

# Moral education really is important

By CHARLES CREEGAN

The relation between morals and education has gotten a lot of attention recently at Wesleyan.

Some speakers have publicly suggested that there should be a closer connection between the two categories here. They have sometimes expressed dismay that Wesleyan is a "party school."

Others have argued forcefully

that morals should not, and perhaps cannot, be taught at a college. They apparently fear any attempt to do so will turn Wesleyan into a "Christian college."

Before getting into the debate I think it's important to have a working definition of "moral education." At least some of the participants in the debate at Wesleyan seem to be assuming that moral education means teach-

## Opinion

ing a specific moral code, or forcing people to behave in certain predefined ways.

In the liberal arts tradition, the idea of "moral education" suggests something quite different. Colleges like Wesleyan, whether

their heritage is specifically Christian or not, are founded on the idea that *all* education is "moral." Our primary offering is not information but training and socialization in a particular attitude of respect for knowledge and learning. As a corollary of this attitude, we argue that information and decisions are never free of consequences.

This is "moral education" in the sense that it challenges the beliefs and decision strategies of everyone involved; not a class should pass without both professor and students being challenged, and not a student should pass through the college unchanged. We believe that ideas matter, and we try to arrange things so that students will be permanently infected with that same belief.

This model of moral education provides a perspective on the two terms which have recently been bandied about: "party school" and "Christian school."

Should Wesleyan be a "Christian college"? If this means all members of the College community should be required to sign a Biblically based "lifestyle expectation" statement (and punished if they deviate), no. Such a model generally presupposes that everyone's moral education is complete before they arrive. As an institution of moral education, Wesleyan must be in the business of challenging presuppositions, rather than enforcing them with an iron hand.

But if by "Christian college" is meant an institution which honors the Christian moral and intellectual background of Western culture, while at the same time taking serious, reasoned dissent from this tradition seriously

(whether it comes from within Western culture or from other cultures), then Wesleyan can be this without disrespect to anyone, and indeed with great benefit to everyone.

Is Wesleyan a "party school"? If this means a place at which massive parties occur, probably not. As we have been told, many Wesleyan students go elsewhere to find that sort of party. But if this means a place where sex, drugs, and rock n' roll have higher priority than studies, I believe it is.

My belief is largely based on anecdotal evidence collected from my classes, so I urge each of you to ask several students two simple questions:

A. Do you routinely drive 50 miles to party?

B. Do you ever drive 50 miles to visit a library?

If you get four or more times as many positive answers to A as to B, Wesleyan qualifies as a party school.

I'm not interested in condemning sex, drugs, and rock n' roll. I simply want to suggest that "party priority" thinking (whether actualized on or off campus, or frustrated) is an impediment to moral education, as I have defined it.

It would be sad enough if the party animals only defeated the moral enterprise as it applies to them. After all, in our society they are entitled to squander this possibility. But in fact by not caring and not participating in the intellectual life of the College, they reduce the opportunities of challenge and growth for everyone.

They reduce the educational effectiveness of this community, and that's immoral.

## Internet stimulates learning

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new from the Internet every day. The Lynx browser currently available to the students (option 3. World Wide Web), first goes to Yahoo, which is a search engine on the WWW. A lot of students think that Yahoo is the WWW, which in fact it's just another search engine on the WWW. There are at least two to three other search engines which are as good or better than Yahoo, but a lot of the students have no idea of the other search engines available to them.

I don't mean *all* students when I say students, and in no way am I saying students are stupid either. I am just saying there just is not enough knowledge about the Internet at NCWC as of yet.

I am aware of students, and I am one, who need to use the computers to do "real" work, but sometimes have to wait for a com-

puter and deal with all of the distractions when a few people are *loud*, but I can understand the fun and excitement of the Internet. I can remember, just a couple of months ago, when the computer lab was empty most of the time. I kind of like having a "busy" environment to work in. But, at least the students are communicating in a way that was not available to them before the new system.

Just think, by this time next year we'll have a lot of "Net-Savvy" students in our midst.

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### Even the hate groups entitled to free speech

Dear Editor:

Should hate groups be allowed to express their ideals in a school paper? That is a question that has this writer perplexed.

On one hand, some people

would argue that they should not have to read about racist or hateful ideologies in a school paper. Groups like the Aryan Nation, Neo-Nazis, or KKK have galvanized the majority of American people in a way that suppresses the rights of hate groups.

The First Amendment supposedly guarantees citizens the right of free speech. This right needs to be extended to the minority of people that agree with unpopular beliefs. Suppressing the voices of these groups is comparable to silencing the voice of blacks after the 13th Amendment. Blacks were denied the right to speak out for integration in the 1800's and early 1900's just as these groups and others are prohibited from voicing their opinions today.

I am not one to practice or condone racism, but neither am I willing to suppress the First Amendment rights of these people. If I have offended anybody due to your beliefs or ideas, I apologize. I am curious as to what others have to say in regards to this issue.

Paul Pacheco

## Understanding silence

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*Other Demons*, a tale about a young Colombian girl who is bitten by a rabid dog, tossed in a convent by her father, and (happily) seduced by a priest. Gramps cackled, "Why that's just like this little old girl who lived over to Davie County back in the twenties..." Believe me, Gramps' story about rabies and illicit love would teach even Garcia Márquez a lesson or two.

Then dark bloomed, as it does when you are away from the lights

of civilization; a dark so thick you breathe it in. Gramps didn't even notice; he was used to it. But I began to long for some familiarity. I even reached into the darkness a couple of times.

Then I realized that because Gramps has no TV, no radio, no stereo, none of our American noise-making diversions buzzed, hummed, or banged. We were listening to the land that even Gramps' grandparents had heard. Finally, I said, "Gosh, it's quiet."

"Yeah?" drawled Gramps. "Ain't it supposed to be?"

### Letters to the editor policy

*The Decree* accepts only signed letters to the editors. Unsigned letters will not be printed. Letters should not exceed 400 words. Letters need to be placed in the campus post office and marked "Decree" or placed in the *Decree* office in the Hardees building. Letters must be received by Friday of the week prior to the next issue in order to be printed in that issue. *The Decree* reserves the right to edit or reject letters for grammar, libel, or good taste.

