent moral value and worth, a relational ethics is concerned with cultivating and refining a capacity for imaginative reconstructions of reformed social orders, based on shared needs for mutual

respect, acceptance and validation. As Johnson (1993) affirms:

What we need is an adaptive capacity and a flexibility that allows us to confront and deal constructively with new problems (even new kinds of problems) that emerge in our changing experience. This requires taking up different critical perspectives on our present moral understanding and figuring out how we can extend or change aspects of it in light of our present situation. (p. 242)

If a relational approach to ethics is concerned with cultivating an awareness of a shared moral worth amongst individual persons, stimulating the moral imagination to rehearse imaginative possibilities for expressing mutual care and empathy within a social context, can enable subsequent formulations of alternative forms for moral coexistence.

For this reason, this 'relational' paradigm for developing moral consciousness can stimulate serious reflection of viable moral dispositions, values, and principles, within the context of a caring and responsive social order. Johnson (1993) observes that, "Moral deliberation should be viewed as expansive, imaginative inquiry into possibilities for enhancing the quality of our communally shared experience." (p 80) According to a relational ethics, the promotion of interpersonal respect and responsibility, mutual empathy and care, should provide a guiding orientation with which to assess prevailing moral perspectives, ideals, and standards. Thus, such an approach to cultivating moral judgment and praxis does not endorse moral relativism or moral tolerance. Arguing against the

misconceived assumptions of the value of moral tolerance in ethical discourse, Royce (1982) asserts that:

When pluralism is seen against a background of moral relativism,.... tolerance still only remains as one option among others. The moral relativist cannot consistently maintain that difference and conflicting value judgements are equally valid, and that all people should be tolerant. Tolerance might be one of the values of one of the groups, but as such could itself be an important issue dividing people. (p. 176)

In contrast to moral tolerance, a relational ethics seems to recommend those life-affirming and life-promoting values and principles for the betterment of personal life and social coexistence.

A relational ethics argues for the persistent need for dialogue in moral inquiry and moral deliberation. For Noddings (1992):

Dialogue...connects us to each other and helps to maintain caring relations. It also provides us with the knowledge of each other that forms a foundation for response in caring.. We respond most effectively as carers when we understand what the other needs and the history of this need Continuing dialogue builds up a substantial knowledge of one another that serves to guide our responses. (p. 23)

Such genuine and responsive exchanges regarding individual moral perspectives can stimulate the descriptive and analytic capacities of the moral imagination

Subsequently, these can result in a sensitive inquiry of the particulars of a

specific moral situation that can stimulate the creative and inventive functions of imaginative cognition. As Johnson (1993) avers, "It is our moral imagination that permits us to rehearse dramatically various projected courses of action, so that we may have the opportunity to investigate the morality of the options available to us within particular circumstances." (p. 108) Thus, there is a complex interplay of imaginative identification and impersonation, as one receives the situation and reconstructs the moral subject's perceptions of it.

Through this process of psychological and emotional engrossment, one is able to perceive and appreciate those metaphorical schemata through which a moral subject structures and interprets a moral situation. As a consequence, the moral imagination can be engaged in a reflective evaluation that analyzes, classifies, and compares plausible solutions to a specific dilemma. As Johnson asserts, "The locus of our moral understanding is thus our imaginative rationality (a human, rather than Universal Reason) that allows us to envision and to test out in imagination various possible solutions to morally problematic situations." (1993, p. 219)

Moreover, it is through creative imaginative shifts of perception that the moral imagination is able to project possible courses of action and to envisage their practical consequences. The functioning of the moral imagination can enable a more holistic assessment of a morally problematic situation, one that is characterized by moral empathy towards a human subject's moral uncertainties, and sensitive discrimination of viable forms for resolving a moral situation. Johnson

(1993) contends that, "Morally sensitive people are capable of living out, in and through such an experiential imagination, the reality of others with whom they are interacting, or whom their actions might affect." (p. 200) Through dialogue, perceptive judgment, and careful deliberation, one is able to appreciate the plurality of perspectives that aim to assign moral meaning to moral experience

This dialogic and narrative exchange may enable one to scrutinize and to evaluate the context of a moral situation, in light of the personal, social, historical, and cultural factors operating to create moral conflict. If, as Johnson asserts, the synthetic unity of the moral self is a product of those cultural metaphorical frames of reference embodied in the narrative context of daily experiences (pp. 163-164), moral judgment should involve a careful assessment of those interpretative schemata that assign moral significance to a specific situation "We must cultivate moral imagination by sharpening our powers of discrimination, exercising our capacity for envisioning new possibilities, and imaginatively tracing out the implications of our metaphors and narratives " (Johnson, 1993, p 198)

Through a process of imaginative discrimination and discernment, one is able to perceive those metaphorical frameworks that often shape moral perspectives and that often condition responses to morally problematic situations. In addition, by identifying those metaphors, concepts, and symbols foundational to most moral perspectives, one can be engaged in a logical deliberation of the practical viability of certain moral values and principles within concrete existential situations. "The envisioning of possibilities for fruitful, meaningful, and constructive

action requires moral imagination." (Johnson, 1993, p. 203)

The exploratory potential of the moral imagination enhances the capacity for imaginative reasoning that permits individual persons to envision and to experiment with possible solutions to morally problematic situations. Morality, for Johnson, "...can never be merely a matter of obeying restrictive rules, because acting morally requires acts of imaginative exploration of possibilities open to us in morally problematic situations." (1993, p. 31) It is through this process of imaginative 'exploration' that one is able to intuitively recognize common views and aspirations for moral coexistence that inhere to different moral perspectives. By permitting individual biases, prejudgments and revered standards of authentic moral behaviour to be challenged and assessed through dialogue and critical reflection, a relational ethics can provoke a profound awareness of a fundamental moral sensitivity that unites all human beings

Our prejudgments are conditions for our being able to make sense of things.

...Rather than overthrowing all our prejudgment, we need to open them up to possible transformation through our encounters with others, whose prejudgments may confront our own. (Johnson, 1993, pp. 231-232)

One is therefore able to identify certain objective standards for moral behaviour, encapsulated in moral principles which have prescribed the need for mutual respect, empathy, interpersonal responsibility and social validation. As Johnson (1993) indicates, "Our common embodiment (and the role it plays in founding our reason and our desire), therefore, insures that there will always be

at least a partial frame in common between competing moralities." (p. 234)

Lickona (1991) concurs that:

There are rationally grounded, nonrelative, objectively worthwhile moral values: respect for human life, liberty, the inherent value of every individual person, and the consequent responsibility to care for each other and carry out our basic obligations...These objectively worthwhile values demand that we treat as morally wrong any action by any individual, group, or state that violates these basic moral values (p. 230)

Such guiding principles may provide a foundational context against which competing moral perspectives can be evaluated. According to Johnson (1993), "Moral principles, function not as restrictive moral laws, but rather as summaries of our collective moral experience that present important concerns we ought to figure into our moral deliberations " (p. 80) Because the moral imagination can enable a critical assessment of moral principles and perspectives, the substantial and superior worth of some can be rationally defended as these aim to preserve human life and to promote a profound consciousness of shared human worth and integrity. For Johnson:

Given the nature of our bodies, our brains, and our physical and social interactions, we would expect that certain basic-level experiences (e g , of harm, of help, of well-being) would be common across cultures. The existence of such universal constraints and basic-level experiences will not, to be sure, select any one position as either all-encompassing or final, yet

they will limit us to a range of reasonable alternatives. Furthermore, they indicate relevant considerations for constructing productive dialogue among competing views. (1993, p. 237)

In light of this awareness of a commonly shared moral worth, moral deliberation can ultimately be concerned with imaginative possibilities for enhancing the moral quality of human experiences within a communal context. The recreative functions of the moral imagination can therefore generate viable alternative visions of a reformed moral coexistence based on a more just, caring, and respectful moral orientation. As Maguire (1990) avers, the moral imagination.

...is the supreme moral faculty. Through it we break out of the bondage of the current state of things and perceive new possibilities...Moral thinking at its best perceives goods that have not yet existed and brings them into being in the creative act. (p. 79)

The dialogic character of a relational ethics can therefore enhance imaginative reasoning to discover new ways to suggest and prescribe morally validating and just treatments of all human beings. For Maguire (1991), "In moral discovery there is the experience of a new unity through a recognition of previously missed likenesses." (p. 81) The possibility of defining a more responsive, responsible, empathic, and just vision of personal and social existence stems from the capacity for imaginative creative insights into the humanizing powers of caring relationships. Thus, the perpetual desire for a renewed moral coexistence finds further support in the dialogic encounters of competing moral perspectives and in



subsequent expressions of constructive possibilities for moral reform.

A relational ethics reminds us that moral values and principles are fallible and always in need of modification and transformation. Thus, such a model for moral inquiry acknowledges that moral choice may not be based solely on predetermined moral laws and rules that are grounded in revered moral codes and dogmatic moral philosophies. In fact, such an approach to moral deliberation suggests that moral values and principles are constantly evolving in relation to the concrete moral choices individual persons have to make. A relational ethics aims to remind humanity of the fundamental need for the life-affirming values of care, compassion, empathy and respect that can help to provide more life-promoting and empowering solutions to diverse moral issues and situations.

### 3. 2. Assessing the Value of Dramatic Art for Moral Pedagogy

An alternative approach to moral pedagogy that incorporates dramatic art as a potent catalyst for stimulating moral reflection and deliberation can enhance a more refined and discriminating consciousness of those complex levels of moral agency. Such an approach for engaging moral reflection refrains from referring to plays as didactic morality tales imparting absolute moral truths, rules, and ideals. Rather, plays are regarded as potent dramatized presentations of virtual actions and interactions between fictional characters, through which an audience's awareness of the subtle and complicated layers of moral thought, judgment, and conduct can be broadened and deepened. According to Novitz (1993), as a work of fiction, a play can "...bring us to reconsider our existing values and attitudes by

tempting us to apply these to a complex and very lifelike situation, which has [been] sketched in abundant detail and with consummate skill." (p. 591) Kupfer (1978) concurs that through aesthetic encounters with fictional works, such as plays, an audience can be provoked to "...respond to the morally relevant aspects of particular situations for which no rules are sufficient. Aesthetic activity can help delineate the moral structure of any situation." (p. 19)

Because of their potency to stimulate empathic identification with contrived moral conflicts and dilemmas, most works of fiction, such as plays, can provide a potent means by which a group of perceiving subjects can be challenged to reconsider certain basic assumptions of what it means to be 'moral.' As Bailin (1993a) indicates:

Dramatic works...can contribute to an enlargement of vision and broadening and deepening of experience and can provide a context within which we can come to constitute ourselves and understand the world around us. But drama has a particular power in this respect in that it requires direct identification with characters and promotes affective engagement with their situations in a way that may engender unique opportunities for understanding. (pp 67-68)

Corresponding to this process of emotional identification is that of imaginative impersonation which draws on those affective impressions derived from aesthetically encountering dramatic characters. As Greene (1988) asserts in describing the process of 'imaginative encounter' with fictional characters,

"...imagination must intervene, so that we allow those characters to have their full existence in an illusioned world. We must focus on them, take them as somehow self-contained in a world that is outside the actual, that is extra-ordinarily 'real.' (p. 54) Indelible interactions between audience and stage often ensue which provide aesthetic pleasure while conveying insights into the processes of moral resolution in relation to detailed conflict situations and character dilemmas. For Wilshire (1982), "We in the audience identify with these confrontations: these are our conflicts-or ones which might be ours. We resonate in mimetic attunement." (p. 97)

Through the theatre medium, multiple situation-specific dilemmas and their circumstantial nuances often provide detailed accounts of how moral conflicts evolve and progress, although not always, towards some final resolution. A play can present detailed sequences of moral conflicts and dilemmas, as well as concrete depictions of individual anguish, distress and pain resulting from unresolved moral situations and dilemmas. In this respect, a student audience can be engaged to critically assess dramatized instances of moral agency from a more contextual perspective. Dramatic art can enable a more relational approach to the study of distinct forms of moral agency because of its ability to present the emotional, spiritual and psychological consequences that often result from moral judgments and actions that sever relational ties between individual characters

Similarly, Parr (1982) asserts that, most forms of fiction, and therefore most plays, often "...dramatize how people - given their cultural values, their individual

aspirations and talents, and their perceptions of the possibilities of freedom and self-realization - define themselves, make choices and act." (p. 19) A dramatized play, that affords the vicarious and communal experience of a self-sustaining fictional 'world,' can provide the stimulus for a profound re-assessment of the creative potential for moral reasoning and deliberation. Gardner (1978) indicates that:

...since the possible number of actions in the universe is unlimited...morality is infinitely complex, too complex to be knowable and far too complex to be reduced to any code, which is why it is suitable matter for fiction, which deals in understanding, not knowledge. (p. 135)

In short, being exposed to a playwright's moral insights into the human condition can stimulate further reflections on prevailing moral perspectives that may be in need of comprehensive revisions. As Feder (1981) concludes in his study of how fictional works, such as plays, can help refine sensitive moral awareness and reflection, it is because of their:

...hospitality, in short, to unlimited visions of man and the life of man that secures [them] a special place in a pluralistic society's cogitations about the continued cultivation of its freedoms. This is hardly an unimportant function and, in considerable measure at least, offers compensation for [their] inability to provide final solutions to specific moral issues. (p. 26)

Consequently, students can be engaged to reconsider how distinct perspectives of valid forms of moral conduct between moral agents are seriously

challenged by a play's critique of the human losses to dated moral ideals and moral imperatives. Plays can therefore be examined and analyzed for their potential to challenge biases and preconceptions of moral conduct and behaviour, while illuminating perceptions of the moral sphere for further reflections of how human persons should choose to define themselves morally within a secular society.

Foundational to this study's alternative approach to moral pedagogy are some of the central principles of the ethical criticism of fictional works (Booth, 1988; Coles, 1989; Nussbaum, 1986, 1990; Schwarz, 1988). In addition, this pedagogical approach stresses the significance of engaging the 'moral imagination' (Johnson, 1993) for generating analysis and deliberation of those intricate and variegated dimensions of moral agency. In *The Moral Imagination*, Clausen (1986) argues that moral criticism of fictional works may take two forms. One may examine the implications of the moral assumptions and attitudes inherent in the work itself and/or one may evaluate the implications of these assumptions beyond the work, within the historical, cultural and social contexts which determine and qualify them (p. 20). As a work of fiction, a play can stimulate comparative reflections and deliberations of those moral codes and perspectives that condition and influence the lives of its fictional characters.

The ethical import of experiencing a dramatized play can be assessed on various levels. Initially, the choice to engage willingly and with pleasure in the dramatic narrative presented on the stage can be understood to possess

normative value. Both audience and actors/performers have freely entered a complex transaction by which a fictional 'world' is made physically palpable to be imaginatively recreated for further contemplation and reflection (Pelias, 1991; Rayner, 1993). Both sets of moral agents have willingly chosen to enter the play's self-sustaining universe and to partake of the fictional lives either physically or vicariously.<sup>9</sup> In doing so, both actors and audience have chosen to submit to an intuitive mode of perception through which multiple levels of moral judgment, action and interaction may infiltrate moral consciousness.

Ethical criticism of a dramatized play's depictions of moral agency, implies that moral reflection can focus on the practical implications for interpersonal relating the resolution these fictional moral situations may engender. Encountering concrete moral conflicts within distinct cultural, social, and historical contexts can broaden one's awareness of the intricate nature of moral agency. An aesthetic experience with a play can lend itself to a more discriminating awareness of those surprising ambiguities, inconsistencies, and irregularities with moral judgment and moral behaviour. In this respect, dramatic art can function to broaden moral perception by challenging an audience's moral smugness (Maguire, 1978, pp. 362-363).

By presenting a self-contained fictional 'world' that operates according to its

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<sup>9</sup>For an engaging study of the moral concerns inferred from the culturally specific perceptions of the actor's role in the history of Western theatrical performance, please see Worthen's (1984) book, The Idea of the Actor: Drama and the Ethics of Performance, (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

own moral prescriptions and situational contingencies, a dramatized play can provide an experiential context to critically assess the manner in which dramatic characters choose to resolve a moral dilemma. According to Bailin (1993b), a play, as most forms of fiction:

...explores in evocative detail human situations, human interactions, and human motivations...[giving] us access to ways of being that go beyond our own experience and presents us with the entire range of problems, issues, and contradictions with which human beings struggle and have struggled.  
(p. 62)

Through such evocative responses to the pain, anguish, and frustration of character interactions and responses to specific conflict situations, student spectators can be imaginatively implicated in the dramatized struggles for moral resolution.

This has lead Swanger (1985) to concur that there are parallels in the dynamic of moral and aesthetic judgment, which provide substantial support for relying on different art forms, including dramatized plays, to cultivate sensitive moral discrimination and to refine moral judgment (p. 85). For Swanger, judging about moral issues, situations, or themes is similar to evaluating works of art, because both processes rely on understanding open form and recognizing the value of reciprocity (1985, p. 89). Swanger affirms that, "Because both artworks and moral issues are open forms, both require that we respond to them with patience and diligence, and with a tolerance for ambiguity." (p. 91) Responding

to and critically assessing those multiple levels of moral agency presented by a dramatized play, can involve sensitive discrimination of those situational elements and interpersonal factors that contribute to the creation of moral conflicts.

Consequently, attending to the particulars of such dramatized forms of moral judgment, choice, and action can solicit various judgments of the resolutions offered. Since multiple perspectives can be offered through such discussions, one can be sensitized to the ambiguities of moral conduct and to those intricate processes involved with resolving a moral issue or a morally divisive situation. Shared evaluations can stimulate further discussion of alternative courses of action that could have been taken to resolve a particular conflict, which can involve subsequent philosophical deliberation of viable forms of moral coexistence between individual persons.

In addition, Swanger (1985) asserts that "...what we do in morals is what we must do in aesthetics: establish a reciprocal relationship between ourselves and the 'other' we are judging." (p. 93) By stimulating intuitive response and engaging affective identification with a dramatic character's moral predicament, a dramatized play can broaden and enrich one's consciousness of those emotional and spiritual factors that often inhere to the process of moral judgment and moral conduct. Imaginative reciprocal extensions of the self into the pain, suffering and elation experienced by dramatic characters, can enlighten about the value of empathy and compassion when dealing with real cases of moral conflict. Consequently, perceptive considerations of the fictional moral agent struggling to resolve a moral



conflict can sensitize about the necessity for assessing moral conduct according to an orientation of care and compassionate relational responses.

In short, through imaginative participation with dramatized moral dilemmas, an audience can be provoked to reflect on the merits of nonjudgmental response and relational support when dealing with morally problematic situations. As Swanger (1985) affirms:

If we attempt to judge a moral issue without reciprocity, without the same extension of ourselves into the other, the same conjoining that is essential to aesthetic judgment, we are likely if not to commit evil (although that is a possibility), then at least to make a judgment that will be less adequate because it will not fully account for the humanity (the 'endness') of its subjects (s). (p. 94)

Similarly, by citing Swanger, Bailin (1993) concurs that there are important parallels between aesthetic appreciations of works of art and contemplating the intricate dimensions of a moral situation. In the same manner that aesthetic judgments rely on emotional response and diligent examinations of the formal particulars of a work of art, most assessments and evaluations of moral issues and should equally involve empathic identification with the moral subject, and careful discrimination of the situational elements that inhere to a specific situation. As Bailin asserts:

The application of the notion of appreciation to the moral sphere might help to direct attention to the fact that intellectual evaluation of a moral situation

on the basis of abstract reason is insufficient and incomplete. What is necessary is an appreciation of the situation, which links reasoned judgment and emotional response closely together. (1993, p. 101)

Perceptive engagement with the situational contexts of a play's moral conflicts can allow individual spectators imaginative access to thoughts, motivations, and points of view with which he or she may or may not be familiar (Novitz, 1993, p. 591). For Sheppard (1991), through such imaginative extensions, members of an audience are "...enabled to see and feel as though [they] were present at events represented or described, while yet aware that [they] are not in fact present. Such imagination is worth cultivating for the insight it can give us into other people and their lives." (pp. 37-38) Similarly, Bailin (1993) concurs that "...empathetic understanding and appreciation of a moral situation..." enabled by a work of art, such as a play, "...implies more than intellectual understanding. It implies emotional engagement, and this may well provide the energy, the motivation for moral action." (p. 100)

Such emotional involvements with the pain, anguish, and often elation experienced by dramatic characters, can provide meaningful intuitive insights into the spiritual dimensions of moral agency, alluding to those spontaneous reactions and responses to specific moral conflicts. Furthermore, vicarious involvement with dramatic characters with distinct temperaments, personalities, ideological persuasions and moral perspectives, can enable student spectators to understand and to appreciate the complex processes of moral agency. For Novitz (1993), a

fictional work, such as a play, "...is at its most exciting, and instructs us most adequately in matters of value, when it explores moral problems and brings its [audience] to see them in their fullness and complexity." (p. 590)

Through empathic identification and imaginative impersonation, a student audience can be deeply moved to feel those evocative needs, aspirations, and frustrations conveyed through dramatized moral dilemmas. As Novitz (1993) indicates, "We acquire moral insight without having to live in the situations which occasion them. What is more, they are insights which are often more easily acquired from fiction than from their actual counterparts." (p. 591) Aesthetic reception of these emotionally charged moral conflicts often provides a significant stimulus for the moral imagination to perceive the points of contention and frustration through the eyes of these troubled and pained characters. In this regard, aesthetic encounters with dramatic characters can permit a student audience to imaginatively engage those detailed features and nuances of morally problematic situations, providing an important access to those moral principles and values that are either being affirmed or seriously challenged through the work (Eldridge, 1989, p. 33, Nussbaum, 1990, p. 24)

By attending the performance of a play, a student audience can be stimulated to explore the moral implications of actions and interactions between dramatic characters, especially as these relate to those individual and environmental factors that seem to, by virtue of imaginative extension, influence and condition most forms of human behaviour.

In addition, an aesthetic encounter with a dramatized play can lend itself to identifying, examining, and assessing those metaphorical schemata by which dramatic characters construct their interpretations of morally problematic situations. Experiencing a play can provide a student audience with an opportunity to reflect upon the practical viability and validity of standard moral principles and codes of behaviour, in relation to the concrete circumstances of specific moral conflicts. As Nussbaum (1990) indicates, an audience at a play can be "...deeply immersed in the messy impure world of human particularity; and we learn to ascribe a high importance to events that befall [these characters] as they move through the world of contingency." (p. 386) Similarly, Kupfer (1978) affirms that "...aesthetic activity can be practice for the moral exercise of our imaginations, for in both the reconciliation of tensions and dovetailing of the diverse call for freshness in invention." (p. 19)

A play can engage the moral imagination in much the same manner as anecdotal narratives illustrate the intricate levels of moral agency. According to Johnson's (1993) highly insightful analysis of the metaphorical nature of moral knowledge, understanding, and reflection, moral concepts and moral perspectives are defined by metaphorical and symbolic systems of thought (p. 33). In addition, the synthetic unity provided by metaphors and by the narrative form often reflect those concepts which enable human individuals to assign moral meaning. As he asserts, "We come to understand and evaluate the morality of our character, intentions, and actions within the context of imaginative models and frames that

give partial syntheses to our manifold and variegated experiences." (1993, p. 165) In short, Johnson argues that most moral values and principles have a cognitive and affective grounding in metaphorical schemata and narrative frames of reference.

Assuming that such cognitive paradigms define the manner in which social interactions are assigned moral significance, moral reflection can entail an assessment of the cultural and historical contexts of distinct moral perspectives. Understood as guiding principles originating in the narrative descriptions of interpreted experience, the structuring and ordering functions of moral principles often reflect an attempt to assign moral value and relevance to social coexistence. For Johnson (1993), "The meaning, relevance, and guidance that moral principles offer depends ultimately upon the narrative settings in which they have emerged and to which they are being applied." (p. 160) As a consequence, moral principles and values can be regarded as evolving metaphoric conceptualizations derived from diverse historical, cultural, and political contexts.

The progeny of a productive moral imagination that enables individual persons to assign moral meaning to a precarious, yet inevitably relational existence, these synthetic conceptual schemata can be revised and reformulated in light of the prevailing demands for a more just and equitable moral coexistence. Johnson cites Dewey as support for his contentions that moral consciousness and understanding evolves through a dynamic interplay between self and other, between individuals and their social contexts.

When we observe that morals is at home wherever consideration of the worse and better are involved, we are committed to noting that morality is a continuing process not a fixed achievement. Morals means growth of conduct in meaning; at least it means that kind of expansion in meaning which is consequent upon observations of the condition and outcome of conduct. It is all one with growing. (Quoted in Johnson, 1993, p. 180)

Johnson thereby asserts that moral reform can result from more refined perceptions of the perpetual needs for justice, empathy and compassion between individual persons "Moral deliberation should be viewed as expansive, imaginative inquiry into possibilities for enhancing the quality of our communally shared experience." (Johnson, 1993, p. 80)

In light of the above presuppositions concerning moral consciousness, to cultivate moral sensitivity within a pedagogical context involves two distinct, yet interrelated, functions. For Johnson, moral insights can be enhanced when there is both an awareness of the imaginative nature of ethical systems of thought and of the power of the moral imagination to envisage countless possibilities for a reformed moral coexistence (p. 198) A capacity for moral sensitivity can therefore result because of a refined perception of the plurality of moral concepts and paradigms for assigning moral significance to interpersonal and social interactions

Thus, an important objective of this study's alternative approach to moral pedagogy is to attempt to sensitize students' awareness concerning the pluralistic nature of moral perspectives and moral principles. "A pluralistic view of morality

allows us to appreciate metaphor as the locus of our imaginative exploration of possibilities for action, and the basis for our self-critical reflections on our values, ideals, and institutions. (Johnson, 1993, p. 35) Consequently, a deeply reflective disposition regarding the metaphorical nature of moral thought and moral knowledge should be developed so as to cultivate students' capacities for sensitive moral discernment and subtle discriminations of moral conduct.

If moral knowledge and awareness can be increased through a renewed perspective of the metaphoric and narrative grounding of moral values and principles, the pedagogical value of fictional works, including plays, is in their ability to develop and to refine sensitive discriminations of moral agency. Moreover, the pedagogical merits of critically analyzing the moral issues, themes and situations examined by particular plays lie in their capacity to generate profound reflections on the pluralistic nature of various moral perspectives and moral frameworks. An aesthetic experience with a work of fiction, such as a play, can stimulate sensitive evaluation of the personal and social consequences resulting from multiple forms of moral action and intended courses of action. A fictional narrative, such as a play, "...invites us to develop our perception of character, of what is important in a given situation, and of the subtly interwoven threads of our moral entanglements." (Johnson, 1993, p. 197)

Dramatic art can provide an opportunity for students to critically reflect upon the complex processes by which human persons often solve their moral dilemmas. A play becomes an important catalyst for critical analysis of those extraneous

factors that often contribute to the creation of moral crises, and that often condition the moral responses that are dramatized. Ethical criticism of dramatized moral actions and interactions can implicate a perceiving student audience in further reflections of the plausibility, and often the inevitability, of certain courses of action. For Nussbaum (1990), an important dimension of most fictional works, such as a play, lie in their ability to "...display to us the complexity, the indeterminacy, the sheer difficulty of moral choice, and which show us,...the childishness, the refusal of life involved in fixing everything in advance according to some system of inviolable rules " (p. 142)

Empathic identification with dramatic characters often leads to a broader and deeper awareness of those variegated levels of moral thought and action. In this respect, moral inquiry and deliberation focusses on circumstance and context, rather than on moral absolutes and rationalized moral imperatives. For Brown and Tappan (1991), "The key to understanding the psychological complexity of moral experience is to sustain as a fundamental unity its cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions." (p. 176) The presentation of fictional 'lives' on the stage, involved in various moral conflicts that beg to be resolved, can provide that sense of sustained unity for critical assessments of moral conduct. Through such reflective assessments, one can often perceive the points of contention between competing moral perspectives, as well as the restrictive nature of moral dogmas and rules.

Confronting the pain, anger and frustration often resulting from moral laxity



and/or moral intolerance and fanaticism, can stimulate serious discussion of how human beings should choose to behave morally within a secular society. There is thus an attempt to see and to feel a moral act from the perspective of an imagined other, a moral agent who struggles to regulate personal actions and interactions according to certain moral values and principles (Johnson, 1993, p. 219). It is by perceiving the actual consequences of moral action and inaction, that students can be invited to deliberate on the need for more just and life-affirming solutions to recognizable dilemmas. As Paul (1988) contends, the value of fictional works, such as plays, rests on their ability to.

...represent and reveal,...the deeper meanings and universal problems of everyday life. Most of these problems have an important moral dimension. They are the kinds of problems all of us must think about and solve for ourselves, no one can tell us the 'right answers.' (p. 14)

One can infer then that the ability to visualize a number of possibilities of a renewed moral vision for social coexistence often stems from the inventive capacities of the moral imagination. As Johnson (1993) asserts:

Moral imagination is our capacity to see and to realize in some actual or contemplated experience a range of possibilities for enhancing the quality of experience, both for ourselves and the communities of which we are a part, both for the present and for future generations, both for our existing practices and institutions as well as for those we can imagine as potentially realizable. (p. 209)

To undergo vicariously the unifying complexity of moral experience through an aesthetic encounter with a play, can enhance awareness of a shared concern for assigning moral significance to human experience. Further reflections on the metaphorical and symbolic dimensions of moral concepts and perspectives can result in subsequent discussions of the often precarious nature of standard and prevalent moral frameworks and systems of thought. As Nussbaum (1990) asserts, the value of most fictional works, including plays, for stimulating and refining moral perception, is reflected in their potency:

...to show the ethical crudeness of moralities based exclusively on general rules, and to demand for ethics a much finer responsiveness to the concrete-including features that have not been seen before and could not therefore have been housed in any antecedently built system of rules.

(p. 37)

Moreover, a group of students can be further provoked to critically assess those theoretical assumptions embedded in distinct moral perspectives, through which dramatic characters choose to resolve their respective dilemmas. Deliberating the interpersonal and social implications of a play's commentary on prevailing moral codes, can be related to a playwright's critique of standard moral orthodoxies and moral truths. Extending the practical implications of these critiques to lived reality during post-performance class discussions, can involve further assessments of those moral values and principles that can secure a more just and empathic moral coexistence. As Johnson (1993) observes, a play, like most works

of fiction, can "...provide us with rich, humanly realistic experimental settings in which we can make our own moral explorations." (p. 198)

The performance of a play can engage the moral imagination to speculate, 'rehearse' and contemplate viable resolutions to the moral issues presented by a particular play, and to explore desirable moral attitudes and habits between individuals. As Gardner (1978) asserts of most art forms, one can argue that dramatic art, "...may not really legislate for humanity - an idea still worth trying - but whether it is heard or not, it is civilization's...device for learning what must be affirmed and what must be denied." (p. 146)

Consequently, a dramatized play can engage more philosophical considerations of moral conduct, soliciting a more substantial analysis of dominant perceptions and conceptions of morality (Nussbaum, 1990, p. 173). As Nussbaum (1990) asserts, "By cultivating our ability to see vividly another person's distress, to picture ourselves in another person's place ..we make ourselves more likely to respond with the morally illuminating and appropriate sort of response." (p. 339) Furthermore, extended reflections based on multiple dramatized forms of moral experience can very well implicate a student audience in a critical appraisal of its own ethical limitations.

Because of this appeal to the moral imagination, attending the performance of a play can additionally stimulate moral self-examination by challenging and provoking a student audience to seriously question many conventional and prevalent assumptions about just, benevolent, and humane actions Raising

awareness of the metaphorical structure of distinct moral perspectives and moral frameworks can liberate prevailing assumptions of moral truth and moral certainties, to enable a more contextual, pluralistic approach to moral reflection.

Stimulating sensitive perception of morally problematic situations can provide students with the motivation to critically evaluate competing moral perspectives, as well as to test the viability and validity of cherished moral ideals, values and principles. As Johnson (1993) avers:

Unless we can put ourselves in the place of another, unless we can enlarge our own perspective through an imaginative encounter with the experience of others, unless we can let our own values and ideals be called into question from various points of view, we cannot be morally sensitive.

(p. 199)

Unprecedented realizations of limiting and repressive moral orthodoxies, enabled by an aesthetic experience with a play, can stimulate further deliberations on the potential implications for a reformed awareness of moral priorities. As Nussbaum (1990) observes, a play

...can gesture towards the limits of ethical consciousness, making us aware of the deep elements in our ethical life that in their violence or intensity leads us outside of the ethical attitude altogether, outside of the quest for balanced vision and perfect rightness. (p. 190)

Class discussions would focus on those moral values and principles that aim to ensure and to preserve a humanistic ethos that is foundational to a

relational approach to moral practice. Consequently, the pedagogical value of dramatic art for stimulating serious deliberations of the moral sphere lies in its ability to enrich students' consciousness of the prevailing need to reconsider their potentials as moral agents within a secular society. This it can achieve by challenging them to reconsider those forms of moral conduct that, as Maguire (1991) argues, "...befit or do not befit persons as persons." (p. 8)

Therefore, further reflections beyond the play itself that concern its implications for potent revisions of conventional systems of moral thought and action, can involve a renewed interest in contemplating the recreation of prevailing moral frameworks and perspectives. As Feder (1981) indicates, aesthetic feeling evoked by encountering the fictional 'world' of a play can "...awaken [a spectator] from sympathetic lethargy to sympathetic surprise and from there, it is hoped, leads him to further growth in human sensibility." (p. 21) As a 'philosophizing' medium (Esslin, 1976, p. 22), dramatic art can encourage a re-evaluation of prevailing complacent views of moral knowledge, with the hope of reminding a student audience of its yet unrealized potentials as moral agents.

The power of the theatre experience to stimulate moral self-examination, as well as a critical analysis of prevailing moral perspectives, attitudes and normative standards, needs to be assessed in relation to the most significant principles of a relational ethics. A relational approach to moral pedagogy that incorporates the aesthetic experience of plays acknowledges and respects the rational and imaginative capacities of each student. Through such an approach, students may

be educated to be morally aware, morally perceptive, and ultimately, morally concerned for a recreated vision of a more just, equitable, and empathic moral coexistence.

### 3. 3 Canadian and Quebec Theatre as a Medium for Moral Inquiry.

As an art form, Canadian and Quebec theatre can be regarded as potent cultural mediators that often aim to inform and to enlighten their audiences about the pluralistic matrix of a corporate national identity. In its multiple attempts to examine and to explore a culturally diverse ethos, Canadian and Quebec theatre often affirm and celebrate the cultural plurality of Canadian and Quebec life through dramatized situations and events. As Canadian playwright Cook (1984) indicates, "The playwrights in this country are a fact of life...To deny them existence is to impose alien academic and cultural values upon material that speaks directly to the landscape and its people." (p 17)

In addition, most Canadian and Quebec playwrights situate prevailing and perpetual existential conflicts and dilemmas within specific Canadian and Quebec historical, political, and social contexts. For Moore (1973), "Even when the themes are seen as universal (suppression, selling one's soul, human rights, growing-up), they are still clothed in what to other audiences must seem like peculiar-and-provincial garments." (p. 87) Thus, the *regional* character of most Canadian and Quebec theatre can be regarded as that reference point which constitutes those culturally determined ideological systems of thought by which specific groups of persons have defined their collective identity and their social co-existence. As

Courtney (1982) indicates,

We create culture when we acknowledge others in community; it is a two-way exchange. Yet through this exchange, culture also identifies our selves with community...Cultural meaning is related to identity. Without cultural identity there can be no personal identity." (p. 147)

Often English-Canadian and French-Canadian drama critics and theatre historians have critically analyzed the regional character of this indigenous art form as being a major obstacle for helping to define a national identity (Wallace, 1985, pp. 69-71). In reaction to this debate, theatre historian Mavor Moore affirms, in one of his influential and seminal discussions on the history of the Canadian theatre:

...it may very well be that in time to come, the most valuable aspect of the Canadian theatre will turn out to be its difference from that of others, that it will offer the world not only an alternative North American art, but a model for greater diversity in general-because we are a pluralistic society in which no really 'national' theatre can exist no should be expected to (Quoted in Wallace, 1985, p. 71)

It is not the intent of this discussion to assess the advantages and disadvantages of this polemical epithet for this indigenous art form. Rather, the following discussion assumes that as most forms of Western theatre, Canadian and Quebec theatre often provide highly incisive and detailed presentations of those multiple flaws and strengths of empirical reality, and of prevailing epistemologies for

existential meaning.

Brook (1992) affirms that the potency of most dramatic art to influence and at times transform perceptions of the human condition, stems from its ability, "...to show the world as it is, this abnormal world of villains, rascals and simpletons, and at the same time...make a radical transformation so that for a moment the world is seen complete, with all its difficulties, all its riches and all its potentialities." (p. 76) Most Canadian and Quebec drama often function at this level of perceptual engagement and transformation.

For this discussion, it is assumed that as an art form, most Canadian and Quebec theatre often function to stimulate perceptions and to broaden awareness of those individual and environmental factors that motivate actions and interactions between human subjects. In this regard, the discussion aims to illustrate that Canadian and Quebec plays can provide some relevant insights into the complex processes of moral agency in relation to specific conflict situations. As most works of drama, Canadian and Quebec plays often examine human angst and emotional turmoil resulting either from multiple attempts to resolve pressing moral crises or from conscious choices to leave interpersonal conflicts and dilemmas unresolved.

In addition, Canadian and Quebec plays often engage controversial moral issues that serve to challenge their audiences to re-evaluate prevailing perspectives on valid and acceptable forms of moral coexistence (Wallace, 1985, 1990; Wilson, 1995; Zimmerman, 1994). It is the intent of this discussion to argue that Canadian and Quebec theatre has much to offer in terms of subject matter for



discussing and critically assessing multiple forms of moral judgment, choice, and behaviour. Moreover, since Canadian and Quebec theatre can function as a potent catalyst for sensitive moral reflection, it is suggested that it can lend itself to a relational approach to the study of morality.

Considering that there does not exist a substantial body of dramatic criticism concerning the moral implications that can be culled from most Canadian and Quebec plays, throughout this discussion references are made to established sources of literary ethical criticism, that pertain equally to a description of the moral questions and issues raised in most Canadian and Quebec theatre. Similarly, concrete references to published texts and journal articles on the Canadian and Quebec theatre, that mention some dimension of morality treated in a specific play, are cited to support this discussion's arguments.

The appeal and relevance of most Canadian and Quebec theatre do not lie solely in those regional particulars that embody multiple forms of interpersonal conflicts and individual dilemmas, but in its ability to explore what playwright George Ryga refers to as "regions of social anxiety " (Quoted in Wallace, 1985, p. 73) These 'regions' of human conflict often reflect certain spatial and social features of a distinct locality and culture, while embracing those subliminal, conceptual, and ideological factors that often influence and condition interpersonal strife and struggle. Moreover, a significant testament of this indigenous art form's continued significance lies in its ability to expose embodied primordial forces in the process of transition and change. In fact, most Canadian and Quebec theatre often

enable a form of ritual communion with subliminal archetypal symbols and themes, as reflected in those metaphoric images of human anxiety, fear, triumph and despair presented on the stage.

Canadian playwright Reaney (1978) indicates that , "Good plays dance with the audience, make each person use parts of his soul he hasn't been using for some time and make him use various parts of his soul in succession during the evening " (p. 143) Similarly, Salter (1995) observes that such embodied souls often experience " ...spiritual resistance [which] may lead-however slowly, however gropingly-to spiritual healing, taking place now but just possibly lasting forever." (p. 222) Spiritual angst effectuated by physical isolation, by social ostracism and alienation, and by political oppression, that is coupled by the emotional atrophy of the human psyche in solitude, struggling to satisfy archetypal needs, longings, and desires, collectively provide those motivational factors for these dramatized conflicts. It is the human soul in the process of disruption, dissonance, evolution, stasis or decay, that is at the core of most Canadian and Quebec theatre.

As an art form, Canadian and Quebec theatre can lend itself to a more profound awareness of those elemental and prototypical forces resonating through the psyche's growth, development and transformation. Canadian and Quebec plays offer themselves as symbolic presentations of the psyche's intricate levels and therefore, can function as catalysts for a more profound and sensitive consciousness of human motivation, action, and interaction (Salter, 1995, p. 222) Although often reflective of specific elements of a culturally diverse national

identity, the fictional 'worlds' of most Canadian and Quebec plays inevitably challenge most spectators to re-evaluate their perceptions of interpersonal relating and of valid societal behaviour. Canadian and Quebec theatre can therefore provide an audience with a more holistic understanding and appreciation of those motivational elements that often provoke human behaviour, and consequently, can raise valid questions and concerns regarding the moral implications of these distinct forms of interpersonal and social conduct.

The psyche's subliminal needs and yearnings thus find expression in dramatic conflicts and dilemmas that can help broaden an audience's awareness of the intricate spiritual dimensions of moral agency. According to States (1985), these motivating forces constitute a character's *identity*, and he argues that these

...[are] one's end: [they] may take the form of an obsession, an *idée fixe*, a sustained exercise of will, a passion, a humor, a status, or a passive satisfaction or dissatisfaction of being what one is. Crisis in drama comes normally from the conflict of individual identities that refuse to "give "

(p. 97)

In essence, the particulars of individual character *identities* serve to thematize prevailing existential concerns, fears, needs and aspirations, that often nourish a playwright's vision for a reformed humanity and social coexistence that has strong implications for moral conduct. For Wallace (1985)

The regions of social anxiety that [a playwright] depicts, in other words, are his own regions of personal concern. Usually it is the playwright's

personal perspective that gives his material the ring of truth; and it is this that allows a play to travel effectively to a variety of people in different locales. (p. 77)

Thus, the prevailing appeal of Canadian and Quebec theatre is to a large degree due to its ability to transcend regional parameters by addressing significant existential questions and concerns that constitute effective theatre.

In light of a Jungian typology that accounts for the distinct levels of the human psyche, dramatic characters encountered through most Canadian and Quebec plays can be appreciated as struggling to fulfil archetypal needs and subliminal longings. Often desperate, frustrated, disillusioned and suffering from spiritual dissonance, these pained psyches react against stultifying and oppressive circumstances and social conditions. Consequently, when assessing the morality of their choices of action, one needs to consider the manner in which the soul, or 'the anima,' of each dramatic character provokes some resolution to a divisive situation that invites pertinent moral considerations.

Jung (1983) described the anima as "...a clearly demarcated functional complex that can best be described as a "personality." (p. 97) Hillman (1976) indicates that for Jung

The Anima is a person and anima is a conceptual notion and anima means soul...it is who creates conflicting confusions and attractions, who brings moods and desires and neurovegetative symptoms, who kindles the peculiar fascinations of fantasy that turn one's head, and yet also conveys a vague

sense of interiority, a sense of soul. (p. 21)

As embodied souls, or *animae*, the fictional characters of most Canadian and Quebec theatre struggle to recover a sense of psychic unity and wholeness, as they struggle to heal while enduring the fears, traumas, anxieties and frustrations of psychic dislocation.

Isolated in a complicated process of evolution and growth, these embodied souls often seek some form of restitution from sudden spiritual dissonance and disturbance, that can evoke in a perceiving audience an intuitive sense of reverence and awe for the psyche's predicament. This perception of reverence (Zukav, 1989, p. 52) can be nourished and cultivated by exposure to those multiple instances of conflict, progress and regression embedded in the psyche's realm. As Hillman (1976) indicates, a playwright's " .fictions are often more significant than his own reality, containing more psychic substance, which lasts long after their "creator" has gone [He] creates only by their authority " (p 12)

Refusing to be moralistic, a play's depictions of spiritual conflicts endured by distinct characters often expose familiar psychic motivations that cause human persons to act within specific environmental and social contexts. Thus, as symbols of pained and distraught psyches in the process of transformation, dramatic characters on the Canadian and Quebec stage can engage an audience in a more compassionate and sensitive assessment of interpersonal actions within the context of spiritual conflict.

An initial awareness of these troubled fictional lives often begins with an

intuitive perception of embodied souls in dislocation, reflected in compelling depictions of each character's emotional turbulence and distress. Such intuitive receptions of pained psyches often resonate within the viscera, enabling physical and emotional responses due to an instinctive affinity with each character's embodiments of the collective human psyche's transpersonal elements. Pearson (1991) indicates that, "The soul is the repository of all the potential of the human species, potential that lies within each one of us, like the seeds germinating and ready to sprout if external conditions are propitious." (p. 28) Even though actions taken by these dramatized characters to resolve their dilemmas may upset an audience's preconceived notions of conventional moral human behaviour, the perceiving subject attending a play's performance can intuitively empathize with the pain, agony and frustration that inheres to a character's responses to conflicting spiritual needs.

During this process by which a perceiving spectator's soul embraces and resonates with the emotional substance of distressed, frustrated and pained dramatic characters, Hillman (1976) indicates that:

Functionally anima works as that complex which connects our usual consciousness with imagination by provoking desire or clouding us with fantasies and reveries, or deepening reflection. She is both bridge to the imaginal and also the other side, personifying the imagination of the soul.  
(p. 43)

By imaginatively participating in the evolution of the drama, one can instinctively

explore the depths of the human psyche which has been given physical parameters within the spatial and temporal 'world' of the play.

Often, dramatized conflicts seem to erupt when embodied souls react against confining elements of the persona. For Jung (1983), the persona is

...a complicated system of relations between the individual consciousness of society, fittingly enough a kind of mask, designed on the one hand to make a definite impression upon others, and, on the other, to conceal the true nature of the individual. (p. 94)

The persona thus functions as that influential composite of culturally and socially prescribed roles by which a character interacts with others, and adapts to social demands and expectations. Conflicts often unfold as the needs of the anima confront those ingrained and complacent attitudes, values and perceptions that have filtered into consciousness through the mediation of the persona. As Jung (1983) asserts, "...it is the anima that reacts to the persona." (p. 96) The pain and suffering of the soul in transition can therefore be intuitively felt and experienced as it attempts to secure some sense of balance and unity when confronted with oppressive cultural and social institutions, or ideologies that structure empirical experience.

Entangled in the conflicting demands of soul and persona, dramatic characters often react to secure a sense of autonomy and integrity within a microcosm of embodied souls, who are themselves involved in their individual quests for renewed psychic balance and stability (Salter, 1995, p. 221). Thus,

when a character reacts to those disturbing unconscious obsessions and compulsions of a troubled soul, it is often with the intent to reinstate some sense of psychic unity and wholeness. Some characters choose to ignore the call for spiritual growth and maturation, thereby succumbing to the confining and stifling elements of these inner compulsions (Salter, 1995, p. 222). In order to appreciate the potent and provocative nature of psychic disturbance and disequilibrium, actions taken to resolve multiple conflicts faced by dramatic characters often need to be reassessed in terms of this quest for spiritual transformation and healing. Most of these characters are often:

...positioned within liminal spaces, inside thresholds, between borders: dematerialising places where they are irradiated by the desire to become different from their normal selves. But will they in fact cross over, or will they remain transfixed, perhaps forever, on the (virtual) edge of spiritual transformation. (Salter, 1995, p. 225)

By empathizing intuitively with these embodied souls in transition, one is able to revise and reassess one's perceptions of the moral import of human actions. As Hillman (1976) avers, in order to enhance consciousness of those potent subconscious factors of interpersonal and social actions, an attempt has to be made to ". . .de-moralize the psyche from the moralistic fallacy which reads psychic events in terms of good and bad, right and wrong." (p. 178) Vicariously experiencing the pain, suffering, and disenchantment of dramatic characters can enable one to transcend towards a more profound consciousness of those complex



internal processes by which moral dilemmas are often instigated and sometimes resolved.

Part of the appeal of Canadian and Quebec theatre rests in its ability to expose the different levels through which these embodied souls transform to incorporate material experiences. Sudden internal motivations to act, governed by the soul in transition, often serve to complement the quest for self-knowledge, as well as for existential meaning and purpose. Most Canadian and Quebec theatre can therefore be characterized as "...featuring characters-traumatized, brutalised, repressed, silenced, violated, abandoned, or destroyed-who experience profound epiphanies in which they discover that they must undertake a quest-romance in search of themselves." (Salter, 1995, p. 221) The inner conflicts engendered by what Jung identified as "unconscious complexes," (Pascal, 1992, p. 61) are responsible for those psychic disruptions sustained by these embodied souls.

Externalized and projected onto the material world of significant others, psychic energy, or libido, in the pursuit of some form of spiritual healing and restitution, often provokes multiple conflicting situations endured by these fictional lives. In short, the embodied soul in the process of transition and regeneration, struggles to secure a sense of developmental closure as it experiences the pain and suffering of sudden disengagement. As Zukav (1989) observes

The pains that [one] suffers, the loneliness that [one] encounters, the experiences that are disappointing or distressing, the addictions and seeming pitfalls of [one's] life are each doorways to awareness. Each

offers an opportunity to see beyond the illusion that serves the  
balancing and growth of [one's] soul. (p. 237)

Through symbolic allusions of souls in transition, the situational conflicts of most Canadian and Quebec plays can often engage an audience in an intuitive reception and response to those unconscious forces that generate moral actions and interactions.

Thus, dramatic characters become symbols of those primordial archetypal forces that can provoke the psyche's transformation, and through an aesthetic experience with a play, one can transcend towards a more profound consciousness of the perpetual need for psychic unity, healing and stability. As Jung (1983) observed, "The collaboration of the unconscious is intelligent and purposive, and even when it acts in opposition to consciousness its expression is still compensatory in an intelligent way, as if it were trying to restore the lost balance." (p. 219) Engaged in an intuitive mode of reception and empathic identification, an individual spectator can feelingly perceive the workings of familiar unconscious forces attempting to reinstate psychic balance within the lives of these dramatic characters. Jung asserts that intuitive awareness is perception via the unconscious, and it is through aesthetic engrossment with dramatized conflicts and dilemmas, through focussed emotional participation with these pained psyches, that one tacitly encounters multiple reflections of psychic activity.

Another part of the emotional appeal of dramatized conflicts and resolutions lies in their ability to evoke multiple and variegated affective responses to material

expressions of unconscious needs and desires.

The autonomy of the unconscious therefore begins where emotions are generated. Emotions are instinctive, involuntary reactions which upset the rational order of consciousness by their elemental outbursts...In a state of affect a trait or character sometimes appears which is strange even to the person concerned, or hidden contents may irrupt involuntarily. (Jung, 1983, p. 215)

A playwright's vision of the human soul in transition, motivated to act in order to appropriate the persona's experiences, focusses an audience's visceral response to these subliminal intimations of the drive for psychic equilibration. Consequently, one's knowledge and appreciation of the complex levels of the human psyche, and of the potency with which it generates multiple reactions to the numerous obstacles it encounters in its search for stability, is further enhanced by vicariously experiencing the trials and tribulations of these fictional lives. Dramatic art can effectively illustrate how:

...consciousness succumbs all too easily to unconscious influences, and these are often truer and wiser than our conscious thinking it frequently happens that unconscious motives overrule our conscious decisions, especially in matters of vital importance. Indeed, the fate of the individual is largely dependent on unconscious factors (Jung, 1983, pp 218-219)

Aesthetic 're-play' of dramatized conflicts (Courtney, 1982, p 4) can engage a spectator to experience familiar, and sometimes latent, emotions, needs, and

aspirations, that can expand one's perception of those protean and subliminal factors often foundational to distinct forms of moral agency. Elemental and primordial patterns of needs and proclivities, those archetypes of the collective human unconscious (Hillman, 1976, p. 148; Jung, 1983, p. 67, Pascal, 1992, p. 80), resonate symbolically through character projects or courses of action (Beckermari, 1990). This energizing strata of psychic activity, transcending all cultures and symbolically represented through dramatized personal and interpersonal dilemmas, often functions to advance conflicting situations to their inevitable resolutions

For Jung (1983), "The origin of these archetypes, or primordial images, can be explained by assuming them to be deposits of the constantly repeated experiences of humanity. Therefore...archetypes are recurrent impressions made by subjective reactions." (pp. 70-71) Similarly, Philipson (1963), in his discussion of a 'Jungian aesthetic,' observes that "What the unconscious activity contributes is the archetypal forms by which the content of consciously experienced conflict may be synthesized." (p. 75) Assuming that such primordial forces and needs are at the core of most forms of dramatic conflict, a vicarious experience of character motivations can implicate an audience member in primary intuitive perceptions of the 'soul' in transition towards some eventual restitution.

The experience of the drama itself can be likened to a profoundly revelatory encounter with those archetypal and elemental needs, longings, and desires, symbolically conveyed through the stage. Hillman's (1976) treatise on the

pantheistic nature of the psyche's 'inner world,' argues that multiple archetypal influences often affect human actions, and by metaphoric extension, dramatic action. As Hillman (1976) avers, "[Archetypes] present themselves each as a guiding spirit with ethical positions, instinctual reactions, modes of thought and speech, and claims upon feelings. These persons, by governing complexes, govern life." (p. 35) Similarly, Pascal (1992) asserts that:

Archetypes are...nodal points of psychic energy in every contemporary psyche, impelling us to actions and behaviours and ways of perceiving and evaluating the realities of everyday life in the here and now. These form-giving images also pattern all our emotions. (p. 91)

Intuitively and affectively connecting with such primordial situations and forces when experiencing a play, can enable profound insights into those recurring archetypal needs that inform interpersonal actions. In this respect, at this level of subconscious dramatic 're-play,' or recognition, one can be able to derive further knowledge of those causal factors of interpersonal and social behaviour that raise important moral implications for human conduct.

Often plays from the Canadian and Quebec theatre depict characters acting in irrational and destructive manners to resolve the conflict situations they encounter. The 'dark' side of the human psyche, or what Jung (1983) referred to as 'the shadow' (p. 89), often finds heightened dramatic expression as characters interact to satisfy some consuming need. For Jung, the shadow's dark characteristics, "...have an emotional nature, a kind of autonomy, and accordingly

an obsessive or, better, possessive quality." (1983, p. 91) Exploring the functions of the shadow as a potent causal agent for dramatic actions can often serve to enlighten a perceiving subjectivity of those destructive primeval forces that constitute a significant substratum of the human psyche.

Thus, when dramatic characters react violently, impulsively and aggressively to resolve their conflicts, as unsettling as these actions may appear to be, an audience is not being invited to logically and categorically condemn them. On the contrary, by being emotionally engaged in the drama, the intention seems to be to sensitize the perceiving psyche regarding those familiar primeval levels of repressed longings and needs, that can often provoke human actions and interactions. Brutal reactions of pained psyches against perceived sources of oppression, as well as consuming manipulations of other characters for vindictive gratifications, can thus invite further speculation concerning those life-affirming needs that are seeking to be fulfilled. As Pascal (1992) asserts:

Ultimately all forms of negativity, such as hate and anger, stem from a feeling of not being loved. Love the most complete form of consciousness, makes us feel at one with others. Not feeling this oneness of consciousness is painful, and painfulness can express itself as anger and hate or depression (anger turned toward oneself). (p. 130)

In short, exposure to the shadow side of the human psyche can function as a potent reminder of those latent weaknesses, limitations and strengths, that are significant features of the human subconscious.

Elements of the shadow side of the human psyche are most prevalent in such Canadian and Quebec plays as Walker's (1986) *Zastrozzi: The Master of Discipline*, Pollock's (1981) *Blood Relations*, and Dubois' (1993) *Being at Home with Claude*. As studies in the dark side of the human psyche, the appeal of these plays lies in their ability to transcend an audience towards a more profound awareness and sensitivity of those subconscious forces that often provoke violent resolutions to conflict situations. Whether in the Grand Guignol style of melodrama, or the caustic realism of naturalistic theatre, these plays aim to broaden and deepen an audience's perceptions of those elemental forces that often provoke pain, anguish, and frustration between human subjects. As Zastrozzi observes at the end of Walker's play, "Understanding the truth is understanding that the force of darkness is constant." (Walker, 1986, p. 272) A communion with the shadow, enabled by intuitive responses to such plays, can provide further insights into those intricate processes of spiritual growth and evolution, as well as into those social conditions and circumstances that often provoke its expression.

In light of the above, aesthetic encounters with a dramatized play can enable the appraisal of conflict resolutions through an empathic understanding of dramatic characters' psychic dispositions, partly conditioned by the environmental contexts of their fictional lives. Perceiving the anguish and ecstasy with which dilemmas are engaged and resolved, involves a more profound consciousness of the social and psychological conditions that inform character projects. Thus, an audience's evaluations of character actions need not be categorically and harshly

morally judgmental, because they can intuitively recognize the fictional depictions of complex psychic motivations. Any indications of moral failure need to be scrutinized for those subliminal psychic factors that provoke conflicts between dramatic characters, often propelling these towards some inevitable resolution. As Hillman (1976) indicates, "Therefore it is necessary to dehumanize, depersonalize, and de-moralize the psyche in order to deepen the meaning of its human experiences beyond the measure of man." (p. 190)

As Fromm (1975) asserts, understanding the moral failure of human character, and in this case of dramatic characters, may enable one to evaluate the actions taken in light of those psychological and environmental factors that condition moral conduct and behaviour (p. 238). Conflict resolutions endured by dramatic characters in a play can invite critical assessment, but only after a more perceptive evaluation of their causes has been attempted. By targeting the complex levels of human motivation that often compel and regulate character actions and interactions, engaging these fictional lives can expand one's consciousness of those complex emotional, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of moral agency

Moreover, an aesthetic encounter with a dramatized play often enables an individual spectator to identify those distinguishing elements of a play's cultural and historical context. Vicarious participation with a dramatized play often results in an awareness of the physical, cultural, and social conditions influencing character conflicts and dilemmas. As O'Toole (1992) indicates, "The fictional context may



be defined as comprising situations embodying characters who interact with each other, and their physical, social and cultural environment as presented in the fiction." (p. 14)

As most genres of theatre, Canadian and Quebec theatre often present the "...plight into which characters have fallen as a result of intentions that have gone awry either because of circumstances, of the "character of characters," or most likely of the interaction between the two." (Bruner, 1986, p. 21) Dramatized character interactions and reactions help to focus audience awareness on those cultural units of meaning that circumscribe character behaviours, and that often reflect certain moral frameworks situated within distinct cultural contexts. Conflicting moral values and principles, and competing value claims, engender multiple dilemmas that need to be resolved by these dramatic characters, and their resolution can help restructure an audience's understanding of moral agency. Thus, most Canadian and Quebec theatre often offer concrete presentations of the value of "...choice between two qualitatively different actions or commitments, when on account of circumstances one cannot pursue both " (Nussbaum, 1990, p. 37) In addition, conventional and prevailing moral perspectives are often seriously criticized and challenged for their limiting and oppressive effects against human persons.

According to Courtney (1982), the arts "... are the nearest cultural worlds to the living process. They are directly concerned with the moral life and, as a result, are the kernel of a healthy society." (p. 148) If cultural moral values, ideals, and

principles fashion a human subject's moral identity and, therefore, guide his or her interactions with other moral agents, Canadian and Quebec theatre often expose those intricate levels of moral choice and moral conduct within specific cultural contexts. The pluralistic nature of moral judgment and moral choice is often explored by this indigenous art form, through which student audiences can be exposed to the prevailing variety of moral perspectives that inform the Canadian and Quebec social mosaics. Consequently, Canadian and Quebec theatre can be regarded as potent catalysts for stimulating critical analysis of the culturally and socially determined processes of moral agency. Through its multiple 'regions' of interpersonal conflict and social anxiety (Wallace, 1985), Canadian and Quebec theatre can broaden student perceptions of the constant need for revising valid forms of moral coexistence.

Through their treatment of prevailing social and moral issues, most Canadian and Quebec dramatists, of different cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds, and of both genders, often aim to provoke an awareness of the need for moral reform by implicitly referring to certain oppressive, dehumanizing and culturally sanctioned moral standards and norms (Grant, 1995; Parameswaran, 1995; Wallace, 1992; Wilson, 1995). In addition, the issues addressed in many Canadian and Quebec plays can cause an audience to re-examine those abusive, alienating and disempowering features of prominent cultural institutions and their respective ideologies. Such incisive evaluations of indigenous cultural institutions can stimulate critical reflection concerning the social construction and perpetuation

of moral attitudes, dispositions, perspectives and beliefs that govern interpersonal conduct.

By doing so, Canadian and Quebec playwrights often aim for a conversion of consciousness, at a reformed vision of interpersonal and social relating that validates the inherent moral value and worth of human beings. Their intent is usually to provoke thought and deliberation regarding the possibility of reconstructing social coexistence that assigns moral meaning "based on an attitude to humanity that is expressed agape - altruistic love, brotherhood, community and sharing." (Courtney, 1982, p. 147) In this respect, Canadian and Quebec theatre can lend itself to enhancing consciousness of the need to redefine ourselves morally, in relation to the prevailing demands for social justice, political recognition and empowerment, and cultural validation and acceptance.

According to Swanger (1993), ethical criticism of a fictional work " . . . inheres in its capacity to foster empathetic knowledge, the kind of knowledge that counters our tendency to create the "other" of our fellow humans " (p. 48) As an art form, then, is there a role for Canadian and Quebec theatre in moral pedagogy? One can begin to answer this question by focussing on the potency with which Canadian and Quebec theatre can provide students with multiple insights into spiritual growth and development. Complex archetypal forms and situations seem to embody those elemental needs, drives, and yearnings that often instigate the process of spiritual transformation and maturity. Dramatic characters, functioning as symbols of embodied souls in transition, can serve to enhance students'

awareness of those processes of spiritual growth and transformation, and of spiritual decay and stagnation. In this respect, the causal factors of dramatized conflicts can be critically re-evaluated in relation to the pain and suffering endured by such embodied souls in the process of transition.

If the potency of dramatic art often inheres in its ability to assault prevailing perceptions of legitimate forms of moral agency, then Canadian and Quebec theatre can lend itself to a reformed vision of spiritual and moral education. In fact, spiritual enlightenment that can result from the intuitive perceptions of fictional 'souls' in transition, can serve to complement the refinement of individual moral consciousness. Thus, aesthetic encounters with a dramatized Canadian or Quebec play can deepen students' awareness of those distinct psychic factors that often provoke moral conduct.

Educating the soul through Canadian and Quebec theatre can help to revise common perceptions of human suffering and pain, thus broadening students' awareness of the causes of personal and social conflicts, that often result from a quest for psychic and emotional healing. Intuitive responses to psyches in transition characterize emotional and spiritual engrossments with certain Canadian and Quebec plays, during which

A strong presence of actors and a strong presence of spectators can produce a circle of unique intensity in which barriers can be broken and the invisible become real. Then public truth and private truth become inseparable parts of the same essential experience. (Book, 1987, p. 41)

In this respect, developing and refining moral consciousness can evolve out of a more holistic awareness and appreciation of the human psyche in transition

Thus, Canadian and Quebec theatre can significantly contribute to moral pedagogy by sensitizing students to the need for a more contextual approach to moral inquiry and deliberation. Dramatized moral actions and interactions can be assessed in relation to those spiritual needs, as well as to those socio-cultural conditions, that dynamically provoke relational and social conflicts. By attending the performance of Canadian or Quebec play, one is able to broaden and to enrich one's moral consciousness of those complementary levels of psychic maturation and valid forms of moral agency.

Exposing students to the human casualties and losses of dated moral ideals and orthodoxies, and to the emotional and spiritual consequences of disturbing ruptures in relational links, can enhance a more discriminating perception of those intricate layers of moral agency. Moreover, through this vicarious experience of concrete moral predicaments, the moral imagination can be engaged to re-evaluate the viability of prevailing cultural norms and standards in relation to the demands of psychic balance and growth. Attending the performance of a Canadian or a Quebec play that provides an incisive commentary on multiple forms of pain and suffering endured because of restrictive dogmatic moral codes, can stimulate subsequent thought on the potential for recreating social coexistence according to principles that validate individual persons as moral beings in the process of becoming more humane.

The potency of the theatrical event as a catalyst for moral reflection lies in its ability to broaden and deepen moral awareness of human limitations, thereby stimulating further critical thought on the possibilities for a more just, empathic, and equitable moral coexistence.

### Conclusion.

The preceding discussion has illustrated the manner in which dramatic art can lend itself to a more relational approach to the study of moral choice and moral conduct. It has been demonstrated that as an art form, Canadian and Quebec theatre can serve as a potent medium for examining those individual and circumstantial factors that often contribute to the creation of morally divisive situational and interpersonal encounters. Moreover, it has been argued that by re-conceptualizing dramatic characters as embodied psyches in the process of growth, transformation, or stagnation, the psychology of moral agency provides an additional dimension to the study of morality. The discussion has also underscored the potency with which Canadian and Quebec theatre can engage discussion and debate of viable forms of moral conduct within a culturally pluralistic and secular society.

In the following section of this study, specific pedagogical guidelines are provided for implementing this alternative approach to moral pedagogy.

### Part III: Textual Analyses and Some Pedagogical Suggestions.

#### Chapter IV: General Pedagogical Guidelines.

##### Introduction.

The preceding chapters have illustrated how dramatic art can enhance and broaden one's consciousness of those multiple levels of moral agency. It has been argued that Canadian and Quebec theatre, as a specific dramatic genre, can enable a more contextual approach to the study of moral choice and moral conduct within specific cultural and social paradigms of coexistence. This chapter presents a series of recommendations for implementing this alternative approach to moral pedagogy within an educational context. The discussion illustrates those correlational propositions between progressive philosophies of education that promote experientially-based student-learning activities, and the instructional methodology of this study's approach to moral pedagogy.

Instructional suggestions are grounded partly in Rogers' (1969) existential philosophy of education, as well as in Dewey's (1963) educational pragmatism. Noddings' (1988; 1992) principles for creating a caring and supportive learning environment for teachers and students, is integrated into the discussion. Based on Davis's (1988) treatise for developing and enriching student perceptions of theatre as an art form, suggestions are offered for preparing a student audience to engage a theatrical event aesthetically, as well as to enable students to identify those multiple dimensions of the moral sphere often explored by staged plays.

In addition, references are made to Bailin's (1993a, 1993b, 1993c, 1994d)

and to Hornbrook's (1991) views on the instructional value of dramatic art for engaging aesthetic judgment and refining aesthetic appreciation of dramatized plays. Mention will be made of their respective arguments for incorporating the theatrical event as a potent instructional activity for providing students with meaningful aesthetic learning experiences. In the final section of this chapter, some suggestions are made for extending preliminary discussions of the moral issues examined by a play to include such creative dramatics activities as role-playing, improvisation, and scripted plays.

#### 4. 1 Experiential Learning and the Rediscovery of Moral Concerns.

Maintaining intellectually challenging and engaging discussions on morally problematic situations and prevailing moral issues necessitates a more creative approach to moral pedagogy. The traditional case study methodology that invites rational deliberations of situational dilemmas can be replaced with more emotionally stimulating learning experiences. One can argue that a significant weakness with this conventional approach to moral pedagogy is that it promotes a rational consideration of situational conflicts of interest, without a clear demonstration of the personal and social consequences of complicated resolutions to specific moral problems. Thus, it often neglects to actively engage those intuitive and affective faculties of perceptive evaluation that can be stimulated by multiple vicarious encounters with dramatized fictional situations. In order to engage emotional and intuitive modes of perception, dramatic art becomes an alternative medium for generating moral awareness, reflection, and critical judgment, because



it can provide a more holistic assessment of the intricate process of moral choice.

The pedagogical approach illustrated in this study aims to enhance and to extend students' knowledge and awareness of recognizable dilemmas and moral issues through the medium of the theatre. Dramatic art becomes an important source for examining those intricate levels of moral agency, where actions between fictional characters often cannot be reconciled with a moral perspective that is espoused. Similarly, because it often draws its inspiration from empirical reality, a play can illustrate a concrete moral situation in a detailed manner, inviting further speculation of the moral implications of dramatized forms of moral judgment and conduct.

Often the conflict resolutions that are offered prove to be wanting, especially if these result in actions that profoundly dehumanize and debase these fictional embodied souls struggling to secure some sense of personal validation and interpersonal affirmation. Consequently, students who engage with such depictions of gravely deficient and corrosive moral actions and perspectives, can be given much emotional and intellectual fodder for conceiving alternative forms of moral coexistence, that are based on the principles of a relational ethic. According to Paul (1988), "Students certainly need opportunities to explicitly learn basic moral principles, but they also need opportunities to apply them to real and imagined cases and to develop insight in both genuine and pseudo-morality " (p 12)

Underlying this study's alternative approach to moral pedagogy are the theoretical principles derived from the most seminal philosophical assumptions of

experientially based philosophies of education. Experiential learning that implicates the whole person in discovering personal value and meaning of one's being in the world (Rogers, 1969, p. 158), provides a guiding theoretical framework for creating learning situations to engage critical self-examinations of individual moral identities within supportive and non-adversarial learning environments. As unique, meaning-making individuals responsible for discovering and appropriating a personal moral framework, students are to be engaged to reflect critically of prevailing moral ideologies and of individual preconceptions of legitimate forms of moral behaviour. Consequently, teachers are to function as empathic, trusting, validating, and responsible facilitators of the learning process (1969, pp. 108-112), who are ultimately concerned with developing sensitive discrimination and perceptive judgment of those intricate levels of moral judgment and moral behaviour.

An important assumption underlying the current pedagogical approach is that students should be made aware of their capacity for discovering a moral identity as individual persons. Moreover, as responsible moral agents belonging to a morally confused, defective and deficient social order, schooling should provide them with learning situations that can provoke reflection of how they will choose to define themselves morally within a secular society. Consequently, the manner in which they choose to conceive of themselves as morally responsive and responsible subjects within a culturally diverse and secularized society becomes an important pedagogical concern for implementing this alternative approach to moral pedagogy.

this alternative approach to moral pedagogy.

If it is true that human beings have created moral ideologies that are harmful in practice, then likewise they can be stimulated and engaged to invent alternative perspectives for reconstructing a more equitable, caring and just social coexistence. Schooling can therefore provide significant learning experiences which aim to implicate students in critical reflections, discussions, and appraisals of valid moral perspectives that can serve to eradicate those prevailing social ills and injustices that oppress human beings.

The pedagogical approach illustrated in this study would engage students to be self-critical, and would provide them with multiple opportunities to seriously question those culturally and socially determined ethical frames of reference that often influence moral agency. Such a methodology for generating sensitive inquiries and discriminating assessments of moral conduct, would remind students of the prevailing need to reconstruct society and human relationships so that the individual integrity and inherent worth of all persons is preserved. Thus, to implement this methodology, it is recommended that moral educators aim to develop the necessary skills and capacities for enabling students to progress towards a more compassionate and discriminating orientation for relating and responding to individual persons and their respective communities.

Furthermore, if current educational institutions are concerned with sensitizing students to the value of working towards social change and towards a more caring coexistence, students need to discover their capabilities for suggesting

alternative resolutions to divisive moral issues. Guiding students to develop and refine a sensitive discrimination of competing moral ideologies and perspectives, and encouraging them to discover their potential for critically assessing viable forms of moral coexistence, are two significant learning objectives for implementing this study's pedagogical approach.

On this basis, any attempt to develop a process of critical reflection concerning the intricate levels of moral agency, would not be concerned with formulating instructional materials and devising pedagogical methodologies that simply engage cognitive deliberations of abstract moral concepts and principles. Students should be made aware that moral issues and concerns are deeply embedded in existential reality, and that the moral implications of human actions permeate all levels of interpersonal coexistence and of political and social organization. In addition, students should be made aware that they too have legitimate and valid questions and concerns about ethical issues that need to be voiced and addressed in a responsible and conscientious manner. It is therefore recommended that students be emotionally and intellectually involved in careful assessments of morally divisive situations and of prevailing moral issues, allowing them to be engaged in profound criticisms and assessments of the personal and social consequences arising from conflicting moral perspectives.

Furthermore, subject matter would constitute moral issues and themes that students would like to examine and to address. Classroom relational dynamics between members of this learning community would be characterized by mutually

supportive and validating interpersonal encounters between teachers and students. Students would be recognized for their legitimate concerns or proposals for research inquiries, and reminded of their personal responsibility for their course work. Relational principles of reciprocity, responsiveness and reception would guide interpersonal interactions between teachers and students. A more sincere and personable approach to teacher-student relating, as defined by such existentialist philosophers as Buber and Rogers, would therefore ensure more genuinely responsive and attentive communications of personal views and individual observations. Thus, students would be expected to act according to the principle of reciprocal respect, trusting in the freedom they have been given to grow and evolve, at their own pace, in their capacity for moral discrimination and moral awareness.

Similarly, teachers should serve as models of a caring and compassionate disposition that enables them to sustain receptive, responsive, and validating relationships with their students, and that promotes enriching relational experiences with individualized personalities who have distinct views of what is morally acceptable and desirable. In this respect, teachers would be expected to endow their students with what Buber (1958) identified as the subjective status of a 'Thou,' and thus relate to them as individuals with intense, personal worlds of meaning that need to be acknowledged in each learning situation. As Rogers (1969) asserts, "A creative, active, sensitive, accurate, empathic, nonjudgmental listening, is for me terribly important in any relationship." (p. 227)

in their relational contacts amongst themselves and with their teacher, would therefore involve a sharing of knowledge and feelings regarding specific moral issues. It would additionally involve a sharing of individual aspirations for the possible recreation of a more just, equitable, and caring social coexistence. Thus, moral pedagogy should attempt to stimulate and to provoke sensitive reflections and critical responses to those personally relevant questions, raised by both teachers and students, concerning the need to redefine ourselves as moral agents within a secular society.

Recognizing that students are not only endowed with specific moral perspectives and beliefs, but that they have the ability to reassess and modify many of their preconceptions about acceptable forms of moral agency, teachers should engage students through dialogue and discussion to discover valid moral principles for interpersonal behaviour. Imparting moral dogma or specific moral rules for cognitive assimilation is therefore not an objective of this study's pedagogical approach. On the contrary, it is recommended that moral educators aim to develop and to refine students' capacities for critically analyzing prevailing moral ideologies and toxic pseudo-moralities.

Furthermore, there would be no predetermined subject content that would have to be learned for examination purposes, as this pedagogical approach is not concerned with how well students are able to retain abstract philosophical ideas or theoretical principles, that often have little relevance for their developing knowledge of current moral issues. Moreover, cultivating an awareness of the

intricate process of moral choice in relation to concrete situational conflicts should not be reserved to critical discussions of case studies that usually require a rational deliberation of a valid resolution to a specific moral dilemma. Rather, dramatic art would be relied upon as a potent pedagogical medium for engaging critical discussion of concrete, emotionally engaging depictions of dramatized forms of moral agency.

An important objective for implementing this approach would be the creation of an open and supportive forum for student discussions and debates, where opposing views, individual questions, assumptions and concerns can be voiced and critically evaluated. Consequently, students would be implicated in a process of mutual discovery, which encourages them to express culturally-determined moral perspectives, and which invites them to discriminate sensitively among competing needs for moral justice and moral confirmation underlying these seemingly opposing moral points of view. Providing students with multiple opportunities to share a plurality of moral values and principles can serve to sensitize their consciousness to existing commonalities between different moral perspectives. This can engage further philosophical justification of viable and consistent levels of moral conduct between individual persons.

In short, in the process of discovering a moral identity that they believe has merit and integrity, students would be challenged to re-evaluate many of their assumptions, biases, and prejudices of morally acceptable forms of interpersonal conduct. Thus, instead of engaging students to simply clarify their personal value

frameworks, as with the values clarification paradigm, it is recommended that students be required to engage in discussion and debate of those viable moral principles by which human beings should operate within a culturally pluralistic social order. It would be left for each individual conscience to decide whether or not there exists some remote possibility of striving for moral regeneration within the prevailing realities of social marginalization, political oppression, and cultural intolerance of a prevailingly secular society.

If, as both pragmatic and existentialist thinkers suggest, experiential education is an enriching source of personally relevant learning, then, providing students with various simulated experiences of morally problematic situations becomes a potent pedagogical means for generating thoughtful responses to complex moral themes, situations and issues. As Dewey (1963) asserts, "The central problem of an education based upon experience is to select the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences." (pp. 27-28) Classroom learning can begin with vicarious experiences of dramatized conflict situations, moral dilemmas and resolutions that can stimulate students to think in concrete terms, before they advance to more abstract rational deliberations of what it means to be moral.

Such fictional dilemmas should be initially explored through the medium of the theatre, and later through practical dramatic activities, such as role-playing and improvisations. A dramatized situation that raises pertinent considerations and concerns of moral significance, would provide a concrete illustration of those



concerns of moral significance, would provide a concrete illustration of those situational and interpersonal factors that determine the development of some moral crises. By imaginatively engaging with such dramatized fictional moral conflicts and dilemmas, a student audience would be enabled to identify, assimilate and reflect upon those notable particulars underlying a morally divisive situation. Without having a concrete illustration or description of opposing moral perspectives and conflicting moral priorities, most students would find it difficult to reason at an abstract level on current moral issues and prevailing moral themes. The instructional potential of a dramatized play lies in its ability to stimulate intuitive and affective means of perception, so as to engage further reflection of those intricate levels of moral agency with which a student audience may or may not be familiar. Exposure to such dramatized resolutions of moral conflicts can engage students to critically assess the viability of rule-based moral perspectives in dealing with the concrete particulars of moral situations.

Similarly, often presented as a *fait accompli* in the theatre, a dramatized resolution usually demands a more intuitive and visceral response from a perceiving audience, and can generate further reflections on the acceptability of the moral choices that dramatic characters have made. A dramatized play often provides concrete, morally complex existential situations that examine those emotional, spiritual and psychological consequences resulting from interpersonal conflicts and social crises. Engaging a student audience on both cognitive and affective levels of perception can enable a more holistic examination of those

complicated dimensions of a particular moral conflict.

Through their intuitive receptions, their emotional and cognitive responses to such dramatized moral conflicts and dilemmas, students can be sensitized to the personal and social costs resulting from the pain and suffering of morally detrimental resolutions to conflict situations. In light of the main principles of a relational ethics that would be discussed in class, students would be further engaged to critically assess those significant weaknesses and deficiencies with the moral orientations underlying such conflict resolutions.

The principle of experiential continuity would imply that moral educators who choose to engage discussion of specific moral issues or themes through dramatic art, should also aim to involve their students in various activities that help to deepen and to extend their students' initial appraisals of a play's moral situations. According to Dewey (1963):

The principle of continuity in its educational application means, nevertheless, that the future has to be taken into account at every stage of the educational process ..In a certain sense every experience should do something to prepare a person for later experiences of a deeper and more expansive quality. (p 47)

In relation to this study's pedagogical approach, teachers would be responsible for ensuring that some form of dialogue and discussion would result concerning the moral implications culled from a specific play.

Moreover, subsequent student-initiated learning activities, such as individual

or group research projects concerning scholarly research on a specific moral issue, oral and media presentations on the need to recreate social coexistence according to the principles of a relational ethics, and suggestions for viewing and discussing other media productions that deal with similar moral conflicts and dilemmas, should be encouraged. Panel discussions of distinct moral perspectives identified in a particular play, grounded in either religious or secular moral philosophies, would stimulate further reflection of what it means to be morally responsible and responsive within a secular society. The intent would be to allow students to determine freely additional learning activities that they would like to engage in, with some guidance from their teacher.

Teaching about morality according to this approach would necessitate a more collaborative selection of those moral issues or themes that both teacher and students would like to explore and to discuss as a community of interested and motivated subjects. Discussion of different moral issues would be complemented with concrete references to specific plays that deal with these, encouraging students to decide which performance and which play will provide the experiential basis for individual and group analyses. Focusing group and class discussions on a play's dramatization of a morally problematic situation would provide a valuable experiential context, and thus, a vicarious encounter with a fictional moral conflict, that can generate further critical reflections upon the moral implications that have been culled from a specific play.

Student responses, questions and observations are therefore to be

welcomed and collectively assessed, but they should not be graded according to the traditional academic requirements for logical accuracy and coherent argumentation. Rather, the intent is to encourage the free expression of personal feelings, impressions, opinions, and critiques that have been formed because of their individual and collective experiences with a specific play. As it is important to guide students eventually to further deliberations of viable forms of moral conduct within a secular society, educators should not provide pre-determined valuational criteria for ranking student responses according to rational argumentation and abstract justification. As Rogers (1969) observes, "The evaluation of one's own learning is one of the major means by which [experiential] learning becomes also responsible learning." (p. 142)

Consequently, on an individual basis, each student would be required to evaluate his or her own progression in moral awareness throughout the course, allowing them the discretion of expressing in writing, or in private, any reservations, fears, or concerns that have resulted from any provocative challenges to their most valued moral beliefs. Thus, students would be encouraged to follow their own development as responsible, competent, and creative thinkers, gradually evolving into confident learners with the potential for self-initiated inquiry and research into moral issues and themes that interest them.

Guiding students to develop and to evolve as critical and confident thinkers with such emotionally demanding and ideologically divisive ethical concerns and questions, would necessitate the creation of a mutually supportive, responsive, and

intellectually challenging learning environment. Since students would be expected to cultivate and to refine gradually their perceptual skills and their capacity for discriminating moral reflection, they would require multiple instructional opportunities for moral self-examination and for critical scrutiny of opposing moral perspectives. Similarly, teachers would be expected to challenge any concerns, questions, and observations raised within group and class discussions responsibly and conscientiously, aiming for dialectical debates that can provoke further reflection on a given moral issue. Stimulating awareness, engaging reflection and sensitive deliberation of those intricate levels of moral agency, would therefore require a respectful and concerned disposition by which educators can guide their students towards substantial assessments of those complex layers of the human moral sphere.

#### 4. 2. Creating a Learning Environment for Moral Reflection and Deliberation.

As indicated above, by relying on some of the most seminal principles of experiential learning, the pedagogical approach outlined in this study supports individualized, student-centred learning experiences that invite discussion and debate of distinct moral perspectives. To do so effectively would necessitate creating nonjudgmental learning environments defined by a specific relational orientation for responding and interacting with students. Noddings (1988, 1992) provides a valuable description of those relational values by which a more emotionally supportive and intellectually challenging learning environment can be created. To implement the current pedagogical approach, it is recommended that

these relational values function as guiding principles for interpersonal relating between moral educators and their students, and amongst the members of the student body.

For Noddings (1988, 1992), such forms of interpersonal relating between moral educators and students are characterized by four major components: modelling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation. To create a supportive, respectful, and caring community of learners, it is suggested that a moral educator model benevolent, just and caring dispositions when interacting with a group of students. As Noddings (1992) asserts, "The capacity to care may be dependent on adequate experiences in being cared for." (p. 22) Moral educators must thus serve as prototypes of a caring disposition, respectfully and responsibly interacting, communicating and responding to the individual questions, concerns and aspirations expressed by each student in the class.

Applying this study's pedagogical approach would therefore imply that moral educators listen and respond to student discussions in a nondictatorial, non-intimidating, personable and cordial manner. Since the emphasis is on preserving caring and mutually validating human relationships, it should be noted that moral educators model not only admirable patterns of intellectual activity but acceptable ways of interacting with people. Because such moral educators should be interested and concerned with developing morally sensitive and caring human persons, they should aim to create a learning environment that enhances and promotes feelings of mutual respect, affirmation and validation. As Noddings

(1988) indicates, "Such teachers treat students with respect and consideration and encourage them to treat each other in a similar fashion. They use teaching moments as caring occasions." (p. 223)

Dialogue is essential in this alternative approach to moral pedagogy. True dialogue between moral educators and students should be open-ended; that is, there should be no predetermined conclusions or decisions held by either party at the outset of any discussion, that deals with a specific moral issue (Noddings, 1992, p. 23). Developing genuine dialogue between students allows for the sharing of distinct, and often opposing, moral perspectives. It is therefore recommended that class discussions of a moral choice explored by a specific play, should involve a clear and concise synthesis of those circumstantial factors and evaluational frameworks that inhere to a particular situation. Additionally, such individual assessments of dramatized moral conflicts should be offered without the pressure of eventual academic testing.

Ensuring a non-threatening and non-competitive discussion forum would allow students to freely, and respectfully, comment, question, and criticize those views and perspectives shared by their classmates on the issues under consideration. Consequently, students should be encouraged to sensitively discriminate and to appreciate those personal and cultural moral frameworks that often influence individual perceptions of moral situations. As Paul (1988) asserts

Each student must also learn how to enter sympathetically into the moral perspectives of the other students, not with the view that all

moral perspectives are equally sound, but rather with the sense that we cannot judge another person's perspective until we genuinely understand it. (p. 15)

Students should also be encouraged to engage in discussions of controversial forms of moral agency explored by a specific play. A nonjudgmental learning environment would invite open dialogue and rational deliberation of personal assumptions, concerns, and feelings regarding viable and authentic moral behaviour between individual persons in a secular society. As Paul (1988) avers, "We should continually encourage and stimulate our students to think and never do their thinking for them. We should, above all, be teachers and not preachers." (p. 17) Similarly, alternative proposals for recreating a more caring, equitable, and just social coexistence should be allowed free expression during group and class discussions. As Noddings (1992) indicates, "If schooling is to have meaning for students, controversial issues must be discussed, and they must be discussed with full affect - that is, with attention to the responses of those involved" (p. 129) These discussions should therefore aim to develop a capacity for discriminating judgment of the choices to be made for redefining moral perspectives according to a more caring and mutually validating relational coexistence

Dialogue between parties within such a receptive learning environment becomes a catalyst for engaging students on a critical search for legitimate, validating, other-affirming and life-promoting moral principles. Dialoguing with a group of students is essentially 'dramatic' in character, as feelings, objections, and



arguments prevail during this process of sincere reflection that should not be governed by any predetermined conclusions. As Courtney (1982) avers, "Good teaching is like an improvised drama. We may prepare for it but, when it occurs, we fall into the drama. We become involved in it. It transcends us. While it is happening, no one knows what the results will be, for it has a spirit of its own..." (p. 152)

Consequently, according to the current approach, students should be engaged to entertain the question of how individual persons shall choose to redeem an increasingly corrosive state of interpersonal alienation and moral indifference within modern secular societies. In fact, such dialogue should enhance and extend the recreative potentials of the moral imagination, because of which alternative solutions to prevailing moral issues can be suggested and critically evaluated for their humanizing consequences. As Noddings (1988) affirms, an important objective of such dialogue is "The search for enlightenment, or responsible choice, or perspective, or means to problem solution which is mutual and marked by appropriate signs of reciprocity " (p. 223)

Furthermore, Noddings indicates that, "In a classroom dedicated to caring, students are encouraged to support each other, opportunities for peer interaction are provided, and the quality of that interaction is as important (to both teacher and students) as the academic outcomes " (1988, p. 223). To implement the pedagogical approach outlined in this study, group discussions of a particular play should enable students to develop their individual capacities for mutually

supportive, sensitive, and attentive responses towards their thoughts and assessments of a play under consideration. Realizing that they are not in competition with each other for academic excellence and recognition, an important feature of group work would be the challenge that inheres from learning how to care for others and for their views. Furthermore, without any fear of some future retribution, students would be encouraged to offer carefully rationalized justifications of opposing moral positions.

In addition, the demands placed on students for collectively assessing, evaluating and synthesizing critical observations raised during group discussions, should enable them to learn how to care for the collaborative work with which they are involved. Consequently, students should be encouraged to engage in sensitive discriminations and judgments of those opinions, arguments and observations shared by all members in the group. Group dynamics should therefore be based on feelings of mutual respect, reflected in a sincere willingness to listen carefully, to challenge and to allow one's position to be challenged, with the intent of gathering substantial information to guide student responses to the issues or themes under consideration. Furthermore, as a group, they should be expected to formulate a summary of the group's critical assessments of an issue examined in a play, which they would have to present orally to the class.

Moreover, when individual groups share their respective analyses of a play with the rest of the class, members of each group should be required to interact with one another with the same quality of respect they have learned from listening

and responding to each other in their groups. Thus, class discussions should provide further opportunities to develop one's capacity to listen attentively and carefully to the views presented by other students, recognizing that the intent for this dialogue is to stimulate further reflection of the concerns, observations and questions raised by each member of the class. Group interactions need to be monitored by a responsible educator concerned with the preservation of a co-operative collaborative, and supportive learning environment. As Noddings (1988) indicates:

...if teachers approach their responsibility for moral education from a caring orientation rather than an ethic of principle...moral education cannot be formulated into a course of study or set of principles to be learned. Rather, each student must be guided toward an ethical life-or, we might say, an ethical ideal-that is relationally constructed. (pp. 221-222)

If individual persons discover and define their moral identities through relational contacts with others, class encounters should aim to facilitate the cultivation of responsible and empathic critical thinkers, concerned with sustaining a moral orientation of care and compassion for recreating social coexistence. Consequently moral educators should be responsible for confirming all attempts at realizing the ethical ideal of a caring and compassionate disposition (Noddings, 1992, p. 25). In this respect, applying this alternative approach to moral pedagogy should entail a sensitive discrimination of possible conflict situations so that students do not feel intimidated or threatened because of their opposing moral

views.

Developing the capacity to care and to be compassionate towards others should therefore involve multiple opportunities for implicating students to redefine their primary moral concerns as responsible and conscientious moral agents within a pluralistic social order. Noddings asserts that, "If we decide that the capacity to care is as much a mark of personhood as reason or rationality, then we will want to find ways to increase this capacity." (1992, p. 24) It is recommended that to implement this study's pedagogical approach, students should be engaged in learning situations that help them develop their individual capacities for discriminating empathy and sensitive deliberation, to be able to assess sound moral judgments that preserve human relations and affirm the inherent worth of individual persons

Furthermore, if as Noddings (1992), Maguire (1991), and Gilligan (1988) assert, moral pedagogy should concentrate on developing the attitudes and skills required to sustain compassionate and caring relations between individual persons, then students should be exposed to learning situations where they are engaged to resolve real or imaginary moral conflicts and dilemmas according to the guiding principles of a relational ethic

Without emphasizing authoritarian control of the learning situation, moral educators should be responsible for ensuring that students continue to cultivate their ability for empathic identification and sensitive response towards alternative perspectives, even in cases where there seems to be a staunch refusal to

compromise one's point of view. Furthermore, as is often the case in a class of individual moral subjects, argumentative confrontations may result between contentious moral perspectives, and often harsh reactions to alternative proposals for conflict resolution can alienate students from each other. Educators who teach about morality should be expected to remind their students that a fundamental learning objective for the course is to allow themselves to be genuinely implicated in a critical assessment of their personal biases and prejudices of morally acceptable and viable actions between human beings.

As an act of affirming and encouraging students to evolve continuously as responsible, conscientious, and caring moral agents, teacher confirmation should therefore involve a consistent reminder of the prevailing need to develop one's growth in the ethical ideal. Consequently, teachers should be concerned with educating their students on the personally and socially enriching benefits of mutual care and validation, for a more civilized coexistence between groups of persons. As Noddings (1992) indicates, "If we want people to approach moral life prepared to care, we need to provide opportunities for them to gain skills in caregiving and, more important, to develop the characteristic attitude [of relational care]" (pp. 23-24).

Given Noddings' recommendations for creating a mutually supportive learning environment, the philosophical approach to moral pedagogy illustrated in this study would be concerned with promoting learning experiences that begin from the premise that students need to be educated about the value of interpersonal

sensitivity aims to cultivate creative, confident, and responsible moral thinkers who are able to effectively defend their assessments of inadequate forms of moral conduct between individual persons. Encouraging students to practice commitment and care in their relationships with their teachers and amongst themselves becomes a crucial pedagogical goal that can enlighten them about the emotionally rewarding and spiritually enriching experiences of mutual care and affirmation.

Individually, and as a group, students need to believe that their observations matter, and that they can engage in serious deliberation of morally desirable forms of interpersonal behaviour. By establishing a non-judgmental and supportive learning environment based on mutual respect and relational responsibility, students can discover their potential for autonomous reflection of alternative and viable forms of moral coexistence amongst persons within a secular society.

#### 4. 3. 'Rehearsing' the Audience for a Dramatic Performance.

According to Davis (1988), most educators of dramatic literature fail to cultivate students' appreciations of dramatic art precisely because they neglect to initiate their students in those personally enriching experiences that can be afforded by a theatrical event (pp. 4-5). In secondary schools, colleges, and universities, plays are still being read and analyzed as if they were works of literature, which clearly reflects a common assumption that as an art form, dramatic art is synonymous with literary art. Therefore, to study drama usually implies the textual analysis of published play texts, while relying on those methodological tools of literary theory. For Davis, this instructional approach to the

methodological tools of literary theory. For Davis, this instructional approach to the study of plays often serves to skew students' perceptions of the theatre's potential for providing enlightening aesthetic experiences. Furthermore, students are not being sensitized to the value of the theatre as an entertainment medium that can impress a more profound understanding of those existential concerns deeply ingrained in the human condition.

In general, students are not being educated to value those formal elements of dramatic art that distinguish it from other art forms, nor to appreciate the complementary dramaturgical skills of committed theatre artists by which a play text is embodied and conveyed to an audience. In addition, students are often not aware that a dramatized play is a work of art that has been created for an audience's enjoyment and contemplation, and which can provide indelible aesthetic encounters that engage a group of spectators emotionally and intellectually. Educators who teach plays as if they were literary texts to be analyzed and discussed rationally and critically, deprive their students from developing and refining an aesthetic appreciation of dramatic art, and thus fail to educate their students of the pleasure to be derived by assessing those formal elements of this art form (Davis, 1988, p. 7). Students are often graduating from college and secondary school deficient in skilful aesthetic judgments of this art form, and thus, with little interest in the theatre as a potent artistic medium for pleasurable encounters with fictional lives that can reveal some insight into the human condition.

A concern remains among many theatre practitioners about the survival of dramatic art, considering the theatre has to compete for audiences with more popular forms, such as film and television. One may agree with Davis (1988), that part of the reason for such a notable absence of interest for this art form, stems from the manner in which theatre art is introduced to future generations of potential theatre audiences in many of our educational institutions (p 3). To remedy the situation, Davis (1988) argues that "As teachers, we have the responsibility of educating these new audience members in order to increase their enjoyment of the plays they see." (p. 4)

Similarly, Hornbrook (1991), arguing for the pedagogical value of exposing students to living 'stage texts,' maintains that "If we wish to help [students] to become stage literate, then we must make sure not only that they encounter as wide a range of stage-texts as possible, but also that they are suitably prepared for these encounters " (p 97) For this pedagogical task to be accomplished, educators must aim to develop and enhance their students' perceptions of dramatic art by focussing the experience of drama on the stage and in the theatre. There, students can engage in aesthetic appreciation of dramatized plays and other performance pieces.

In support of Davis's contentions, one can cite both Bailin (1993a, 1993b, 1993c, 1993d) and Hornbrook (1991), who maintain that the prevailing paradigms of drama education can be broadened to include a full range of dramatic forms and experiences, that include attending and assessing the performance of plays.



According to Hornbrook (1991) "Deep learning in drama may well be more profoundly accomplished by asking students to watch a play then by encouraging them to participate in one." (p. 38) Similarly, Bailin (1993) contends that drama educators should be concerned with guiding students to cultivate their individual capacities for aesthetic appreciation of dramatic art (p. 524) As Bailin (1993b) avers:

Ultimately, appreciation rests on how we are affected by a work. And we can often be affected by works where we have little background knowledge, a person with little knowledge of theatre can be moved by a play. But it is skills in dramatic discrimination and knowledge related to technique, style and context which open up possibilities for appreciation which go deeper than this sort of precritical response, which makes another level of appreciation possible. (p 430)

Educating about drama and the medium of theatre can therefore involve a reconsideration of this art form's ability to promote aesthetic activity and to foster aesthetic appreciation of those formal, stylistic and contextual elements that contribute to the creation of staged performances

In light of the approach to moral pedagogy outlined in this study, attending the performance of plays within traditional and alternative theatre spaces becomes a mandatory curricular requirement for its implementation Redirecting the focus of experiencing dramatic works from the text to the stage, would provide a necessary precedent for confirming the instructional value of the theatrical event

for stimulating critical reflection and discussion of pertinent moral issues and themes treated by various plays. Attending a dramatized play provides that experiential context from which teachers and students can engage in serious discussion and debate of the intricate nature of moral agency as conveyed through dramatized actions and interactions. Bailin (1993a) affirms that, dramatized plays have a particular power of enhancing students' understanding of human life because they often require:

...direct identification with characters and promote affective engagement with their situations in a way that may engender unique opportunities for understanding. It is this type of understanding that we risk withholding from our students if we omit the performance and appreciation of plays from the drama curriculum (p. 68)

A dramatized play that depicts concrete moral conflicts and dilemmas between fictional beings becomes a potent medium by which teachers and students can discuss and assess those complex levels of moral agency that are being explored in a specific work. Consequently, educators would be required to provide their students with the necessary knowledge for attending the performance of a play. This would involve pre-performance discussions on the formal elements of dramatic art, and post-performance evaluations of the production and the performance itself.

In his book on 'audience education,' Davis (1988) provides a useful model for 'rehearsing' student audiences to attend the theatre, that would prove valuable

for incorporating the theatrical event in a course on moral pedagogy. Davis' model is based on the conviction that a specific performance of a play should be central to the study of drama. Davis's model acknowledges those interrelated cognitive and affective learning experiences that may be afforded through an aesthetic appreciation of a performed play (1988, pp. 8-10).

Although Davis does not refer to the pedagogical merits of dramatic art for generating discussion and debate of those intricate dimensions of specific forms of moral agency, his model provides a valuable and innovative methodological approach for preparing student audiences to attend the performance of most plays. What follows is a discussion of those pre-performance and post-performance activities that should prove essential for applying the pedagogical approach outlined in this study. Moreover, for the purposes of brevity, the terms 'teachers' and 'educators,' imply moral educators intent on applying this study's approach for moral pedagogy. The following instructional suggestions should enable most moral educators to 'rehearse' their audiences before they attend the performance of a play as a class.

Pre-performance activities should involve assessing students' attitudes and feelings towards a specific work and/or towards their preconceptions of dramatic art as a valuable entertainment medium. In addition, at this stage teachers should provide their students with brief information on the play's storyline and on those formal production elements that distinguish a live performance of a play from other media forms. For the purposes of this study's approach to moral pedagogy, it is

at this pre-performance stage that students should be given a series of questions that will help focus their attention on the moral issues treated by a specific work.

Post-performance exercises should necessarily involve student discussions of those individual and social factors that contributed to the creation of some moral conflict, and of the manner in which it was resolved. Moreover, students should be expected to share their feelings and thoughts on the production itself, and on those dimensions of the performance that left unanswered questions, or indelible impressions of live theatre.

Selecting a performance of a particular play, and for the purposes of the current pedagogical approach, of a Canadian or Quebec play, would involve some preliminary research by both teachers and their students of the different productions staged within a specific time period by both local and professional theatre groups. Newspaper review articles of current productions may be distributed in class and students should have the opportunity to decide which play they would like to attend. Once a particular play has been chosen, teachers should familiarize themselves with the specific work, and attempt to ascertain the kinds of moral issues or moral conflicts examined by this play. They can then choose to share some of these opinions briefly with their students, so as to stimulate some interest and curiosity in the work.

Furthermore, filmed or televised versions of a specific play can be shown in class to provide students not only with some knowledge of the main storyline and situational conflicts presented by this play, but to expose students to an

alternative production of the same script. After attending a theatrical performance of a specific play, class discussion should involve some assessment of those distinguishing aesthetic features and production elements that enabled students to differentiate their experiences of the theatrical presentation from the filmed version of the same text

Davis (1988) suggests that after a decision has been made to attend the performance of a specific play, educators should allow their students to voice any assumptions or expectations they may have of this play, as well as any biases or attitudes they hold towards the theatre as an art form and as an entertainment medium. Davis maintains that the teacher's role during this process is "...that of an accepting listener, one who does not condemn any attitudes, however negative they may seem." (1988, p. 12) Questions could focus on their past experiences with live theatre, on the productions of specific plays they have seen, and of the feelings and impressions they have been left with by attending a staged play.

In addition, the scope of the discussion can be further extended to invite their views on other forms of media, and on how these differ essentially from their knowledge and/or experiences with 'live theatre' and dramatized performances of specific plays. Gradually, the discussion can progress to their respective views on a given playwright or a play under consideration, encouraging them to express their opinions and attitudes towards the work that has been chosen for study.

As an example, if Sharon Pollock's play *Doc* has been selected for analysis and discussion, students may be asked to reveal any knowledge, opinions or

preconceptions they may have of Canadian theatre, or of this Canadian woman playwright, before they attend a performance of this play. In short, within a nonjudgmental and receptive learning environment, students should be encouraged to share their questions, concerns and attitudes regarding their participation in a theatrical event.

After giving students an opportunity to share any predetermined expectations of a particular play or of the medium of dramatic art, Davis (1988) suggests that educators should begin to provide some brief information that could help dispel any negative attitudes, concerns, or objections that may have been expressed during class discussions (p. 12). A brief, informal biography of the playwright can be offered, as well as some mention of the audience reception and critical success of a specific play under consideration. With respect to Pollock's play, for example, one can identify those autobiographical elements within the work, elaborating on the playwright's unresolved personal issues with members of her immediate family that she chose to examine in this play.

In addition to guiding students to modify any preconceptions they may have of a specific playwright or of a play, one should proceed to redefine students' participation in the theatrical event according to a more active role (1988, p. 13). Davis suggests that students should be reminded that a dramatized play has been prepared for an audience's enjoyment, appreciation and contemplation, and that ultimately, they are individually responsible for deriving personal pleasure from the enacted events.

Moreover, students need to be educated about the possible effects their collective and individual responses can have on the performance, which can result in spontaneous adjustments and modifications by the actors during the presentation of the play. Since actors are continuously aware of their audience's presence in the theatre, students can be reminded that actors often need to have their performances confirmed and validated by an audience's evocative responses to their skill and artistry in conveying a role. Moreover, when desired emotional effects have not been achieved by a group of theatre artists, this often motivates them to modify the production so that eventually they can achieve the results they had originally agreed upon.

Providing this kind of pre-performance knowledge to students would only serve to reinforce their awareness of an audience's emotional and psychological involvement in the theatre experience, and could strengthen their perceptions of the demands placed on a group of spectators to respond to a live production. Finally, students need to be made aware that as members of an audience, they usually influence each other through their emotional, and sometimes, physical responses to a staged performance (Davis, 1988, pp. 14-16). Conveying this kind of information to a group of students can only help to broaden their perceptions of the magnitude and potency for emotional identification and aesthetic judgment that can be afforded by these interactive encounters in the theatre.

Davis also suggests that educators should make some references to 'playgoing etiquette,' (1988, p 18) before taking a group of students to see the

performance of a play. Students should be informed about the value of silence in the theatre, and of attentive concentration to the events that are unfolding on stage. Similarly, they should be aware that actors, and other theatre artists, are usually paid professionals who have been assigned a specific task to complete. As experienced practitioners committed to perfecting a certain craft and skill, theatre artists deserve respect and courtesy for their attempts to entertain an audience, and should be duly remunerated by an audience's receptive attention and diligent response. As members of a larger group of spectators, students should be informed that most people who attend the theatre choose to do so as a means to fulfil some need for vicarious identification, for cathartic release, or for discriminating insights, that are usually denied by daily life

Having discussed the logistics of playgoing, a teacher should then decide to provide a brief synopsis of the play's storyline to provoke curiosity and instill interest in the fictional world that is to be presented on the stage (Davis, 1988, p 22). Providing a succinct plot summary, that underscores the main points of contention between the different characters in a specific play, can provide the necessary background to enrich students' lived experience of the play's story. In addition, Davis suggests that if the world in which the play's story takes place is foreign and unfamiliar to most students, as in the case with Shakespeare's plays or those by the French playwright Moliere, students should be informed about the social, cultural, and political dimensions of this fictional world (Davis, 1988, p 25)

As an example, if Michel Tremblay's play, *Forever Yours, Marie-Lou*, was



chosen for critically analyzing and discussing the moral issues it explores, some background information on the historical influence of the Roman Catholic Church within French-Canadian, or Quebecois, culture, could be beneficial. This information would enable most students to appreciate an important source of ideological oppression determining the individual conflicts endured by this play's main characters.

Preparing an audience for attending a play can additionally involve a discussion of the historical, social, cultural and political contexts within which an individual playwright created a specific dramatic work (Davis, 1988, p. 28). The world of the script and of the playwright provide a rich resource of information that can enable a group of students to appreciate a play's critical commentary of specific issues or existential themes that an individual dramatist addresses through his or her work. In addition, discussion of dramatic genres and styles would help enhance students' aesthetic involvement with a given performance (1988, pp. 29-32).

As an example, most novice theatre-goers may have the false assumption that the majority of plays have a linear plot development with a final resolution of the main conflict at the end of the play. If a group of students are unfamiliar with the stylistic conventions of 'memory plays,' attending a production of Sharon Pollock's *Doc*, may prove to be a rather confusing and frustrating theatre experience. Consequently, before suggesting that a class of students attend a performance of this play, it would be beneficial for them to be informed of this

play's complicated structure and of Pollock's stage directions for creating significant shifts in time and space to convey the enactment of past events and experiences.

Similarly, knowledge of 'metadramatic' devices, such as the play-within-the play, exemplified in Michel Marc Bouchard's *Lilies*, would benefit most novice student audiences. This information would help students appreciate how this playwright relies on the very structure of his play to underscore his thematic concerns of teasing his audience's perceptions of that very fine line between illusion and reality.

Having discussed a play's structure and genre, Davis (1988) suggests that teachers identify diverse performance conventions, so as to enable students to effectively decode the action presented on the stage (p. 36). As he indicates, "The necessary background to any theatrical performance is the world of theatre. The novice playgoer has little of this background and subsequently little for the performance to stand out against." (1988, p. 37). Thus, some explanation of the manner in which stagecraft conveys setting and establishes space, and of how shifts in lighting help to create mood and atmosphere, can enhance aesthetic appreciation of a staged play. In addition, some references to the use of costume and make-up for conveying social status, cultural background, and behavioral idiosyncracies, as well as to the symbolic significance of stage props and of sound for iconically suggesting character motives and needs, can provide valuable information for decoding a specific performance.

Moreover, some discussion of the physical blocking of character actions and

interactions, of the style and structure of dialogue and of its delivery, as well as of significant conversational conventions of theatrical performance, can enhance student enjoyment of the skill with which character roles are performed on the stage. Finally, some references to the constraints imposed upon the theatre "...by the script, the performance space, the available time and economics..." (Davis, 1988, p. 41), allows students to understand the complex logistics of play-production, especially if they are reminded how these differ from those of other media forms. After attending a play, students should be encouraged to present their personal judgments of a particular performance, in light of those production and directorial choices that were made by a collective of theatre artists to present their work to a specific group of spectators.

For a final, preparatory discussion before attending a play's performance, Davis suggests that teachers equip their students with a series of open-ended questions to help focus their active concentration and attention of a staged play (1988, p. 42). Such questions can not only involve identifying character motives and plot development, but can also encourage students to examine those production techniques and methods by which a group of theatre practitioners has chosen to create the illusion of lived experiences on the stage. For the purposes of the pedagogical approach outlined in this study, students should be given a series of specific questions regarding those moral issues treated by a specific play.

Moreover, students should be reminded that post-performance class discussions will not only revolve around their individual impressions and aesthetic

judgments of the production itself, but most importantly, will focus on their thoughts and assessments of those multiple sources of moral conflict examined in the play. Similarly, students should be expected to discuss and debate the resolutions offered for each dilemma, recognizing that the individual and social consequences that inhere have significant implications for how human persons choose to define themselves as moral persons within a secular society. Consequently, students should be expected to record in their journals their analyses, comments, questions, and critical observations of the moral issues examined by a specific dramatic work. Each journal entry would therefore provide them with the necessary documented information for subsequent class discussions on the play.

A sample list of questions for helping students identify and critically analyze the moral conflicts examined by a specific play should be based on a situational and contextual approach to the study of moral agency. Primarily, students should be expected to define and to discuss a series of moral conflicts explored by a play. References to the moral framework of those dramatic characters implicated in certain moral dilemmas should be made, including a discussion of the manner in which these fictional moral agents choose to resolve their respective conflicts. Similarly, students should aim to identify those subconscious needs and psychological motives that seem to provoke character attempts to resolve interpersonal conflicts, and that often raise important moral implications for human behaviour.

Furthermore, students should attempt to illustrate those situational elements,

frames of reference, which seem to contribute to the creation of the moral dilemmas endured by the play's characters. Finally, based on a relational approach for assessing moral choice, some mention of alternative proposals for resolving a play's moral conflicts, should engage students to critically reflect upon the manner in which human beings should choose to coexist as moral beings within a pluralistic society.

In addition to these character and plot analyses, students should be encouraged to record their personal feelings and critical reflections of a playwright's thematic treatment of a particular moral issue. Any concerns, questions, or reflections they may have about the choice of conflict resolution offered by a play should be included in their journal entries. Finally, their personal views should be offered on how this particular play has helped to broaden their understanding of those complicated levels of moral agency. In short, students are not solely being asked to discuss and to evaluate those variegated instances of moral conflict presented by a particular play. They are also being encouraged to assess an individual playwright's judgment and critique of unresolved moral issues or of limited and deficient forms of moral conduct, that need to be redressed through a re-evaluation of moral priorities within a secular society.

An additional section to this analytical discussion of a play's moral conflicts and issues should include student thoughts, feelings, and impressions of the performance itself (Davis, 1988, pp. 54-56). Personal observations of their emotional responses and reflections during and after the play, should be

emotional responses and reflections during and after the play, should be welcomed, and should be given a hearing during class discussions. Students should be allowed to express whether or not their expectations had been fulfilled, and whether or not they were emotionally affected by the events, conflicts, and resolutions that had transpired on the stage. Opinions and judgments of the performance's strengths and weaknesses should be invited, enabling students to express their aesthetic assessments of those production elements that contributed effectively to the play's dramatization.

Finally, students should be encouraged to reveal to what degree their perceptions of the human condition and of the compounded sphere of moral agency have been modified, confirmed, or seriously challenged. Comparing their individual assessments and judgments of a particular performance with those of their classmates can enable them to re-evaluate their initial responses to this work of art. Consequently, their aesthetic appreciations of the performance can be extended and enriched through opposing and/or complementary evaluations offered by other members in the class.

The author of this study recognizes that the above pre-performance activities neglect to mention the instructional value of reading the play's text before attending a performance of it. As one of the main objectives of this study's theoretical approach is to provide students with a fresh, living experience of the play's story, it is recommended that the theatrical event take precedence over a preliminary textual analysis of the play's script. As Davis (1988) contends, "...use

the page to supplement the experience of the stage, not vice versa." (p. 24)

If students suggest that they would like to read a published version of a play's script after they attended a performance of a particular play, they should be encouraged to do so, especially if they feel that this reading will complement their initial understanding and appreciation of this play's moral issues or conflict situations. However, if students are aware of a particular play that they would like to study and to discuss, and yet there are no immediate or future productions of the script that they can attend as a class, students should be given the opportunity to read the play text. Class discussions would therefore focus on the moral issues, conflicts and situations that were identified by reading the play.

Post-performance activities should necessarily involve discussion of those moral issues, conflicts, and dilemmas that have been identified and analyzed in student journals. In her article on classroom strategies for generating student responses to fictional works, including plays, Davis (1988) suggests that these kinds of group and class discussions are, "...a way of transmitting the shared or communal knowledge about a play - wisdom that exists beyond any individual's immediate experience [of the work]." (p. 70)

Initially, teachers can request a class discussion during which students may offer their views and assessments of the performance. Thoughts and feelings regarding students' emotional involvement with the play's characters and their respective predicaments, as well as any reflections on the play's storyline and plot development, could begin this introductory appraisal of the performance. Gradually,

the discussion can focus on those formal elements of the production, encouraging students to express their observations on the staging of the play. Teachers can choose to contribute their personal assessments of the performance, emphasizing that their appraisal is not definitive and that it simply reflects one person's aesthetic judgment of the performance.

After this initial group review of the performance, teachers should direct subsequent class discussions towards an assessment of the moral issues and themes examined by a play. Students can be divided into groups, and each group should be assigned to analyze and to evaluate either a specific character's moral conflict (s) or a moral issue (s) that an individual playwright has chosen to examine through his or her play. Moreover, each group should be expected to record those salient observations, concerns, and questions raised during the group's discussion, which they will have to report afterwards to the rest of the class.

Teachers can suggest that members of the group may choose to defend or to condemn a particular character's choice to resolve a moral dilemma, providing cogent arguments to support their respective judgments. In their groups, students can choose to explore optional courses of action that could have been taken by an individual character to deal with a moral conflict, providing a critical analysis of what they perceive to be as those motivating factors that provoke a character to act in a certain manner. Moreover, a group of students can also choose to evaluate the degree to which their individual awareness of a moral issue has either been challenged or modified by watching this play.



devoted to such group discussions before students are asked to share their observations and their assessments with the rest of their classmates. Individually, or as representatives of their respective groups, students can begin to offer their reflections, questions, concerns and critical observations of the moral dilemma (s) chosen for discussion by their group. During these class discussions, teachers should facilitate dialogue between students by redirecting the questions and observations that are raised to other members in the class, encouraging further responses to the arguments advanced in support of each critical analysis.

In addition, questions and comments that challenge students in their groups, and as a class, to re-evaluate and to re-examine their assessments of a moral issue, should be contributed by both teachers and students. The aim of such class discussions is therefore twofold: first, students are being asked to present an evaluation of a moral choice that is made by a character in a play, and second, they are being invited to assess the moral implications of the consequences that inhere because of a distinct form of moral conduct.

Thus, an educator carefully leads a group of students towards a philosophical discussion of the manner in which human beings should define themselves morally within a secular and pluralistic society. Questions on the viability and validity of the moral resolutions proposed, as well as references to a particular playwright's criticism of prevailing moral norms and perspectives, should provoke further reflections on future revisions of existing forms of moral coexistence. An attempt should be made to engage students towards serious

reflection of those moral principles by which individual persons can choose to operate and to interact with one another, within the prevailing context of a morally pluralistic social order.

The fundamental question remains whether or not a multicultural society needs a series of well-reasoned moral principles which can guide interpersonal relations between human beings. As future citizens of a secular society, students need to be stimulated to reflect on the possibility of creating a more just, equitable, and caring social order, given the prevailing deficiencies with current paradigms of moral coexistence and of political distributions of power and wealth.

#### 4. 4. Creative Dramatics and Moral Reflection.

Following group and class discussions of the moral issues, themes, or situations explored by a particular play, students can be additionally engaged to participate in certain creative dramatics activities, to further enhance their awareness of the issues or situations under consideration. Dramatic role-playing involves students physically, emotionally, and cognitively in spontaneous or planned dramatic activities that can generate multiple conflict-situations for sensitive scrutiny and evaluation. According to Bailin (1993c), "This means that the focus of the participants is on 'being in' the dramatic situation and experiencing the emotions generated therein." (p. 423)

Such improvised dramatic activities can lend themselves to the vicarious experience of contrived or prefabricated morally divisive situations that often challenge students to re-evaluate their individual perceptions of valid forms of

moral behaviour. By assuming the roles of characters in conflict within specific contexts (Courtney, 1993, p. 511), students are imaginatively implicated in the moral crises of these fictional lives, and thus engaged in the struggle for some eventual resolution. As Courtney (1990) observes, "Being 'as if' is the self's fictional mode of operation. Functionally it is an imaginative or imaginative - 'enactive' activity, but modally it is supposition." (p. 13)

As improvised, non-scripted dramatized situations, such fictional moral conflicts are generated and solved within specific social, cultural and/or historical contexts, that serve to create the fictional world of each situation. Since students collaborate to create a conflict situation, they are individually and collectively exposed to that intricate web of motivations, feelings and situational factors that often determine and affect moral conflicts between human persons. Moreover, in-role encounters and interactions with these fictional others can stimulate a more holistic awareness of those psychological, emotional and circumstantial elements that often provoke distinct forms of moral agency. As Courtney (1982) indicates, "The essential quality of spontaneous drama is that learning is set within a holistic and human context. Drama is more concerned with the development of people than the development of drama. It has intrinsic values." (p. 70)

As the members of the class participate vicariously with a dramatized situation, they are exposed to a concrete, morally problematic situation which can stimulate further discussion and debate on acceptable resolutions to this dilemma. According to Heiden (1991):

Creative dramatics is a viable and valuable technique for exploring moral issues with students. The dramatic context encourages [students] to reason and examine their feelings about ethical issues...and students will be exposed to the reasoning and feelings of their peers as they struggle together to solve dilemmas. (p. 71)

Through role-playing, for example, students are individually and collectively exposed to those complex processes of moral choice, and can be engaged to critically reflect on those metaphorical and conceptual structures by which moral judgment and action are understood. As Duke (1978) succinctly asserts:

When it is properly used, role playing permits the kind of discovery learning which occurs when individuals in a group face up to the ways they tend to solve their problems of interpersonal relations while becoming conscious of personal value systems. (pp. 64-65)

In addition to such creative dramatics activities as role-playing and group improvisations, students can choose to collaborate on the writing of a script (Bailin, 1993c; Hornbrook, 1991) that deals with a moral issue, which they may choose to perform for the rest of the class. Group scripts may aim to present an alternative perspective or analysis of an issue or dilemma that has been treated by a play. These scripted texts may offer unique suggestions or recommendations for resolving similar moral conflicts, thus involving students in the intricate process of playwriting to convey their respective views of the situation under examination.

Moreover, students may choose to produce a script that deals with a moral

issue that they have not yet discussed or studied in class, which treats this problem from either a social, cultural or historical perspective that they feel needs to be addressed. Class discussions can therefore revolve around these student productions and performances, encouraging individual responses from both teachers and students to a particular script's dramatic treatment of either a prevailing moral issue, or of a morally problematic situation.

Performances of these scripts may also be staged for other classes and other faculty members within an educational institution. Encouraging these groups of students to expose their dramatic works to an audience of friends, classmates, and teachers, can not only serve to stimulate aesthetic pleasure within these groups of spectators, but can, one hopes, provoke further critical responses to the views and concerns expressed through these works. As they are not aiming for performance excellence through their staging of a particular script, the intent of this exercise would be to explore the possibilities and constraints afforded by the theatre medium for examining a particular moral issue or theme. In short, students would be encouraged to employ the medium of dramatic art to convey their thoughts and concerns of the needs to reassess conventional moral perspectives. By doing so, they would be employing the theatre medium to generate further reflections and discussions of a more responsible, validating and respectful coexistence between human persons.

### Conclusion.

"In a secular age, the usefulness of drama lies in its ability to articulate

meaning in particularly direct and accessible ways so that we, in turn, can make better sense of the world in which we live." (Hornbrook, 1991, p. 41) An alternative approach to moral pedagogy that incorporates dramatic art as a potent medium for enabling direct access to morally divisive situations, would require a re-evaluation of traditional content-centred instructional methodologies for a more individualized form of experiential learning. To implement the alternative pedagogical approach illustrated in the preceding chapters would additionally necessitate the creation of more supportive, nonjudgmental, and caring learning environments within which students can rediscover their potential for analytical discussion and critical deliberation.

Classroom interactions between teachers and students, and amongst the members of the student body, would be characterized by mutually responsive, caring, and responsible interpersonal contacts. Relationships between the members of this learning community would therefore function according to the principles of social and interpersonal conduct specified by a relational ethics. Being supportive and respectful of a process of moral self-examination, to be initiated by multiple discussions of sensitive moral issues, divisive situations and themes, would necessitate a learning environment in which individual questions and concerns are sincerely offered and respected.

In addition, this approach requires attending the performance of plays so that students are exposed to provocative and compelling examinations of specific moral issues or of morally problematic situations by the theatre medium. Students

should be prepared to participate in the performance of specific plays, which would entail that teachers provide the necessary background information to a specific performance. Furthermore, students should be guided on how to remain focussed on the moral issues or situations explored by a specific play, which would involve suggestions on defining and recording those issues or problems for subsequent analysis and discussion.

Similarly, students should be encouraged to offer any personal critiques of those formal production and performance elements that effectively secured and maintained interest and concentration during a specific performance. Moreover, students should be invited to express their views on how the production could have been modified for a more engaging dramatization of the play's story. Students should choose either individually, or in groups, to investigate further a moral issue that has been discussed in class. Finally, students should be encouraged to engage freely in other dramatic activities that extend their study of those individual and environmental factors that often motivate moral actions and interactions between individual persons.

## Chapter V: Textual Analyses of Selected Plays and Instructional Suggestions

### Introduction.

This chapter presents five textual analyses of five different plays from the Canadian and Quebec theatre, and illustrates those moral issues, conflicts and dilemmas examined in each play. In addition, some instructional suggestions for studying and discussing these plays are presented at the end of this chapter. This particular collection of play texts has been selected according to the kinds of moral issues examined and the manner in which each playwright has treated certain morally contentious situations. Of the five play texts to be discussed, two are written by English-Canadian women playwrights: Sharon Pollock's (1986) *Doc*, and Judith Thompson's (1989) *The Crackwalker*.

Of the remaining three play texts, two are written by French-Canadian, or Quebecois, male playwrights: Michel Marc Bouchard's (1990) *Lilies, or the Revival of a Romantic Drama*, and Michel Tremblay's (1990) *Forever Yours, Marie-Lou*. The final play text to be discussed in this chapter, written by a Canadian playwright of African descent, is Kevin Longfield's (1995) *Going Down the River*, a poignant examination of racial tensions within the pluralistic cultural matrix of Canadian society. In selecting these dramatic works for textual analysis, special care was taken so that a variety of perspectives on certain prevailing moral and social issues could be analyzed, and so that the multiple causes of interpersonal conflict, that often entail moral deliberation, could be critically assessed. Textual references to the plays of Bouchard and Tremblay will be to the English translations of these



play texts.

Presenting a focussed analysis of the moral issues and conflicts examined within these plays necessitates a reliance on the published texts of these dramatic works. These function as expedient textual resources of concrete morally problematic situations to support a discussion of the moral implications that can be culled from each play. By relying on these published scripts, the intent of the following discussion is threefold: first, to emphasize further the main contentions of this study that plays from the Canadian and Quebec theatre can be analyzed from the perspective of ethical inquiry and moral deliberation; second, to illustrate how certain play texts can be examined in terms of the moral issues and/or moral dilemmas that these explore; and third, to examine and to assess those multiple and variegated causes of distinct forms of moral agency that are presented by each play.

The author recognizes that other perspectives of textual inquiry could be relied upon to analyze and to assess each play's thematic content. Thus, these play texts could be examined solely from the perspective of political and cultural ideology, or in terms of the philosophical or sociological issues and themes that are addressed by each specific playwright. Similarly, these texts could be analyzed from the perspective of Freudian psychology, or in light of those archetypal motifs and symbols reflected through the progression of dramatic conflict. Finally, the analysis of each play could emphasize the multiple levels of iconic, deictic, and symbolic signification embedded in and reflected through the gradual development

of dramatic action. The following analytical study, however, centres on the moral issues and situations treated in each play. Furthermore, this discussion presents concise synopses and clear references to concrete instances of moral conflict and resolution explored in each work, often in relation to the central principles of a relational ethics.

Although this study has argued consistently for dramatic art's potential to enhance appreciation and cultivate perceptual discrimination of the complex levels of moral agency, the ensuing discussion does not aim to assess the formal elements of play production in relation to each play. As this is not an analysis of the formal presentation of each work, which would entail some discussion of those performance and production concerns and considerations involved in the actual staging of each play, the following discussion does not explore the dramaturgical possibilities for presenting these plays to prospective audiences

This is not to say that the author does not recognize the pedagogical value of engaging discussion and evaluation of those aesthetic properties that would inhere to the production and performance of each play. On the contrary, the author maintains that the study of dramatic art should be redirected to the stage, and thus, multiple opportunities for direct contact with staged plays is a fundamental recommendation for the implementation of the theoretical approach outlined in this study. In addition, the use of filmed and video-taped productions of these play texts would provide further accessible dramatic performances of these works for subsequent analysis and discussion within an educational context.

Given the ephemeral nature of dramatic art, the transitory quality of staged performances, and the perceptual idiosyncracies of particular audiences, the author of this study chose not to focus the discussion of these plays on specific performances of these plays. To do so would require quantitative and qualitative research with specific student audiences to illustrate the pedagogical results of implementing this study's alternative approach to moral pedagogy. (This point will be further elaborated upon in the concluding section of this study). Thus, the intent of these textual analyses is primarily to underscore that certain moral issues, conflicts and dilemmas can be identified within each play.

Consequently, performances of these plays can be attended with the assurance that they raise some significant questions and concerns regarding acceptable and valid forms of moral agency between individual persons. As recommended in the following section on instructional suggestions for applying this study's alternative methodology, post-performance discussions between teachers and student can not only involve analyses of the moral issues and situations a particular play explores, but can also include thoughts and comments on the formal presentation of a specific performance.

Finally, the author chose to refer to the published versions of each play text to illustrate how educators, who are not acquainted with specific Canadian and Quebec plays, through a careful reading of a play text, can familiarize themselves with the moral issues and situations examined by a specific play. Moreover, as each script provides a textual reference point for analyzing a play from the

perspective of morality, the author intends to emphasize how the play text can be employed to focus class discussions on the moral issues, situations and themes that have been selected for critical analysis.

#### 5. 1. 'Till Death Us Do Part', or a Family of Corpses in Tremblay's 'Marie-Lou'.

Michel Tremblay's (1990) play *Forever Yours, Marie-Lou*, raises important concerns regarding the moral implications of conjugal violence, child abuse and spousal rape. For Tremblay, the traditional patriarchal family unit perpetuates a morality of objectification, control and victimization which results in the pained and distraught human casualties one encounters through his play's characters. The play can provoke critical analysis and can engage further discussion of those cultural, social and religious ideologies that often condone specific forms of paternal domination and oppression within the context of the conventional nuclear family. Thus, this play can invite further speculation and debate of patriarchal values that need to be revised in relation to the guiding principles of mutual care and responsive responsibility between individual persons of a relational ethics

A potent critique of the traditional patriarchal family unit, Tremblay's play seriously scrutinizes the despair, anger, and frustration often endured by human subjects because of interpersonal alienation and oppressive ideological subjugation. The play is a tragic testament to the manner in which emotional and spiritual atrophy can serve to objectify and to alienate human persons within a hostile living environment. For Tremblay, because most conventional nuclear family units ascribe rigidly to dogmatic patriarchal ideologies, these often perpetuate

painful and manipulative interpersonal dynamics that create emotionally consuming and spiritually stifling 'prisons.' As Tremblay (1978) himself indicates, "Society decides what the family should be. The members of the family do not decide. A family has unwritten laws to obey, rules to fulfil, and these rules are decided by outsiders. This is what I talk about in *Forever Yours, Marie-Lou.*" (p. 282)

Within this depersonalizing and dehumanizing living environment, human persons become victims of unresolved needs, resulting in profound spiritual angst and emotional suffering. As the character of the wife, Marie Louise, remarks:

I was reading in the *Digest* the other day that a family is like living in a cell, that each member's supposed to contribute life to that cell...Cell, my ass! It's a cell all right, but not that kind. When people like us get married, it's to be alone, together...A gang of people who are all alone, together, that's what we are! (Tremblay, 1990, p. 77)

The individual members of this fictional family unit are the pained casualties of an ideology of objectification, which constitutes a potent moral perspective by which human persons often choose to interact and to relate to one another.

A prevailing atmosphere of acute animosity and bitterness characterizes this family unit, which suffocates any attempts at some form of relational empathy and responsive care. Perceiving the other in a purely objective manner, as a *thing* to be overpowered or to be manipulated for selfish ends, finds material expression in the often disturbing allusions to conjugal violence, marital rape, and child abuse presented in this work. In Tremblay's play, isolated and alienated embodied souls

seem to feed on their weaker counterparts, forcing them to deal with their spiritual compulsions and obsessions alone. Consequently, one either succumbs to spiritual atrophy and perishes in the emotional wasteland of a sterile and indifferent setting, as do Marie-Louise and Leopold, for whom the only form of salvation is physical death. Or one chooses to abandon the corrosive memories of one's familial past, as does their liberated daughter Carmen, who chooses to forsake a desperate need for personal validation and respect for the prurient ego-driven desires of a prostitute's physical gratifications. Exposing those repressive cultural ideologies that prescribe stringent codes of interpersonal behaviours within a sacred patriarchal institution, can provide an important insight for the need to reassess those moral principles by which a family unit should sustain itself.

In order to examine the spiritually and emotionally debilitating and depersonalizing effects of an abusive family situation, Tremblay alternates the dramatic action of his play between the often violent and degrading exchanges of both husband and wife (Leopold and Marie-Louise), and their daughters' (Carmen and Manon) subsequent struggles to relinquish themselves from the oppressive shadows of their turbulent past. Structurally, the play's action evolves within two temporal continuums that often intermingle at key moments of dramatic conflict between the characters. Thus, the double action of the play is divided by ten chronological years, enabling an audience to witness the debilitating family dynamics that engendered angry, rebellious, disillusioned and dispirited progeny.

Moreover, to underscore the solitary nature of their mutual coexistence,

Tremblay advises that throughout their conversations, each pair of characters should not move or look at one another. Only near the end, moments before they succeed in their suicide pact, does Tremblay suggest that both husband and wife turn and look at each other. At this point, Marie-Louise venomously declares, "You'll never know how much I hate you." (Tremblay, 1990, p. 81), while Leopold stoically resigns himself to the most redeeming solution to an emotionally depleted situation. As a final act of symbolic defiance against their pained existence, they can only agree that their lives no longer have any value together or apart, and they therefore have no need to try and salvage a decayed marriage union.

A machine operator at the local manufacturing plant, Leopold drinks to numb his frustrations of a spiritually consuming impotence, characterized by the mechanical routine of a job that strips him of his powers to improve his financial predicament, and renders him a mere automaton, like the machine he operates. He bitterly observes in his poignant monologue, "...When I got strapped to that fucking machine, I was hardly more than a kid. And I've still got twenty years to go! In twenty years there'll be nothing left of me. I'm already half dead." (1990, p. 44) As the sole bread-winner in the family, and compelled to dutifully observe the cultural dictates for financially sustaining the family unit, Leopold resents the eternal drudgery that crucifies his spirit daily. Leopold cynically remarks:

...You sweat your balls off to earn a few lousy bucks and you hand the whole wad over to them. Your precious family! Another of the good Lord's inventions! Four big mouths, gaping wide open and all ready to

bite when you walk in the door on Thursday night! (Tremblay, 1990, p. 44). Angered and embittered with his persistent limitations, Leopold seeks to dull the pain of a stalemate existence through inordinate amounts of alcoholic consumption. Unfortunately, these only serve to foster a wider schism between himself and the other members of his family.

Nightly visits to the neighbourhood bar is always a prelude to the numerous violent assaults he inflicts upon his spouse and his children. As Leopold reveals, "And then... Everything turns red. All I can see is red. All I want to do is to take the whole world in my hands and crush it." (1990, p. 58) The tragic irony of Leopold's situation implies that being a man in a patriarchal and classist society, does not necessarily render one immune to the process of objectification perpetuated by that very same ideology that supports male supremacy. As his wife, Marie-Louise, rightfully observes, "...You're all alike, You dump on us 'cause we're weaker than you, then you let the jerk on top dump all over you Stop taking it out on us and go after them for a change." (p. 45) Thus, Leopold himself unwillingly succumbs to a vicious and dehumanizing cycle of social and economic disempowerment, which exacerbates his feelings of insecurity and inadequacy, and strengthens his obsessions with his impotence to modify his predicament.

Unable to empower himself in the workplace, and having to submit to the gender role expectations of a powerful Church that supports a patriarchal culture, Leopold exerts power and control over the lives of his wife and his two children. Through physical violence and psychological intimidation, he asserts his



domination over the family unit. Not only does Leopold physically abuse his children, but in addition to berating and assaulting Marie-Louise, he resorts to raping her when she refuses him sex on demand. Rape becomes the final recourse through which Leopold asserts his authority over his property, as he reminds Marie-Louise, "You're my wife and you obey me." (Tremblay, 1990, p. 38) Each time she is raped, Marie-Louise conceives.

Early in the play, the audience learns that Marie-Louise is once again expecting "Another gift from Heaven." (1990, p. 30), as she cynically remarks. Once again she has to endure a brutal assault on her body which only serves to reinforce her profound hostility and hatred towards her domineering husband. Bitterly Marie-Louise remarks:

..Three months ago, when you came home drunk from your famous shop party and threw yourself on me as if I were a whore on St. Laurent you got me pregnant, Leopold. That's right, you got me pregnant!...It's like three other times you've raped me. Leopold once again you've got me pregnant. (p. 30)

For Leopold, terminating the pregnancy is a viable solution to their predicament, but as a devout Roman Catholic, Marie-Louise makes the sign of the cross and declares, "It's too late And, I'd never do that...It's against nature." (p. 33) Within the context of this brief exchange between these two characters, allusions are made to a moral dogmatism fervently perpetuated by a powerful religious institution, the Roman Catholic Church, that resolutely promotes a

comprehensive moral code amongst its followers. Followers of the faith are expected to adhere to these moral dictates unquestioningly, and as procreating paragons destined to secure and to reinforce the quantity of worshipping masses, women are conditioned to accept moral responsibility for conceiving through sexual intercourse.

Moreover, women are taught that sexual intimacy is for the sole purposes of procreation, and therefore a sacred duty to be offered to a male god who, according to the patriarchs of the Roman Catholic church, is ultimately concerned with the propagation of His faith on earth. In this respect, Marie-Louise's resolve to keep the pregnancy can be assessed in relation to the stringent sexual mores enforced by the Church, which she, like most French-Canadian women before the major upheavals of Quebec's Quiet Revolution, had respectfully adopted and dutifully observed. Given the concrete particulars of her life in a hostile and an uncaring relationship, questioning her moral choice can involve additional suggestions of all other viable forms for resolving her dilemma, which would also entail a critical assessment of the various consequences that would ensue.

Leopold's pervasive insecurities of having little control over his life often compel him to secure his dominance in the bedroom forcefully, where his authority is being challenged by an uncompromising wife. As violent acts against the personhood of a disillusioned and dispirited spouse, collectively these instances of sexual assault become an important means for reaffirming his manhood and his virility. As he observes to Marie-Louise during one of their many arguments, "If

you wouldn't act like an old maid who keeps her cherry in the fridge, if you'd just enjoy it, a bit, a good screw, then we might be able to stand it around here." (Tremblay, 1990, p. 70) Depriving him of sexual intimacy exacerbates his personal insecurities of self-worth and causes him to feel unloved, which he then perceives to be a form of punishment against his manhood. Leopold poignantly remarks, "...When I try to come near you in bed...I ask you nicely why you don't want me to touch you...And you know, you know I've tried to do that gently..."(1990, p. 70) Frustrated and humiliated by Marie-Louise's hostile antipathies to all forms of sexual stimulation, which compound his perceptions of his partner's unwillingness to affirm his masculinity and to validate his sexual prowess, Leopold strikes back and takes by force what he believes is lawfully his. In the process, however, he objectifies and degrades his wife.

As a victim of marital rape and conjugal violence, Marie-Louise retaliates with countless invectives and critical affronts against Leopold's failed attempts to secure material wealth and a stable living environment for his family. As a French-Canadian woman brought-up in a patriarchal society firmly supported by the dictates of the Roman Catholic Church, she realizes early in her life that the only way she can escape the abject poverty and claustrophobic conditions of her paternal home is to get married. Ignorant of the physical and emotional dimensions of sexual intimacy between sexual partners, she recounts her first sexual experience, and consequently her first experience of rape, in the following section of her poignant monologue, which clearly illustrates the painful and

spiritually debilitating effects of this violent act of objectification:

My mother...I'll never ever, forgive her for not telling me more...All my mother said was, "When your husband comes near you, close your eyes and go stiff as a board. You have to put up with it, all. It's your duty." Well, I did my duty, goddamn it! And you bastard...You hurt me!...I wanted to scream, but my mother told me, to grit my teeth...I said to myself, "If that's what sex is, then never again." Never! Never!

(Tremblay, 1990, p. 75)

Faced with this traumatic experience and unable to return home, Marie-Louise takes her mother's advice, grits her teeth and bears it all. Uneducated and unskilled, she chooses to stay with Leopold, with whom there is some financial security, at the risk of being subsequently victimized.

Moreover, social expectations and religious values at that time (i.e. French-Quebec, 1950-1960), precluded divorce and so the threat of being alone in the world with three dependent children forces her to accept her fate and to eventually become a 'corpse' in the 'prison' she calls home (1990, p. 77). Without the support of family and friends, Marie-Louise stays in an abusive relationship because she feels she has no choice, and because it was the socially acceptable, and culturally prescribed, solution to her predicament.

Confined to an emotional and spiritual 'wasteland' of a home, sustained by potent feelings of resentment and distrust, Leopold and Marie-Louise focus their energies in daily rituals of sadistic exchanges through which they derive mutual

pleasure from berating and demeaning each other. Marie-Louise chastises Leopold for their perpetually impoverished material subsistence, deriding him for his inability to radically alter and transform their financial predicament. Viciously she remarks:

It's always your bloody fault. Always. No matter how hard I make things better, we always end up worse off than before...I put my foot in the shit when I said yes to you, Leopold...But before I die in it I'm gonna say no a thousand times. .(Tremblay, 1990, p. 39)

Caustically, she reminds Leopold that since his father suffered from numerous bouts of pronounced psychoses, he may very well have inherited this mental condition that is often aggravated by daily alcoholic binges.

For Marie-Louise, it is only a matter of time before her husband succumbs to the consuming spasms of mental disease, that will enable her to rid herself of this burden by committing him to the state sanatorium. As she cynically observes, "...I know the phone number by heart, Leopold, and when your tongue starts hanging out and your eyes go screwy, believe me, it won't be long. Oh no, it won't be long. And I'll be rid of you, for good...Finally." (1990, p. 52) Leopold retaliates vehemently by deploring the day he allowed himself to be deceived by conventional ideologies of marital trust, care and devotion. He thus bitterly remarks, "You're not the only one who regrets, you know? If I'd known I wouldn't have married you either. Maybe I'd be a happy man today. In the army.. or in prison...Anywhere but here, but somewhere else, goddamn it!" (Tremblay, 1990, p. 62)

Disillusioned with the culturally reinforced 'myths' of prospective marital bliss, Marie-Louise and Leopold represent the human casualties of a stagnant and decayed family environment lacking in any form of empathic care or of reciprocal validation and respect. Given a cultural ideology that clearly sustains and prescribes parental obligations to the Church and to the nation state through the metaphysical logic of a preordained and revealed religious doctrine, both Marie-Louise and Leopold are victims of those ideological controls perpetuated by the most revered institutions of their cultural community. Since the Church maintains that marriage is a sacred sacrament to be fulfilled by members of the faith through the bearing of children, thus objecting to the use of most forms of contraception, sexual intercourse is regarded as a necessary activity for the sole purpose of procreation. Furthermore, since there inheres a potent cultural taboo for neglecting to fulfil one's religious and social duties by remaining outside of the 'sacred canopy' of holy matrimony, Leopold and his spouse are socialized to conform to the expectations that are established for them. Consequently, their pronounced antipathies towards their respective predicaments need to be assessed and appreciated in light of those cultural, social, and religious factors that serve as potent regulators of their existing conflicts.

The arrival of Manon and Carmen, and later of Roger, further compounds their misery. Moreover, these new members of the family unit mature and experience life within a hostile and an uncaring living environment, where they are constant witnesses to the agony and pain endured by their estranged parents.

Berated, beaten and intimidated by an emotionally bankrupt and frustrated father, it is no wonder that they gradually develop their own demons that consume their psychic stability. According to Marie-Louise, Leopold is "...just a guy who's screwed up his whole life and who takes it out on his family instead of himself..." (Tremblay, 1990, p. 64) As a consequence, and as is clearly evident through the often disturbing dialogues between Carmen and Manon, they too suffer from an oppressive cycle of disillusionment, contempt and alienation that sustains the interpersonal dynamics between their parents.

Spiritually and emotionally, Manon is enslaved by the shadows of brutal violence and intimidation that plague her soul, rendering her unable to release herself from the painful memories of life with an abusive father. As Manon poignantly remarks, "When I wake up in the morning I always think I'm gonna hear them yelling...For a moment it's like I'm a child again, back in our old room. I'm sure Maman's gonna scream..." (1990, p. 59) Obsessed with recollections of her parents' tragic death, she sits in her paternal home alone and relives the final hours of that unforeseen event. Withdrawn and living as a recluse, over the years Manon has endowed her mother with the aura of martyrdom, while she spends much of her daily life worshipping a forgiving god at church, saying her rosary, and praying for the soul of a father who is now burning in Hell.

Indelibly marked by witnessing her mother succumb to the brutality of sexual assault, she developed a deep hatred and fear of all men, and chose a vow of celibacy to devote herself to some form of spiritual absolution for her parents' sins.

As she remarks to her sister Carmen, "This marked me for life...I know it marked me for life...I don't care what you say...There's nothing you can do to change it...You didn't see them." (Tremblay, 1990, p. 42) Consequently, Manon stagnates with her obsessions, choosing to isolate herself so as to ensure control over any unwarranted and unexpected experiences of pain and suffering. Ironically, she thus chooses to live with illusions of spiritual and emotional security, even though her memories of the past are an important source of her despair and dispiritedness. As she reveals early in the play, and what seems to succinctly underscore the gravity of her perpetual predicament, "Everything's stayed the same..." (1990, p. 11)

In sharp contrast to her sister, Carmen deserts her paternal home, and chooses to discard most of her recollections of the countless moments of pain and disillusionment she endured while living in a hostile and uncaring environment. Carmen frees herself by shedding those culturally indoctrinated paternalistic values for gender coexistence, so as to fashion a personal identity that embraces her professional status as both a country singer and a prostitute working out on the Main. She considers herself to be socially liberated and financially empowered precisely because she has not accepted to compromise her freedom to the dictates of patriarchal values and expectations. As she remarks to Manon, "I'm free. You hear me?...And I'm so glad to be free of all the shit that went on in this prison...The men in the audience, they look at me. .They're never the same, they change every night, but every night, they're mine!" (Tremblay, 1990, p. 80)



Concerned with her sister's incessant fixations with their family's turbulent past, Carmen urges Manon to relinquish her painful memories, as these are the major obstacles preventing her from embarking on a quest for emotional stability and for a social identity. Confronting Manon, Carmen observes "It makes me sick to see a girl like you, my own sister, ruin her life for nothing...For nothing...It's all in your head." (1990, p. 43)

Needless to say, Manon refuses to acknowledge her sister's achievements, nor to accept her advice, regarding Carmen to be nothing more than a disreputable whore who has brought insult to the family through her depraved lifestyle. For Manon, Carmen is equally deluded by her obsessions for material pleasures, a veritable pawn in the commercial market of sexual gratification created and perpetuated by a paternalistic society. Sexually exploited and manipulated by men, Manon realizes that Carmen lives with the illusions that the countless men she encounters validate her humanity and her personal identity through sexual intercourse. As Manon remarks, "They're not dreams! You know they're not dreams. You're the one who's dreaming, Carmen. You live in a dream." (p. 23)

A victim of a distant father who never showed how a man can care and empathize with the physical and emotional needs of a woman, for Carmen, physical intimacy becomes a primary indicator of mutual care and validation between a man and a woman. The unfortunate irony is that these countless men are only there to manipulate her for their own physical pleasures, thus objectifying her as her father had mistreated her mother. Consequently, Carmen suffers from

the same misguided logic that equates sexual intimacy with simple physical gratification, that had in the past created significant tensions and interpersonal conflicts between her parents.

In the final scenes of the play, the audience learns that Leopold, Marie-Louise and their son Roger are killed in a car crash. As a foreshadowing of this tragic event, Leopold remarks, "You know what I feel like doing sometimes, my precious Marie-Lou? I'd like to take the car, get you and Robert in it, drive out on the parkway and smash the mother into a concrete wall...We're of no use...to anybody..." (Tremblay, 1990, p. 78). Manon confirms that Leopold was responsible for the deaths, killing himself, Roger and Marie-Louise, who was once again pregnant. Faced with the prospect of another child to feed and clothe while living a life deprived of personal validation, economic security and sexual gratification, Leopold chose to dispose of his property, and to end his agony and despair.

In the end, she went to her grave with Leopold, forever his . forever his Marie-Lou.

Viewed as a final act of defiance against those unforeseen circumstances that had rendered their lives together no longer bearable, Leopold's moral choice for terminating his tormented and wretched existence begs critical assessment and deliberation. On another level, one can examine and evaluate those distinct levels of interpersonal conflict between these family members, in order to deconstruct those cultural and ideological sources of emotional and spiritual pain and suffering

that often provoke moral conduct between these characters. Thus, conjugal violence, child abuse and marital rape, although undeniably intolerable and unacceptable forms of violence against individual persons, can be reassessed in relation to the concrete situational circumstances that provoke such behaviours within this family unit.

Given the cultural and social contexts of this family's relational predicament, one can critically evaluate their respective moral choices in light of their individual moral frameworks and/or those subconscious psychological and spiritual needs that are seeking to be fulfilled. For example, Carmen's choice to peddle her flesh for financial gain can be examined in terms of those underlying emotional needs for personal validation, care, and respect that could not be satisfied within a hostile living environment. Finally, on a more philosophical level, one can suggest that this play implicitly critiques the manner in which cultural institutions employ ideological controls with which they oppress human persons. Thus, the morality of conformity, often resulting from unquestioned acceptance of conceptual frameworks for assigning moral meaning to human experience, can be further deliberated upon because of this play's scrutiny of how such systems of thought can, and do, create human despair and agony.

#### 5. 2. Resurrecting Love and Moral Compassion in Bouchard's 'Lilies.'

A morality of objectification, victimization and alienation is explored in Bouchard's (1990) play, *Lilies, or the Revival of a Romantic Drama*. This work's dramatic appeal lies partly in its ability to expose the emotional devastation and

spiritual atrophy resulting from social stigmatization and marginalization perpetuated by a heterosexist and homophobic society. Consequently, it is a play that can stimulate personal reflections of prevailing perceptions and conceptual biases regarding alternative forms of sexual intimacy and expression. Similarly, by attending to the situational conflicts and dilemmas endured by this play's protagonists, further discussion and reflection can revolve around the manner in which a secular society can acknowledge and validate the prevailing human need for love, compassion and understanding, regardless of sexual orientation. This is a play that can invite an audience (and in this case, a student audience) to recognize its own complicity in a conspicuous moral intolerance endemic to a patriarchal social order, which strictly demarcates appropriate forms of sexual behaviour and relational intimacy, and often does not condone sexual relating between members of the same gender

Bouchard's play is a poetic portrayal of homosexual love that struggles to survive against the dogmatic persecutions of a heterosexist and homophobic society. According to Wallace (1992), ". homophobia is invisible until it is manifest in action...Because the power of homophobia is so strong, it frequently is internalized by gay men themselves..." (pp. 15-16) Bouchard's play is a powerful criticism of the dehumanizing effects homophobic actions and reactions can have on human persons of a specific sexual orientation. Chastised and devalued by a patriarchal mentality (that is firmly reinforced in an orthodox religious doctrine that hostilely condemns and persecutes 'unnatural' forms of sexual intimacy between

members of the same gender), the two male lovers of this play are victims of a culturally determined and insular moral intolerance lacking in empathy and compassion.

The main action of the play is historically situated in the year 1912, in the Quebec town of Roberval, while the play begins 40 year later in an abandoned theatre, where Simon Doucet re-enacts the tragic events from his adolescence that have permanently scarred him emotionally. Through the metadramatic device of situational flashbacks, the play-within-the-play serves as a potent catalyst for provoking Bishop Jean Bilodeau, being held hostage by Simon and his troupe of thespians, to confess his motivations for testifying against Simon at the trial for the accidental death of Count Vallier de Tilly.

Repeatedly throughout their exchanges, Simon confronts the now eminent potentate of the Roman Catholic Church to reflect on his malevolent mistreatment of the two young lovers, questioning Bilodeau's moral actions at the trial that could have acquitted Simon of any liability for the death of his lover. Simon repeatedly taunts the respected bishop, supposed guardian of moral virtue and moral truth, by remarking, "You're the last one who should talk about morality." (Bouchard, 1990, p. 18) At the end of the play, the maliciousness of a pained ego is unmasked, and Bishop Bilodeau reveals how a consuming need for revenge compelled him to let his friend suffer an unjust sentence.

The central action of the play begins with homoerotic allusions to the martyrdom of the Christian martyr Saint Sebastian. His trial and brutal execution

by decree of the Roman Emperor Diocletian, forms the plot of the school play *Father Saint-Michel*, a teacher at Saint Sebastian's School for Boys, has chosen to produce with his male students. Thus, the covert sexual dynamics between the saint and his executioner, symbolically embedded in mystical declarations of spiritual atonement through physical death and resurrection, aim to subvert traditional and conventional Christian teachings concerning the asexuality of its martyrs and its many saints. Thematically, the sacrificial slaying of Saint Sebastian functions as a potent metaphor for the power of Christian agapism to transcend the material limitations of socially constructed ideologies. These often oppress individual persons because they delegitimize and discredit the emotional content of diverse human needs, most notably in the areas of human sexual relating.

A powerful indictment of the Church's doctrinal suppression of the liberating and revivifying spiritual dimensions of human sexual relating, Bouchard's play implicitly questions those stringently imposed sexual mores that have traditionally discredited the value of sexual gratification for developing a personal sense of identity. In this respect, the play's title may symbolically allude to the spiritual revival and emotional 'resurrection' following Simon Doucet's gradual acceptance of his sexual identity, because of which he realizes that his need to care and to be cared-for can only be fulfilled through his love for Vallier.

Simon Doucet and Count Vallier de Tilly are two adolescent boys, from different social backgrounds, who are assigned the principal roles in the school play. When not in role, it quickly becomes apparent that these young boys share

profound carnal passions for one another, which find multiple expressions through their numerous sexual encounters in remote and discrete settings within the town. In addition, Vallier has no reservations with openly proclaiming his love for his partner, while Simon struggles to reconcile his feelings with those ingrained cultural expectations of a masculine sexual identity reinforced by a patriarchal society. Homophobic judgments of their sexual 'perversions' are mercilessly expressed by their classmate Jean Bilodeau, whose mother leads a community protest to censor the presentation of the play. The production is finally cancelled by the school's principal.

Consequently, Father Saint-Michel's discriminating vision regarding the theatre's potential to transform perceptions of the human condition, is gravely shattered by a medieval morality that does not tolerate iconoclastic themes and provocative issues. As he bitterly foreshadows the termination of the play's performance, which results in his relocation to one of the Church's sanctuaries in Quebec City, where he can recover from his supposed spiritual ailments, Father Saint-Michel remarks:

No one understands me I try to offer them modern productions. But I keep forgetting that we are at the mercy of an audience of peasants whose taste is limited to operettas, light comedies or melodramas. And the clergy is only interested in seeing saints stoned to death, impaled, burned at the stake, carved into pieces...served as hors d'oeuvres with spicy sauces. I feel utterly defeated. (Bouchard, 1990, pp. 16-17)

For Bilodeau, Simon and Vallier are suffering from a 'plague' contracted by participating in Father Saint-Michel's sacrilegious dramas that stimulate unnatural and depraved feelings between men. As he tauntingly remarks to the pair of lovers, "It's not a sickness you can see on your skin. It's inside you. It burns inside you like...the flames of hell. It's like...hell on earth. When I came across the two of you up in the attic last week, I saw your sickness plain as can be." (1990, p. 20) Conflict erupts for Simon and Vallier, when the Countess Marie-Laure De Tilly, Vallier's mother, inadvertently reveals to Simon's father that she had walked into a rehearsal of the play and saw Simon passionately kissing young Bilodeau.

Angered and dismayed by what he perceives to be an unforgivable affront to his masculine integrity, Timothee goes searching for his son Simon, and is expediently brought to the lovers' hideout by an eagerly obliging Bilodeau. To cure his son of a 'degenerative' disease, Timothee proceeds to cruelly berate and beat Simon into submission, as is poignantly described in Simon's monologue

...He was like a mad dog when he found me. He grabbed me by the arm and dragged me home. The minute we got inside the house, he went crazy ...I passed out a couple of times, but he kept swingin' away till I got my twenty-two lashes. And he hit hard, really hard (1990, p. 34)

Violently chastised and ridiculed for his love of Count Vallier de Tilly, Simon succumbs to the pressures of a strict code of gender role expectations, that severely discredits and devalues homosexual intimacy as a debased and unnatural form of sexual expression. As defined by a paternalistically reinforced cultural



system, male masculinity is embodied through carnal knowledge of the opposite sex, and thus any aberrations from the norm need to be suppressed and sublimated for social acceptance. Simon denies his feelings for Vallier, and rejects his lover, as he declares, "...I don't want to have anything to do with you. It's all over. The attic, the hayloft, the closets, the lake! Don't you understand? Every time I go off with you, I'll be risking another beating. It's time for me to start thinkin' about girls." (Bouchard, 1990, p. 35) Dejected and confused by this traumatic experience, Simon finds some comfort in the arms of the newly arrived Mademoiselle de Rozier (Lydie-Anne for short), a compulsive liar who is initially quite smitten with the young man's masculine beauty.

Before long, it is announced that Simon and Mademoiselle de Rozier are to wed, although their engagement party is a nuptial travesty, as it is quickly revealed that Simon has little intentions of consummating his marriage with an embittered and disillusioned fiancée. If they choose to proceed with this union, both Simon and Mademoiselle de Rozier intuitively know that they will be living a lie, enacting the 'game' of heterosexual monogamy that has been instituted by religious and cultural authorities. Yet, for the sake of social respectability, Simon feels compelled to disregard his true sexual identity. Meanwhile, Mademoiselle de Rozier chooses to ignore her insecurities by believing in her own fabrications of a shared fondness between herself and a deeply confused young man. The tragic irony with their predicament is that any imminent prospects for conjugal happiness are essentially elusive because of a perpetually instinctive distrust of their mutual

sincerity.

Spiritually and emotionally wounded by disparaging hostilities for his feelings towards Simon, feeling abandoned by a callous and disrespectful rejection from his paramour, Vallier retreats to an impoverished home. There, he lives with his mother the Countess Marie-Laure de Tilly, perpetually ensnared in her multiple delusions of impending material prosperity and a restored noble rank. Deserted by a father who returned to France and proceeded to alienate himself from his wife and his son, Vallier assumes financial responsibility for their livelihood, working as a fishing guide for the town's aristocracy, an indignant offense for a once respected French aristocrat.

Known for his delicate mannerisms and excessive sensitivity, for which Bilodeau has cruelly nicknamed him 'Lily-White,' he struggles to come to terms with his sexual identity, which he quickly realizes is marginal to the accepted sexual mores and norms. Feeling frustrated and dejected by a corrosive social stigmatization that denies him his humanity and delegitimizes his fondness and devotion for Simon, Vallier reveals to his mother that he is indeed in love with Simon. Empathically, the Countess recognizes and affirms the sincerity of his confession, and suggests that Vallier confront Simon before he leaves for France in Lydie-Anne's aerostat.

Draped in crimson, gold and cream-coloured curtains, and wearing a crown of leaves in his hair, with impertinent dramatic flair Vallier disturbs the festivities at the engagement party and entices Simon to recite their lines from the play.

After a brief exchange between Vallier and Simon, the party of celebrants disbands, while the Countess is left to console and to comfort her deeply distraught son. Having escorted Lydie-Anne home, Simon returns to the terrace of the Hotel Roberval, and meets with his nemesis Bilodeau.

A crucial scene ensues, during which insight is given to Bilodeau's motives for viciously harassing and demeaning the arrogant foreigner who caused an irrecoverable wedge to his friendship with Simon. Implicit homoerotic overtones to their conversation suggest that Bilodeau's vexations are motivated by an unfulfilled need to partake of the passion that deeply united this pair of male lovers. As Bilodeau indicates, "...Ever since the French count and his mother have been here, it's like they're trying to soil your soul...Before Lily-White came between the two of us, we were always together, 'cause I wanted to be friends with a saint." (Bouchard, 1990, p. 55)

For Bilodeau, Simon should abandon Lydie-Anne and follow him to the seminary in Chicoutimi, where his soul can be saved, and where their friendship can be strengthened. Simon refuses, and Bilodeau is left alone once more. Feeling frustrated and dejected at Simon's insensitive dismissal of his sympathies, it is no wonder that Bilodeau resolves to go to any lengths to destroy a friendship he knew he could never possibly have. It is with this knowledge of a pained and suffering psyche that one may appreciate the final tragic episode in the play.

Although engaged to be married to Lydie-Anne, Simon forsakes the dictates of cultural expectations and the inevitability of social persecution, stigmatization

and alienation, in order to resuscitate his love for Vallier. Renouncing his pyromantic inclinations, a symbolic indication of his need for emotional rebirth and spiritual revivification engendered by a secure confidence in one's sexual identity, Simon crosses the liminal space of the de Tilly home to be reborn. There he once more succumbs to those repressed subconscious longings for sexual intimacy and personal affirmation. Revealing to Vallier his reservations concerning the sincerity of his love for Lydie-Anne, Simon remarks, "I'm not happy Vallier...I'm not sure that this is what I want in life. I don't think I love Lydie-Anne the way I should...What I feel for you is stronger than what I feel for Lydie-Anne." (Bouchard, 1990, p. 59) With a passionate embrace, their love-relationship is 'resurrected,' with a renewed and reformed consciousness of their mutual admiration and care for one another. Like the scriptural 'lilies of the field,' their regenerated love embodies biblical connotations of redemption and atonement for having forsaken the demands of a socially accommodating persona, so as to rediscover their mutual worth and value as sexual persons. And the audience is made aware that two men can love and care for each other passionately.

At this point in their encounter, Lydie-Anne, guided by an overly zealous Bilodeau, surprises the pair of lovers and finally has her painful insecurities confirmed by the spectacle that assaults her senses. Disillusioned and hurt, Lydie-Anne viciously reacts at the apparent callousness with which the Countess responds to her pain. She takes great pleasure in revealing to the Countess that Count de Tilly has remarried, and currently lives in Lyon with his wife and two

young daughters. Moreover, Lydie-Anne finally realizes that she has allowed herself to be deceived not only by Simon, but most importantly, by her own obsessive needs for mutual love and care. As she bitterly remarks, "Should I have told you the truth so that we could see your pain? Should I have told you the truth? That men are liars...and I too was lying...to myself." (Bouchard, 1990, p. 62)

By entering this liminal space, Lydie-Anne herself undergoes a profound transformation of awareness, as pretensions and cynicisms are finally dropped for a more honest evaluation of the psychic wounds she has inflicted upon herself. Similarly, the Countess's illusions of conjugal reconciliation are shattered, and without the inebriating pleasures of lofty resolutions to her predicament, she chooses death at the hands of her son, to end the suffering from the loss of meaning and purpose. As she grimly remarks, "Tomorrow morning, we shall go hunting as planned, and then, at noon, I shall be leaving you...I shall be leaving...for Paris." (1990, p. 62)

In the final dramatized memory sequence, Vallier and Simon are secluded in the attic of their school, where they proceed with a ritualistic ceremony of marriage by swallowing Simon's wedding rings. Realizing that when the Countess's corpse is discovered by the town's police they both will be held legally accountable for her death, Simon and Vallier partake in a suicide pact, while Bilodeau desperately tries to save the pair of lovers from the consuming flames. As the performance of the play-within-the-play ends, the adult Simon demands that

Bishop Bilodeau end the story, hoping that Bilodeau will finally reveal why he left Vallier die in the fire, while he saved Simon and testified against him in court.

A painful exchange between these two adult men ensues, during which Bilodeau discloses that he consciously chose to allow Vallier to die because he believed he could never enjoy the same emotional and physical intimacy with the one that he loved, Simon Doucet. As he declares publicly to this group of thespians, "I couldn't understand the force that drew you together...A force so strong you were willing to die. I thought I could possess that force by running away with the two of you, but you rejected me right up to the last second " (Bouchard, 1990, p. 69) For that, Bilodeau wanted Vallier to die, and for Simon to obsess over this callous act of betrayal while he was confined to his prison cell, living life with painful memories of the unjust persecutions for his love

Of special interest in the play is Jean Bilodeau's fixated sanctimonious zeal that propels him to revenge himself on Simon Doucet for having refused him his affections. The tragic appeal of this character lies in his clever masking of his painful dejection with a self-righteous attitude that motivates him to act against the pair of young lovers. One may even suggest that this character exemplifies the embodied soul in regression and stasis, plagued by obsessive needs that can never be satisfied. Consequently, it is no wonder that Bilodeau seeks refuge in a religious institution that often functions to seriously restrict awareness and acceptance of subconscious needs and fixations. Moreover, although young Bilodeau professed to be a disciple and a witness to the radical Christian vision of

social agapism, he renounced his commitment to destroy the love that he could never have. As an adult who still believes that he was morally justified in his actions, he is a fascinating model of spiritual atrophy, and thus, of moral deficiency.

During the play's epilogue, Simon and his troupe encircle Bilodeau with the intent of partaking in a ritualistic slaying of 'the beast' in their midst. In a masochistic cry, Bilodeau begs Simon to kill him, declaring "I loved you so much I wanted to destroy your soul." (Bouchard, 1990, p. 15) Simon reacts by allowing Bilodeau to live, to be endlessly troubled by a moral conscience, as he tries to serve his God. As he bitterly remarks before he exits and leaves Bishop Bilodeau alone, "I hate you so much...I'm gonna let you live." (1990, p. 69)

Bouchard's characters are ensnared in a complex web of deceptions which torments their psyches as they struggle to regain a sense of personal worth and validation through their social contacts and their interpersonal relationships. Societal pressures and culturally determined directives provide an ideological context within which the two protagonists, Simon and Vallier, attempt to secure a sexual identity and a way of life that comprises a mutually supportive and caring relationship. Given their exposure to a virulent intolerance of homosexual activity that is grounded in a culture's religious doctrine, the morality of their suicidal pact needs to be assessed in light of a prevailing heterosexist mentality that refused to legitimize and to affirm their sexual orientation.

Even though their love-relationship is 'resurrected' near the end of the play,

in a very revealing betrayal of their friendship and as symbolized through the character of Jean Bilodeau, they are both sacrificed to those subliminal destructive forces that often masquerade under the civilized veneer of irrefutable moral superiority. Moreover, Bilodeau's moral choice to revenge himself against Simon by refusing to rescue Vallier from impending death, needs to be examined in relation to Bilodeau's consuming anger, frustration and loneliness for being unable to fulfil his desire for commitment and love from the friend he adored.

At the end of the play, when the adult Simon confronts the man responsible for his unjust incarceration, he may have chosen to terminate Bilodeau's life as an appropriate form of moral restitution for Bilodeau's malicious malevolence that cost Vallier his life. Yet, Simon chooses not to degrade himself to the same debased level of moral atrophy and apathy as the now respectable potentate of the Church. Neither will he absolve Bilodeau of his crime, nor can he fulfil Bilodeau's needs for companionship and empathy. Instead, Simon quickly realizes that his 'play' has disturbed repressed memories of a vindictive character, which may now provoke Bilodeau to attempt to reconcile a consciousness of his sins with the hollowness of his professed service to the moral vision of the resurrected Christ. Consequently, Bishop Bilodeau will be forced to endure the pain and anguish of a plagued conscience that struggles to heal against the irredeemable consequences of moral corruption, for which there exists no spiritual restitution.

Assessing the moral implications of social alienation and victimization within the context of a heterosexist and homophobic society can entail a substantial



analysis of those cultural norms and religious values that condone such forms of social oppression. As products of a morally intolerant society, Jean Bilodeau and Timothee Doucet exemplify through their actions the cruel animosity and violence that is reflective of a homophobic mentality. As symbols of a cultural and social ideology that can not and will not acknowledge the potential for emotional fulfilment made possible through homosexual love, both characters reflect a moral orientation that is diametrically opposed to the relational empathy and care sustaining Simon's and Vallier's relationship.

Consequently, the central conflict of social prejudice and ostracism raises significant questions and concerns regarding the prevailing need for re-assessing our capacity as individuals for accepting, respecting and affirming all persons, regardless of their sexual orientations. In essence, Bouchard's play can be used within a pedagogical context to engage a student audience in subsequent deliberation and discussion of the manner in which human persons should choose to relate to one another, not because of their differences, but in spite of them.

Often disillusioned and distressed, Bouchard's enigmatic characters tend to react to the bitter reality of their unfulfilled needs with unprecedented malice, confusion or hysteria that seriously undermines their professed values and principles. The suicide pact of the two young lovers, Bilodeau's unjust betrayal of his friend, and Countess deTilly's death at the hands of her son, Vallier, are moral acts that invite further analysis and discussion of those subliminal factors that provoke these characters to react to their respective predicaments. Critical

assessment of these characters' choices of action could additionally entail discussion of alternative forms that might have been taken for resolving their individual and interpersonal conflicts. Such discussions could further engage students to reflect on the viability and desirability of specific relational principles for enabling these troubled and distraught characters to deal with their situations.

### 5. 3. The Moral Apathy of Family Trappings in Pollock's 'Doc.'

Like Tremblay's *Forever Yours, Marie-Lou*, Sharon Pollock's (1986) play *Doc*, is a disturbing semi-autobiographical portrait of the emotional pain and suffering associated with the callous objectification and oppression of human persons within the traditional nuclear family unit. Once again, an analysis of the conflict situations examined in this play can focus on a morality of objectification and of indifference that is responsible for the multiple forms of interpersonal alienation that ensue between the members of this family. Numerous confrontations between father and daughter, the two principal characters of this drama, reveal pained psyches struggling to reconcile feelings of guilt and disillusionment, with an emerging consciousness of personal responsibility for the tragic events that occurred in their household.

According to Zimmerman (1994), there are two thematic lines of investigation in this play, "The first is moral and ethical: the workaholic doctor is being tried by the family he neglected. The second is Catherine's struggle with her own personal identity: who am I; and, more importantly, which of my parents do I resemble?" (p. 86). Consequently, the play explores those personal and

ideological sources of conflict that have managed to create a hostile and uncaring living environment within which members of this family unit feel alienated and delegitimized as human persons. *Doc* therefore presents a caustically incisive examination of a family unit that has created dispirited, confused, and frustrated personalities who suffer because of a genuine lack of mutual empathy and care for their personhood.

A memory play that presents a non-linear series of vignettes of past recollections, it begins in the present with the return of the daughter Catherine, a writer in her mid-thirties, to the family home. Like fragments from "the kaleidoscope of memory," (Pollock, 1986, p. i), events materialize from different historical periods of this family's collective past, and characters either speak across time and space to figures from their individual pasts, or they relive episodes from recalled memories of significant periods in their respective lives. As Pollock advises in her stage directions, "I think of the setting as one which has the potential to explode time and space while simultaneously serving certain naturalistic demands of the play." (1986, p. i)

The complex structure of the play serves to underscore the thematic concerns of dramatizing the continuing painful control and influence memories of lived experiences often have on individual psyches. In this respect, obsessive recollections of past wrongs that can not be righted function as crucial sources of spiritual and emotional oppression. But they also seem to provoke a renewed attempt by the play's principal characters to forsake the past for a reformed vision

of mutual coexistence based on rediscovered feelings of empathy, care and understanding.

Catherine's return to the family home immediately provokes the renewal of old conflicts and confrontations, as the stage explodes with the repetition and re-enactment of past struggles to assert one's voice and authority in the face of ideological pressures and personal ambitions. Character dynamics embodied through this reunion between father and daughter create a veritable emotional maelstrom, a volatile and confrontational progression of different episodes in which accusations and counter-accusations are made, and which clearly reflect potent hostilities between these characters. In addition, the adult Catherine is in search of a deeper understanding of the tragic events of her own traumatic past, within which is embedded a matriarchal cycle of suicidal yearning and death that Catherine fears she may have inherited. As memories are conjured up and relived, Catherine gradually uncovers the conflicts and dilemmas that produced a dispirited mother and an indifferent, yet professionally driven, father, while she learns to release all moral responsibility for events that were beyond her control

When the audience first sees Ev, he is holding an unopened letter his mother wrote him just before her suicide. Catherine enters the house but her presence is initially not acknowledged by her father. As a prelude to the first enactment of a past memory, Eloise Roberts, Catherine's mother, nicknamed 'Bob,' reveals that Ev's mother killed herself by walking in front of an advancing train. She taunts an apparently distraught Ev to break the seal of the letter, and to read

his mother's explanation for her drastic measure to escape the pain and agony she must have felt. Yet, he refuses to do so, even to the end of the play.

During the memory sequence that ensues, the audience witnesses a highly disturbing encounter between the young Catherine, or Katie, and her alcoholic mother. In a drunken stupor, Bob physically attacks her daughter for having poured her hidden bottle of alcoholic salvation down the drain. Katie retaliates by striking her mother and knocking her down. As she composes herself, Bob makes a crucial statement that, when understood on a symbolic level, immediately alludes to the moral implications of Ev's general mistreatment of his spouse and lover, "Look at what your father did." (Pollock, 1986, p. 9) Within the context of the verbal exchange following her brief altercation with her daughter, Bob's remark simply denotes an apparent drunken confusion as to the real identity of the person who struck her.

However, the remark symbolically signifies a meaningful testament of women's oppression within a paternalistic social order, and thus Bob's predicament serves as a potent reminder of the female casualties of stringent patriarchal gender-role dictates. Thus, initial impressions of Bob consist of an angry, pained and frustrated woman, who has suffered with an indifferent and distant spouse, and whom she accuses of lacking in genuine care and empathy for her emotional distress and spiritual unrest. As she bitterly declares, "He doesn't care. He doesn't care about anything except his 'prac-tice' and his 'off-fice' and his 'off-fice nurse' and all those stupid, stupid people who think he's God." (Pollock, 1986, p. 6)

When Ev finally notices his daughter's presence in the room, an emotionally charged verbal exchange follows between these two characters, during which multiple accusations are made of their mutual apathy and indifference for their respective welfare. Catherine arrives on the eve of the dedication of the new hospital that will bear her father's name, and the audience learns that Ev is recovering from a heart attack. Interestingly, Ev reveals that he did not want his daughter to find out that he suffered this attack because, as he remarks, "...I knew, even if you did know, you wouldn't come-and my heart would've burst from the pain." (1986, p. 23) Moreover, the audience discovers that Ev is estranged from his son Robbie, who was not informed of his father's heart condition, nor has he personally felt compelled to communicate with his father for a substantial period of time.

Alienated from his children, who themselves have very little personal contact with each other, Ev suffered the indignity of nearly dying alone, for which he blames Catherine, "If you gave a damn you'd have been here!" (p. 23) Angered and frustrated at this cruel turn of events, he proceeds to berate his daughter for her failed relationships and for her compulsive working habits, because of which she has not only been unable to settle down and start her own family, but she has also neglected to visit and care for her father. At this point in their exchange, Catherine reacts with accusatory indignation, "What family did you ever raise? You were never home from one day to the next so who are you to talk to me about family?" (Pollock, 1986, p. 25) Insight is thus given into the character and

personality of this aging patriarch, as well as to an important source of conflict between himself and his daughter Catherine, which is further confirmed in various instances as the play progresses.

A retired physician who had been a tireless and dedicated family doctor, Ev is a highly respected pillar of his community. Determined and driven to succeed in his chosen profession, he is a man who struggles against many odds to finally achieve his desired goals in the field of medicine. As Ev remarks to his daughter, Catherine, "My whole family never had a pot to piss in, lived on porridge and molasses when I was a kid. And I fought for every goddamn thing I got!" (1986, pp. 31-32) A man of principle, ambitious and often self-absorbed, he practices medicine with a consuming fervour for the healing powers he has cultivated, and dreads the thought of losing a patient to any disease. Resolved to practice his vocation with genuine sincerity and concern for his patients' welfare, he reveals to Catherine, "Hated, hated losin'! Always. Hockey, politics, surgery, never mattered to me, just had to win. Could never let go." (p. 24)

His heart set on post-graduate studies for a medical specialist's career, he eventually marries a nurse named Eloise Roberts (nicknamed Bob), who is pregnant with his child. Disheartened by her son's choice to abandon his graduate studies, Kate Chalmers accuses Eloise of intentionally becoming pregnant to 'catch herself a doctor.' Needless to say, her first meeting with her in-laws leaves her guilt-ridden and insecure, feeling unfairly slandered for the unforeseen circumstances that force them both to assume responsibility for their new charge

equally. Convinced that she is mostly to blame for an unwanted pregnancy, Bob bitterly remarks, "And you, you're there, way up there, the shining light, can do nothing wrong, except one thing is wrong, we are wrong!" (p. 52)

Ev manages to convince her that they made the right decision, and so they do marry. Bob abandons her career to stay home and care for the baby, while Ev assumes the financial responsibilities as the principal bread-winner of the family. As their years together progress, Bob grows embittered by her predicament as the sole care-giver in this family unit, and by Ev's seemingly blatant disregard of her legitimate needs for some form of professional and personal validation. She eventually becomes an alcoholic and commits suicide when their daughter Catherine is a teenager. For this unfortunate turn of events, Ev is repeatedly chastised and berated by the voices from his past.

Completely absorbed in his medical practice, Ev persistently delegitimizes Bob's emotional needs as a wife and a mother, and staunchly opposes her request to resume her nursing duties at the town's hospital, where they first met. Ev rebukes her proposal to return to work, that may have altered her progressive emotional and spiritual deterioration, by retorting, "I don't want any surgeon's wife on staff. And I don't know any surgeon who wants his wife on staff " (Pollock, 1986, p. 55) Thus, Ev stands accused of sustaining an uncaring and apathetic attitude towards his wife, because of which he is to be held morally responsible for her alcoholism and subsequent suicide.

The audience learns of how Ev is unable to be present for the birth of his



son Robbie because he is tending to the wounds of a young man, and of how he asks his friend Oscar to escort Eloise on a vacation holiday to a warm climate, where she could convalesce from major uterine surgery. Repeatedly he is charged with neglecting to care for her emotional needs as a person and as a wife, as Bob declares, "You don't love me, you never loved me! You don't even see me. You look at me and there's nobody there. You don't see anybody but those stupid stupid people who think you're God. You're not God!" (Pollock, 1986, p. 103) Even Oscar confirms that Ev failed to acknowledge and to respond to Bob's needs for genuine affection, affirmation and respect, as he exclaims, "Her problem is the crazy son-of-a-bitch she's married to ." (1986, p. 106)

With two failed suicide attempts, Bob finally succeeds. After years of idealizing Ev, Oscar bitterly concludes at Bob's death, "I could see it in my father, I can see it in you. You got your eye fixed on some goddamn horizon, and while you're striving towards that, you trample on every goddamn thing around you!" (p. 122) Following this harsh exchange between himself and Ev, they end their friendship, and Oscar leaves Ev's home never to return again.

Given the callous inattentiveness of her husband towards her valid needs as a spouse, a mother, and a dedicated nurse, Bob succumbs to a discouraging and dispiriting emotional entrapment that she feels she cannot escape. The wishes of an autocratic husband dominate her life, and persistently she is denied the opportunity to assert her identity within an oppressive living environment. Certainly a victim of patriarchal expectations, she is unwillingly forced to embrace

conventional gender role prescriptions that deny her autonomy, and therefore confine her spirit within an oppressive self-denial. As she painfully observes to her husband, "It's not my fault if other people don't know who I am! It's not my fault if all they can see is your wife!" (Pollock, 1986, p. 59)

For Bob, herself an achiever who had strong ambitions for her career, she is driven to succeed in her chosen profession because of the personal satisfaction she derives from perfecting her professional skills as a nurse. With great spirit, she declares to her daughter, "I was the smartest. And I always won, Katie! Because I played so hard! Played to win! And school-first, always first! 'Our valedictorian is Eloise Roberts.'" (1986, p. 62) Suddenly, with her marriage, her career ends, and she is left with profound regrets of the sacrifices she was forced to make for the benefits of the household. As she cynically reveals to Oscar, ". I think of my Mama who cleaned all around so I could go into nursin and you want to know what's worse? My Mama's so happy I married a doctor. I'm successful you see I made something of myself. I married a doctor." (p. 71)

As she watches the 'shining light' she married succeed in most of his undertakings as a physician and a surgeon, Bob gradually becomes acutely depressed and discouraged at the sense of entrapment she continuously feels. She turns to alcohol to have her spirits lifted and to momentarily escape an intolerable situation. As she remarks to an indifferent husband, "I feel as if I wasted something." (p. 60) Given her cultural and historical context, as well as a personal character that is lacking in spiritual resilience, it is no wonder that she

succumbs to the expectations that have been forced upon her. She remains in an emotionally and spiritually oppressive living situation. In this respect, she is a tragic figure who generates pathos for a predicament she feels she is unable to evade.

Considering that their relationship was lacking in mutual expressions of love, care and respect, both husband and wife neglect their children as they obsess with their respective self-absorbed needs. Ev fulfils an insatiable ego's persistent needs for public recognition and acclaim for his medical achievements, while Bob suffers under the subconscious obsessions of a pained psyche. Consequently, the young Katie subsists within an uncaring and spiritually stifling atmosphere, ridden with feelings of guilt that because of her, her parents had to marry, and because of their children, they will not divorce. When the adult Catherine returns to her family home, there are clear instances when she interacts with her younger self (Katie), during which the audience becomes aware of her psychological struggles to establish her own personal sense of identity.

As a young girl, Katie adamantly denies that she resembles either her mother or her grandmother, who surrendered their autonomy and independence under the yoke of patriarchal expectations, and who were emotionally and spiritually deficient to assert their power within their homes. For both Katie and Catherine, these women represent weakness and surrender and eventual demise, attitudes that do not fit with Katie's and Catherine's perceptions of themselves as ambitious souls willing to realize their dreams and professional goals. As Katie observes, "I'm like you, Daddy. I just gotta win-and you just gotta win..." (Pollock,

1986, p. 87) The adult Catherine is the feisty, liberated, and self-assertive daughter who will not concede to her father's demands for a home and a family, and who is determined to reconcile her traumatic past with an independent and confident sense of personal worth.

At the end of the play, Ev finally acknowledges his daughter's ambition, and for the first time they seem to interact in a less hostile and a more understanding manner. When Catherine responds to her father's question, "Do you know what you want?," in the affirmative, he replies, "Then you grab it" (1986, p. 125). Moreover, as they burn the unopened letter that Ev's mother had left him before her suicide, there is an implicit sense of empathy and forgiveness for the unforeseen tragedies that had emotionally scarred them in the past. It's as if they were able to liberate themselves from their past errors as father, spouse and daughter. This enables them to recognize that circumstances, fears and insecurities often propel individual persons to act in cruel ways towards those for whose care they have been charged.

Assessing the moral implications of Ev's actions towards his wife and his children may entail a comprehensive analysis of not only his patriarchal values, but of his obsessive insecurities for social recognition that seem to provoke his workaholic attitude towards life. Morally, one cannot but hold him responsible for his wife's progressive demise and untimely suicide. Yet, considering that he strictly adhered to a Protestant work ethic that he had been taught as a child, and that he was raised in a moderate social-economic background, it is understandable how

professional status became a consuming end that justified all means he followed to succeed. Ev himself summarizes his moral predicament in this unanswerable question that is asked repeatedly throughout the play, "Supposin' it were, her death my fault, put a figure on it, eh? Her death my fault on one side-and the other any old figure, thousand lives the figure-was that worth it? Was it? I'm askin' you a question? Was that worth it?" (Pollock, 1986, p. 123) As the audience watches Bob's painful regression into a life of alcohol, failed suicides, psychiatric evaluations and institutionalization, was it morally acceptable for him to delegitimize her needs and wishes because of an inability to understand her emotional needs?

Moreover, what of Pollock's indictment of patriarchal culture? Clearly, a moral position is taken against conventional expectations of women's roles within patriarchal societies. Presenting the human casualties of spiritual pain and suffering, as reflected in the lives of this generation of women, suggests that individual persons of both genders need to rethink the values, ideological frameworks and psychological dispositions, by which they choose to coexist. As the burning of the unopened envelope by both father and daughter may symbolically attest, perhaps human beings will eventually learn to listen and to respond to one another in a compassionate and co-operative manner, without threats and intimidations to the embodied human spirit. In addition, prevailing ideologies of the division of powers within the traditional nuclear family unit, may be revised with the intent of re-establishing the significance of mutually supportive,

caring and compassionate partnerships between parents and their offspring. Perhaps the intimate nature of this fictional family's drama can provide a powerful stimulus for provoking reflection on how men and women can choose to relate and to respond to each other's needs as physical, emotional and spiritual beings.

#### 5. 4. Troubled Lives on the Margins in Thompson's 'The Crackwalker.'

A brilliant, and highly disturbing portrait of the human capacity for brutal violence and social alienation is Judith Thompson's (1989) play, *The Crackwalker*. Although Thompson's characters are coarse, volatile and often cruel, they each operate according to a distinct moral framework that strongly influences their conduct towards one another. In addition, each character suffers from some form of emotional isolation and spiritual disillusionment, and thus collectively, they comprise a group of pained psyches desperately seeking some sense of psychic healing and restitution. By examining those emotional, spiritual and psychological factors that often motivate these characters to act, it becomes apparent that moral conduct often results as a reaction to those constraining, dehumanizing and oppressive conditions of their social realities. A critical analysis of those distinct forms of moral agency explored by this play could invite further speculation and discussion of those situational elements that often provoke human persons to respond negatively to a distressing predicament.

Thompson's character studies are valuable in that by exposing an audience to the products of institutional oppression and social marginalization, they can sensitize them to those circumstantial factors that strongly influence moral choice

and moral action between individual persons within such desperate and disheartening living conditions. In doing so, each character's situation refocusses the need for further discussion and debate on humanity's potential for recreating itself and its social coexistence according to a more caring, responsive and understanding moral disposition.

Thompson's play is one of her best-known and most often produced plays, and according to theatre critics Kareda (1989) and Zimmerman (1994), has achieved its classic status in the history of contemporary Canadian drama. What it lacks in terms of a complicated plot line, it compensates through its incisive, unsparing and generous examination of, in Jungian terms, the 'shadow' or 'dark' side of the human condition. As Thompson herself observes, the plot of this play can be seen as a kind of "...costume draped over the characters." (Quoted in Zimmerman, 1994, p. 180). Thompson's characterization provides an intimate study into the shadow's function as a potent causal agent for interpersonal actions, that can sensitize an audience towards those destructive subconscious forces that often provoke violent and brutal resolutions to conflict-ridden situations. In this regard, even though the characters in her play often react with malicious and vicious intent to debase, degrade, objectify and abuse one another, and as disturbing as their actions may appear to be, the audience is not being invited to categorically condemn these immoral behaviours.

On the contrary, Thompson is concerned with examining those concrete circumstances and external conditions of social reality that often incite the

shadow's physical expression within human relationships, thus sensitizing an audience to those latent weaknesses of human life. According to Kareda (1989):

Because everything is part of the human spectrum, Judith Thompson doesn't judge her characters. The animal-the other side of the dark-they are within us, part of us. She has a sober acknowledgment of evil, but it is understood as part of the original sin we all bear. (p. 12)

And as Thompson herself affirms, "In my mind these people ARE us, in those circumstances. They're not that horrible. They're not that different from anybody else." (Quoted in Zimmerman, 1994, p. 186)

A contemporary urban play set in the slum area of Kingston, Ontario, the main lines of dramatic action revolve around two couples-Joe and Sandy, Theresa and Alan-who are friends. The plot of the play is straightforward, but its characters are highly complex, suffering respectively from multiple fears and insecurities, strained psychoses, subliminal fixations and an intense sense of rage for their individual predicaments. Divided into two acts, the play explores the degrading and tragic lives these characters lead, and functions as a powerful testament to the pain and anguish human persons can, and often do, inflict upon each other

In the play's first act, Theresa moves into the apartment of her married friend, Sandy. A series of emotionally disturbing vignettes ensue through which the audience is made privy to the sado-masochistic nature of Joe and Sandy's marriage. The physical abuse and the coarse and debasing verbal exchanges of their explosive relationship, reveal an emotionally taxed and stifling living



environment within which pained psyches struggle to secure a sense of personal validation. The play's second act is devoted to the pathetic life Alan and Theresa have established together with their handicapped infant son, whom they both adore and yet, given their respective psychological conditions, for whom they are unable to care. At the end of the play, Alan murders his child and thus tragically ends his impossible dream.

One of four extended monologues by which the plays' characters reveal something of their inner yearnings and compulsions, Theresa's monologue begins the play. Theresa's coarse language and infantile remonstrances immediately convey a slow, or retarded personality, who has been placed in the care of a state social worker, Mrs. Beddison. The audience learns of an offstage character Bonnie Cain, who witnesses everything and then maliciously reports it, and who told the social worker that Theresa "...was suckin off queers down the Lido for five bucks..." (Thompson, 1989, p. 19) Interestingly, because of this titbit of information, Mrs. Beddison surprises Theresa in her room with one of her 'clients,' for which the social worker feels personally responsible.

Theresa says that she left her social worker's house because she was unable to accommodate Mrs. Beddison's puritanical morality, that forced her to read the Bible, hoping that this might save her immortal soul and reform her moral framework. In addition, this woman's obsessive cataloguing of Theresa's every move creates within Theresa a sense of oppressive entrapment that she feels she can no longer tolerate. Frustrated and angered, Theresa exclaims, "I'm not going

back there no more no way, I'm going back to Sandy's." (Thompson, 1989, p. 20)

Unfortunately, when she arrives at her friend's apartment, she is confronted by Sandy's rage because "...Bonnie Cain seen ya right through the picture window! With my husband!" (1989, p. 21) Resentful and angered by Theresa's blatant betrayal of trust, Sandy initially orders Theresa to leave the premises, threatening that if "You touch my fuckin husband again...I break every bone in your body!" (p 21) Through their subsequent conversation, the audience learns that after Sandy confronted Joe about his sexual encounter with Theresa, he brutally beat his spouse. In retaliation, Sandy waited until Joe returned home drunk, and as he lay in intoxicated somnambulistic stupor, she proceeded to tear at his back with the spiked heel of one of her black stiletto shoes, which almost cost her life.

Enraged by Sandy's apparent insolence, Joe chased her out of their flat, and when he got hold of her, he almost killed her. Abruptly, he stopped and walked away from their skirmish, and later left their apartment altogether. According to Sandy, given the recurring episodes of physical abuse she endured at the hands of her husband, she empowered herself by using force to assert her rightful responsibility over her personal safety. As she remarks to Theresa.

Cuttin him with the heel was the smartest thing I done Ya see, he wasn't gonna kill me cause he don't want to do time, eh, and he knew if he just beat up on me he'd never get no more sleep; cause I'd do it again. He knows it. He don't take a hand to me again, no way. Either he takes off, or he stays and he treats me nice. (Thompson, 1989, p. 23)

Resourceful and resilient, Sandy suffers but she knows how to survive. She lets Theresa stay with her partly because she feels pity for her and partly because her man is gone and she would like the company. Endowed with a strong character that has enabled her to deal effectively with a hostile and volatile living environment, she is an intense woman, embittered and toughened by experience. Yet, she can feel empathy towards others and is unusually loyal and forgiving. Of the four characters, she is the most diligent and competent, supporting herself by working as a barmaid at the local Greek restaurant. Moreover, she feels genuine concern for her friends and is willing to give them emotional support when they have been unduly hurt by others. She does not wallow in dejected self-pity because her husband abandoned her, and resolves to take legal action against Joe if he ever returns and resumes to debase her through physical violence.

Yet, she remains loyal to Joe, which is fiercely disturbing, since he callously berates and insults her when he returns home. Often cruelly demeaning towards Sandy, as when he leads her to believe that they will be sexually intimate, and then leaves her standing alone in their apartment in her bra and pantyhose, Joe manipulates this unyielding fidelity to his advantage. Although it may seem that Joe softens near the end of the play, and in spite of his promises to reform his abusive attitude towards his spouse, it is not clear that Sandy is making the right choice to move with him to Calgary for a new start. In any event, as an intelligent woman who takes a firm stand against any subsequent forms of objectified and depersonalized mistreatment, she seems to know what her limits are and to be

resolute in her convictions and needs for due respect of her inalienable moral worth.

A cruel and vulgar man, endowed with an explosive temperament and prone to brutal acts of physical violence, Joe manipulates and exploits both Sandy and Alan, his adoring partner in crime. He's a street-tough, smug and petty thief who has a potent appetite for carnal pleasures that he fulfils with all sorts of women. As an archetypal figure of patriarchal male physical prowess, he is a man who confuses masculinity with crass insensitivity and ruthless intimidation. Yet he suffers from his personal nightmares of the impending finality and perturbing silence of human mortality. Physically and emotionally abusive towards his wife Sandy, he derives sadistic pleasure from degrading and debasing her with crass invectives and his boorish antics. For example, early in the play, when Sandy accuses Joe of gambling their money at the Embassy, the local watering-hole, Joe spits a mouthful of beer in her face and then rudely demands that she prepare dinner for him.

Through such episodes of mutually hostile and fierce responses to each other, it becomes quickly apparent that theirs is a connection permeated by serious mistrust and callous indifference for their respective needs. Although their shared sense of abandonment and their personal feelings of isolation may have motivated them to reunite as a couple, and even though their choice to change locations with the hope of rediscovering some sense of purpose in their miserable lives is, in the final analysis, admirable, it is not clear to what extent their relationship will survive.

After all, creating a mutually supportive and nurturing relationship with another human person involves far more than the ability to give and receive sexual pleasure. In the end, they have to be respected for their choice to escape an oppressive living environment, in order to establish a more stable relational commitment to one another.

Of the four characters, Alan's tragic predicament raises the most pathos. Insecure and lacking in self-confidence, his unusual alliance with Joe is based more on his emulation of this man's coarse attitude and boorish qualities, than on the complementarity of their respective personalities. As he innocently remarks to Theresa, "I-Joe-he and me are good buddies, too." (Thompson, 1989, p. 33) Unskilled and uneducated, but highly sensitive and prone to expressing his awareness of human pain and suffering in intense, vivid imagery, Alan is emotionally unstable. A pained psyche struggling to secure a sense of personal validation and worth, Alan needs to be cared for and loved, but instead, he offers to look after Theresa. Capable of genuine affection and sincere tenderness, and yet extremely vulnerable, Alan desperately wants to create a loving and supportive family.

Choosing to disregard what he knows of Theresa's promiscuous, erratic life, and ignoring what she tells him of her irresponsible mothering in the past that resulted in the death of her first child, he believes that he has finally connected with the person who will bring happiness to his life. Calling her his madonna, Alan idealizes Theresa, regarding her as that 'sacred vessel' who should not concede

to state demands for sterilization. She will help him create a flawless family that will confirm his abilities as a care-giver, "I know you don't and we're gonna have a baby and nobody ain't gonna stop us. We're gonna have our own little baby between you and me and nobody can't say nothing bout it." (Thompson, 1989, p. 35) Intensely passionate in his commitment to his family's welfare, he soon realizes that he is unable to meet the demands that have been placed upon him, and he eventually takes drastic measures to rid himself of his burdens.

Working at a minimum-wage paying job as a dishwasher at the Tropicana, Alan is determined to secure a stable family life for Theresa and their son. As the pressures to meet the demands of sole provider and care-giver increase, his anxieties build, and he begins to become obsessed with strange, paranoid thoughts of being pursued by steel vipers and virulent cancerous cells. In a highly disturbing monologue before the culminating tragic scenes in the play, Alan reveals to his audience:

Did you ever start thinkin something, and it's like ugly...? And ya can't beat it out of your head? I wouldn't be scared of it if it was sittin in front of me, I'd beat it to shit-nothin wouldn't stop me-but I can't beat it cause it's in my head fuck. It's not like being crazy, it's just like thinkin one thing over and over and it kinda makes ya sick...(1989, p. 50)

Frustrated at Theresa's inability to devote herself to her studies with the same fervent dedication that he gives to the family's economic welfare, and gradually embittered with his son's physical defects, Alan becomes increasingly

melancholic and discouraged at his failed achievements as a husband and a father. Theresa reveals that Al has been crying at nights, and in the following scene, the audience learns that he has lost his job. Disillusioned and pained by his glaring inadequacies, that are further compounded by his loss of employment, Alan returns home where he will destroy his own future with his own hands.

In a rage, Alan bursts into their apartment, spewing coarse expletives about their social worker's inability to recognize his competence as a father and caregiver. He then launches into a violent tirade accusing the medical community and its doctors of failing to heal their human charges:

No fuckin social worker's gonna fuckin tell me how to run my fuckin life!

I don't take that fuckin shit from nobody! Nobody don't tell me what to do and nobody don't tell me how to take care of my baby never!...We're not using any of their cocksucking medicine-they'll try to kill you with it! (Thompson, 1989, p. 61)

Determined that he can restore his ailing son's physical health, he declares that through some form of natural therapy, he will be able to succeed where the doctors have all failed through their prescribed medications. As he remarks to Theresa, "That baby ain't getting no better you stupid woman, you know it ain't. It looks strange. It don't look right and that's cause they're given it all them fuckin medicine." (1989, p. 62) The tragic irony is that his child was born "a medical retard" (p. 59), and therefore, Alan alone will be unable to heal young Danny of his present condition. Nevertheless, in his uncontrolled hysteria, Alan places the baby

and its crib near the oven, arguing irrationally that all the infant needs to overcome his cold is the warm heat from this kitchen appliance and a generous application of petroleum jelly.

After this, Alan begins to make sexual overtures to Theresa, who rebuffs him because they have no birth control, and threatens to call the police if he does not comply with her demands. Alan explodes, yells and beats her. He collapses on the floor, whining, "Alls I wanted was a little lovin anyways there's nothin wrong with that? A man is sposda get lovin from his woman ain't he? That is how come ya get married, ain't it? All I wanted was a little lovin that's all...that's allll." (Thompson, 1989, p. 64) Concerned about the baby's crying, he approaches it to calm it down. Panic-stricken and in stress, Alan proceeds to strangle his baby, while a frantic and helpless Theresa watches in terror. In a very symbolic gesture of defiance against all those external forces that would deprive him of the necessary means to realize his dream, Alan puts an end to his suffering and to his anguish. Moreover, from an archetypal perspective, the sacrificial slaying of this infant symbolizes humanity's rage at those levels of oppression and entrapment that stifle the human spirit and create automatons of human beings, willing to subject themselves to the controls and dictates of a powerful and elite few.

At the end of the play, standing with a derelict Indian man on a warm air vent, Alan is confined to a life on the streets, destitute and entrapped in his psychosis. When Joe offers him moral support, he rejects his friend by declaring, "I done what I done and I done it and I fucked it up so I'm paying for it, get it? I'm



paying for it." (Thompson, 1989, p. 69) He, like his sad companion, have been brutally defeated by life, human subjects who have been subjugated by different forms of social and political oppression respectively. Consequently, they function as iconic symbols of the pain and suffering that human persons, with their various systems of control and disempowerment, inflict upon one another.

Unlike her spouse who gradually disintegrates when his pipe-dream falls apart, Theresa, like Sandy, is resilient. She seems to be going through the motions of life, dimly aware of the human pain and anguish that surrounds her, struggling to survive with the help of social services and her friends. At times pleasant, at other times naive, she is sufficiently resourceful, capable of securing financial assistance from the province's social welfare institutions and of lying to avoid the penalties of illicit behaviours. According to Thompson, "Most people see Theresa as a victim...But I always saw her as a kind of a real happy character. A survivor." (Quoted in Zimmerman, 1994, p. 184)

At the end of the play, she is without companionship and shelter, as she was at the beginning. However, her love-relationship with Alan may have had some profound transformative effect on her perceptions of herself as a care-giver and as a sexual being. In a brief episode that ends the play, she seems to be struggling with a man offstage, a man who may be trying to procure her 'services,' to whom she responds, "Stupid old bassard don't go foolin with me you don't even know who I look like even. You don't even know who I lookin like." (Thompson, 1989, p. 71) Simultaneously a comical and a tragic figure, Theresa embodies the

prevailing ironies of human life, a symbol of the human soul capable of reconciling and assimilating the suffering and the joy of the human condition.

Thompson's play presents several disturbing situations of emotional and spiritual entrapment, and offers no solutions, no forms of redemption, and no escapes. Flawed and often in serious emotional turmoil, her characters suffer from their respective fears, insecurities and obsessions, which often provoke them to act with little remorse for the moral repercussions of their actions. In addition, her characters seem to function along a moral continuum of extremes, with Joe's moral corruption at one end and Theresa's moral indifference at the other. Sandy and Alan are respectively on some form of spiritual and moral pilgrimage, struggling to secure some sense of personal validation within a callous and discouraging social environment.

It is not clear whether or not Sandy has made a responsible choice to follow Joe to Calgary, as there do not seem to be any cogent indications that he has evolved morally, with the intent of establishing a more caring and emotionally supportive relationship with his once estranged spouse. Alan's tragic predicament cannot be condemned categorically because he himself has fallen prey to an institutionalized mentality that objectifies human beings and delegitimizes human needs for empathy, care and compassion. Thus, the brutal slaying of his infant son needs to be critically evaluated as an instinctive reaction to intolerable stress and pressure at the gradual disintegration of personal control over life's unforeseen circumstances.

Thompson's provocative criticism of existing institutional controls and of ideological and interpersonal forms of oppression, seems to imply that the cruel victimization of human persons remains a constant within a social order that is lacking in human compassion and care. It is no wonder that in Sandy's poignant monologue at the end of the play, in which she describes certain events from the baby's funeral, she remarks, "I think it's better off dead. I'm not kiddin ya I'm serious. It don't hurt babies to be dead they go straight on up to heaven no hell no purgatory no nothin *no problems*." (Thompson, 1989, p. 70) Symbolically, these last words embody a rather morbidly potent reminder that physical death is often more appealing than continued subsistence within degrading and dehumanizing living conditions.

Given the callous disregard of human pain and anguish that is prevalent in this play, death becomes morally acceptable and ethically justified as a means of escape from intense and unyielding forms of oppression and subjugation. Since motivation is lacking for political and social reform, so that human persons are treated equitably and with respect, perhaps human beings are 'better-off dead,' than as living perpetrators of suffering and pain without any remorse or shame. Although Thompson herself does not propose how such social reforms can be actualized, the issue is raised for further discussion and debate, in light of the moral apathy and corruption pervading the lives of these dramatic characters, with which most audiences can identify.

Within a pedagogical context, Thompson's play could be used to generate

critical analysis and discussion of those multiple factors that provoke her characters to react to their distressing and frustrating predicaments. Furthermore, this is a play that invites deliberation and assessment of the different forms of moral conduct undertaken by each character to resolve a specific conflict or dilemma. Whether or not it was morally acceptable and just for Alan to murder his son, or for Sandy to retaliate against Joe's brutal beatings, these are the kinds of questions that could be addressed with a group of students. Similarly, in light of the main principles of a relational ethics, further discussion could focus on how such distinct forms of moral agency could be ethically and legally adjudicated, involving students in further deliberations on viable means for legal restitution in cases on interpersonal violence.

In addition, such discussions could invite further analyses of existing forms of institutional oppression and social marginalization, thus engaging students to propose alternative measures for eradicating social disempowerment within a secular society. Thus, discussion of each moral issue and/or situation examined by this particular play would not only entail a detailed analysis of those multiple factors that create each morally divisive situation, but would also include additional suggestions for reforming moral coexistence along a more respectful, caring and just moral disposition.

#### 5. 5. The Value of Moral Conscientiousness in Longfield's 'Going Down the River.'

Kevin Longfield's (1995) play, *Going Down the River*, raises certain timely moral issues that could generate strong, emotionally charged discussions and

debates between members of a class. This is a play that can be used to engage reflection and deliberation on the morality of censoring literary works from school curricula, especially those works that seem to perpetuate negative ethnocentric and eurocentric stereotypes of specific ethnic and racial groups. Moreover, the protagonist's dilemma invites further discussion about the moral acceptability of refusing to submit to unjust accusations of racial bigotry, by adhering to one's sense of empathy and justice when deciding on the future of someone's professional career.

This is a play that deals with the politics of power within the context of schooling, and raises significant questions and concerns on how persons in positions of authority should deal with their charges when there is an apparent threat to the professional integrity of a valued social institution. Consequently, this play can be used to engage further discussion and reflection on the professional ethics of teachers and administrators involved with the education of young people, focussing on the prevailing need for these individuals to consistently model appropriate and valid forms of moral conduct.

Although most of the playwrights discussed above situate specific moral conflicts and dilemmas within certain concrete social, historical, cultural and political circumstances, often their resolutions suggest a moral framework or a moral perspective that has been taken with the treatment of each predicament. There are therefore no significant attempts at moral propaganda or at moral inculcation made by most of these playwrights through their works, nor do they

provide overt suggestions on how such moral quandaries can be resolved. Longfield's (1995) one-act play is the exception in this series of Canadian and Quebec plays. Unlike the other plays discussed in this textual analysis, Longfield's play explores the strenuous and complicated processes of moral choice and moral judgment in relation to the existing demands of cultural politics and political correctness, and offers a viable resolution to the protagonist's dilemma. Moreover, Longfield's study of an embodied moral conscience struggling to reconcile the needs for political equality and cultural validation with an acute sense of moral justice, provides a highly engaging critique of a prevailing deficiency of moral vision within many of our secular institutions.

Indeed, part of the appeal of this play lies in the very moral dilemma the female protagonist, who is in a position of power and authority over others, is forced to engage and to resolve. As the playwright himself indicates, "I have always believed that most of the evil in the world is caused not by one person making a bad decision, but by many people not making the right decision: the decision to follow their consciences instead of the herd." (1995, p. 215) As a moral dissenter, Lettie, the play's protagonist, learns the value of moral empathy and compassion when choosing to act responsibly and respectfully for the humanity of another person.

Structurally, the play's main line of dramatic action takes place within the principal's office of a large high school. Memory sequences materialize within a working class living room in the early 1960s, suggested by a few items of furniture.

During the course of the play, lighting cues suggest that Lettie's father, functioning as her "super ego," (Longfield, 1995, p. 216), will be intruding into the main dramatic action. Animated by Lettie's subconscious, his physical presence embodies a moral framework grounded in such fundamental principles as respect and responsibility for the inherent worth and integrity of human persons, which should never be compromised for personal gains, self-interest, social expectations or professional status.

The main source of moral conflict in this play is reflected through Lettie's inability to discern a viable resolution to an unforeseen dilemma that has been forced upon her. Furthermore, she risks being falsely accused of callously delegitimizing and undermining the racial prejudices that often exist within the institutions of the 'white establishment.' She struggles to reconcile her moral and cultural commitments against a father's persistent citations against her self-serving political savvy, which functions as a notable obstacle to a principled resolution of a socially divisive, and potentially violent, conflict situation. Thus, the play becomes a study in the rigorous process of moral agency, which clearly involves weighing alternative courses of action to secure some form of moral justice. In the process, Lettie learns the value of moral empathy as a potent guide for moral conduct, which often enables one to discriminate between life-promoting actions, and those that serve to discredit and to degrade the legitimate needs for respect and validation of individual persons.

A forty year-old black principal of a large inner-city high school, Lettie

Thomas is an intelligent and sensitive woman who has risen to a position of responsibility and power through determination and perseverance. The play's first memory sequence suggests the political intolerance, cultural persecution and social prejudices that caused Lettie and her father to leave their native town of Meridian, Mississippi to relocate to a country where, "...you can talk to white folks without looking at the ground." (Longfield, 1995, p. 217) Victims of intensifying racial bigotry and witnesses to the violent confrontations between whites and blacks in the streets of their home town, their survival was threatened by a tribal ideology of a radical white-supremacist group that was responsible for the burning of a cross on their lawn.

Fearing for their lives, Lettie's father chooses to leave family and friends behind to come to Canada where he believes they will have an equal chance to fulfil professional aspirations, and to establish more secure living conditions. As he remarks to Lettie, "Maybe you don't understand it now, but up here your future has a chance. You're going to make something of yourself, honey, be someone important, somebody folks look up to." (1995, p. 217) Unable to meet Canadian accreditation standards for professional engineers, Mr. Thomas chooses to remain in his newly adopted country, working menial jobs so that at least his daughter will have an equal opportunity to secure social advancement and financial security. He responds to Lettie's fears that they have made a wrong decision to come to a foreign country where there are still obstacles to overcome by remarking:

...-there's hard times coming back there, Lettie, bloody times, and I



don't want you to have any part of it. Coming here is a chance for you to avoid all that, and I couldn't have called myself your father if I denied you that chance...It doesn't matter what happens to me, because you are going to make somethin of yourself, you hear? (Longfield, 1995, p. 222)

As father and daughter interact through multiple flashbacks, the audience is exposed to this man's caring sensitivity, genuine concern and admiration that characterize his relationship to his daughter. Moreover, he is a man who has strong faith in certain moral ideals and principles, and wisely advises his daughter to reflect carefully and conscientiously when she is dealing with the personal welfare of other human beings. He recognizes that his daughter shares in his ambition and in his distinguished sense of integrity, yet he advises her to be responsible for the choices she makes while she climbs her chosen path for professional success.

Repeatedly he reminds her that a moral choice inevitably brings specific consequences and repercussions for those involved in a problematic situation, and therefore remarks that, "The right thing to do isn't always the easy thing, but it's always the right thing to do." (1995, p. 233) When Lettie attempts to resolve her moral dilemma, which may have damaging consequences for her professional career, she gradually discriminates between her professional obligations and her moral priorities as a human being because of the spiritual interventions of a father who has long been dead.

When the audience first sees the mature Lettie Thomas, she is at her desk

completing a performance evaluation form for Mr. Nigel Brownstone, a dedicated and driven white male teacher who works as a substitute teacher for her school. Lettie is impressed with the zeal and commitment that Nigel approached his teaching responsibilities, as she later reveals to him, "Not every supply teacher treats his temporary classroom as his or her own. Not every substitute can establish an atmosphere of respect with twenty teenagers who know the sub will be gone sooner or later." (Longfield 1996, p. 222) She recommends to the school board that he be given a permanent teaching assignment as soon as one becomes available. Within moments after she completes this formal recommendation she receives a phone call from an angered and distraught Paula Morgan, the mother of a student in Nigel's class, accusing Mr. Brownstone of racial prejudices against her son.

According to Mrs. Morgan, her son decided to quit school because he feels Mr. Brownstone discriminates against him, and all black people, in his English Literature course. Moreover, Mrs. Morgan decides to seek legal action against this teacher and the school board that has hired him, unless an expeditious solution is found to her son's predicament. Lettie suggests that Mrs. Morgan come to her office to meet with her and Mr. Brownstone, so that they can discuss the charges that have been made. Furthermore, she suggests that they collaborate to resolve this problem fairly and without any major repercussions for all the parties involved.

Mr. Brownstone arrives at Lettie's office first, where he is commended for his services and is allowed to read the professional assessment Lettie completed

on his behalf. Initially, she does not confront him with Mrs. Morgan's accusations of racial discrimination. Lettie decides that this is an ideal opportunity to caution Nigel regarding his instructional methodologies, diplomatically suggesting that he may have neglected to give all his students due attention and respect. At this point, she suggests that perhaps Winston Morgan was one such student. Defensively, Nigel responds, "I give everyone an equal chance to speak out, if they want it. Winston doesn't seem to want it. He doesn't seem to be interested in anything, as far as I can see." (Longfield, 1995, p. 224).

Calmly, Lettie suggests that he not overlook her professional recommendation, observing that "...uninterested students often have very interested parents who will accuse you of ignoring their child, or worse, when the child does poorly." (1995, p. 224) One can only begin to imagine the doubts and apprehensions such an observation would raise for an idealistic teacher just starting in his or her profession. Furthermore, Lettie informs Nigel that even though he could have been assigned a permanent teaching replacement that has just materialized, he needs to compete for the same position with teachers who have seniority and are on availability. However, she will not advertise the position immediately, thus allowing Nigel to remain on staff, with the provision that he try and improve on his pedagogical weaknesses.

Interestingly, she attempts to resolve the conflict from a political angle, reminding Nigel that she is in a position of authority, with the ability to offer some crucial assistance for his teaching career. Aware that she may be promoted to the

assistant superintendent's job that has become available, Nigel realizes that Lettie has the necessary professional clout that can prove to be profitable for an aspiring teacher. However, when she confronts Nigel about Mrs. Morgan's charges of racial discrimination, Lettie is surprised by his blunt refusal to concede to her demands for a formal apology to the young boy's mother. These accusations of racial bigotry in the classroom stem from Nigel's approach to the teaching of Mark Twain's novel, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. It seems that in an attempt to dramatize the many verbal exchanges between young Huck and his friend Jim, the black slave, Mr. Brownstone plays each part by assuming different accents for each character.

For Paula Morgan and her son Winston, Twain's portrait of this young black slave is a skewed ethnocentric insult to all black persons. Moreover, because of Nigel's callous insensitivity with portraying a demeaning stereotype of black persons, Winston is ridiculed and taunted by his classmates in the same accent that Nigel uses in the classroom. In order to diffuse such a potentially explosive and divisive situation, Lettie recommends to Nigel that during their meeting with Mrs. Morgan, "We give Mrs. Morgan a sympathetic hearing, agree with as much of what she says as dignity permits.. And promise to take care in the future" (Longfield, 1995, p. 229). For the sake of avoiding a public scrutiny of this situation, that may evolve into an equally divisive debate over censorship, Lettie suggests that "...the easiest...ah, the safest course is a quiet solution, even if it means swallowing some pride. I don't like it either, but that's the way it is "

(Longfield, 1995, p. 239)

Needless to say, Nigel finds himself in a difficult predicament as an educator and as a man with firm principles and beliefs. If he chooses to defend his teaching methodology, he risks professional censure and public ostracism, resulting in the eventual demise of his teaching career. Nigel does not feel that he has done anything that could be misconstrued as racially offensive, as he argues with Lettie, "We both know the book is anti-racist, and that's the way I teach it-we're all on the same side." (1995, p. 230) Conversely, if Nigel chooses to accept moral responsibility for Winston's decision to quit school, for what Nigel perceives to be a misinterpretation of his teaching intentions, then he is conceding to the charges of racial discrimination. Consequently, by such a public admission, Nigel not only risks losing the respect of his colleagues, his students and their parents, but his moral integrity as a person would be seriously compromised.

Moreover, as Lettie leads him to believe, some moral concessions in situations like these can benefit his career in the long term. Professionally and personally, Nigel feels insulted and is not willing to play the 'politics of career survival,' as he indignantly remarks to Lettie, "And I'm supposed to allow myself to stand accused of being a racist, apologize for it, so that I can be guaranteed a permanent position? Is that what you call a small compromise?" (p. 232) Given a strong faith in his moral principles and a firm commitment to his teaching philosophy, Nigel chooses to defend his innocence during his confrontation with Mrs. Morgan.

Throughout this brief exchange between Lettie and Nigel, repeatedly her father interjects with critically incisive objections to Lettie's proposed course of action for dealing with this dilemma. As a symbolic embodiment of her repressed moral conscience, he reminds Lettie that regardless of how conciliatory she may appear to be to Mrs. Morgan's demands, "This isn't just one more touchy situation you can smooth over with no fuss." (Longfield, 1995, p. 229) That there will be losses for all parties involved, including Lettie, is inevitable. Yet, her father's intrusions serve as potent reminders of the potential damages to one's moral integrity that can ensue if one chooses to satisfy the irrational and, later to be confirmed, vindictive demands of a misinformed parent. As he advises his daughter, "Why don't you just once do what you know is right, instead of what you think others expect of you? Is that the way you were brought up? What are you...a sheep?" (1995, p. 231)

Interestingly, Lettie only manages to transcend societal and social barriers, while fighting for justice, when she allows herself to empathize with Nigel's predicament, imaginatively involving herself in his personal conflicts as a teacher being forced to compromise his pedagogical philosophy and his professional principles. As her father observes, "Your head will tell you what the world thinks is right, but your heart always tells you what you know is right-if you listen to it" (Longfield, 1995, p. 219) Lettie can only discriminate the potential hazards of cowing to political pressure once she realizes, through sensitive identification with Nigel's pain and frustration, that he is unfairly accused of racial intolerance and

bigotry.

Moreover, setting an ethical and legal precedent by which an academic can be removed from the classroom and have his or her position terminated because of some unfounded accusations of overt racial prejudice, may have dire implications for the professional status of educators in most educational institutions. If this became educational policy, would this not be akin to opening a Pandora's box of unforeseen demands and expectations that would seriously endanger employment security and professional accreditation, without due course for legal restitution against false charges of racial or ethnic bigotry? As a person in a position of authority, Lettie quickly realizes that administrative control requires responsible moral thought and reflection.

As potent catalysts that motivate Lettie to rethink her moral responsibilities to Nigel as an educator, her father's interjections are all the more piercing and astute throughout her encounter with Mrs. Morgan. A heated and vicious exchange follows between Nigel and Mrs. Morgan, during which multiple charges of racial discrimination and intolerance are leveled against Mr. Brownstone. When Nigel dares to suggest that perhaps Winston may be unjustly accusing him of racial prejudice, as a way of revenging himself against an authority figure who gave him poor grades, Paula refuses to tolerate implications that her son could have lied to her.

Their arguing reaches a final climax when Nigel unwisely recommends that perhaps Winston should seriously consider transferring to a trade program, through

which he could learn some mechanical skill. At this suggestion, Paula rages, "So! Blacks are good with their hands, but they're intellectually inferior, right? Racist pig! I knew it! See? See what you have on your staff? And you said I was over-reacting! I'll sue your pretty pants off. You snake." (Longfield, 1995, p. 239) Lettie intervenes to moderate the situation, and assures Mrs. Morgan that not only will Mr. Brownstone alter his teaching methods to accommodate Winston's feelings, but he will apologize for any pain he may have caused any of his students by the discriminatory undertones of his teaching methodology.

Needless to say, Nigel refuses to accept this decision, and before leaving Lettie's office, he promises to file a formal grievance against his principal with the teacher's union. Paula and Lettie are left alone, and during their discussion, Lettie tries to reason with Paula for a more conciliatory resolution to this situation. For Mrs. Morgan, however, this remains a racial issue, as she dutifully reminds Lettie, "Well? Whose side are you on lady, our side or that white jerk's? It's us or them, Lettie Thomas." (1995, p. 243) Compounding her profound indignation for political oppression is her chance discovery of the employment appraisal Lettie completed on behalf of Nigel. Paula threatens to seek legal action against the school board if Mr. Brownstone is re-employed, which leaves Lettie little choice but to offer that she will have Nigel relocated to another school before the week is over.

This is not a sufficient solution for Mrs. Morgan, for she would like to have Nigel expelled as a teacher from the school board altogether. In fact, she offers to help Lettie rewrite the letter of appraisal to include the charges of racial



intolerance against Mr. Brownstone. Frustrated and spiritually weakened from such an emotionally charged and draining situation, Lettie agrees to rewrite the appraisal herself, and have Paula read it before she personally delivers it to the school board. Satisfied at this victory, Paula leaves Lettie in her office, to struggle with her conscience.

Anxiously wrestling with her father's repeated insinuations of moral failure, Lettie declares, 'The only reason I'd want you here was if I didn't know what to do. And I know what I have to do-you just won't let me. Why can't you rest in peace, and let me live in peace?' (Longfield, 1995, p. 248) Confused, exhausted and discouraged, she finally takes a moment to herself to re-evaluate her moral choice. A great deal transpires within her pained psyche during that sacred moment of conversion. Recollections of youth lived with the guidance of a warm, sensitive and compassionate father, coalesce with a process of moral self-evaluation, that can only be further reinforced by images of a distressed colleague who is unfairly slandered, and yet who is determined to defend his innocence.

At some point during that critical moment of self-appraisal, Lettie must have cared enough to reassess the consequences of her choice, and to finally decide that the problem had not been justly resolved. The final scenes of the play show Lettie withdrawing formally from the competition for the job of assistant superintendent, and calling Winston Morgan to notify his mother that she will be visiting their house shortly to discuss these charges of racial discrimination once more.

Written by an African-Canadian playwright, this play examines a rather complex, yet timely, moral issue regarding the censorship of subject matter and learning materials within the classroom. Class discussion could entail a substantial analysis of the major advantages and disadvantages that inhere to most forms of censorship within a secular society. Related to this issue is the politicization of the learning process, suggesting that a more multicultural approach to education in a secular society would ensure the prevention of the continued perpetuation of cultural stereotypes and of ethnocentric attitudes towards visible minorities and ethnic groups.

Evidently, there appears to be a marked contrast with what could be a politically viable resolution to this conflict, as opposed to what should be the morally responsible solution for personal justice. For Lettie Thomas, the decision is not an easy one to make, and she gradually realizes that she can still defend minority rights without compromising her moral integrity and the moral worth of her colleague. In fact, it would seem that without a firm moral framework grounded in a consciousness of the inviolable and irrefutable worth of individual persons, one might find it difficult to fight for political recognition and social validation

Considering that there were no concrete examples of overt discrimination between teacher and student, and that Mr. Brownstone was not accused of publicly delegitimizing and demeaning the historical, political and social obstacles that have been faced globally by most black persons, it would seem morally unacceptable to dismiss him from his position. However, if like Mrs. Morgan some

parents might find the work's depiction of a black person highly offensive, then the decision to censor this particular text could be based on public discussions and debates with school administrators, parents and teachers, and left to a democratic vote. Needless to say, its literary qualities as a widely read text of American literature would have to be discussed before making any decision to remove it from the course reading lists.

In addition to examining this issue, the play presents an audience with a series of moral dilemmas that have to be resolved by its characters. Lettie has to make a choice between obeying her conscience and defending Mr. Brownstone's professional integrity and academic right to teach content that he believes has some aesthetic and philosophical value, or conceding to the demands of an obstinate parent. Furthermore, she experiences additional emotional and spiritual conflicts as she tries to reconcile her ego-driven desires for professional success with a gradual awareness that her actions will inevitably impair the professional future of a dedicated and competent educator.

Nigel Brownstone, on the other hand, has to decide whether or not, for the sake of professional advancement, he will publicly acknowledge that he is guilty of racial prejudice, regardless of the fact that his honour and integrity as an educator have been unjustly slighted by false accusations. As for Paula Morgan, one can understand and appreciate why she would go to any lengths to ensure that her son remains in school. We learn early in the play that she is a single mother, abandoned by a white man who had fathered her child, while she was left

to raise this child on her own. As Lettie remarks to Nigel, "She's an angry person. She's been dealt a pretty rotten hand, so I suppose it's natural to be bitter." (Longfield, 1995, p. 228) Considering that she works at a menial job to support herself and her son, she too may have dreams of her child achieving financial prosperity and professional security by staying in school.

It is not surprising that she reacts in such an obstinate manner to any suggestions for compromise from those whom she perceives to be defenders of "the white establishment" (1995, p. 228), and who are determined to ruin her life and her son's. Given her experiences as a black woman who probably suffered multiple forms of racial discrimination at certain points in her life, there is reason to believe that she would fight 'tooth and claw' to obtain justice. However, both she and her son have to be held morally and legally accountable for the charges that they make against Mr. Brownstone. Their allegations would have to entail solid evidence of clear examples of discriminatory actions within the classroom, before any form of disciplinary action could be taken against this teacher.

Given Lettie's cultural background and professional obligations to her teachers, her students and their parents, class discussion could focus on the most appropriate solution to her dilemma as an administrator. Such a discussion could involve various considerations of how she should proceed to reconcile the two quarrelling parties, given that she has decided to support a teacher's academic right to choose subject matter for the classroom. In addition, students may be invited to reflect on how Paula Morgan's demands for integrating more positive

literary portraits and media presentations of racial and ethnic groups in pedagogy, could be complemented with Mr. Brownstone's need for academic freedom as an educator. Finally, discussion could focus on Paula Morgan's moral responsibility for her unfounded and unjust accusations of racial prejudice against Mr. Brownstone, engaging students to deliberate and debate the manner in which both she and Winston could be held legally accountable for their defamatory charges.

Conclusion: Instructional Suggestions for Analyzing and Discussing These Plays.

The above textual analyses of these five plays from the Canadian and Quebec theatre have attempted to illustrate the range of moral issues, and the diversity of moral conflicts examined in these dramatic works. Incorporating an analysis and a discussion of the issues treated by each play within a pedagogical context, would entail a thorough examination of the situational contexts, circumstantial factors, character motives, cultural ideologies and moral perspectives, that collectively generate the moral conflicts explored in each play. Different forms of moral agency would be examined in relation to the concrete particulars of each character's individual predicament, focussing on the process by which decisions are made to resolve a conflict, and the solutions that are eventually taken. In addition, impulsive reactions and responses to contentious situations could be assessed in light of those emotional and spiritual conflicts that often provoke human beings to act. Finally, character resolutions to moral conflicts and dilemmas could be evaluated according to the principles of a relational ethics, focussing on the necessity for a reformed moral coexistence that functions along

more caring, equitable, and humane principles.

References to one of the plays examined above will help illustrate the process by which most dramatic texts can be analyzed and discussed for moral insights, within a classroom context. As a disturbingly incisive study of conjugal violence, marital rape and child abuse, Tremblay's (1990) play, *Forever Yours, Marie-Lou*, is a crucial vehicle for engaging students in discussion and dialogue of the manner in which patriarchy, and its institutional ideologies, often function to isolate and to oppress human beings, both men and women. Focussing on the dysfunctional family dynamics explored in this play, students can be encouraged to critically analyze and to assess those culturally determined ideological frameworks through which Leopold and Marie-Lou find themselves in a hostile, uncaring, and alienating environment.

Moreover, students can be engaged to discuss how religious doctrine, as exemplified by the Roman Catholic dogma alluded to in this play, and how spiritual faith, often serve as crucial factors in defining the interpersonal dynamics of human relationships. Assessing the manner in which each character chooses to resolve his or her conflict, from Leopold's decision to murder his wife and his son, while terminating his own life, to Carmen's decision of abandoning her roots and prostituting herself for financial independence, can be evaluated in light of the spiritual pain and suffering these characters have endured within the context of their family situation.

Each character's needs and motives would have to be determined for

judging their respective actions. Having established motive, discussion would inevitably focus on the moral acceptability of the actions taken by these characters to resolve their individual conflicts. Furthermore, students would be encouraged to reflect upon alternative courses of action that could have been taken by each character, and to evaluate whether or not these would have been viable solutions given each character's unique predicament. Class discussion can therefore entail a series of student responses to how this play has served to enhance their awareness of the complex level of moral agency, and of the different dimensions of each moral issue. Finally, students can be involved to reflect upon the value of a relational ethics for transforming interpersonal relationships, within the context of this play's powerful indictment of patriarchal culture and its principles for conjugal relating. Thus, such a detailed analysis of the moral implications that can be culled from this play would involve a more holistic assessment of those personal, social and cultural factors that interweave to create the moral predicaments each character faces.

The above instructional suggestions for generating classroom discussion could be applied to the critical analysis of the four remaining plays. In fact, such a rigorous assessment of the intricate process of moral agency can be executed for a number of Canadian and Quebec plays that explore the very complicated moral dimensions of interpersonal behaviour. As has been demonstrated, a play that deals with a prevailing moral issue, or that explores the complicated process of moral choice, can provide emotionally stimulating learning experiences. Plays

from Canadian and Quebec theatre, because they are rich in moral insight, have the ability to enhance consciousness and to broaden understanding of the often perplexing nature of moral action between human persons in all their individualized realities.



## Chapter VI: Conclusion

Moral pedagogy need not concern itself with indoctrinating denominational moral virtues or with inculcating dogmatic sectarian moral absolutes; nor need it emphasize cultivating the valuing process, which, according to proponents of values-clarification, should involve students in a detailed and intricate analysis of a personalized value framework. Moral educators do not have to remain neutral to ensure objectivity during this valuing process, nor do they have to ignore their responsibility to find ways of challenging the validity of value positions without denigrating or debasing the integrity of the valuing subject. However, according to proponents of the values-clarification paradigm for values education, this individualistic and subjective process of appropriating self-chosen values necessitates that the teacher's role be defined primarily in terms of value-neutrality.

Moreover, moral pedagogy need not be dedicated to developing logical deliberation of competing value claims, rights and moral perspectives, without acknowledging the dynamic emotional and spiritual content of provocative forms of moral choice. Kohlberg's (1984) rigid developmental model of progressive and principled moral autonomy, cultivated through a process of formal decision-making of hypothetical case studies, neglects to address the circumstantial particulars, the contextual elements and psychological motivations that often inhere to specific forms of moral agency. In addition, it neglects to examine the possibility of engaging students in detailed assessments and critical reflections of acceptable forms of moral conduct between persons within a secular society.

Furthermore, moral pedagogy need not be concerned with limiting discussion of moral issues, situations and themes to the sphere of rational discourse, while underscoring the need to educate about a specific set of moral 'virtues' for guiding moral judgment. For Wilson (1990), moral reasoning develops as an independent faculty which has the capacity to engage in dialectical and logical deliberations of valid universal moral norms and principles. This perspective neglects to address the many ambiguities and contradictions of moral conduct, failing to recognize the need for empathic engrossment and sensitive discrimination of morally complex situations. Similarly, Wilson's approach does not effectively address those compelling subliminal factors that often motivate individual persons to respond to specific moral conflicts.

The current study has presented an alternative approach to moral pedagogy that relies on dramatic art to enhance consciousness of the intricate and dynamic levels of moral choice, moral judgment and moral conduct. This approach underscores the value of dramatic art as a potent catalyst for developing and cultivating sensitive discrimination, critical reflection, and a more holistic appreciation of the emotional, spiritual, psychological and circumstantial factors that often inhere to moral choice and moral behaviour. It has been illustrated how dramatic art lends itself to a more detailed examination of specific forms of moral agency, enabling sensitive discrimination of those contextual frames of reference and moral perspectives by which particular moral agents respond to their situational predicaments. In addition, the study has delineated those principles of

aesthetic engagement by which dramatized moral conflicts can engage the logic of the moral imagination for critical reflections of viable forms of moral coexistence within a secular society.

Specifically, the study has illustrated how analysis of contemporary Canadian and Quebec plays, exploring specific social issues that raise pertinent ethical considerations, and examining the complex processes of moral judgment, moral choice and moral action, can sensitize individual consciousness to the significance of relational principles for moral deliberation. By relying on detailed textual analyses of the moral issues, themes, and situations examined in a specific corpus of Canadian and Quebec plays, it has been argued that Canadian and Quebec theatre can prove to be a valuable medium for exposing students to the cultural plurality of moral judgment and conduct. In addition, it has been suggested that Canadian and Quebec theatre can provide an experiential basis for critically assessing valid and viable forms of moral coexistence within a secular society.

Furthermore, the study has presented a series of instructional suggestions for implementing this alternative approach to moral pedagogy. Relying on the interactive and collaborative principles of experientially based philosophies of education, and on Noddings' (1984, 1992) inter-subjective and inter-human principles for guiding relational encounters and contacts between teachers and students, recommendations have been presented for creating non-judgmental, supportive, and caring learning environments for analytical discussions and debates of sensitive moral issues. Moreover, references to Davis's (1988)

pedagogical model for rehearsing' a student audience to attend the performance of a play, have provided a theoretical context for instructional activities which prepare students for analyzing a play's moral issues, situations or themes.

The alternative philosophical approach to moral pedagogy discussed in this study is a preliminary theoretical framework for a curricular model for cultivating moral consciousness and stimulating moral deliberation. As a complement to this introductory outline of instructional suggestions, there is a need for the creation of a comprehensive curricular model for implementing this approach at the secondary and post-secondary levels. This model would provide a rationale for incorporating theatrical performances of dramatized plays to engage moral reflection and debate, and would list general, terminal and intermediate objectives for implementing specific instructional activities. Detailed descriptions of instructional exercises that involve class discussions or debates of moral issues examined by particular plays, would enable moral educators to assess the practical requirements of applying this model, and would inform them of the necessary preliminary activities for using this model within specific classroom situations. Additional drama exercises, such as improvisations, role-playing, and scripted plays, would be illustrated, indicating how they can function as valuable extensions to initial class discussions concerning a particular play.

Further empirical research needs to be conducted in order to assess how student audiences respond to live theatre, and to what degree regular visits to the theatre enable analyses of the moral themes of specific plays. There is a need,

for example, for qualitative research with both college and secondary school students, which examines the impact that dramatized moral conflicts can have on critical reflection. Such research would explore student reactions to the quality of aesthetic engagement maintained during specific theatrical performances, assessing the levels of emotional and intellectual engagement with particular plays. It would also examine the extent to which a dramatized play has sensitized a student audience about different moral issues. There is also a need for research studies which aim to assess the manner in which student perspectives of specific moral issues have either been affirmed, seriously challenged or perhaps even modified, by their exposure to a play's treatment of some aspect of these moral issues.

Similarly, there is a need for research which examines the actual implementation of this alternative pedagogical model within specific learning situations. Such qualitative and quantitative research can take the form of student questionnaires, videotaping of group and class discussions, and analyses of student journals which contain their thoughts, observations, and critical reflections of the moral issues, themes and situations explored by a specific play.

Training moral educators to apply this model is another area which needs to be explored more fully. University faculties of education can design courses that prepare future moral educators to apply this pedagogical approach. Course objectives can include the assessment of in-service applications of this pedagogical model with specific groups of secondary students, and involvement

of student-teachers in evaluations of the major strengths and limitations of this approach. Student-teachers should also be encouraged to experiment with alternative art forms, such as literature and poetry, and different communication media, such as film and television, in order to compare their experiences with those of particular groups of secondary students.

Detailed recordings of how student-teachers proceed to apply the model within concrete learning situations, and of their individual responses to how the model worked with groups of students, would provide the necessary empirical data for substantiating the approach's theoretical underpinnings. Such in-service research would also provide the data to support scholarly publications on this alternative pedagogical model, and would suggest new areas of investigation.

College and university courses in moral philosophy can also rely on the model to generate debate on several moral issues and on particular philosophical questions regarding viable and desirable forms of moral conduct between individual persons. Student impressions and responses to the approach, recorded through individual questionnaires, oral responses, and individual journal entries, would provide additional data substantiating the pedagogical merits of this alternative approach to the study of ethics.

There is a need to explore how secondary and college teachers concerned with implementing this model can establish a theatre outreach program through which they are able to inform theatre artists and professionals of the instructional potential of live theatre. Contacts between theatre artists, secondary teachers of

moral education, scholars of ethics and professors of moral education, should be maintained on a regular basis. Community outreach is an initiative of great interest to professional theatre companies who would doubtless welcome a co-operative arrangement in this respect. Secondary teachers and college professors, need to be informed of the kinds of plays scheduled for performance by both amateur and professional theatre companies for a given season, and of the moral issues and themes, if any, with which each play deals. Written communiques from theatre artists to moral educators could consist of brief descriptions of each play's storyline, emphasizing those moral issues that may be of interest to a specific group of students.

In return, student responses to individual performances could be sent to the respective members of each theatre company, which would include their thoughts and comments on how a play served to enhance their individual and collective awareness of a specific moral issue. In doing so, theatre artists can be sensitized not only to the instructional potential of their chosen art form, but are also made aware of the impact their performances had on their audiences. A further approach to implement the model could involve formal requests for theatre artists to perform selected plays that deal with specific moral issues. Such performances could take place within schools and college auditoria, and students might be required to pay a small monetary fee to help support some of the expenses for each production. Additional costs might be supported by regional school boards and departmental budgets.

Furthermore, moral educators and college professors can invite co-operation from these theatre artists to engage in post-performance discussions with specific groups of students. This is a particular activity typically looked upon favourably by performers. During these discussions, students would be encouraged to express their views on the performance itself, and on the manner in which a specific play dealt effectively with some moral issue or dimension of moral agency. These discussions could be videotaped or audio-taped, and would provide additional data for extending further scholarship in this curriculum area.

Letters of assessment from student audiences and their teachers attending the performances of Canadian and Quebec plays could also be sent to the playwrights responsible for these dramatic works. An increasing number of international artists are creating internet 'web pages' for the purpose of communicating with their audiences in this way. These reports could include student reactions to the play's treatment of a particular moral issue, with special emphasis on how their knowledge of the intricate levels of moral choice has been enhanced by attending a performance of the play. Similarly, students could write about how a particular play has helped them re-evaluate their understanding of the demands arising from responsible and autonomous moral judgment and moral behaviour. Both students and teachers could request some written feedback to their letters of appraisal from these individual playwrights.

In secular societies such as Canada and Quebec, there is an increasing need for diligent and sensitive discourse regarding viable and desirable forms of



moral coexistence. Moral pedagogy can focus on cultivating and refining the capacity for sensitive discrimination and on developing a more caring and compassionate disposition by which moral choice and conduct can be assessed. Moreover, moral educators need to be concerned with enhancing each student's potential for addressing the manner in which individual persons within a culturally pluralistic society will choose to define themselves as moral persons, and to relate to one another as responsible and conscientious human beings. Canadian and Quebec theatre can function as a potent instructional medium by which students are enlightened of the interpersonal, communal and social benefits of relational values and principles.

As most genres of dramatic art, Canadian and Quebec theatre presents its audiences with the multiple and variegated faults, strengths and weaknesses of moral agency. Education about the necessity for a reformed moral consciousness dedicated to the preservation of compassionate, caring and responsive relational contacts between individual persons, can be enhanced by dramatic art which provides insights into the deficiencies of prevailing archaic and dogmatic moral perspectives. In this respect, it is a valuable medium for making alternative forms of moral coexistence between individual persons in a secular society more explicit.

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For a more accessible listing of the sources consulted for this research project, the current bibliography has been divided according to the following sub-headings:

1. Moral Education
2. Ethics in Drama and Literature
3. Dramatic Art, Communication Theory and Theatre in Education.
4. Philosophy of Education and Aspects of Aesthetic Engagement.
5. Canadian and Quebec Theatre Research and Criticism.
6. Jungian Analytic Psychology.
7. Plays Consulted and Referred to in the Textual Analyses.
8. Suggested Further Readings of Plays Written by Canadian and Quebec Playwrights.

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