

# Chapter 19

## Giftedness and Moral Promise

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**Abstract** The relationship between giftedness and moral development is complex. One does not have to be gifted to be moral, and the gifted are capable of incredibly destructive, immoral behavior. However, many have observed that gifted children express moral concerns at a younger age and in a more intensified manner than their age peers, and some theorists suggest that moral sensitivity increases with intelligence. From our experience, which spans more than 5 decades, we contend that gifted children are *at promise* for high moral development in adult life. Their ethical sensitivity stems from their heightened cognitive awareness, keen sense of justice, emotional sensitivity, empathy, insightfulness, powers of observation, knowledge of consequences, questioning of the morality of the culture, and their ability to imagine alternatives. Moral promise comes to fruition within a nurturing environment. Self-regulation – the ability to put the needs of one’s community before one’s own desires – develops through the establishment of emotional bonds with caring adults who honor one’s inner world.

**Keywords** Attachment · Awareness · Bond · Community · Complexity · Conscience · Ethical · Empathy · Honesty · Interdependence · Justice · Leader · Moral judgment · Moral promise · Psyche · Self-protection · Sensitivity · Values

What is morality and what prompts us to be moral? To a great extent, our concepts of right and wrong are culturally determined. A guard at a Nazi concentration camp rescued a 3-year old boy and then put him back into a gas chamber because her conscience bothered her. She thought that she was being moral by adhering to the dictates of her regime. Hitler was clearly a genius who understood the German

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mind during a period of great suffering and was able to use it in the service of his own hunger for power. He had the ability to manipulate people's minds, twisting their normal conscience, so that they no longer knew the difference between good and evil.

Unfortunately, Hitler is only one of many individuals who used their great intelligence in destructive ways. Throughout history, gifted people who lacked morality have created havoc. By the same token, gifted people such as Rosa Parks, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Jr., Albert Schweitzer, and Gandhi have been moral beacons. As examples exist at both extremes of the continuum, is there a correlation between high intelligence and morality?

The relationship between giftedness and moral development is complex. We have a tendency to confuse giftedness with goodness. Not all gifted people behave morally, and one does not have to be highly intelligent to act with conscience. Yet, high intelligence appears to be a requisite for leadership. "No one has ever advocated stupidity as a qualification for a leader" (Hollingworth 1939, p. 575). Moral leaders are usually gifted (Brennan 1987; Brennan and Piechowski 1991; Grant 1990; Piechowski 1978, 1990, 1992). Some theorists even suggest that moral sensitivity is essential to the preservation of the species and increases with higher intelligence (Csikszentmihalyi 1993; Loye 1990). Loye (1990) asserted that moral sensitivity is biologically based and governed by the frontal lobes. It appears to increase in species with higher intelligence. In *The Evolving Self*, Csikszentmihalyi (1993) contended that there is an evolutionary thrust of moral concern related to the complexity of the organism.

The final principle of evolution is: (7) Harmony is usually achieved by evolutionary changes involving an increase in an organism's complexity, that is, an increase in both differentiation and integration. (p. 156, italics in original)

In our combined experience we have seen more gifted children with exquisite moral sensitivity than bright children who lack that sensitivity. This trait appears to be born from a keen sense of justice. "Concerned with justice, fairness" is one of 25 qualities in the *Characteristics of Giftedness Scale* (Silverman 1993a), which has been used as a screening tool at the Gifted Development Center for the last 30 years. In the Annemarie Roeper Method of Qualitative Assessment (Roeper 2003), examiners are trained to look for "an enormous sense of justice" as a strong attribute of giftedness (Roeper 1988). Lewis Terman (1925) and Leta Stetter Hollingworth (1942), early leaders in gifted education, noted the moral sensitivity of this population; it has been a common theme in the writings of those who followed. Gifted children repeatedly have been found to demonstrate moral concerns at an earlier age and in a more intensified manner than their peers (see Boehm 1962; Clark and Hankins 1985; Drews 1972; Galbraith 1985; Gross 1993; Janos et al. 1989; Karnes and Brown 1981; Martinson 1961; Passow 1988; Simmons and Zumpf 1986; Vare 1979).

In this chapter, we will attempt to glean insights into the nature of the relationship between giftedness and moral promise, and provide examples from our practices of children who demonstrate high degrees of moral sensitivity. The material that follows is derived directly from our many years of intimate experience with

gifted children. We depart somewhat from an academic tone and use more evocative accounts to help readers experience the depth of moral awareness exhibited by our clients.

Gifted children show early promise of becoming morally responsible adults. Promise is potential, and, like all other aspects of giftedness, moral promise does not come to fruition in a vacuum. It can be dampened by neglect or disfigured by ridicule. Full realization requires early attachment to primary caretakers and a nourishing environment.

## 19.1 The Development of a Moral Sense

A child is born with her eyes closed; otherwise the impact of the outside world would be too overwhelming. Her emerging psyche cannot face this world by itself. Relationship is the essential ingredient in healthy development – the foundation of moral connection to the community. An invisible replacement for the umbilical cord, the relationship to the mother or caretaker is the child's lifeline. All future relationships are modeled after this primary one.

For a child to learn to care about others, she must feel loved and safe. The infant begins her journey toward developing trust that her needs will be fulfilled, needs that are enormously strong during this time of total dependency. The original bond with the parent becomes the protective hallway of growth. There is a delicate balance between the inner and the outer world, which is mediated by empathic interactions with the primary caretaker. The health of this original relationship, therefore, is of crucial importance. The primary bond expands to others in the environment, and to the family unit, the first community that becomes the prototype for future communities.

Moral reasoning originates with the development of the conscience. The newborn does not have a concept of morality. At first the child wants to still his hunger and meet his own needs. There is no morality, just the basic need for survival. The newborn has a sense of entitlement – he feels entitled to the nurturing, to the food. In order for a moral sense to emerge, the baby needs to have internalized the idea of being an independent human being. The infant at the mother's breast does not see himself as separate from the mother. The breast is a part of him. The child cannot develop a sense of morality until he has a sense of self and a sense of separateness – of "I."

Once the child develops a sense of her own existence separate from the mother, she begins to explore her personal power. That is when the concept of right and wrong enters the child's awareness. Reactions of her primary caretakers are the basis of this developing conception. The sense of right and wrong is outside the self. Then there comes a moment when it is incorporated into her sense of self. Her inner agenda grows and develops as she learns to increasingly differentiate and recognize her own environment. In the beginning, the child's conscience is totally dependent on the approval or disapproval of those who are closest to her. Through the bond of trust that develops with her caretakers, gradually she begins to learn some inner control.

Children who believe that their needs will be taken care of develop power and control while learning to adapt and to submit. If postponement is learned safely, children accept adult power as supporting them. They learn inner control when they begin to realize that postponement means soon – not never (Roeper 2007). As time goes on, they learn to regulate between their own needs and the needs of the outside world. They start to understand that time and attention must be shared. If a trust relationship has been established with parents, children learn the give and take of living harmoniously with others.

On the other hand, if primary relationships are flawed or the outside demands are too great, panic sets in. This makes it more difficult to develop the inner structure of control and mastery – to put the needs of others before the needs of the self. For example, two young children are scheduled to have an operation. One parent arranges to stay in the hospital with her son, even though she must occasionally leave to take care of other responsibilities. The relationship is an open, honest and secure one for the child. He has been told the truth about the operation and is prepared for what will happen. The relationship is emotionally uncluttered. The other child has had a conflicted relationship with the parent. She has been deceived about the severity of the operation and is left alone in the hospital. The feeling of abandonment overcomes her. She feels she was a bad girl and is being punished. There is intense panic; she feels terribly threatened. She cannot control her anger and anxiety (Roeper 2007). In the first scenario, the child feels protected, and in the second, the child feels abandoned. These early experiences set the stage for moral development.

The child's unconscious hope is unconditional acceptance and love from the all-powerful parent, gradually expanding to the world as an extension of the parent. Realistically, this is impossible for the parent, who has other obligations that go beyond the child. The parent's own conscious and unconscious needs have an impact on the vital bond with the child. However, the more uncluttered the parent-child relationship remains, the easier it is for the child's moral sense to blossom.

The normal reaction of young children is to take what they desire, but at the same time, they have a sense of community. Is this a built-in sense of identifying with others' feelings or simply the function of what they learn? There is so much moral judgment that surrounds a child from the day he is born. This makes it difficult to discriminate in-born traits from learned behavior. Lois' grandmother had a cookie jar on a shelf in the cupboard that her grandchildren could reach. She made batches of freshly baked cookies and placed them in the cookie jar. Her grandchildren were expected not to eat all the cookies, but to leave some to share with others. And the grandchildren responded to this expectation. Children who take all the cookies for themselves and leave none for others have not developed a sense of community.

Morality, in its original essence, is self-protection. The psyche's first task is to protect itself, to remain a unit, to feel this inner unit as unity, rather than be torn apart. This need for survival, self-protection, is the overriding motivation for all actions. "Do unto others as you want others to do unto you" is actually a self-protective statement. As the growing self goes on its journey, it encounters the needs, world-views, and agendas of other psyches. In an optimal environment, the psyche comes to recognize the principle of reciprocity: kindness to others is likely to result in kindness in return.

## 19.2 Children at Promise for Moral Development

In general, as well as in specific cases, morality is almost always a silent partner in our process of experiencing the soul of the gifted child. Many gifted children have an unerring sense of morality that begins rather early in life (Gross 1993). It stems from their great cognitive ability, their powers of observation, their sensitivity and their intuition. Insightfulness, empathy, cognitive understanding, sense of justice, knowledge of consequences, questioning the morality of the culture, the ability to understand that there are alternatives, all play a part in moral judgment. Because the gifted have these characteristics, they are at promise for high levels of moral development. This does not imply, however, that children who are not gifted are less moral.

Deeply interwoven with the concept of morality is the enormous sense of justice so many gifted children seem to experience at the center of their emotional lives.

One of the well known characteristics of the gifted is their acute sense of justice. Gifted children are questioners, keen observers, logical thinkers. They will notice inequities, unfairness, double standards, and will question instances and experiences of that sort with passion. Often they feel helpless and powerless to make an impact, and they suffer deeply from this. They worry about the injustices of the world. They worry about peace, about the bomb, about their futures, about the environment, about all the problems that they encounter. (Roeper 1988, p. 12)

A sense of justice and of fairness (which are not necessarily synonymous) grows directly out of the deep insights of the gifted child. For example, even a very young gifted child will notice when parental expectations vary among siblings.

An infant with greater cognitive awareness develops an understanding of cause and effect early in life. With this understanding comes a greater knowledge of consequences. Gifted children do not need as many repetitions to learn consequences. Average children usually learn by trial and error, whereas gifted children often will have the forethought to solve problems without trial and error. For example, if an average toddler were to reach the top of a staircase unsupervised, there would be a great chance that this child would fall down the stairs head first. However, if a gifted toddler reached the top of a staircase unsupervised, the child would be more likely to back away to keep from being hurt, or problem solve another way to negotiate the stairs that would be safer, such as turning around and going down the stairs backward.

During the time she was Head of the Nursery School at The Roeper School, Annemarie was watching two boys, Joe and Hal, who were not yet 3 years old. They were fighting over a toy. Joe wrested the toy from Hal, and Hal angrily picked up a block and aimed it at Joe's head. There was no one close enough to him to intervene. He stopped himself with the block in mid-air and put the block back down. Something inside of him prevented him from hurting Joe. Had he learned at such a young age that hurting someone would bring punishment from adults? Or was his restraint motivated by an inner sense of compassion?

One can't fool really gifted children (much as many adults try). They will cut through all attempts at deceiving them and come directly to the truth. It is impressive

how decisive they are, and how they apply this knowledge to their daily lives. They are offended by the deception of adults, and find it immoral. No amount of trying to disguise one's shortcomings will prevent a child from seeing through falsehood. Loving adults often try to protect children from the vicissitudes of life, and try to present conflict to them in a simplified and mostly positive way. However, honesty is a better policy than protection.

The result [of protecting the child] is almost a conspiracy of silence which is reciprocated by children. It is as though a mutual agreement exists that certain things, even though obvious to all, simply have not occurred. This means that we may believe we have succeeded in keeping certain realities from children, while, in actuality, they have successfully kept their concerns from us. The consequence is that they are forced to deal with difficult problems by themselves and are left to face questions without help, for which they are neither emotionally nor intellectually equipped. (Roeper 2004, p. 5)

Gifted children actually develop a sense of personal power earlier than their age-mates, and, therefore, develop a conscience earlier. One gifted infant, within a few hours of birth, screamed until all the other children in the nursery were crying, and then would be quiet to listen to them. As soon as they quieted down, he would start again. In the crib, gifted babies often move objects to see what they will do, recognizing that it is within their power to make these objects move. This sense of personal power, combined with their sensitivity and awareness, and their early development of conscience, may lead to feelings of omnipotence.

In the more average child, the feeling of omnipotence is limited by reality before the conscience develops. . . . Feelings of omnipotence make children believe that there is no limit to their abilities, while the newly developed conscience forces them to act with moral perfection. In other words, they feel that their ability to achieve has no limitation and that it is their duty to live up to this unlimited capacity. Imagine the burdens these children take upon themselves, feeling responsible for everything and feeling guilty every time they fail to live up their responsibility. (Roeper 1982, p. 22)

Several years ago, a 5-year-old child came to Annemarie all bent over. She said to him, "You look like you are carrying the world on your shoulders." He responded, "Oh, but I am!" He had a 7-year-old sister who had a chronic illness. He felt that if he wasn't at home to take care of things, it would be disastrous.

Most gifted children have a greater sense of guilt than other children the same age, because they are more aware of the consequences of their behavior. Because of their sense of morality, (which, again, is because of their knowledge), they feel an obligation to behave in a certain way, and also to make the world a better place. They fail themselves in both these aspects, very often, which is why it is essential for gifted children to be involved in good deeds.

Gifted children often become outspoken leaders within a school community. This happens because they develop a greater awareness of everything around them and either a conscious or unconscious realization about the connection of everyone in the world in general, and specifically among members of a school community. Their moral attitudes often become a major factor in our understanding them, as well as in our desire to help them be a part of the whole fabric of life and education.

Gifted children are more likely than others to understand the interdependence of all life on the planet. This awareness has an increasing impact on their perceptions

of moral concern and responsibility. “Am I my brother’s keeper?” has expanded meaning in a global society. In the disappearing world of little fiefdoms, we believed we had a choice. We felt morally obligated to certain people and not to others. In an interdependent society, there is no choice, for we see how we depend on each other. If we mistreat each other, mistreatment becomes acceptable behavior and our own safety is threatened. Every action on our part creates a multitude of reactions in others, which results again in multitudes of actions by others.

Interdependence applies not only to people but also to our environment. Once we thought the world’s resources would last forever and that we could use them as we wished, but we are quickly coming to the realization that we are morally responsible even to the air we breathe. If our actions destroy the ecosystem, we will endanger our lives and all future life. In this manner, morality is actually self-preservation. Self-preservation involves the preservation of others as well as the self and also preservation of the planet.

Gifted individuals have the intellectual capacity to understand the intricacies of an interdependent world. Even as young children, they can envision “what would happen if. . .” we polluted all the lakes and rivers, cut down all the trees, lost all the polar bears, and so on. While other children are absorbed with what is happening in this moment of their lives, gifted children are more aware of what is happening in other parts of the world and worry about the future of the planet. Greater cognitive complexity and greater awareness make gifted children more likely to take on the weight of the world, to feel personally responsible for leaving this world a better place than they found it.

Research on gifted children’s moral development echoes our observations. Eighty percent of the 400+ gifted children whom Galbraith (1985) polled reported that they worry a great deal more about world problems than their peers – problems such as world hunger, nuclear war, pollution and international relations. Clark and Hankins (1985) conducted a comparative study of gifted and average children. They found that young gifted students read the newspapers more often than nongifted students, paid more attention to world news items and were more concerned about war. Rogers (1986) asked parents of gifted and average third graders to rate their children’s concerns about morality and justice on a 5 point scale, from “always” to “never.” While 36% of the gifted children were described as having deep concerns about morality and justice, only 8% of the average children were characterized in this manner. Janos et al. (1989) found accelerated gifted adolescents to be advanced in moral reasoning on Rest’s (1979) *Defining Issues Test*, attaining levels similar to those achieved by graduate students.

### **19.3 Examples of Moral Sensitivity in Gifted Children**

Over the last several decades, we both have encountered countless morally advanced gifted children. They protect those whom they feel are more vulnerable: babies, disabled people, the elderly, the outcasts. They stand up to bullies, overcoming their

own fears, in the name of justice. If a classmate is humiliated, they become terribly upset, and may even challenge the instructor. For example, a teacher destroyed the artwork of a student because he didn't draw a figure the way she wanted him to, whereupon an unusually shy and withdrawn boy, who never spoke up in class, shouted, "That's not fair!"

When parents are asked to describe their gifted children, "sensitive" appears more frequently than any other trait (Silverman 1983). The following description is typical of the children brought to the Gifted Development Center for assessment:

P is quite sensitive to the feelings of others and has a well developed sense of justice. She befriends the outcasts in her class and will not tolerate cruelty from other children. She comments to me if she feels her teacher is not treating children consistently. (Silverman 1994, p. 111)

Another parent described her 9-year-old daughter as sensitive to the feelings of others "to a degree that almost defied belief." Kay can't be convinced "to do anything she perceives as wrong, unsafe, or boring." From an early age, Kay "exhibited an unusually keen awareness of the world around her, particularly as it relates to the feelings and needs of others." She often seemed "burdened by the weight of knowledge she has not had the emotional maturity to deal with" (Silverman 1993b, p. 63).

With a deep understanding of the importance of conserving resources, gifted children are the ones who initiate ecological campaigns in their schools and communities. Some become vegetarians in meat-eating families as young as 5, because of their revulsion to the idea of killing animals for food. We often hear stories of young gifted children crying at the slapstick violence in cartoons and being unable to bear the cruelty depicted in Disney movies. Some refuse to fight back when attacked because they consider all forms of violence – including self-defense – morally wrong. We've read poems of anguish and letters to Presidents begging them to stop wars. Gifted children are not easily comforted by the knowledge of their own safety when they know children in other parts of the world are dying.

Empathy is often the basis of moral sensitivity in the gifted. A 4-year-old boy who was assessed at the Gifted Development Center was described by his father as an "incredible peacemaker," able to keep harmony in groups as large as 19 of all different ages:

A is an exceptionally gentle and kind boy. I have never seen him hit or push and, in fact, have had to teach him that it is not good to let his little brother hit him. . . . He is extremely loving (e.g., he sings, 'I'm so glad when Daddy comes home' every day to me). He daily praises my wife and me for taking care of his baby brother. He has an intense love of games and frequently seeks out adults to play with him. When he plays with his friends, he will help them find the best move in a game and deliberately lose – all the while telling his friends how good *they* are at the game. . . . He is easily upset if he believes someone else has been treated unfairly (e.g., was sobbing because someone had taken his friend's toy – the friend was not crying). (Silverman 1993b, p. 63)

Children like this one are "emotionally gifted" (Roeper 1982). Their compassion is remarkable, more advanced than most adults who have learned to conform to the expectations of society. A classic example of emotional giftedness is John, a brilliant



chess player, who was obviously winning a chess tournament, when suddenly he began to make careless mistakes, and purposely lost the game.

When asked why, he replied, *'I noticed my opponent had tears in his eyes. I could not concentrate and lost my desire to win.'* John's empathy was greater than his ambition. Many adults, especially those who supported John, were disappointed. Yet, one could argue that his reaction was a more mature one than theirs for his self-esteem did not depend on his winning the competition. (Roeper 1982, p. 24)

When Sara Jane was 2 years old, she saw a television report of an earthquake that hit Russia, leaving countless people homeless. With tears in her eyes, she brought her piggy bank to her mother and said, "Mama, send my money." The following Christmas, at the age of 3, Sara Jane requested that her presents be given to needy children: "I have everything I need. I wish you would give my presents to some little girl or boy who won't get any" (Silverman 1993c, p. 313). At age 6, Sara Jane contacted a nearby soup kitchen to find out what was needed right before Christmas and wrote a letter to her school community requesting donations of specific foods, soap, toothbrushes, shampoo, and gifts for poor children:

If you can earn the money to donate a gift for a poor child, think of how many children will be happy on this holiday. Please try to bring in a small gift that is wrapped and please put a tag on the gift telling exactly what the present is so they will know who should get this gift.

You can help make a child's holiday much happier. Please bring food and a small gift by December 15. (Silverman 1994, p. 112)

At the age of 9, Mark picked fruits and vegetables one summer to sell in his neighborhood so that he could earn money to donate to the homeless. This was his own idea, not inspired by teachers or parents. Jason Crowe began his peace crusade when he was 9. Devastated by the death of his grandmother, Jason turned to Jim Delisle, who suggested that reaching out to help others is sometimes the best cure. So Jason published a newspaper, and donated the proceeds to the American Cancer Society.

Four months after starting my "By-Kids-For-Kids" newspaper, another awesome friend, Laura Whaley from the Center for Gifted Studies at WKU, sent me an article to read about a cellist in Bosnia who witnessed the massacre of 22 of his friends and reacted by playing the cello for 22 days amidst sniper fire. To me, his musical harmony represented social harmony, and I immediately knew that I had to keep his message alive. Thus, at age 10, I became a peace activist.

Besides organizing local events, I decided to commission a peace statue to be sent to Bosnia from the kids of the world. I wrote to President Clinton and received an encouraging reply, got endorsements from Joan Baez, Pete Seeger, Yo-Yo Ma, U2's Bono, and also received a thumbs-up from statesmen, businessmen, and educators. I found a sculptor and commissioned The Children's International Peace-and-Harmony Statue. (Crowe 2001, p. 3)

We have found that the higher the child's IQ, the earlier moral concerns develop and the more profound effect they have on the child (Silverman 1994). But it usually takes maturity before the child can translate moral sensitivity into consistent moral action.

This is not to say that all gifted children are morally advanced. There are some children who have been emotionally damaged by neglect, abuse, insensitivity or

lack of understanding. An emotionally damaged gifted youth may be of greater danger to society than a young person with less ability, because this individual has a greater intellectual capacity to put in the service of antisocial behavior. There are also gifted children who are one-sided in their development, who have been allowed to develop their specific talents without equal attention to their social and emotional development (Silverman 1994). According to Lovecky (1994):

My own work with gifted children also suggests unusual moral and social concerns. Both boys and girls worry about war, the environment, the homeless, poverty, crime and drugs. And yet, for many gifted boys, there is also a fascination with violence.... In fact, many of the gifted boys I have questioned see violence as the only solution to interpersonal conflicts. Both the influence of peers and of the media around them appear to place gifted children, particularly boys, in conflict with their innermost feelings and judgments. To continue with the generous, compassionate and altruistic responses of early childhood places many gifted boys at considerable risk for peer rejection and ridicule. They are too vulnerable this way, so they often conceal the moral side of themselves behind the same invulnerability modeled for them by others; that is, they wall off and deny compassionate responses to others. (p. 3)

While moral sensitivity appears to be correlated with giftedness in early childhood, it is in danger of being snuffed out or buried through environmental exposure, especially exposure to the inexorable media blitz, which glorifies violence. By the middle grades, morally aware children, especially boys, seem to face two choices: become victims or “prove” themselves by repressing their moral sensitivity to gain acceptance (Silverman 1994).

## 19.4 Recommendations for Encouraging Moral Development in Gifted Children

We recommend the following activities to enable gifted children to fulfill their moral promise:

1. Provide opportunities for gifted children to internalize caring values by making community service a part of their curriculum or extra-curricular activities (e.g., in hospitals, day care centers, nursing homes). Allow them to select their own service projects.
2. Support their courage to stand up for their convictions, despite the blows to self-esteem they might sustain from others.
3. Introduce students to Barbara Lewis' books (e.g., *The Kids' Guide to Social Action* [1991, 1998], *The Kid's Guide to Service Projects* [1995], *What Do You Stand For?* [1998]). (Additional books are listed in the references). Lewis highlights projects initiated by children to help others, and provides wonderful ideas for community service projects for children of all ages.
4. Give them books to read and films to watch to familiarize themselves with moral leaders, so that they have appropriate role models (Hollingworth 1942). Explore with them humanitarian values and the lives of individuals dedicated to service.

5. Assist them in designing projects related to social and moral issues: (for example, writing research papers; developing films, videotapes or plays; conducting panel discussions; using an art medium, such as painting or sculpting, to represent a contemporary social ill; planning strategies for raising the consciousness of their community with respect to a particular concern) (Weber 1981).
6. Help them critically examine the historical development of philosophies and the effects of these values on the development of societies.
7. Introduce them to the contributions of the inconspicuous and unsung who show admirable qualities and lead worthwhile lives (e.g., parents who sacrifice for their children; handicapped individuals who lead productive lives; VISA and Peace Corps volunteers who leave comfort and security in order to help others).
8. Examine with them moral issues shown on television, seen in the newspapers, or found in the community (Drews 1972).
9. Employ simulations, role play, or perspective-taking exercises. Focus on different viewpoints in everyday interactions; have the teacher and students share their feelings about interactions, events, or activities (Hensel 1991).
10. Involve them in group dynamics activities, in which children learn to interact cooperatively with each other, respect each others' rights and gain a sense of social responsibility (Sisk 1982).
11. Have students establish their own code of rules for behavior (Leroux 1986).
12. Have students participate on an equal footing with faculty members in decision making (Roeper 1990).
13. Model caring behaviors (Roeper 1991).
14. Help students become activists by engaging in the study and solution of real life problems confronting society (Passow 1988). Encourage them to attempt to share these alternatives with civic leaders (Weber 1981).
15. Encourage students to read the newspapers so that they can begin to see how they and their communities are not isolated from the outside world; provide opportunities for them to share their perceptions and questions with others on a regular basis (Clark and Hankins 1985).
16. Encourage gifted students to think about the moral and ethical dimensions of the subjects they study and to raise questions of conscience regarding content (Passow 1988).
17. Give students opportunities to think about their role in the world. For example:
 

What impact could they make? What impact do they want to make? What impact does the world have on their lives? They need the tools to make an impact on their own destiny and the ever expanding inter-relatedness of the destiny of everybody on the planet. (Roeper 1988, p. 12)

## 19.5 Conclusion

Some researchers have suggested that the unique ethical sensitivity of the gifted indicates a special potential for high moral development (Drews 1972; Vare 1979). We call this potential *moral promise*; it is probably due to the complexity of moral

issues and the intellectual demands involved in ethical judgments. However, this potential needs support. Without prior training, the gifted are not any better equipped to grapple with the value dimensions of their studies than they are to solve problems in non-Euclidean geometry (Tannenbaum 1972). Rarely has the moral awareness or promise of the gifted been used as a basis for program planning or counseling.

Honesty, fairness, moral issues, global concerns, and sensitivity to others are common themes in the lives of gifted children. If we want moral leaders, we need to understand and nurture the inner world of the gifted – the rich, deep internal milieu from which moral sensitivity emerges (Silverman 1994). We cannot educate the mind and forget the *Self* of the child (Roeper 1990). Gifted children need relationships with people who care about who they are, not just what they can do. And they need opportunities to develop and express their emerging moral awareness. With nurturing, their moral promise will be fulfilled.

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